The UN and post-crisis aid: Towards a more political economy

Bruce D. Jones

Summary

This paper reviews certain aspects of the post-crisis problem, as seen from within the UN. It outlines the wide variety in cases that fall within post-crisis policy, and suggests a basis for categorisation, which is crucial for a more systematic learning process. Secondly, it explores the shift in UN responses to post-crisis, emphasising the growing involvement of the UN Security Council and the political departments of the UN in the direct management of post-crisis assistance. This has important implications for the roles of the humanitarian and development actors. Finally, the paper outlines new challenges relating to quasi-legitimate political authorities, learning processes and the relationship with the World Bank

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Introduction[1]

One of the starkest realities faced by UN actors engaged in the multi-faceted business of conflict management – be it in the humanitarian, development, or political dimensions of war – is the fact that several of the worst humanitarian crises of the past decade have come in the wake of the collapse of UN-sponsored or facilitated peace agreements.[2] The worst fighting in Angola followed the collapse of the Lusaka Protocols; agreement between Indonesia, Portugal and the UN over East Timor did not forestall violence and crisis resulting from the elections; and most dramatically, the Rwandan genocide occurred during UN efforts to implement the Arusha Accords.[3]

These few catastrophic episodes highlight a wider problem, namely consolidating peace and maintaining stability in the wake of conflict and crisis. As a large number of civil wars have ended in the 1990s, so the international community has increasingly been occupied with this challenge. In its ambitious version, this is referred to as "rebuilding post-conflict societies". More minimally, the challenge is to ensure political stability and lay the ground for economic and social recovery.

Within the UN, post-crisis assistance has historically been managed jointly (some would say dis-jointly) by humanitarian and development actors. This joint effort has been framed in policy terms as a challenge of the transition between relief and development. This problematique of relief-to-development partially shapes UN policy in a diverse set of countries, from Kosovo to Congo-Brazzaville. Furthermore, the problematique covers a wide range of specific operational challenges, ranging from social reintegration of returning refugees to demobilisation of ex-combatants.

As a result, the relief-development issue has generated a myriad of distinct but overlapping policy processes. These processes have often been captured by institutional competition and politics. Because the problematique is insufficiently articulated, and because there are enormous institutional stakes vested in their outcomes, these policy processes have obfuscated as much as they have clarified.

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[1] This paper was written while the author was a visiting scholar at the Chr. Michelsen Institute, as a contribution to the CMI project "Between emergency and development". Until May 2000, Bruce Jones was responsible for policy issues related to strategic co-ordination and post-conflict peacebuilding in the UN's Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs, New York. He was also a member of the UN's Advance Mission in Kosovo, and was involved in the design of the UN's transitional authority in East Timor. The views expressed in this paper are those of the author alone. They are not necessarily those of the United Nations.

[2] Stephen Stedman, Don Rothschild and Elizabeth Cousens, "Introduction." in Stephen Stedman, Don Rothschild and Elizabeth Cousens, eds., *Peace Implementation: Themes, Issues, Challenges* (Forthcoming, 2001). The phenomenon is of course not limited to the UN; for example, the worst violence in Kosovo followed the collapse of the NATO-brokered Rambouillet Accords.

[3] On the collapse of the Lusaka protocols, see Virginia Page Fortna and Stephen Stedman, "Implementing Lusaka", draft paper for Stedman et al, *Peace Implementation*; on East Timor, see *Report of the Secretary-General on the UN Assistance Mission to East Timor*, (New York: UN, 1999); on Rwanda, see Bruce D. Jones, "Civil War, the Peace Process, and Genocide in Rwanda" in Robert O. Matthews and Taisier Ali (eds.) *Civil Wars in Africa: Roots and Resolution* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 1999), pp. 52-87.

Nevertheless, a certain trend can be discerned in the UN's responses to post-crisis situations. With growing recognition of the *political* causes of the recurrent relapse of seemingly post-crises cases back into acute crisis, there has been a conceptual shift towards a policy framework which places greater emphasis on political stabilisation in post-conflict settings, a framework partially captured by the UN-term "peacebuilding". This shift towards peacebuilding as a policy framework has significant political and institutional ramifications. Most significantly, the result has been an extension of the UN's political involvement in post-crisis settings.

This paper reviews certain aspects of the post-crisis problem, as seen from within the UN.[4] It outlines the wide variation in cases and elements that fall within post-crisis policy, noting some efforts at classification of that variation and suggesting a basis for more detailed categorisation. Then it explores the shift in UN responses to post-crisis, emphasising the growing involvement of the Security Council and UN political departments in the direct management of post-conflict assistance. Finally, it outlines a number of challenges faced by the UN in attempting to develop a more effective approach to the post-crisis situations.

Nature and Aspects of the Problem

There are literally dozens – possibly hundreds – of official UN documents, lessons-learned studies, policy statements and reports relating to what is variously known as the relief-development continuum, transitional assistance, relief-development linkages, post-conflict reconstruction, or, most recently, the relief-development gap. A quick perusal of any one of these documents will reveal two things: that they refer to an astonishing range of specific operational problems; and that the problem is considered in a range of cases across the globe with very diverse features. Arguably, one part of the explanation for limited policy progress on post-crisis issues within the UN, and elsewhere, has been the failure to unpack the problem into its constituent parts or to pay sufficient attention to context.

Context

The variation in context of post-crisis situations is geographical, political, economic, and organisational. Significant differences between cases include: the nature of the conflict and the settlement; the *degree* of settlement; the degree of economic collapse within the state; the economic vitality of the region; the existence or not of a powerful patron to the government; whether or not the international community has mounted a political or military response to the situation; and others. Some of these differences are in the nature of the conflict and the settlement, others are in the nature

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[4] Until April 2000, I was responsible for post-conflict policy in the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Thus, much of what is discussed in this paper as actions of "the UN" are actually actions or policy decisions in which I was directly involved. This is true also of much of what are described as weaknesses or mistakes by the UN. These were often mine, at least in part. One further note: at points in the text, I am quite critical of the UN. Academic writers on the UN talk about the role of the faceless bureaucrat. I am very familiar with the faces involved. Indeed, in working at the UN, I have seen what most outsiders coming into the UN find: that notwithstanding all of the problems, the core of the UN is composed by a small number of intelligent, dedicated, and principled staff members. Thankfully, one of the defining characteristics of this core staff of the UN is that they are relentlessly self-critical. I have been privileged to work with them over the past two years, and hope that any criticisms expressed or implied in this text will be taken in the constructive, self-critical vein they are intended.

of the international response. They combine to create radically different post-conflict settings. A few examples of the different situations considered to be part of the post-crisis problematique illustrate something of the breadth of situations being addressed.

Compare the nature of the post-conflict situation in just two contexts: East Timor and Guatemala. The former saw a short period of acute violence following a quarter century of gestating, low-level conflict between an occupying state and a rebel force; the collapse of the state during the post-electoral violence; and the departure of the Indonesian state machinery and many of its local supporters to West Timor or Indonesia. Guatemala on the other hand experienced one of the longest running civil wars of the post-World War II era, a war between a relatively capable state and a small group of rebels (several thousand strong); no collapse of the state; a political settlement between the two sides leading to full disarmament of the rebels; elections and the revival, however uncertain, of constitutional politics.

