The creation of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2005 was the culmination of a long and contentious process. In this book Rob Jenkins provides a concise introduction that traces the origins and evolution of peacebuilding as a concept, the establishment and functioning of the PBC as an institution, and the complicated relationship between these two processes.

Jenkins examines how continued contestation over what exactly peacebuilding is, and how its objectives could most effectively be achieved, influenced the institutional design of the UN’s new “peacebuilding architecture.” He then analyzes the roles that the organizations which comprise this new architecture have carved out for themselves during their first years in existence. The book argues that the UN’s approach to rebuilding war-torn states will continue to be profoundly influenced by persistent political faultlines between member states as well as institutional rivalries within the UN’s sprawling bureaucracy.

The theory and practice of peacebuilding have assumed increasing importance over the last decade, and this work is essential reading for all students of conflict resolution, peace studies, and international relations.

Rob Jenkins is Professor of Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center at The City University of New York. Formerly Professor of Politics at the University of London, he has published widely on Indian politics, movements for democratic accountability, and the politics of international economic and security assistance.
Routledge Global Institutions Series
Edited by Thomas G. Weiss
The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA
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University of Manchester, UK

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Peacebuilding
From concept to commission

Rob Jenkins
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Foreword

The current volume is the seventy-second title in a dynamic series on global institutions. These books provide readers with definitive guides to the most visible aspects of what many of us know as “global governance.” Remarkable as it may seem, there exist relatively few books that offer in-depth treatments of prominent global bodies, processes, and associated issues, much less an entire series of concise and complementary volumes. Those that do exist are either out of date, inaccessible to the non-specialist reader, or seek to develop a specialized understanding of particular aspects of an institution or process rather than offer an overall account of its functioning and situate it within the increasingly dense global institutional network. Similarly, existing books have often been written in highly technical language or have been crafted “in-house” and are notoriously self-serving and narrow.

The advent of electronic media has undoubtedly helped research and teaching by making data and primary documents of international organizations more widely available, but it has complicated matters as well. The growing reliance on the Internet and other electronic methods of finding information about key international organizations and processes has served, ironically, to limit the educational and analytical materials to which most readers have ready access—namely, books. Public relations documents, raw data, and loosely refereed websites do not make for intelligent analysis. Official publications compete with a vast amount of electronically available information, much of which is suspect because of its ideological or self-promoting slant. Paradoxically, a growing range of purportedly independent websites offering analyses of the activities of particular organizations has emerged, but one inadvertent consequence has been to frustrate access to basic, authoritative, readable, critical, and well-researched texts. The market for such resources has actually been reduced by the ready availability of often poor-quality electronic materials.
For those of us who teach, research, and operate in the area, such restricted access to information and analyses has been frustrating. We were delighted when Routledge saw the value of a series that bucks this trend and provides key reference points to the most significant global institutions and issues. They are betting that serious students and professionals will want serious analyses. We have assembled a first-rate team of authors to address that market. Our intention is to provide one-stop shopping for all readers—students (both undergraduate and postgraduate), negotiators, diplomats, practitioners from nongovernmental and intergovernmental organizations, and interested parties alike—seeking insights into the most prominent institutional aspects of global governance.

**Peacebuilding**

What should be done when the dust of conflict has settled? Answering that question has become arguably the most essential challenge facing the UN system in the aftermath of the Cold War. The growth in civil wars and the challenges facing war-torn societies have figured prominently in a host of volumes in this series precisely because picking up the pieces after war has become the growth industry in the United Nations’ conflict business. Indeed, even a RAND Corporation study has demonstrated that the UN is better able to re-knit societies than the US military and government.¹ Many of the topics that arise in the margins of this book—from Security Council priorities to the shape of humanitarian responses to contemporary wars—are also topics for detailed analyses elsewhere in the series.²

Among the few concrete decisions³ agreed at the UN 2005 World Summit was the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and, subsequently, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). As the theory and practice of peacebuilding assumed increasing importance over the last decade, we were persuaded that the topic would be central to this series, and so we were delighted when Rob Jenkins agreed to write this book. His interpretation of the literature on peacebuilding and of the fledgling efforts by the PBC and PBSO are informed not only by his teaching at Hunter College and The CUNY Graduate Center, but also by his experience as a consultant to the PBSO, where he served as lead author of the 2010 *Report of the Secretary-General on Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding*. Among Rob’s earlier publications of interest are titles on democratic accountability, sexual violence and peace negotiations, and the PBC itself.⁴ Few analysts are as well positioned to write about an issue that is evolving continually as this and other books in the series go into print. Rob’s substantial exposure to developing countries and
to various idiosyncratic UN bureaucracies is very much in evidence on every page of this compelling book.

We are delighted to have this book in the series because it enriches the literature on global institutions and governance with a much needed title on the nature of peacebuilding and of international efforts to help mend societies. We wholeheartedly recommend it and, as always, welcome comments from our readers.

Thomas G. Weiss, The CUNY Graduate Center, New York, USA
Rorden Wilkinson, University of Manchester, UK
May 2012
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The research for this book was carried out during 2006–11. During this time, I benefitted from recollections and observations provided by scores of people who agreed to be interviewed, who responded to queries (by phone, e-mail, and Skype), who supplied invaluable documentation, and who (in several cases) subjected themselves to impromptu interrogations in and around United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York. There are too many people to mention by name, and a good number spoke on condition of anonymity, but I thank them nonetheless.

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officials, activists, scholars, and journalists who participated in consultations and interviews in Kathmandu, Geneva, and New York taught me a great deal about the dilemmas facing practitioners on the ground.

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Prakirti Nangia provided crucial research and editorial assistance for this project, showing maturity beyond her years. Her successor, Jacqueline Lekhraj, helped to bring the project to completion.

As ever, my greatest debt is to Anne Marie Goetz, without whom this book would not have been started, let alone completed. Our kids—Max and Nate—deserve one equally sized shout-out each.

The usual disclaimers apply.

RJ
New York
April 2012
## Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ASG</td>
<td>Assistant Secretary-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>BCRP</td>
<td>Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery</td>
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<td>CAR</td>
<td>Central African Republic</td>
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<td>CG</td>
<td>Consultative Group</td>
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<td>CSC</td>
<td>Country-Specific Configuration</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil-Society Organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDR</td>
<td>Disarmament, Demobilization, and Reintegration</td>
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<tr>
<td>DESA</td>
<td>Department of Economic and Social Affairs</td>
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<tr>
<td>DFS</td>
<td>Department of Field Support</td>
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<tr>
<td>DPA</td>
<td>Department of Political Affairs</td>
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<td>DPKO</td>
<td>Department of Peacekeeping Operations</td>
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<tr>
<td>DRC</td>
<td>Democratic Republic of the Congo</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOSOC</td>
<td>Economic and Social Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECPS</td>
<td>Executive Committee on Peace and Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>EISAS</td>
<td>ECPS Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat</td>
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<tr>
<td>EOSG</td>
<td>Executive Office of the Secretary-General</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERG</td>
<td>Expert Reference Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>ERSG</td>
<td>Executive Representative of the Secretary-General</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization</td>
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<td>FPB</td>
<td>Financing for Peacebuilding</td>
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<tr>
<td>GATT</td>
<td>General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade</td>
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<tr>
<td>HLP</td>
<td>High-Level Panel (on Threats, Challenges and Change)</td>
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<tr>
<td>IASC</td>
<td>Inter-Agency Standing Committee</td>
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<td>INGOs</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organizations</td>
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<td>IDPs</td>
<td>Internally Displaced Persons</td>
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<td>IDPS</td>
<td>International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding</td>
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<tr>
<td>IFIs</td>
<td>International Financial Institutions</td>
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Abbreviations

ILF  In Larger Freedom
IMF  International Monetary Fund
IMPP Integrated Missions Planning Process
IPBS Integrated Peacebuilding Strategy
ITF  Integrated Task Force
LICUS Low-Income Countries Under Stress
MDTF Multi-Donor Trust Fund
NAM  Non-Aligned Movement
NATO North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO  Non-Governmental Organization
NJSS National Justice Sector Strategy
NSC  National Steering Committee
OCHA Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs
OECD Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OIOS Office of Internal Oversight Services
OSAGI Office of the Special Advisor for Gender Issues
OSCE Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PBA Peacebuilding Architecture
PBC  Peacebuilding Commission
PBF  Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO Peacebuilding Support Office
PCG  Peacebuilding Contact Group
PCNA Post-Conflict Needs Assessment
PRF  Peacebuilding Recovery Facility
PRGF Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility
PRSP Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PRST Presidential Statement
R2P Responsibility to Protect
SPBF State and Peace Building Fund
SPG  Senior Peacebuilding Group
SRF  Strategic Recovery Facility
SRSG Special Representative of the Secretary-General
SSR  Security Sector Reform
TCC  Troop-Contributing Countries
ToR  Terms of Reference
UNICEF UN Children’s Fund
UNIFEM UN Development Fund for Women (now UN Women)
UNDG UN Development Group
UNDP UN Development Programme
UNHRC UN Human Rights Council
US  United States
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USAID</td>
<td>US Agency for International Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>WFP</td>
<td>World Food Programme</td>
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<td>WGLL</td>
<td>Working Group on Lessons Learned</td>
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<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
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Introduction

- The empirical context
- Key arguments
- Organization of the book

Sustained peace is not a naturally occurring phenomenon; it must consciously and continuously be constructed and renewed. This is the central premise of what the international community, and the scholarship that has grown up around it, call peacebuilding. It applies not only to relations between states, but also, increasingly, to the contentious politics that exist within them.

States that have recently suffered violent internal conflict clearly face more daunting challenges than those with no recent history of civil war. Chronic recidivists, such as Afghanistan and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), are just the visible face of a larger problem. While it may be hard to support as a general proposition the widely propagated assertion that half of all “post-conflict” countries return to war within five years,¹ the recrudescence of violence is an ever-looming threat. Many “post-conflict” societies that have avoided returning to the “conflict” category have suffered extremely high rates of “violent crime,” with people forced to endure levels of insecurity exceeding those in many officially designated conflict zones.

A consensus has emerged on the necessity of sustained and coordinated external support to locally negotiated peacebuilding efforts. Diplomats and civil servants in multilateral organizations recognize that the international community has both a moral obligation and a practical incentive to shore up the foundations of peace where it exists, and to rebuild states and societies that have fallen victim to war in ways that prevent its return. Without external assistance, people needlessly suffer, and conflict’s ill effects—refugees, disease, political instability, *more* conflict—spread easily beyond the immediate theater of war.
The idea of peacebuilding has risen to prominence in all three “sectors” of the United Nations’ (UN) work—international security, sustainable development, and human rights. Different shades of meaning are conveyed by different users of this capacious term, but at its core peacebuilding is about preventing the outbreak or recurrence of widespread and systematic violence in the short run, while pursuing longer-term actions to construct the social, economic, and political foundations of lasting peace. The best means for accomplishing these twin objectives is open to question, but peacebuilding is generally associated with efforts to move beyond immediate technical problems, such as a lack of physical, administrative, or economic infrastructure (all of which are acute in post-conflict settings), to a more encompassing, partly political approach that engages with the primary actors involved in conflict and addresses its root causes, particularly those stemming from developmental deficits or the basic structure of the political settlement.

Peacebuilding, undertaken by both international and national authorities, official agencies and nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), is related to but distinct from peacekeeping, a term far better known to the public, but one which, like peacebuilding, does not appear in the UN Charter. Peacekeeping was invented in the late 1940s and early 1950s, largely in the context of UN engagement in the Middle East—for instance, following the Suez crisis of 1956. Peacekeeping was justified as an implied power deriving from the Security Council’s Chapter VII mandate to address threats to international peace and security. Peacebuilding, because it ranges beyond narrowly defined security issues to encompass matters of development and human rights, is the more expansive term. To elaborate further this skeletal definition of peacebuilding risks straying into conceptual and operational debates that would be premature to rehearse here—but which are in part the subject of this book. For now, it suffices to note that disagreements continue on such questions as which actions are essential to building peace, when and where such initiatives should take place, who should perform them, how to determine whether they have been successful, and indeed what constitutes peace.

Peacebuilding as an operational concept, requiring doctrine, structures, and response capacities, emerged as the Cold War was concluding. Indeed, debates concerning what peacebuilding is, or should be, often seem to have inherited the ideological rancor of the superpower rivalry, transposed to new issues and with a reconfigured set of actors. However, it was not until September 2005 that world leaders paid peacebuilding the ultimate compliment by endorsing the creation of a new UN entity devoted to, and explicitly named for, this vital undertaking. The UN Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), an intergovernmental body composed
of 31 member states elected on rotating terms from various functional constituencies, convened for the first time in June 2006, six months after identical resolutions authorizing its creation were passed by the General Assembly and the Security Council. The PBC stands, along with the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC), as among the few visible institutional legacies of former UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s ambitious but largely unrealized reform agenda.

The PBC’s purpose is to prevent countries “emerging from conflict” from returning to war. The PBC is supposed to do this by maintaining a “watching brief” on countries placed on its agenda, much as the Security Council does with country situations of which it “remains seized.” Unlike the Security Council, the PBC has few directive powers. The commission’s architects—almost all of them unhappy with the political compromises that bequeathed its cumbersome structure and vague mandate—hoped that the collective political clout of PBC member states, and the quality of the comprehensive peace-consolidation plans they would formulate collaboratively with the governments concerned, would attract interest and funding to countries in danger of becoming aid orphans. In 2006 Burundi and Sierra Leone—neither of which was at the time receiving much international media attention because widespread political violence had ebbed—were the first two countries placed on the PBC’s agenda.

The resolutions that created the PBC also specified the establishment of two affiliated bodies: the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), to act as an administrative secretariat to the commission while also formulating and disseminating policy guidance based on “best practice” among field practitioners; and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), to provide rapid finance for critical activities in countries at risk of relapsing into conflict. Perhaps inevitably, the PBSO and the PBF were soon seen as synonymous with, or at most appendages of, the PBC, when in fact they possessed considerable autonomy from the commission. Before long, the three institutions were being referred to collectively as the UN’s new Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA).

UN officials and member states sold the PBC’s creation as a major turning point in the international community’s approach to promoting peace and security. Kofi Annan claimed that the PBC was designed to fill a gap in the UN’s institutional fabric—a gap created by the mismatch between the world of sovereign nation-states (and “dependent territories”) of the UN’s founders in the mid-twentieth century, and the world of the new millennium, where state sovereignty was being challenged by an array of powerful forces.

Confronted with this disjuncture, the international community gradually began acknowledging its collective interest in returning post-conflict
states to a minimal standard of de facto sovereignty. It was also recognized that restoring effective statehood to countries ripped apart by internal violence would require more resources and enhanced institutional capacity. The creation of the PBA in 2005 reflected a belief that to build peace (and states) effectively, the UN had to rethink its doctrines and organizational structures for handling such cases, which typically require long-term investment, across a range of competencies, among diverse external actors, in locations of great insecurity.

This book is about the relationship between a contested concept and a constrained commission. Put differently, it is about an idea (peacebuilding), an institution (the UN PBA), and how the assertion of various interests (bureaucratic and political) has influenced the development of each of these entities and mediated interactions between them. Ideas, interests, and institutions constitute a familiar triad of explanatory categories in the study of political and economic phenomena. Taken as an ensemble, they provide a flexible analytical framework for achieving the book’s two primary objectives: first, tracing the idea of peacebuilding from its earliest stages to its manifestation in the form of the PBC and its affiliated institutions, the PBSO and the PBF; and second, assessing the significance of the PBA’s first half decade as a going concern. The five-year period covered permits consideration of how ideas, interests, and institutions can (as they do throughout the analytic narrative) assume various roles—as cause, effect, or both.

While “ideas” have clearly played a crucial role in the PBC’s development, it is difficult to draw generalizable conclusions concerning their relative importance as an explanatory variable. To be sure, the peacebuilding field is a magnet for politically charged ideas. David Chandler, for instance, considers the standard package of post-conflict assistance to rest on questionable ideological assumptions, notably that democracy and free markets will breed accountability and interdependence, and thus peace within and between nations. The “liberal peacebuilding” paradigm has become so “normalized,” critics argue, that noting the existence of alternative models, let alone promoting their adoption, invites charges of radical deviancy.

Causally speaking, however, “interests” and “institutions” appear, ex ante, just as relevant as “ideas.” In the absence of (inevitably self-interested) agents capable of transmitting ideas about peacebuilding into decision-making forums, few of the outcomes regarding the PBC would have been the same. The structure of the wider institutional landscape profoundly influenced peacebuilding’s journey from concept to commission as well, and will continue to do so as the new peacebuilding architecture strikes deeper roots.
Ideas, interests, and institutions do not exist in a historical vacuum, however. The end of the Cold War was followed—not coincidentally—by the ignition of many “new wars” of a qualitatively different variety: conflicts within rather than between states, typically fought by armed gangs and militia rather than organized armies, often fueled by the proceeds of illicit trade, and all too frequently targeting civilians rather than sparing them. The sites of these conflicts—from Bosnia to Sierra Leone, Burundi to East Timor—have witnessed the near or total collapse of state authority.

Though commonly described as civil wars, these conflicts often defy easy classification. In many cases they have spilled beyond the borders of these states, drawing in both governments and ethnically based militias from neighboring countries. The classic model of a government fighting rebellious soldiers or the forces of a separatist region is often not found. Some analysts have responded to the definitional challenge by developing models built around quantitative indicators on death rates, conflict duration, the geographic dispersion of violence, and the configuration of combatant groups. There can be reasonable disagreement on appropriate benchmarks, and indeed on whether a single global benchmark is appropriate.

Identifying the causes of conflict is, of course, even more complex. The extent to which economic and political forces outside a state’s borders account for the outbreak or recurrence of armed conflict remains difficult to assess. For instance, the Cold War’s end may have been a necessary condition for the outbreak of violence in the former Yugoslavia, but surely was not sufficient to explain the horror that ultimately unfolded. Given this, how should we account for such pervasive and sustained influences as decades of forced liberalization of aid-recipient countries’ economies by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank? There is, as yet, no convincing “large-n” research on the effects of conditionality-based lending programs on a country or region’s propensity toward war or peace. However, World Bank/IMF reform programs, even in the so-called post-conditionality era, generally require recipient governments to slash spending, shrink bureaucracies, reduce regulation, and embrace globalization by progressively removing barriers to cross-border flows of goods, services, finance, and ideas. Each of these measures can have direct and multiple implications for political legitimacy and stability, and indeed for whether or not an existing civil order collapses.

While inter-ethnic violence is a feature of most new wars, the reasons why ethnic differences erupted where, when, and with the force and brutality that they did, are rarely apparent. Legacies of mistrust, born of earlier conflicts, are often partly responsible. Resentments stemming
from the unfair terms (or unfulfilled promises) of previous peace agreements furnish flammable tinder. Political leaders find it difficult to resist the temptation to exploit feelings of inter-communal suspicion and insecurity as a way of polarizing populations for political gain. Once one group begins recruiting fighters or amassing arms, there are powerful incentives for others to strike before being struck. Cycles of violence assume lives of their own.

Actions by neighboring countries or by groups within them have affected conflicts in places as different as Uganda and Cambodia. In a variation on this theme, the unfinished business of decolonization shaped the dynamics of conflict in East Timor, over which Indonesia had assumed de facto control, if not legal sovereignty, for a quarter century before the outbreak of severe violence in 1999. Indonesia’s political convulsions following the disintegration of the Suharto regime in 1998—its a casualty of the 1997 Asian financial crisis—clearly played a role. Disputed control over natural resources—oil, minerals, timber—is at the root of many conflicts. Funds raised through the illegal exploitation of these resources helped to fuel the continuation of conflicts in Angola, the DRC, Sierra Leone, and elsewhere.

Another approach to examining causality in the study of peacebuilding is to establish correlations between measures of human-development deprivation and various dimensions of civil conflict. Such studies regularly confirm that even in countries subjected to extremely grim economic and social conditions, organized violence is usually absent in most places at most times. Still, widespread malnutrition and illiteracy provide inhospitable soil for peaceful coexistence in deeply divided societies. Communities affected by severe poverty often lack the social and political resources to extinguish sparks of violence before they become flames of war. In some contexts the collapse of traditional livelihoods in agriculture and allied economic activities has not helped matters. Indeed, the lack of legitimate economic opportunities offers fertile ground for the recruitment of combatants. So do persistent patterns of misgovernance. In many countries, institutionalized corruption has crippled key institutions, such as the customs service. With the guardians of a nation’s borders compromised, smugglers are enriched, the national treasury depleted, and popular faith in the rule of law undermined. When a state is dominated by a small ruling clique, its right to govern is doubted, and the legitimacy of violence as a tool of resistance rises accordingly.

The precise alchemy that causes these and other factors to congeal into the breakdown of civil order remains obscure. Fragile states, like Tolstoy’s unhappy families, collapse in accordance with their own idiosyncratic logics.
The empirical context

To understand peacebuilding’s emergence as a key concept among scholars and practitioners alike, and to assess its materialization in the form of the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF, requires a basic familiarity with certain transformative events that, from roughly 1989 to 2001, re-shaped the security landscape. The UN’s role in containing the breakdown of the former Yugoslavia, in combating resource wars in Africa, and in tying up loose ends left over from the Cold War generally—these and other crucial experiences had a large, though not always consistent or uniform, impact on how peacebuilding was deployed as a conceptual framing device and an operational objective.

By the time the idea of peacebuilding assumed formal institutional expression—through the creation of the three institutional components of the PBA in 2005/06—the international community had experienced a decade and a half of intensive engagement in reconstituting post-conflict states. In theory, “lessons” had been “learned” from each peace operation.14 Because these narratives have been so frequently deployed in debates about peacebuilding—and the creation of the PBC—an overview of key events in the peacekeeping and peacebuilding record is in order.

As an improvised response to a major transformation in world order, the restoration of state authority (the core business of peacebuilding) took place in the early post-Cold War years without blueprints, or even accessible theoretical models. Peacebuilding was invented out of necessity by practitioners rather than deliberately designed by legal or technical experts on institutional restructuring. Large-scale peacebuilding missions were underway before the word peacebuilding had been coined. Actors engaged in early post-Cold War peacebuilding certainly did not use the term.

There was little practical guidance on which early peacebuilders could draw. Constantly evolving conditions gave expertise a short half-life. There was not much by way of concrete historical precedent to go by, either. America’s experiences rebuilding Germany and Japan after the Second World War are frequently regarded as misleading analogies for state-building in the late twentieth century.15 In Germany and Japan, for instance, effective states existed prior to the conflicts that caused their collapse, whereas many civil wars of the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries were waged in places where the state’s penetration of society had been patchy at best. There also proved to be much less appetite for trusteeship in the 1990s than there had been in the 1940s.

To make matters worse, after 1989 the Secretary-General’s “good offices” were increasingly sought in conflicts where no clear victor
had emerged—no unconditional capitulation, no Hirohito-style radio broadcast, not even Robert E. Lee laying down arms and grudgingly accepting the punishments of defeat. In some cases, there was little that resembled surrender at all. The UN, increasingly, was left with the problem cases.

The earliest UN peace operations are almost as old as the UN itself. The 1948 missions in Kashmir and Palestine are both still active, in modified form. In the early days of peacekeeping, the roles were straightforward and limited, if still difficult to perform: monitoring a truce, patrolling a border, securing an arms cache. As the Cold War began winding down, however, the UN was being asked to contain—if not prevent—civil wars, a task for which it had little direct experience. After 1989 most peace operations would be responses to intra-state conflicts. Suddenly, “peacekeeping” missions were responsible for implementing complex, “multidimensional” peace agreements that reflected humanitarian, economic, governance, and other considerations. These included many more tasks than traditional peacekeeping had performed. Only five post-Cold War peace operations involved monitoring ceasefire agreements between sovereign states, until then the classic peacekeeping role.16

As the superpowers withdrew resources from proxy conflicts worldwide, several wound down and became “ripe” for settlement.17 During the decade and a half between the Cold War’s demise and the PBC’s birth, methods for securing peace continually adapted to political developments. A small number of cases was instrumental in shaping, and reshaping, the international community’s collective thinking on post-conflict reconstruction. Beginning in 1989, the UN was involved in four relatively successful post-conflict operations. In Namibia (1989–90), a UN peace operation monitored the withdrawal of South African forces and oversaw the country’s first democratic election. This marked the end of an occupation dating back to the UN’s founding. Soon thereafter, missions were undertaken in El Salvador (1991–95), Cambodia (1991–93), and Mozambique (1992–94). The UN played a central role in resolving these conflicts and overseeing implementation of comprehensive peace accords. Cambodia is generally regarded as the least successful of the four, but compared to the failures that would follow, Cambodia’s results were respectable. Neither sustained nor widespread violence ensued following the establishment of a UN “advance mission” in 1991 and the UN Transitional Authority in Cambodia in 1992. Despite unconscionable delays in the country’s transitional justice process, the Khmer Rouge did not return to power, nor even pose much of a threat to the state’s authority.

The early post-Cold War years were a time of considerable optimism about the international community’s ability to mediate between warring
parties, to implement the terms of the resulting peace settlements, to oversee democratic elections, and to funnel resources and expertise to support government institution-building and the restoration of basic services. Promoters of an activist peacebuilding agenda received a rude shock when far more complex cases emerged in the early 1990s. As James Dobbins and other experts have noted, the UN’s early post-Cold War peacebuilding consisted primarily of cases in which the warring parties had grown exhausted by fighting. The next wave of conflict resolution and peacebuilding would prove much more challenging.

Four cases were crucial in recalibrating expectations. The first was the withdrawal of US forces from their military mission in Somalia in 1993. The United States not only failed to restore civil order, but it could not even cripple the militia of warlord Mohamed Aideed, held up as the main obstacle to peace in post-communist Somalia. The Somali fiasco could perhaps be dismissed as an outlier—a case of imperial hubris where there was no peace to keep. Most UN officials consider the failure America’s, not the UN’s. The second case—the 1994 genocide in Rwanda—was harder to explain away. A UN peacekeeping force was present in the country, and yet the UN failed to predict, to prevent, or to mitigate substantially once underway, the massacre of nearly a million Tutsis and moderate Hutus. The UN peacekeeping machinery, under the management of future Secretary-General Kofi Annan, suffered a huge blow to its prestige. The most influential external powers—the United States and France—were seen by many as equally culpable of placing politics before principle.

The third blow to confidence in the UN was the stalling and then definitive demise of the Angolan peace process during 1995–96, despite successive peacekeeping operations. At the beginning of the 1990s, buoyed by success in Namibia, the UN sought to broker peace in Angola while simultaneously rebuilding the capacity of the Angolan state, decimated by more than a decade and a half of civil war. This included a flawed presidential election process. In the mid-1990s, after overseeing the departure of (government-supporting) Cuban military forces, UN efforts to promote various power-sharing and wealth-sharing formulas proved unsuccessful. The last UN peacekeepers finally departed in 1998, despite the continuation of the conflict, which did not end until a government offensive killed rebel leader Jonas Savimbi in 2002.

The fourth setback was in the former Yugoslavia. The conflict that began in 1991 had, by 1994, given way to the forced relocation of ethnic populations. The UN was slow in responding, but eventually provided peacekeepers, who were responsible for securing “safe havens” for vulnerable members of target ethnic groups. One of these was Srebrenica,
in Bosnia, where a massacre of civilians demonstrated the inadequacy—not to mention moral bankruptcy—of the international community’s approach. The 1995 US-brokered Dayton Peace Accords, which created Croatia, Serbia, and Bosnia-Herzegovina, did not resolve all of the issues concerned, as would soon be obvious when Serbia began using the relative peace on the Croatian and Bosnian fronts to escalate the abuses being perpetrated in Kosovo.

The Dayton Accords did not generate much enthusiasm for the international community’s further involvement in civil conflicts or rebuilding after their conclusion. According to William J. Durch, during the immediate post-Rwanda/post-Srebrenica period, “member states largely turned away” from the UN: “Between 1995 and 1999, the UN launched one robust operation in eastern Croatia and a police monitoring mission in Bosnia, but both were backed up by NATO [North Atlantic Treaty Organization] military power.” The rest of the UN’s new initiatives were “small observer missions.”

Nevertheless, during the latter part of the 1990s the UN high representative overseeing the “transitional administration” in Bosnia was gaining valuable experience in directly administering post-conflict territories. This proved useful when at the end of the decade two other provinces in search of statehood—Kosovo and East Timor—came under the control of similar forms of international governance.20 UN officials may not have classified these as trusteeship territories, but observers from outside the UN have invoked the term.21

The range of activities undertaken by the UN in these directly administered territories was substantial. Some tasks—disarmament, appointments to joint military commissions—were specified in peace agreements. Others required peace-implementing officials to improvise. To create new political orders, new constitutions had to be written, which meant that constituent assemblies had to be convened; traditional authorities (clan chiefs, religious leaders) needed to be consulted; the constitution-writing process itself required structure and guidance; security services had to be reconstituted and subjected to civilian control and oversight; elections had to be organized; law-enforcement and criminal-justice systems had to be constructed; community-based organizations for building inter-ethnic forms of social capital had to be established.22 The daunting breadth and depth of the challenges was tempered by a belief that this wave of cases represented Cold War leftovers rather than a new and lasting trend. This proved to be mistaken.

The events of 11 September 2001 ushered in the final phase in the evolution of peacebuilding prior to the PBA’s creation in 2005. The attacks on the lone superpower magnified fears that collapsed states—
ungoverned spaces on the world map—represented sources of contagious instability. These anxieties had been slowly building since the 1998 US embassy bombings in east Africa and the attack on the USS Cole off the coast of Yemen in 2000. The fear now had a name (Osama bin Laden, al-Qaeda, the Taliban) and an address (Afghanistan, but also sometimes Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and Pakistan, America’s friends).

After its military campaign deprived Afghanistan of its sovereignty, the United States attempted to reconstitute it, the objective being a new state, able to control its territory and honor international commitments. In 2003, preventing terrorists from obtaining weapons of mass destruction was President George W. Bush’s most consistent justification for invading Iraq, a project the United States turned to immediately after ousting the Taliban from Kabul. These two wars and their violent aftermath created a huge stabilization and long-term peacebuilding project for the world’s hegemonic power. This naturally affected the wider aid community. Advocates pleading for increased resources to rebuild states at risk of collapse found themselves being listened to. Pledges of increased funding followed the 2002 Monterrey Financing for Development Summit. It is important to recall that the occupation of Afghanistan and Iraq—with the prospect of sustained peacebuilding ahead—was the immediate context into which the PBA was born.

**Key arguments**

In the process of tracing peacebuilding’s emergence as a central concept among international actors, and analyzing its institutional manifestation in the form of the PBA, the book advances five contentions.

First, the same conceptual ambiguities that made peacebuilding such an attractively vague concept in the lead up to the PBC’s creation—each constituency could interpret the term’s meaning as it saw fit, avoiding open disagreements that could derail convergence on other issues—could not, once the PBC began operating, contain the profound differences of opinion on how best to use this new institution to consolidate peace. These disagreements, rooted in contested conceptions of peacebuilding, played themselves out almost continuously during the PBA’s formative years, providing convenient fault lines along which existing rivalries could be enacted by both bureaucratic and diplomatic actors.

Second, peacebuilding’s encompassing nature made each of the three new institutions that comprised the PBA an attractive site for issue advocates seeking to advance their agendas. Many issue advocates attempted, from the PBC’s very earliest moments, to link its program of work to an explicitly rights-based approach to peace consolidation. Amnesty
International proposed using the UNHRC’s Universal Periodic Review mechanism as a partial basis for assessing progress in countries on the PBC’s agenda. Others called for recognizing the special circumstances facing refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs) in post-conflict situations. As we will see, advocates for women’s participation in matters of peace and security—mediation, military peacekeeping, post-conflict planning and reconstruction—made a particularly strong bid to harness the PBA to advance implementation of Security Council resolution 1325, passed in 2000. Newly created and mandated to achieve something as broad as sustainable peace, the PBA’s component entities became vessels into which the unfulfilled policy aspirations of issue-specific constituencies could be poured.

Third, exacerbating organizational and ideological rivalries was the fact that the ostensibly “new peacebuilding architecture” did not supplant the “old” peacebuilding structures. Instead, the three new bodies were inserted on top of, adjacent to, and overlapping with preexisting organizational units engaged in peacebuilding work. Lacking policy making or operational authority, the PBC, PBSO, and PBF nevertheless represent a significant addition to the changing organizational landscape of international peacebuilding. They have not, however, produced an ordered set of relations between UN entities. The PBA’s three institutional components are less a distinct edifice than they are a new set of organizational nodes in an evolving network of actors, historically bequeathed and highly complex. The ancien régime of UN peacebuilding was undoubtedly piecemeal, constructed and renovated over time, but beneath its pockmarked institutional façade was a perceptible sense of order, a kind of vernacular architecture.

The Department of Political Affairs (DPA)—which monitors country developments through regional bureaux, organizes and deploys peace mediators, oversees UN support to post-conflict elections, and manages UN missions in several countries at risk of slipping into (or emerging from) conflict—was at the center of this pre-PBA universe of overlapping jurisdictions. Other perennial pillars of the UN’s “old” peacebuilding architecture included the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), which manages most UN field missions in conflict-affected countries, the largest development and humanitarian agencies—e.g. the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the World Food Programme (WFP)—and policy secretariats specializing in everything from “economic recovery” to “gender issues.” The Security Council qualifies as part of the old peacebuilding landscape as well, since the council is the primary custodian of peace and security. The purpose of highlighting the distinction between the old and
new is to underscore that the new peacebuilding architecture came into being without demolishing what preceded it. Indeed, the Security Council, DPA, DPKO, and UNDP still constitute the bulk of the “built environment” around which UN efforts to consolidate peace take place. The PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF are relative newcomers, largely unwelcome intruders in an established bureaucracy.

Fourth, the PBA’s early years have been influenced by the context of almost continuous organizational reform within the UN and in the larger international community. Member states routinely use PBC sessions as a platform for advancing their positions on other aspects of UN reform. India, for example, has been eager to show that its participation in the PBC is as much about its newfound role as a “non-traditional donor” (offering various forms of assistance to post-conflict countries) as it is a reflection of India’s status as one of the world’s top “troop-contributing countries” (TCCs). This is consistent with India’s desire to obtain a permanent seat on the Security Council, the non-reform of which remains a perennial issue.

The only other permanent intergovernmental body of substantial heft created in recent years, beside the PBC, was the UNHRC. Like the PBC, the UNHRC spent 2005–10 finding its feet, though it was not so much in its institutional infancy as in its adolescence, evolving from the long-complained-about Human Rights Commission to the higher-ranking Human Rights Council. This affected the PBA in a number of ways. First, arguments from one venue sometimes spilled over into the other. More positively, the increasingly apparent problems facing the UNHRC in its first year convinced a number of key member states that resources ought to be devoted to making the PBA appear successful, lest the UN be seen as having two failures on its hands.

Another reform that affected the PBA’s early years was the adoption of the doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), which has slowly been taking root within the UN system and within international law. Some developing countries reacted sharply to the emergence of R2P, which, like the PBC and the UNHRC, was endorsed at the 2005 World Summit. Some fear that imperial adventures will result from the international community’s decision to take upon itself the duty of rescuing civilians and restoring security in cases where governments prove unable and/or unwilling to prevent or halt genocide, ethnic cleansing, and other high international crimes. Critics charge that R2P is a slippery slope to the passing of state sovereignty. The dismay at this prospect has at times generated extreme bitterness and has spilled over into other forums, including the PBC, where issues of sovereignty are never far from the surface. The R2P agenda received a major boost in early 2011, when the doctrine was invoked in Security Council resolutions 1970 and 1973,
which authorized the use of force to protect civilians in Libya—including those who had joined in rebellion. The result in this case—militarily induced regime change—triggered grave concerns about R2P among many member states.

The PBA was a child of its time in other respects as well. It emerged amidst several peacebuilding reform efforts within the UN system. Plans were being developed for expanding the number of DPA-run, country-level “peacebuilding” offices (which would succeed peacekeeping missions). At a more systemic level, the UN was experimenting with “comprehensive transition recovery frameworks that integrate reconstruction, rehabilitation and long-term development to … countries emerging from conflicts.”

Seemingly permanent organizational restructuring—at multiple levels, of varying severity, over a diverse range of time scales—cast a huge shadow over efforts to determine the PBA’s appropriate organizational niche.

Among the entities that undergo constant organizational restructuring are the constellations of interagency and interdepartmental standing committees, working groups, and task forces spread across the UN system. These typically assume relatively informal organizational forms, and therefore do little to bind the UN’s funds, agencies, and programs to an agreed division of labor. For the most part, UN agencies respond vertically to their governing bodies and largest donors, not horizontally to (or collectively with) their counterparts working on similar issues in other UN entities. This substantial layer of interagency sinew—one mid-ranking official commented that it was “more like flab”—complicates peacebuilding planning. However, as we will see, it also provides opportunities for PBA actors seeking additional points of leverage. Not least among the advantages conferred by these interagency forums is the entry points they provide for influencing the key processes of organizational change across the three pillars of security, human rights, and development.

Relevant non-UN-centered reform processes included a major international initiative on promoting “aid effectiveness.” The aid effectiveness “agenda” is supported by an administrative apparatus that propels it from one summit and agreement to another. This agenda has inserted into the institutional DNA of the PBC, PBSO, and PBF—born within months of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness—an emphasis on promoting “national ownership.” Ownership, like peacebuilding, has many meanings. In this context, however, “national ownership” must at a minimum refer to a genuine conviction among key officials in aid-recipient states in the efficacy of externally funded policy reforms. The ownership imperative is based on the belief that if policy agendas are imposed from abroad—by the World Bank, the World Trade Organization (WTO), the European Union (EU)—then they will be implemented half-heartedly.
Whatever benefits emerge will be captured by governing elites. The emphasis on home-grown policy solutions has been so dominant during the PBA’s early years that it has constrained actors working with and in the PBA from pursuing a more activist agenda-setting role.

Another implication of perpetual reformism is that each of the PBA’s three institutional components must differentiate its work from existing processes for coordinating international assistance. Most post-conflict countries are already engaged in multiple aid-coordination mechanisms—notably the World Bank–UN Post-Conflict Needs Assessments (PCNAs) and World Bank- and IMF-led processes for identifying, implementing, and monitoring Poverty Reduction Strategies. How the “integrated peacebuilding strategies” (IPBSs) devised by the PBC for post-conflict countries on its agenda would relate to existing Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) developed by these governments (in partnership with international donors) was something that it took half a decade for the PBC to resolve—and it did so by, eventually, abandoning the cumbersome IPBS instrument.

Fifth, despite these and other constraints, the PBA has emerged from its first half decade surprisingly well positioned to participate in many aspects of the UN’s peacebuilding work—political (the PBC), administrative (the PBSO), and financial (the PBF). The PBA’s evolution during its early years in operation can be divided into two phases. The first three years or so—through most of 2008—saw the PBSO, the PBC, and the PBF displaying admirable powers of institutional survival. This consisted of the capacity to establish organizational routines that make the entity a regular presence in collaborative policy processes, and to secure investment, diplomatic and financial, from key stakeholders engaged in peacebuilding. A second phase of roughly equal length, from mid-2008 through the end of 2010, witnessed the graduation of the PBA’s three components to a slightly more lofty plane: from bare institutional survival—which in this case resembled the organizational equivalent of a persistent vegetative state—the PBA experienced an attempt at organizational revival, a renewal of purpose if not much by way of concrete impact. The revival was characterized by a more robust effort—by the PBSO and to a lesser extent the PBC—to exploit all aspects of their respective mandates, and to influence the decisional calculus of other peacebuilding actors.

Organization of the book

The book’s chapters are organized as follows. Chapter 1 unpacks the term peacebuilding, an elastic concept that continues to shift shape. Rather
than exhaustively cataloguing the huge and diverse range of meanings assigned to the term, a limited set of crucial distinctions is set forth. In particular, the text examines the “who, what, where, and how” of peacebuilding. The chapter also situates peacebuilding amidst various terms (human security, stabilization, peacekeeping, nation-building) that have become part of the practitioner discourse, and identifies the advantages that various interest groups perceive in different permutations of the peacebuilding concept. Finally, the chapter reviews a selection of the literature that assesses the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions.

Chapter 2 focuses on the structure and origins of the PBA. It begins by describing what each element of the PBA is and what it is supposed to do. This involves outlining the organizational structure of the PBC, the functions assigned to each of its three institutional components, the means envisaged for fulfilling their assigned responsibilities, the institutional relationships in which each is embedded, and the procedures through which it organizes its work. Particular note is taken of the complexity of the PBC’s organizational design and its wide-ranging and highly ambiguous mandate. The chapter then examines the evolution of proposals for an international entity dedicated to post-conflict reconstruction, and of reforms undertaken from time to time. The discussion follows a path through research papers and official reports to the proposals that culminated in December 2005 in the creation of the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF through passage of Security Council resolution 1645 and General Assembly resolution 60/180.

