**Forum:** General Assembly 3

**Issue:** Establishing measures to improve post-conflict reconstruction efforts

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Introduction

The world hoped for a period of euphoria after the cease of the Cold War beginning in the final decade of the twentieth century. However, this hope was soon proven to be little more than perhaps utopian folly as more than a hundred and fifty civil wars ensued in the three decades since. Prolonged conflicts such as the Balkan Crisis, instability in Iraq and Afghanistan, and the Syrian Civil War are clear examples, where local or regional violence escalated to international heights. Despite recent developments of agreed cease-fires and reconstituted governments in many of these regions displaying improvements, decades of complacency have caused stagnation and reevaluations to the effectiveness of peacekeeping, as well as enforced the norm of prioritized prerogatives within the Security Council. Such a crisis necessitates a sense of urgency not only in passing resolutions to achieve peace but also maintaining this fragile peace throughout reconstruction and development to prevent likely relapses. The long-term challenges of efficient and effective post-conflict reconstruction efforts call for the increased attention of the United Nations.

Despite the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission in 2005, the UN needs to reconsider their ability to transform systems and infrastructure entirely, as opposed to simply providing funds for basic developments. The need to improve post-conflict circumstances like poverty, unemployment, and economic stagnation to avoid further relapses and highly polarized political and social relations is quintessential to the maintenance of global peace.

Definition of Key Terms

**Peacebuilding**

Peacebuilding is the integrated and cooperative process of peace continuum that a country transitions into after international peacekeeping and conflict. It mainly focuses on socio-economic recovery and development in basic safety and security, political reforms, provision of basic services, infrastructure restoration and economic revitalization.

**Peace Continuum**

A peace continuum refers to mechanisms to maintain and uphold long-term peace within post-conflict states by addressing critical aspects of state building to achieve stability, as well as to undergo sustainable development and reform.

**Disarmament**

Disarmament is the collection, documentation, control and disposal of small arms, ammunition, explosives and light and heavy weapons of combatants and often also of the civilian population. Disarmament also includes the development of responsible arms management programs.

**Demobilization**

Demobilization refers to the act of taking troops out of service, typically at the end of war.

**Reintegration**

Reintegration means the process of enabling a transition and integrating ex-soldiers and militia personnel to gain civilian status with occupation and income into a post-conflict society. Employment opportunities must be made available for socioeconomic development and to prevent discontent. Providing psychological support and rehabilitation should also be made a priority to mitigate lasting effects of war-time trauma that can often hinder a veteran’s abilities to readjust to peacetime life and possibly spur future criminal intentions.

Repatriation

Repatriation is the process of locating and returning refugees and displaced persons safely back to their states once a prominent conflict has been resolved.

History & Developments

Peacekeeping in the Late Twentieth Century

Establishment of Peacekeeping

Since the beginning of the United Nations in 1945, the organization has emphasized the importance of international communication in order to achieve and uphold world peace. To properly assist in the process of creating peace, the UN peacekeeping force was established by the Security Council in 1948. Throughout the next few decades, UN peacekeepers were deployed to primarily maintain ceasefires and stabilize situations to support political efforts to resolve conflict through peaceful means. Because the UN deployed peacekeepers through numerous short-term operations in times of increased tension and regional militarization during the Cold War, the department of peacekeeping was awarded the 1988 Nobel Peace Prize for their notable “contributions towards the realization of one of the fundamental tenets of the United Nations.”

Post-Cold War

Historic Failures and Reassessment

The strategic utilization for Peacekeepers shifted after the end of the Cold War. The UN expanded their use for peacekeeping operations from basic maintenance and observational tasks to more multidimensional missions to not only maintain peace agreements but also further develop the foundations of peace continuum within conflict-stricken environments. Although much of society expected an untroubled period of stability and peace after the Cold War, this theory was soon renewed by the increased occurrence of civil wars in post-colonial states, particularly in Africa and the Middle East. Therefore, the increased scale and importance of missions necessitated an increase in personnel of the peacekeeping force. Furthermore, the UN also implemented a list of responsibilities to the operations to properly help stabilize and rebuild states ravaged by conflict. Additional complex tasks included helping build sustainable institutions of governance, monitoring human rights, reforming and ensuring basic security, and disarming, demobilizing and reintegrating former combatants. All such tasks were designed to not only fulfill the need of a negotiated ceasefire and end to conflict, but further assist post-conflict states in reconstruction and recovery, to develop socioeconomic infrastructure past the point of fragile, short-term peace, and to prevent likely relapse into conflict.