Then consider the differences in the nature of the international response to two other post-conflict settings: Kosovo and Congo-Brazzaville. In the former, the international community has a military presence of over 35,000 troops; has pledged over $2 billion for reconstruction; is represented by over 300 international and non-governmental organisations; has almost total legal and juridical authority for a transitional period; and is operating in a context where the various European powers and the United States see direct security, political and economic interests. In the later, in a region of Africa that has never been central to the interests of the major powers, the international community has no UN political presence, no peacekeeping presence, a handful of UN and non-governmental humanitarian agencies, and a minimal UN development presence. The differences in international capacity to meet the post-conflict challenge in these two cases, are vast.

Important differences exist even when one compares countries on the same continent with similar levels of pre-war economic development, such as Rwanda and Liberia. Both were characterised by medium length conflicts, by situations in which one party to the conflict ended up with a virtual monopoly on power, by a high degree of ethnic fracture and tension, and are now weak states in the early stages of recovery from full collapse at the peak of conflict. Yet in Rwanda, the situation is one where the government achieved power through military victory, where society has been rent by a massive genocide, and where the army is still engaged in active regional conflict. In Liberia, the government achieved power through elections, albeit marred by heavy-handed persuasion tactics, and is no longer actively engaged in military conflict (though it supports the RUF in neighbouring Sierra Leone). Further, Rwanda continues to enjoy a fairly high degree of international attention, resulting in very significant financial flows to Rwanda both through humanitarian channels and bilateral assistance channels. Liberia on the other hand receives almost no money through humanitarian channels and minimal bilateral assistance.

Confusingly, the label "relief-to-development" linkages is also applied to contexts where localised, long-running emergencies persist in relatively stable settings. In such contexts as Sri Lanka and Uganda, a significant challenge for the aid community is to sort out the relationship between humanitarian assistance and development aid, especially in relationship to wider strategies of conflict management. Many of the specific features of post-crisis situations (described below)

are prevalent in these protracted emergencies, but there are significant political and institutional differences between these and more narrowly defined post-crisis situations.

Some efforts have been made to develop conceptual categories around these different sets of cases. In particular, Michael Doyle has written on the different "worlds" of peacebuilding. Doyle sees the primary features of the differences between cases in terms of the number of factions, their coherence, and the degree of reconciliation between them.[5] Using these features, Doyle constructs a matrix of cases which can be plotted in terms of the degree of challenge of peacebuilding. Where you have many, incoherent and unreconciled factions (Somalia, Sierra Leone), we should expect that the political challenge of peacebuilding will be considerably more difficult than when there are few, coherent, and reconciled factions (El Salvador, Mozambique). It is notable that many of the cases recorded in UN conventional wisdom as "successes" occurred in cases that, by comparative standards, were relatively straightforward in their post-crisis dynamics.

Doyle's is a very helpful contribution. However, it considers only the political dimension of the situation. Seen in terms of the wider challenge of post-crisis challenges, a wider set of factors is likely to be relevant to policy-making. For example, we should expect that the economic challenge of peacebuilding will be very different in Congo-Brazzaville than in Kosovo; that the social challenge of peacebuilding will be greater in Rwanda than in East Timor; that the military challenge will be greater in Afghanistan than in Guatemala.

Furthermore, while Doyle's model is useful for indicating what degree of international authority and presence is likely to be required for successful peacebuilding, experience shows that the level of the international presence is not a function of need, but primarily of pre-existing political interests and connections. Thus, building the level of international interest into the categories, rather than treating it as a separate feature, is likely to be necessary in terms of policy making. Policy must take into account both the nature of the challenge and the level of available resources, not treat the later as a function of the former. Further work in this direction would constitute a useful contribution both to the literature and to UN policy making.

Recurrent Elements

Of course, the reason that the same conceptual framework is applied to a broad and diverse set of cases is that many of the same problems recur in these cases, irrespective of context. It is to these that we now turn. However, it is important to keep in mind that however similar the recurrent problems appear, the differences in geographical, political, economic and international context matter significantly for the effectiveness of international responses.

Some of the recurrent challenges in post-conflict settings include:

Continued political and military instability. Rare is the post-crisis setting that does not see continued military skirmishes, inter-communal clashes, and significant

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[5] Michael Doyle, "Worlds of Peacebuilding", draft paper for Stedman et al., *Peace Implementation.*

political instability. Within the context of peace settlements, parties often retain a capacity for violence as a negotiating tool or to secure political and territorial gains. Some of these resort to force when confronted with acting on commitments made during negotiation – for example UNITA in Angola or the RUF in Sierra Leone. Even when the parties cooperate at the political level, this does not always translate into compliance throughout the ranks. Clashes between groups of demobilising soldiers are frequent occurrences, which threaten political stability even when they do not signal a return to war. Even when one side of the conflict ends up in power, through military victory or other means, opposing parties do not just disappear. Rather, defeated opponents often find haven across a border, from where they continue attacks on their home state – examples include the anti-independence militias in West Timor, and the former Rwandan genocidaires in eastern Zaire. This frequently sparks regional conflict into which is drawn the new, weak government, amplifying the stabilisation challenge. In general terms, then, continued insecurity and military instability is often a significant factor in 'post-crisis' situations.

Quasi-legitimate counterparts. Even in contexts of relative political stability, it is often the case that the UN does not recognise the government as a fully legitimate political partner. Sometimes this is due to the lack of an elected counterpart, such as in Kosovo. Even where the existence of a peace agreement between parties means that the UN can officially work in support of a transitional government, such agreements are usually hampered by fracture, distrust and paralysis within power-sharing governments. Such governments not only have legitimacy problems, but are usually highly ineffective. Thus, post-crisis political counterparts are rarely both legitimate and effective, and are often neither. For UN political and development actors, whose mandates and methodologies emphasise support to a national government, this is a major challenge. (Traditionally, this has been seen as less of a challenge for UN humanitarian actors, whose programmes are designed to work directly in support of war-affected populations, and are therefore less concerned by the nature of authority. A later section of this paper, however, will present arguments for rethinking this conception.)

Collapsed or drastically constrained states. Quite apart from weakness at the political level, post-conflict societies are often ones in which the state has fully or almost fully collapsed as a result of prolonged conflict. The better cases are ones where the fighting never occurred within the bounds of the capital city, and where as a result some of the administrative machinery of the state was left intact. Even in such cases, however, the state was often constrained to controlling a narrow circle of territory outside the capital city; efforts to expand the state into the countryside or regions constitute a major state-building exercise (an example is Mozambique). The worse cases are those in which the departing regime (and sometimes, less explicably, the arriving regime), lays waste to the physical and economic infrastructure of the state machinery (as occurred in Kosovo, Rwanda, East Timor), meaning that the state building process must proceed from a very low level, if not from scratch. In many cases, also, the human resources of the state have been decimated by years of conflict. The most challenging contexts are those such as Kosovo and East Timor where virtually the entire staff of the state machinery flees the country in the face of a military victory by forces opposing the regime.