Chapter 3 is the first of two that examine how the PBA has performed as a functional entity. The roughly five-year period covered, 2006–10, is divided between this chapter (2006 through mid-2008) and Chapter 4 (mid-2008 through 2010). Chapter 3 documents the process through which the PBA survived its infancy. The findings have implications for our understanding of how international organizations adapt, how national actors pursue their interests, and the circumstances under which civil society can exert influence on UN policy agendas. The chapter includes an analysis of how component entities have translated their vague mandates into organizational roles. The PBC’s engagement with the first two countries on its agenda, Burundi and Sierra Leone, provides much of the empirical context. The chapter advances the claim that the PBC’s institutional design, particularly the composition of its membership, undermined its capacity to improve coordination among the many organizations involved in peacebuilding. The chapter concludes by identifying the means by which each component of the PBA carved out a unique set of organizational niches for itself, a process aided by the existence
of pre-existing institutional relationships within the bureaucracy and among member states.

Chapter 4 is the second of two chapters examining the PBA’s activities during its formative years. This chapter picks up the narrative in mid-2008, a turning point for each of the PBA’s institutional components, though for different reasons in each case. It was during this second phase in the PBA’s development that it evolved from an institution that had managed to “survive” its infancy, but was on the equivalent of life support, to one where efforts were being made to “revive” the enthusiasm in which it was first conceived. The hallmarks of this transition from (bare) survival to (attempted) revival have been, first, a greater willingness to exploit all aspects of the organization’s mandate, and second, enhanced capacity to affect the decisions of other peacebuilding actors. The strictly procedural nature of these performance benchmarks—no actual peacebuilding outcomes are included—reflects the limited nature of change that has occurred. During the PBC’s second phase, the addition of two new countries on its agenda—Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic (CAR)—reshaped the way the PBC’s country-level engagement was viewed. The PBSO and the PBF, similarly, managed to expand their relevance, a topic discussed through case studies of these entities.

Chapter 5 examines—from the perspective of early 2011—the direction in which the PBA appeared to be heading. At that time the PBC and its affiliated institutions were collectively devising a “roadmap” to take forward the findings of an official five-year review. The positions staked out by key peacebuilding actors demonstrated that, despite the “revival” of activity by the PBA’s component parts, in some respects little had changed since 2005.
1 Peacebuilding
A contested and evolving concept

- What is peacebuilding?
- The ascendancy of peacebuilding and the illusion of convergence
- Assessing peacebuilding performance
- Conclusion

This chapter addresses three questions: What is peacebuilding? How and why has it become such a widely deployed concept? And what does existing research tell us about how, and under what conditions, peace has most effectively been built? The three questions are interrelated. How to go about building peace depends, in part, on how you define it. The ability of various actors to draw on the subtly different meanings of peacebuilding helps to account for the term’s popularity. To complicate matters further, the idea of peacebuilding continues to evolve, not least in response to actions taken by the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO). In this necessarily selective overview of a complex topic the discussion shifts between the empirical and the theoretical—between real-world events and how they are interpreted, classified, and packaged as lessons that practitioners are expected to learn.

What is peacebuilding?
For a seemingly self-evident concept, peacebuilding is used by both theorists and practitioners to convey a surprisingly wide variety of meanings. As Erin McCandless and Vanessa Wyeth note, post-conflict countries face not only many practical obstacles, but also “problems caused by confused and contested understandings of what it means to build peace in the aftermath of war.” This stems partly from the ambiguity of terms with which any attempt to build peace must reckon—security, development, the state, and indeed peace itself.
Peacebuilding has been subjected to “contested understandings” since the idea was first floated in the 1970s by one of the founders of modern peace studies, Johan Galtung. Usage of the term peacebuilding in official and academic discourse highlights four key sources of variation in meaning. These correspond to the questions of when, what, how, and who—that is, the period during which peacebuilding takes place, the type of peace sought, the methods employed to attain it, and the key actors in the peacebuilding enterprise.

**Differentiation from cognate concepts**

These dimensions of difference have been evident as far back as the first definitive statement on peacebuilding, through which the idea entered the official lexicon. This was 1992’s *An Agenda for Peace*, UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s reform manifesto. It referred to “post-conflict peacebuilding” as “action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” Boutros-Ghali was reported to have first uttered the words at 30,000 feet, en route to examine progress on various Central American peace accords, the terms of which implied large UN peace-implementation missions. This was months before *An Agenda for Peace* was published. Boutros-Ghali’s broad conception—specifying neither the forms of “action” nor the types of “support”—became a feature of many subsequent approaches to peacebuilding.

This definition was refined in the “Supplement” to *An Agenda for Peace*, issued in 1995, which stressed that the development of national institutions and the capacity to operate them impartially were necessary for peace to withstand the disruptions that arise in the life of any society. *An Agenda for Peace* was influential beyond the UN system. It catalyzed efforts on many fronts to define what peacebuilding was. George F. Oliver notes that the December 1994 version of the US Army’s Field Manual “defined preventive diplomacy and peace building along the lines described in *Agenda for Peace*.”

The new millennium occasioned two further seminal statements on peacebuilding. The first was contained in a pioneering quantitative study of the international community’s engagement in post-conflict reconstruction and development. Clearly influenced by the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis defined peacebuilding on the basis of what they considered a realistic assessment of the challenges faced by all countries: “In plural societies, conflicts are inevitable. The aim of peacebuilding is to foster social, economic, and political institutions and attitudes that will prevent
these conflicts from turning violent. In effect, peacebuilding is the front line of preventive action.”

The second key statement was found in a joint report written by eminent experts tasked by Secretary-General Kofi Annan with assessing the performance of UN peace operations. The resulting Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations—what came to be known as the “Brahimi Report” (named for panel chair Lakhdar Brahimi, a former foreign minister of Algeria and high-level UN envoy)—defined peacebuilding as “activities undertaken on the far side of conflict to reassemble the foundations of peace and provide the tools for building on those foundations something that is more than just the absence of war.”

In 2003 a further definition emerged when a consortium of donor governments formed a task force known as the Utstein Group, which assembled an analytical inventory of approaches to peacebuilding. The Utstein Group’s report defined peacebuilding as efforts to create “the structural conditions, attitudes and modes of political behavior that may permit peaceful, stable and ultimately prosperous social and economic development.” The focus here on “development” and the inclusion of “attitudes”—among both holders of state power and social actors more generally—reflects a significant strain of thinking about peacebuilding that seeks to move beyond objective conditions and institutional variables.

In 2008 Charles T. Call and Elizabeth M. Cousens defined peacebuilding as “actions undertaken by international or national actors to institutionalize peace, understood as the absence of armed conflict and a modicum of participatory politics.” The oblique reference to democratic legitimacy echoes a number of other earlier conceptions, such as Eva Bertram’s 1995 study, which regarded peacebuilding as establishing “the political conditions for sustainable, democratic peace.”

Peacebuilding is frequently defined in relation to various cognate concepts. Peacemaking refers to diplomatic efforts (including UN-mediated peace talks) to resolve conflicts already underway or those that threaten to break beyond fixed bounds. This is distinct from peacekeeping, which involves the deployment of military forces to monitor a ceasefire or to oversee other agreements between parties to a conflict. Peace enforcement is a term sometimes employed to denote peacekeeping that involves more robust military engagement by international forces, in some cases undertaken without the consent of the parties to a conflict.

Peacebuilding can be situated amidst these concepts in a variety of ways. Like peacemaking, peacebuilding is about resolving conflicts, but generally attempts to do so either before they erupt into widespread violence, or before those that have erupted recur. Peacebuilding seeks, in
other words, to prevent conflicts, and to do so systematically, rather than simply through negotiation, by addressing the “root causes” of conflict—economic, political, social, and psychological.

Like peacekeeping, certain varieties of peacebuilding occur after peace agreements have been concluded. Both peacekeeping and peacebuilding constitute forms of “peace implementation.” Peacebuilding, however, draws on a much wider range of instruments, beyond military action, including humanitarian relief, the restoration of public services, economic development initiatives, inter-ethnic reconciliation programs, transitional justice mechanisms, and so forth. Doing so requires wide-ranging expertise, and was thus for a time referred to as “multidimensional peacekeeping.” Madalene O’Donnell states that if peacekeeping concerns “the maintenance of a secure environment,” then peacebuilding encompasses “all other tasks undertaken to implement a peace accord or sustain peace.”

Cedric de Coning states that while peacekeeping is “about maintaining the status quo,” peacebuilding “has to do with managing change.”

Peacebuilding can also be distinguished from state-building and nation-building, though in some quarters the three terms are used interchangeably. A 2008 policy paper commissioned by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) declared emphatically that “state building is not peacebuilding.” It conceded, however, that “state building is likely to be a central element of [efforts] … to institutionalise peace,” where the notion of institutionalizing peace is more or less equivalent to peacebuilding. Restoring state authority and creating effective government bureaucracies are seen as necessary but not sufficient preconditions for lasting peace. It is unclear whether peacebuilding or state-building is the more encompassing task. Peacebuilding, in a sense, is the larger set—state-building constituting a subset—because peace must continuously be built, even after state-building finishes. However, one could argue that state-building is a task beyond peacebuilding. Benjamin Reilly, for instance, claims that “the focus of most UN missions has shifted from one of pure peace-building to one of state rebuilding.”

Like other analyses, the OECD paper also distinguishes state-building, and by extension the peacebuilding domain of which state-building is but one element, from “nation-building,” a term that can convey at least two distinct meanings. In American political discourse, nation-building sometimes refers to the array of external interventions—military and civilian—required to create political systems that will neither descend into internal violence nor be prone to external aggression. This usage, which corresponds to certain non-technical definitions of both peacebuilding and state-building, found utterance most famously in former
US President George W. Bush’s statement, in a 2000 campaign debate against then-Vice President Al Gore, that America should not engage in nation-building.  

The second meaning of “nation-building” is of older vintage, and refers to conscious efforts by leaders of newly decolonized territories, particularly during the 1950s and 1960s, to construct national identities in ethnically diverse polities. To create a sense of “Nigerian-ness” among the Hausa, the Igbo, the Yoruba, and the myriad other groups across that part of British West Africa was to engage in nation-building. The term “national integration” was invoked more frequently in places like India, and referred to the goal of inventing, or recapturing, a sense of nationalhood that transcended language, region, religion and other social cleavages. Something like nation-building continues in many countries, whether this term is used or not. The construction of effective and accountable states may require this sort of nation-building to succeed. Analytically, however, this usage of nation-building is distinct from most contemporary conceptions of peacebuilding, and as a practical matter, the latter term has become predominant in discussions of international efforts to rebuild post-conflict countries.

**The where, what, how, and who**

As noted above, there are four key axes along which various conceptions of peacebuilding diverge: with regard to the time period under consideration (the when), the goals pursued (the what), the actions undertaken (the how), and the actors involved (the who). These are inter-related. How peacebuilding is pursued will inevitably affect who (i.e., which set of actors) plays a central role. When peacebuilding takes place will, likewise, have a bearing on what kind of peace is sought.

As we have seen, even the most basic effort to distinguish peacebuilding from similar terms raises the questions of time and purpose (the when and the what). The conventional sequence is: peacemaking (to reach agreement among the parties to a conflict), leading to peacekeeping (to ensure that commitments contained in peace accords are honored), followed by peacebuilding (to prevent the cycle of violence from repeating itself). However, throughout the nearly 20 years that the term has been in use, repeated attempts have been made to question the validity of such fixed ideas about when peacebuilding begins and ends.

Actions following the termination of armed conflict fall within the category of “post-conflict peacebuilding,” implying the existence of a separate category of “pre-conflict peacebuilding.” Call and Cousens invoke this distinction explicitly. William Durch observes that “[c]onflict
prevention comes in two flavors: long-term (or strategic) and short-term (or crisis-related).” Post-conflict peacebuilding attempts to prevent the recurrence of violence, whereas pre-conflict peacebuilding seeks to forestall its initial outbreak. When the term peacebuilding is used without a temporal qualifier, it is sometimes difficult to discern which variety of peacebuilding is being discussed.

A 2001 study found that humanitarian actors were increasingly aware that how they conducted their work during conflicts had profound effects on later, post-emergency phases of international action. The authors concluded that “a broadening of humanitarian mandates to include developmental and peacebuilding objectives is necessary.” These actors wanted to expand their “downstream” mandate. A 2003 review of trends in peacebuilding found not only that the idea had “broadened” in scope, and “deepened” in terms of the degree to which external actors penetrated into local societies, but also that peacebuilding had “lengthened in terms of stages of conflict when it operates.” In addition to extending further downstream along the timeline of reconstruction, peacebuilding had migrated “upstream” to include various forms of conflict prevention. A 2005 attempt by the OECD to provide a working definition of peacebuilding for practitioners referred to “a broad range of measures implemented in the context of emerging, current or post-conflict situations,” a conceptualization that further undercut the notion that peacebuilding could be precisely fixed in time.

In general, however, contemporary usage equates peacebuilding with actions undertaken in the aftermath of conflict. Even so, associating peacebuilding—explicitly or implicitly—with post-conflict activity does not specify the point in the post-conflict period when peacebuilding begins. Is it after a de facto cessation of hostilities? Or after the arrival of peacekeeping forces? Following the signing of a comprehensive peace agreement? Or after the departure of peacekeepers? A 2008 review of gaps in the international community’s approach to rebuilding failed states acknowledged a continued lack of clarity as to the period covered by post-conflict peacebuilding: “[t]he term … is used in two ways—either to refer to the entire post-conflict exercise, or to refer to the post-peacekeeping phase,” after external military forces had departed. The report recommended that this ambiguity be overcome by using the term “early recovery” and “late recovery” to refer to different phases of the post-conflict period.

Attempts to establish causal relationships between modes of peace-making and successful peacebuilding raise further questions concerning when peacebuilding begins. For instance, international mediators seeking to facilitate a negotiated settlement to an armed conflict want not
just a peace agreement, but sustainable peace. When mediators craft agreements to enhance their longer-term durability, they are engaged in a form of peacebuilding—anticipating the post-conflict setting and specifying the adaptations that will be necessary to prevent the reemergence of conditions conducive to conflict. That they do so even as war continues to be waged should not matter, if the goal—rather than the time when such efforts are undertaken—is the key definitional criterion.

Terms such as “lasting,” “durable,” or “sustainable” peace beg the question of when peacebuilding comes to an end. In the abstract, peacebuilding never ends: eventually, a country that has successfully avoided a relapse of violence should be permitted to shed the “post-conflict” label, at which point prevention efforts can be redirected toward not the recurrence of a prior conflict, but the potential outbreak of new conflicts. The transition from one variety of peacebuilding to another is theoretically continuous if not always operationally seamless.

Given these complexities it is no wonder that practitioners continue to ask: How many years without a significant relapse are sufficient to classify a country as having achieved a “lasting peace”? Three years? Five years? Ten years? Others speak of the need to think in terms of decades in places where war has been particularly brutal, where the economic outlook is particularly dire, or where nearby conflicts threaten constantly to permeate a country’s borders—the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) being a case in point. Or the appropriate timescale could be established on the basis of the statistical curve represented by past performance, which would take into account all conflicts during a given period and define as the point of sustainable peace the period of continuous non-conflict after which the likelihood of recurrence falls below a predefined threshold. Whether the threshold should be a 10 percent chance of recurrence, or 20 percent, or some other number is of course profoundly arbitrary. Roy Licklider’s 1995 study of how civil wars end articulated an oft-repeated rule of thumb: if a negotiated settlement lasts at least five years, the chances of a return to organized violence are drastically reduced.

Then again, there remains considerable doubt as to whether sustainable peace is best measured in time at all. There is agreement that peacebuilding is a process, extending years if not decades, but what exactly this process is trying to achieve is far from clear. At one level, the problem is arbitrary time horizons, leading us back to the question of “when”: when is peace durable enough to withstand the strains to which societies are prone? However, bound up with this issue is the question of what constitutes peace. This was alluded to earlier with reference to the work of Galtung, whose key distinction was between negative and positive
conceptions of peace: on the one hand, the absence of widespread and systematic inter-group conflict; on the other, a condition of social justice and pluralism in which the root causes of conflict are, if not fully eliminated, successfully managed through non-violent processes of political representation, negotiation, and compromise.

Another attempt to move beyond the peace-as-the-absence-of-war perspective is represented by the idea of “human security,” a term that has evolved alongside peacebuilding, and lends itself just as readily to multiple interpretations. The idea of human security is premised on two conceptual shifts. The first concerns the unit of analysis—away from the vulnerability of nations and governments, and toward a concern with protecting individuals and social groups. The second shift involves the nature of the threats: human security emphasizes not just protection from organized armed aggression, but also reduced exposure to such threats as famine and pollution. Security from physical harm—including that wrought by violence—remains a key element of human security. In addition, though, a human security perspective incorporates a wider range of potential threats, including criminal gangs, abusive spouses, drug traffickers, and business oligopolies.

The concept of human security—which, like peacebuilding, attempts to transcend divisions separating the development and security fields—became a mainstay of international discourse when it featured in the 1994 Human Development Report. The link between human security and peacebuilding has been examined by, among others, John G. Cockell, who in fact defines peacebuilding as “a sustained process of preventing internal threats to human security from causing protracted, violent conflict.” There is more than a whiff of circularity to this fairly widespread conception of the link between the promotion of human security and efforts to secure sustainable peace. Roland Paris’s devastating critique of the human security “paradigm” points out that because protection from violence is folded into the definition of human security, “Cockell is effectively saying that peacebuilding seeks to prevent a decline in human security from causing a decline in human security, which makes little sense.” Paris is not alone in finding scant merit in “the notion that human security” necessarily “entails a particular ‘orientation’ toward peacebuilding.”

As noted above, some definitions of peacebuilding refer—explicitly or implicitly—to the goal of building a democratic post-war order. The underlying assumption in this school of thought is that authoritarian regimes tend to fuel conflict-recurrence. Denying people the right to associate freely, to read and hear uncensored news and opinion, and to choose their representatives will sooner or later spill over into cycles of
resistance and repression, with violence an ever-present danger. Less extreme versions of this thinking acknowledge that while authoritarianism need not result in armed conflict, the “political stability” produced under such circumstances is nevertheless not worth having, that peace through repression is, in effect, not peace at all. This is a variant on the human security perspective. This instrumentalist version of the relationship between democracy and peacebuilding rests uneasily alongside the constitutive version.33

There has been considerable criticism of the “liberal peacebuilding agenda,” which is based on the premise that sustainable peace requires, and therefore should prioritize, the creation of democratic states and market-based economies. Two streams of criticism are worth differentiating. The first is concerned with the degree to which the liberal agenda is externally imposed, the hasty manner in which it may be pursued, or the emphasis on private-sector development that, in practice, often underlies its implementation. The second avenue of complaint is that building sustainable peace requires more attention to state consolidation than to the type of state being consolidated. The preoccupation of Western aid donors and international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) with human rights is sometimes counterproductive, according to this line of thinking. For fledgling states emerging from prolonged periods of conflict, the urgent need is to root out and eliminate groups that threaten the state’s capacity to penetrate society, to control its borders, and to secure a monopoly over the use of force—a process which, historically, European states accomplished with scant regard for human rights.34 To a degree, the disagreement expressed here reflects opposing conceptions of the relationship between order and legitimacy: on the one hand, the belief that self-regulating peace (a form of order that emerges with minimal exercise of force) is not possible without legitimacy; on the other, the view that that political legitimacy—indeed, the process of legitimation itself—rarely emerges without active efforts to establish basic order, which in turn may require the temporary use of methods often considered illegitimate, domestically and/or internationally.

The contribution of peacebuilders to human or any other kind of security depends to some degree on the mix of concrete activities undertaken in any given case—that is, how sustainable peace is achieved. One “constructivist perspective” argues that only an “interpretive ‘bottom up’ approach to peacebuilding”—based on an understanding of “identity, ideas, [and] knowledge”—can deliver genuine “human security.”35 This strand of thinking is represented by grassroots community-reconciliation programs that attempt to reestablish trust, one locality at a time.36 At the other extreme are donor agencies that provide financial support and
technical assistance to restore the capacity of post-conflict governments
to manage aid resources, deliver essential services, administer justice,
conduct elections, and perform any other functions that might conceivably forestall a return to inter-group violence. (These examples of local and national action demonstrate the great variability that exists in terms of the level at which peacebuilding takes place—what could be called the question of “where.”)

The range of peacebuilding activities that can reasonably be undertaken depends on which phase of the continuum from war to peace is under consideration, how long a peacebuilding operation lasts, the level of resources devoted to reconstruction, and of course the type of peace sought. A peacebuilding agenda can be narrowly or expansively framed. A narrowly defined agenda might limit itself to such core issues as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the restoration of basic public services, and security-sector reform. An expansively defined approach might include transitional justice issues, democratic decentralization, women’s empowerment, and so forth.

In general, the toolkit of peacebuilders has expanded over time. Alternative approaches to peacebuilding continue to emerge regularly. Stephen Brown and Marie-Joelle Zahar, for instance, examined mechanisms for supporting fragile political settlements with “soft guarantees” and unconventional power-sharing arrangements.37 Processes supervised or monitored by peacekeeping forces—such as the demobilization and disarmament of combatants—are by most reckonings an integral part of peacebuilding. However, so are employment-creation programs, initiatives to place security forces more firmly under civilian control, institutions that distribute reparations to victims of serious human rights abuses, efforts to create talk-radio stations that foster interethnic dialogue, and programs for resettling refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs).38 Promoting respect for the “rule of law” is considered the primary objective in some quarters.

Whether a post-conflict country emerges with a relatively narrow or expansive peacebuilding agenda depends on the extent of physical, social, and institutional devastation caused by the war, which is partly a function of its duration, the diversity of actors involved, whether access to natural resources was a motive or means (or both) for prosecuting the war, and whether the war grew out of an earlier conflict. Another crucial determinant of the breadth of the peacebuilding agenda is the character of the post-conflict country’s external relations—with its immediate neighbors, its military allies, its donors, and its former colonial powers, among others. The most influential factor, however, appears to be the degree to which—in that particular case, at that
particular moment—the international community regards state-rebuilding as essential.

Whether or not one’s definition of peacebuilding incorporates state-building is, as noted earlier, a major fault-line running through the peacebuilding field. Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk argue that “[s]tate-building—the construction of legitimate, effective governmental institutions—is a crucial element in any larger effort to create the conditions for a durable peace.” In the absence of such institutions, “postconflict societies are much less likely to escape the dual ‘traps’ of violence and poverty.”39 State-building is at first glance a more user-friendly term than peacebuilding. The task of “constructing governmental institutions” has a concrete ring to it. Unfortunately, the meaning of state-building is just as contested as the meaning of peacebuilding.

A minimalist conception of the state would include recognition by other states, an ability to exercise basic control over a given territory, and a monopoly over the legitimate use of force.40 A maximalist position is taken by authors such as Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, who identify ten functions associated with statehood, and therefore the state-building project.41 These include, in addition to the components found in the minimalist definition, a willingness and ability to manage public funds, to act as stewards of national culture and natural resources, to invest in citizens (and indeed to define the rights and obligations of citizenship itself), to encourage the development of markets, to provide necessary infrastructure, and so forth. Ghani and Lockhart concede that theirs is a demanding conception of stateness, and in certain respects an arbitrary one (they ask, “why not nine or eleven” functions?).42 Their aim is to define what state-builders should aspire to, rather than to describe the characteristics of all states.

Most conceptions of statehood fall somewhere between these two extremes, with Paris and Sisk roughly the mid-point between them. The same holds true for those who prefer to think of themselves as building peace rather than states.

Who are these peacebuilders? A central distinction is between domestic and external actors. Domestic peacebuilders can include—in addition to the usual well-intentioned cast of social activists and institution-builders—less savory stakeholders, such as militia members once engaged in armed conflict. Peacebuilding is generally thought most effective when it involves the widest possible array of stakeholders, including those with the greatest capacity to act as “spoilers.” Disgruntled former combatants can disrupt a fragile peace at surprisingly low cost. Post-conflict recovery plans typically use incentives to lure former combatants back into civilian life through “reintegration” programs that accompany
disarmament and demobilization. However, granting the spoils of peace to those who waged the war risks stirring resentment among other groups, including those who suffered abuses at the hands of these former combatants, making it even more difficult to build trust and reconstitute the social fabric.

Civil-society organizations (CSOs) are an essential component of a broad-based domestic peacebuilding coalition. They include trade unions, business associations, faith-based organizations, issue-specific advocacy coalitions, and other organizational forms. CSOs do everything from mobilizing public opinion to delivering services to monitoring human-rights abuses. A CSO’s history may be relevant to its potential post-conflict role. Associations based on ascriptive identity that adopt non-violent ideologies can be a useful channel for reaching people—particularly minority groups—who need direct external assistance to recover from conflict.43 In the absence of a capable state apparatus, NGOs often undertake functions customarily performed by government agencies. In many countries, without prodding and logistical support from NGOs, crucial peacebuilding activities, such as opening and operating schools for former child soldiers, would not have taken place. It is by now widely understood, however, that efforts to bypass states in the interests of operational efficiency or equitable distribution are usually self-defeating. This is true particularly with respect to public finance systems.44

External peacebuilding actors include multilateral institutions, donor governments, INGOs, transnational firms, and diaspora groups, among others. There is significant diversity within each category. Among multilateral institutions, the United Nations (UN) is vastly different—in terms of mandate, governance, financing, and much else—from the World Bank. Though both contribute to peacebuilding, broadly conceived, security issues are central to the UN’s mandate, while the World Bank focuses on economic development. To the extent that conflict, insecurity, and incapacitated states constrain development, the World Bank claims a central peacebuilding role. The UN and the World Bank are also agglomerations of differently structured organizational units of varying levels of size, autonomy, and influence. The volume and diversity of this category becomes evident once regional organizations, trade-related institutions, and other smaller treaty-linked bodies are considered.

Donor governments are another highly diverse species of external peacebuilder. A bilateral aid agency’s institutional behavior is determined in part by its position within the government of the donor state—for instance, whether it is independent of the foreign affairs ministry, whether its head has cabinet rank, the agency’s status in the national budget, and so forth. Certain more or less deserved stereotypes exist in the
development field: the Scandinavians and Canada have been seen as champions of human rights; the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) stresses agricultural and private-sector business development; Japan lays great emphasis on human security. Some donors have been more attentive than others to the recent emphasis on promoting “national ownership” (especially government policy-autonomy) in aid-recipient countries. National self-interest drives donor behavior as well, implying less-than-optimal policy coherence no matter what institutional design the international community was to produce.

INGOs are similarly diverse. Thousands of INGOs operate independently. Some represent federations of similarly situated and like-minded national NGOs. Others—such as advocacy groups that target a particular international issue (e.g., trade) or organization (e.g., the World Trade Organization, or WTO)—exist almost entirely in transnational space, with perhaps a small New York or Geneva office. A tiny minority (e.g., the International Committee of the Red Cross) enjoy privileged status in the UN system on humanitarian issues. Many NGOs are contracted by development organizations to carry out field-based programs.

An INGO’s ability to have a positive impact may also depend on which aspect of peacebuilding has been targeted. On human rights, transnational groups such as Amnesty International loom large; on refugees, the International Rescue Committee is a major player. INGOs like Oxfam combine a significant presence in advocacy circles with an extensive operational network. As with bilateral donor agencies, INGOs are very often rooted in the cultures of their home countries, and perceived as such by authorities in the post-conflict countries where they work. INGOs frequently stress their partnerships with “national” NGOs, contrasting their local and small-scale initiatives with official agencies’ bloated, top-down programs. Some INGOs acknowledge that they are no less engaged in promoting (a modified version of) the “liberal peacebuilding” project than their counterparts in international officialdom.45

It is doubtful whether post-conflict peacebuilding is ever entirely, or even predominantly, an endogenous process. Chester Crocker argues that, just as “conflicts seldom resolve themselves, peaceful settlements do not implement themselves.” Indeed, “foreign interveners … are essential to keep things on track, to sustain the political chemistry that produced the deal, and to continue linkages and pressures that led to the breakthrough.”46 According to Michael Barnett and others, peacebuilding is, in fact, “generically understood as external interventions that are intended to reduce the risk that a state will erupt into or return to war.”47 In this formulation, the question of what constitutes peace and how it is to be achieved are sidestepped, but at least part of the
“who” question is built into the definition, which is restricted to external actors.

The ascendency of peacebuilding and the illusion of convergence

The work of Barnett and his coauthors is a particularly useful means of moving from the key dimensions of peacebuilding (the when, what, how, and who) to the issue of why this term has taken hold. This section discusses this important contribution, which focuses on organizational identities and incentives.

Barnett demonstrates how, in international officialdom beyond the UN system, the urgent need to impose terminological order has coexisted alongside a continued willingness on the part of many organizations to embrace the still rather vague notion of peacebuilding. Barnett and co-authors agree with Thorsten Benner, Andrea Binder, and Philipp Rotmann that the term peacebuilding has taken root because it represented the kind of seemingly neutral concept around which the appearance of consensus could be built. Indeed, in the nearly two decades since An Agenda for Peace endorsed the idea of peacebuilding, its definition has been modified to suit changing circumstances as well as the bureaucratic imperatives and political interests of a variety of actors, including UN agencies, bilateral aid programs, NGOs, and former warring parties themselves. As Barnett and co-authors put it, “[t]he willingness of so many diverse constituencies with divergent and sometimes conflicting interests to rally around peacebuilding also suggests that one of the concept’s talents is to camouflage divisions over how to handle the post-conflict challenge.” While the authors are referring only to post-conflict peacebuilding, the fact that advocates of “pre-conflict” peacebuilding use the same generic term strengthens the argument.

Barnett and others map operational definitions of peacebuilding to a set of 24 organizations, a combination of government agencies and international institutions. This allows them to “identify critical differences in how they conceptualize and operationalize their mandate.” These divisions reflect the organizational concerns of the actors involved. Defense departments naturally focus on military and security considerations when “stabilizing” post-conflict environments. Human rights NGOs stress the need to ensure accountability, both for past abuses and for the actions of fledgling authorities.

An agency’s mandate shapes its approach to peacebuilding, and hence the conception of this term employed by agency staff. The objectives sought and the strategies employed are profoundly influenced by whether
an entity is located within the UN Secretariat, a UN specialized agency, a European organization (the European Union, EU; the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE), or merely within the government of an individual member state. Barnett and his collaborators observe that it makes organizational sense for the UN Development Programme (UNDP)—given its wide-ranging mandate—to be relatively loose with its use of the terms peacebuilding and conflict-prevention. This is manifested in the naming of the UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR). BCPR conceives of peacebuilding as the sum total of all means for preventing conflict, whether an initial outbreak of violence, or its recurrence following a peaceful interlude, or indeed the “recovery” activities that reside somewhere in between. The use of the term “Crisis” rather than “Conflict” in BCPR’s name indicates that its work ranges beyond armed conflict to natural disasters and famine, which can be independent of as well as connected with conflict situations.

The World Bank, on the other hand, uses the terms “post-conflict reconstruction.” This makes sense given the Bank’s founding, as the Second World War came to an end, as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development. Avoiding political terms—state- or nation-building, for instance—is a priority for the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF). The articles of agreement for both institutions prohibit involvement in a client country’s domestic politics. The Bank’s lateral entry into “conflict-sensitive development” resembles its adoption of corruption as a signature issue during the late 1990s. Corruption, like conflict, was officially declared an obstacle to economic performance and to the effective delivery of development assistance. Just as the WTO expanded the old General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade’s (GATT) emphasis on tariffs, to include “trade-related” issues once considered beyond its remit—such as Trade-Related Intellectual Property Rights—the World Bank justifies its newly expanded remit by claiming that its work is confined to the development-related dimensions of conflict.

It is also no surprise, pace Barnett and co-authors, that European development agencies generally prefer terms such as “civilian crisis management.” Nordic aid programs feel strongly about emphasizing the distinction between civilian and military activities. The government of Denmark employed the civilian crisis management language in its efforts to shape the UN peacebuilding architecture during 2003–05. France, Germany, and EU bodies also use variants on this terminology, though they do not always emphasize the same civilian activities, nor do they approach them in the same ways.
The United States, the United Kingdom, and Japan—the closest of strategic allies—all coalesce around the term “stabilization,” which implies a resort to peace implementation or peace enforcement (active military engagement to ensure fulfillment of the terms of a peace accord), but has also been used to describe cases in which _suo moto_ external military intervention has been used to restore civil order. Canada, another close military partner, has departed from this practice, heartily embracing the language of peacebuilding. Perhaps the best indication that “peacebuilding” represents a compromise formulation is that, despite almost none of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization’s (NATO) leading members using the term to describe their engagements in post-conflict countries, NATO itself does.  

Benner, Binder, and Rotmann argue that “[i]n the UN context, the term peacebuilding clearly won the competition against the terms ‘state-building’ and ‘nation-building,’ which many regard as less politically acceptable because they convey greater intrusiveness and a broader political mandate.” Indeed, they claim, on the basis of interviews with members of the panel that recommended the PBC’s creation in 2004, that some members “would have preferred the term ‘state-building’ … [but] ended up favoring the term ‘peacebuilding’ for the very reason that it was more acceptable politically.”  

Noting persistent “confusion over definitions of conflict prevention and peacebuilding,” an OECD manual for practitioners published in 2008 cautioned that “a policy or approach that was labelled ‘conflict prevention’ or ‘peacebuilding’ in some places is not necessarily described as such elsewhere.” From the overview of competing definitions of the term presented earlier, this lack of clarity is not particularly surprising. On the other hand, one might assume that a term given to such promiscuous usage might be abandoned in favor of more precise nomenclature. Would not operational entities have a direct interest in developing clear, descriptive terminology capable of capturing the specific nature of complex processes in which they regularly engage?  

Institutional incentives help to explain the range of actions justified as peacebuilding. If “opportunistic” organizations (official or nongovernmental) sense that “peacebuilding is big business, then there are good bureaucratic reasons for claiming that they are an invaluable partner” to initiatives designed to prevent a recurrence of conflict. Barnett _et al._ point out that bureaucrats, sensibly, “favor those strategies and definitions that will most clearly advantage their bureaucratic interests.” The way in which organizations approach peacebuilding may be influenced “not only by their knowledge of how to reduce the risk of conflict but also by a consideration of how they might best
and most easily extend their existing mandates and expertise into the post-conflict arena."

To analyze how organizations approach peacebuilding, Barnett and co-authors offer a typology of four sectors: security and military; developmental (social and economic) and humanitarian; political and diplomatic; and justice and reconciliation. The UN depicts itself as a comprehensive provider of peacebuilding services, compensating in breadth for what it often lacks in depth. European states and institutions stress their diplomatic and political contribution to “transforming” conflicts from zero-sum to positive-sum situations. The European Security and Defence Agency, for instance, works in non-traditional sectors such as engaging women in conflict-resolution processes, pursuant to Security Council resolutions 1325, 1820, 1888, and 1889.

Despite its utility, such a typology inevitably furnishes grounds for complaint. Three shortcomings stand out. First, the characterization of individual actors sometimes contradicts the more complex reality. The authors claim that the United Kingdom has “focused on the security and military sector.” While that may be true in some post-conflict countries, in others the United Kingdom has substantially funded programs focused on human development and governance reform. Nor is it clear what to make of the claim that the United States has scaled back its once “strong interest in democratization and economic recovery,” in favor of stabilization. This implies a short-term security focus centered on training local forces to promote respect for and enforcement of the law. The evidence for this is not obvious. US funding for everything from micro-credit to energy development is justified as essential to nation-building.

Second, the typology has difficulty capturing the indirect role played by certain organizations. Agencies not actively engaged in delivering in a sector may still consider themselves involved because of their role in collective planning and priority-setting activities. A table devised by Barnett and his collaborators, entitled “sectoral activities and focus,” shows empty boxes for both DPA and DPKO in “activity categories” such as “justice and reconciliation,” “good governance,” and “institution building.” In many other categories, only one or the other of these two bodies gets a half-checked box. But both DPA and DPKO are arguably more involved in these activities than the table suggests. For instance, it is during conflict-mediation—a DPA function—that the structure of post-war “transitional justice” arrangements or governance systems are often crafted. Moreover, constituency-defined organizations frequently consider their mandates linked to population groups rather than to particular activities. Consider UNICEF’s focus on children, the International Rescue Committee’s advocacy on behalf of refugees, or UN Women’s
mandate to promote women’s empowerment. These organizations see themselves as having a vital stake in every stage of the conflict timeline, and with respect to every conceivable activity. They seek to “mainstream” their issues into all deliberative and operational procedures.

The final concern relates to Barnett’s claim that external peacebuilders prioritize public security and socioeconomic recovery while failing to focus sufficiently on rebuilding state institutions. Stabilization has certainly been a focus of international engagement during the age of peacebuilding, including efforts to reduce spoilers’ incentives and capacities to disrupt the peace. In this sense, the concept of stabilization is not very far from a broad understanding of peacebuilding. The second objective—socioeconomic recovery—is largely a residual category, encompassing, inter alia, mechanisms through which social trust is established, civil society organizations are nurtured, and conditions for more secure livelihoods are created. To the extent that all of these contribute to creating an effective state, it would seem that state-building is being pursued by another name. Moreover, it is not at all clear that stability and socioeconomic recovery do in fact receive disproportionate attention at the expense of state reconstitution. The basis for the claim of disproportionality was an analysis of the frequency with which the four categories are named in official documents. In addition to the methodological problem of determining how closely funding categories correspond to the underlying activities, the lack of data on the actual, as opposed to rhetorical, resources devoted to each activity makes it impossible to know how much weight to assign this finding.

At the same time, it is difficult convincingly to rebut claims that the adoption of the term peacebuilding was “likely the result of the international community’s embrace of what Linz and Stepan labeled the ‘democratic Zeitgeist’ of the post-cold war era.” The democratic peace thesis was, during the 1990s, effectively extended from the international to the intra-national plane. It was Boutros-Ghali himself who stated that democratic governments, because of their superior claims to legitimacy, “were less likely to have domestic conflicts,” in addition to being less inclined toward interstate war. The Secretary-General knew that democracy promotion appealed to the national (and supranational) legislatures that determine development assistance budgets.

De Coning calls peacebuilding a unifying device—a “strategic framework” within which it is possible, somehow, to subsume “the previously distinct dimensions of conflict management, security, humanitarian action, governance, rule of law, human rights and development.” Peacebuilding, then, is like a flag, a symbol for rallying around, even as each constituency is permitted its own interpretation of the symbol’s meaning.
Assessing peacebuilding performance

Shepard Forman and Stewart Patrick claim that during the 1990s more than US$100 billion was “pledged” to roughly three dozen countries emerging from conflict. Did these funds produce results? This broad question has been approached in a variety of ways, a small selection of which is surveyed here.

Systematic studies

Whether funds are deemed to have been efficiently expended depends on the measurements and benchmarks used, as well as such arcane matters as how to account for the qualitative differences between conflicts waged during the Cold War and those fought later. Cold War-era civil conflicts were frequently resolved through the defeat or surrender of one of the parties. Negotiated settlements emerged less often. In the post-Cold War era, the reverse very quickly became the norm. This was reassuring. Less comforting was research showing that negotiated settlements tend to produce weaker peace: whereas only 15 percent of wars that ended in outright victory for one of the parties to a conflict suffered a relapse, half of the wars that concluded through negotiated settlements (or simply wound down through attrition and mutual diminution of the will to fight) slipped back into violence. The frequency of relapse is contested, and depends on the time period covered and the types of wars included, among other factors.

A key determinant of peacebuilding success should, in theory, be the performance of external actors: which agencies are in the lead, what they do, how they do it, when they start and finish. Studies have asked why some efforts at promoting lasting peace have been more successful than others. Some of the answers involve complex models of how a conflict “fits” with the international community’s post-conflict response. One problem with attempting to learn lessons from the paucity of empirical cases is the variety of peacebuilding operations in existence. There are too many sources of variation to account for given the relatively small number of wars to study. For instance, some post-conflict authorities inherit office from a multilateral peace operation deployed pursuant to a negotiated settlement, while others inherit the reins of office from an occupying power that gained control through military victory. Given how large Iraq and Afghanistan loom in the American consciousness, it is understandable that American scholarship tends to identify peacebuilding in general with the “integrated, international peacebuilding operation” that allegedly characterized the UN Assistance Mission in
Afghanistan. Richard J. Ponzio observes that labels often do not much matter: some “integrated missions,” it seems, are far from integrated; some (e.g., Sierra Leone for a time) at times did not even use the term “peacebuilding.”