However, the UN was forced to reconsider its limits for their peacekeeping operations as multiple historic failures plagued the reputation and questioned the overall effectiveness of the peacekeeping framework. First, the 1994 Rwandan genocide showed a failure of peacekeeping due to a lack of reactive will. The UN peacekeeping operation arrived in Rwanda to assist in the negotiation of a ceasefire and to deliver humanitarian aid and supplies to the internally displaced people. However, several warnings regarding the possibility of genocide were systematically dismissed when the SG refused to define the situation as genocide, but rather as a civil war, meaning there would be no immediate obligation for full-scale intervention. Additionally, with conflict still simmering, the Security Council withdrew its remaining peacekeepers instead of strengthening their mandate, which was seen by many as an abandonment of Rwandan civilians to be victims of genocide. A similar instance followed in the Balkans in 1995 by the name of the Srebrenica Massacre. After declaring the besieged enclave of Srebrenica as a safe zone for the Bosnian Muslim minority under threat from Bosnian Serb Army of Republic Srpska, the UN Security Council (especially the United States) refused and failed to deploy enough troops to defend the village in an attempt to maintain neutral in the course of civil war. As a result, peacekeepers could do little more than watch as Bosnian Serb militias swarmed the village and killed thousands. The death of 8,000 men and children initiated reevaluations of war-time neutrality as well as the effectiveness of peacekeeping under political considerations.

Additionally, other questionable decisions — such as the humanitarian intervention operations in Somalia, where soldiers were met with overwhelming hostility and were forced to withdraw after suffering several casualties — only expanded upon numerous peacekeeping failures in the decade. This series of unfortunate events led the international community to contemplate the inadequacies of the peacekeeping force thoroughly and to realize its limits and potential for future reforms. Secretary-General Kofi Annan composed self-critical reassessments of such framework which led to the eventual creation of a Peacebuilding Commission.

Establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission

First Decade 2005-2015

The failures of multiple peacekeeping operations convinced Secretary-General Kofi Annan that the focus of peacemaking needed to extend beyond the roles of the peacemakers, and so the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), alongside a Peacebuilding Fund, were proposed and created in 2005. Initially, the newly established commission was met with much cynicism from the existing committees, especially the Security Council, as they felt the commission discussions would be redundant as the targeted issues and responsibilities overlapped those of the SC, General Assembly, and Economic and Social Committee. Additionally, the intricate political nature of an intergovernmental organization meant that the PBC also threatened the prerogatives of the SC and the interests of the P5s. However, the PBC did differentiate itself from the other committees with its peacebuilding architecture and execution on the field. Ultimately, Peacebuilding is not the same as international intervention or militarized peacekeeping. Instead, the peacebuilding approach values integrated cooperation with the country’s government under a mutual consensus for reconstruction and development. The PBC only selected countries into their agendas based on the invitations or request for assistance from the country and can withdraw their operations if felt like the government is no longer committed to achieving peace. Thus, the range of countries the commission can operate in is significantly smaller, but its power and functions within each country are, in turn, much more complex and widespread. Technically, under the pretense that the government has agreed, the entry of the PBC permits them a freer range of motion to establish infrastructure, oversee demilitarization and collection of weapons, heavily influence and assist in political reforms and elections, reconstitute government functions, coordinate economic opportunities, and more. Many of the functions of the PBC were considered “infringements on a nation’s sovereignty” under the lens of peacekeeping operations, but peacebuilding is most effective when cooperative and remaining unrestricted by political neutrality or foreign political interests in decision making. In the first decade of its existence, the PBC agenda encompassed six African countries: Central African Republic, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Burundi, and Guinea. The operations showed potential but only achieved limited success as they failed to transform core issues during reconstruction.

