From Peacekeeping to Peace Enforcement and Back to Peacebuilding Dilemmas

Is International Security Becoming More Insecure?

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Abstract *Since its creation in 1945, the UN has steadily increased the ambition and the scale of its peace and security agenda in conflict-affected countries. The development of peacekeeping is seen as a global means to achieve its aspirations of international peace and security. Yet, there are problems with the transition from peacekeeping to peacebuilding as local populations' perceptions of conflicts become an integral part of these interventions. Concerns about the control and protection of processes used to collect local views of peace "spoilers" complicate UN operations. The questions of who gathers local input, from whom it is sourced and how to secure the process against subjective opinions, highlight key obstacles to sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding. This study argues that while it is unlikely United Nations interventions will be effective without turning "local," more work is needed to counter the elasticity of this concept.*

Keywords: United Nations, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, local perceptions

Introduction: The Origins of Peacekeeping

The UN was founded in 1945 with the purpose of maintaining international peace and security, and its Charter authorises the UN Security Council (UNSC) to deploy armed forces to accomplish this mission. However, UN peacekeeping itself is neither an enforcement action, as outlined in Chapter VII of the Charter, nor the negotiated settlement of a conflict under Chapter VI. Rather, it has been described as 'an unwritten Chapter six-and-a-half' that emerged out of 'political improvisation and legal flexibility.'[1] According to Doyle, peacekeeping refers to military and civilian deployments for the sake of establishing a 'United Nations presence in the field, [...] with the consent of all parties concerned.'[2] Simply, peacekeeping describes the use of both military and civilian agencies to respond to countries affected by wars and crises. It is, thus, a significant tool at the disposal of the international community at times of human rights violations.

UN peacekeeping activities developed rapidly through the work of former UN Secretary General Dag Hammaskjold and former UN General Assembly president Lester Pearson.[3] The genesis lay in the assumption that there was always a need to restore peace on the ground.[4] In general terms, peacekeeping aimed first to contain violence and prevent its escalation into war; second, it was meant to limit the intensity and geographical spread of war once it broke out; and third, it attempted to consolidate ceasefires and create space for reconstruction after the end of a war.[5] Raven-Roberts, for instance, traces a path of progress from the UN's formation to 1989 when fifteen peacekeeping operations were established.[6] This suggests that all these operations except for the Congo mission of 1960-1964, were based on the consent of the parties to the conflict, the non-use of force except in self-defence and the values of political neutrality and impartiality.[7] As such, they constituted what has been referred to as 'first-generation peacekeeping.'[8] In other words, they were part of a "buffer" model of peacekeeping, with forces standing between belligerents with the goal of deterring active conflict. Here, the focus was on presenting peacekeeping in terms of conflict management or peace enforcement operations. Since then, different forms of peacekeeping have evolved. Early narrow operations which simply patrolled ceasefires have, thus, made way for far more complex and multi-dimensional missions. The latter seek to impose a specific – normally liberal – order in the territory where they are located.[9]

The Legal Framework for Peacekeeping

There are two legal approaches to understanding peacekeeping: as tra-

ditional peacekeeping (Chapter VI missions) and as peace enforcement operations (Chapter VII missions). Bellamy defines traditional peacekeeping operations as attempts to create a space for the political settlement of disputes between states.[10] These missions were authorised under Chapter VI of the UN Charter and involved the monitoring of ceasefires on a consensual basis where monitors were either unarmed or, if armed, restricted to working within the terms of a specific mandate with the use of force only permitted in self-defence. The action was sanctioned based on the neutral position of interveners and the consent of the parties to the dispute. Traditional peacekeeping was, thus, usually characterised by the high level of consent among conflicting parties and by interveners who adhered to impartiality; its purpose was to enable the discussion of peaceful resolutions to disputes. An impartial "third party" was deployed only after the conflict had become violent and protracted. Notably, this framework did not give peacekeeping operations any functional role in terms of conflict resolution, improving communicative dialogue, building trust or encouraging social, political and economic regeneration in affected communities. Rather, it was a relatively narrow undertaking that sought to contain conflict rather than eradicate it.