Increasingly, scholars have sought to address these and related questions systematically. A particularly influential study is Paris’s account of peacebuilding, *At War’s End,* which concludes that the international community has been excessively concerned with rushing towards political and economic liberalization. Paris is in good company, his views chiming with authors such as Reilly, who argues that hasty elections produce poor outcomes. Cambodia is often held up as an example not to be emulated. One study found that early decisions on the structure of democratic institutions in Cambodia had long-lasting political effects. Where the wounds of conflict are raw, and the tradition of winner-take-all politics very much alive, rapidly holding elections may well be ill-advised. Moreover, reducing the state’s role in the economy—the economic dimension to hasty liberalization—is not advisable when authorities need every lever they can gain hold of to build a diverse social base.

Paris’s study has received much favorable notice, though peppered with critical reactions. Call and Cousens complain that Paris uses an unreasonably “ambitious standard” for “success.” Thus, Paris classifies Namibia and Mozambique as the only successful cases. Without more differentiation, according to this line of critique, we lose opportunities to learn lessons.

A more fundamental critique is that economic and political liberalization were less intensive or extensive than Paris claims. No systematic cross-national evidence is supplied to justify the classification of post-conflict economic recovery programs as extremely “market-oriented.” In fact, the legacy of conflict in some countries meant that there was little or no state to scale back, which naturally reoriented donors toward building state capacity, which almost always implied a de facto temporary increase in size of the state apparatus. Regulatory agencies and other bureaucracies were being created, even as others were being dismantled. Nor was trade being freed overnight. Post-conflict states usually qualify for derogations from multilateral trade obligations. Even where World Bank program documents specify liberal policy conditionalities (privatization, deregulation, etc.), post-conflict states are not expected to institute these measures at the same rate as other developing countries, hardly models of alacrity themselves. It is also doubtful whether, in the cases Paris analyses, policy and institutional reforms were implemented as thoroughly as his conclusions assume.
Taking a similarly broad view, a two-volume 2005 study of post-conflict operations conducted by James Dobbins and others examined several issues, most significantly the relative performance of the United States and the UN as leaders of peacebuilding missions. The authors found that for all their military power, coalitions of the willing, which is what the United States has led, lack legitimacy. UN-run peace operations regularly produce better outcomes than those headed by the United States. Arguably, the United States has taken on the more difficult cases. The study concluded that “the United Nations provides the most suitable institutional framework for most nation-building missions, one with a comparatively low-cost structure, a comparatively high success rate, and the greatest degree of international legitimacy.” Interestingly, nowhere in the two volumes does the term peacebuilding appear—a reflection, perhaps, of their American provenance.

Another excellent source of systematic analysis on performance was the Brahimi report, issued in 2000. The report’s recommendations on enhancing the UN’s capacity to build sustainable peace are discussed in Chapter 2, which traces the emergence of the PBA, but two of Brahimi’s findings deserve a brief mention here. First, the report noted the UN system’s extremely limited ability to collect, process, and analyze information globally. The UN lacked an intelligence system—or “decision-support” capacity—leaving it heavily reliant on non-real-time information supplied by the leading powers. Second, Brahimi stressed the need for the international community to develop rapid-response capacities across the full spectrum of post-conflict activities. “The first six to 12 weeks following a ceasefire or peace accord is often the most critical period for establishing both a stable peace and the credibility of the peacekeepers,” the report argued, adding that “credibility and political momentum lost during this period can often be difficult to regain.”

After making important contributions to debates concerning the causes of civil war, Paul Collier addressed the related but distinct question of what rekindles conflict. The answer, in short, is misaligned incentives—particularly with respect to the relative payoffs from various violent and non-violent options available to the (mainly young) men who fuel organized violence. Collier argued that “[b]roadly based economic development is the only true exit strategy … Its pillars are jobs and basic services.” He questioned the aid effectiveness agenda, particularly concerning the channels through which aid should be delivered. In October 2008, in the context of rising rebel violence in DRC, Collier argued against what he portrayed as the donor agencies’ overly literal commitment to the Paris Declaration aspiration to work through national states (and treasuries) when possible.
maintained, the state is too privatized—that is, easily used by influential actors for private gains—to generate tangible peace dividends rapidly. Because services and jobs were needed right away, all channels had to be mobilized to their fullest extent, which meant donors “bypassing the state” by directly funding NGOs, the private sector, and local councils—a practice directly antithetical to the prevailing discourse of “national ownership.”

George Downs and Stephen J. Stedman also sought to account for differing performance across a broad range of cases in which international action was taken to rebuild the foundations of security and development in post-conflict states. Among their key explanatory variables was serious and sustained great power engagement. This prompted an inquiry into why engagement varies so substantially from conflict to conflict? Is it a function of perceived cost, in blood or treasure, or cultural distance? In fact, how leading powers construe their vital interests is seen as far more consequential.

From the perspective of the present volume, which seeks to trace the early years of the PBA, Lise Howard’s study is perhaps the most relevant of the systematic analyses found in existing literature. Howard finds that the UN has been most successful at peacebuilding when its leadership engages in the process of ongoing organizational “learning,” particularly at the field level. According to this view, the worst thing that can happen to a peacebuilding mission is for directives to be handed down from New York, particularly when these result from intergovernmental political bargaining. Yet, some of the PBC’s architects considered the institution’s ability to facilitate political bargaining its most valuable feature. This is a tension that continues to work itself out in practice.

**Norms, politics, and dilemmas**

Paired-case analysis has been another popular mode of assessing peacebuilding performance. A paradigmatic example is Lisa Hall McLeod’s study of enabling factors present in El Salvador (a successful case) but lacking in Cambodia (which was unsuccessful). Hall McLeod finds that success in El Salvador was largely a reflection of the ability of the UN to transcend its usually limited, neutral role: “the United Nations became an advocate of a particular model of domestic political legitimacy.” The key difference between El Salvador and Cambodia was not resources, or the fundamental dispensations of the local actors concerned, but rather the “significant differences in how outside actors supported the construction of democratic norms of political legitimacy.
during the negotiation and implementation phases of the peace process.” What mattered was “[w]hether or not third-parties proved willing to support UN peacebuilding operations with strategic social construction of democratic and human rights norms.” While the wisdom of assigning such explanatory power to external action in this case is certainly open to question—Cambodia’s genocide would seem a hard variable to control for—Hall McLeod’s analysis is a good example of the comparative-case method at work.

Hall McLeod also pursued a practitioner-oriented question: “what forms of third-party assistance are most likely to support a sustained transformation of civil conflict?” The data suggest that policy makers know less about the implications of institutional variation for the sustainability of post-conflict democracy than they claim. For instance, proportional representation systems are often recommended for post-conflict countries, ostensibly because they avoid winner-take-all contests at the constituency level, provide an effective voice for minority opinions, and create incentives for political compromise. Hall MacLeod, however, finds “no direct correlation between institutional design and the durability of democratic transitions.” Cambodia’s proportional representation system did little to assist the creation of workable power-sharing arrangements in Cambodia, while El Salvador, which adopted a presidential system and first-past-the-post voting rules, emerged as the more successful of the two cases. A far more important factor than the specifics of institutional configuration was whether a post-conflict country was able to generate a “democratic cultural norm of political action.”

Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink present a three-stage model of how self-sustaining norms are socially constructed. The three phases are: (1) the articulation of the new norms (indicators for this are normative statements in policies, speeches, laws, and agreements); (2) “strategic” social construction (where actors comply with new norms in response to material incentives); and (3) the emergence of self-sustaining new norms, the justification of political action in terms of the new norms, and the disappearance of the need for aid-conditionality.

Another perspective on performance comes from Chetan Kumar, Karin Wermester, and Elizabeth Cousens, whose notion of “Peacebuilding as Politics” was based on a different reading of recent history. The cases they analyzed confirmed the importance of political incentives in making peace sustainable. Rather than being continually cast as the cause of conflict, politics was rediscovered as a solution. This is perhaps a reflection of the practitioner orientation of these authors, but they make a strong case against placing excessive hope in technical solutions divorced from political realities.
The message that peacebuilding is a political enterprise—involving the need for local “buy in” from a range of stakeholders, some of them unappetizing—was a central feature of the US-focused efforts to identify the key elements of any post-conflict reconstruction effort. The need for a core team of peacebuilders—agricultural officers, legal experts, financial technicians, and of course soldiers—to engage intensively with a continuously expanding circle of national actors was a key theme of Winning the Peace, edited by Robert Orr, a senior UN official in both the Kofi Annan and Ban Ki-Moon administrations.92 Ponzio—another scholar-practitioner—depicts the UN peacebuilding agenda in Afghanistan as unusually attuned to politics. Seeking the sources of legitimacy in the creation of democratic polities, Ponzio argues that the UN attempted, with some success, to cross-breed modern institutions with older sources of authority. Legislative assemblies, courts, and the state’s security apparatus not only coexist alongside, but are designed to facilitate connections with, such traditional actors as tribal elders, religious authorities, and local community leaders. The hybrid institutions created through this form of peacebuilding push the definitional boundaries of statehood.

An issue of growing concern is how to sequence activities to maximize the chances of early withdrawal of a complex peace operation. Durch93 identifies three prominent models: Day’s “policekeeping” model;94 the approach advocated by Dobbins and collaborators in their book, The Beginner’s Guide to Nation-building;95 and the complicated multiphase approach of Doyle and Sambanis.96 According to Domink Zaum, there may be no identifiable point when the international peacebuilding effort can or will come to a definitive end: “exit should best be seen as a process, not an event, and therefore does not mean disengagement.” Instead of departing in a once-and-for-all manner, external actors remain engaged in the process of state-building, but gradually reduce the intensity of their involvement.97

Much recent peacebuilding research has focused on the need to identify and account for the trade-offs inherent in promoting such a wide-ranging agenda. World Bank President Robert Zoellick, for instance, noted the interdependence between “government, economy, and security”—the three pillars of peacebuilding: “Breakdowns in any of these areas … reinforces breakdown in the others.” The all-too-predictable outcome “is a web of unfit government, economic collapse, and insecurity that breeds violence.”98 A major impediment to reversing this vicious cycle is the lack of finance to ensure that all three elements are addressed simultaneously and in a sustainable fashion.

Another framework for classifying the practical issues that peacebuilders face was devised by Paris and Sisk. They argue that, after a decade of
experimentation with various forms of post-conflict reconstruction, peacebuilding practitioners converged on a principle: that “more durable peacebuilding outcomes would require more focused attention on building up governmental institutions in formerly warring states.”

The authors then proceed to identify five dilemmas that “practitioners of statebuilding routinely face.” These concern: (1) participation (whom to include in various governance processes without devaluing either the legitimacy or efficiency of peace consolidation); (2) how big an operation should be (covering how many activities, and with what degree of force); (3) how long an operation should last; (4) how to avoid dependency on externally provided governance functions (including, but not limited to, security and resource generation); and (5) how to achieve coherence across the various peacebuilding functions and development actors involved in any large-scale operation. The choices prompted by these questions remain the primary preoccupation of contemporary peacebuilders.

Conclusion

Over the past decade and a half, the notion of peacebuilding has taken hold among both scholars and practitioners in the fields of security and development studies. The route by which this now widely used concept emerged has been marked by continuous interaction between academic inquiry and real-world events. Whether or not efforts to build sustainable peace have been successful in general, the concept of peacebuilding itself has enjoyed a lengthy run as a central feature of discussions about how international actors can assist the process by which states and societies recover from civil conflict.

One reason behind the popularity of peacebuilding is that it permits continuous wrangling over what it is or should be. These definitional contests have been influenced partly by the rise to political prominence of a number of large developing countries. The participation of such countries in post-conflict reconstruction is driven in part by aspirations to be recognized as major players in global diplomacy. One OECD report lists the most consequential cases as “India in Afghanistan, China in Timor Leste, South Africa in Sudan, Brazil in Haiti.” As we shall see in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the design of the UN’s new PBA opened the door for greater developing-country influence over specific cases of post-conflict reconstruction. The ranks of the “emerging powers” has begun to swell beyond the likes of India, Brazil, South Africa, and China. Countries such as Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria, South Korea, and Turkey increasingly demand a voice in global decision making. These actors
sometimes have very different ideas of what development is and how it can be achieved,\textsuperscript{102} not to mention the relationship between promoting economic growth and building effective states.

The embrace of peacebuilding may have as much to do with the term’s ability to serve widely varying definitional purposes as it does with any substantive convergence on how a consistent set of peacebuilding principles should be applied. These conflicts have played themselves out in the process of creating and operating the PBA.
2 The UN peacebuilding architecture
Structure, mandate, and origins

- The PBA’s institutional design
- Origins of the PBA
- Conclusion

By leaving unspecified much of the substantive content of “peacebuilding,” the designers of the United Nations’ new Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) could provide the appearance of common ground, even as serious differences among competing versions of peacebuilding persisted. Whether one considered peacebuilding a long-term process implying a commitment to creating a functioning state and a stable political order, or merely a brief interlude between the end of hostilities and the start of the development phase, the new PBA offered a broad church within which these divergent understandings could seek out a following.

The three institutional components of the PBA—the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)—were conceived as a package and ostensibly dedicated to a common endeavor. In practical terms, however, to label them a new “architecture” for peacebuilding—implying the existence of a functional system—is a bit of a stretch. The architectural metaphor implies a definite plan, based on sound structural engineering, whereas the foundation on which the PBA has been constructed is fundamentally unstable. While the PBA is new, it rests atop an existing, at times precarious, substratum of organizations and a history of partially implemented institutional reforms. The PBA is just one element in a much larger organizational universe. Its creators’ insistence that it would be the new peacebuilding architecture, rather than an additional piece to an existing and perpetually in flux peacebuilding landscape, was meant to signal a definitive break with the fragmented approach of the past. Yet, the precise mandate of each of the PBA’s
institutional components and the division of responsibility among them have been sources of continuous disagreement.

The story of how the PBA came into being can be told in a number of ways—as an expression of shifting ideas, as a compromise among conflicting interests, or as the result of institutional pressures. While ideas, interests, and institutions may be distinguishable in theory, in practice they played complementary roles that are difficult to disentangle. How far back to trace the PBA’s origins is also not obvious. The most straightforward narrative extends back just a year or two prior to its creation, but arguably the roots of the PBA are to be found considerably further back in time, including in the wars of the 1990s, which spurred the creation of a more systematic approach to peacebuilding. Another complicating factor is that earlier proposals for bodies resembling elements of the PBA sometimes differ so markedly from what was established that it is not clear whether such proposals belong in the same genealogical tree.

With these caveats in mind, this chapter sets forth the basic structure and functions of the PBA and traces the process through which its three components came into being. The focus is on the year leading up to the passage, in December 2005, of the Security Council and General Assembly resolutions that defined the mandates of the PBA’s three institutional components. The analysis also examines several reform initiatives and proposals that, in the preceding half decade, influenced the substance and tone of the debate on the PBA’s creation.

**The PBA’s institutional design**

Since roughly 2000—amidst a swelling docket of post-conflict cases—the idea of an intergovernmental body dedicated to overseeing crisis countries was supported by a wide array of stakeholders, including member states, UN funds, programs and agencies, UN Secretariat entities, local and transnational NGOs, and academic and legal analysts. Disagreement persisted, though, on the form any such body should take, its sources of finance and administrative support, and many other aspects of its institutional design. However, there was common ground on one point—that the international community had to act in a more coordinated and sustained fashion when dealing with countries “emerging from conflict.”

The story of the PBA’s origins is perhaps best told by beginning at the end—by spelling out what was in fact created, before returning to the process by which it came into being. Let us begin with the most concrete elements of the PBA’s design.
Structure

By prior agreement, identical resolutions—Security Council resolution 1645 and General Assembly resolution 60/180—were passed on 20 December 2005, just three months after the World Summit endorsed the PBC’s creation. The resolutions specified the three pillars of the PBA, though neither the term “pillar” nor “architecture” were used at the time.

The first is the PBC, an intergovernmental body consisting of 31 member states. PBC members, who serve two-year terms, are drawn from five functional and organizational constituencies: (1) seven members from the Security Council (five of which slots are filled by the council’s permanent members); (2) seven from the General Assembly; (3) seven from the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC); (4) five members from among the top 10 troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to UN peace operations; and (5) five of the top ten financial contributors to UN peace operations.

The PBC’s membership is expected to reflect adequate “regional balance”—that is, more or less proportional representation among the geographic groups into which UN member states are categorized. Because each of the five PBC constituencies selects which of its members will serve on the commission, and because it is not feasible to achieve regional balance within each of these quotas, in practice, certain categories are used to offset regional imbalances that arise in the PBC’s overall composition. For instance, insofar as the Security Council and financial-contributor categories produce over-representation for the “Western European and Other Group,” elections for the other membership constituencies compensate for this by confining themselves to candidates from under-represented regions.

The PBC operates in three main formats. First, the Organizational Committee, which includes all 31 members, devises and refines the structures and procedures through which the commission works. It elects a chair from among the members. Operating on the basis of “consensus”—in theory each member possesses a veto—the Organizational Committee decides the commission’s work program and is formally responsible for approving and transmitting the PBC’s annual reports to the Security Council and the General Assembly.

Second, the PBC operates in country-specific mode—a flexible format through which it deliberates on individual post-conflict countries placed on its agenda. There are several routes through which a country can find itself on the PBC’s agenda, but in practice it requires the consent of at least the following: the country concerned, PBC members, the
Security Council, and the Secretary-General. In the first two waves of cases, only countries on the council’s agenda were placed on the PBC’s agenda. This would permit the Security Council to pare back its caseload without appearing to abandon countries that “graduate” off of its agenda. This may change. As of April 2011—more than five years after the founding resolutions were passed—just six country cases had been referred to the PBC: Burundi, the Central African Republic (CAR), Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

For each country on its agenda, the PBC convenes a “country-specific configuration” (CSC). Each CSC selects a chair through a procedure requiring consensus. CSCs are not subcommittees of the PBC; they are, hypothetically, “committees of the whole.” All 31 PBC members are permitted to participate in all CSCs. Some other member states are invited to join in CSC deliberations—states that PBC members consider likely to enhance the proceedings, because of their recent experience recovering from conflict or close ties with (including geographic proximity to) the post-conflict country under consideration. CSCs may also include, as deemed necessary, regional and sub-regional bodies, international financial institutions (IFIs), regional development banks, and bodies such as the Organization of the Islamic Conference. A standing invitation to CSC meetings is extended to the senior representative of the UN field presence in the country concerned.

Third, the PBC meets as the Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL), which convenes occasional meetings to discuss substantive or procedural topics of particular interest to the membership or issues of common concern across a range of CSCs. The WGLL elects a chair from among the 31 PBC members. Country- and subject-specific experts are invited to formal and informal WGLL sessions, including interactive seminars, roundtables, and program briefings. The purpose is to ensure that the PBC’s engagement with countries on its agenda is informed by an understanding of “best practice” from past and current experience. The WGLL is also expected to generate consensus within the international community on desirable approaches to post-conflict state-building.

The PBSO is a relatively small part of the sprawling UN Secretariat, located organizationally within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG). The PBSO’s creation was formally authorized in the same December 2005 resolutions that established the PBC. It is headed by an Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Peacebuilding Support. The PBSO began in 2006 with an official complement of 15 staff members, though in practice it took more than 18 months to reach this size. The language of the resolutions that created the three components of the PBA specified that the PBSO would draw its staff primarily from
officials on loan from other UN entities. In its early years, the PBSO relied to a considerable degree on consultants rather than permanent UN staff. This created an atmosphere of impermanence and uncertainty, which were not assets in advancing the institution’s mandate or creatively extending it.

The PBSO does not have an operational mandate, meaning that it does not (normally) have field staff and does not manage or implement programs as part of UN missions. Instead, the PBSO is charged with two main responsibilities. First, it acts as the PBC’s secretariat, providing administrative and policy-development support to the formal intergovernmental process, which in theory authorizes some, though not all, of the PBSO’s actions. In practice, as we will see, the PBSO takes significant decisions on its own initiative, and obtains direct access to the Secretary-General’s office when seeking support for these. The PBSO supports the PBC by, among other tasks, convening formal and informal working sessions of the CSCs, producing progress reports on country situations, and arranging the programs of member-state delegations that conduct field visits to countries on the PBC’s agenda.

The PBSO’s second mandate is a combined professional-networking, knowledge-consolidation, and information-dissemination role. The resolution that authorized the establishment of the PBA stipulated that the PBSO would identify and serve as the UN’s repository of best practice in the area of post-conflict peacebuilding. It was expected to perform this function by organizing consultations, commissioning expert reports, and facilitating the systematic exchange of insights and information between policy analysts and program implementers within and beyond the UN system. In this connection, the PBSO also serves as the source of ideas, briefing materials, and program support for the PBC’s WGLL.

As with the PBC, the PBSO has spent much of its first few years working out how these somewhat ill-defined roles could best be translated into concrete actions—a process discussed at length in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. It has also experimented with several approaches to organizing itself. Variously named “sections” and “divisions” have come and gone. As of December 2009, the PBSO included, in addition to the office of the ASG, three “branches,” each headed by a director: the PBC Support Branch; the Policy Planning and Application Branch; and the Financing for Peacebuilding (FPB) Branch. The PBSO has generally lacked the specialized skills required to operate these sections effectively. The degree of talent varies considerably across sectors. Substantial country-level expertise relating to PBF-recipient countries or PBC Agenda countries has been in short supply. Insecurity of tenure discourages long-term investment in the organization.
The resolutions that established the two other component entities of the PBA also created a standing PBF. The fund is based on voluntary contributions. Though the types of activities that the PBF would finance were not specified in the founding resolutions, the fund’s establishment was motivated by a desire to prevent disruptions in funding that typically occur when a country moves beyond the humanitarian-response stage, but has not yet consolidated state authority sufficiently to allow large volumes of donor funding to reach the places, people, and institutions that need it. Of particular concern were the often slow and cumbersome procedures required to establish country-level multi-donor trust funds (MDTFs), which tend to be managed by either the World Bank or the UN Development Programme (UNDP) on behalf of contributing donors. Donors to MDTFs are discouraged from earmarking funds, or attaching strings any more onerous than defined by the manager of the fund in question, though on occasion larger donors have negotiated special conditions for the release of “their” funds within the larger basket of contributions. These typically involve a specification of particular sectors, activities, or beneficiary categories. In practice, much fudging takes place to provide the illusion that donor funds have been spent on the purposes for which they were nominally intended.

The PBF was made operational in, and has been governed by detailed Terms of Reference (ToR) since, 2006. These initial ToR were, as originally planned, subjected to review during 2009. The review resulted in an updated set of guidelines, discussed in Chapter 4. Even during its first years in operation, substantial de facto revision took place in how the fund operated: which countries were eligible, who could nominate them, how the money would be allocated across and within countries, which entities could undertake PBF-funded activities, and how activities would be prioritized.

The ill-defined nature of the relationship between the PBF and the PBC is a central part of the analytical narrative pursued in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. The resolutions establishing the PBA were particularly vague about where control of the PBF would lie. As with the other components of the PBA, these details were worked out through a process of political compromise, involving a complex array of stakeholders and extending over a considerable period of time.

The key attributes of PBF financing have been the intention to: respond to changing conditions on the ground; fill “critical peacebuilding gaps”; disburse funds quickly; and prioritize catalytic interventions—those that can kick-start dormant processes and attract longer-term donor support. A target of US$250 million was specified for this standing fund.
Mandate

Given the conceptual ambiguity described in Chapter 1, it is unsurprising that peacebuilding is not defined in the resolutions that established the PBA. A 2005 study commissioned by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) concluded that no shared working definition of peacebuilding existed. Resolution 1645 papered over this by stating the PBC’s core mission as helping societies “emerging from conflict” to avoid lapsing back into violence—an all too familiar occurrence.

While the resolutions that created the three elements of the PBA contain some ambiguous language and stray turns of phrase, the text concerning the PBC’s mandate centers on actions that might allow this intergovernmental centerpiece to perform a coordinating function, herding together the diverse array of aid agencies (official and nongovernmental, national and international) working in a given post-conflict setting. The PBC’s architects hoped that in the process of doing so, political attention could be drawn to countries at risk of relapse; that the actors forcibly commingled in this fashion might agree on a shared plan of action; and that more donors would respond to these efforts at coordination by committing larger quantities of (un-earmarked) funding over longer time spans.

Accordingly, resolution 1645 identified three functions for the PBC:

- “To bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery”;
- “To focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development”; and
- “To provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.”

Despite the mandate to secure sustained attention and additional funding, the primary means of achieving both of these goals was through “coordination.” The “integrated” peacebuilding strategies are in fact the only named method through which the PBC can play its advisory role with respect to the Security Council. Coordination can be seen to consist of two parts: an integrated, cross-sectoral plan to which all
external and internal partners are committed; and an agreed division of labor for realizing the plan. Both facets of coordination are necessary to ensure that donors (including the many UN entities involved) do not undermine one another in their choice of programmatic interventions, and that internationally funded activities are based on an analysis of which state-rebuilding strategies have worked in the past and why.

Ambiguous phrases and unspecified concepts in legal agreements are helpful to contracting parties who must find ways of deferring conflict over certain matters—by expressing them in terms that invite future interpretive contention—in order to secure agreement on other, related issues of immediate importance. In the case of the PBC, the profusion of ambiguities has caused various actors in the UN and beyond to use this new institution to advance their own organization’s visibility and agenda. It has also, not surprisingly, motivated stakeholders in each of the PBC’s three components to demonstrate their component’s unique comparative advantage in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding.

Despite these limitations, it was hoped that the PBC’s broad membership would furnish its deliberations with the political standing necessary to play crucial brokering roles, forging agreements among the many international agencies, member states, and nongovernmental actors operating in post-conflict countries.

**Origins of the PBA**

The PBC was conceived to fill what former Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s 2005 manifesto for UN reform, *In Larger Freedom (ILF)*, called “a gaping hole in the United Nations institutional machinery: no part of the United Nations system effectively addresses the challenge of helping countries with the transition from war to lasting peace.” The Security Council is charged with maintaining peace and security; ECOSOC is responsible for long-term development issues; however, no dedicated intergovernmental machinery exists for addressing the needs of countries emerging from a period of war—still “fragile” states, not yet “developing” or even “least developed” states.

The PBC’s emergence—first as a proposed entity, then as a genuine flesh-and-blood institution—represented, in large measure, the outcome of a long process of deliberate contestation between two competing approaches: first, the rather minimalist “peacebuilding as integrated civilian response” view, where local coalitions of actors were emphasized; and a second perspective, which called for international engagement in post-conflict situations to be based on explicit political agreement among leading UN member states. This clash of ideas could, alternatively, be
seen as a disagreement between those who prefer a limited engagement and those preparing for a long-term democratic state-building project.

As the previous section provided a sketch of the finished institutional product, it is now possible to examine the process by which the PBA assumed its shape. A broad range of issues was negotiated in the lead up to a September 2005 World Summit of heads of state and government, from which emerged an Outcome Document endorsing the creation of the PBC. Many crucial matters were debated in the three months after the Summit as well, culminating in the passage in December 2005 of the identical Security Council and General Assembly resolutions that created the PBA. Still other procedural questions were worked out after the resolutions.

Therefore, a longer evolutionary timeline stretches from May 2004, when the Secretary-General’s high-level panel on international threats began deliberating on what would become one of its signature recommendations (the establishment of the PBA), to April 2006, when the first head of the PBSO assumed office, the PBC’s membership was finalized, and disbursements to the PBF started arriving. Even this extended timeframe can be seen as the “reform endgame,” the culmination of an uneven and contentious process stretching at least as far back as the beginning of the new millennium.

An exploration of this loose chronology, with detours to trace both intellectual and political influences, is thus organized around three clusters of activity: the “Brahimi Report” and proposals discussed in its aftermath; the issuing of the high-level panel’s report in 2004; and the passage of the UN World Summit Outcome and the founding resolutions at the end of 2005.

**Brahimi and after**

In 2000, the Panel on UN Peace Operations issued its findings in what came to be known as the Brahimi report, named for the panel’s chair, Lakhdar Brahimi, a former Algerian foreign minister and UN envoy. The Brahimi report, described as “a remarkable piece of self-criticism by the UN,” diagnosed the shortcomings and outright failures of various peace operations. A central message was that the speed with which missions were being established and their mandates extended was outstripping the UN’s ability to provide adequate military or financial support. According to James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, both the Security Council and the Secretariat were to blame for this dysfunctional state of affairs.

Prior to the panel’s appointment, Secretary-General Kofi Annan had been attempting to develop the operational capacity for sustained
peacebuilding of which his predecessors had long dreamed. The UN’s apparatus for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction had been in a state of organizational flux for a considerable period. Throughout the late 1990s, efforts would be made to confer the “lead peacebuilding role” on DPA. The mid-1997 report, *Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform*, recommended making DPA the primary UN voice on post-conflict peacebuilding.9 DPA would have significant authority to define priorities, assemble teams of executing agencies, and provide progress reports to the Security Council. This plan also had DPA “ensuring that United Nations efforts in countries that are emerging from crises are fully integrated and faithfully reflect the mission objectives10 specified by the Security Council and the Secretary-General.”11 This represented a major status upgrade for DPA, which would also oversee “Peace Building Support Offices”—no relation to the current PBSO—in post-conflict countries where a UN mission’s military component was winding down. These mini “PBSOs” were to promote “confidence-building and political stabilization efforts, electoral support, [and] efforts to strengthen and legitimate a new government established through political support.”12

The 2000 Brahimi report called for DPA to consolidate its recently acknowledged preeminence in what might be termed “pre-conflict” conflict-prevention by adding “post-conflict” conflict-prevention (prevention of recurrence)—what the UN knows as peacebuilding—to its portfolio. This would complement DPA’s mediation function and leverage DPA’s lead role with respect to post-conflict electoral assistance and advice on constitution-writing. DPA’s head could exercise these responsibilities as convener of the UN’s newly created Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS).13 Brahimi’s rationale had two parts: first, in the panel’s view it was perfectly natural for the UN, because of its security role, to “be considered the focal point for peace-building activities by the donor community”; and second, that “there is great merit in creating a consolidated and permanent institutional capacity within the United Nations System” for peacebuilding.14 However, as the panel’s research team acknowledged, events of the time also influenced its deliberations; the “May 2000 Sierra Leone hostage crisis re-emphasized [the] need for change.”15

In December 1998, another influential declaration emerged, a Security Council Presidential Statement (PRST) requesting the Secretary-General “to explore the possibility of establishing post-conflict peace-building structures.”16 This declaration was part of the glacially slow process by which DPA began operating the aforementioned country-based “PBSOs” in a selection of pilot countries.17 This PRST also prefigured the
founding resolutions for the PBA, passed seven years later: “The Security Council … emphasizes the need to improve the exchange of information between all relevant actors in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding, including United Nations agencies and bodies, international financial institutions, regional and subregional organizations, troop contributors and the donor community.” The PRST also articulated a theme that would be widely discussed in the PBA’s early years—the need to begin preparing for the peacebuilding phase as soon as possible: “The Security Council recognizes the value of including, as appropriate, peace-building elements in the mandates of peacekeeping operations.”

The 2000 Brahimi report considered peacekeeping an increasingly complex phenomenon, ranging well beyond the provision of military or police forces. UN peacekeeping was multidimensional, and the civilian dimensions required closer compatibility with military objectives and decision-making processes and enhanced on-the-ground capabilities. The report is rooted in a complex appreciation of conflict dynamics. William Durch, who led the Brahimi panel’s research team, argued that one of the report’s crucial messages is that “peacebuilding” can be practiced at any point along the continuum from war to peace—in a once-stable country experiencing a political crisis or in a country just emerging from (or even still in the throes of) civil conflict.

Brahimi also recognized that the peacekeeping and conflict-prevention agendas required improved systems for collecting and sharing information on potential threats to peace. The report proposed the creation of a dedicated mechanism for informing the then-young ECPS—tentatively called the “ECPS Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat” (EISAS). The EISAS would assist planners in estimating demand for peacebuilding resources. Such a system “could bring a budding crisis to the attention of ECPS leadership,” and thus “transform it [the ECPS] into the decision-making body anticipated in the Secretary-General’s initial reforms” of 1997. The EISAS would supersede the many fragmented early-warning efforts that existed (and still do) in the UN. Having such “an information clearinghouse and strategic analysis center” would make conflict-prevention more systematic and meaningful.

The EISAS was never built. Some developing countries—and others with problematic human rights records—chafed at even the suggestion of increased “surveillance.” The United States and other militarily powerful states were wary for different reasons: they were reluctant to share the kinds of information that Brahimi was planning on assembling through the EISAS. Part of the resistance to the EISAS was bureaucratic. The existing proliferation of UN offices that were “assigned policy and information analysis roles related to peace and security”
meant that “consolidating” them would threaten a good number of UN entities. Potentially on the chopping block, under Brahimi’s vision, were DPA’s Policy Planning Unit, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations’ (DPKO) Policy Analysis Unit and Situation Center, and the Policy Development Unit at the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Establishing the EISAS would also have required a significant infusion of outside expertise, military and civilian, at senior levels—a proposal guaranteed to invite dissent from existing administrative units as well as donors who would be called on to pay for it all.

DPA did not, in the end, receive the full mandate as lead UN actor on peacebuilding that it had sought. It was another stalled reform effort. DPA received control over various “Trust Funds for Prevention,” but not much additional policy authority. Resistance from DPKO was instrumental. The two departments have common origins in the Office for Special Political Affairs, which former Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali split in two in 1992, at roughly the same time as he issued An Agenda for Peace. DPKO, though weakened by perennial divisions between its Offices of Operations and of Mission Support, was at the time sufficiently strong to veto any such radical changes.

The Brahimi report also highlighted the need for the international community to improve the availability of civilian expertise to UN missions—specialists who could augment and build the capacity of local administrators, doctors, engineers, and accountants. Brahimi urged the UN to leverage its legitimacy as a promoter of human rights, justice, and the rule of law to ensure that robust civilian response capacities were available to UN missions. Countries trying to reestablish the rule of law required urgent help to resurrect criminal justice systems. Moreover, civilian components of peace operations needed to be more assertive: “United Nations civilian police monitors,” the report says, “are not peacebuilders if they simply document or attempt to discourage by their presence abusive or other unacceptable behaviour of local police officers—a traditional and somewhat narrow perspective of civilian police capacities.”

Reactions to the Brahimi report were generally positive. It was hard to deny that the panel was at least attempting to break new ground. There was no shortage of critics, though, and as we have seen, many of Brahimi’s specific proposals were rejected. Those enacted have met with mixed results. Graciana del Castillo, acknowledging the “essentially political nature of reconstruction,” found the Brahimi report wanting because it proposed headquarters-based entities to “lead peacebuilding activities.” Centralization, she argued, would restrict the scope for an enterprising
Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG)—such as Brahimi himself, who would serve in Afghanistan following the US invasion in late 2001—to draw strategically on elements of the development framework in support of political objectives.\textsuperscript{26}

Follow-up action on the Brahimi report was uneven.\textsuperscript{27} Some Brahimi recommendations materialized years later. The report called for upgrading and enhancing the UN Field Service, which was understaffed and not represented in key planning bodies. Nothing much happened, until seven years later, in a very different climate, a Department of Field Support (DFS)—created out of DPKO’s logistics and human resource management components—came into being. While the UN did little in the immediate post-Brahimi period to improve civilian-response capacity, over time advocates for the report’s vision took up this cause with vigor.\textsuperscript{28}

A year after the Brahimi report was issued, and partly in response to its message, the earliest recognizable proposals for a PBA-like suite of institution emerged. A clutch of papers by Shepard Forman and others stands out as particularly significant in the evolution of the idea of the PBC and its affiliated institutions. In 2001, Forman, Stewart Patrick, and Dirk Salomons proposed the creation of a “strategic recovery facility” (SRF).\textsuperscript{29} This was arguably the moment when the idea of a dedicated, UN-centered, but genuinely inclusive, post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction entity came recognizably into view.

The purpose of the SRF was to address “challenges that the international aid community must address to maximize its support for sustainable peace and reconstruction in the wake of conflict.” A “new mechanism” was needed “to ensure a timely and effective response to the needs of societies recovering from conflict.”\textsuperscript{30} It would “ensure the timely disbursement of aid in a more coherent and equitable manner.”\textsuperscript{31} As of 2001, “external support for conflict recovery remain[ed] a voluntary and essentially ad hoc enterprise,” in which donors “reinvent structures of coordination from case to case,” igniting disagreements over “divisions of labour and burden-sharing.” A major constraint on rational planning was that each donor’s post-conflict engagements reflected “a combination of humanitarian, economic, diplomatic, strategic and domestic political interests.” International actors needed “an integrated approach to the early stages of conflict recovery,” the involvement of “key local actors,” and “rapid release of adequate funding for programmes that will seed a lasting peace”—all supported by more effective systems to hold donors accountable for delivering on funds they have pledged. Despite the many differences from the PBA that ultimately emerged, these proposals bear a strong family resemblance.
The need for Brahimi’s reforms, as well as something like the institutional restructuring proposed by Forman and co-authors, became most evident just as the political consensus to implement them evaporated. The events of 11 September 2001 fundamentally reoriented discussions of peace and security, including peacebuilding. These 9/11 effects were noted in the Introduction to this book, where a condensed chronology of post-Cold War peacekeeping was outlined. For present purposes one point needs reiterating: following the invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, the question of how the UN should respond to state failure and the need for state-rebuilding was cast in a new light. The High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change (HLP), announced by Secretary-General Annan in September 2003 and appointed soon thereafter, operated amidst not only the post-Iraq sense of crisis in the international system—the fundamental rules of which had been violated by US unilateral action—but also a swirl of ideas about how multilateral efforts could be reformed to cope with the phenomenon of failing states.

In early 2004, for instance, Fearon and Laitin proposed new approaches to mandating, funding, and leading the military and civilian components of peace operations. Like the PBA’s eventual architects, Fearon and Laitin saw “a strong need to consolidate lessons learned and best practices” so that useful “field innovations” could inform future engagements. Given that “the many agencies involved in postconflict peacebuilding” must “work out ad hoc arrangements to coordinate their activities,” the authors recommended “a newly constructed arm of the UN to address some of the issues once handled by the now-defunct UN Trusteeship Council.” Each field mission would be led by a major state with significant military capacity. The authors considered this more realistic than the Brahimi report’s suggestion that a standby brigade under UN command be placed at the Security Council’s disposal.

Anticipating concerns about the accountability of such a “lead agent”—the Security Council being the authorizing “principal”—Fearon and Laitin suggested that the new UN organ be built around country-specific committees of the General Assembly, “in which TCCs would have preferred representation.” Making such committees relatively small, it was argued, would reduce the scope for intergovernmental politics to derail rational assessment of crisis situations—their potential severity, the scope for preventive action, the capacity of prospective spoilers, governance capacities, and so forth. This “modern equivalent of the Trusteeship Council” would also draw on “the investigative services of the Secretariat” to “expose agents who violated the spirit of the mission or international
human rights norms.” This proposal differed substantially from what became the PBC, but was motivated by some of the same concerns, including the need for long-term international political engagement in post-conflict peacebuilding. In suggesting a role for TCCs, it introduced the stakeholder-based model for the new entity. It also suggested something similar to what became the PBC’s country-specific meetings. The mention of “Secretariat services” anticipated the need for the PBSO.

Michael Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, writing around the time the HLP was deliberating, noted with regret the lack of a serious UN mechanism for evolving a coherent peacebuilding strategy: “Peacebuilding is assigned to the Department of Political Affairs, but the expertise that focuses on the nexus between institution building and economic development is scattered across the UN System …,” particularly at UNDP and the World Bank, neither of which answers to the Secretariat. This view was echoed by those working in senior management positions. One former DPA deputy director told a researcher in June 2005 that the UN “desperately needed a high-level political body to … help countries implement peace accords. Historically [DPA] … had been the lead UN body for peacebuilding, but it is not set up to be operational, even though past attempts were made to establish a Peacebuilding Unit in support of field operations.” The official argued that a PBC could “help to create better coordination and leadership on peacebuilding across the UN system.”