<u>Economic collapse</u>. In many wars, conflict and eventual state collapse is accompanied by economic collapse. This can involve the collapse of the currency, collapse of markets, loss of trade relations, withdrawal of international financial systems, destruction of economic infrastructure, and wholesale loss of investment and jobs. In some conflicts, the level of physical damage is much lower than in others, which aids reconstruction, but many conflicts are marred by wholesale destruction of property, often in the final stages of a war. The challenge of economic reconstruction alone is a significant one for post-conflict actors.

<u>Pockets of Assistance</u>. It is usually the case that unlike in either 'normal development situations' or acute crises, post-conflict situations usually demand the simultaneous provision of humanitarian and development assistance. The ending of war does not immediately result in the meeting of humanitarian need; needs continue often for a period of one to two years, especially with returning refugees or resettling internally displaced persons. This creates significant policy challenges for aid actors, who have to reconcile the economic conditions for development with competing humanitarian imperatives.

Nature of the UN Response

If the diversity of contexts, resources and elements of post-crisis situations constitutes a significant degree of complexity, it is almost matched by the diversity of UN actors engaged in post-crisis settings, the number of their roles, and the multiple mechanisms by which their actions are, at least in theory, co-ordinated. It is something of an artificial distinction, but these actors and roles can be explored in terms of three inter-related elements: relief and development assistance; political stabilisation efforts; and co-ordination.

Managing Relief-to-Development Linkages and Transitions

Over much of the past decade, the international aid community has had the primary responsibility for managing international responses in post-conflict settings. As active conflict receded, so, typically, did those charged with managing conflict resolution processes, such as UN mediators or peacekeeping forces. The aid community – humanitarian and development assistance agencies of the UN, their counterparts in the non-governmental organisation (NGO) community, and the major bilateral donors – were then tasked with supporting the reconstruction of political and economic life in so-called war-torn societies.[6]

The relief and development programmes in post-crisis settings are managed by an alphabet soup of UN development and humanitarian actors. They collectively constitute a small part of the wider set of multilateral, non-governmental and bilateral actors engaged in post-crisis aid.

(a) UN Aid Actors

The UN's humanitarian presence in post-crisis settings is essentially identical to its presence during crises. It is led by the 'big three' – the UN High Commissioner for

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[6] This was the name given to a major UN research programme which has subsequently become a self-standing initiative – the War-Torn Societies Project of the UN Research Institute for Social Development.

Refugees (UNHCR), the World Food Programme (WFP) and the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). Additionally, a number of smaller humanitarian agencies, or humanitarian programmes of development agencies, play roles in the provision of assistance to war-affected populations. These include such agencies as the World Health Organisation (WH0) and the UN Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). Additionally, the UN Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) typically has a presence in early post-crisis situations, though is a less significant player than during acute crises.

On the development side, the UN's presence is led by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) and the main UN development agencies, the WFP, UNICEF, the UN Population Fund (UNFPA). Various UN specialised agencies – such as the FAO, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) – play small but not insignificant roles in providing advice and support to emergent governments. Additionally, development policy departments of the UN have recently tried to expand their activities in the post-conflict field. For example, the Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) has sought to provide technical advise on fiscal and economic elements of post-conflict assistance. These efforts have as yet been highly constrained by the centralised, headquarters-based nature of such departments.

The UNDP has played a particularly significant role in this arena, both as the usual in-country co-ordinator of UN activities and as the UN's lead development actors. However, the UNDP's programme for what it refers to as 'countries in special development circumstances' has long been caught between those who see post-conflict settings simply as development challenges under difficult circumstances, those who see them as humanitarian crises with a few additional opportunities, and those who see them as special circumstances that fit neither category. Indeed, as one UN official has argued, UNDP has never even defined what development means in a crisis or immediate post-crisis context. Even the question of who is responsible within UNDP for post-crisis cases has been hotly disputed. On the one hand, the Emergency Response Division was created ostensibly for precisely this challenge; on the other, the various geographical departments claim and are often able to exercise lead roles in shaping the UNDP response. This competition within UNDP both reflects and contributes to a wider uncertainty within the aid community about how to handle post-crisis development programmes.

This uncertainly also reflects the legislative framework within which UN development actors work. This framework is composed primarily of the Economic and Social Council of the UN General Assembly, as well as of the Executive Boards of the various agencies. Typically, policy making in these bodies reflects a careful consensus between OECD states (most of them aid donors) and G77 states (many of them aid recipients). At times, the need to cultivate a consensus with aid recipients has frustrated donor efforts to generate a clearer role for UNDP within the post-crisis arena. Unlike in the international financial institutions, the G77 states carry a lot of power in UN decision making, and among some of these states, greater UNDP involvement in crisis and post-crisis settings is seen as tantamount to interventionism, and is sharply resisted.

(b) Aid Roles

Chronologically, the first task of the UN in post-crisis settings is the continued provision of humanitarian assistance and protection. This involves many of the same tasks as occur in an acute crisis: provision of food aid to those displaced by the crisis; protection of the legal rights of civilians; provision of emergency medical services; and others. A major sphere of humanitarian activity in post-crisis, one where the UN has a prominent role through the UNHCR, is the return and reintegration of refugees. In collaboration with such actors as UNICEF and the ICRC, UNHCR is also playing an increasingly important role vis-à-vis the reintegration of internally displaced persons (indeed, the distinction is the source of increasing controversy).

Many programmes which begin in the humanitarian sphere – such as provision of medical care, basic education, etc – are ones which rightly belong as part of a government or community-led package of social services. In collaboration with NGOs, nascent governments, and bilateral actors, the UN plays a significant role in post-crisis situations in what might be called social reconstruction. The humanitarian dimension of social recovery is the first part of the UN's work to fade out or to diminish to a minor scale. Core social recovery programmes, including reconciliation efforts, continue either through development channels or through a residual humanitarian presence. However, the speed with which such a shift in UN presence occurs depends very greatly on the degree of political and military stability. In fluid, uncertain situations, a major humanitarian presence is prolonged, sometimes for a number of years.

In more stable situations, there is a fairly rapid shift in the UN's work towards economic reconstruction. The economic challenges in post-conflict typically involve: establishment of macro-economic stability; establishing a framework for fiscal policy; restoration of markets; support to community-based development; reconstruction of war-damaged infrastructure; restarting agricultural and industrial activity; and reconstruction of state infrastructure. Within the UN, most efforts in this sphere are directed to supporting the nascent government, or local authorities. Less emphasis is given to support to the private sector or to setting the conditions for international investment. This reflects a deep commitment within the UN to the concept of social as well as economic development. It also reflects the inter-governmental nature of the UN and the prominence among many member states, especially from the G77 but also from Europe, of a philosophy which sees the state playing a significant role in development. This contrast with the more liberal, private-sector oriented philosophy of the international financial institutions.