As the world moved towards the end of bipolar military rivalries, an alternative to traditional peacekeeping was developed to respond to new security threats emanating from the changing international political system. Brutal civil wars that engulfed Balkan and African nations in violence created opportunities for the expansion of peacekeeping engagements in scope and coverage. This alternative, referred to as "peace enforcement," was trialled in the 1990s in Somalia after an earlier attempt by the UN mission in the Congo in the 1960s.[11] The new approach was meant to strengthen UN peacekeeping operations in order to guarantee international order and justice.[12] In contrast to traditional peacekeeping, peace enforcement was an operation that aimed to impose the will of the UNSC through direct military action.[13] It was done with only a low level of consent and questionable impartiality.

We can see, thus, that a multitude of security threats compelled policymakers and UN officials to redefine the doctrine of peacekeeping as peace enforcement under Chapter VII of the UN Charter.[14] Emerging civil wars, in particular, created the momentum to rethink and restructure peacekeeping operations.[15] The term "peacekeeping" itself gained greater prominence in the 1990s as the world realised that matters

once cordoned off from UN intervention such as civil wars and humanitarian crises within sovereign states, had become legitimate concerns for the UN and the international community at large.

The 1992 'agenda for peace' put forward by then UN secretary-general Boutros-Boutros-Ghali, was a turning point in the history of peacekeeping. This unprecedented level of UN involvement in conflict situations brought about exponential growth in peacekeeping operations. This growth was accompanied by fundamental changes in the character, role and constituencies of these missions. As a result, the single-mandate operations associated with traditional (first-generation) peacekeeping evolved into a multitude of tasks and actors, taking on a multilateral, multidimensional and multicultural character. Additional troops came largely from nations in Asia and Africa.

Seen from this perspective, the 1990s marked the commencement of second-generation peacekeeping, conducted with a broader mission in mind. The number of peacekeeping missions surged to thirty-five between 1989 and 2001, with a total of 47,575 people deployed in peacekeeping operations.[16] This new world order altered the traditional legal and political landscape as international human rights mechanisms started to override domestic sovereignty. Here, the perception of human rights as a Western concept was outweighed by respect for people's rights as a global principle of good governance. At the same time, the outcomes of these missions were mixed. While operations in Cambodia, Namibia, Mozambique, Guatemala and El Salvador were success stories, those in Angola, Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda exposed the pitfalls of responding to these conflicts. Sanctioned to ensure respect for peace agreements, these interventions saw the intervening force become a party to the conflict as it enforced a military outcome.[17] Peace enforcement represented a drastic departure from traditional peacekeeping; it was an approach operating in wholly different circumstances and with radically different aims.

The Reform of Peacekeeping

Periods of UN reform were linked to the transforming of traditional peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations into multi-dimensional operations. Such reforms aimed to ensure stable conditions by way of diplomacy, mediation and negotiations in place of quasi-military force.[18] These measures followed the UN reform agenda (the 1997 'Programme for Reform') that would become an institutional blueprint

three years later with the release of the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (the Brahimi report).[19] Based on the latter's recommendations, the United Nations secretary-general (UNSG) tasked its special representative (SRSG) with providing political guidance to the UN resident/humanitarian coordinators. This initiative aimed to develop more coordinated and cohesive UN field operations.[20] Though it encouraged institutional diversity and overlapping functions, it also complicated the coordination of UN agencies.[21]

At mission level, integration reforms included increasing the authority and responsibilities of the SRSG (as head of multi-dimensional UN peacekeeping operations) and "multi-hatting" the deputy SRSG/resident coordinator/humanitarian coordinator so that he or she also took on the role of nominal head of the UN country team (UNCT).[22] The changes focused additionally on re-organisation, intra-agency lines of authority and relations with other actors.[23] Under the new organisational structure, the SRSG was responsible for the mission as a whole, including its political, military and humanitarian responses. While the SRSG led the UN mission, coordination of the UNCT and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was primarily managed by the deputy SRSG in charge of humanitarian affairs.[24] The structure of each mission was to be drawn up based on local requirements:

> An Integrated Mission is one in which structure is derived from an in-depth understanding of the specific country-setting [. . .] form (mission structure) should follow function and be tailored to the specific characteristics of each country setting.