Reevaluation in 2015

The initial years of implementation of the Peacebuilding Commission were less than impressive as many of their operations failed to address prominent social and political issues and only allocated funds to superficial humanitarian investments. Out of the six countries on the agenda, Guinea-Bissau and Burundi experienced major setbacks that characterized the shortcomings of the commission, while more successful recoveries in Sierra Leone and Liberia were still riddled with other concerns. For example, renewed unrest and political tension displayed its instability in the 2015 Burundian elections, when President Nkurunziza announced that he would run for a third term, which was approved by the Supreme Court despite being a breach of the new constitution. Months leading up to the election were filled with political violence and corruption, causing a surge in displaced civilians while the government forced the Human Rights Watch to leave, hindering investigations. Currently, despite improved political stability, human rights violations and humanitarian needs remain a worry, possibly making Burundi not suitable for hosting credible elections in 2020. Common challenges such as unemployment, political stability, and legitimacy as well as infrastructure development hinder the progress of every peacebuilding operation. In 2015, the UN General Assembly underwent a reevaluation and assessment of peacebuilding architecture a decade after the creation. The conclusion was that although the PBC has immense potential to influence change, its investments mostly contribute to superficial and temporary change instead of designing a course of action based on the complex country-specific social circumstances and fulfill all said local responsibilities. After the 2015 assessment, PBC has been directed to be more of an advisor to peacebuilding policies to the Security Council while maintaining its agenda. It hopes to be the unique bridge between all three committees, with increased collaboration with the SC, GA, ECOSOC, to have access to a wide variety of resources needed for their specific operations. Although it continues to prioritize the original six countries, the commission has also started to discuss situations in other locations for future references.

Geopolitics

**United States**

A powerful influence regarding the decision making of many post-conflict reconstructions and rebuilding of nations, the United States of America is an authoritative power in reconstruction efforts because of its economic supremacy and status in the world. With heavy involvement in proxy wars in nations such as Syria and Afghanistan, the superpower's interests and national agenda may determine the decision making of peacebuilding strategies or the viability of specific agreements.

**China**

Recent developments of the One Belt One Road initiative could suggest China’s involvement in an ambitious expansion of influence around LEDCs and recovering countries in Eurasia and Africa. Although not as active as the United States in the recent history of peacekeeping decisions, interests of China and the other P5s will always directly influence the decisions passed regarding post-conflict reconstruction in the security council. Since 2011, China and Russia have effectively vetoed numerous Security Council resolutions regarding the Syrian civil war to protect and support the Syrian government. The split interests and nature of the Security Council deem many discussed actions useless and impossible to implement, which included condemnation, investigation of chemical weapons usage, as well as international sanctions.

Syria

In Syria, the United Nations Security Council has attempted to negotiate multilateral ceasefires within the conflict zone and proceed onto more concrete peacebuilding actions in cooperation with the recognized Syrian government. Despite condemning atrocities and war crimes and asking both sides of the war to reach mutual understanding, the split interests of fighting factions (such as the United States, Russia, Turkey, the Syrian government, and numerous local factions) have failed to reach any long-lasting consensus to render any of these resolutions valid. Resolution proposals such as the referral of the Syrian government to the International Criminal Court in 2014, or the call for an end to all attacks in Aleppo for seven days in 2016, continues to be consistently vetoed by Russia and China, despite having most council members voting in favor. The continuation of the Syria crisis into yet another year is a reminder of the Security Council’s inability to push a solution forward and to prioritize responsibility for each country’s political agendas.

**Bosnia**

The first step to sustainable peace and reconstruction is ending the conflict or war, but the 1995 Srebrenica massacre epitomizes a recent failure of United Nations Peacekeeping. The UN’s unwillingness to deploy troops failed to defend a declared safe zone, leading to the deaths of over 8,000 Bosniak men and children. The massacre was named “worst genocide in Europe since World War II” by former Secretary-General Kofi Annan. Though outright conflicts in the Balkan region have receded in that past two decades, the region remains fractious due to historical rivalries and ethnic tensions.