The UN's role in economic reconstruction is sharply limited in relation to the roles played by other multilateral actors and bilateral actors. The major factor in this regard has been the beginning of a transformation of the World Bank into a development actor with a significant presence in post-conflict settings. In particular, the World Bank has often sought and in many recent cases been given the lead role in donor co-ordination in post-conflict settings, formerly one of the UN's most important roles. Bilateral actors also play a significant role in this regard through their aid programmes. Additionally, the European Community is an increasingly important player in this field. The sums of money that are channelled through such actors dwarf those of the UN in most settings – though in some African contexts in

particular, the sums available to the UNDP represent a significant portion of international assistance.

Another major focus of activity in recent years has been a set of activities that fall under the heading of governance. This includes human rights work, strengthening of electoral systems, development of rule of law institutions including the judiciary, security sector reform, and others. Some of this is old wine in new bottles; the UNDP has been involved in governance work through its national development programmes for many years. But some elements, especially in the security sector, are quite new.

Additionally, under pressure to find areas of comparative advantage, the UNDP has experimented with community-based development programmes using NGOs as partners, as distinct from its normal role in support of government-led economic and social development. In particular spheres, such as education, UN development actors like UNICEF and UNESCO continue to play an important advisory and capacity-building role.

(c) Policy

The challenge of managing humanitarian programmes in tandem with both social and economic development is at the core of the relief-development problematique. The manifold challenges involved are well documented elsewhere. These range from the highly technical (different systems for raising and disbursing funds, different recruitment and staff deployment arrangements) to management issues (different planning frameworks, varying timeframes for engagement) to the political (variable degrees of support for emergent regimes) and the conceptual (distinct conceptions of the nature of the post-conflict challenge, different principles on which aid is based, etc.)

Within the UN, efforts to improve policy co-ordination on post-conflict aid, at least at headquarters level, have focused on strengthening UN co-ordination mechanisms, lobbying donors for greater fluidity in their financing regimes, and on early linkage between planning frameworks for humanitarian and development assistance – the UN Consolidated Appeals Programme and the UN Development Assistance Framework, respectively. In the institutional politics which consumes much ostensible policy-making, the prevalent focus has been on the "gap" between relief programming and development action: the charge, specifically, that UN development actors are too slow to start their programmes, leaving relief agencies holding the bag and forced to take on roles (such as housing reconstruction) that they are ill suited, and under-financed, to play.[7] This concern has been emphasised by UNHCR among others. There has also been a great deal of attention paid by the UN to the problems created by the fact that some major donors have very rigid administrative distinctions between relief and development budgets. This makes it difficult (a) to finance transitional programmes in late-crisis situations, or (b) to finance early development programmes in longer-term transitional situations. Indeed, in this, the UN often has common cause with the managers of aid programmes in donor countries, many of

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[7] These issues were discussed extensively in the so-called Brookings Process, a series of meetings hosted initially by the Brookings Institution and jointly sponsored by the UNHCR and the World Bank. These issues also inform discussion in the IASC Reference Group on Post-Conflict.

whom also seek more flexible aid budgets, over the opposition of treasury or finance departments.[8]

Less explicit attention has been paid to the different conceptual bases for the two types of assistance. Yet these are significant. Whereas humanitarian assistance is focused on the needs of individuals and seeks to solve short to medium term problems, development aid is more focused on longer-term problems of a national or at least communal nature. Development actors place a far greater emphasis on the state and on government than do humanitarians – a repeated bone of contention between the two communities. In the context of joint learning and policy making efforts across the humanitarian – development chasm, the critical work on forging a conceptual framework which provides guidelines as to what aid is supposed to do has largely been sidelined by an excessive focus on technical and management aspects of the problem.

For example, in Kosovo, after the end of the NATO bombing campaign, the institution responsible for economic reconstruction (the European Commission) came into conflict with UNHCR over strategies for rebuilding housing infrastructure. The humanitarian approach was to provide large quantities of reconstruction supplies directly to refugees in need; the reconstruction approach was to stimulate markets and demand through targeted subsidies and thereby generate economic activity while allowing people to rebuild themselves. The merits of each approach can be debated, but the clash between concepts was significant.

The Kosovo example is also interesting for another feature, which suggests an altogether different conceptual framework for thinking about the problem of transitional aid. Specifically, as humanitarian actors in Kosovo, led by UNHCR, began to think about the need to draw down their programmes and hand over to others, they created co-ordination mechanisms to ensure a smooth transition. This co-ordination mechanism linked the humanitarians not with development actors, but with functional departments of the state. In Kosovo, under UN transitional authority, the UN itself manages the state bureaucracy; this odd fact no doubt facilitated the creation of co-ordination mechanisms in this case. But the significant point is that what emerged spontaneously from Kosovo was a form of 'relief-to-state' transition model. Given that the purpose of humanitarian assistance is to meet the basic, essential needs of people when the state cannot or is unwilling to do so, it surely makes sense to think of the phase out of humanitarian operations coming when the state – not development actors – can take over their programmes. Of course, development action is fundamentally about building the capacity of both state and society, so a connection remains. But rather than thinking about transitions between two different sets of international actors, what Kosovo suggests is the need to think more about the differing but ideally complementary ways in which both humanitarian and development actors can help states fulfil their obligations to their citizens.

Kosovo is not the only instance of this kind of thinking within the humanitarian and development communities. In the major humanitarian agencies, and in the academic

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[8] The most comprehensive account to date is Shepard Forman and Patrick Stewart (eds.) *Good Intentions: Pledges of Aid for Post-Conflict Recovery.* (Lynne Reinner, 2000).

sector, some efforts have been devoted to increasing the capacity-building dimension of humanitarian assistance. Such efforts are as yet very limited however.

Not unrelated to this approach, is the concept of peacebuilding and the need for political stabilisation – of the state, primarily – as a pre-condition for effective transitions. By the late 1990s, this conceptual framework of 'post-conflict peacebuilding' was increasingly seen in the UN as an overall strategic framework within which relief-development issues had to be tackled.

Political Stabilisation

The repeated experience of watching states ostensibly past their acute crises falling back into major conflict has been a significant learning experience for the UN. It has resulted in far greater emphasis on the fundamentally political character of post-conflict challenges. This in turn has led to an extension of UN political activity in post-crisis settings. Though not yet fully institutionalised within the UN, this is an evolution with significant implications.

Traditionally, the UN's only direct political involvement in post-conflict settings had been when given a peacekeeping role (under the responsibility of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.) In the 1990s, where the UN has had peacekeeping operations, they have performed a range of roles related to overseeing and guaranteeing the implementation of political settlements. This includes verification of cease-fires; demobilisation and disarmament of former combatants; mine removal; and provision of physical protection to government and international authorities. Less commonly, it also includes military security versus external forces or and military assistance to the government (Sierra Leone). Finally, in recent contexts, the mandates of UN peacekeepers has included the physical protection of all civilians coming under direct threat from combatants (Sierra Leone, D.R.Congo).

After the back-to-back debacles of Somalia and Rwanda, the UN's peacekeeping role declined considerably. In the past few years, the UN has had a minimal peacekeeping role. Moreover, even where there have been peacekeeping operations, they have often been of limited duration, ending soon after the implementation of a political settlement. Only at the tail end of the decade was there something of a resurgence in UN peacekeeping, both in Africa and elsewhere. By mid-2000, the largest UN peacekeeping presence was in Sierra Leone, and a small force was also being planned to oversee a quasi-settlement in the D.R.Congo.