A 2005 report on the performance of reform programmes also strongly indicated that the key points in the debate were integration, coordination and coherence. This meant taking a holistic approach to understanding and dealing with the coordination of activities, with no single agency or set of agencies being seen to have the full answer or capacity within its means.[25] The military was, thus, to remain in a support capacity; its role was to guarantee and maintain a secure environment in which civilian components could conduct their work.[26] Emerging out of the post-Cold War environment, these "multidimensional" operations sought not just to halt conflicts temporarily but actually to end them, moving from simple peacekeeping to peacebuilding.[27] This view is supported by Fetherston, who argues that the practice

of peacekeeping was to be based on a theoretical framework that highlighted both the means available to peacekeepers and the desired ends.[28] This could serve, she notes, to train peacekeepers better in the art of conflict resolution. This was a cosmopolitan approach in a landscape of global governance, and it might be called the third-generation of peacekeeping. On the other hand, Rubinstein cautions against viewing these new forms as entirely superseding earlier ones, suggesting that they might better be conceived as different styles of operation.[29] The migration from a buffer-type to an all-encompassing peacekeeping would, then, reflect the view that peace-keeping was important, but only one early step in an overall effort. Thus, as the UN has continued to reform its global mandate, the engagement for peace has come to include the achievement of democracy, post-conflict rehabilitation, justice and civilian protection.[30]

When put in a single basket, all three generations of peacekeeping may be better understood as "peace support operations." Borrowing from Bellamy's definition, peace support operations are processes that support the establishment of liberal democracy in formerly war-torn societies. They are multifaceted, with significant numbers of both military and civilian components being built around broad and flexible understandings of consent, impartiality and the minimal use of force.[31] Peace support operations are carried out with the aim of reaching a resolution through the reconciliation and transformation of the issues among competing parties rather than forced termination of the conflict. These operations are designed primarily to create or sustain conditions where political and diplomatic efforts may prevail. Concepts of military strength or defeat are less central to peace support operations since military components should in many instances complement diplomatic, economic, development and humanitarian efforts, all revolving around the overarching political objectives. These efforts enhance the whole state-building package with the goal of developing and exporting frameworks of good governance.[32] As a 2010 secretary-general's report to the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations put it, an integrated approach to early peacebuilding can be successful if every actor is clear about their contribution, capable of delivering it and works in cooperation with partners.[33] These approaches have increasingly been accepted as the central measures through which the problems of weak or failing states can be addressed.[34] These moves are considerably more ambitious since they actually seek to resolve violent

conflicts by putting tools in place to prevent their recurrence. This is done through a deeper engagement with the social, cultural, economic and political dictates of affected populations. Peace support operations should then be view a form of conflict resolution mechanism; it is, thus, held that the timing and techniques employed by peacekeepers could be made more effective if tied to a general post-conflict reconstruction strategy.

The Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding Context

Concepts such as peacekeeping and peacebuilding have become part of the global vocabulary with which "failed states" are socially re-engineered. At the same time, these terms continue to stand behind mission mandates.[35] They are rolled out in a context of "new" wars whose characteristics again seem to be changing, producing a common narrative about the new contours of global peace and security; armed violence is the direct product of these new patterns. Banfield notes that 'an observer of conflict trends attempting to capture "20th century conflict" in 1914 would surely have missed a number of unpredictable developments.'[36] Simply, our understanding of peacekeeping and the value it adds to peacebuilding is unequal to the problems against which that understanding is framed. One notable limitation of the goals of peacekeeping missions is their weak link to the factors that underpin contemporary conflicts. This gloomy picture of peacekeeping means its success must be measured in terms of the amount of "negative peace" maintained by operations. To date, multi-dimensional operations have wrestled with strategies to engage with the real constraints of conflict situations. The world audience is still grappling with how to understand the nature of the peace constructed through UN peace operations. Richmond observes that a liberal concept of peace is the main product of such operations; this is constructed within the framework of the liberal international order, consisting, he claims, of an international community made up of democratic states.[37] In a related vein, Pugh contends that the peacekeeping concept is based on a problem-solving model that seeks initially to stabilise the existing order and then tries to enhance it within the liberal international community.[38]