A key feature of the environment in which the HLP’s deliberations took place, and into which its report was received, was the battle for bureaucratic power among the organizations whose work was to be “coordinated.” The sociology of the UN’s competing bureaucratic fiefdoms is set forth in an insightful account of the multiple political cleavages involved. Persistent failure comes with a cost: a landscape strewn with two decades’ worth of abandoned and half-implemented reform initiatives. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), a secretariat entity, attempted in the years leading up to the panel’s report to increase its engagement on post-conflict issues. DESA committees resembling CSCs were established for a number of fragile states. They did not get far, mainly because of DESA’s severe capacity constraints, but also due to the machinations of bureaucratic rivals, including UNDP, which considers itself the sole agency capable of undertaking virtually all non-military functions required for “integrated peacebuilding.” There is also contestation within UNDP over which division is responsible for actions in “immediate post-conflict” environments. This typically pits the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) against the geographic departments.
For other UN agencies, “competition with the UNDP reflects and contributes to a wider uncertainty among the aid community about how to handle post-crisis development programs.” The tension between “OECD [Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development] states (most of them aid donors) and G77 states (many of them aid recipients)” exists not only within the UN’s principal intergovernmental bodies—the General Assembly, ECOSOC, the Security Council, and until recently the Trusteeship Council—but also on “the executive boards of the various agencies,” that is, the member state committees that approve and oversee the operations of entities such as UNICEF (the UN Children’s Fund) and UNDP. The authors argue that much of the dissension reflects the fact that some G77 “states have strongly resisted greater UNDP involvement in crisis and post-crisis settings, regarding it as interventionism,” and also as a source of undue influence for member states that provide the bulk of UNDP’s funding. In short, two turf wars have been a constant source of tension in the UN’s efforts to promote sustainable peace. First, the constant tug of war between DPA and DPKO, and second, the fault line between each of these entities and UN development agencies—most notably UNDP. These fault lines would persist following the creation of the PBA.

Another key document issued just as the HLP was being constituted was the Secretary-General’s 2003 Review of Technical Cooperation in the UN System. It called for senior UN officials to “identify ways in which different parts of the UN system might work together to devise country specific peace-building strategies.” The review alluded indirectly to the bureaucratic conflicts plaguing the still-emerging field of “peace-building,” where “the line between the operational activities of certain UN entities (such as DPKO) and what might be considered technical cooperation is sometimes extremely difficult to determine.” The extent of these “overlaps” depended “on the breadth of the definition of technical cooperation that is used.”

The review noted that the initial group of DPA-managed, country-level “PBSOs” had caused friction between DPA and UNDP. A joint DPA-UNDP assessment of how well these support offices worked with UN Country Teams found that:

… whereas there is almost universal support for the core political functions undertaken by the Representatives of the Secretary-General and peace-building offices, difficulties arise when peace-building offices become involved in operational activities which are traditionally the work of funds, programmes and agencies, particularly in the absence of a peace-building strategy. To the extent possible,
peace-building offices should be catalysts and facilitators rather than direct implementers.\(^{42}\)

This echoes Sultan Barakat’s observation that, despite many agencies entering the peacebuilding “sector,” organizational rivalries prevented them from workingconcertedly.\(^{43}\)

Forman saw three main trends driving the PBC’s creation: the increasing complexity of peace operations, the larger array of actors involved, and the growing acceptance that reconstruction is inherently long-term. The problem was that “within the UN system there is no locus for inter-governmental decision-making relating to post-conflict peace-building.” As a result “the Security Council has extended its writ, both in terms of duration of mandates and the range of economic and developmental issues tackled within multi-dimensional peace operations.” Returning to a key Brahimi theme, he argued that insufficient civilian capacity to rebuild states can “doom post-conflict peace-building efforts.” Shortages of rapidly deployable expertise were found in many areas—from reconstructing and operating public utilities to re-establishing tax and expenditure systems. Forman hoped that the HLP would recommend ways of rationalizing the current system whereby “[e]ach peace-building mission scrambles anew to design and organize the appropriate administrative structure, assess needs, recruit staff, match skills to tasks, mobilize resources and coordinate effectively.”\(^{44}\)

In December 2004 the HLP issued its report. It framed the catastrophes of the previous 15 years as peacebuilding failures: if “two peace agreements, the 1991 Bicesse Agreement for Angola and the 1993 Arusha Accords for Rwanda, had been successfully implemented, deaths attributable to war in the 1990s would have been reduced by several million.”\(^{45}\) This led the panel to identify “a key institutional gap” in the UN system: it lacked an entity “explicitly designed to avoid State collapse and the slide to war or to assist countries in their transition from war to peace.” “[I]n an era when dozens of States are under stress of recovering from conflict,” there was “a clear international obligation to assist States in developing their capacity to perform their sovereign functions effectively and responsibly.”

Concluding that “[s]trengthening the United Nations capacity for peacebuilding in the widest sense must be a priority for the organization,” the HLP report recommended the creation of a PBC.\(^{46}\) The proposed PBC was to be “reasonably small,” and would convene in various configurations “to consider both general policy issues and country-by-country strategies.” It is unclear what the panel meant by “reasonably small,” but discussions reportedly ranged between 10 and (at most) 24
The UN peacebuilding architecture

The HLP also recommended that the chair of the PBC, at least for the first year, would be a Security Council member, with delegates drawn from the Security Council, ECOSOC, and other member state categories. There was no mention of the General Assembly, which as we have seen ultimately gained a seven-seat “quota.” The HLP recommended that the president of the World Bank and the managing director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—in other words, chief executive officer-level officials—be invited to join the PBC’s proceedings.

The PBC would be supported by an administrative entity and, ideally, accompanied by a fund. Significantly, the HLP recommended that the commission undertake both pre-conflict and post-conflict peacebuilding. For pre-conflict cases, the PBC would identify which states were “at risk” of failing, and take action (in coordination with national authorities) to prevent further erosion. The PBC would also lead post-conflict efforts to gain diplomatic support and financial backing for the longer-term process of state-rebuilding. That the panel was eager for the PBC to be involved in both pre- and post-conflict peacebuilding is clear from its diagnosis of the problem: “[i]n both the period before the outbreak of civil war and in the transition out of civil war, neither the United Nations nor the broader international community, including the international financial institutions, are well organized to assist countries attempting to build peace.”

The HLP was received into a world of long-simmering North–South tensions. In particular, “members of the Group of 77, the principal suppliers of peacekeeping troops in recent years, are increasingly bitter about their lack of voice in the Security Council deliberations that formulate and manage the ... [peacekeeping] missions that employ their troops.” Another atmospheric factor was the belief within the UN that an institutional mechanism was necessary to overcome “fragmentation,” “competing mandates,” and “agencies butting heads.”

Forman summarized the situation soon after the HLP report had been launched: “The much maligned word, ‘coordination’ aside, there is mounting evidence that multilateral cooperation and burden-sharing produce better outcomes.” Security Council mandates were formulated on the basis of “little consultation with the development side of the system, either with the programs and agencies, including UNDG [the consortium of agencies known as the UN Development Group], with the IFIs, or with NGOs, let alone with donor government development or finance ministries.” Incoherent post-conflict peacebuilding was therefore often misleadingly portrayed as a by-product of logistical incompatibility among agencies, or turf wars among bureaucrats, when the
problem was substantive: donors “sometimes disagree on the political objectives at hand,” naturally affecting their preferred “strategies for achieving them.”

The HLP’s recommendations on peacebuilding diverged from earlier plans that had focused on civilian-response capacity. Such an approach would have required substantial technical staff, headed by a strong coordinating entity exercising budget authority over considerable funds. Previous proposals usually contained a central role for the IFIs, particularly the World Bank, which ended up being weakly integrated to the PBC that ultimately emerged. Creating a large, formal intergovernmental body—the HLP’s main innovation—was a major departure from this earlier vision. The PBC was clearly to become a high-profile forum, but would it be stocked with member states with little to add to the practical on-the-ground efforts that, apparently, would be the new body’s focus?

In mid-2005, Secretary-General Annan’s, In Larger Freedom (ILF), report sought to distil the high-level panel’s recommendations into a form that, he hoped, member states and senior UN bureaucrats would find acceptable. In the process, as we have seen, much of what the HLP proposed was scrapped. ILF nevertheless articulated a hope that a PBC could perform a series of crucial functions:

... improve United Nations planning for sustained recovery, focusing on early efforts to establish the necessary institutions; ... ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities; ... improve the coordination of the many post-conflict activities of the United Nations ...; provide a forum in which the United Nations, major bilateral donors, troop contributors, relevant regional actors and organizations, the international financial institutions and the national or transitional Government ... can share information about their respective post-conflict recovery strategies ...; periodically review progress towards medium-term recovery goals; and extend the period of political attention to post-conflict recovery.

Even as the shape of the proposed PBC was being debated, considerable confusion emerged surrounding the relationship between the PBC and other UN organs. Annan’s report ILF stated that the PBC could best “combine efficiency with legitimacy if it were to report to the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in sequence, depending on the phase of the conflict”—the Security Council immediately after peace accords are signed, followed by ECOSOC once peace was consolidated. This was not reflected in the institutional design
found in resolution 1645, which called for simultaneous reporting to the General Assembly and the Security Council, with ECOSOC a noted but second-tier partner.

Responding to these PBC proposals, Forman was adamant that it was “necessary to get the functions, structures, and decision-making rules right,” and “essential that the human resource capacity and financial wherewithal be firmly in place.” After all, the purpose of the PBC and PBSO, as proposed by the high-level panel, was:

... to create an authoritative, intergovernmental mechanism that could make the substantive link between the diplomatic, security and development functions involved in international peacebuilding. This means ensuring that for each country-specific situation a comprehensive mission plan is followed, that there is adequate coordination among the multilateral and national donor agencies involved, and that sufficient resources are marshaled to ensure that the bases for sustainable peace and development are put in place.53

Forman saw the PBC and the PBSO as complementary to the efforts of the United Kingdom, the United States, and other governments to enhance their civilian response capabilities. A dedicated intergovernmental body was needed because of the risk that, as new crises crowded their way onto the international agenda, many post-conflict situations would “fall into the category of forgotten or neglected crises.”54

The proposals of the HLP, even as watered down in ILF, could still serve a purpose. The PBC, Forman argued, would “enable the Security Council to draw in a consistent and systematic way on the knowledge, experience and resources of the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, as well as the development ministries of Member States, all present in the field but not readily a part of Security Council deliberations.”55 Forman saw as implicit the additional goal—not stated specifically with respect to the PBC—of restoring an effective sovereign state.56

The HLP foresaw the PBC playing a prevention role with respect to countries that had not yet fallen into conflict. This was underscored in the Secretary-General’s letter to the General Assembly accompanying the HLP’s report. However, the suggestion that the PBC could serve an “early-warning function” generated resistance among G77 countries who feared the PBC overseeing a watch list of countries “at risk,” another formulation generally disliked by Southern states. Opponents of an early-warning role were motivated by concerns that such a capability would merely augment the power of the world’s leading military states.57
Secretary-General responded to this formidable opposition by rescinding his proposal regarding PBC involvement in conflict-prevention. In the subsequently issued “Addendum” to the report, the Secretary-General noted that, while “it would be valuable if Member States could at any stage make use of the Peacebuilding Commission’s advice and could request assistance from a standing fund for peacebuilding to build their domestic institutions . . .,” nevertheless, after consideration, it was determined that the PBC would not “have an early warning or monitoring function.”

The Secretary-General was criticized for caving in on the prevention functions that had initially been proposed for the PBC. Richard Ponzio lamented the demise of the early-warning and monitoring role for the PBC. He argued that focusing “solely on the ‘post-conflict’ dimensions of peace-building runs counter to the call from countless international conferences and UN-sponsored reports since the late 1990s to place conflict prevention at the heart of the UN’s mandate.” Ponzio had a different explanation for its omission: “powerful countries”—not mainly the weaker states of the developing world—opposed equipping the UN Secretariat with “early warning or intelligence gathering capabilities” that might “be used against them.”

The other main reason for not locating early-warning monitoring within the mandate of the PBC and PBSO was the widespread belief “that conflict prevention is already covered” by DPA and various programs operated by specialized agencies, to which a new entity would not necessarily provide additional value. Ponzio countered that even if DPA and other mechanisms were genuinely capable of playing such a role, they might benefit from the global spotlight a dedicated intergovernmental forum would offer: “the PBC’s main asset in the area of conflict prevention would be the high-level political attention accorded to countries and regions on the path towards crisis before they spiral into a full-fledged war . . .” On the day the PBC held its first meeting, Lawrence Woocher lamented the wrenching away of the PBC’s early-warning function, correctly predicting that this would deprive the new institution of much of its clout.

Even without an early-warning capability, there was “a definite need” for a body like the PBSO that could enhance “the current state of competence and capacity within the UN, both in terms of human resources and organizational structure by bringing together experienced and specialized staff who are now dispersed throughout the system, in an institutional arrangement that provides one-stop shopping for analysis, planning and support for peacebuilding missions.” The PBF, as envisaged by the HLP and ILF, was also generally agreed to be a useful
addition to the evolving architecture. Differences emerged over the time period the PBF should cover, which entities should control its operation, and what its main objectives should be.

Forman maintained that the PBF was ideally suited to meeting “the costs of early recovery and rehabilitation,” “financing essential public sector activities until self-sustaining revenues can be generated,” and “initial economic pump-priming, including job recovery and agricultural production, until mainstream development financing and private sector investment come on board.” Without indicating a specific timeframe, he nevertheless argued that “[p]eacebuilding funds should be put as quickly as possible at the disposal of [UN] field operations ... or, where there is sufficient confidence, national authorities.” Forman argued that regardless of the PBF’s final shape, it “should have authority over country allocations based on an acceptable, field-derived coherent plan of action.”63 This is what Security Council members felt they were signing on for when approving the inclusion of the PBF within resolution 1645. As we shall see in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the PBF at times evolved in a different direction while searching for an organizational niche.

“Outcome” and resolution(s)

The environment of mid-2005 was in certain respects unusually conducive to gaining UN-wide consensus on the need for a new suite of peacebuilding institutions. The push for better coordination—a key PBA objective—was a core element of the March 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, which committed donors to “harmonize” and “align” their aid programs and funding modalities. The PBC could be sold as an aid-coordination forum for post-conflict situations; the UN’s involvement would ensure careful, collective assessment of the security dimensions of all proposed activities.

Yet, the UN’s ability to play the role envisaged for it by ILF was increasingly being called into question. Among the most strident critics was acting US Ambassador to the UN, John Bolton. The procession toward the World Summit had almost reached its destination when Bolton assumed office in the summer of 2005. Bolton was sufficiently unnerved by the draft of the Outcome Document, which had been painstakingly negotiated within the UN bureaucracy and among governments during the preceding months, that he wanted almost every section rewritten. He insisted that brackets, signaling non-agreement, frame scores of provisions spread throughout the text. Draft paragraphs pertaining to the proposed PBC were among them.
Because Bolton, a career diplomat, had long been publicly hostile to the UN, the United States’ positions in subsequent negotiations were frequently dismissed, or at least severely discounted, as ideologically biased. Bolton was in fact a reasonably sober analyst. Many of his reservations about the PBA’s institutional components were shared, privately, by other member states and by UN staff. He was particularly concerned about the growing size of the PBC, as well as the lack of clarity concerning its relationship with the Security Council. Aware that he would have at most a year as ambassador, Bolton had little incentive to moderate his behavior. He also knew that his negotiating partners—facing a deadline of September—were not in a position to wait him out. Among his first initiatives was a plan to overhaul the financing mechanism on which the UN system is built. While the UN’s principle organs (the intergovernmental bodies and the Secretariat) are funded through “assessed” contributions—mandatory taxes on all member states, though levied on a sliding scale—the “funds and programs” (UNICEF, the World Food Programme, etc.) are funded primarily through voluntary contributions. Bolton wanted the entire UN system, or as much of it as possible, to move toward the voluntary model. Having to demonstrate performance to funders was considered a good way to ensure accountability. It also placed additional leverage in the hands of large donors like the United States. Though few considered Bolton’s plan likely to gain traction, his support for expanding the voluntary-funding model—and his advocacy of broader “management reforms,” to tame what he and others considered an unaccountable UN bureaucracy—inevitably stoked further controversy in the US Congress as well as the UN Secretariat.

Bolton maintained that the highest levels of UN officialdom had a vision of reform that was not about reaffirming the primacy of member state control. He was particularly scathing about Kofi Annan, Deputy Secretary-General Mark Malloch Brown, and General Assembly President Jan Eliasson, whose “leftist tilt and excessive view of his own importance” were particular sore spots. One of the motivations behind Annan’s creation of the PBC, according to Bolton, was to “build goodwill with the G-77.” He dismissed the other ostensible reasons for creating the PBC as window-dressing. Bolton downplayed what subsequently leaked US diplomatic cables indicated he already knew—that G77 members were largely uninterested in establishing a powerful PBC. Debates over its creation did, however, offer them a chance to bash the Security Council’s five permanent members as usurpers of the General Assembly’s rightful legislative prerogatives. According to one cable Bolton sent to Washington, during negotiations over the PBC’s structure and mandate, “the Pakistani delegation,” among others, did not want to
engage in constructive efforts to create an effective institution.” The opposition by countries such as Egypt and Pakistan to serious UN reform, the leaked cable further speculated, possibly represented “a means of ‘balancing’ their friendship with the U.S. in the eyes of those parts of their publics that do not support U.S. policy.”

Still, as Bolton’s less-than-enthusiastic account makes clear, US support for the PBC was not inevitable. A member of the State Department’s policy planning staff at the time recalled internal “resistance to creating another UN bureaucracy.” Supporters of the Secretary-General’s proposals within the State Department “were helped by the disastrous failures associated with U.S. post-war planning for Iraq and the momentum to create similar post-conflict structures within the U.S. government,” which included, among other initiatives, plans for a rapidly deployable corps of civilian experts. The result was that “[a]s the U.S. got its own house in order, it was difficult to oppose efforts on the part of the United Nations to do the same.”

Tensions within the UN system were fuelled by misinformation and a general disinclination to disrupt the status quo. None of the large entities was pleased with the idea of the proposed PBSO potentially eating up their turf. Once the idea of an administrative entity became an entrenched part of the discussion, however, the main goal was to make sure that it was not subject to the control of one’s rivals. Indeed, the primary reason why DPKO eventually became conditionally amenable to the PBA’s creation was that it deprived DPA of the ability to dominate the peacebuilding field. Bureaucracies, like states, are able to define gains in relative as well as absolute terms.

It was clear during the negotiations over how to translate the World Summit Outcome Document into a Security Council and/or General Assembly resolution that DPKO opposed ceding any operational functions to the proposed PBSO. In October 2005, the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations told the General Assembly’s Fourth Committee that he welcomed the creation of the PBC and the PBSO, but then did not mention either body when discussing his plans for developing “doctrine” for multidimensional peace operations, including on such questions as how the UN could “improve international capacity to deliver a rapid ‘peace dividend’ to societies emerging from conflict.” DPKO did, however, suggest that the PBC and PBSO would not deliver results without a “renewed drive to build a coherent UN-wide system.” DPKO was explicit about its own plans to consolidate its position, “particularly in areas such as Rule of Law, Security Sector Reform, and DDR.” However, at least one observer suggested that DPKO possibly saw in the proposed PBSO an ally for realizing these ambitions. If
the PBSO proved at all difficult, DPKO had a sufficiently weighty presence in various UN bodies to stonewall implementation.

DPA had the best reasons to mistrust the arrival of a new bureaucratic entity dedicated to precisely the undertaking it had been struggling for years to lead. Its general strategy, once fundamental agreement on the need for some kind of PBSO had been reached, was to avoid engagement wherever possible. Even after the PBSO had been established, DPA desk officers and subregional coordinators refused to share privileged country-level information with PBSO colleagues. To do so would not only potentially compromise sources, but also cede a point of comparative organizational advantage. As late as the end of 2006, DPA continued to claim that it was (and had been “since 1997”) “the United Nations focal point for post-conflict peace-building.” Regardless of the existence of the PBSO and the PBC, DPA continued to see its mission as “help[ing] nations consolidate peace through comprehensive peace-building strategies.”69 Its website at that time contained no substantive mention of the PBSO, even as DPA again highlighted its “supervision” of the three peacebuilding field missions it managed, and its lead role in electoral assistance, “a key component of post-conflict state-building.”

As for the PBF, both DPKO and DPA sought during the negotiations to gain control over its resources. Both argued that the PBF would allow them the freedom to allocate resources between countries and between sectors. At the time, most SRSGs overseeing peace operations were under DPKO, though subsequently, an increase in the proportion of missions where the military component had been scaled back (transforming “peacekeeping missions” into “special political missions” or in some cases “peacebuilding” missions or offices) meant that DPA’s portfolio was substantially enhanced. The PBF would provide resources that a strategic SRSG could deploy to maintain a fragile “post-conflict” peace—for instance, by supporting small-scale mediation efforts when peace agreements had not included all groups, such as in Burundi during the late 2000s.

The way in which some advocacy groups sought to leverage the creation of the UN’s new peacebuilding entities to garner support for their agendas also highlights the salience of bureaucratic relationships in shaping the PBA. A range of issue-specific organizations sought, from the time proposals for the PBC entered the reform agenda, to influence the new entity’s priorities. Gender-equality advocates, for instance, insisted on a gender mainstreaming mandate for the PBC. Advocates for the rights of internally displaced persons (IDPs) called for the PBC to engage with disenfranchised IDPs in national peacebuilding efforts.70 It was through bureaucratic channels, not primarily through member

state representation, that gender equality and other special interest advocates were able to exert influence.

Michael Barnett and co-authors conclude that in the field of peacebuilding DPA, UNDP, and DPKO have all been profoundly incapable of resisting opportunities for bureaucratic encroachment.71 This holds true for the process of creating the new elements of the PBA. Absent such a tendency, a different PBA may well have emerged. The commission could have been more compact, and a new bureaucratic entity avoided, had the main players faced sufficient incentives to arrive at a power-sharing formula. A key structural barrier to any such consolidation is the nature of UNDP’s relationship to each of the Secretariat-based actors. UNDP’s BCPR competes with DPA and DPKO at the policy level in New York and Geneva, while UNDP’s operational divisions compete with DPA and DPKO in the field. Despite efforts to create integrated missions, SRSGs and Deputy SRSGs (resident/humanitarian coordinators) continue to jockey for influence. The erstwhile UNDP Administrator’s shift to a new post as Kofi Annan’s chief of staff just as the PBC proposals were being unveiled raised a new set of suspicions about which organizational issues were driving the reform agenda.

The process of crafting the founding resolution was sufficiently opaque that even advocacy organizations that supported the PBA’s creation were mistaken about certain aspects of its design. A November 2005 report issued by a London-based NGO stated that “[i]n support of the PBC, a multi-year standing Peacebuilding Fund will be established.” In fact, the relationship between the PBF and the PBC had not been precisely established.72 The lack of clarity about the PBF’s purpose and management continued to plague the fund long after it became operational.

Member states were urged to fill gaps in the still-imprecise wording of the outcome document, which like the HLP “side-stepped” crucial design questions. As one analyst warned, without “a clear strategy and structure, adequate funding, key partnerships … specific functions … and reporting lines, the PBC and Support Office will be born ineffectual.” One concern was size. The general refrain was that the “the PBC’s membership should be reasonably small in number to ensure manageability”—ideally not more than 15 to 18 members.73

Another cleavage along which the PBC can be viewed is between (mainly) Northern and (mainly) Southern countries. The key concern of Southern states was that the concept of peacebuilding (or the commission itself) not be used as a Trojan Horse through which the Security Council could extend its authority into functions that are rightly the preserve of the UN’s development-oriented bodies. Not coincidentally, developing countries are more influential in ECOSOC and the regional
economic commissions. Many of the UN’s leading donor countries held the opposing view—that failed states should not be entrusted to a body that would be too timid or simply too bureaucratic to take swift and decisive action where transitions from war to peace encountered serious difficulties.

One recurring issue was where the PBC would be located institutionally. Several Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) countries, such as Cuba, were in favor of creating a commission, but only “as long as it is not a subsidiary body of the Security Council.” There were differences of opinion even within this camp, however. India, Iran, and Malaysia wanted the General Assembly to have authority over the commission, while Uganda was among those that hoped the PBC would report primarily to ECOSOC.74

Almost none of the key recommendations for the PBC’s functional remit were reflected in the final institutional design. The PBC would have no authority “to design, approve, and amend mandates for UN peace-building operations”; “to initiate and co-ordinate early warning ... and conflict prevention efforts across the UN system”; or even “to oversee the disbursement and replenishment of a standing Peace-building Fund.” Instead, the council would keep mandates under its sole control; early warning remained outside the PBC’s mandate; and the PBSO, not the PBC, would operate and oversee the PBF.75

Paragraph 23 of Security Council resolution 1645 insists on the limited role of the PBSO. The “Office” (not a full-fledged “Department”) was to be small and non-operational. PBSO staff were “to assist and support the [PBC]” by, for instance, “gathering and analyzing information” of various types. This was to include information concerning “the availability of financial resources, relevant U.N. planning activities, progress towards meeting short and medium-term recovery goals, and best practices with respect to cross-cutting, peacebuilding issues.” A related issue was how the PBSO would be led. It was suggested at one point that DPA and DPKO take turns holding the position of head of the PBSO.76

Staff questions in general were a major point of controversy. One analyst, who would later work at the PBSO, stated prophetically that if the PBSO’s meager staff were to consist largely of loaners from other UN entities, it would “barely fulfill the PBC’s basic secretarial and monitoring needs,” and certainly not provide “analysis of peacebuilding trends” or “logistical support to field offices.”77 Steadfast opposition from developing countries to making the PBSO much more than a back office for the PBC’s deliberations marked the process leading up to the establishment of the PBSO. Negotiations ensued in
the General Assembly’s administrative and budget committees over extremely small sums and minor personnel issues, demonstrating the sensitivities all around.78

Indeed, many of the recommendations found in the HLP’s report were summarily discarded. Resolution 1645 does not, contrary to the HLP’s recommendation, require the PBC to be chaired by a Security Council (or council-approved) member. The PBC is significantly larger than the “small” size originally foreseen. The HLP stated only that “representatives of the principal donor countries and, when appropriate, the principal troop contributors should be invited to participate in its deliberations,”79 but by the time the PBC emerged, both donors and TCCs received explicit full-membership quotas. The stipulation of being “invited to participate” in CSCs, however, remained for IFIs, regional bodies, and other entities deemed relevant.

The failure to secure a comprehensive prevention mandate for the PBA could be seen as a setback to system-wide coherence. Some of resolution 1645’s language could be seen as containing “sleeper” provisions, which at a later date could be activated, circumstances permitting. For instance, one provision stated that in “exceptional cases” a member state at imminent risk of “lapsing into conflict” could request the PBC’s assistance. Discussion over this particular point involved lengthy debates over the distinction between “lapsing” and “relapsing”—that is, whether lapsing referred to the process of returning to a prior conflict, or whether the very existence of the word relapsing implied that the unmodified lapsing referred solely to a conflict’s initial outbreak. Either way, any PBC member could veto such a request for assistance. As the PBC held its inaugural meeting, it was “widely assumed that any PBC ‘conflict prevention’ role will be negligible.”80

Not surprisingly, political dispute continued even after the identical Security Council and General Assembly resolutions creating the PBA’s three component entities were passed. Early in 2006 contention arose over formulas for deciding how countries would be elected within each membership category. Clarifying its position further, the Security Council immediately passed a follow-on resolution (Security Council resolution 1646) stating that the council’s permanent members would automatically occupy five of its seven seats on the PBC. The council also used resolution 1646 to reinforce what it saw as the PBC’s dual-reporting structure. The Security Council also ordered that the PBC’s Annual Report, which paragraph 15 of Security Council resolution 1645 said should be submitted to the General Assembly, “also be submitted to the Security Council for an annual debate.” This was viewed in some quarters as after-the-fact modification of a text jointly agreed by leading members
of the council and the General Assembly. The charges of duplicity at the
time of the PBC’s creation did not augur well for the organization’s future.

In this highly charged atmosphere, arriving at a formula to divide up
the seven PBC seats from the General Assembly quota took months. The General Assembly passed a curiously ad hoc resolution noting the
lopsided regional distribution arising from the selection procedures within
ECOSOC, the Security Council, and from among the donor and TCC
categories. This was five African states, seven Asian, two Eastern Eur-
pean, one Latin American/Caribbean, and nine Western European
and Others. On the basis of this, and in the interest of regional balance,
the General Assembly decided that of its seven PBC members, three
would come from Latin America/Caribbean, two from Africa, and one
each from Eastern Europe and Asia. No General Assembly members
would come from the West European and Other group. The General
Assembly resolution stated, furthermore, that this was a one-off arrange-
ment that could be altered in future, depending on the regional com-
position of the PBC. The resolution further stipulated a complex lottery
procedure for determining which of the General Assembly’s PBC mem-
bers would have to step down after their first year of service in order to
implement a staggered membership system in which only a share of the
overall body is up for election in each cycle. It took until May 2006 for
the commission’s members to be selected.

**Conclusion**

Here is how the *Economist* magazine, with characteristic pithiness,
described the PBC’s origins: “As first conceived, it would have had
enforcement powers and tried to pre-empt state failure, not just cure it.
But many governments, jealously guarding the cloak of statehood, lob-
bied to keep the commission weak.” This is a reasonable summary,
though it obscures some of the pre-history that has been presented in
this chapter. For instance, it is not clear which of the prior proposals
would have conferred “enforcement powers” on a new intergovernmental
body. More problematic is the *Economist*’s assumption that “guarding
the cloak of statehood” was the main reason why the PBC ended up
weaker than some people had hoped. It was as much turf-protecting by
bureaucrats as principled opposition among member states that influenced
the outcome.

Del Castillo, a former senior official during Boutros-Ghali’s tenure
as Secretary-General in the 1990s, wondered why Secretary-General
Annan had not addressed systematic peacebuilding issues earlier. Given
Annan’s “bleak view of the UN’s record in the early 1990s and the high
probability of the recurrence of conflict, it took him surprisingly long [i.e., five years into his tenure] to recommend changes to strengthen the peacebuilding capacity of the organization.” In fact, del Castillo was one of the early skeptics. Because decisions would have to be made “by consensus,” and because neither the PBC nor the PBSO had an operational role, they would have little flexibility and almost no “leverage” over larger UN entities, let alone other international actors.83

In the end, given the history of failed reform efforts and unheeded coordination proposals, we might rather wonder that the PBA was ever created at all. In fact, del Castillo reports that internal debates over consolidating peacebuilding functions were almost as old as peacebuilding itself. A late-1990s proposal to create a Post-Conflict Economic Reconstruction Unit within DPA did not gain traction. Hence a decade later she could report confidently that “the political and economic objectives of post-conflict transitions continue to be as poorly integrated at UN headquarters as they have been in the field.”84

The international community was, of course, aware before 2005 of the potential benefits of an institution dedicated to rebuilding war-torn states, though few observers entertained illusions about the UN’s capacity to ensure that such a body would be optimally designed. The number of conflict situations coming onto the Security Council’s agenda was growing. Older conflicts were not “graduating” at the rate required to make room for new crises. It was difficult to know when international security forces could safely depart, and international technical assistance be scaled back to “normal” developing-country levels. The need to reform the UN’s ad hoc approaches to carrying out state-rebuilding—and to decongest the Security Council’s agenda—were strong institutional reasons for creating the PBA. The next two chapters examine how the new institutions performed once in existence.
3 Institutional survival

The peacebuilding architecture in action, 2006–08

- The PBC
- The PBSO
- The PBF
- Conclusion

Chapter 2’s account of the pre-history and organizational structure of the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA) identified some of the limitations imposed by its institutional design and the circumstances surrounding its birth. This provides the necessary context for a realistic assessment of the PBA’s first five years in operation, the subject of this chapter and the next.

Efforts to make sense of the PBA’s first half decade inevitably run up against two analytical challenges. First, the PBA is an institutional complex rather than a single entity. Successfully analyzing such a body requires an ability to isolate the performance of each component entity, while simultaneously assessing the institutional cluster as a whole, which may or may not amount to more than the sum of its parts. Since each of the PBA’s three components operates in an arena shaped in part by the other two, as well as by actors from beyond this insular triad, mapping internal institutional borders and external effects is as much art as science.

The second analytical challenge concerns the arbitrary nature of standards. In theory, indicators could be developed for each element of the PBA’s mandate, but even if robust performance measures were devised, calculating the PBA’s aggregate contribution to advances or declines on any such indicators would involve considerable guesswork. Even if issues of causation and attribution could somehow be addressed, and composite proxies identified, how much weight to assign each of the subsidiary indicators would involve judgments based on unexamined assumptions.

Another form of uncertainty concerns whether critics of a new institution are comparing its performance with what they imagine an alternative
version, more closely resembling their own preferred organizational design, might have produced—or whether the comparison is with what the existing institutional configuration could have achieved had different leadership been in place, a different strategic direction been taken, or different operational procedures been devised. What, after all, is reasonable to expect of a fledgling body with a vague mandate, particularly one embedded within the larger organizational universe of the United Nations (UN) system? Under such conditions, is not mere institutional survival—establishing procedural routines and securing ongoing financial and diplomatic investments from actors involved in the organ’s work—a significant accomplishment in its own right?

Consideration of these two analytical challenges—of imperfect aggregation and inherent ambiguity—informs the assessment of the PBA’s first five years. Attention is paid to the interaction between the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF). These component entities, and their relationships with the wider international community, are also examined over time. The PBA of late 2010 is not the PBA of early 2006, when the PBC’s membership was being selected, the PBSO’s staffing determined, and the PBF’s initial endowment secured.

While the PBA evolved gradually, and in non-linear fashion, certain key turning points are evident. For reasons discussed later, a watershed in the PBA’s early evolution was mid-2008, which, conveniently, is also the halfway point in the five-year span treated in this book. The two and a half years from the beginning of 2006 through mid-2008 are the focus of this chapter—which charts the politics of institutional survival—while the ensuing two and a half years (from mid-2008 through the end of 2010) are covered in Chapter 4, which documents efforts at institutional revival.

In the process of charting the PBA’s early years, three arguments are advanced. First, due to a combination of its organizational structure and the political circumstances surrounding its creation and infancy, the PBA was ill-equipped successfully to discharge the wide array of functions so hopefully enumerated in its founding resolutions. Second, the PBA’s performance was further inhibited by the tendency of international actors—member states, multilateral institutions, and civil-society organizations (CSOs) alike—to use the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF as new arenas for playing out old enmities. Third, the PBA was able to survive this unpromising start—even if reduced to a position of negligible relevance—because each of its three component entities disengaged, selectively and opportunistically, from the other two. Adaptations born of institutional disaggregation allowed each of the PBA’s component entities to carve out a unique organizational niche.
The PBC

The designers of the new UN peacebuilding architecture considered the intergovernmental pillar its crucial feature: the collective moral weight of member states, with their links to systems of popular political representation, was seen as indispensable for effective “engagement” with post-conflict countries.

The PBC’s three core mandates are to increase coordination among national and international actors working to consolidate peace; to sustain public and diplomatic attention to post-conflict countries at risk of slipping off the international community’s radar; and to “marshal” external resources for post-conflict countries so that funding is increased, financial flows become increasingly predictable, and deployments of civilian expertise are more appropriate to the receiving contexts.1

While the PBC has few powers, its direct link to the Security Council, which has organizational representation within the PBC, led some member states to express guarded optimism about its potential. The commission’s lack of directive authority, it was argued, could be offset by its “soft power,” particularly its “convening” role. The PBC’s inclusivity—regional organizations and the international financial institutions (IFIs) would participate in its deliberations—would, apparently, create a forum through which substantive priorities and long-term commitments could be negotiated.

Engagement with post-conflict countries

It was not until late 2006 that the PBC, which had convened its first Organizational Committee meeting in June of that year, began pursuing its central mission—helping individual post-conflict countries to lay the foundations for sustainable peace. The focus on the country level stemmed not only from a commitment to affecting outcomes on the ground, but also from a belief that engagement with real-world cases was the most practical method for determining the PBC’s rules and procedures, which despite months of squabbling remained substantially uncodified. The PBC’s initial caseload deeply shaped its institutional profile.

The PBC’s first year witnessed a continuous struggle to justify the new institution’s existence. Little more than six months after the PBC’s inaugural meeting, the Security Council and the General Assembly—the UN organs to which the new body was in theory jointly accountable—each insisted on holding debates to discuss the commission’s early performance. The Security Council debate was prompted by concern among some of the five permanent members (P5)—Russia, most notably—
that the PBC’s first steps seemed to be in the direction of subtly eroding the council’s prerogatives in matters of peace and security, especially when the PBC’s caseload included countries that remained on the council’s agenda. The General Assembly debate was motivated by the opposite fear: the G77 was adamant that the PBC not be used as an instrument for further council intrusion into matters (particularly development and human rights) outside its core mandate, and which were supposed to be handled by the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and the PBC’s (fraternal) twin from the 2005 World Summit Outcome Document, the UN Human Rights Council (UNHRC). The assessments that emerged during the General Assembly and Security Council debates were not flattering. Even diplomatic formulations could not fully conceal the sense of disappointment. Brazil’s representative told a General Assembly debate that “the Commission has very little to show” for its work.² Privately, one member state said the PBC had had a “shaky beginning.”³

From the beginning, the PBC found itself squeezed between two pressing needs: on the one hand, to devise the administrative infrastructure—the committees, rules, and processes that allow UN bodies to function—and on the other, to develop collectively a shared understanding of the PBC’s institutional mission and how to pursue it. Work on the bureaucratic chore could be commenced without delay, so was taken up; conceptual innovation would take time, so was put off, notwithstanding the pleas from all sides for the PBC to discover its “value-added.”⁴ The PBC duly defined rules for itself, including procedures for electing chairs of the Organizational Committee and the CSCs. After a year or more of continued adjustments to the methods for determining meeting dates, distributing documents for member state review, and confirming the acceptability of speakers for CSC meetings, the PBC began to function more regularly and predictably. Chairs’ Summaries of formal PBC sessions, including CSC meetings, began to be agreed through an accepted procedure; announcements of upcoming missions were circulated with more advance notice.

The role of CSC chairs was gradually regularized as well. It became the norm to draw CSC chairs from among the ranks of donor countries, including those that were not PBC members, but could be co-opted into CSCs “as appropriate.” The countries on the PBC’s agenda supported this practice: a CSC chair’s contacts might help to unlock further resources—financial or diplomatic—which the PBC was in any case charged with “marshaling.”

In the PBC’s early years, members frequently identified the body’s main mission as “coordination,” which in theory should involve developing
complementary approaches to common problems, based on a rational division of labor among domestic and international actors. The highly fragmented nature of much external peacebuilding assistance is indeed a major concern of recipient governments. The government of Sierra Leone complained openly about this when discussing the nature and extent of donor support for the country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The government of Sierra Leone complained openly about this when discussing the nature and extent of donor support for the country’s Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). Roland Paris, among others, has characterized the international community’s preoccupation with coordination as a potentially dangerous chimera. There was, in any case, scant evidence of the PBC promoting substantive national and international coordination in the first two countries on its agenda (Burundi and Sierra Leone), whether in terms of agreeing on a practical, prioritized peacebuilding plan or a division of labor for realizing an existing one. PBF financing did help Sierra Leone’s election commission to ensure a relatively fair process in late 2007, when power changed hands with a minimum of violence. The positive result had little to do with the PBC, however.

Characterizing the PBC’s contributions to state-rebuilding is a matter of interpretation. The verdict depends on which benchmarks are used. Regardless of the standards applied, however, the PBC’s defenders will point out that, as a new institution, it was forced to incur the inevitable (one-off) start-up costs of devising organizational structures, agreeing on working methods, and finding suitable channels for relating with other parts of the UN, notably the Security Council. However, even accounting for these transaction costs, the PBC’s net value-added seems meager.

The PBC is supposed to enhance coordination by, among other things, helping to devise country-specific “integrated peacebuilding strategies” (IPBSs). The PBC’s founding resolution provides no definition of what purposes such IPBSs should serve, the level of detail expected, how and by whom their provisions should be carried out, the relevant timeframes involved, or appropriate methods for monitoring implementation and impacts. The PBC’s ability to discharge this responsibility was also hampered by its lack of operational authority (depriving it of the carrots and sticks necessary to ensure effective follow-up action); the considerable distance the first two countries on its agenda, Burundi and Sierra Leone, had already traveled down the post-conflict timeline; and continued confusion concerning the PBC’s ability to control PBF resources.

The difficulties of designing effective engagement instruments—assuming such a thing was possible given the PBC’s institutional limitations—were compounded by the perennial difficulty of prioritizing in contexts where everything is an urgent priority. William Durch and
Tobias C. Berkman note that “[n]o sectoral specialist wants to be the one whose sector is consigned to second, third, or fourth tier in the national recovery plan; all will argue that their sector must be active at the earliest possible moment.” This challenge is exacerbated by the proliferation of UN entities engaged in such aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding as reforming security agencies, monitoring elections, establishing institutions to hold war criminals to account, promoting inter-communal tolerance, building the capacity of civil society advocates to lobby for democratic development, or engaging women in all of the above.