Increasingly, however, even where the UN does not have a peacekeeping role, or where those roles have had a short duration, the UN has extended its political involvement in other forms. This often occurs under the lead of the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), either through a UN political mission, or through a new innovation, UN Peacebuilding Support Offices (PBSO). The roles of these offices include co-ordination of confidence-building measures and political stabilisation efforts; electoral support, in terms both of pre-electoral education and registration as well as direct assistance to local, national elections, and verification of the results; efforts to strengthen and legitimate a new government, especially when that government is established through political settlement; hosting of donor conferences to provide financial support to the new government, and others.

The use of Peacebuilding Support Offices has been a notable innovation. First used in Liberia to help consolidate the peace agreements, PBSOs have since been created in Guinea-Bissau (where the UN had no peacekeeping role) and in the Central African Republic, following a brief peacekeeping mission which oversaw elections. PBSOs are the institutional expression of the formal lead role for post-conflict peacebuilding given to the Department of Political Affairs in the Secretary-General's 1997 UN reforms.

The activities of these political offices extend into the sphere of rule of law and human rights. They undertake tasks in post-conflict settings related to the development of national human rights institutions, support to judicial reform, and constitutional development. Such activities now constitute a far greater share of the UN's activity than more traditional human rights functions such as monitoring and reporting, though these activities continue.

Of course, activities similar to those performed by PBSOs have been undertaken in other contexts by the UNDP, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, and other UN actors. However, the adoption of these tasks by UN political offices is more significant than a simple alteration of lead responsibility within the UN family. Far more important is the fact that these offices operate under the legislative authority of the Security Council, and therefore bring the Council directly into these post-crisis efforts. The Security Council monitors the day-to-day developments of these operations, and shapes operational policy decisions.

The involvement of the Security Council in peacebuilding lends considerable weight to the UN's efforts in this regard. From the perspective of the host country, the statements or decisions of a PBSO carry with them something of the weight of the governments who comprise the Council, including obviously the US government as well as several major European powers. This political weight can be used to place considerable pressure on local authorities, as well as on regional actors whose actions may have a significant bearing on political stabilisation in a post-crisis setting. Of course, the weight of the Security Council has not forestalled the collapse of peace agreements in some past examples, notably Angola and Rwanda.

Furthermore, the involvement of the Security Council in peacebuilding activities has a series of other implications as well. The fact of development-oriented activities being managed by the Security Council, rather than the General Assembly-based fora which traditionally set policy in the economic sphere, raises questions about the relationship between the primary organs of the UN. Significantly, the G77 has a much less significant role in the Security Council than in the GA, though the presence of China in the Council is an omnipresent check on the western members. Furthermore, the reliance of political offices on mandates from the Security Council also raises concerns about continuity at the end of the mandate. In past instances, the abrupt withdrawal of peacekeeping missions with significant development portfolios – such as UNTAC in Cambodia – meant the sudden end to many ongoing peacebuilding and development-oriented programmes, with negative effect. Increased political management of aid could exacerbate this problem.

On balance, however, the longer-term consequences of political management of aid are probably more than offset by more effective efforts to stabilise political

settlements in post-crisis contexts. While it may be the case that in the long run social and economic development will reinforce peace and reduce the potential for renewed conflict, it is certainly the case that unstable politics undermines any form of development, and a return to large-scale violence even more so. In the short term, prioritising political stabilisation over development – where they are in conflict – seems an appropriate strategy for the UN. In the medium to long term, political stabilisation and development are mutually reinforcing.

It is worth noting one additional point about the shift towards a greater political role for the UN in post-conflict. This is that it reflects a hesitant but nevertheless significant revival of support for the UN's role in crisis and post-crisis contexts, in particular among the European donor countries. This can be explained by a coincidence of factors: the perceived success to date of the UN reform package introduced in 1997; a 'loss of innocence' in the civil society sector, and a growing recognition that many NGOs are beset by the same problems that initially led donors to shift support away from the UN; and most significantly, as noted above, a growing recognition of the fundamentally political challenge of post-conflict stabilisation. In the last element in particular, the UN has a significant comparative advantage over the civil society sector and even the international financial institutions. This is a point to which we will return.

Co-ordination

The increasing frequency of the deployment of UN political field missions in post-conflict cases has led to some confusion in the question of overall co-ordination of UN activity in these contexts. Whereas previously the UNDP had an undisputed co-ordination mandate for aid, and DPKO had the undisputed lead in UN field missions, both of these questions are now in dispute. Indeed, the question of who within the UN co-ordinates overall post-conflict activity is among the most contentious of current UN policy debates. Given that the UN in theory co-ordinates not only its own activity but that of some portion of the non-governmental and other multilateral actors, the co-ordination role and challenges of the UN have significant impact on the wider question of post-conflict assistance.

In many of its areas of responsibility, one of the UN's primary functions is to co-ordinate the operations of a variety of external actors, especially civil society organisations. The extent to which the UN is able to fulfil this role varies both by sector and by case.

Furthermore, the UN is expected to play a co-ordination role not just within a given sector such as humanitarian assistance, but between sectors. This again reflects a comparative advantage of the UN – the only global organisation that has a political, humanitarian and a development programme. The fact that the UN is engaged in a host of activities across the various sectors of activities theoretically gives it an advantage over other institutions and actors with a more limited range.

These two challenges – co-ordinating among a range of actors and co-ordinating across sectors and – are central to the UN's post-crisis role.

(a) Co-ordination Mechanisms

The mechanisms through which the UN attempts to fulfil this role are in flux. For a start, whereas within the narrow political or humanitarian fields there are clear mechanisms for co-ordination within the UN, this is not the case in the post-conflict arena.

Within the political sphere, there are two co-ordination mechanism relevant to post-crisis: the Executive Committee for Peace and Security (ECPS) which brings together political, legal, development, humanitarian and human rights elements of the UN, under the lead of DPA; and the self-explanatory Co-ordinating Action on Small Arms (CASA), led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs (DDA). The DPKO is a significant presence in both. Even within this small trio of actors, there is significant competition and lack of clarity vis-à-vis roles. In particular, the past two years have seen as growing tension between DPA and DPKO in particular on the question of primary responsibility for post-conflict peacebuilding. As DPA has expanded its field presence through the Peacebuilding Support Offices, this has created a situation in which there are in effect two different kinds of frameworks through which the UN co-ordinates political activity in post-conflict settings.

On the humanitarian side, there are also two co-ordination mechanisms, both led by OCHA: the Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (ECHA), which brings together the UN humanitarian actors with core development and political bodies; and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, which incorporates UN humanitarian and development agencies, non-governmental organisations, and the ICRC. While ECHA is the prime decision making forum for post-conflict issues, decisions are often first aired with IASC members. In past times, many decisions relating to relief-development linkages were handled within the IASC. More recently, with the advent of a more political approach, ECPS has emerged as a major forum for tackling both policy and operational questions. Even when the IASC is used for post-crisis issues, DPA and DPKO are asked to participate – as for example, in the IASC Reference Group on Post-Conflict.