The UN has undertaken tremendous reforms with the aim of smoothing the ground for operations, distinguishing the use of military force and traditional peacekeeping by reference to coordination

mechanisms, rules of engagement and mandates. All these efforts highlight the UN's push to resolve as opposed to just managing conflicts. "Positive peace" should be attained through modern multi-dimensional peace operations; this contrasts with the negative peace supported by more traditional peacekeeping. Since the word "peace" has meaning according to how it is used by an affected population, it may be refined with external support, but a deeper engagement with local dictates remains essential. This is also a sure way to transfer capacity to the local institutions that will ultimately contribute immensely to remaking the international order. In this regard, the civil wars which the world community experienced in the early 1990s could not be healed through peacekeeping measures alone.[39] Instead, the international armed forces involved in these interventions had to change how they conducted missions in conflict situations to encompass the wide range of tasks that fell under the rubric of peace operations.[40] Shifting the focus of efforts, training and resources to local contexts is, then, vital if we are to improve the prospects of peacekeeping becoming transformative peacebuilding. This shift makes the complex relationships among the "international," "national" and "local" levels more meaningful and workable. In its absence, the global body struggles to build lasting peace in a world of uncertainty and conflict. The liberal peace model has, thus, come under sustained pressure and criticism due to its perceived failure in practice.[41]

Understanding local realities as the tools for programme design is very crucial for the success of UN missions. Local perceptions dismantle what Galtung has explained as peacekeeping's tendency to focus on direct rather than structural sources of violence.[42] While it is appreciated that peacebuilding is not the core task of either military or civilian actors alone, there is general agreement that both these entities affect the dynamics of any conflict where they are deployed. Lederach's peacebuilding framework offers us a space in which to analyse these crucial issues and a way to develop best practices that could have a transformative impact.[43] According to this framework, peacekeeping should be divided into the peacebuilding issues of local submission, local co-option and establishing a platform to unlock the multiple and often hidden forms of resistance. This is the way to expose the acceptance, domination and resistance that create tension between international and local peacebuilding interlocutors. In this regard, peacekeepers' goal of establishing safety and stability in war zones re-

mains as vital as it was many decades ago. However, it is an approach that is insensitive to local cultures; in other words, it is not rooted in the cultures, traditions and prevailing customs of the societies where interventions happen.[44]

In contrast, peacebuilding seeks to create the conditions for positive peace in the community at large by addressing and transforming the underlying circumstances that led to (or may again trigger) conflict. It is a process in which the players drive through a bottom-up intervention based on conflict prevention, multi-track diplomacy and the creation of "local capacities for peace." This complements top-down state-building that seeks to stabilise the situation by attaining reasonable levels of security and institutionalisation before proceeding with liberalisation.[45] The liberal approach is, then, a broad picture that can accommodate a wide range of political and economic structures as well as diverse methods for engaging with the inhabitants of societies at war. This also explains the lack of any realistic alternative to the liberal peacebuilding strategy. Barnett, for instance, proposes the use of approaches that enhance individual freedom and government liability as a way of achieving sustainable peace in post-conflict societies.[46] However, such moves can only be sustained through engaged relations with local people. Arguably, without local participation in reconstruction projects, external efforts tend to misdirect the process. Mission success therefore depends on three main variables—*consent, impartiality and force*—which are constantly under tension in a conflict atmosphere. They are not constant and may singularly or collectively shift during the course of an operation in line with the ever-changing conflict dynamics on the ground.

In this regard, peace is understood to germinate in the reconstruction and transformative processes which lead to democratic states.[47] At the same time, from a conflict resolution point of view, the goal remains to end violent conflict and prevent its recurrence. In the past, the legitimate use of international force on humanitarian grounds, has occasionally paved the way for other reconstruction activities to take hold. But these practices have preceded any clear understanding of how international engagement can be maintained and coordinated most effectively.[48] The underlying assumption behind such interventions is that they provide the ultimate resolution to a conflict and will inevitably trigger a sustainable peace process. Human rights protection, humanitarian assistance and development projects have, thus, all

been viewed as grounds for peace zones. They are placed under a single banner as matters that provide "solid avenues" for legitimate intervention. Alongside these policy and operational shifts, peacebuilding tasks have been sub-contracted to a spectrum of other actors and, thus, are no longer the sole domain of the UN. As Richmond observes, there has been unprecedented acceleration in the privatisation of peace as well as the sub-contracting of peace activities to private actors.[49]