PBC members assigned the PBSO the responsibility of proposing the initial scope and format of IPBSs. The first two countries on the commission’s agenda would be the test cases. Very early in the process of contemplating precisely what an IPBS might look like, there was considerable doubt about the utility of producing yet another strategic framework. Richard Ponzio, a future PBSO staff member, captured this spirit by questioning the motivation for IPBSs in PBC countries: “how could yet another strategic peacebuilding framework benefit a country such as Sierra Leone, which … already maintains a Poverty Reduction Strategy, a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and a Peace Consolidation Strategy?” Having “Member States determining at UN Headquarters specifically how UN bodies should work with one another and on which activities in a particular country context” risked merely “adding a layer of confusion.” This was a fairly close approximation of the impact of the PBC’s deliberations during its first year or two in existence. Ponzio rightly sensed that—as we will see in Chapter 4—post-conflict countries had reached the point of framework saturation.

Where Ponzio proved perhaps less realistic was in expecting IPBSs to “serve as a major instrument for tracking progress toward concrete democratization benchmarks and ensuring domestic and international accountability.” He also wanted the PBC to “champion a culture of ‘zero tolerance for corruption,’” demanding “honest behaviour … in exchange for sustained international engagement.” A limited number of the priorities identified in PBC-devised IPBSs during 2006–08 reflected a concern with such issues, but no evidence exists of corruption having been reduced or governance made more responsive as a result. Still, securing a public commitment is significant even if not, on its own, materially consequential.

The PBSO initially conceived of the IPBS as a “compact”—emulating the terminology of the aid-coordination/national-planning agreement used in Afghanistan following the Taliban’s demise in late 2001. Compacts of this type specify goals that development agencies and
government authorities will pursue, and actions that will be taken. The word compact struck some (mainly developing country) PBC members as too binding and “legalistic” for what resolution 1645 had called merely a “strategy.” The term “framework” was ultimately agreed upon. Nevertheless, these frameworks mirrored the form of a compact, indicating commitments on the part of donors, government authorities, and the PBC itself. Enforcement mechanisms were, however, conspicuously absent.

The development of the Sierra Leone framework was a long and drawn out process described in detail by close observers. Significantly, the PBC proved reluctant to agree to any comprehensive framework until Sierra Leone’s elections were held in late 2007. This was matched by the Sierra Leone government’s insistence that it would not agree to a publicly accessible document outlining substantive commitments or detailing the procedure for monitoring and tracking them. Burundi faced similar difficulties during this period. Having already developed a “conflict-sensitive” PRSP, the government of Burundi, as well as the UN mission in Burundi, strongly discouraged the PBC from producing yet another strategy document. Not only the potentially conflicting “priorities,” but the sheer administrative chore of formulating and tracking such a document, was a strain on the government’s thin human resources.

By the end of 2007, the PBC had developed an IPBS for each of the two countries on its agenda: a Peacebuilding Framework for Sierra Leone, and a Strategic Framework for Burundi. “Strategic Framework” would ultimately win out as the generic term for the IPBSs mentioned in the PBC’s founding resolutions. (Hereinafter the term “framework” refers to these documents.) Each national framework ostensibly represents a common approach to rebuilding state authority that all actors—national and international—have agreed jointly to pursue. A shared vision, complemented by an agreed division of labor, should theoretically mitigate the fragmentation that debilitates the international community’s work in so many post-conflict environments.

Substantively, the PBC-brokered frameworks for Burundi and Sierra Leone were unoriginal. They were largely collages of existing national strategy documents, for the most part reaffirming the importance of policy measures and institutional reforms that had already, in one form or another, been agreed to between each of the governments and its respective consortium of donors. The framework documents for Burundi and Sierra Leone did assign general responsibilities to government actors, external donors, and indeed the PBC. A number of sectoral priorities were also identified for each country. Still, the PBC has no authority to insist that independently governed international entities—the bilateral
aid programs of leading member states as well as the operational staff of multilateral agencies—restructure their country strategies if these appear to duplicate (or in some other way undermine) the collective work of peacebuilding actors, domestic or external.

An early assessment of the PBC criticized its “apolitical” approach to peacebuilding. The PBC had focused too much on “resources and donor coordination, rather than a more complex combination” of factors, including “the political root causes and legacies of conflict, especially in cases where a party to the former conflict may still be in power.” To demonstrate its value-added, the PBC was advised to “go beyond the question of resources and address the difficult political sticking points in national peacebuilding processes.” Unfortunately, in the name of diplomatic decorum, “the PBC may hesitate to be too critical of governance at country level” or may discuss domestic political obstacles only in “vague language and at a very superficial level.” The report questioned the PBC’s institutional capacity to ask “tough questions” of governments when implementation of national peacebuilding frameworks was reviewed. The PBC’s natural inclination would be to “cloak the failures of various actors”—including donors—“behind the ambiguous diplomatic language that often characterizes public UN debates.”

These suspicions proved justified. The PBC’s experience of monitoring the Burundi and Sierra Leone peacebuilding frameworks was unimpressive. Neither the structure nor content of these documents, nor the process by which they were agreed, influenced the behavior of government authorities or donor agencies in a meaningful way. Observers found the documents “vague,” lacking in sequencing of identified peacebuilding priorities, and without an adequate division of labor. One author claimed that

Without a detailed delegation of tasks to both UN bodies and bilateral partners ... misunderstandings about responsibilities and tasks among UN agencies and international donor countries are likely. Furthermore, Burundi’s IPBS did not specify any mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating the document’s provisions ... These were only agreed upon in November 2007, almost half a year after the IPBS.

Indeed, the text of the frameworks themselves did not contain specific provisions for creating or operating enforcement mechanisms. Equally difficult was identifying mutually acceptable benchmarks for measuring progress in the typical “priority areas” identified: youth employment, governance reform, security sector restructuring, capacity-building,
and so forth. To PBC “agenda” countries, the idea of specifying the passage of reform legislation in any policy sector sounded suspiciously like the era of IFI policy-based conditionality, and hardly in tune with the contemporary emphasis on national ownership.

Disagreements about how the frameworks would be monitored were more acrimonious than debates over their content. In early 2007, a group of mainly donor PBC members initiated consultation on various proposed methods for tracking progress in implementing the frameworks. Almost every aspect of the “follow-up” process became a point of contention. First, clarification was sought on whether the PBC itself (or some subset of PBC members) would coordinate the monitoring. Questions remained concerning how frequently monitoring would occur, and through what sort of reporting procedure. Second, debate took place concerning whether monitoring would be based on previously agreed “indicators”—and if so, whether these would be qualitative or quantitative, whether they would focus on processes or outcomes, whether they would be based on self-reporting by government agencies or on independent assessments, and so on. Third, there was disagreement as to whether progress on individual indicators would be assessed against “benchmarks” (performance targets)—and if so, how these targets might be determined. Fourth, and perhaps most controversially, discussion took place over whether progress in meeting performance benchmarks (on agreed indicators, monitored through a defined procedure) would trigger “consequences”—and if so, what these might be and whether extenuating circumstances would be taken into account when assessing the adequacy of national efforts.

The governments of Burundi and Sierra Leone proved very adept at warding off attempts to bring unwanted agenda items into the national frameworks they agreed with the PBC. The issue of natural-resource extraction, for instance, was conspicuous by its absence in the version of the Sierra Leone framework agreed by the PBC in June 2007, much to the consternation of international nongovernmental organizations (INGOs) such as Global Witness, which complained of this omission in a 2007 report issued to coincide with a series of Sierra Leone CSC meetings and the chair’s visit to Freetown.22 Burundi, for its part, successfully resisted calls for the PBC to monitor more closely what was seen as a deteriorating human rights situation.23

The monitoring and tracking mechanism for Burundi’s IPBS was launched in November 2007. It was praised for helping to institutionalize donor-government dialogue in Burundi.24 It was developed partly in response to what was seen as a successful donor conference in Bujumbura in May 2007. Tellingly, the conference’s Final Communiqué
indicated that Burundi’s PRSP “remains the operational framework for all the parties operating in Burundi.” Nowhere is the PBC or the PBSO even mentioned, though both subsequently claimed credit for the conference’s “success” in “exceeding” the pledge target. The pledges totaled US$655.6 million, $175.2 million of which was not earmarked and would therefore support the national budget. Less than 20 percent of this total ever materialized as disbursements above previously agreed funding levels.

The monitoring and tracking mechanism appeared to be a relatively detailed document. An annex contained a matrix for each of the six “priority” areas, but they were defined so broadly as to call into question whether or not much prioritizing was going on at all. Almost every positive scenario one might wish for was included. They were not priority-ranked—either with respect to resources (which would determine funding levels), or in terms of activity sequences (which would indicate the order in which reform measures would be executed).

The promised “engagements” by the PBC and government of Burundi—the term “commitments” was rejected as too constraining—were similarly thin in all six “priority areas.” The PBC, for instance, promised merely to urge “all relevant international actors to support … the implementation of the Comprehensive Ceasefire by December 2007.” Had a framework document not existed, would they not have issued such a call? The government of Burundi’s “engagements” were equally anodyne. The “Promoting Good Governance” priority involved efforts to “accelerate the rebuilding of a functional public administration and its decentralization.”

The actions that moved beyond familiar territory were articulated in “priority area 5,” which in addition to mentioning “socio-economic recovery” for war-affected people also referred to the “land issue.” This centered on internally displaced persons (IDPs) and refugees returning to properties that had been seized by private citizens, militia forces, or government entities. The “benchmarks” for measuring progress were vague enough to prevent genuine assessment of progress. The monitoring document merely hoped that “[e]nough resources” would be allocated to activities “that contribute to solving land issues,” and for a “well resourced institutional and legal mechanism for the sustainable resolution of the land issue.”

The PBC’s approach to engaging with Burundi and Sierra Leone was immediately called into question. Even before negotiating its national framework documents, an announcement was made that $35 million in PBF resources had been allotted to the government of Sierra Leone. (A similar amount was eventually earmarked for Burundi to
ensure equality of treatment.) This amounted to roughly 10 percent of Sierra Leone’s annual Official Development Assistance—a significant contribution. It became clear in the process of the PBC’s engagement with Sierra Leone that the government was more interested in securing the release of PBF resources than it was in the more arduous and potentially less lucrative process of formulating what was to become the peace-building framework. This surprised no one. As one observer noted, the PBF was “a lot of money with no analysis,” whereas the PBC’s work on the strategic framework represented “a lot of analysis with no money.”

An NGO assessment eventually criticized the PBC for making the “mistake” of agreeing to a “priority plan” for PBF spending “before the mutual political commitments [from the subsequently developed framework] had been agreed.”

Donor governments represented on the PBC recognized that this approach—of funding commitments before strategic planning—reduced the PBC’s leverage: once PBF resources were approved, a post-conflict country had less incentive to engage with the PBC. Donors wanted to prevent this precedent from hardening, arguing that a country’s funding ceiling should be agreed only after a credible, prioritized peace-consolidation strategy had been negotiated with the PBC. PBC agenda countries would need to “eat their spinach” before getting “dessert,” as one European delegate put it. Temporarily withholding PBF resources might have allowed the PBC to extract commitments from the government of Sierra Leone to take such crucial (and already “nationally owned”) actions as implementing the recommendations of the country’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Resisting inclusion of even soft benchmarks for their respective frameworks, the governments of Burundi and Sierra Leone knew that even to specify indicators was to place themselves on a slippery slope leading, logically and inexorably, toward “consequences.” Even so, a certain amount of playing along was de rigueur. In the end, a skeletal monitoring document was appended to the PBC’s report on its review of the Sierra Leone framework. It contained no hard benchmarks. Burundi, on the other hand, did agree to a monitoring and tracking mechanism that included a number of “soft” targets.

Burundi and Sierra Leone were able successfully to prevent the adoption of intrusive monitoring procedures primarily because of pressure exerted by Southern PBC members. Aid-recipient member states sought to use PBC deliberations on Burundi and Sierra Leone as a platform for reasserting the principle of national ownership, and for questioning donors’ commitment to honoring it in practice. The governments of Burundi and Sierra Leone reiterated their intention to implement
reforms necessary to consolidate peace, expressing dismay that their international “partners” did not trust them to pursue with vigor what were, nominally at least, nationally owned strategies.34

This minor skirmish in the world of aid diplomacy is only significant insofar as it highlights the PBC’s status as one more intergovernmental arena in which long-running political battles can be enacted, turf protected, rivals one-upped. At the PBC, as elsewhere in the international system, the North–South divide, pitting developed against developing countries, frames much of the sparring. As one account of the “wider UN dynamics” that played themselves out in the PBC’s infancy put it, G77 countries, “fearing that donors could exercise an undue influence in the work of the PBC,” pressed for the use of formal procedures in conducting the commission’s work. Skirmishes between developing and developed country members reflected “the ongoing tension around the UN budget cap debate, the dispute over UN management reform and even residual anger over fixed seats for the P-5 in the PBC itself.”35

As an arena for contestation, the PBC and its component parts also attract attention from bureaucratic interests and advocacy organizations seeking to advance their agendas. For instance, in late 2006, the Secretary-General’s representative on Human Rights for Internally Displaced Persons informed the General Assembly’s “Third Committee” that he expected the PBC “to be an extremely important body to address situations of internal displacement.”36 The jockeying for position began even before the PBC came into being.37

Contestation at the PBC is powerfully influenced by the composition of its membership. The PBC is based, in part, on a “stakeholder” model of representation.38 Constituencies with a direct interest in international peacebuilding are included in the PBC’s membership, the selection of the representatives delegated to stakeholder groups themselves. While UN bodies are not typically founded on the stakeholder model, its underlying principles are not completely alien. The Security Council, by providing permanent, veto-wielding seats to just five states, embodies the idea that some states have a bigger-than-average stake in international peace and security, and a greater capacity to promote it. The PBC’s creation acknowledged that the international community has a collective interest in preventing post-conflict states from relapsing. Failed states provide a haven for terrorists and money-launderers, generate waves of refugees, and spread conflict and insecurity—all of which adversely affect the global political environment.

However, because some constituencies are more directly affected than others—or possess disproportionate remedial capacity—the commission comprises representatives from five stakeholder categories, each of
whose inclusion is justified differently. The Security Council’s seven-seat quota represents states that collectively decide whether to wind down individual peace operations, to amend an operation’s mandate, or to begin a new one. The five-seat troop-contributing country (TCC) quota implicitly acknowledges that, if peace is not consolidated, then it is to this relatively small group of states that the UN will turn for additional peacekeepers; such states ought therefore to have a voice in shaping UN approaches to preventing conflict-recurrence. The five-seat donor quota reflects awareness that leading aid providers will largely determine whether the PBC can successfully “marshal resources” for peacebuilding. The ECOSOC and General Assembly quotas—seven seats each—recognize that peacebuilding is partly about development, ECOSOC’s specialty, but also that international peacebuilding is in desperate need of political legitimacy, in which the General Assembly has a comparative advantage.

The stakeholder model has practical implications for the PBC’s efforts in other areas. For instance, the PBC is one among many bodies that attempt to coordinate the actions of aid donors. It is different from other aid-coordination mechanisms for three reasons. First, as part of the UN, the linchpin of the international system, the PBC obtains a legitimacy premium over other plurilateral forums. Second, the PBC focuses on security issues, and is linked to the one intergovernmental body (the Security Council) that possesses the international legal authority to organize military action. These two differences are apparent to most observers, and have been commented upon in PBC deliberations.

The third difference between the PBC and other aid-coordination mechanisms has been the most consequential: the deliberative setting that the PBC’s particular form of stakeholder engagement creates. Most substantive donor-recipient engagements take place “bilaterally.” Donor agencies (bilateral and multilateral) negotiate with the lead government entity for each policy area. Donor coordination, when it occurs, typically takes one of three forms. The first involves agencies generating consensus about good practice independent of deliberations on any particular recipient-country case. This type of coordination is exemplified by the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which operates as something like a trade association for donor agencies. The DAC operates working groups on governance, macroeconomic policy and, as we shall see, “aid effectiveness,” among other topics.

The second form of donor coordination is represented by the Consultative Group (CG) constituted for each aid-recipient country. CGs are intended to promote dialogue among donors, governments, and
(increasingly) civil society. They review performance and discuss upcoming reform milestones. What distinguishes this variety of coordination mechanism from the first is that it focuses on individual recipient countries rather than best practice in the abstract.

Like the CGs, the third form of donor coordination brings together donors and recipient-government officials. In this case, however, unlike the earlier two, the mechanism revolves around a specific planning framework. “Framework-focused” approaches to coordination can address a sector (for instance, through a Sector-Wide Approach in health or education) or a thematic area (such as governance or gender equality). PRSPs, which aid-recipient governments must devise to qualify for debt relief and concessional finance from the IFIs, are a notably comprehensive framework genre.

The PBC’s version of aid-coordination does not fit neatly into any of these three categories. Like the second and third varieties, the PBC’s various CSCs convene a cross-section of donors for sustained engagement with national authorities; however, unlike these two models, the PBC includes in its country-specific deliberations a range of aid-recipient governments as well. These countries have not secured PBC membership because of their status as aid-recipient states. Officially, they represent one of the PBC’s functional or institutional categories. Nevertheless, almost all of the top TCCs are aid-recipient states, as are a majority of PBC members from the General Assembly and ECOSOC quotas.

Even so, the presence of so many aid-recipient governments in the PBC substantially alters the underlying negotiating dynamic between donor members and the post-conflict countries on its agenda. Aid-recipient governments tend to be more sympathetic to the plight of other aid-recipient governments. In short, the membership structure of the PBC provides additional allies for the post-conflict governments on its agenda. Such backing is invaluable to governments that find their past actions, present situation, and future prospects under scrutiny by donors, bilateral and multilateral, with PBC representation. In any aid-coordination forum, the substantive and political differences that exist among donors limit their ability to close ranks against a recipient government that refuses to follow a multilaterally agreed course of action. However, the active involvement of aid-recipient countries in the PBC’s deliberations further reduces the effective leverage of donors pressuring post-conflict governments to pursue particular budget priorities or institutional reforms.

From the very first CSC meetings, aid-recipient PBC members forcefully and consistently urged the commission to prioritize “national ownership” in its engagement with Burundi and Sierra Leone. The IPBSs that the PBC is mandated to devise for countries on its agenda must,
they argued, be “homegrown.” Discussions had to be conducted in the spirit of the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. As noted in Chapter 2, this is a landmark agreement on the relationship between aid donors and recipients adopted under the OECD’s auspices in March 2005, just months before the PBC was created. The PBC could advise, but the post-conflict government concerned would have to consent. Cooperation and consensus, rather than compulsion and conditionality, would have to characterize all interactions between the PBC and the countries on its agenda.

During the PBC’s first two and a half years—by which time the Paris Declaration was three years old—donors continued to deviate from these tenets of good “donorship.” In many highly aid-reliant countries, external assistance came with the usual strings attached. Some donors increased the proportion of aid channeled through national budgets, though earmarked program and project funding remained substantial. Some donors became more open to national perspectives on the pace, sequencing, and, in some cases, even content of reform. On core issues, though—the determinants of developmental performance, or the key drivers of conflict—recipient governments found it difficult to depart from the prevailing international orthodoxy.

To be fair, donors had reason to believe that without threats to curtail funding or diplomatic support, difficult reforms would either be abandoned or implemented to benefit regime-affiliated elites, quite possibly to the detriment of lasting peace. Promoting systemic change through governments whose leaders perceive fundamental reform as inimical to their political interests remains an enduring paradox for donors. They recognize that the reluctance of national leaders to create truly independent oversight institutions or shut down inefficient state-owned enterprises stems from the need to placate powerful defenders of the status quo in order to retain office. Nevertheless, donors side-step the “national ownership” imperative more frequently with post-conflict countries than with traditional aid-recipient countries. An OECD report acknowledges that post-conflict states are different from conventional developing countries, even while reaffirming the organization’s commitment to Paris principles.

Treating post-conflict countries as a unique species of aid-recipient state is not without justification. States emerging from civil war usually possess incomplete sovereignty. Even where they have regained “international legal sovereignty”—recognition by foreign governments, the ability to incur sovereign debt—post-conflict governments often possess only a tentative claim to de facto sovereignty. They sometimes lack the ability to control flows of goods and people across their borders, or
even to maintain an institutionalized presence throughout the bulk of their territory, let alone provide basic services. For most countries emerging from civil war, securing a monopoly over the legitimate use of force is precisely what they are working toward, not something that can be assumed when devising modalities for external support.

Post-conflict states, moreover, often do not possess the capacity to adhere to the responsibilities that emerging human rights norms impose upon them, casting into doubt even their claim to “external sovereignty”—the presumption of being juridically equal to other states—which is increasingly fashioned as conditional rather than absolute.\(^{44}\) It is for these reasons, as we saw briefly in the Introduction, that such states have in extreme cases become wards of the international community, their sovereignty placed temporarily under the trusteeship of UN-backed (and donor-supported) “transitional administrations.”\(^{45}\) In less drastic cases, the international community has exercised the functions of governance even as nominal sovereignty has remained in the hands of national authorities. A gradual transition toward full sovereignty takes place as UN peacekeepers and other international actors cede control to local authorities.

**An instinct for self-preservation**

Despite its shortcomings, the commission was able during its first two and a half years to become, and remain, a going concern—actively deliberating on country cases, on the basis of agreed procedures, timelines, and outputs. PBC members generally took their duties seriously, even as ambitious diplomats recognized that the PBC’s somewhat marginal status made it a less-than-promising vehicle for career advancement. Donors were at least rhetorically committed to increasing resources for countries on the PBC’s agenda.

One dimension of the PBC’s institutional survival was the continuous process of regularizing the body’s procedures—defining functions, formalizing organizational roles, and operationalizing the machinery for receiving and disseminating information. The second dimension of institutional survival—continued investment by stakeholders involved in the PBC’s work—is equally important, however. A cross-section of PBC members prioritized the development of its institutionalized link with the Security Council, a key stakeholder constituency. Their approach centered not on the PBC collectively, but on its CSCs, and especially the chairs of these configurations, who appeared best positioned to provide added value.

Sustained lobbying during the PBC’s early months led the Security Council to extend ad hoc invitations to the chairs of the PBC’s two
This precedent began taking root in December 2007, when the chair of the Burundi configuration briefed the council, which was considering a report on the UN Integrated Office in Burundi. The nationalities of CSC chairs—two came from important donor countries and one from Brazil, an emerging power—also helped to ease their passage into the Security Council’s institutional milieu.

CSC chairs can potentially perform a valuable function at the Security Council. When the council deliberates on mandate renewal or other matters related to a field mission, it relies largely on oral briefings as well as country-specific reports prepared by the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). Not surprisingly, SRSGs are frequently accused of allowing personal biases or career ambitions to influence their reports. Security Council members often regard SRSGs as excessively solicitous of the sensitivities of host governments, to the point of defending dubious national policies. SRSGs are also sometimes suspected of prioritizing initiatives that will yield visible results before they leave office, regardless of whether these actions represent optimal investments in long-term peace. Moreover, officials in the Secretary-General’s office who revise and “clear” these country-specific reports attempt to make the findings as politically appealing as possible, spurring further doubts among council members about the reports’ accuracy and impartiality. Security Council members seek additional channels of information and analysis to inform their deliberations. The popularity of the “Security Council Reports” series of publications, produced by a nongovernmental research organization, is testament to this thirst for unbiased analysis.

Seeking to exploit this opening, CSC chairs increasingly used their Security Council briefings to position the PBC (and by extension the PBSO) as a credible source of alternative perspectives on specific countries. CSC chairs are in many cases highly respected members of the diplomatic fraternity, whose assessments are listened to closely, especially if they are major donors to the country under consideration. CSC chairs travelled regularly to the countries with which they were engaged, a practice that council members, facing a heavier caseload, cannot readily adopt. That CSC meetings are more open to civil-society participation, particularly from the post-conflict countries concerned, adds further analytical depth, if not political weight, to the assessments offered by CSC chairs. Whether or not Security Council briefings by CSC chairs are substantively valuable, they indicate a degree of council support, in principle, for the PBC playing at least a nominal advisory role. They represent a significant contribution to the PBC’s survival as a functioning enterprise.
Even so, during the period covered in this chapter the tenor of relations between the Security Council and the PBC gradually deteriorated. While some council members felt the PBC was treading on its territory, some PBC members questioned whether the council was according the PBC sufficient respect. In one instance, recalling a council meeting to which PBC members had been invited, Angola noted that it “was concerned about the manner in which some Commission members had been treated. For example, Jamaica had not been given the opportunity to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement [NAM].” Angola concluded that “[i]n future, the Council should make Commission members feel welcome.”

In Burundi and Sierra Leone, the cases on which this chapter focuses, the PBC did not engender the deep coherence among external development actors that its architects hoped it would. The PBC may even at times have exacerbated latent tensions between Burundi and Sierra Leone and their respective international donors—the antithesis of coordination.

Paradoxically, these heightened tensions have contributed to enhanced coherence of another kind: by broadcasting donor-recipient disagreements to a wider audience of stakeholders, including an additional complement of member states, PBC deliberations created openings for (mainly) developing countries, abetted by elements within the UN bureaucracy, to counter what is widely regarded as the excessive influence of the Washington-based IFIs in fragile and post-conflict situations. Complaints had long been voiced about the rigidity of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) policy prescriptions, and the problems they pose from a peacebuilding perspective. Under certain circumstances, hastily shrinking the government payroll can prove politically disastrous, depriving national authorities of opportunities to accommodate potential spoilers with senior public-sector positions. Such an approach would typically include posts with significant patronage potential—in effect offering wavering seed capital for a (non-violent) political career.

Policy outcomes that IFI officials might regard as unpleasant but unavoidable economic dislocations—short-term costs in support of long-term growth—can have other grave political and security implications as well. Policies with unequal distributional consequences across regions or ethnic groups can upset delicate mediation efforts. Some UN officials argue that Security Council mandates to prevent conflict recurrence should not be bound by economic orthodoxy. The early phases of peacebuilding almost by definition involve strengthening the state’s hand in the economy more than mainstream economists are generally
comfortable advocating. A former high-level official, who served in both the UN and the IMF, has written of the difficulty she faced in the 1980s and 1990s trying to convince IFI decision makers that post-conflict environments were a special case requiring special treatment—not “development as usual.” She argued that while it is understandable that World Bank and IMF officials confronted with a distinct set of organizational incentives would favor a limited menu of policy options, ultimately economic orthodoxies must yield to the logic of peacebuilding.\(^5^8\)

UN officials have long sought ways to counter what they regard as the IFIs’ outsized influence over national development planning in aid-recipient countries.\(^5^9\) In countries where the UN has a stronger claim to strategic if not operational leadership by virtue of its unique dual (economic and security) mandate, IFI efforts to dictate the content of national recovery planning, including PRSPs, have triggered particularly vehement reactions.\(^6^0\) Efforts to “balance” the IFIs can be traced at least as far back as the promotion of the concept of human development in the 1980s, which came to be institutionalized in the UN Development Programme’s (UNDP) annual *Human Development Report*.\(^6^1\) This impulse continues: during 2006–07 a group of UN agencies commissioned a study to assess methods for increasing the UN’s “voice” in the formulation of PRSPs.\(^6^2\)

A PRSP is a comprehensive national vision of a country’s human development objectives and how the state, international donors, and civil society will collectively realize them. A recipient government must devise and adhere to its PRSP to qualify for concessional lending or long-term debt-relief from the IFIs. IFI approval also determines eligibility for funding from many bilateral donors. This, say critics, leads aid-recipient governments to be unduly influenced by World Bank and IMF staff, who cultivate relationships with government officials; those deemed promising are offered Washington consultancies, training opportunities, and “study leaves” to write policy reports.\(^6^3\) The IFIs also employ many more highly trained, technically capable economists than the UN does. Possessing substantial in-house expertise in almost every sub-discipline of economics and on most sectoral issues furnishes the bank and the IMF with a huge agenda-setting advantage.\(^6^4\)

These twin forms of contestation—between Northern and Southern states, and between UN and IFI officials—spilled over into the PBC’s work soon after the first two countries on its agenda were announced. Repurposing the PBC to counter IFI influence was particularly appealing to developing-country members, many of which considered themselves victims, at one point or another, of high-handed treatment by Bank and Fund staff.\(^6^5\) They embraced the view that IFI approaches
were too rigid for post-conflict contexts, which require a more pragmatic, improvisational approach. That the World Bank needed reining in was something on which many donor and developing country PBC members, as well as a good number of UN officials, could agree.

While using the PBC to enhance post-conflict governments’ negotiating leverage with the IFIs was an attractive proposition, in practice there were few opportunities to make a concrete difference. One example, however, was the PBC’s response to Burundi’s mid-2007 budget crisis. In September 2007 the (Norwegian) chair of the PBC’s Burundi configuration undertook a field mission to apprise himself of recent developments and assess the condition of the country’s core institutions. Following the chair’s return, the PBC convened several meetings to discuss the bottlenecks to peace in Burundi. Many of the problems were political, such as the breakdown of the agreement under which Burundi’s remaining rebel forces were to disarm and the parliamentary gridlock preventing passage of legislation that the government had promised to enact. The Burundi CSC chair’s mission report noted that the deteriorating social, political, and economic situation was being exacerbated by the IMF’s failure to complete the sixth (and final) review of Burundi’s economic reform program, as required under the terms of the IMF’s Poverty Reduction Growth Facility (PRGF) agreement with Burundi. Consequently, $93 million in bilateral and multilateral aid could not reach Burundi’s treasury. The delay in completing the review was widely seen as a tactic to pressure Burundi’s government to implement outstanding reforms.

During the PBC’s subsequent deliberations, Burundi’s UN ambassador expressed concern about the IMF’s doctrinaire approach to his country’s financial-cum-political crisis. The IMF allegedly pressed the government to reduce the budget deficit by raising the price at which state-owned distributors sold petroleum. Such an approach, the PBC was told, ignored Burundi’s fragile political situation, which had been unsettled not only by continued difficulties in implementing an agreement between the government and remaining rebel forces, but also by a series of destabilizing events, including a strike threat by magistrates. The government was finding it difficult to pay civil servants, a recipe for further instability.

Burundi’s ambassador informed PBC members that his government had met 80 percent of the policy and institutional reform commitments set forth in its IMF program, and that disrupting the flow of funds would not make achieving the other 20 percent any easier. He characterized the IMF’s concerns about probity in public office as reducible to a single incident of corruption, which the government had, he
asserted, already addressed. Corruption had been a key element of the IMF’s “governance concerns” during negotiations over how to conduct the final PRGF review. Invoking the PBC’s mandate to promote coordination, Burundi’s ambassador suggested euphemistically that “[p]erhaps the IMF was not working hand-in-hand with the [PBC].” Egypt, Jamaica, and other PBC members from the NAM chimed in sympathetically. They requested information from the IMF on its negotiations with the Burundian authorities. For the first time in the PBC’s 15-month existence, the IMF deputed senior officials to discuss substance with PBC members. The IMF received a stern “talking to” from several PBC members, North and South. IMF officials reportedly demonstrated greater flexibility from that point forward, at least for a time.

The PBC’s report on the Burundi situation contained a section outlining “conclusions” and “recommendations.” It called on the government to “investigate fully and immediately recent governance issues and take necessary steps to ... effectively prevent misuse and misappropriation of public funds.” However, the PBC was also unusually direct in calling on the IFIs to “take into account ... the fragile situation in the country,” when considering “early disbursement of financial support.” The report also recommended that the World Bank and the IMF “continue to actively follow-up on the commitments made at the May 2007 Round Table and consider additional and/or alternative financial support in the context of the fragile budgetary situation.” This was a coded dig at the Bank and the Fund for failing to corral donors into making good on their pledges.

In late September 2007, the day after the PBC’s recommendations on Burundi were issued, the IMF executive board decided to grant a waiver to Burundi that permitted a resumption of PRGF funding. This stabilized Burundi’s fiscal position, alleviating some of the political uncertainty that had in part stalled the government’s legislative agenda. In January 2008, the IMF formally completed its final review of Burundi’s PRGF program. The IMF’s statement concerning the release of funds cited the government’s pursuit of sound macroeconomic policies, making no reference to the array of actions that had, still, not been taken.

The PBC’s role, if any, in hastening the release of funds to Burundi, is difficult to quantify. Its intergovernmental sessions did, however, provide a high-profile forum for a cross-section of the international community to reaffirm that economic considerations must occasionally take a backseat to the imperatives of maintaining peace. The spotlight cast on the IMF by the PBC’s involvement may have increased the
perceived reputational cost to IMF officials of taking a hard line when
governments fail to implement reforms. The PBC’s diverse membership
and its status as an advisory body to the Security Council made it
difficult simply to ignore. On their own, developing countries are a weak
lobby, but when allied with progressive donors and supportive UN
officials, voices favoring a less intrusive role for the IFIs can be amplified.

Skeptics might wonder why a donor would prefer the indirect route
of PBC engagement to influence IMF policy to working with the IMF
directly. However, these are not mutually exclusive strategies. PBC mem-
bership is meant to supplement (not substitute for) existing organiza-
tional engagements. While donors are well represented on IFI boards,
their governments’ positions therein tend to be determined by their finance
ministries, not their foreign ministries. The PBC thus offers foreign min-
istries, to which UN diplomats generally answer, an indirect voice in
country-specific contexts where Bank and Fund officials generally pre-
dominate. When economic questions are translated as threats to the peace,
diplomats and national security actors more frequently prevail over their
rivals from treasury. The PBC’s early engagement with Burundi and
Sierra Leone has thus reaffirmed the view that conflict-reducing measures
must often trump economic policy preoccupations.

In this “survival” phase, the PBC focused on establishing routines
and securing stakeholder investment. On both counts, the record was
mixed. This did not prevent PBC members from celebrating whatever
small victories could be mustered. Member states praised the PBC’s
working methods for being more open and “interactive” than typical
intergovernmental bodies. One respected nongovernmental monitoring
service observed with some satisfaction that the PBC had “conducted
many of the Burundi and Sierra Leone meetings with video links to
Bujumbura and Freetown. It invited high-level UN officials to address
meetings. It had briefings by NGOs and specialists outside the UN,
and it undertook field missions to Burundi and Sierra Leone.” The
novelty of some of these practices is open to question, however. Video
teleconferencing and CSO speakers have been used in other intergovern-
mental bodies, including the Security Council. The PBC, in fact, received
numerous complaints in May 2007 when it produced what were seen as
excessively restrictive procedures for CSO participation.

Even “recognition” by other UN organs—a relatively minor form of
stakeholder investment—was gratefully welcomed by the PBC. In May
2008, for instance, members greeted references to the PBC in Security
Council resolution 1829 with a round of self-congratulation. The reso-
lution stated that the UN’s new “peacebuilding” mission in Sierra
Leone should be “[c]losely coordinating with and supporting the work
of the Peacebuilding Commission, as well as the implementation of the Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework and projects supported through the Peacebuilding Fund.” Examined more closely, this involved no additional leverage for the PBC, and yet potentially a lot more influence for the PBSO, through its role as PBF manager. Even this, as we will see below, took years to evolve.

The PBSO

The PBSO was the earliest component of the PBA to take concrete shape. Its creation was itself an act of faith, approved by the Secretary General several months before the passage of Security Council resolution 1645. The first sentence of the 13 July 2005 “Decision” of the Secretary-General states that “[a] Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) will be established.” This directive outlined more or less the PBSO that came to be: located in the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), headed by an Assistant Secretary-General (ASG), staffed by 15–20 professionals, and so forth. However, the July 2005 Secretary-General’s Decision (issued while member states were still deep in negotiations over the text of the World Summit Outcome Document) also provided a glimpse of the PBSO that might have been. For instance, the Decision indicated that the PBSO was being considered as a host for the inter-agency Rule of Law Unit then being developed. The Rule of Law Unit ultimately became a separate office within the EOSG, reporting to the Deputy Secretary-General.

As we have seen, peacebuilding—and the commission in particular—had by 2005 become a common arena for North–South contention. Because they regarded the PBSO as a potential Trojan Horse for further council encroachment on the UN’s development agenda, G77 representatives on the General Assembly’s budget committees were adamant that resolution 1645’s call for a “small” PBSO should be taken at face value. They successfully if temporarily blocked the Secretary-General’s modest appropriation requests to establish the PBSO, and refused to deviate from what they considered the resolution’s clear provisions on PBSO staffing. Staff was to be drawn from existing human resources, including temporarily loaned staff. In theory, this would conserve resources by reducing functional redundancies. Moreover, seconding staff from both secretariat departments and UN agencies might spur greater “buy-in” to the PBA concept from across the UN system. The downside was that building organizational capacity requires a degree of staff continuity. Moreover, UN entities tend not to loan out their most capable staff members.
The first ASG for Peacebuilding Support was appointed in early 2006. The choice was strategic for three reasons. First, the ASG came to New York directly from serving as SRSG for Burundi, having overseen the implementation of much of the Arusha peace agreement and a substantial winding-down of the UN’s military peacekeeping presence. She understood the problems faced by UN representatives in the field. Second, the ASG combined direct experience of security issues with deep involvement in development policy—an ideal profile for the head of an office devoted to bridging these two domains. Finally, the ASG was from Canada, historically a provider of both peacekeepers and financial assistance, and a strong and early proponent of peacebuilding as a field of practical action and, conceptually, a process for advancing human security.

The PBSO quickly encountered the need to do three things: support the commission on the basis of a program of work to be devised by the membership; promote a coordinated response among UN and other international actors engaged in peacebuilding, including through the development of common norms, principles, and standards; and oversee the operation of the PBF. The three tasks, while similar to the three elements of the PBC’s mandate, are distinct. The approach taken to the PBSO’s internal structure did not, however, mirror this three-part functional division.91

Within months of the PBC’s first meeting, it became apparent that an ASG with an inadequate budget and a skeleton staff on loan from other organizations was ill-equipped to service the administrative needs of an intergovernmental body. Formal meetings needed to be arranged, background papers written, briefings for chairpersons staffed, legal opinions sought, country-specific expertise consulted, minutes distributed and approved, communications strategies devised, and so on. The adverse effects of the PBSO’s staff shortages and lack of basic administrative infrastructure could have been mitigated had the PBC chosen to elect as its first chair a member state with administrative capacity to spare. Instead, the PBC’s G77 members pushed for the election of Angola, a country with a recent history that might provide it with important perspectives on peacebuilding but with a UN mission too small to serve as an adjunct secretariat.

The PBSO’s dearth of specialized staff, combined with continued ambiguity as to the PBC’s precise value-added, meant that crucial tasks were assigned to relatively junior officials, some of whom had no field experience. One such assignment was to devise the IPBSs, or frameworks, discussed earlier. After a prolonged period of internal debate and discussion, much of which took place without the benefit of a clear
process for identifying the criteria against which such a document might be assessed, a junior staff member, on loan from another UN entity, was given a week to review existing models of international engagement drawn from the official and academic literature, and to provide options for the PBC.92 Also striking was the PBSO’s weak financial management capacity, particularly for an entity charged with overseeing a sizable multi-donor trust fund (MDTF). Much of the burden of improvising fell to consultants lacking resources and authority.

The PBSO inherited two institutional traits that made it, potentially, a more formidable institutional actor than its modest footprint and limited mandate might suggest. First, as an independent “Office,” located within neither DPKO nor DPA, the PBSO stands in unmediated relation to the Secretary-General’s office. This positioning provides the PBSO an entry point into various interagency structures. Exploiting such opportunities is part of how the PBSO began occupying a set of unique organizational niches that secured its survival. Second, as the secretariat for the PBC, the PBSO derived legitimacy through association with a “representative” (i.e. intergovernmental) body. The PBSO cultivated and deployed member state backing for its positions in interagency forums while simultaneously distancing itself from both member states and the other PBA components to secure a degree of organizational autonomy. This proved a highly adaptive strategy in pursuit of institutional survival.

One modest hope of the PBA’s framers was that it would promote a shared understanding of what peacebuilding is and how the international community could assist it. This required standardizing the field’s vocabulary, an objective the PBC was manifestly unable to advance, despite its “best practices” mandate. The PBSO should in theory have been better positioned to make progress on this front, given its knowledge-management and policy-coherence mandates. These were strengthened as a result of a 22 May 2007 Decision of the Secretary-General, pursuant to a Policy Committee meeting, which confirmed the PBSO’s role as “a knowledge base for peacebuilding lessons learned, drawing upon the range of capacities and knowledge in the UN system.”93 PBSO staff sometimes cited this document to justify their presence in one or another interagency process.

Soon after its creation, the PBSO began working with other entities to generate a common definition of peacebuilding. The purpose was to arrive at a conception that would capture the term’s distinct meanings at the strategic, policy, and operational levels. A shared nomenclature might assist integrated planning too. Another Decision of the Secretary-General produced an all-encompassing definition of peacebuilding,
allowing almost anything to qualify as a post-conflict priority. The most important differences had been elided. While it is unreasonable to expect the PBSO’s knowledge consolidation and dissemination work to have triggered profound changes in UN practices in such a short period, a more precise vocabulary would have been a useful contribution. Yet, terms such as “early recovery” and the “rule of law” continued to mean different things to different constituencies, making coherent policy and coordinated action that much more challenging.