**Rwanda**

Similar to the Bosnian massacre, the 1994 Rwandan genocide is also a historic failure of peacekeeping as part of the United Nations system that directly led to the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission. The Secretary-General dismissed several warnings regarding the possibility of genocide. Consequentially, the Security Council immediately withdrew the remaining peacekeepers facing the risk of conflict and chose not to interfere with the country’s supposed civil war, resulting in the deaths of over 500,000 civilians.

**Sierra Leone**

The Peacebuilding Commission inSierra Leone is often regarded as an exemplary peacebuilding program since the country become one of the original beneficiaries in 2005. The transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding has successfully demilitarized previous combatants without criminal relapses, and the community continues to collect leftover weapons in disarmament events. Other achievements also include a vibrant free media, newly established democracy, and general social-economic infrastructure developments. Significant challenge remains to be made to the unemployment rate, which spiked at 80 percent in 2010, and unmet promises to many unemployed former soldiers pose a potential risk.

**Burundi**

Burundi was the second country introduced into the United Nations Peacebuilding Agenda in 2007. Transitioning from a peacekeeping success to an integrated recovery, the government adopted a democratic election procedure, addressed reemployment of ex-soldiers, and increased political dialogue. However, the commission mostly provided funds just for general development and aid rather than transform prominent systematic and social issues. Political instability and tension led to renewed unrest in the 2015 elections, proving to be a major setback to human rights operations and humanitarian reform, possibly making Burundi not suitable for hosting credible elections in 2020.

**Guinea-Bissau**

Guinea-Bissau is another country part of the Peacebuilding Commission's agenda since the country's request for assistance in 2008. The commission provided funds for investments and development projects when International donors failed to do so, but were also criticized for the lack of transitional justice, political stability, and conflict resolution. The challenges further burdened when the military coup in 2012 suspended cooperation with the PBC for a year. Currently, progress has been slow and, although no longer widely labeled as a failed state, Guinea-Bissau remains as one of the poorest countries in the world.

**Liberia**

Liberia is a rare example of the success of the peacebuilding commission in the twenty-first century. After demilitarizing the majority of remaining soldiers, the UN further helped the newly reformed government host a fair democratic election, eventually leading Liberia to have the first-ever female president in the entire continent. Humanitarian developments, employment improvement, as well as training catering towards the integration of young women has continued to improve under the cooperation between the commission and the current president George Weah.

**United Nations Peacebuilding commission (PBC)**

The PBC is the primary United Nations intergovernmental body responsible for developing and assisting post-conflict states in peacebuilding. Established in 2005, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission has prioritized six countries (Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia and the Central African Republic) as the recipients for efforts in a peace continuum. The commission consists of 31 member states in two-year rotations selected by the General Assembly, Economic and Social Council, and Security Council. The commission is uniquely different due to its highly political operations that are not part of the responsibilities of any other intergovernmental UN organization or committees. The commission acts as advisors regarding issues overlapping the concerns of all three committees. Because of its intentions for political reform, the PBC would only cooperate with countries that have “shown the commitment to peace and development” as well as a mutual consensus to integrated reconstruction.

**United Nations Peacebuilding Fund**

Managed by the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Peacebuilding fund is a collective pool of funds created alongside the Peacebuilding commission to provide funding through both short-term responses, delivering fast, flexible and relevant funding or long-term financing for peace building and recovery. From its creation to the end of 2015, the PBF has allocated $623 million to 33 countries to help prevent (re)lapse into conflict and sustain peace.

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

Peacekeeping and peacebuilding should be adaptive tools that can adjust to different situations and be improved based on past performance. As aforementioned, the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission in 2005 was an attempt to address the need for better post-conflict reconstruction with a new framework and with more independently explicit perspectives for solutions. It was developed specifically for the purpose of peace continuum, designed to be uninfluenced by P5 prerogatives and foreign political agendas, which allows advisory states and organizations to cooperate intricately with the rebuilding government. The PBC succeeded more as a concept for its first decade, as its bold ambitions and potential for significant change wasn’t translated well by its execution on the field. Future operations should be country-specific and upholding of its civic responsibilities. Although, there also have been some positive cases, with Liberia being one of the governments continuously committed to reform and development with the commission, and has seen significant improvements in stability and economic welfare.