Supported by the UN Charter, several initiatives including the secretary-general's 1992 report *Agenda for Peace,* have sought to improve the process of exporting peace to war-torn societies. These steps have either ambitiously introduced or attempted to strengthen early warning systems along with peace-making, preventive diplomacy, peacekeeping and peace enforcement programmes, all as a means to get at the causes of social injustice. Operationally, this has entailed carrying out the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, facilitating the return of refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), monitoring elections, reviving the economic sphere for job creation, establishing functioning governments and the rule of law, facilitating reconciliation for social reintegration and promoting inclusive political participation. According to Chandler, the key lies in ensuring a level of 'domestic sovereignty' that would allow states to adequately tackle the factors that brew violence.[50] This is because certain democratic principles are considered integral for the creation of long-term sustainable conditions for peace.[51] Paris endorses proxy governance as one way to assist conflict zones.[52] Nevertheless, the recipients' experience, culture, identity and geopolitical locations remain vital ingredients in post-conflict peacebuilding. This demands that UN interventions be plotted and rolled out from inside conflict situations despite the challenges of fusing local perspectives with the global agenda. Peacebuilding is a responsibility that demands multiple actions from an array of actors across a society.[53]A lack of human security means there are inadequate conditions to foster peaceful relations especially when violence does not cease with the end of general hostilities, but continues during peace time as well.[54]

At the same time, the world community still requires clarification about who constitute "locals." This is particularly relevant in ethnic and transnational civil wars that produce many IDP and refugee camps, which are sometimes secretly used as sites for revolutionary acts. These scenarios make it more difficult for the United Nations to

arrange for the cooperation of local actors, thereby leaving governance functions in the hands of external players. Groups such as rebel factions, secessionists and guerrillas, thus, become opportunists in these wars where violence and crime interact. In the contemporary world, conflict is explained as deriving from the violence inherent in political, economic, cultural and geopolitical structures.[55] In this regard, peace may be understood to halt human rights violations by ending violent conflicts.[56] Conflict resolution initiatives need then to be seen within what Demmers calls their 'ontological boxes.'[57] According to Durkheim, these interventions in societies should focus on what holds them together—the structures of social rules that function to bring order and social equilibrium (back) to society.[58] This classic Durkheimian idea views societies as entities that exist in a continuous struggle between forces of integration and those of disintegration.[59] Any intervention should be based on a clear understanding that societies control individuals through their participation in shared perceptions. The totality of beliefs and sentiments common among average citizens in a society forms a system with a life of its own; we may call this the collective or common conscience.[60] In this respect, conflicts weaken the controls and attachments (perceptions) which sustain these shared ways of life and which remains a unifying factor among people in common spaces. Local perceptions of restorative action can return stability to a society while a new or renewed commitment to a shared future is developing. Lederach's framework for reconciliation and his "elicitive" approach achieve an important advance in thinking about interventions. He argues that peacebuilding techniques should be developed from—and thereby embedded in—the localities where they are employed. This brings a needed perspective to analyses of the interconnected structures of a particular society, the nature of violent conflicts and liberal interventionist approaches. Lederach carefully distinguishes this framework from that of conflict management by calling for a shift away from the focus on issues to one on rebuilding relationships. Manifest signs of violent conflicts may to some extent be easier to deal with than latent ones. This is largely because such visible conflicts cause physical hurt which ultimately overshadows other underlying factors in the conflict. Nevertheless, Demmers has argued that underlying these 'acts of physical hurt' are other forms of violence which he divides into structural/systemic and cultural/symbolic conflicts.[61] The long-term goal of this work is the sustainable transformation of soci-

eties. Here, Lederach proposes that the response to a violent and protracted conflict requires action beyond the traditional international relations methodology of conflict management. He suggests analysing the conflict as a social system which is 'peopled'; this means focusing on the relationships within that system. From this perspective, reconciliation is understood as work on relationships that may be trapped within deep-seated hatred, prejudice, racism and xenophobia. Given these primary factors and motivators of conflict, relational transformation must be rooted in the psycho-social and spiritual dimensions of society that traditionally have been seen as either irrelevant or outside the competency of international diplomacy.[62]