Another example of PBSO knowledge consolidation during this early period is the Peacebuilding Community of Practice (PB-CoP). The PB-CoP had one physical meeting—in Hiroshima in 2008—where experiences were shared, and professional networks extended. For the most part, however, the PB-CoP was a virtual entity, with a no-frills online presence, operated by a very junior staff member, lacking even the most rudimentary budget except when short-term project funds could be obtained. The PBSO also pursued its knowledge-management role when supporting the commission’s work—for instance, by organizing briefings for the PBC’s Working Group on Lessons Learned (WGLL), which quickly became the object of considerable complaint, both for its level of organization and the sometimes dubious value of its deliberations.

Attempting to amass organizational influence by serving as a focal point for the collection and refinement of expert knowledge is a bureaucratic strategy with a distinguished pedigree. Recent scholarship on international organizations, particularly Michael Barnett and Martha Finnemore’s empirically wide-ranging work, suggests that it is precisely by framing concepts, relationships, and processes in ways that require expert input to operationalize them that international bureaucracies seek to make themselves indispensable, expand their mandates, and wrest a degree of autonomy from member states and the vagaries of intergovernmental bargaining.

Two examples of PBSO efforts to occupy an organizational niche are discussed here. Both are rooted in the PBSO’s system-wide knowledge consolidation and dissemination role, as opposed to its function as the PBC’s secretariat. The first is the PBSO’s involvement in the UN Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP) during its first two years. Departments and agencies involved in peace operations had long pressed for a more structured and inclusive process for determining whether, for any country case, a multidisciplinary peace operation is feasible, whether it is necessary, and what its lifecycle (up to and including “exit”) might look like. The IMPP “guidelines” outlined the relationships among actors, functions, and decision points involved in mission planning. Producing (and updating) these guidelines entailed intense, line-by-line
negotiations, conducted over an extended period, among a diverse array of bureaucratic and political stakeholders. Some of the roles and responsibilities, not to mention mandates and timeframes, continue to be a point of contention.

Even before the PBSO was fully functional, officials associated with its creation—especially from the EOSG—lobbied for the PBSO’s substantial inclusion in the IMPP guidelines in a variety of roles. They were supported, somewhat unexpectedly, and indirectly, by mainly Southern member states, which saw PBSO involvement as at least a symbolic victory for the long-established G77 position that attention to rebuilding national capacity, the *sine qua non* of peacebuilding, must begin at the earliest possible stage of international involvement, even before peacekeepers have overseen the scaling back of intergroup violence. The contentiousness of the PBSO’s potential role is apparent from drafts of the document ultimately titled *Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP): Guidelines Endorsed by the Secretary-General*. The PBSO’s involvement is evident from the 13 June 2006 draft of the guidelines—where the PBSO is mentioned in the preamble—issued even before the PBC had held its first meeting.

Two of the four triggers for initiating the IMPP involved the PBC and/or PBSO: “a recommendation by the [PBC], or a request by a member state or regional organization, to the UN Secretary-General to consider possible options, including a peace support operation”; and “[t]he development by the PBC or PBSO of an overarching strategy for U.N. peacebuilding support.” Though the PBSO is not mentioned in the first of these, it would play an indirect but critical role by shaping the analysis of the PBC’s “recommendation.” In practice, the PBSO will not trigger anything on its own, but to be explicitly authorized to participate in decisions of such magnitude was significant for a new entity of still uncertain status.

The PBC was assigned a vague consultative role in the “pre-decision” stage of the IMPP. The PBSO would be “responsible for devising longer-term strategies to help countries fully recover from conflict, help bring the U.N. system together, and also draw together non-U.N. actors, including IFIs and regional organizations in support of a common strategy.” The purpose was to provide the Security Council and other relevant actors with a longer-term perspective on any commitments being contemplated. The wording echoed the resolution that created the PBC, but applied the tasks to the PBSO. It also put the PBSO much further upstream in the time-sequence of international engagement. The “Strategic Assessment”—which determines whether a mission is feasible and desirable—was expected to “draw on the strategic analysis of the
PBSO,” among others. DPKO would conduct “operational planning,” “in consultation with the PBSO,” providing, in theory, another opportunity for field-level influence. The PBSO was also to have a role in the “review and transition planning” phase: “[T]he PBSO should be regularly updated” on the conduct of the mission. The “Mission Plan should contain triggers and benchmarks for initiating transition and exit planning,” to be “developed in close collaboration with,” among others, the PBSO.100

The issue of “transition” (an operation’s multi-stage exit from a post-conflict situation) is also reflected in the second example of the PBSO inserting itself into interagency processes. During 2007–08, the PBSO began seeking to use its knowledge-consolidation role to engage on a key question facing the Security Council: the conditions under which peace operations could be drawn down. A UNDP-coordinated interagency initiative—the UN Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action—provided a good opportunity to do so. The “Framework Team” monitored developments in countries considered “at risk.”101 It devoted attention to all countries where regime stability was threatened by systemic violence, not just states “emerging from conflict,” which is the PBC’s designated area of responsibility. The Framework Team, which seeks to expand the remit and enhance the stature of the Peace and Development Advisors its organizers have helped to deploy in various conflict situations, provided an entry point for the PBSO into a policy arena (conflict prevention in states that have not recently experienced war) where it was otherwise short on influence.102 The Framework Team furnished a forum in which the PBSO could attempt to steer the debate on the optimal conditions to facilitate “transitions” toward full de facto state sovereignty, a euphemism for “exit.” The PBSO did this by securing space on the agenda of the Framework Team’s Expert Reference Group (ERG), which refines the analytical tools at members’ disposal.103

The PBSO has also attempted to influence the choice of analytical instruments used in assessing post-conflict situations. In late 2007, the PBSO commissioned a study of potential transition indicators, the findings of which were disseminated through the Framework Team’s ERG.104 The purpose was to guide UN entities engaged in planning country transitions from the peacebuilding to the (longer-term) development phase. The PBSO’s proposals received a mixed response: formal appreciation of the PBSO’s efforts masked intense irritation at the upstart entity’s presumptuousness. Nevertheless, asserting a legitimate interest in this issue positioned the PBSO to continue participating in negotiations on these and related matters.
These two examples demonstrate the PBSO’s limited but important ability, during its earliest years, to embed itself in interagency processes through which it could influence the development of norms, policies, and priorities. Still, the PBSO’s evident shortcomings during its first two-to-three years cannot be ignored. With certain exceptions, the quality of its analytical work proved disappointing. Documents produced for CSC briefings often provided little insight into conflict/recovery dynamics in the countries on the PBC’s agenda. The shortcomings were evident as well in the functioning of the PBF, over which the PBSO held management control, but only, as we will see, alongside a host of other actors.

The PBF

While all three components of the PBA are interdependent, the PBF, a “multi-year standing fund,” is, paradoxically, both the least and most autonomous of the three. The PBF is both a meeting point for, and a constant source of tension between, the PBSO and the PBC. The PBF is “managed” by the PBSO, but “the Peacebuilding Commission provides advice and guidance on the strategic focus of the Fund’s activities in countries under its agenda.” In addition, an independent advisory group meets periodically to assess the PBF’s substantive priorities and working methods. The PBF was also to receive “strategic guidance” from the “Senior Policy Group on Peacebuilding,” an interagency group representing UN security, development, and humanitarian organizations.

The nature of this advisory function was left vague, but was expected to include an “oversight role in the context of the global decision-making processes of the Peacebuilding Fund, especially as it relates to the review of countries to be declared eligible for the fund, the review of submitted priority plans and the approval of emergency projects.” While the PBSO’s decisions on global PBF activities were to be “based on the advice and recommendations of the Senior Policy Group,” the degree to which this formulation implied final decision-making autonomy for the PBSO was, again, unclear. To the PBSO, the terms “advice and recommendations” had a distinctly non-binding connotation.

Yet, the PBC has been specified in official reports as “an integral part of the [Peacebuilding] Fund’s governance structure.” The PBF sees itself as furnishing “a flexible mechanism for the provision of immediate, short-term, catalytic or gap-filling critical support during the early stages of a peace process.” The “early stages of a peace process” is much earlier in the timeline than had been agreed through the 2005
World Summit Outcome Document. Moreover, the PBF announced that resources could be made “available to any country in exceptional circumstances”—as long as they were “at risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict.” Again, the wording is crucial: lapsing was placed alongside relapsing, it was argued, specifically to indicate that countries falling into an initial period of conflict (not just returning to conflict after a peaceful interlude) were eligible for PBF funding.\(^\text{108}\)

From its creation through June of 2008, the PBF received $269.9 million in pledges from a total of 44 donors, all of which were member states, with the exception of one pledge from an individual.\(^\text{109}\) Roughly four-fifths of the funds actually delivered came from about eight donors. The largest were Sweden ($42 million), the United Kingdom ($36 million), Norway ($32 million), Japan ($20 million), Canada ($19 million), the Netherlands ($19 million), Ireland ($13 million) and Germany ($10 million). By mid-2008, the list of developing world contributors included almost 30 member states.

From its earliest days, the PBF’s extremely broad-based set of stakeholders pulled its management in different directions. A “two-window” system was experimented with—one that distinguished between PBC Agenda countries and all others when considering requests for funding. By 2008, a “three-window architecture” had emerged: the first for PBC Agenda countries; the second for non-emergency countries formally declared eligible by the Secretary-General; and the third, an emergency facility available for urgent peacebuilding challenges and opportunities.\(^\text{110}\)

During its first two and a half years in existence, the PBF migrated further up the conflict-prevention timeline than the other two pillars of the PBA. The PBF’s reliance on voluntary contributions relieved it of at least some of the bureaucratic shackles that constrain the PBSO, which largely (but incompletely) controls the PBF. The PBF also operates at some remove from the member state politics of which the PBC itself is essentially constituted. The Secretary-General’s office has wide latitude in using the PBF to stamp out inchoate violence. This, in effect, permits action even in countries that are not technically post-conflict cases. The complex governance arrangements of the PBF blurred reporting lines, creating opportunities for discretion and flexibility.

The PBF’s early performance was mixed. In some cases, such as in matters of PBC Agenda countries, the PBF could be agonizingly slow. The rate of fund disbursement and project delivery during Burundi’s 18 months as a PBF-eligible country was considered “poor.”\(^\text{111}\) The sequencing of disbursement was also criticized. One author writes: “Several observers lamented the poor sequencing between PBC and PBF activities in Burundi which resulted in disbursing money for peacebuilding
projects before an overarching strategic framework was developed."

Some of the PBF’s shortcomings were highlighted in the January 2007 Security Council debate on peacebuilding. Anxiety was particularly pronounced among Northern (donor) countries, notably Belgium, France, Italy, and the United States. The questionable value-addition of the PBF and inordinate delays in disbursing funds were recurring themes. Where the PBC itself was involved in decision making, PBF resources invariably flowed more slowly.

On the other hand, the PBF provided resources that an able special envoy or special representative in the field could use to fill programmatic gaps. There were indications that the Secretary-General’s office was indeed making use of the PBF for this purpose, both in PBC countries such as Sierra Leone and in countries where new needs had arisen—for instance, in Kenya at the time of its disputed election.

Like the other two PBA components, the PBF is an instrument through which various actors seek to advance their organizational objectives. These actors include but are not limited to the PBSO and the PBC. Donors that provide the bulk of the PBF’s resources expect disproportionate influence as well. The PBF’s donor base is wide compared to that of the typical MDTF. China’s pledge of $3 million to the PBF in 2006 was noted in the donor community. The pledge was justified explicitly with reference to China’s rising global profile. The People’s Daily article announcing the pledge quoted Foreign Minister Li Zhaoxings as saying: “As China’s economy grows, China is prepared to increase contributions to the UN budget in accordance with the principle of the ability to pay.”

The PBF has funded a range of programs across many thematic areas such as gender equality and environmental sustainability, two cross-cutting issues specifically identified in the PBA’s founding resolutions. Two years after the PBC’s inaugural meeting, however, concerns remained—slow implementation, poor integration between PBF-funded interventions and those supported by other forms of development assistance, the variable quality of country-level priority setting, unclear project-approval processes, and a lack of meaningful performance measures for PBF projects.

The PBF was meant to be fast-disbursing, and sometimes was. Because of the discretionary power accorded the Secretary-General, acting with and through the ASG for Peacebuilding Support (the head of the PBSO), the PBF was arguably the most promising of the three pillars from a conflict-prevention perspective. On the other hand, there was considerable discontent with the PBF. One indication was the rapid arrival of proposals for competing MDTFs. By the time the PBF
arrived, several similar funds had existed for years. In 1997, the World Bank established the Post Conflict Fund, followed in 2004 by the LICUS (Low-Income Countries Under Stress) Trust Fund. These funds were to ensure the expeditious delivery of finance to fragile countries, and somehow to do so without reference to domestic politics, as the bank’s Articles of Agreement require. In 2008 the World Bank merged these two initiatives into the “State and Peace Building Fund” (SPBF), allocating $100 million over three years to support quick-response projects, most of which involved resuscitating basic services. This was a major increase: in just two years, overall SPBF resources would match a decade of LICUS and Post-Conflict Fund spending ($154 million).

It was not immediately apparent what the World Bank’s creation of the SPBF signified in relation to the PBF. Optimists hoped that the bank’s SPBF would represent additional funding that could support “priority” activities already identified in one (or both) of the PBA’s country-specific frameworks: the IPBSs devised through the PBC, and the peacebuilding priority plans, developed at the country level but mandated by PBSO at headquarters, which are supposed to guide the allocation of PBF resources to projects. Surely there could be no objection to the bank using the SPBF to fill additional funding gaps for activities contained in each PBC Agenda country’s framework or priority plan. A charitable reading of the PBF’s influence in this case might claim that the PBF had done precisely what it was supposed to—catalyze actors, in this case the World Bank, through the SPBF, to emulate its approach: a focus on projects capable of producing quick impacts and demonstrable peace dividends.

Another perspective was that the World Bank, through the SPBF, would be competing for the same resources, from more or less the same donors, as the PBF, which was unwelcome news at the UN. Dissatisfaction among donors with the speed and coherence of the PBF’s first two years of grant making arguably benefited the bank’s SPBF, which portrayed itself as attempting to compensate for the PBF’s shortcomings. The PBF may have catalyzed new funding, but only through force of negative example. The PBF’s failures contributed to a diversification, not a consolidation, of financing instruments—the opposite of coordination and coherence.

While the PBF was often criticized during its first two to three years, the diffuse accountability that comes with composite institutions such as the PBF made it difficult to assign blame convincingly. The nature of the criticism varied as well. Some questioned the quality of country-specific priority plans, which PBF-eligible countries were required to produce. In the PBF’s early phase, these were of uneven quality. UN mission leadership could not be completely absolved of blame, as the
“priorities” expressed in these plans were clustered around pre-determined thematic areas drawn from existing planning documents. This was natural enough as UN agencies were expected to partner with grantees, governmental and nongovernmental, to ensure that PBF resources were effectively spent. The earliest drafts of Sierra Leone’s priority plan, particularly the aid-diplomacy idiom in which they were couched, revealed the influence of donor agencies.119

Others worried that the priority plans rushed through by the PBSO in collusion with the SRSG would undermine previously agreed in-country understandings between donors and government entities on the pace and sequencing of the country’s reform agenda. This concern manifested itself most visibly in the form of a January 2007 letter from a UK aid official to the head of the PBSO. The head of the Conflict and Institutions team within the UK aid ministry wanted to “express our concerns” about the Burundi and Sierra Leone priority plan formulation process and content.120 The United Kingdom was aggrieved that the PBSO had included named activities within the four priority areas listed in Sierra Leone’s plan. The projects that caused the most anxiety were for the Senior Executive Service (SES), a fast-track civil service reform initiative, and the Youth Employment Scheme. The UK aid official emphasized that projects and priorities listed under the “justice” section of Sierra Leone’s PBF Priority Plan were “not consistent with” the National Justice Sector Strategy (NJSS) that—“two years in the making”—had just been endorsed by donors, government, and civil society. PBF activities created without the NJSS in mind “could therefore seriously undermine it.”121 The United Kingdom and others feared that ongoing negotiations between donors and PBC Agenda governments were being derailed by the threat of forum-shopping—the concern that countries like Burundi and Sierra Leone might decide they could obtain better terms (allowing more decision-making autonomy) from the “international community” in New York than it could get from discussions with in-country donor representatives. The UK letter stated that, in Sierra Leone, “Donors and Government are in the middle of discussions on the details of the SES,” meaning that donors did not need their leverage undercut.

This was less of a worry in the second phase of the PBA’s existence, discussed in Chapter 4.

Conclusion

The PBA survived its infancy, though the effort expended seemed to leave the three component entities relatively little energy to achieve
lasting results of any kind. Nevertheless, all three managed to occupy organizational niches within the UN system and the wider peacebuilding community. They did so as individual entities, for the most part, rather than as a coordinated ensemble. In fact, institutional disaggregation likely aided the PBA’s ability to adapt to the unpromising institutional environment into which it was born.

In certain respects the PBA’s early years fulfilled the expectations of at least some theorists. Barnett, for instance, foresaw “bureaucratic power and political infighting” as the chief determinants of which peacebuilding strategies an institution like the PBC would promote. This is largely what happened. The “political” war was played out primarily in the PBC, while the “bureaucratic” battle took place mainly through the PBSO. Both were waged through the PBF. Fault lines forged in other forums curtailed the ability of the PBC effectively to assist countries on its agenda. The North–South divide was proving exceptionally durable.

As for the ongoing quest for “bureaucratic power,” Barnett and co-authors regard despecialization by international peacebuilding entities as evidence “that agencies will attempt to expand when and where possible.” Bureaucratic opportunism has clearly been on display since the PBA was revised in 2006. This has taken a variety of forms, some of which have been discussed in this chapter. The next chapter, which evaluates the second half of the 2006–10 period, will examine additional examples.
4 Institutional revival
The peacebuilding architecture in action, 2008–10

- The PBC
- The PBSO
- The PBF
- Conclusion

Chapter 3 traced the Peacebuilding Architecture’s (PBA) path to institutional survival during its first two and a half years in existence—from the beginning of 2006 until roughly the middle of 2008. The chapter argued, among other things, that new multi-component organs such as the PBA tend to become sites for reenacting existing political and bureaucratic battles; that, partly as a result of this, these institutions develop unanticipated roles; and that when office-holders focus on securing organizational niches for their respective components, as was the case with the PBA, they sometimes strengthen the institution as a whole.

However, emerging onto the institutional landscape basically intact is an accomplishment that carries limited bragging rights. The Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), in particular, resembled—as in certain respects it still does—what Moises Naim has called a “zombie” international organization: “They exist. But they do not really have a life.”1 Skeptics may reasonably wonder whether immediate survival was purchased at the expense of future potential. Once a new entity has established a predictable routine and elicited adequate if unremarkable buy-in from member states and other directly concerned stakeholders, do its leaders still possess the impetus to explore the further reaches of the organization’s mandate? How can its work be made more relevant to other international actors, contributing to and impinging on their decision-making processes and/or programmatic priorities? How, in other words, can an institution move from a low-equilibrium “survival” mode to a state of attempted institutional “revival”?

1 Moises Naim, “Reducing the Risk of Another Cold War,” Foreign Policy, November/December 1991, 36.”
This chapter examines a second phase in the development of the PBA—from roughly mid-2008 through the end of 2010. By mid-2008, the PBC, the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO), and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) had become, in the eyes of many people, symbols of United Nations (UN) inaction—process-focused organizations with little of substance to show for their efforts. This second phase, however, was marked by a shift on the part of the PBA’s three institutional components toward more aggressive pursuit of their mandates and heightened efforts to expand their influence within and beyond the UN system. Some components displayed more assertive tendencies than others, and did so more intensively at some points than at others. The impacts were likewise mixed. Still, the prevailing trend was for the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF to have greater relevance for the work of other peacebuilding actors. The self-assertion of the PBA from mid-2008 onward is more important in terms of its impact on the UN’s peacebuilding work than it may at first appear. An institution that can attract formal recognition and stakeholder investment—the minimum requirements for institutional survival—is qualitatively distinct from one whose pursuit of an expanded mandate actively impinges on the decisional calculus, if not the operational autonomy, of other actors.

As in Chapter 3, this chapter analyses the PBA’s three institutional components in turn, though the connections among them are discussed throughout. In the process, it advances three main arguments. First, the PBC’s profile was enhanced by the deepening of its relationship with the first two countries on its agenda, a doubling of its country caseload, and declining suspicion among other entities that the PBC’s country-level engagement would usurp their prerogatives. Second, the PBSO’s capacity to make its presence felt in UN peacebuilding policy improved as a result of strengthened links to the Secretary-General’s office and an increasing awareness among UN stakeholders that the PBSO could be a useful partner in advancing their institutional objectives. Third, the PBF became a more relevant and sought-after source of funding due to the professionalization of its management and its willingness to take risks. These three trends reinforced one another in important ways.

The PBC

By 2008, as we saw in Chapter 3, the PBC’s organizational attainments mainly involved procedure and precedent, such as the regularized process of inviting country-specific configuration (CSC) chairs to brief the Security Council. PBC members were more or less content to advance
limited objectives: the commission’s continued “engagement” with specific cases was seen to possess intrinsic value by focusing attention on countries in danger of slipping off the global agenda.

For the PBC, 2008 was a turning point for a number of reasons. Chief among these was the arrival of a second wave of cases onto its agenda: Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic (CAR). At a minimum, the addition of new cases demonstrated that the international community, including the national authorities of the countries concerned, retained confidence that the PBC could be trusted to “do no harm” to peace consolidation efforts. Looked at more closely, these particular cases were remarkable additions to the PBC’s docket.

Guinea-Bissau and CAR were surprising choices, given the pressure on the PBC to identify a case from outside Africa. The perennial UN quest for “regional balance” in all things would have made an Asian country such as East Timor or Nepal a more obvious choice. East Timor, however, had little need for additional international engagement. Its brief 2006 relapse into conflict (after half a decade of uneven but respectable progress toward political stability) drew a huge response from the international community, which saw East Timor as a test case for its commitment to preventing the recurrence of conflict. East Timor was one of the very few cases in which the UN had directly operated a “transitional administration” during the post-conflict period. East Timor could also count on intensive support from its regional partner, Australia. It did not need the PBC.

As for Nepal, another candidate for inclusion on the PBC’s agenda, leaders from across the country’s political spectrum were reluctant to increase Nepal’s exposure to international monitoring. The UN Mission in Nepal, established following the conclusion of a peace agreement in 2007 (which also, not coincidentally, consolidated a democratic transition), had a very limited mandate and was not locally popular. Its top leadership was alleged by critics to consist of Maoist sympathizers. There was no appetite for anything that would cast Nepal as a ward of the international community. Regional politics also militated against Nepal’s inclusion on the PBC’s agenda. India, a PBC member, considered Nepal to be within its sphere of influence, and possessed sufficient clout to scotch any suggestion that Nepal was a fit candidate for the commission’s attentions. China, which also borders Nepal, shared India’s concerns.

In the end, CAR and Guinea-Bissau may owe their inclusion on the PBC’s agenda to the lack of any suitable alternatives at a time when PBC members saw an expansion of its caseload as a prerequisite for institutional growth. The willingness of CAR and Guinea-Bissau to
become PBC Agenda countries stemmed, at least in part, from the weakness of these countries’ governments. Both relied heavily on a small number of development and security partners. Pressure from donor countries on the PBC was seen as particularly effective in gaining the governments’ consent. If the profile of the first-wave countries caused concern that the PBC would handle only the most promising cases, the choice of CAR and Guinea-Bissau demonstrated the PBC’s commitment to extending its work to places at risk of, or indeed still actively experiencing, conflict.

Indeed, the inclusion of CAR and Guinea-Bissau as PBC Agenda countries signaled a general desire among PBC members to reach beyond the institution’s comfort zone. The perennially unstable CAR was not only still in the throes of its own civil war—peace negotiations were underway at the time the PBC began its engagement with the country—but also suffering the ill-effects of conflicts spilling over from neighboring countries. Rebel groups from Uganda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), and Chad had all passed through CAR by 2008. Militia based in CAR had, likewise, played a role in ongoing conflicts in these and other countries. The idea that CAR was “emerging from conflict” seemed, to many observers, a stretch, though a 2009 peace agreement ostensibly provided a justification for CAR’s classification as a post-conflict country.

Guinea-Bissau was also an intriguing choice. It represented a different kind of post-conflict country—with a brief period of open civil war that ended in 2000. Political instability clearly afflicted Guinea-Bissau in the years that followed. Nevertheless, classifying the Guinea-Bissau of 2007–08 as a state “emerging from conflict” was fundamentally to redefine this category of cases. The continuing interest of the Security Council in Guinea-Bissau might be enough to place it in the post-conflict category, and not further up the timeline toward conflict prevention. However classified, Guinea-Bissau exhibited classic symptoms of a fragile, pre-collapse state, ensuring that strategies recommended by the PBC for this case would be perceived as relevant throughout the wider conflict-prevention sector. Guinea-Bissau possessed the chief characteristic of the archetypal prevention case: a state with limited reach and an inability to control flows of goods, money, and people across its borders. As a key trans-shipment point for illegal narcotics and weapons, Guinea-Bissau presented more warning signs than most “at risk” countries.

While the PBC’s choice of Guinea-Bissau marked a new departure, the commission’s handling of this case demonstrated substantial continuity with past practice. The PBC-negotiated framework for Guinea-Bissau
contained no indicators or benchmarks for any of the commitments mentioned, nor was a monitoring and tracking document circulated. Guinea-Bissau’s first review took place without a progress report, or indeed a framework. The review nevertheless provided “conclusions and recommendations” on the “situation in Guinea-Bissau.” These were as generic as could be imagined: the government was called on to continue reforming, to hold elections on time, and to continue engaging with the PBC.2

Arguably, the PBC’s approach to Guinea-Bissau was less promising than in the earlier cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone. As Necla Tschgiri has noted, the PBC’s stance in the Guinea-Bissau case was one of curious, and potentially hazardous, detachment.3 The 2009 assassinations of the country’s president, his chief of general staff, and a presidential candidate elicited tame responses. The desire of member states to distance themselves from these events meant that the “PBC was largely a bystander in the process” of coping with the fallout.4 Apart from general statements condemning violence and calling for dialogue, the commission’s documents contained “little reflection on the implications of these violent events on the PBC’s engagement with Guinea-Bissau or even any sense of urgency about the need for a different course of action.”5

There were a couple of bright spots in the PBC’s handling of the Guinea-Bissau case, however. First, the PBC began to recognize more explicitly the threat posed by unregulated transborder flows—of narcotics, weapons, criminals—and the concomitant need to formulate policy responses from a regional perspective. The PBC chair for Guinea-Bissau invited participation from regional and subregional organizations in both formal PBC deliberations in New York and the field visits undertaken by members of the CSC. Second, the PBC used its first review of Guinea-Bissau6 to make direct recommendations to the Security Council—in this case that the council continue to remain seized of the Guinea-Bissau case and that it press for a more coherent UN presence in the country.7 None of the other “conclusions and recommendations” documents make such explicit suggestions.

While the Guinea-Bissau case generally indicated a depressing reluctance to engage robustly with national authorities, the PBC’s approach to CAR revealed the possibility of a more active stance. Even so, the PBC failed in CAR to obtain government agreement on explicit indicators, though some are implied by process benchmarks such as the creation of “a secure legal environment … for the security sector.”8 Where the PBC began to show signs of a more effective approach was in the review process for CAR. The first review in January 2010 made reference to commitments that the CAR authorities had not fulfilled, though it did not dwell on them, and in fact blamed a lack of funding.9
For the most part, however, the document lacked coherence: the six weak “recommendations” offered did not address the gaps and problems identified in the “conclusions” section. The review also highlighted the importance of the creation of “development hubs” to kick-start employment and service delivery in “communities affected by conflict,” though very little information about them was provided. At one point in the recommendations, the PBC suggested that the government take ownership of the development hub initiative. Some PBC members stated that while the report may have been bland, the discussions, led by a firm (Belgian) CSC chair, were very frank and led to informal agreements between the office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and government departments that had been at loggerheads over the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) process and plans for elections.10

The second review of CAR’s strategic framework was not undertaken until more than a year later, despite the norm of six-monthly reviews. It is also more frank, in tone and substance, than its predecessor. It refers to unfortunate “developments ... in the country, some of which have informed the decision to delay the second review of the Strategic Framework.” Recognizing a classic peacebuilding tradeoff, the review notes that “preparation of the country’s presidential and legislative elections may have also impacted negatively on the speed of progress in certain areas, particularly in DDR.” Indeed, the PBC admitted that “[d]evelopments on the ground have been exceedingly slow, in large part due to the politicisation of the DDR Steering Committee.” Security sector reform (SSR) had also reached “stalemate,” having “stalled” since October 2009.11

Recognizing also that CAR was likely to switch to a Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP)-centered approach to tracking peacebuilding progress, the CSC for CAR stated its objective of ensuring that the country’s new-generation PRSP “fully incorporate[d] peacebuilding elements of the Strategic Framework” previously negotiated with the PBC. The PBC would, moreover, continue to support “national authorities in developing the PRS in a peacebuilding and conflict sensitive way.”12

In addition to expanding its caseload, the PBC in late 2008 began substantially to transform its engagement with its first two Agenda countries. This expressed itself in various ways. After formally adopting a peacebuilding framework for Sierra Leone, PBC members spent a considerable portion of late 2008 attempting to develop appropriate indicators and benchmarks to measure progress on the commitments for which agreement had been secured. Sierra Leone’s officials became frustrated with some donors’ persistent efforts to include specific policy
and institutional reforms among these commitments. The Sierra Leone government increasingly questioned the wisdom of the framework itself. By early 2009, Sierra Leone decided that being assessed twice per year on the basis of the framework was too costly in terms of public exposure. Government officials complained, belatedly, that the framework was lacking in national ownership, and that reporting on its commitments was duplicative of other processes and therefore an undue administrative burden. The government proposed that its PRSP, already deemed conflict-sensitive, could serve as the basis for reviewing peacebuilding progress and challenges. Its core elements had effectively been repackaged as a document entitled *Agenda for Change*, which included standard prescriptions for improving economic growth (developing agricultural markets, providing infrastructure), enhancing governance (strengthening anti-corruption bodies, reforming public-sector bureaucracies), and achieving reconciliation (promoting political dialogue, rebuilding justice institutions).13

In the end, the PBC’s monitoring and tracking process for Sierra Leone corresponded to the portion of Sierra Leone’s *Agenda for Change* that overlapped with UN country programming. This zone of overlap was retitled the “Joint Vision.” Many PBC members understood that it looked extremely bad for the PBC’s country-level “engagement” document, devised and refined over the course of more than two years, to be more or less unilaterally abandoned by an Agenda country. Making the best of an awkward situation, the PBC embraced the new approach, proclaiming it a victory for the PBC’s emphasis on building national ownership of peacebuilding strategies. What could better express ownership than a government defining its own priorities, based on a homegrown national planning document? The transition away from the previously agreed framework (and associated monitoring process) culminated in a “High Level Event” on Peacebuilding in Sierra Leone, held in New York in June 2009, where the “Joint Vision” was formally “adopted” by the PBC, whatever that meant.14

In time, following Sierra Leone’s example, Burundi too would press for closer “alignment” between its PRSP and the framework document through which it engaged with the PBC. As early as 2007, stakeholder committees were established in Burundi—including government, donors, and civil-society organizations (CSOs)—to examine the feasibility of doing so. By early 2011, the chair of the PBC’s Burundi configuration was having an “open, frank, and useful discussion” with Burundian officials on “linking the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding and the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper,” stating upon his return to New York that “[t]he time has come to merge” these documents.15 Some
countries—such as Germany, Japan, and the Netherlands—informally supported this position, while others such as Kenya and Norway expressed concern that the merger might come at the expense of the commission’s ability to consider the “political” issues that many members see as crucial elements of the PBC’s value-added.16

Indeed, during 2009 and 2010, the PBC’s relationship with Burundi and Sierra Leone began to transcend the earlier preoccupation with the framework documents. Another indication of deepening PBC engagement with the first two countries on its agenda was its members’ willingness to address contentious political questions that went beyond specific framework provisions. One such issue was corruption, a subject that had previously been discussed—if at all—euphemistically, as “governance deficits” or “accountability concerns.” By March 2010, when Sierra Leone’s minister of foreign affairs and international cooperation appeared before the Sierra Leone CSC, corruption was being addressed in unusually frank terms. The minister reported that in addition to “public education campaigns” and “procurement reform,” the state was also pursuing perpetrators no matter how well-connected politically: “The recent indictments of high-profile public and private individuals,” she stated, “are [a] clear manifestation … that sacred cows are a thing of the past.”17 The Burundians were less forthright, but PBC members were nevertheless increasingly direct when discussing the adverse effects of corruption on efforts to consolidate peace. One member claimed to have told Burundi’s president, during a 2009 visit to Bujumbura, that “ordinary citizens do not perceive a peace dividend when donor funds are stolen by officials connected with his [ruling] party.”18 By late 2010, discussions on combating corruption had become more specific, and the government had taken some tentative first steps, such as creating an ombudsman’s office.19

Other issues of an even more party-political nature became part of the PBC’s approach to Burundi and Sierra Leone during this second phase as well. In the case of Sierra Leone, the PBC became directly involved in responding to the March 2009 violence that broke out between members of the ruling All People’s Congress and the opposition Sierra Leone People’s Party, which had lost power in late 2007. The Secretary-General’s representative in Sierra Leone remained in close contact with the chair of the PBC’s Sierra Leone configuration, who sought information on how the international community might prevent this spark from igniting further violence. The chair’s informal report to PBC members in New York included a frank assessment of the causes and scope of the violence. Member states lacking strong diplomatic representation in Freetown found this report valuable. The message that the violence was
limited but potentially explosive, that it grew out of long-standing tensions and scattered episodes of inter-party violence in both 2008 and 2009, and that neither party was free from blame, built consensus in the PBC and the Secretariat for deploying PBF resources to support a range of confidence-building measures, including implementation of a Joint Communiqué signed by both parties, in the presence of the Executive Representative of the Secretary-General (ERSG), in early April 2009. Activities funded by the international community included facilitating the work of the Independent Review Panel constituted to investigate the events in question. Sierra Leone’s parties responded as well through, for instance, participation in each other’s National Delegates’ Conventions. The PBC’s developing country members refrained from characterizing these actions as an unwarranted intrusion on the country’s internal affairs.

In Burundi, the PBC assumed a similarly active stance on issues of a political nature. It played a particularly supportive role in the run up to the mid-2010 parliamentary elections. The Burundi configuration met frequently, keeping a close watch on developments in the country. The chair of the Burundi CSC worked to raise resources for the election process and to ensure appropriate monitoring arrangements. When all funds were exhausted, he successfully lobbied member states and key officials in the UN system to ensure that PBF resources would be made available to support the election process. The CSC chair also, informally, called on members to press their diplomats in Bujumbura to encourage opposition parties to participate in the elections.

In the end, the vast majority of the opposition boycotted the elections, resulting in a hollow victory for the ruling party. Other sensitive political issues of grave concern to the international community were, however, increasingly addressed in PBC meetings, particularly in informal consultations. PBC members, North and South, spoke out forcefully against the government’s failure to pursue investigations of alleged torture and extra-judicial executions. This was part of a larger ongoing discussion of Burundi’s extremely dilatory approach to transitional justice, which PBC members considered a major obstacle to reconciliation between ethnic groups.

To some extent, the modest yet perceptible uptick in PBC assertiveness during this second phase of its young life was a byproduct of the routinization that had taken place earlier. Force of habit proved forceful indeed. Before long PBC members were regularly scrutinizing government actions that G77 countries typically characterized as purely domestic matters. By 2009, the PBC’s CSCs were deliberating on not only broad principles or generic priorities, but also, in some cases, substantial issues affecting institutional design and policy choice.
During 2009 and 2010 member state views on the PBC began to shift in unexpected ways. In the Security Council debate on the *Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict* (discussed in greater detail later in this chapter), a realignment was evident. Developing countries—perhaps recognizing the PBC as a forum where their voices could more effectively reach security debates—pressed for PBC involvement earlier in the conflict cycle. Guatemala, for instance, stated that the PBC might usefully engage with countries while conflict was still underway. Uruguay, too, argued that the PBC should participate in planning for peacekeeping, rather than waiting until later. In this vein, Morocco called for closer interaction with the Security Council when mission mandates were being formulated. Pakistan, similarly, wanted early engagement by the PBC.20

By contrast, some major donors were more cautious about an expanded role for the PBC. This reflected a desire to avoid diluting the influence they retained. Japan, for instance, argued that the PBC was not necessarily suited to providing strategic direction in the immediate post-conflict period; it needed to “consolidate” rather than “overextend” its current capacity. Russia, ever-jealous of any encroachment upon the Security Council’s core mandate, was hesitant about a larger role for the PBC during or immediately after conflict. The PBC, it argued, needed to hone its methods before assuming any new functions.

These and related debates would recur throughout 2009 and 2010, as the five-year review of the PBC (due at the end of 2010) got underway. A discussion among key stakeholders conducted away from the UN’s premises included a telling query: “This [mid-2009] is an ‘identity moment’ for the PBC. Is it purely a gap-filler, a speedy funder for early peace dividends? Or, is it rather a leader in mainstreaming peacebuilding in the United Nations and even in the world?”21 The responses were split between those who saw the PBC as indeed “filling the much-needed role of a flexible and fast provider of peace dividends” and those with a “more ambitious” vision, who regarded the PBC as a body that “informs the Security Council of needs and potential crises at a strategic level” and “even acts as a top-down unifier of other global actors” through the compacts agreed through the CSCs.22

**The PBSO**

During the period discussed in this chapter (2008–10), the elements of the PBA residing within UN officialdom—the Secretariat-based PBSO and, to a more limited extent, the multi-stakeholder PBF—went even further than the PBC in expanding the scope of their mandates and the depth of their influence. These exertions have not, however, been divorced
from intergovernmental politics and processes. As we will see, the PBSO’s attempts at institutional revival were most significant when they involved member states.

From its inception until mid-2008 (the period covered in Chapter 3), the PBSO gradually improved its capacity to serve as the secretariat for the PBC. The PBSO also persistently positioned itself to engage in activities it considered consistent with its mandate. It sought and obtained important “Decisions” of the Secretary-General. These directives confirmed the PBSO’s role in various policy domains. The PBSO also worked to gain access to interagency processes related to peacebuilding. The intensity and quality of the PBSO’s participation was variable, and its influence often negligible.

In mid-2008, however, a series of processes began to unfold that permitted the PBSO to increase both its presence and influence among UN peacebuilding actors. The subsequent two-and-a-half-year period—running through the end of 2010—could fairly be described as a phase of institutional renewal for the PBSO, when contrasted to the period of somnolence that followed the institution’s efforts to establish itself. First, as we have seen, in 2008 the PBC’s caseload doubled with the addition of two volatile countries; this increased twofold the workload of the PBSO division that services the commission. As new staff with greater country and technical expertise arrived, the PBSO’s profile in headquarters-based policy processes was enhanced.

A second catalyst during 2008 was a non-official (but donor-funded) “strategic review” of the PBC and related institutions. The review team’s report concluded that the PBSO had a potentially crucial role to play in “driving coherence” among UN actors engaged in peacebuilding work. The meaning of this phrase received little further specification. Nevertheless, PBSO officials cited this finding when advocating for new mechanisms that would permit the PBSO to perform such coordination functions. The idea of new coordination structures was not warmly received by the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and other partners. Over time, the idea of a high-level peacebuilding forum gained traction, however. The PBSO favored it, naturally enough, because a standing committee, task force, or working group would furnish a (hopefully PBSO-chaired) platform for developing system-wide “doctrine.” The PBSO considered this part of its mandate, stemming from the “coherence” and “knowledge consolidation” provisions in the founding resolutions.

The Secretary-General’s office was also reportedly eager to establish a specialized peacebuilding group for senior officials. It wanted to
decompress the agenda of the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee. An interagency peacebuilding coordination body could serve as the Policy Committee’s de facto subcommittee on peacebuilding, allowing only the most contentious matters to reach the Policy Committee and, ultimately, the Secretary-General for his consideration and disposition. Other UN actors saw the proposal for a principal-level peacebuilding committee differently—as potentially a means of constraining, rather than empowering, the PBSO, the presumptuousness of which was proving increasingly irritating.24

Created in 2008, the Senior Peacebuilding Group (SPG), as this forum came to be known, consists of Assistant Secretary-General (ASG)-level representatives of all relevant entities, including DPKO, DPA, UNDP, the EOSG, and others.25 UN funds, agencies, and programs are represented through their respective coordination entities. Development agencies are represented through the Development Operations Coordination Office, while humanitarian agencies are represented through the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Somewhat confusingly, a number of entities covered under these umbrella groups—the World Food Programme (WFP), UNICEF (the UN Children’s Fund), etc.—have their own representatives on the SPG.