The reassessment of the commission in 2015 was another attempt at reforming the utilization of the Peacebuilding Commission. The General Assembly concluded that it is critical to the efficiency of peacebuilding for committees such as the Security Council to cooperate closely and frequently with the intergovernmental body. As opposed to its previous functions, the commission can now serve more as an advisor and bridging role regarding peacebuilding decisions in different UN entities. Secondly, it was also suggested for the commission to act as a platform to convene relevant peacebuilding actors within and oustide of the UN, therefore ensuring predictable financing and having access to a variety of resources.

**Relevant UN Treaties and Events**

* [Resolution 60/180](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/RES/60/180) and [Resolution 1645 (2005)](http://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=S/RES/1645%20(2005)),
* [A/RES/70/262](https://undocs.org/A/RES/70/262) and [S/RES/2282 (2016)](https://undocs.org/S/RES/2282(2016)),
* [Landmark resolutions](https://news.un.org/en/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=53800) (S/RES/2282 and A/RES/70/262)
* Peacebuilding and sustaining peace report of the Secretary-General, <https://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/72/707>
* SC Syrian Civil War resolutions 2016/1026 and 2014/348
* Situation in Burundi Report 2017
* Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework. PBC/2/SLE/1
* Liberia’s Peacebuilding Plan <https://www.un.org/peacebuilding/sites/www.un.org.peacebuilding/files/documents/040417_sg_letter_of_4_april_liberia.pdf>

Possible Solutions

There have undoubtedly been many improvements in the past that have attempted to solve the issue of post conflict zones. To fully consider peacebuilding architecture as effective and impactful as it should be, there need to be direct changes to execution, with funding directed more to complex social-economic developments rather than general and often ambiguously allocated peacekeeping aid. The open-ended funding of the peacebuilding fund is sufficient when providing quick, adaptable funds, but the distribution needs to avoid issues such as 1) being wasted in a state of premature development due to the lack of infrastructure, and 2) only being used on general humanitarian aid programs similar to any other peacekeeping mission. Funding for peace building should also be long-lasting and consistent, committed to prolonged post-conflict reconstruction compared to the short-term, volatile funding provided to many peacekeeping missions.

The UN should also ensure that the focus of the commission is on country-specific solutions that adequately address the different situational needs for each post-conflict state. Solutions are more impactful if they can adjust accordingly to the social and political circumstance with various approaches that respond to demands and to context rather than deploying generic programs. Being an intergovernmental body that only enters the country with an official request, the PBC can operate heavily with the political fields of a sovereign state, something the Security Council cannot do as an infringement of sovereignty. Thus, the commission should further utilize its allowed influence and exercise direct implemented changes for more impactful and lasting change. However, the limits of this framework mean that the PBC cannot effectively operate within countries without their mutual consensus, hence keeping the commission’s agenda to six countries. The UN can envision ways to expand the agenda and functions of the PBC as it already has discussions regarding certain other regions. As a downside, given the expected freedom to operate, it is challenging to maintain integrated cooperation and integrity if situated in more countries that choose not to welcome it entirely. Perhaps it should be encouraged that more countries can recognize the need for post-conflict peacebuilding and agree to cooperate with the commission. This process can also occur if the PBC gains more international reputation by showing significant success within its current agenda of the next decade.

Another aspect essential to the functions of the PBC is closely intertwined cooperation with state governments. Such mutual commitment and integral cooperation need to be emphasized and carried out through every program invested in with the participation of local people and experts to ensure local responsibilities be met and addressed while state institutions remain the priority. Being more closely integrated with the government should also help stabilize the political interests of each party. Although seeing cases where governments have relapsed into conflict (2012 Guinnea-Bissau military coup, 2015 Burundi election crisis), the commission should also develop efficient strategies to counter any sudden relapses and setbacks that can damage the overall cooperation with the government in the long-term. Furthermore, as stated in the 2015 reevaluation, the commission should further strengthen its ties and increase interactions between the SC, GA, and ECOSOC, as well as establishing partnerships with more international organizations.

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