However, such processes call for adequate time and the existence of relatively free hands, two resources which unfortunately are not available.[63] In many instances, inequalities are embedded in the social structure. Modern conflicts are multi-causal in nature; the outcome of the interplay between the actors and structures that incubate these waves of violence, mobilised through ethnic, religious or other group identities. The human needs theory put forward by Azar and Gurr can perhaps summarise for us what detonates collective violence. Azar argues that new wars are protracted social conflicts that revolve around communal identities. Communities pursue protracted violent struggles for basic needs such as security, recognition and acceptance, fair access to political institutions and economic participation.[64] While this theory emphasises *needs deprivation,* it does not support the compartmentalising of conflict causes. In fact, Azar cautions against labelling conflicts as internal, international, religious, ethnic etc, because numerous cases do not fit into these categories. The compartmentalisation of a conflict, he notes, robs peacebuilding actors of the opportunity to adequately understand its causes. This allows social, economic and political ills to be reproduced through this form of intervention. An organic analysis of a conflict is also dangerous, he argues, since it imposes our understanding of the conflict on the blank slate of its genesis, maturity, reduction and termination.[65] As such, the termination of the conflict is equated unreflectively with a state of peace. This may either overstate the power of conflict resolution techniques or somewhat underestimate the serious factors behind collective acts of civil disobedience. In his project 'Minorities at Risk,' Gurr highlights four interrelated input variables that drive groups to engage in violent acts: ethno-cultural identities, collective incentives for political action,

group capacities for collective action and opportunities for group political actions.[66] This is the case because group members usually represent their disadvantages and seek redress not just with self-interest in mind, but expressing passion, self-righteousness and solidarity with their kin. By implication, *human needs theory* overrides state security and calls for conceptual and methodological frameworks for non-state actors including civil society organisations. This is a reminder of needs theory's finding that the repression and deprivation of needs coupled with structural factors, are root causes of protracted conflicts.

In his 2001 report to the UN Security Council on exit strategies for peacekeeping operations, the then secretary-general Kofi Annan wrote that

> domestic peace ... becomes sustainable, not when all conflicts are removed from society,
> but when the natural conflicts of society can be resolved peacefully through the exercise
> of State sovereignty and, generally, participatory governance. In many cases, an effective strategy for realising that objective is to help warring parties to move their political and economic struggles from the battlefield and into an institutional framework where a peaceful settlement process can be engaged and future disputes can be addressed in a similar fashion. To facilitate such a transition, a mission's mandate should include peace-building and incorporate such elements as institution-building and the promotion of good governance and the rule of law, by assisting the parties to develop legitimate and broad-based institutions.

At the same time, Annan's *No Exit without Strategy* report identified three key objectives whose fulfilment 'often' results in successful peacebuilding: the consolidating of internal and external security; the strengthening of political institutions and good governance; and the promotion of economic and social rehabilitation and transformation.[67]

From the report's wording, it is clear that the UN secretary-general recognised the difficulties of reconstructing a society from the drawing board as it emerges from a past of human rights violations. UN missions have sometimes notched up successes, achieving clear political milestones such as peace agreements, elections or functioning governments as they seek to jump-start countries into sustainable peace and full recovery. However, caution should be taken when trying to meas-

ure world successes in a more objective manner. For instance, the UN supported the 1992 elections in Angola, but this did not end that country's crisis. In fact, it only set off serious waves of violence after Jonas Savimbi rejected the outcome of the elections. This is to argue that the signing of a peace agreement may merely set the stage for the unlocking of peacebuilding innovations that could add value to the overall post-conflict reconstruction effort. The success of those innovations may be traced in the enhanced security of ordinary people and the statistical reduction of deaths from violence, hunger and disease. These results are also shown in the robust and inclusive buy-in of affected populations in peacekeeping or peacebuilding operations.

Peacebuilding Dilemmas and a Terminological Standoff

While peacebuilding emerged to address the shortcomings of peacekeeping work, the same dilemmas adhere persistently at the current crossroads between peacekeeping and peacebuilding practices. In some cases, the United Nations is challenged by its inadequate understanding of contexts that themselves breed misunderstandings about UN operations; this, in turn, reduces the levels of legitimacy and consent given to the global body. Pragmatic "peacebuilding from below" is a needed tool for cultivating cultures of peace in areas of armed conflict. There are also new appeals to "local ownership" in the peace discourse that signal a constructive engagement with the grassroots. These existing intervention frameworks have the potential to assist states, but there is less understanding of how they can be developed and implemented.[68] Here it may be worth recalling Boulding's insight that cultures of peace can survive in small pockets and spaces even in the most violent of conflicts.[69] Their existence is related to the ways that local people regard situations, events and dynamics relevant to the conflict, the peace process and the peacekeeping mission's mandate. This includes local opinions, concerns, aspirations and priorities.[70]