The SPG describes itself as “an inter-agency forum established to provide senior-level, strategic advice to the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Peacebuilding Support,” and to “help ensure the coherent engagement of the UN system in peacebuilding support efforts.”26 What this meant in practice would emerge only through a period of trial and error. The phrasing of this mission statement was itself the result of negotiation. By denying this body executive status, and stressing that the group was targeting its findings at the PBSO, those hostile to the PBSO’s expansionist tendencies hoped that the SPG could exert a constraining influence. Expected to meet 10 to 12 times per year, the SPG was to endorse interagency agreements reached at the “working level” through the corresponding Peacebuilding Contact Group (PCG), and to address disagreements that could not be resolved at the PCG. Operating on an “as needed” basis, the PCG eventually came to meet more often—with more than one meeting per week not unusual during peak decision-making periods.

Third, and perhaps most significantly, it was in mid-2008 that the PBSO was charged with leading the drafting and consultation process for the Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict (hereinafter the Immediate Aftermath report). Some observers regarded the call for the report as a vote of no confidence in the still-young PBA, and an attempt to renegotiate the roles
and responsibilities of UN entities working in conflict and post-conflict situations. Others disputed this interpretation. Either way, leading the report’s preparation provided the PBSO with considerable visibility.

The genesis of this report was rooted in efforts by many parts of the international system to address the financing, planning, and staffing gaps that emerged when humanitarian response and early ceasefire monitoring gave way to the longer-term project of implementing wide-ranging peace accords. In May 2008, the Security Council debated the issue of peacebuilding. The matter was placed on the council’s agenda by the United Kingdom, which occupied the rotating presidency for that month. UK Prime Minister Gordon Brown and his foreign policy team had identified what they considered a gap in the international community’s capacity to promote lasting peace. This concern was based on a belief that actions taken, or not taken, at the very early stages of the post-conflict period—or even before hostilities had formally ceased—profoundly affect a country’s chances to secure lasting peace.

Brown had already called (in November 2007) for focusing on conflict prevention in “fragile states,” proposing “the first internationally agreed procedure to prevent breakdowns of states and societies.”27 How consensus for such an approach could be generated was not apparent, however, especially “given that moves in 2005 and 2006 to arm the new UN Peacebuilding Commission with a prevention mandate quickly foundered in the face of ferocious developing country opposition.”28 Nevertheless, within months Brown proposed the creation of a “crisis prevention and recovery” fund. This reportedly took some in the United Kingdom’s UN mission in New York by surprise. The initiative was nevertheless seen as a potentially useful way of improving the UN’s early peacebuilding performance.

In early 2008, before the Immediate Aftermath report had been requested by the council, the UK government commissioned a study to assess the need for, and feasibility of, a new mechanism along the lines proposed by Prime Minister Brown. Entitled Recovering from War: Gaps in International Action, the study distinguished “early recovery” from “late recovery,” and defined early recovery as initial efforts to “secure stability”; “establish the peace”; “resuscitate markets, livelihoods and services”; and “build core state capacity.”29 The study conceded that the entire peacebuilding process—both early and late—was plagued by coordination problems stemming from a lack of operational control. It concluded that the “Peacebuilding Commission has begun to address some of these problems—but so far” it has “not yet exercised its mandate to improve coordination,” largely because it lacked concrete means of doing so.30 Views differed within the UN system and among
member states as to whether this meant that the PBC and the PBSO should be pressed to assume a greater role in early recovery, or whether a different set of actors—those with on-the-ground knowledge and capacity—should lead.

The UK-sponsored study suggested that a new fund would complement existing funding mechanisms, including the PBF. Justifying the need for yet another financing channel, the report argued that the PBF was dedicated to the period after post-conflict stabilization. As such it was ill-suited to Brown’s key operational objective: to have this fund work in concert with a new international stand-by capacity of rapid-response teams of police and civilian-reconstruction specialists trained in methods for quickly restoring law and order and rebuilding crucial infrastructure and basic services.

After the council asked the Secretary-General to produce the *Immediate Aftermath* report, a July 2008 Decision of the Secretary-General communicated that the PBSO would take a lead role in producing it. The year-long process of drafting the report, which culminated in its debate by the council in mid-2009, marked an important moment in the PBSO’s institutional trajectory. First, the PBSO was charged for the first time with coordinating the UN system on a high-profile initiative that would shape the organization’s priorities for post-conflict reconstruction for years to come. Second, the PBSO sought to leverage its position as lead drafting entity to ensure that the report recommended future substantive roles for the PBSO (and to a lesser extent the PBC). As we will see, this strategy met with mixed results. Third, in the drafting process, both the PBSO and the PBC were made aware of new ways of fulfilling, and in some cases expanding, their mandates. These became important later in supporting the shift toward a more assertive posture on the part of all three components of the PBA.

While preparing the *Immediate Aftermath* report, the PBSO and its partners confronted the question of what constituted “early recovery.” One analysis, conducted in conjunction with the report’s preparation, identified a number of meanings of “early recovery,” and sought valiantly to reconcile this term with concepts such as “stabilization” and “transition.” Many UN actors had a stake in defining the “early recovery” period in ways that would justify their involvement in phases from which they had previously been excluded. Humanitarians made the case that their work could constitute “early peacebuilding,” but were nevertheless reluctant to be too closely associated with the military components of UN missions, for fear of compromising their status as neutral and impartial actors operating under the Geneva Conventions. Defining the report’s scope as the “immediate aftermath of conflict” underlined the
The post-conflict nature of the issues involved, though the focus on post-conflict planning hinted that upstream portions of the timeline would be covered as well.

The PBSO summarized the report’s purpose as helping to “ensure a more robust and coherent international response to peacebuilding challenges, especially in the period just before, and just after a peace agreement when the delivery of a visible ‘peace dividend’ is critical for stabilizing the peace.” Ultimately, the report identified the “immediate aftermath” period as the two years following a conflict’s conclusion. The report would focus on improving strategic assessment, monitoring and reporting; enhancing the capacity of the UN’s field leadership; accelerating responses to crisis situations; and developing more flexible funding instruments.

UN actors engaged in “early recovery” work mobilized quickly to influence the report. In November 2008, members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)—a collection of UN humanitarian entities—met to discuss mechanisms for improving the effectiveness of the UN’s work in “Early Recovery and Transition” settings. The IASC’s working group on “early recovery” recognized the Immediate Aftermath report as an opportunity to advance reform objectives to which members had long aspired. It conducted a study that found that the primary financing vehicles used for humanitarian purposes (Consolidated Appeals, Flash Appeals, the Central Emergency Response Fund, and the Common Humanitarian Fund) did not adequately fund “early recovery” activities. Around this time, the IASC’s early recovery group joined forces with a separate Working Group on Transitions (which included, in addition to humanitarian agencies, development entities working in conflict and post-conflict settings) to agree on principles for coordinating “early recovery” actions.

Other actors were similarly eager to shape the Immediate Aftermath report. At the initiative of the United Kingdom, a group of like-minded member states was formed to support the report-preparation process. As a result, background studies were commissioned and consultation events convened, including the Early Recovery Practitioners and Policy Forum held in Copenhagen in October 2008, hosted by Denmark and UNDP. The Forum’s conclusions were to “feed into” the Immediate Aftermath report, focusing on strategy, capacity, and financing issues. The spirit of that meeting was the need to move beyond the “UN’s so-called peacebuilding architecture,” which was receiving too much attention for the liking of many delegates from other parts of the UN system.

The Immediate Aftermath report went through several iterations. Contentious issues included the need for a surge capacity (and therefore a
roster-based “standby” system) for post-conflict countries; the difficulties of maintaining and operating such a mechanism; the skill gaps that persist in the absence of pre-deployment training geared specifically to peacebuilding and state-building; and the shortage of financing for these activities. Wide agreement turned out to exist on the need for the international community rapidly, coherently, and efficiently to provide: “safety and security” (DDR, SSR, and the rule of law), “political processes” (elections, reconciliation), “basic services” (health, education, sanitation), “the restoration of ‘core government functions’” (particularly public finance), and “economic revitalization” (particularly employment generation). The report concluded that contributing to the restoration of these five central peacebuilding priorities “requires augmenting capacity on the ground by deploying additional international civilian capacity.”

A major theme of the Immediate Aftermath report was the need to engage in national capacity building as early as possible. Developing countries were particularly preoccupied with this issue. The report also noted that many humanitarian capacities established during the fighting can be “redirected or transitioned towards early peacebuilding priorities, particularly through those entities that have a dual humanitarian and development mandate, such as UNICEF, FAO [Food and Agriculture Organization], WFP and WHO [World Health Organization].” In addition to proposals to improve the recruitment of mission leadership and the management structures through which they work, the report recommended that management teams be “supported by shared analytical, planning and coordination capacities in the form of small, unified teams of experts that can be rapidly supplemented by additional pre-identified expertise.” Such “standby capacities” would consist of “rosters of pre-vetted candidates able and ready to deploy rapidly to serve as staff members of a United Nations mission or under engagement with other United Nations organizations, international financial institutions, NGOs [nongovernmental organizations] or external partners.”

The report acknowledged that this was easier said than done: “experience has shown that roster maintenance requires significant investment, particularly to ensure depth, range and diversity of expertise, particularly from the South.” In addition, “expert-level rosters are rarely interoperable or coordinated and there is no single point for national and UN actors to transmit requests or obtain information on what resources are available.” The report explained that “[e]xperts continue to be deployed piecemeal with different rules and procedures to support separate parts of the United Nations in-country presence.” This, combined with other factors, “complicates their ability to come together quickly and work together effectively.”
The *Immediate Aftermath* report recognized the management issues—particularly the fuzzy lines of authority extending from the SRSG to agency field staff—that hinder the formation of effective, rapidly deployable civilian-response teams. Part of the proposed solution was to develop “mutual accountability mechanisms” to bind the various actors participating in the implementation of jointly agreed “integrated strategic frameworks” at the country level.\(^{41}\) In the absence of hard enforcement provisions, however, such mechanisms were unlikely to spur long-term improvement, as evidenced by the frameworks adopted by the PBC for the first two countries on its agenda (discussed in Chapter 3), and to a lesser extent to the second wave countries (discussed earlier in this chapter).

In earlier drafts of the *Immediate Aftermath* report—indeed as late as the draft of 18 May 2009 (less than a month before the report’s release)—the PBSO was proposed as the entity best suited to developing guidance on civilian response. The 18 May draft recommended that “[t]he PBSO should work with roster leads to facilitate the development of common standards, training, and guiding principles to enhance the interoperability across expert rosters within each of the typical priority areas.”\(^{42}\) Under the right circumstances, a remit to set standards can provide a bureaucratic foothold en route to a potentially larger role in coordinating international civilian-response capacity. With sufficient buy-in from other entities, standards can evolve into “minimum requirements” for governments, international bodies, NGOs, and others that contribute to civilian-response teams. Systems of this type vest those who design and operate them with significant influence.

However, the final version of the *Immediate Aftermath* report did not task the PBSO with this responsibility. The revised text replaced “the PBSO” with “[t]he United Nations Secretariat.” Nominating the “Secretariat” to perform this function was a non-decision. Failing to specify which part of the Secretariat would take the lead role was to encourage continued jockeying for position among the departments and offices that consider themselves most capable of taking on the challenge. This was significant given the strong interest shown by some member states in according UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery (BCPR) lead-actor status. That such a seemingly small role was a point of such intense maneuvering indicates the defensiveness among officials who have experienced more than a decade of continuous reform.

In the end, through its connection to the Secretary-General’s office, the PBSO was able to play a key role on the issue of deployable post-conflict expertise. It did this by managing the Review of International Civilian Capacities, which took place during most of 2010. The Review
team’s report ultimately identified the Department of Field Support (DFS) as the lead entity for ensuring that civilian response teams were appropriately skilled, coherently assembled, and rapidly deployed. Achieving any of this is difficult when staff from different countries, or even different UN entities, operate under widely varying terms of employment. The process of “harmonizing conditions of service” was one that required constant oversight by, among others, the PBSO, through its superintending role as SPG/PCG chair. While the PBSO could not acquire the operational and decision-making authority that its leadership had hoped for in this area—at least as far back as when it devised the Peacebuilding Capacity Inventory in 2006–07—the PBSO nevertheless shaped policy in ways that impinged on the decisions of other actors, within and beyond the UN. This was a significant step toward reanimating the PBSO as an institution.

So although the content of the Immediate Aftermath report did not confer upon the PBSO any new concrete functions, the process of producing it placed the PBSO in a more central position from which to acquire new roles. Following discussion of the report in mid-2009, the Security Council called for a progress report on implementation within a year. Naturally enough, the Secretary-General’s office tasked the PBSO, as lead author of the original report, with coordinating the progress update. The role of “progress monitor” was devoid of substantive power. Like virtually all reports of the Secretary-General, the progress update to the council was to be based on interagency consensus. Nevertheless, the PBSO would have significant “nuisance value.”43 The PBSO was empowered to ask uncomfortable questions of other UN entities concerning delivery on the promises found in the Immediate Aftermath report. The ability to frame the report’s structure, tone, and key messages made the PBSO-led drafting team the object of considerable complaint from departments and agencies that felt their accomplishments were being downplayed in the reporting.

In many instances, there was in fact little substantive activity to report. Even process milestones—for example, identifying divisions of labor among the multiple UN entities engaged in such peacebuilding activities as post-conflict elections and DDR—were in many cases not being met. Similarly, detailed proposals to ensure regular budgeting of core field posts in resident coordinator offices had not been implemented. What were the incentives for the PBSO to reveal such inadequacies? Earning the displeasure of the largest UN entities was not something to be undertaken lightly. On the other hand, by supplying unbiased information on (the lack of) progress in these fields, the PBSO could demonstrate its value to the Secretary-General’s office. The more that powerful entities
complained about the PBSO’s “meddlesome” behavior, the greater, possibly, would be its perceived value as an honest broker. A negative portrayal in the PBSO-drafted report caused at least some UN entities to seek more favorable coverage, which the PBSO could exchange for support for its pet initiatives, almost all of which required partnership with other UN entities.

The PBSO’s role in producing the Immediate Aftermath report helped it to secure another high-profile coordination assignment—in this case, one that prompted both the PBSO and the PBC to pursue areas of their respective mandates that had received scant attention. Their founding resolutions called on both the PBSO and the PBC to address gender issues in all aspects of their work. As we have seen, by mid-2009 there was already a growing sense that the PBC’s value-added lay in “mainstreaming” a peacebuilding perspective into all UN work—that is, to advocate for designing programmatic and diplomatic activities to prevent the outbreak or recurrence of conflict. The PBC and PBSO mandates that required them to promote gender-sensitive approaches to peacebuilding thus represented a second mainstreaming function nested inside the first.

It was because of this gender mandate that the Secretary-General’s office responded to the Security Council’s request, in resolution 1889 of October 2009, for a report on “women’s participation in peacebuilding” by designating the PBSO the lead drafting entity. Vietnam, which as rotating council president had drafted resolution 1889, sought to ensure that the Secretary-General selected the PBSO for this role. Council members such as the United Kingdom wanted to avoid at all costs having the women’s participation in peacebuilding report assigned to the Office of the Special Advisor for Gender Issues (OSAGI), a tiny DESA-based bureau that had conspicuously failed, in its a decade of responsibility for guiding the UN system’s response to resolution 1325 on women peace and security, to embed gender issues in the UN’s conflict prevention, resolution, or peacebuilding work. Specifically, OSAGI had failed to do what the PBSO recognized as central to any peacebuilding reform at the UN: to agree a credible plan with the main peace and security entities, set benchmarks, and build political consensus. The council therefore inserted in resolution 1889 language stipulating that the report be prepared in “consultation with the PBC,” a hint the Secretary-General’s office was able, with some quiet encouragement from member states, to decode as a preference for having the PBSO lead the drafting process. Rather than engage in the opportunistic turf-grabbing that might be expected of the PBSO at this stage, some extremely senior PBSO officials informed the Secretary-General’s office, informally, of their concerns about leading on the women’s participation in peacebuilding report.
They appeared to have two reasons: the perceived gaps in the PBSO’s analytical capacity, and persistent anxiety that the process of drafting the report would place the PBSO in the cross-fire between the demands of gender advocates and the operational entities that service UN field entities. These were both reasonable concerns.

The still-new head of the PBSO (the ASG for Peacebuilding Support) decided ultimately that if externally funded consultants could be obtained, then the women’s participation in peacebuilding report was an assignment worth embracing. The UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), which at this point was still early in the process of merging into the newly created UN Women, supplied the PBSO with one senior and one junior consultant to lead the six-month consultation, drafting, and review process. When delivered to the council in September 2010, the report advanced not just the moral case for women’s right to engage in matters of peace and security, but also the instrumental case, emphasizing the practical benefits of women’s participation in rebuilding economies, reconstituting social stability, and enhancing the legitimacy of competitive politics.45

Like the Immediate Aftermath report, the women’s participation report was structured around an action plan. This consisted of procedural changes to, for instance, automatically involve women in peace talks, and make gender equality a central part of post-conflict planning. The part of the plan that encountered the most resistance committed UN entities to spending at least 15 percent of their funds in post-conflict countries on efforts aimed primarily at empowering women and enhancing gender equality. To aid implementation and monitoring, the concrete measures identified were placed in tabular form and endorsed at the Secretary-General’s Policy Committee in September 2010, once the report’s content had been agreed. The Policy Committee called for an update in a year on progress achieved, while the council would receive an implementation report in 2012. The PBSO would, again, coordinate the reporting.

Two points of significance emerge from this episode. First, by building the women’s participation in peacebuilding report around an action plan, which would be merged into the larger reform agenda contained in the Immediate Aftermath report, the PBSO secured for itself an ongoing role in tracking the UN system’s work on gender and peacebuilding, a previously underexploited mandate. Second, the PBSO again served as an entry point to peace and security decision-making processes for another entity, UNIFEM/UN Women. UN Women subsequently extended its partnership with the PBSO to cover post-report implementation and monitoring.
For all its efforts at institutional revival, the PBSO often remained a marginal force. At the end of 2009, for instance, the PBSO received no mention at all in the text of a key interagency funding framework that would define priorities and designate lead entities for a subject on which the PBSO had just produced a report—coordinated international action in conflict’s immediate aftermath. The interagency “early recovery” group could find no role for the PBSO—not even through such “soft” modalities as staff secondments—despite the PBSO having been identified in a July 2008 Decision of the Secretary-General as a key actor in “Delivering on Recovery and Peace Dividends”—a Decision cited by the working group that drafted the funding document.46 Rivalries among powerful UN entities nevertheless placed the PBSO in a strategically useful balancing position. A pattern of “nested rivalries” could be discerned—DFS versus DPKO; both versus DPA; all of the above, representing a Secretariat perspective, in competition with the funds and programs (in particular UNDP), including the humanitarian actors. Central to the PBSO’s prospects was its proximity to the Secretary-General’s office. Indeed, the PBSO’s consolidation of whatever turf it managed to occupy represented a centralizing tendency within the UN, an assertion by the Secretary-General of more regularized powers of decision making. While the PBSO falls organizationally within the EOSG, it is—and is perceived to be—organizationally distinct from the staff complement working in the Secretary-General’s personal office and in (or for) his cabinet. Still, the PBSO can be a useful instrument for achieving the Secretary-General’s objectives. One way in which the PBSO has strengthened its linkages with the Secretary-General’s office is, as noted in Chapter 3, through decisions concerning the PBF.

The PBF

As with the PBC and the PBSO, the period from mid-2008 to mid-2009 represented a turning point for the PBF. The PBF had improved its financial position: by the end of 2008, the PBF had US$319.3 million in assets, exceeding by more than a quarter the $250 million target. It had also become a subject of considerable scrutiny and criticism. The PBF’s institutional terms of reference were officially reviewed during this period, as planned. During 2008–09 the PBF received consideration in three other analytical exercises as well, all of which would influence decision making by PBF stakeholders. The first was the Immediate Aftermath report, which called for a clearer PBF role and for a range of actions to achieve this. The report’s recommendations, however, were not specific enough to affect fund management practices.
Second, in the closing days of 2008, the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) published an independent evaluation of the PBF. The OIOS evaluation was wide-ranging, but a few points particularly illuminated conflicting visions of the PBF’s mandate. When the OIOS evaluation queried the reasoning behind the selection of certain recipient countries, the PBF’s managers robustly defended the fund’s performance. A document responding to points raised in the OIOS evaluation stated: “The PBSO does not agree with the suggestion … that [emergency window modalities] may have been used to fast-track non-emergency projects.” The PBF’s managers nevertheless agreed to revisit its emergency “criteria to ensure that the facility is used as strategically and responsively as possible.”

The PBSO also defended itself against concerns raised in the OIOS report about the distribution of PBF projects among recipient organizations. Answering such concerns, the PBSO, acting as the PBF’s management, explained that agencies such as UNDP received a large share of project funds in PBF countries because of their relative size and operational capacity in the field. UNDP’s role as the PB’s administrative agent did not bring it any additional funds beyond the multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) office’s standard fee. Administrative and financial rules stood in the way of Secretariat departments receiving a greater proportion of project resources in PBF-eligible countries. Not only were Secretariat contracting procedures more cumbersome, but Secretariat entities had not been able to reduce their administrative charges to the standard 7 percent level agreed among UN funds and programs. The PBSO nevertheless conceded that new structures and approaches were necessary to address many of the shortcomings the OIOS report had highlighted. By early 2009, some actions had already been taken—for instance, “Human resource constraints hindering PBF management were identified and corrective measures … put in place to balance the ‘ratio of staff to funds managed.’”

The third PBF review exercise during this period was a series of donor-funded assessments of its operations, performance, and prospects for reform. Among the most far-reaching was a mid-2009 (UK-funded) analysis of whether the PBF was showing signs of responding constructively to the criticisms leveled by the OIOS report. The review found that there was evidence of action being taken within each of the six “key challenge” areas the PBSO’s Financing for Peacebuilding (FPB) branch had established to guide its internal reform efforts. While appreciating this rapid progress, the review made further recommendations, including the need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of key stakeholders, address the main sources of delay in project development, and (somewhat
controversially) accept “political realities.” The review also asked why emergency (Window III) funding accounted (at that point) for only 5 percent of PBF allocations. This was the opposite of the criticism voiced by the OIOS, which worried that too many non-critical cases were being classified as emergencies. Because many of the stakeholder organizations involved in reforming the PBF could see that the PBSO was receiving conflicting advice and admonitions, the PBF paradoxically was freed of the need to respond with great commitment to the commands of any one constituency.

The PBF’s revised Terms of Reference (ToR), reported to the General Assembly in April 2009, had two aims: “rationalizing and simplifying” the fund’s structure and architecture, and maximizing “synergy between the Peacebuilding Commission and the Fund.” Limited progress was made on both fronts. The new ToR specified that the PBSO would regularly brief the PBC, donors, and other member states. They also specified the two-window system that thenceforth would be used instead of the existing three-window system. It would consist of an Immediate Response Facility (IRF) for emergency or high-payoff situations, whether or not the country was on the PBC’s agenda; and a Peacebuilding and Recovery Facility (PRF), for cases (PBC Agenda countries) in which longer-term planning was possible.

For IRF countries, the ASG for Peacebuilding “will ensure that consideration includes appropriate review procedures and risk assessments, which will be conducted in a manner that does not compromise speed or efficacy of response.” For PRF countries, where priority plans have been developed, the PBSO “will determine the overall country funding envelope based on a review of the priorities set, with due regard for funding needs, the available balance in the Peacebuilding Fund and projected requirements for new countries likely to be considered by the Fund.”

“National Steering Committees” (NSCs), “co-managed by the respective senior United Nations representative and the concerned Government authorities, and with representatives of other key stakeholders,” were explicitly mandated to oversee “[t]he review and approval of project activities.” The activities financed through the PBF would be limited to those that addressed a “gap that cannot be, or has not been, funded through any other mechanism,” and that do “[n]ot duplicate other ongoing interventions.”

Paradoxically, from 2009 onward, the PBF became both more politicized and more professionalized. The PBF’s ToR require the “Head of the Peacebuilding Support Office” to perform certain functions “[u]nder the authority of the Secretary-General.” This includes authorizing spending and conducting “an expeditious review of the priority plan through a
consultative process.” There was considerable conjecture as to the purpose of this formulation. Are not all actions initiated by Assistant or Under-Secretaries-General taken “under the authority” delegated to them by the Secretary-General? One interpretation is that the “under the authority” language was meant to discount any claims to residual PBC authority over the PBF, beyond those specified in the ToR. Another view was that this turn of phrase, like an earlier incarnation that referred to the Secretary-General “acting with and through” the head of the PBSO, was meant to indicate that the only boundary between the Secretary-General and the PBF was a thin membrane represented by a mere ASG—i.e., that the Secretary-General was making funding decisions that were merely executed under the sanctioning authority of the ASG.

From 2009 onward, the PBF was, in the minds of a number of observers, increasingly associated with the Secretary-General. During this period, certain individual funding requests were initiated by the Secretary-General’s office. Among these was the case of Uganda. The speedy attention Uganda’s PBF application received during 2010 was not surprising to some insiders. The Secretary-General’s office was said to regard this transaction as a way of shoring up Uganda’s current president, while simultaneously building support for the Secretary-General’s own reelection.

Even as this fairly subtle political process was unfolding, the PBF was becoming notably more professional. Analysis of expenditure was conducted more rigorously and presented more comprehensively. Partly this reflected the galvanizing effect of a new ASG, with new priorities, taking charge. This had followed two short-term, interim appointments. The new ASG saw the fund as the primary source of the PBSO’s power in two senses: the power to achieve results on the ground, and the power to gain leverage in negotiating with organizational rivals. A clear framework to identify the PBF’s approach was disseminated. In addition, a highly successful appointment was made for an administrator with the technical skills to oversee the PBF and to respond to the growing requests for analysis and recommendations from the ASG’s office, the fund’s advisory board, donors, CSC chairs, and entities represented on the SPG.

Any assessment of the PBF’s development must account for the serious handicaps imposed by the fund’s complex governance and oversight structure. The PBF must manage the tension between traditionally aid-receiving Southern member states (who form a majority in the PBC), and the smaller but substantial group of traditionally aid-supplying Northern states. Donors want to retain control of their funds, with threat of withdrawal their key negotiating resource. Southern states want more collective (PBC) control over PBF selection and allocation, in effect
further de-linking financial contribution from programmatic control. There is also tension between the PBSO and operational entities represented on the SPG, many of which feel that the PBF diverts resources away from their vital activities.

Despite these obstacles, the PBF improved its performance along many dimensions. The PBSO delivered on its promise to—in line with the revised PBF ToR—“make active use of evaluations and lessons-learned exercises so as to rapidly build up a body of knowledge and best practices relating to the utilization of the Fund.”\(^62\) The process for developing priority plans was streamlined and decision-making authority made more explicit. Detailed guidelines on this and other processes were devised and planners in UN field missions were supported in using them. The PBSO’s FPB branch helped to systematize various approaches to assessing project applications against the broad principles spelled out in recipient-country priority plans.

Working with its independent advisory group and others, the PBSO’s FPB branch also developed much clearer priorities for the fund globally. A list of 12 (sometimes 13) priorities was reduced to four key areas. These helpfully correspond with actual UN processes (and therefore institutions) rather than with an abstract model of how peacebuilding should ideally be structured. These were: implementation of peace agreements; co-existence and peaceful resolution of conflict; early economic recovery and peace dividends; and administrative services and human technical capabilities. Arguably, this is a better breakdown of peacebuilding’s key objectives than the “five recurring priorities” found in the Secretary-General’s *Immediate Aftermath* report, which has become the standard typology. The PBF also developed improved mechanisms for measuring how PBF money was being spent—country by country, sector by sector, goal by goal. As of 30 June 2010, for instance, the fund was able to document that almost half of the roughly $175 million approved as PBF projects went to the first global priority area (implementing peace agreements). Another quarter was for the second priority area (“peaceful resolution of conflict”). Donors were pleased with these developments.

The impact of PBF management decisions in New York could be felt in all countries where the fund was active. Staff in the resident coordinator’s office in Nepal spoke appreciatively of the flexibility shown by the fund’s managers in applying the PBF’s new terms of reference to individual countries.\(^63\) In Nepal, PBF resources were absorbed into a larger UN country-specific trust fund, and in light of the significant measures instituted to ensure accountability for the Nepal fund’s decisions, the PBSO did not require the creation of an NSC, along the lines specified in the PBF’s ToR.
Two other aspects of the PBF’s revival during 2009–11 deserve a brief mention. The first is that the PBF showed itself willing to engage with risky cases. The PBF began an expedited assessment process in Guinea (Conakry) during 2009. The situation was not encouraging, and an increase in disbursements was not advised. These early missions to Guinea had prepared PBF staff to perceive improvements that had taken place by 2010—not least the departure of Guinea’s psychologically unstable president. Lacking that prior point of reference, some other funding entities regarded Guinea as a zone of chaos, where programmatic activities could not be undertaken, but the PBF provided early financial support for Guinea—including for its remarkably violence-free elections of 2010—and won the respect of many parts of the UN system and international community for doing so.

The second area of PBF improvement during this period is more prosaic, but just as important: increased efficiency in the mechanics of fund operation. This was enhanced in several respects, most of which involved reductions in processing time—for instance, the time needed to affirm a country’s eligibility for PBF resources, to develop a priority plan, and to receive approval on project applications from the NSC. Actual expenditures from the PBF went from $37 million in 2008, to $45 million in 2009, to $54 million in 2010, with something like $70 million estimated for 2011. Levels of “approved” funds increased even faster.64

Conclusion

Despite the PBA’s relatively weak mandate—the PBC’s highly contingent “advisory” status, the PBSO’s vague coordinating role, and the contested nature of the PBF—as well as its politically contentious origins, this still-fledgling suite of institutions emerged from its first five years in existence as a significant new influence on the UN’s approach to preventing conflict recurrence. The PBC and the PBSO are now visible actors in the community of international actors engaged in the rebuilding of post-conflict states. As envisaged by their architects, both institutions participate in broader institutional discussions on the causes of violent conflict and the best means of preventing its eruption or recurrence.65 Given the speed with which newly minted international bodies can begin slipping into terminal irrelevance almost from the moment of inception,66 this is a not inconsiderable accomplishment.

Such assessments are all relative, of course. Even during the post-2008 “institutional revival” era—during which PBA entities sought to move beyond just treading water to survive—the PBSO was repeatedly revealed as marginal to key decision-making forums. It was not
mentioned in a 2008/09 report on providing support to resident coordinators, the senior field officials in locations without a peacekeeping or special political mission— not even in the section on headquarters support. The PBSO took solace in small achievements—for instance, its inclusion in the UN post-conflict planning process. The comprehensive inventory of UN agencies working on “Transitions from Relief to Development” acknowledges that, as per paragraph 80 of the relevant General Assembly resolution, “The United Nations development system” is expected “to take into account the advisory role that the Peacebuilding Commission can play in relation to peacebuilding and recovery strategies.” Using such positioning to influence decision making was a major PBSO preoccupation.

The three elements of the PBA have assumed prominent positions as much through improvisation as through the rational elaboration of coherent rules and procedures. Indeed, while the PBSO, PBC, and PBF have emerged as actors with which other peacebuilding stakeholders must contend, they are ill-suited to at least some of the complex tasks assigned to them. For instance, neither the PBC nor the PBSO has performed well in discharging its best-practice/knowledge-management function. Efforts to innovate in the field of post-conflict priority setting have not been particularly successful either. The PBF alone has stood out as an initiator of change—for instance, through the creation of its Gender Promotion Initiative. All this suggests that a viable future for the UN’s “new architecture” may require that it become better connected to the peacebuilding landscape in which it has been placed. The implications and possibilities for peacebuilding and the PBA are the subject of the concluding chapter.
5 Conclusion

- Implications
- Future directions

This concluding chapter has two objectives: first, to reflect on the significance of peacebuilding’s transition from abstract idea to institutional reality in the form of the Peacebuilding Architecture (PBA); and second, to assess the PBA’s future prospects based on an analysis of trends, recent and longstanding. In the process, this chapter revisits the five contentions advanced in the Introduction.

Implications

The concept of peacebuilding lends itself to multiple interpretations, in part because of the diverse and growing array of activities encompassed by the idea: providing public safety, designing electoral systems, reintegrating former combatants into civilian life, delivering basic services, resurrecting public administration, creating jobs, securing a viable tax base, and so on. In addition, the quantity and diversity of stakeholders involved in post-conflict reconstruction—national authorities, bilateral donors, multilateral agencies, national and international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), business interests—make consensus on goals, let alone strategy, elusive.

Peacebuilding in practice has also been shaped by the context in which it arose, particularly the conflicts that erupted as the Cold War ended. Both the nature of these conflicts (their “new war” traits) and the uneven performance of the international community in post-conflict reconstruction influenced perceptions of peacebuilding’s meaning, its appropriate timeframe, the methods that could most effectively be employed, the mix of actors required, and many other dimensions of the complex process of rebuilding states. The decade and a half of peacebuilding
leading up to the creation of the PBA in 2005 bequeathed an ideological legacy that combined market-democracy triumphalism (post-1989) and fear of ungoverned spaces (post-9/11).

The PBA, in other words, was a child of its time. While the issues driving the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) and its affiliated bodies were longstanding, the immediate context of their creation was the still-bitter aftermath of the 2003 US-led invasion of Iraq, which occurred without Security Council authorization. In the wake of this conflict, many countries became suspicious of any new institution created to meddle in the affairs of legally sovereign states, even if doing so in the name of rebuilding the state’s de facto sovereignty. With this inauspicious start, the PBA’s inability to resolve the conceptual and practical disagreements that have characterized international peacebuilding during its two decades as a field of both practice and scholarship is hardly surprising. Lacking direct control over the humanitarian and development agencies concerned, the PBC and Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) were unable even to “coordinate” the efforts of United Nations (UN) and other actors working in post-conflict countries. The PBC’s chief contribution during its first half decade may have been as a new venue—one possibly more advantageous to Southern states—for enacting these underlying rivalries.

As the PBC began embarking on its second five years, the process of conceptual and organizational positioning continued unabated, including among official entities. For instance, embracing an unusually broad conception of peacebuilding, UNICEF (the UN Children’s Fund) in November 2010 contended that it had long been engaged in this endeavor—insofar as UNICEF had always regarded “peace as a general objective of its work.” UNICEF lamented that its “programmes that aim at building peace are often not recognized or categorized as ‘peace building’ as such.” This definition of peacebuilding—anything that contributes in some way to peace “as a general objective”—is problematic for some stakeholders in the UN system, as will be detailed below.

Despite all the jockeying for influence over UN peacebuilding doctrine, and the use of the PBC and its affiliated institutions to advance various policy and organizational agendas, the PBA managed to survive its early years. In the latter phases, following a year or more of relative inactivity, the PBA’s component parts began to show signs of renewal—attempts at institutional revival, no matter how marginal their impacts.

As the first five years drew to a close, the intergovernmental PBC began to work more systematically to fulfill its mandate, taking seriously its stewardship role vis-à-vis the first four countries on its agenda:
Sierra Leone, Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, and the Central African Republic (CAR). It even added a fifth country, Liberia, to its agenda in late 2010, demonstrating signs of continued life. Guinea (Conakry) became the sixth country in early 2011. The PBC has succeeded in focusing at least some international attention on these countries, a serious challenge given our highly distractible world.

Once ensconced within the intergovernmental machinery, the PBC compelled other actors to devote resources and political capital to monitoring and participating in the body’s deliberations. It also triggered debate among governments and official entities about what constituted peacebuilding, how priorities for post-conflict economic recovery can and should be set, the role of women in peacebuilding, the most effective institutional mechanisms for binding national and international actors into a relationship of mutual accountability, and other key issues. The PBSO and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF)—which it oversaw in concert with other stakeholders—followed a similar course. All three institutional components successfully navigated the transition from institutional survival to institutional revival, each finding niches for itself through various means.

An analysis of the PBA’s institutional components during their first five years reveals actors operating very much as some scholars of international relations have theorized. Bureaucratic “agents,” as expected, sought a degree of autonomy from member states, their nominal “principals,” through the selective acquisition of organizational roles within and beyond the UN system. They have done so using the familiar arsenal at their disposal—control over information, agenda-setting advantages, a presumption of dispassionate expertise—and on the basis of a standard UN process that Brian Urquart identified decades ago:

... ideas from member states or other sources begot studies which produced reports which set up staffs which produced more reports which were considered by meetings which asked for further reports and sometimes set up additional bureaucratic appendages which reported to future meetings. The process was self-perpetuating.3

In addition, member states have sought to encroach on the domain of other intergovernmental bodies. These processes have been complicated by the composite nature of the PBA: officials in the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF have focused on “their” individual components, engaging with the others instrumentally. This was manifested most directly in persistent contestation over control of PBF resources between the bureaucrats who manage the PBSO and the member states that constitute the PBC.
Future directions

The half decade after the PBA began operating in 2006 was marked by considerable reflection on how the three institutions of which it is composed could best contribute to sustainable peace. Soul-searching over the most effective roles for the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF—individually and collectively—has taken place at internal “retreats,” expert seminars, online “virtual” discussions among practitioners, “induction” events for new PBC member states, and a range of other forums—including, of course, formal meetings of the PBC itself. Annual reports on the PBC’s work have been issued. Both the Security Council and the General Assembly have debated the question of the PBA’s value-added. The PBF has been the subject of several assessments, in addition to its regular annual reports.

One particularly relevant analysis, *The 2010 Review of the Peacebuilding Commission*, was called for in the PBC’s founding resolutions. The three-country team that led the *PBC 2010 Review* process—consisting of the permanent representatives of Ireland, Mexico, and South Africa—arrived at a predictably balanced picture of performance, while admitting that the PBC’s founders would have been disappointed in many respects. Members that worked tirelessly for a seat on the PBC “have not always invested commensurate energy in discharging the responsibilities of membership.” All three PBA entities were found wanting. The PBF needed to focus on targeting its efforts on high-payoff interventions, while the PBSO “has struggled to find an identity that would enable it to fulfill an effective coordinating role on peacebuilding issues across the United Nations Secretariat.”

Among the *PBC 2010 Review* team’s mandates was to discover how the PBC could work more closely with the Security Council. Various possible methods were discussed during months of consultations. The review team ended up focusing its recommendation on the “potential … involvement of the Commission” in the process by which the council “considers” peacekeeping mandates. That this would be a major thrust of the review was clear from the earliest stage of deliberations. In January 2010, the newly elected PBC chair outlined a six-point agenda. Point 3, which concerned the achievement of a “more structured relationship with the Security Council,” called for the council to “benefit from the PBC’s advice at an early stage, in formulating mandates for peacekeeping missions and monitoring the implementation of those mandates and Special Political Missions.”

Behind this proposal was the desire of troop-contributing countries (TCCs) to have a greater say in the nature of the mandates being
created for peacekeeping missions, and of many other member states to influence the priorities of and exit strategies for UN missions of all kinds. This example shows the PBC, once again, serving as an additional venue for playing out pre-existing disagreements—in this case, those that dominate the predictably contentious negotiations of the “C-34,” the Special Committee on Peacekeeping, which reviews all aspects of UN peace operations and reports to the General Assembly.

Conceptually, however, the proposal for earlier PBC involvement—at the mandate-setting rather than mandate-implementing stage—was justified through a critique of conventional approaches to peace that assume a correspondence between activities and phases. The section of the PBC 2010 Review entitled “the illusion of sequence” argued that the roles of different actors often span the artificial boundaries separating humanitarian action, peacekeeping, early recovery, peacebuilding, and other such “phases.” This further elaborated an idea that had been in circulation for some years. It was articulated eighteen months earlier in the Secretary-General’s 2009 Immediate Aftermath report, which called for “the respective roles of the Council and the Commission … to be seen as complementary and in parallel, as envisaged by the founding resolutions, rather than sequenced in a manner that would diminish the Commission’s role during earlier phases where it could add significant value.” The Immediate Aftermath report had argued that “the advice of the [Peacebuilding] Commission could contribute to … [the Security Council’s] work during the early phase of the Council’s consideration of post-conflict situations.”