On the development side, co-ordination is done through the UN Development Group, the membership of which comprises all of the UN development and specialised agencies, as well as some development policy departments of the UN Secretariat. This body is chaired by the Administrator of UNDP, who, as noted above, also manages in-country co-ordination of the UN's operational activities, through Resident Co-ordinators.

A major difference between these three co-ordinating fora is the extent to which they co-ordinate non-UN as well as UN entities. This is perhaps strongest on the humanitarian side, where the IASC actually contains non-UN actors. Moreover, under UN reform, OCHA has an explicit mandate to co-ordinate the activity of the humanitarian community as a whole, and in recent years has had in some contexts significant success in fulfilling that function. Its co-ordination authority and capacity varies from case to case, but in several recent instances OCHA has supported the creation of in-country mechanisms, supported by a Humanitarian Co-ordinator, that generate participation and support from a wide range of NGOs, bilateral actors, and others. Of course, there are still those who shy away from co-ordination by the UN.

Most recalcitrant have been ECHO and some NGOs principally funded through ECHO, such as *Médécins sans Frontières* (MSF).

On the political side, there are in most instances fewer actors involved in post-conflict activities, and so a lesser co-ordination challenge. In the cases where many different regional political institutions do get involved in political activities, the extent to which they recognise the co-ordinating authority of the UN depends greatly on the UN's mandate, role, and the personalities. This was perhaps weakest in Rwanda where, given the catastrophic role played by the UN during the pre-genocide period, its post-conflict co-ordinating authority was minimal. In more positive examples, bilateral actors have worked through or in support of UN Special Representatives or the equivalent, often through a "Friends" mechanism – ie. a meeting of relevant states with the UN Special Representative or Secretary-General, which is used to co-ordinate policy vis-à-vis local parties. The rising number of NGOs involved in political issues poses a new challenge to political co-ordination mechanisms at the one but one which so far has not weakened political co-ordination at the headquarters level.[9]

The co-ordination of non-UN actors is weakest in the development realm. A number of reasons can be posited for this. First, there is an enormous number of UN entities involved in development, meaning that the internal co-ordination challenge is greatest in this realm. Second, there has been a decline in the overall portion of development assistance which is channelled through multilateral institutions, meaning that the UNDP's spending is shrinking by comparison with bilateral assistance. Third, partially as a result, there has been a striking erosion of the perceived authority and capacity of the ostensible co-ordinating agent, the UNDP. And fourth, the World Bank has played a growing role in co-ordination in post-conflict settings, bolstered by its considerable resources and by the support of a number of influential states. The combination of a loss of funds and prestige with significant competition has eroded the co-ordination capacity of UNDP – indeed, support for the institution as a whole. Indeed, at the time of writing, the new Administrator of UNDP had acknowledged that UNDP was in deep crisis and was working furiously to find new niches and new roles for UNDP. Among the most contentious and difficult was the precisely the question of post-crisis co-ordination.

What is notable is that among all of these co-ordination bodies, there is none that brings together the main players in post-crisis. While ECPS and ECHA perhaps comes closest, in having UN political, humanitarian, human rights and development representation, both these bodies are missing the NGO community and the World Bank. The NGOs and the Bank are part of the IASC; but that body has no UN political representation. None of these fora connect in any formal way to the donor community. And none have any direct involvement of affected governments or regional organisations. Informal networks such as the Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction Network do bring together all of these relevant bodies, but only in a dialogue setting, not in a policy-making or operational co-ordination forum. For

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[9] For an account of UN efforts to relate to the new generation of conflict resolution NGOs, see Fabienne Hara, "Burundi: A Case of Parallel Diplomacy" in Chester A. Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall (eds.) *Herding Cats: Multiparty Mediation in a Complex World*, (Washington, DC: US Institute of Peace Press, 1999).

many working on post-crisis issues, this lack of a central, authoritative co-ordinating forum for post-crisis is seen as a problem contributing to the weakness of the multilateral system's efforts in this area.

(b) Cross-Sector Co-ordination

Were the co-ordination challenges in each of these spheres not great enough, the real challenge has recently been that of forging linkages between these co-ordinating bodies. One of the central tenets of 'peacebuilding' relates to the important of linkages between political, humanitarian and development stabilisation efforts in post-conflict settings. This has given rise to an increased emphasis on co-ordination across these respective spheres of UN activity. The question has then arisen: who co-ordinates the co-ordinators?

Unsurprisingly, given the institutional stakes involved, several of the different UN entities involved in post-crisis activity have put forward their own framework for overall UN co-ordination. Within the development sphere, under the lead of the UN Development Group Office, the UN has experimented with the so-called UN Development Assistance Framework. As its name suggests, this is primarily a tool for enhancing the coherence of the programmes of the various UN development and specialised agencies. It is based around a common assessment template, specified programme cycles, and joint policy formulation (based on UN standards). However, in the past few years there have been growing efforts to use the UNDAF as a policy co-ordination tool even in "countries in special development circumstances" – i.e. countries in crisis. The UNDAF has, for example, been used in Burundi to orchestrate the UN's development plans, notwithstanding the continuing conflict and crisis in that country. However, the UNDAF is very limited as an overall co-ordination tool for crisis, especially since it is managed by the UNDG – which, alone of the three co-ordinating fora mentioned above, has representation from UN actors in only one sector. No humanitarian or political entities of the UN are part of the UNDG or have been part of the development of UNDAF, and unsurprisingly, therefore, see little value in it as a co-ordinating tool.

More significantly on the development side, there has been a consistent defence of the role of the UN Resident Co-ordinator (supported by UNDP and the UN Development Group Office) as the overall co-ordinator of post-crisis operations. However, in 1997 the Secretary-General established the principle that when a UN Special Representative was deployed to a country, that individual was to have overall co-ordinating authority over the UN. UNDP's adjustment to this new policy has been slow and partial. In some cases, Resident Co-ordinators have been assigned as Deputy SRSGs, bringing the two co-ordination mechanisms together. In more general terms, however, there has been considerable resistance to this trend within UNDP. This for two reasons: first, because of the concerns with political management of aid, as outlined above; and second, for more narrow reasons of institutional prestige. The UNDP's mandate for co-ordination is closely guarded.

(Ironically, as part of its own reform process, OCHA and the IASC have placed greater emphasis in recent years on the fusion between humanitarian and development co-ordination mechanisms – specifically, on appointing the UN Resident Co-ordinators as Humanitarian Co-ordinators in a number of settings. This has been mooted over time. The evolution of co-ordination arrangements within the

UN, and the uncertain role of UNDP in this regard, may call for a re-evaluation of this policy.)

This is especially so since the question of the relationship between humanitarian and development co-ordination mechanisms is increasingly overtaken by the question of each of there relation to political co-ordination mechanisms. More and more policy support is being given by the UN leadership to the notion of integrated co-ordination mechanisms, under the lead of a SRSG.