For all the terminological innovations, there has not been simultaneous clarity about how these terms converge and circulate in the conflict resolution field. The identity of "locals" is especially unclear since other (non-"local") actors in the security environment of a warring country are usually non-existent in the reconstruction agenda. Examples include people living in the diaspora, immigrants, guerrilla fighters and other actors who shape the security environment based on hidden vested or illicit interests. Critically, peace actors also fail to ap-

preciate how "internationalised" (local, non-state) actors shift dynamically across social, cultural, economic and political structures. Ricigliano argues that changing terminology is not helpful unless it reflects a deeper change in how we think, how we act and the results we achieve on the ground.[71] Smith also points out that dilemmas have arisen elsewhere from over-descriptive mandates and the roles accorded to UN peace support operations.[72] Some of these goals, he notes, are ironically contradictory, which may lead to the implementation of incoherent strategies in the field. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), for example, the UN's mandate to protect civilians was contradicted by an additional mandate to work closely with and support the DRC government and its armed forces— often the perpetrators of violence against civilians.

Peacebuilding is not just about identifying and supporting social and civic structures that may prevent a relapse into violence. It goes beyond that simple definition by understanding the importance of identification and support when gathering local people's perceptions. The UN confirms that current practices rely heavily on its staff and standard mission interlocutors such as civil society representatives to capture local perceptions.[73] Potential "spoilers" such as economic actors, armed groups and youth are rarely engaged in these efforts. As such, the fluid factors that drive societies into violence continue to evade current practices, having not been properly applied or understood.[74] The question remains how operational activities can effectively build local capacity to deal with internal disputes amicably. Re-establishing state institutions that cannot handle problems related to the accurate perceptions of particular conflicts and their resolution, is a sign of a flawed process. In fact, it points to a negative relationship between ordinary citizens and government institutions. Harnessing and strengthening formal and informal mechanisms to mediate and negotiate grievances are essential if we are to ensure resilient state-society and relations and prevent future conflict.[75]

It is local perceptions that are the interface between international support and other realities on the ground. A process of change is healthy if the means of change do not cause harm; ideally, they should also improve groups' ability to effect more change in the fact.[76] Here, the emancipatory approach is generally seen as an avenue for achieving sustainable peacebuilding: Duffield refers to this approach as one that enhances solidarity among the governed[77] while Pugh sees it as a

process involving greater participation by local actors.[78] Such an approach is crucial for the championing of the bottom-up policies that are needed to empower individuals in affected populations and free them from the prescriptions of external actors.[79] These policies can respond to the fluid nature of contemporary wars that are characterised by such highly complex causes and resolutions. As Sir Emyr Jones Parry, (former UK permanent representative to the UN observes), 'there is no regular sequence in how conflicts end, peace is re-established and stability ensues.'[80] Fostering a sense of ownership is a practical way to tie a partnership in agenda-setting to a broader and deeper understanding of the conflict. "Perceptionist" thinking allows for a more refined understanding of how new wars emerge from multiple embedded conflicts, which are at once undergoing various stages of escalation and de-escalation.

In parallel with the state-centred approach, the emancipatory agenda calls for the furthering of a human security standpoint which stresses the value of individuals, groups and communities for sustainable security.[81] In this regard, the UN has learnt from its experiences in Somalia that peace cannot be forced on a society; it has to be won over time. Any gaps between international expectations and local perceptions, expectations and capacities must be recognised and addressed. This is important because these local positions not only create a historical understanding of the conflict, but highlight the present context and realign societal hope and vision before any peacebuilding strategies are implemented. Local partnerships, participation, ownership and wisdom are all to be emphasised. As Muggah (and others) have noted, localised customary structures are often perceived as more effective and legitimate than state institutions.[82]

In this respect, internationally supported peacebuilding has undergone a local turn, with the buy-in of local people being regarded as an essential ingredient for sustainable and effective peace. Identifying how a conflict is regulated, organised and executed gives us distinct pathways to understand how, when and to what end support for these informal nodes of authority may contribute to peacebuilding at a conflict's end.[83] Positive change can be achieved by supporting locally led approaches to peacebuilding in specific conflict situations as a global goal while also ensuring that these interventions remain true to core principles.[84] Persuading stakeholders to work collaboratively requires signalling a real break with the past and developing mechanisms to

lock in these changes and show that they will not be reversed.[85]