As for its engagement with countries on the PBC’s agenda, the PBC 2010 Review recommended that country-specific configurations (CSCs) experiment with more flexible modalities, certainly something less cumbersome than a one-size-fits-all framework-centered monitoring process. The review proposed strengthening CSCs by creating in-country counterparts with which they could work to advance the shared objectives agreed through the intergovernmental process. Two types of counterparts were envisaged. The first was diplomatic: within each PBC Agenda country, an embassy representing the same country as the CSC chair would assume a lead peacebuilding donor role. For example, when Norway’s UN representative served as chair of the Burundi configuration, the Norwegian ambassador in Bujumbura would simultaneously have served as lead peacebuilding donor for in-country coordination—in theory creating coherence between negotiations in New York and on the ground. The second kind of CSC counterpart was to be at the official level. The PBC 2010 Review recommended “liaison committees” to deepen engagement by CSCs with in-country decision makers. Each
PBC Agenda country’s liaison committee would be co-chaired by a host government representative and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG), and include “a broad range of members and a level of attendance commensurate with the Commission’s high-level political role.”

After receiving the 2010 review, the PBC deliberated on how it might best respond. Though based on consultations with PBC members (among others), the review was not a consensus document; it was produced by a three-country panel appointed by the General Assembly. The (German) chair of the PBC circulated a series of draft “Roadmaps,” prepared with the assistance of the PBSO. These remained at a high level of abstraction, permitting various actors to quietly undermine proposals they did not like.

The response of key bureaucratic actors to the PBC 2010 Review’s proposals will likely have a major impact on whether and how they are pursued. One crucial actor was the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which in early 2011 produced an eight-page memorandum outlining its reaction to the review and the roadmaps proposed for “taking forward” its recommendations. The memorandum, circulated to the (PBSO-chaired) Senior Peacebuilding Group (SPG), provided a window onto disagreements within the UN system on approaches to peacebuilding. This lack of consensus is a significant bottleneck, preventing the PBA from evolving into a more significant institutional force.

DPA’s memorandum began with a series of diplomatically phrased complaints. The PBC should be focusing not on matters of grand peacebuilding strategy, but on marshaling resources for what has already been agreed. The PBC’s role in providing political oversight (or “accompanyment”) should, for the foreseeable future, be limited to developing “best practice” case studies and “lessons learned” documents. Expanding the PBC’s “conflict-prevention” role would have major implications that had not received adequate consideration, and so required “detailed discussion”—code for delay.

DPA particularly objected to the review’s proposal for in-country “liaison committees” for each CSC. One DPA staff member complained that it would consume more of their field staff’s time and create a “parallel process” that would confuse “lines of authority.” DPA was particularly sensitive to the “misunderstanding … that S/ERSGs [Special/Executive Representatives of the Secretary-General] are appointed by, and work for the CSC-Chairs, not the Secretary-General,” by which was meant the operationally relevant Under-Secretaries-General for Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations, respectively. The memorandum stated that if such a PBC-liaison function had to be
created, it should at least be undertaken by an existing body. For instance, the mandate of National Steering Committees (NSCs) could “be expanded to strengthen PBC-PBF synergy at the country level.” NSCs exist in countries receiving PBF resources but are confined to allocating project funds on the basis of previously agreed priorities. In many countries, questions have been raised about NSCs’ technical capacity and socio-political inclusivity. They are certainly not designed to perform the functions that the review team had in mind.

At the root of almost all of DPA’s expressed concerns was an underlying conviction that the new PBA has fragmented rather than consolidated UN efforts to create stability and build peace. There is undeniably some truth to this claim, as the analysis of events in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 showed. A lack of clarity concerning roles “within the Secretariat (i.e., DPA, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG), PBSO),” and among field-based entities, “continues to unnecessarily generate confusion,” according to DPA. DPA also deplored the “duplicated reporting lines to and from headquarters and the field.” DPA (and by implication DPKO) officials felt that their “lead” roles as managers of field missions meant that further investment in their capacity (and authority) should be prioritized. Funding and attention for peacebuilding was getting dispersed—away from DPA and DPKO—because of the UN’s excessively broad “collective understanding of the scope of peacebuilding.” Things the UN had “been doing for decades are now being re-packaged as ‘peacebuilding.’” These activities are now “framed under the reports of the Secretary General on peacebuilding and many thematic Security Council debates.” This was a veiled reference to the indirect leverage the PBSO had gained by preparing and monitoring implementation of the 2009 Immediate Aftermath and 2010 Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding reports. It was also a complaint about the growing presence in UN decision-making structures of entities whose activities, DPA evidently felt, were only coincidentally “conflict related.”

DPA’s displeasure with encroachment on its turf from the PBSO and other, primarily “policy guidance” entities was reflected in the statement that “ensuring operational entities play their respective roles” would allow the UN more effectively to “support conflict-affected countries.” The strong suggestion was that non-operational entities should stay out of matters that do not concern them. The memorandum also suggested that the PBSO was the wrong place to go for serious analytical work: “Different to the conclusion of the Review, we believe better use of operational entities’ existing mandates will improve political and other substantive and thematic analysis.” Instead of seeking funds to build
its own in-house capacity, the PBSO should “tap the expertise that exists elsewhere in the system,” including the country-specific Integrated Task Forces (ITFs) and other interagency mechanisms, most of which are DPA- and DPKO-led. Agreeing with the review’s conclusion that the PBC needed better analytical support, DPA argued not for expanding the PBSO, but for “lead departments” (i.e., DPA and DPKO) to reorganize themselves to support the PBC, and for ITFs to “be used more frequently to brief CSCs.”

The DPA memorandum stated explicitly what was hinted at in the Introduction to this book—that to conceive of the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF as “the UN Peacebuilding Architecture” is to make a fundamental error. The three entities are merely new actors placed amidst a complex set of existing structures. This misconception “is problematic because … the UN’s ‘peacebuilding architecture’ also includes headquarters, regional and in-country operational capacities”—in other words, entities like DPA, DPKO, and the UN Development Programme (UNDP). By layering new institutions on top of older ones, the UN peacebuilding bureaucracy had become afflicted by what Jan Klabbers once called “constitutional sedimentation.” This creates considerable confusion: because only the uppermost institutional stratum is visible, the contributions of lower-down strata—including peacebuilding organizations that existed prior to the PBA—are often neglected. As DPA put it in its memorandum to the SPG, the “role of lead departments—DPA and DPKO … are effectively rendered invisible in the 2010 PBC Review.”

Another important intra-UN relationship is between the PBC and other intergovernmental bodies. One analyst has argued that because “one of the PBC’s purposes” is to serve as a venue “for security and development actors to discuss and coordinate their policies … [t]he Security Council should rely more on this institutional support, especially in its country-specific configurations.” Among the contingent factors that will influence whether and how this takes place is the composition of the Security Council’s non-permanent membership. During 2010 and 2011, crucial PBC members were represented among the council’s non-permanent members. As one contemporary analysis put it, “Having both Germany, the chair of the PBC since January 2010, and Brazil, the chair of the Guinea-Bissau country-specific configuration, as well as South Africa, one of the co-facilitators of the PBC review, on the Council may bring a new dimension to this issue … [of] the relationship between the Council and the PBC.”

The same analyst recognized, however, that “[s]ome permanent members … prefer a more cautious approach, particularly if it might impact
on the working methods of the Council.” This aversion to substantive change—the five permanent members of the Security Council clearly do not want to cede their mandate-setting and monitoring roles—may be sufficient to convince a preponderance of PBC members that the institution’s best hope for closer integration with the Security Council is to focus on other ways of influencing the council. One way of doing this would be to assist in reducing the number of country situations of which the council is “seized” by developing a mechanism for recommending when a post-conflict country has made sufficient progress for it to “graduate” from the council’s agenda to the PBC’s alone (assuming that a period of overlap provides continuity), and, eventually, off of the PBC’s agenda as well.

As indicated in Chapter 3, the PBSO already has been engaged in the process of identifying performance measures that accurately capture progress toward self-sustaining peace consolidation. In fact, the possibility that a new intergovernmental body might be of assistance in easing countries off of the Security Council’s agenda was among the reasons why proposals to create the PBC received such broad support in the first place. James Fearon and David Laitin, whose work was discussed in Chapter 2, were merely the most explicit about this vision. It is widely recognized that the Security Council is ill-equipped to provide the requisite level of ongoing attention to the large volume of cases it has been forced to carry in recent years. The council was not designed to retain a close watching brief on the many countries where war has ended but where the restoration of state authority, the revival of economic activity, and the return of community life may take a decade or more. Although recent cases of conflict relapse—East Timor, Côte d’Ivoire—have made the Security Council skittish about scaling down its attentions too hastily, the desire to clear space on the council’s agenda remains strong, as does the concern to ensure that “graduating” countries receive continued guidance from an institution with political heft. The inclusion of the P5 within the PBC makes it at least potentially able to play this role.

There has never been a fixed procedure for “graduation” off the Security Council’s agenda. Indeed, the issue has been clouded by confusion over the distinction between graduation in the sense of no longer remaining an agenda item, and “exit” in the sense of winding down the security components of multidimensional peace operations (or indeed the closing of UN missions entirely). While in theory the PBC should take on countries far in advance of any such exit or graduation moment, and follow such situations concurrently with the council, it should also be prepared to inherit sole charge of cases that have become stable.
enough for the council to relinquish. For these cases, the council could confer a subset of its prerogatives on the PBC—the right to request and deliberate upon progress reports and make recommendations to the Secretary-General on restructuring elements of the remaining UN country-level presence to correct any deficiencies identified. What constitutes “stable enough” depends on the metrics used. In the end, graduation decisions will be political, and the council will retain considerable latitude. It would nevertheless benefit from a measurement and analysis methodology, validated by an impartial UN office (such as the PBSO), which could provide cover for taking unpopular actions.

Recognizing that “benchmarks and indicators are required to determine when a UN peacekeeping operation can begin the process of handover and withdrawal without jeopardizing ongoing efforts to consolidate the peace,” some PBC members have called for the development of benchmarks that might signal a country’s readiness to make the political transition from Security Council to PBC oversight. During 2009–10, one (donor) member organized technical consultations with external experts to assess the potential for such a mechanism. Subsequent informal discussions among member states (as the PBC review process was underway in 2010) revealed that there was little appetite for anything resembling a benchmarking instrument for PBC use.

Moreover, it may be that in order to evade the prohibition on assuming an early-warning role, which had been specifically rejected when the PBA’s institutional design was debated at the UN in 2005, the PBC may need to frame its conflict-prevention work as just another means of helping to decompress the council’s agenda. Preventing new cases from arriving on the council’s docket by helping them to avoid conflict in the first place would be the justification for PBC involvement in pre-conflict settings.

The PBA may in fact be able to evolve into an institution that prevents all kinds of conflict, whether an initial occurrence or a threatened recurrence. As indicated in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, all three elements of the PBA have been sliding toward engagement with the broader conflict-prevention field. The PBSO engaged with the interagency “framework team,” which among other things monitors early-warning indicators for countries at risk of descending into violence. In 2008 the PBF provided resources to Kenya, which had not slipped into a formal state of “conflict,” despite widespread post-election violence in 2007 and 2008. The PBC itself took an important step in adjusting the scope of its mandate when it placed on its agenda a country that had not yet emerged from conflict (CAR), and another (Guinea-Bissau) where conflict had ended many years earlier and worries centered on the potential
outbreak of a new war (this is conceptually distinct from preventing the recurrence of a prior conflict, even if distinguishing the two is difficult in practice). The PBC went even further than this in early 2011 when it placed Guinea on its agenda. While Guinea had experienced a disorderly transition and a period of violent rule, followed by a coup and further political instability, it had not been a “conflict” country.

Limiting the PBA to post-conflict states—for which the key issue is the recurrence of violence—undermines the UN’s ability to develop an integrated and comprehensive approach to conflict-prevention, broadly conceived. There are two dimensions to this problem—one organizational, the other operational. First, assembling core expertise on the risks of and responses to fragile states—whether statistical (e.g., based on an analysis of conflict drivers) or qualitative (e.g., based on extensive country knowledge)—requires a systematic pooling of resources. This does not happen when “prevention of outbreak” and “prevention of recurrence” are placed in separate conceptual categories, prompting organizational fragmentation. Second, there is an operational advantage to a unified system for: (1) monitoring developments within and across at-risk countries; (2) sharing this information with key decision makers in real time; (3) charting the effects of decisions made; (4) tracking the uneven process through which countries engaged in peace negotiations fall into and out of armed conflict; and (5) providing high-quality analysis of security, economic, and humanitarian developments in states emerging from conflict.

Under a “unified” peacebuilding approach, staff working on a country at the post-conflict end of the prevention cycle would be operating on the basis of not only current information but also longitudinal data that has been consistently collected and analyzed over time. Because the data would reach back to the pre-conflict period, a comprehensive case history would be maintained for all states at risk. The type of information the PBC and PBSO are currently able to process for the countries with which they are engaged (which for the PBSO extends beyond the countries on the PBC’s agenda) provides only a snapshot.

Just as the PBC was shaped by the atmosphere of perpetual UN reform surrounding its birth and early life, the PBC’s future prospects will depend on the playing out of various reform agendas. These will touch on everything from funding trends to reform of the Security Council to initiatives beyond the UN. One that may have an impact is the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding (IDPS). This began in December 2008, a result of the Accra Agenda for Action, the outcome document of the Third High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Accra two months earlier. Its primary concern is how
to adapt the principles of the Paris Declaration (discussed in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3) to post-conflict contexts. Concepts such as national ownership and mutual accountability, staples of the aid-effectiveness agenda, become even more slippery when applied to countries where the state exists in name only.

Ideally, despite mutual suspicions, the IDPS could be considered a resource for furthering the aims of the PBC and the PBSO. For instance, the location of the IDPS’s Secretariat within the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development’s (OECD) Development Assistance Committee (DAC) places valuable data and extraordinary analytical capacity at the IDPS’s disposal—something the PBC and PBSO sorely lack. A partnership with the IDPS would open possibilities such as using internal analysis of OECD data on aid flows to inform CSCs on the performance of donors in fulfilling their aid pledges in a timely fashion and in accordance with Paris principles. This would rebalance the current state of mutual accountability relationships, in which countries on the PBC’s agenda receive far more scrutiny than their donors (many of them PBC members) ever do. The PBA engaged with the IDPS process, including in the run up to the 2011 Busan meeting on Aid-Effectiveness, where new principles were agreed. Soon thereafter, however, divisions emerged within the UN system over how to treat the Busan declaration, in particular whether the UN, the Secretary-General, or specific UN entities had endorsed it, or indeed should do so.27

Another factor that will likely shape the PBC’s prospects is whether it can move beyond the technical to the political. As Michael Barnett has noted, when it comes to peacebuilding, “international coordination and collaboration will be more than a technical feat—it also will be profoundly political.”28 A 2007 Decision of the Secretary-General echoed similar ideas.29 The World Bank has, somewhat surprisingly, begun advocating detailed analysis of local political dynamics for post-conflict programming.30 Defining the boundaries of the “political,” in the senses implied here, is as difficult as reaching consensus on the precise meaning of peacebuilding.

An NGO-led review of the PBC’s early years argued “that particular emphasis should be placed on the PBC as a political forum to facilitate commitment, consensus and action” among the widest possible array of external stakeholders.31 This reference to the need for international political agreement was complemented by a plea for the PBC’s consideration on issues of domestic political concern. The purpose of the PBC as a political forum was not merely to promote coordination, but also to prompt “action in tackling tough governance-related challenges” that are “particularly relevant for countries in late post-conflict
and early development periods.” 32 One way would be to “encourage broader citizen engagement with governing structures,” which might “foster political pluralism in the long term.” The goal was “to facilitate the political engagement of ordinary citizens.” There was some evidence of this in Burundi, where the PBC catalyzed a “modest yet innovative discussion on peacebuilding among various stakeholders at the national level … one of the great benefits of the PBC process.” 33 The PBC 2010 Review also recognized the value of a “high-level political accompaniment.” It argued that “civil society, including women’s groups … must be central to the country-specific configuration approach,” which nevertheless “needed to be offered in a context-specific and appropriate way.” 34

Finally, the PBA’s prospects may be affected by whether future Secretaries-General perceive the PBSO and the PBF as useful instruments for enhancing the Secretary-General’s leverage over the wider UN system. The PBF represents the only relatively untied funds that can be used at the Secretary-General’s discretion. PBF resources can be allocated to states whose backing is desired by the Secretary-General on a particular issue, which may or may not concern peacebuilding as such, and can also be a way of gaining the support of UN entities that act as implementing agencies for PBF-funded projects. All this assumes a good working relationship between the Secretary-General and the head of the PBSO, who formally controls the fund. It is through this relationship—through proximity to, and the ability to produce positive decisions for, the Secretary-General—that the PBSO can gain leverage for its policy development efforts in New York and for its country-specific work with the PBC. The PBSO’s ability to influence the UN’s approach to Guinea was a sign that the PBA’s period of renewal might not have exhausted itself.

On the other hand, one can search too diligently for hopeful signs. Wishful thinking and grasping at straws are not unknown pastimes among scholars of UN reform. The PBC’s light-touch approach to engagement with Liberia, for instance, was hailed in early 2011 as a new, low-cost alternative to the heavy-footprint approach of the framework compacts. Yet one can see little to celebrate in the Liberian case. By early 2012, plans for “regional hubs” to promote peace and development were stalled, and the country’s elections were far more vulnerable to violence than had been recognized. At a February 2012 PBSO staff retreat, a senior diplomat (and former CSC chair) criticized the PBC in unusually harsh terms. It was an institution incapable of supporting, let alone driving, systemic change. This failure, he argued, had further decreased interest among ambassadors in New York, who
rarely bother to appear at anything but the most high-profile PBC meetings. This sense of disenchantment from an actor who at one time sought, seemingly in earnest, to breathe new life into the PBC was disheartening to many of those present—not that they disagreed, for the most part. Such frankness may in time fuel demands for a new wave of reform to the peacebuilding architecture, encompassing actors beyond the PBC, the PBSO, and the PBF, whose cooperation is essential if genuine change is to take place.
Notes

Foreword


3 In addition to the establishment of the Human Rights Council and the agreement about the norm of the responsibility to protect, which are also topics in this series: see Bertrand G. Ramcharan, *The UN Human Rights Council* (2011); Rama Mani and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *The Responsibility to Protect: Cultural Perspectives from the Global South* (2011); and Mónica Serrano and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *Rallying to the R2P Cause: The International Politics of Human Rights* (forthcoming, 2013).


Introduction

1 This statistic and variations on it have been repeated and adjusted with great frequency. The most careful version is found in Michael W. Doyle and Nicholas Sambanis, *Making War and Building Peace* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006), where it is stated that peace is not sustained in about half of the 121 conflicts examined. The rate is about the same
regardless of whether one adopts a two-year or a five-year timeframe, and regardless of which of the main definitions of peace is employed.

2 UN Charter, Chapter VII.


6 One academic used the measurements from his cross-national statistical research to declare, in a mid-2006 *New York Times* op-ed, that Iraq was at that moment experiencing a civil war, rather than an “insurgency,” “sectarian violence,” or other such euphemism. See Nicholas Sambanis, “It’s Official: There is Now a Civil War in Iraq,” *The New York Times*, 23 July 2006.


13 The first line of *Anna Karenina* informs the reader that “All happy families resemble one another, each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina*, translated by Louise Maude (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 1.


22 Recommendations of this kind were emerging from UN-funded research in Indonesia, Nigeria, and other countries—e.g., Ashutosh Varshney, Rizal Panggabean, and Mohammad Zulfan Tadjoeddin, “Patterns of Collective Violence in Indonesia (1990–2003),” Working Paper 04/03 (Jakarta: United Nations Support Facility for Indonesian Recovery, 2004).

23 “The PBC should make use of the information of the UN Human Rights Council’s Universal Periodic Review process, an Amnesty International representative suggested at the council’s general debate on the follow-up and implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action . . . ,” www.reliefweb.int/node/281204.


25 The term “mission” is used to denote the field presence of the UN pursuant to a security council mandate. These come in various forms, including “peacekeeping,” “peacebuilding,” and “special political” missions. Other permutations—“assistance” and “support” missions, for instance—emerge from time to time.


28 UN Chief Executives Board, One United Nations—Catalyst for Progress and Change (New York: UN, 2005), para 131.


30 OECD, The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the Accra Agenda for Action.


1 Peacebuilding: A contested and evolving concept


This is the recollection of a very senior UN official who was present at the occasion. Personal interview, New York, 4 January 2009.


Notes


36 A classic text on this is John Paul Lederach, Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 1998). Nearer the softer end of the peacebuilding spectrum are approaches that deal primarily with the social and cultural dimensions of community recovery—including, for instance, officially sanctioned symbolic and communal reparations (in the form of public memorials or days of remembrance) for groups that suffered severe injustice during periods of conflict or oppressive rule.


40 In the field of international relations, Kenneth Waltz is associated with the minimalist school. See Kenneth Waltz, Theory of International Politics (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1979), 97–99.


42 Ghani and Lockhart, Fixing Failed States, 124.


49 Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding.”

50 Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding,” 36.


52 For instance, a consultation workshop on “Strengthening the UN’s Capacity on Civilian Crisis Management,” Copenhagen, 8–9 June 2004.

53 Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding,” 43.

54 Thorsten Benner, Andrea Binder, and Philipp Rotmann, “Learning to Build Peace? United Nations Peacebuilding and Organizational Learning:
57 Personal interview with a diplomat from one of the five permanent members of the Security Council, New York City, October 14, 2009.
60 Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding.” 37.
63 Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding.” 50.
64 Barnett et al., “Peacebuilding.” 51.
80 James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele, Richard Teltschik, and Anga R. Timilsina, The UN’s Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), xxxvii.
84 Collier, “Naive Faith in the Ballot Box.”
86 Lise Morjé Howard, UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008).
88 Hall MacLeod, Constructing Peace, 3–11.
89 Hall MacLeod, Constructing Peace.
91 Chetan Kumar, Karin Wermester, and Elizabeth M. Cousens, eds., Peacebuilding as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2000).
Notes


102 Address by a senior official in the EU’s development cooperation directorate, EurAid, Workshop on Aid Effectiveness, Maastricht School of Governance, Maastricht, the Netherlands, 14 October 2008.

2 The UN peacebuilding architecture: Structure, mandate, and origins

1 Financial contributions are calculated as the aggregate of a member state’s “assessed” contribution to UN budgets and its voluntary contributions to UN funds, programs, and agencies (including the PBF).

2 These are the African Group, the Asian Group, the Eastern European Group, the Latin American and Caribbean Group, and the Western European and Others Group.


5 As one mid-ranking official put it, “in the UN, ‘coordination’ is code for adjudicating between the claims of the many UN entities, which have overlapping mandates in many cases. This tendency toward duplication and overlap is the consequence of a conflict-avoiding approach to institutional under-performance [wherein] new institutions are created to do the job that existing ones are failing to do,” personal communication, 26 July 2011.


8 Fearon and Laitin, “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States.”
13 The ECPS was created in 1997 as part of an earlier reform process. See Renewing the United Nations: A Programme for Reform (General Assembly document A/51/950), 14 July 1997.
17 Five years later, the UK was still referring to DPA as “the UN home for peacebuilding.” UK, Department for International Development, Evaluations Division, “Review of the UK Government Approach to Peacebuilding,” London, 2003.
21 “Trust Fund in Support of the Special Missions and Other Activities Related to Preventive Diplomacy and Peacemaking—Terms of Reference” (unpublished UN document, c.2007), Section V states that: “the implementing office of the Trust Fund [is] to be the Department of Political Affairs,” with the Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs serving as “Programme Manager.”
26 Del Castillo, Rebuilding War-Torn States: The Challenge of Post-Conflict Economic Reconstruction, 57.
27 The list of items the Secretary-General proposed for implementation (most never undertaken, let alone completed) are found in reports submitted by

28 This culminated in the *Report of the Independent Review on Civilian Capacity in the Aftermath of Conflict*, transmitted by the Secretary-General via document A/65/747-S/2011/85 (18 February 2011). This report was prepared under the auspices of the PBSO, where its secretariat was located, but with major inputs of personnel and political influence from DPKO and DFS, which took the lead in taking forward the report’s recommendations.


30 Forman and Patrick, “Preparing for Peace and Development.”


33 Fearon and Laitin, “Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States,” 36.


37 Busumtwi et al., “Structural Deficits.”

38 The Group of 77 was established in 1964 by 77 developing countries. It currently has 131 members.


52 In Larger Freedom, 33.


56 In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All—Report of the Secretary-General (General Assembly document A/59/2005), 21 March 2005, 6. The document states: “The proposals … are designed to strengthen States and enable them to serve their peoples better by working together on the basis of shared principles and priorities … [O]ne of the great challenges of the new millennium is to ensure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face.”

57 The success of this rearguard action was reflected in Addendum 2 (para. 17) of ILF, inserted after consulting with member states.


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68 Remarks of Mr Jean-Marie Guehenno, 6.
69 From the “DPA Field Missions” page on the UN DPA website. On a different page, the DPA grudgingly acknowledged the need to “support … the establishment of the PBC and the PBSO,”—though not necessarily their actions—as “per the decisions of the World Summit.” This was an imposed decision. The DPA reserved the right to continue “ongoing efforts to enhance DPA’s own performance in this area.”
73 Ponzio, The Creation and Functioning of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, 5–6.
75 Ponzio, The Creation and Functioning of the UN Peacebuilding Commission, 6–7.
78 The level of discord could be seen in the concluding paragraphs of the December 2005 report by the General Assembly’s Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), on the proposed 2006/07 budget, where the committee chastised the Secretary-General for going beyond the remit of the 2005 Summit Outcome while preparing the PBSO’s establishment. See The Peacebuilding Commission: Programme Budget Implications of Draft Resolution A/60/L.40 (UN Administrative and Budgetary Committee document A/60/7/Add.25), 16 December 2005.
3 Institutional survival: The peacebuilding architecture in action, 2006–08

1 Security Council resolution 1645, 20 December 2005, preamble.
8 Personal interview with a consultant to one of Kofi Annan’s key advisors during 2005, New York City, 13 February 2007.


23 For instance, a November 2006 report on Burundi by the International Crisis Group (ICG), an NGO, called on the PBC to keep “under close review human rights and economic governance matters related to Burundi,” and develop “benchmarks for improvement on which disbursement of further aid should be conditioned.” See ICG, “Burundi: Democracy and Peace at Risk,” *Africa Report* No. 120 (30 November 2006): Recommendation 17(b).


By the conclusion of the PBC’s first year in June 2007, the Sierra Leone framework was only in draft form—not formally adopted by the PBC. Many donors considered it prudent to await the outcome of national elections scheduled for September 2007 before finalizing the document. When a new government assumed power in late 2007 it was less resistant than its predecessor to including anti-corruption initiatives among the framework’s key objectives, mainly because the new leadership’s political rivals—the recently ousted ruling party—would be the primary targets for investigations into widespread and systematic corruption.


The Paris Declaration was an outcome of the “High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness,” held in Paris from 28 February through 2 March 2005, which included representatives of donor and recipient countries, multilateral institutions, and CSOs. The forum was organized by the Working


OECD, “Statebuilding in Fragile Contexts,” *Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility: Policy Guidance*, DAC Reference and Guidance Series (Paris, 2008). On page 47, the document notes that “[w]here the state is comparatively strong, it will by and large be able to impose a degree of order on both donors and agencies; where the state is comparatively weak, incoherence among donors will reinforce incoherence of state strategy and incoherence among multilateral agencies and non-governmental organizations.”


Personal interview with a diplomat from a country that chaired one of the PBC’s first two CSCs, New York City, 27 May 2007.

The Netherlands chaired the Sierra Leone CSC, Norway chaired Burundi’s, Brazil chaired Guinea-Bissau’s, and Belgium chaired the Central African Republic’s.

The SRSG for Sierra Leone’s integrated office (UNIOSIL) during 2006–07 was widely regarded as secretive and unwilling to consult with other parts of the UN system. Personal interview with an official working in one of the three institutional pillars of the PBA, New York City, 16 May 2007.


Personal interview with an official from a developing country mission to the UN, New York City, 7 November 2008.


This is a consistent theme in the research emerging from the Crisis States Programme/Development Research Centre, which is funded by the UK Department for International Development. See James Putzel, “Politics, the State and the Impulse for Social Protection,” Working Paper No. 18 (London: Crisis States Programme, 2002), eprints.lse.ac.uk/840/1/WP18JP.pdf.


As Ramesh Thakur, a long-time observer of the UN, stated, “the UN was instrumental in broadening the concept of development to make it more human … Since the 1980s this has taken the form of constructive dissent to the prevailing Washington consensus among the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the US Treasury.” Ramesh Thakur, The United Nations, Peace and Security: From Collective Security to the Responsibility to Protect (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 360.


Personal interview with a high-ranking official from the UN mission of a developing country that played a central role in negotiating the PBC’s institutional design, New York City, 2 November 2007.

The need for the UN to counter continued World Bank/IMF hegemony—and thus the utility of a PBC-like coordinating institution—was stressed in an interview with a senior official at UN DESA in New York City on 26 January 2008.

*Report of the Mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Burundi* (Peacebuilding Commission document PBC/1/BDI/2), 21 May 2007, 3–4. For a chronology of the deteriorating situation in Burundi, see the Secretary-General’s country-specific reports to the Security Council. The May 2007 *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB)* (S/2007/287) was optimistic about the potential for states from the subregion, such as South Africa, to serve as peace monitors; the November 2007 “Second” *Report of the Secretary-General on BINUB* (S/2007/682) offered a bleaker assessment; and by the “Third” *Report of the Secretary-General on BINUB* (S/2008/330), the council was being told that Burundi was on the verge of relapsing into violence.


The IMF’s PRGF offers concessional finance at 0.5 percent per annum to qualifying countries. The loans are repayable over 10 years, with a 66-month grace period on principal payments. Such loans are very attractive to governments of low-income countries with poor credit ratings and/or weak tax bases. See IMF, www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prgf.htm.

Personal interview with an official working in one of the PBA’s three institutional components, New York City, 31 October 2007.


IMF, *Food and Fuel Prices*.


Personal interview with an official working in one of the PBA’s three institutional components, New York City, 31 October 2007.

Personal interview with a representative of a prominent developing-country PBC member, New York City, 26 January 2008.

Personal interview with a UN mission staff member of a major European bilateral donor country, New York City, 1 February 2008.

Identical Letters Dated 20 September 2007 from the Chairman of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission, delivered to the President of the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly, and the President of the Economic and Social Council (Peacebuilding Commission document PBC/2/BDI/2), 19 September 2007, 2–4.

Identical Letters, 3.

Identical Letters.


Personal interview with a UN consultant who specializes in police reform in post-conflict countries, New York City, 7 September 2007.

Interview with a senior Indian diplomat, Philadelphia, PA, 18 April 2008.

See *Thematic Meeting on Diplomacy, Development, and Integrated Planning in Fragile States: Final Outcome Summary*, Oslo, Norway, 11–12 February 2008. This group of experts and practitioners concluded that “[g]iven the fragile context, political considerations and a conflict analysis are essential for international inventions” in the development field.


*Provisional Guidelines for the Participation of Civil Society in Meetings of the Peacebuilding Commission, Submitted by the Chairperson on the Basis of Informal Consultations* (Peacebuilding Commission document PBC/1/OC/12), 29 June 2007.


The PBSO was initially divided into four divisions.

The PBC agreed on “the basic concept for an integrated peacebuilding strategy and its design process” in February 2007. This was stated in PBSO, “Implementation and Application of Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies: The Case of Burundi and Sierra Leone,” internal memorandum, August 2007.


The decision chiefly concerned the “Conceptual Basis for Peacebuilding,” which was effectively broadened, and a statement on the (expanded) “Role of the Peacebuilding Support Office” (PBSO). “Decisions of the Secretary-General,” No. 2007/28.


A footnote in the 13 June 2006 version clarifies that the guidelines apply only to peace support operations occurring in a “post-conflict setting” where the UN “mounts multi-disciplinary peace support operations of which a peacekeeping mission is a component.” United Nations, Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP): Guidelines Endorsed by the Secretary-General on 13 June 2006 (2006), www.undg.org/docs/8481/IMPP.pdf. The guidelines state that “[d]ifferent processes may apply for United Nations peace support operations where no peacekeeping operation is involved.”


The mission and structure of the Framework Team, as well as the BCPR, which is part of UNDP, can be found at www.undp.org/cpr/.

UN Country Team [UNCT] in Burundi is particularly striking. Although the PBSO was designed to reduce the workload on the UN’s country presence, in fact, BINUB and UNCT provided support to the PBSO and the CSMs, putting additional strains on their already limited capacities.”


107 The Peacebuilding Fund.

108 The Peacebuilding Fund, 4.

109 Sheikha Haya Rashed Al Khalifa, a Bahraini lawyer, diplomat, and one-time president of the General Assembly, said she was hoping to set a precedent for individual contributions that others would follow. It did not catch on.

110 Arrangements for Establishing the Peacebuilding Fund: Report of the Secretary-General (General Assembly document A/60/984), 22 August 2006, annex.


120 “Peacebuilding Fund: Sierra Leone and Burundi Priority Plans,” letter from the Head of Conflict Institutions Team, UK Department for International Development, to the UN ASG for Peacebuilding Support, 23 January 2007.

121 “Peacebuilding Fund,” 2.


123 For an analysis of the various (mainly self-serving) meanings attached to the term peacebuilding by bilateral aid agencies, multilateral institutions, and other institutional actors, see Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O’Donnell, and Laura Sitea, “Peacebuilding: What is in a Name?” Global Governance 13, no. 1 (2007): 35–58.
4 Institutional revival: The peacebuilding architecture in action, 2008–10

1 This formulation was articulated by Naim at a Brookings Institutions seminar on “Foreign Policies of Emerging-Market Democracies: What Role for Democracy and Human Rights,” Washington, DC, 15 April 2011.


4 Tschirgi, “Escaping Path Dependency,” 12.

5 Tschirgi, “Escaping Path Dependency.” This silence was particularly notable in the PBC’s third annual report (Peacebuilding Commission document PBC/3/OC/L.1), the preparation of which took place months after the events in question—ample time for considered reflection.


10 Personal interview with a diplomat from a PBC member state, 8 February 2010, New York.


13 Government of Sierra Leone, Office of the President, An Agenda for Change (Freetown, December 2008).


16 Institute for Global Policy, “Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission.”

17 Statement by Hon. Mrs Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation at the High-Level Special Session of the

Personal interview, New York City, 30 April 2010.

In early 2011, the (Swiss) chair of the PBC’s Burundi CSC expressed satisfaction that this and other actions had been taken, though he noted that “there are areas where it is apparent that there is no effort to fight corruption.” The chair reiterated that he had, in particular, “encouraged the president [to ensure] … the protection of people in and outside the government, such as NGOs … in their work against corruption.” Institute for Global Policy, “Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission: Report on the Chair’s Visit to Burundi,” unofficial record, informal (open) meeting, 3 March 2011, New York, 1, www.betterpeace.org/node/1805.

For a summary, see the “Report on the Security Council Open Debate on Post-Conflict Peacebuilding” (www.betterpeace.org/node/936), which includes links to the full text of country statements.


Stanley Foundation, “Peacebuilding Following Conflict,” 5.


Personal interview with a former DPKO official, New York City, 19 April 2010.

The SPG was adapted from the Senior Policy Group on Peacebuilding, mentioned in Chapter 3 with respect to UN system guidance of the Peacebuilding Fund. The new SPG was to meet more regularly, be chaired by the PBSO, and cover a wider array of subjects.

This description was provided by a member of the SPG.


Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict, para. 26 and 30.

Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict, para. 64 and 30.

Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict, para. 35.

Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict, para. 64.

Personal interview with a PBC member diplomat, New York City, 18 June 2010.

To signal the council’s preference for the PBSO as the report-drafting entity, the United Kingdom inserted language in resolution 1889 specifying that the report should be prepared in consultation with the PBC.

The author draws attention to the disclosure in the book’s Acknowledgments concerning his involvement as Senior Consultant and Lead Author, Report of the Secretary-General on Women’s Participation in Peacebuilding (S/2010/466), based in the PBSO during February–September 2010.


Ball and van Beijnum, “Review of the Peacebuilding Fund,” iii.
54 Ball and van Beijnum, “Review of the Peacebuilding Fund, para. 25, 26.  
56 Report of the Secretary General: Arrangements for the Revision of the Terms of Reference for the Peacebuilding Fund, annex: “Terms of Reference for the Peacebuilding Fund,” para. 3.3.  
57 Report of the Secretary General: Arrangements for the Revision of the Terms of Reference for the Peacebuilding Fund, para. 3.5.  
58 Report of the Secretary General: Arrangements for the Revision of the Terms of Reference for the Peacebuilding Fund, para. 3.6.  
59 Report of the Secretary General: Arrangements for the Revision of the Terms of Reference for the Peacebuilding Fund, para. 3.5(a).  
60 Personal interview with a senior Secretariat official, New York City, 13 October 2010.  
61 This was observed even by colleagues from entities that continued to disapprove of the Fund’s existence. Personal interview with a Secretariat official, New York City, 26 May 2010.  
63 Personal interview with staff in the resident coordinator’s office, Kathmandu, Nepal, 31 May 2010.  
64 Data drawn from the PBF website, including www.unpbf.org/donors/donor-briefings.  
65 The need for such a capacity is evident from theoretically informed empirical research. See, for example, Paul Collier, Lani Elliott, Havard Hegre, Anke Hoeffler, Marta Reynal-Querol, and Nicholas Sambanis, Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy (Washington, DC: The World Bank, 2003).  
67 UN Development Group (UNDG), “Capacity Requirements for Resident Coordinator Offices in the Context of Crisis and Post-Crisis Recovery and Peace-Building,” May 2009. This is a background document for the “joint retreat” held by the UNDG/Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs Working Group on Transitions and the Cluster Working Group on Early Recovery. The PBSO was not listed among the participants either. 

5 Conclusion  
1 This was a prominent view in the extensive consultations on institutional design that preceded the PBC’s establishment—among member states, NGOs, UN officials, and policy academics. See, for example, New York University, Center on International Cooperation and International Peace Academy, “Post Conflict Transitions, National Experience and International Reform,” 2005; Dan Smith, International Peace Research Institute,

This was in a “Background Note” accompanying Hilde F. Johnson (UNICEF deputy executive director), “Presentation: UNICEF and Peacebuilding,” a presentation to the executive board, 1 November 2010. These materials formed the basis for a briefing for the Assistant Secretary-General (ASG)-level Senior Peacebuilding Group (SPG) as well.


Identical Letters Dated 19 July 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and South Africa to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (General Assembly and Security Council document A/64/868-S/2010/393), 21 July 2010, annex, para. 11.


Report of the Secretary-General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict, paras 88–89.


Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, 8 February 2011, para. 1.

Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, para. 2.

Personal interview with senior DPA official, New York City, 14 March 2011.

Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, 8 February 2011, para. 16. Emphasis in original.

Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, para. 12.

Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, para. 18–19.
19 Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, para. 19–23.

20 Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, para. 22.


22 Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, 8 February 2011, para. 22.


25 “Update Report No. 4—Post-Conflict Peacebuilding: Institution Building.”


27 This was debated as per an agenda item for the February 2012 meeting of the Senior Peacebuilding Group at UN Headquarters.


29 UN Secretary-General, “Draft Decision No. 2008/25—Delivering on Recovery and Peace Dividends,” circulated by the Secretary-General’s office to participants in the 23 July 2008 Policy Committee meeting, 22 August 2008, Item (i), which discusses “interlinkages with … political … imperatives.”

30 The sixth of World Bank President Robert Zoellick’s ten suggestions for how to engage in effective post-conflict statebuilding is for policy makers to “[p]lay attention to the political economy” of the country in question, particularly as this is played out within specific policy sectors. See “Fragile States: Toughest Development Challenge of Our Era,” World Bank Press Briefing, 19 September 2008, web.worldbank.org/WEBSITE/EXTERNAL/NEWS/0,contentMDK:21908486~pagePK:64257043~piPK:437376~theSitePK:4607,00.html.


32 Street et al., “Experiences of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission in Sierra Leone and Burundi.”


34 Identical Letters Dated 19 July 2010 from the Permanent Representatives of Ireland, Mexico and South Africa to the United Nations Addressed to the President of the General Assembly and the President of the Security Council (General Assembly and Security Council document A/64/868-S/2010/393), 21 July 2010, annex, para. 91–92.


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Government of Sierra Leone, Statement by Hon. Mrs Zainab Hawa Bangura, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation at the High-Level Special Session of the Sierra Leone CSC of the Peacebuilding Commission (New York: Permanent Mission of Sierra Leone to the United Nations, 26 March 2010).
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— Memorandum from ASG for Political Affairs to ASG for Peacebuilding Support, 8 February 2011.


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Craig.Fowlie@tandf.co.uk
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