Two versions of this concept, quite distinct, have been put forward by political departments. One, sponsored primarily by the DPKO, entails "integrated missions". Used first in Kosovo and East Timor, but also planned for use in the D.R. Congo, the integrated mission concept involves all elements of the UN's presence forming part of the UN's "peace operation" – to use the most recent terminology. In this model, all of the UN's programming, be it in development, humanitarian assistance, human rights, or political spheres, falls under the direct authority of the UN Special Representative. In addition, various other international and regional organisations have formed part of the integrated missions in Kosovo and East Timor, including the European Union and the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe.[10] This approach emphasises a chain of command model, no doubt reflecting a certain military culture in DPKO. Early experience with this model in Kosovo and East Timor appeared to be successful in terms of mitigating co-ordination problems within the UN. However, there is still resistance to the wider application of the model, both from UNDP as described above, and from some parts of the humanitarian community which are concerned about a loss of impartiality and independence.

Reflecting the more consensus-based diplomatic culture of the DPA is a second framework, namely the Strategic Framework. The SF is often associated with humanitarian actors, because in its first innovation, in Afghanistan, the lead role was devolved from DPA to OCHA. More recently, the Strategic Framework was promulgated as a General Guidance, and applied to Sierra Leone. In generic terms, this is also a tool for overall co-ordination by SRSGs, who is guided to ensure that political, aid, and human rights elements of UN programming "inform and are informed by" one another. Additionally, the SRSG, along with the Resident Co-ordinator, is instructed to develop co-ordination mechanisms bringing together the UN agencies, local and international NGOs, bilateral donors, and national authorities.

Early experiences of the Strategic Framework suggests that it suffers from the opposite problem of the integrated approach: excessive inclusiveness. With so many actors involved, it has proved very difficult to make the leap from generic consensus to concrete decisions. Moreover, the mechanisms envisaged by the Strategic Framework take a long time to establish – in both Afghanistan and Sierra Leone, over a year elapsed between the launch of the framework and the appearance of concrete results.

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[10] See the Report of the Secretary-General to the Security Council on the UN Administration in Kosovo (S/1999/779), and the Report of the Secretary-General to the Security on the UN Transitional Authority in East Timor (S/2000/53).

On the other hand, the Strategic Framework has one significant dimension missing in the integrated mission concept: a formal commitment to working primarily through and in support to national capacities. In point of fact, this has not yet occurred in either of the two test cases. However, the general concept is sound.

In any case, through such efforts such as the Strategic Framework, integrated missions, enhanced roles for Special Representatives, and others, the UN has sought to provide a comprehensive policy framework for post-conflict recovery. However, these co-ordination efforts have so far been characterised by an emphasis on process over content, and an excessive focus on internal UN institutional competition. The result has at been a proliferation of co-ordination mechanisms, which in some instances has *complicated* overall co-ordination efforts. Consider, for example, Sierra Leone. In this context, where there has been reasonable donor support for the UN to play a lead role, with significant direct backing from the British government, the UN has deployed a multitude of co-ordinating mechanisms. There is an integrated mission (led by DPKO), a Strategic Framework (led by DPA), and a Resident Co-ordinator (under UNDP), plus at times a Humanitarian Co-ordinator (reporting to OCHA). While these could all be pieces of an elaborate co-ordination puzzle, the reality on the ground has been overlapping, unclear and excessively complicated co-ordinating structures none of which clearly relate to one another.

As this paper was being written, one proposal for improving co-ordination in Sierra Leone being vetted within the UN was the possibility of having the Humanitarian Co-ordinator serve as Deputy SRSG. In other words, the concept was moving more in the direction of an integrated model. In this regard, it may be useful to consider the relative merits of the two models vis-à-vis different stages of post-crisis. Don Rothschild has noted a distinction between very early post-crisis efforts, which focus on military stabilisation and humanitarian relief, and longer term efforts which are more political and developmental in emphasis.[11] It may yet prove that the integrated mission model is a more effective political co-ordination approach for the early phases of post-crisis, and that the Strategic Framework model – or a less complex variant – is more effective for longer term peacebuilding processes.

In any case, it is no doubt evident from this discussion of its co-ordination role, that the challenges to the UN performing its multiple roles are considerable.

Challenges and Constraints

Indeed, the UN faces a number of constraints in implementing a more political approach to post-crisis. Most of these have been touched on, but they are worth revisiting.

Nature of Political Authority

First, commensurate with a greater emphasis on the political aspects of post-conflict assistance has been a growing recognition of the nature of post-conflict authority and the challenges it poses. Even in contexts of relative political stability, it is often the case that there is no government that can officially be recognised as the fully

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[11] Don Rothschild, "Conclusion", Elizabeth Cousens, Stephen Stedman and Don Rothschild (eds.) *Peace Implementation: Cases.* (Forthcoming, 2001).

legitimate political partner of the UN. Even where the existence of a peace agreement between parties means that the UN can officially work in support of a transitional government, such agreements are usually hampered by fracture, distrust and paralysis within power-sharing governments. Thus, counterparts at the political level are rarely both legitimate and effective, and are often neither. For UN political and development actors, whose mandates and methodologies emphasise support to a national government, this is a major challenge.

The reasons for caution in relations with local authorities are good: too rapid recognition of quasi-legitimate authorities can lead to excessive centralisation of power and diminish the prospects for democratisation. However, as with the prioritisation of political stabilisation over development, there is a strong argument that this argument is tantamount to allowing the best to be the enemy of the good. The costs of caution vis-à-vis quasi-legitimate authorities are high. In the case of East Timor, the UN's early state-building efforts were complicated by hesitancy over the recognition of the CNRT – a constellation of political parties that endorsed independence, led by two Nobel Peace Prize winners and backed by Falantil, an independence militia noted for its proper treatment of civilians during its military campaign.

This kind of problem has been a recurrent feature of post-crisis situations. The issue is hotly debated within the UN on a case-by-case basis. As yet, no official policy has been developed on the issue, no guidelines drawn up, no comparative lessons learned studies commissioned. While the issue is clearly a very sensitive one, some work in this direction could mitigate the difficulty of future post-crisis undertakings.

Also on this issue: with growing recognition of the problems posed by quasi-legitimate authorities, it is increasingly understood within the UN that the problems of financing transitions are not just of a technical nature. Rather, donors face the same political dilemmas as the UN. For donor countries to engage in development spending, as distinct from humanitarian spending, constitutes a very different kind of decision, one that often involves recognition of the governmental authorities in question. In cases of quasi-legitimate authorities, this is obviously complicated. Moreover, when a country has long been in crisis, this typically means an erosion of the kinds of civil and political links between that country and the donor that generate political support for aid within the domestic political sphere of the donor capital. This can be a significant impediment to a restoration of development aid in a context of declining resources and a growing tendency to focus aid spending on a restricted set of preferred recipients.

Lessons Learning and Policy Making in Complex Systems

Because UN agencies and departments all report, in some fashion or another, either to a body comprised of all world governments or a representative set of them, post-crisis policy is almost always set in a global, rather than context-specific context. The effort by Secretary-General Kofi Annan to create a specific policy framework for Africa – the Secretary-*General's Report on the Causes and Consequences of Conflict in Africa* – was among the first of its kind, and has frankly done little to alter the nature of policy-setting or decision-making within the UN.