In the peacebuilding context, the local is equated with authenticity, acceptance and the conferring of legitimacy on a process. Indeed, the term “local” could be seen as a signifier of many of the encompassing positive norms of the UN such as honesty, impartiality, community solidarity and sustainability. It is a word that allows the UN to highlight its neutrality in a conflict in the face of large-scale operations. It follows that the UN has the opportunity to define, characterise, sustain and neutralise its operations vis-à-vis local tensions. Since “local” is used instrumentally and has meaning attached it, the United Nations’ dilemma is how to implement its operations in line with localism; this refers not to any rigid or geographical fact but to the elasticity of what defines the “local” population. Once the elasticity in the definition and its application are contextualised properly, the prospects of using the term accurately in relation to peacebuilding and conflict resolution are promising.

Unfortunately, international peacebuilding imposes a series of imaginaries on war-torn societies as a means of interpreting them. By its nature, peacebuilding is an elastic concept which can be defined broadly or narrowly, and there is no universal agreement about its precise parameters. Nevertheless, Boutros-Ghali has defined peacebuilding as ‘action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.’[86] This means that the UN cannot create the conditions for its own success but must foster those already existing in the areas of its intervention. Simplistic narratives about the “local,” however, reveal the tendency of international peace builders to objectify people and spaces as a method of reducing target populations. People are neatly categorised as “victims,” “perpetrators,” “refugees,” “IDPs” etc. while their spaces are also reduced to the predetermined categories of “safe,” “war-torn,” “green zone,” “red zone,” “refugee/IDP camps,” “rebel-held territory,” etc. Approaching people and places as “local,” thus, runs the risk of turning communities into immobile objects in a globalised context, so that they lack the agency for an inclusive recovery process. This approach may also exaggerate the purity of local realities, thereby blurring entry points for external leverage in sustainable post-conflict reconstruction.

Despite these conceptual ambiguities, peacebuilding is unlikely to be sustainable in research or practice without a turn to local terminol-

ogy. The local may be the antidote to the perceived shortcomings of the elite-coined, top-down model used to design and implement UN intervention programmes. It may be inferred that UN success depends in part on peace builders' abilities to read the local politics of a particular conflict and recognise where and when the necessary conditions for peacebuilding obtain or can be fostered and where and when they do not exist.[87] The concept of local ownership has, thus, established itself as one of the key principles of UN operations. The localisation of an intervention – or to put it more simply, the creating of the "local" – should ostensibly be democratic and in line with human rights protection, the rule of law, justice and economic development.[88]

Conclusion

As shown, the development of peacekeeping remains one of the United Nations' major tools in war zones. It is as stage-setter for other peacebuilding activities that now face numerous methodological challenges as well as a standoff over terminology. The UN's efforts to engage sustainably with populations at sites of intervention are weakened by highly subjective assumptions that distort both the meaning and effectiveness of the local/non-local distinction. These societies are considered to be dormant, ill-resourced, incapable or inexperienced while outsiders are capable, resourceful and experienced. These are the views that shape the perspectives attached to conflicts and the opportunities for their resolution. It is only through a clear understanding of local perceptions about conflicts that interveners' imaginary narratives about locals will be checked and protected against.

By using a bottom-up approach to engage with conflict-affected populations, the United Nations reinforces its interventionist regime in conflict zones. The perceptionist model can therefore be deployed as a framework to counter asymmetrical relationships and develop a more balanced partnership between "insiders" and "outsiders" in international peacebuilding activities. Currently, the local ownership concept calls for a complete reorientation towards approaches that put high value on both home-grown solutions and locally driven partnerships.[89] At the same time, the concept legitimises the entire UN interventionist system. In this sense, rather than being remote and peripheral, the local should be seen as central to modern UN multi-dimensional peace reconstruction systems in destroyed states. The relations that produce sustainable reconstructions of peace are embedded

in the binary symmetrical attachments of local and non-local actors. This holds true because conflicts emanate from the "indigenised" social structures that fragment societies. As such, the "indigenisation" of peacebuilding measures so that they are rooted within these societies is the right way forward. The success of peacekeeping depends on the existence of clear systems for checking and protecting the processes of collecting local observations, as well as systems for probing information sources. This implies not only broadening local participation, but also legitimising the local ownership of the peace process.

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** Please note that the views, omissions and any factual errors contained in this study should be attributed to the author and in no way reflect the positions of his current or former employers.

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