This global policy setting is both a strength and a weakness. On the positive side, it allows the UN to draw from successful lessons and experiences from a wide range of contexts, and to see general patterns where actors closer to the local context will tend to see specific features. However, this positive aspects is largely outweighed by the negative sides, which include: drawing lessons from past examples which contain superficial similarities but which in fact differ substantially in both content and context; the difficulty of drawing general policy lessons on such issues as relief-development transitions when the resulting policy has to apply to such contexts as different as Liberia and Kosovo; and the fact that general knowledge and patterns tends to overwhelm specific knowledge.

Moreover, as is often the case with lessons learning, the tendency is to learn positive lessons from past successful cases and negative lessons from past catastrophic failures. There are two problems with this. First, there is little in the lessons learning function within the UN (or for that matter in other multilateral organisations such as the World Bank or the OECD) that allows policy-makers to draw lessons which are specific to *types of cases*. The kind of categorisation of cases discussed above rarely occurs. The typical pattern is that a lessons learned study will be commissioned drawing on between four and six cases, chosen either for institutional reasons (one case where WFP was important, one case where UNDP did well, one case where the UN had a peacekeeping presence....) or because they represent varying points on a spectrum (one early post conflict case, one case two years into a settlement, one case five years into a settlement, etc). Geographical variation is also always a factor. The nature of such analysis is that it can only generate rigorous lessons about the institutional dimensions of the response – since these are more or less constant. The UN rarely engages in a learning exercise where a sufficient range of cases is studied to provide lessons applicable to types or categories of cases. The net result is that one finds lessons from Afghanistan being applied to Sierra Leone; lessons from Bosnia being applied to Kosovo; lessons from Cambodia being applied to East Timor. Very little in the learning process intervenes to force policy makers to ask the question: are the lessons applicable to this kind of case?

A second major constraint on effective policy making in a complex organisation like the UN emerges from the range of actors involved, as described above. All of the normal difficulties of proper institutional learning and policy making apply to each of the entities listed above. Added together, the problems of joint learning and policy making are amplified. There are plus sides to joint policy making – the best processes create opportunities for those involved in humanitarian or development aspects of response to learn further from political actors about the challenges they face or the nature of their response, and so to forge collectively greater understanding. The down sides, however, are significant. The nature of the UN as an institution is that there is a heavy premium on compromise and consensus.

The importance of this fact is that it means that when it comes time to set overall policy for a post-conflict setting, it has proven extraordinary difficult to get the UN to recognise and tackle the challenge of making trade-offs or compromises between competing priorities. There is a general presupposition (probably accurate) of the long-term compatibility of the various goals pursued by the UN in post-conflict settings. But when it comes to reconciling short-term trade-offs, it has been the

general tendency to paper over the differences so that consensus can be reached. This limits the articulation of effective policy.

Relationship with the World Bank

A third challenge is the question of the UN's relationship to the World Bank. As noted above, the World Bank has increasingly been in competition with UNDP for the lead role in co-ordinating the development dimensions of post-conflict assistance. In some recent cases, including in Rwanda and Sierra Leone, there have been significant political battles between the two multilateral organisations and their respective backers in various capitals. New leadership at the UNDP and new policy in the World Bank has led to a muting of these battles, but as yet there is no clear division of labour between the two entities.

However, as this paper was being written, a significant policy shift was underway within the World Bank and the UN, resulting in something of a rapprochement. On the World Bank side, the shift appeared to result from the successful efforts of the Social Development Division, including its Post-Conflict Unit, to focus the Bank's attention on the social and political dimensions of growth in post-crisis settings, as distinct from a focus exclusively on macro-economic policy. A growing recognition within the Bank of a need to engage on political questions, coupled with restrictions on their capacity to do so in the absence of firmly recognised governing authorities, has led the Bank to seek greater collaboration with the political departments and programmes of the UN. Within the UN, at least within its political departments, this Bank effort has been warmly received. This is both because the rift between the Bank and the UN has long been recognised as a serious impediment to effective peace-making, and second because the Bank's overtures have bolstered the UN's confidence in its own role in conflict and post-conflict management, especially its new, more political, framework for post-conflict assistance.

Conclusion: Institutional Innovation?

As this paper was being drafted, one of the major proposals being discussed within the UN and among member states concerned with post-crisis issues, was an idea first floated by the Center for International Cooperation at New York University. During a process of dialogue and debate between UN entities, donors, NGOs, and recipient governments, the Center suggested that some of the problems addressed in the paper could be solved through the creation of what became known as a Strategic Recovery Facility (SRF).[12]

The basic notion of an SRF is to solve three of the most complicated problems relating to post-crisis by bringing together a range of different actors under one roof. As initially envisaged, the facility – or mechanism, or agency – would be co-chaired by the UN and the World Bank, solving one problem immediately by bringing the UN and the Bank into more active collaboration. Also represented in the chairmanship or membership of the SRF would be humanitarian and development agencies of the UN, NGOs and donors – solving a second problem, by creating a policy-making and operational co-ordination forum for post-crisis containing all the relevant actors, or at

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[12] Shepard Forman, Stewart Patrick and Dirk Salomons, *Recovering From Conflict: Strategy For An International Response*. Policy Paper, Center on International Cooperation, New York University, New York, 2000.

least representatives of them. Third, the SRF would, optionally, manage a fund or a facility in which various donors, both private and public, could concentrate funds devoted to post-crisis activities, which would then be readily available to support joint action by the multi-lateral community in support of immediate post-crisis action – solving, or at least easing, the problem of inappropriate financial systems for paying for post-crisis essentials. Additionally, the SRF would serve as a repository of learning, a kind of clearing house for system-wide learning of the sort not yet in existence (with one small exception, for demobilisation-related activities, housed in UNDP).

Whether such a facility would be able to ameliorate the central challenge – the question of recognition and support to quasi-legitimate and partially-effective local authorities – is debatable. There is, however, a precedent which suggests positive evidence, namely the War-Torn Societies Project (WSP). While WSP's experience in performing its core function of helping to identify local priorities for post-crisis assistance had received mixed reviews, the project has gained many supporters within the UN because of its degree of flexibility in developing relations with local authorities. As a quasi-UN entity, WSP has some of the advantages of a UN official agency, and the flexibility of an NGO.

A case for similar institutional innovation could be made for the post-crisis sector. Indeed, what is required at this stage is not so much a serious discussion of *whether* institutional reform and innovation is needed, but on precisely *how* this innovation should occur; exactly what form it should take; what management structures it should have; and how it can best solve some of the problems mentioned above without adding complexity or bureaucratic burden to an already burdened system.

There is little doubt that a central part of any such debate, dialogue or innovation must be an effort to strengthen the new improvement in the UN's relationship with the Bank. This will be among the most crucial in determining the UN's ability to perform an overall co-ordinating role in post-crisis, its ability to make effective linkages between humanitarian assistance and state capacity-building, and its ability to ensure coherence between the economic reconstruction efforts of the Bank and its own efforts at political stabilisation. An effective relationship between the two is the essential building block for a new, more effective political economy of peacebuilding.