

## Organizational Change and Institutional Survival: The Case of the U.N. Peacebuilding Commission

*Rob Jenkins\**

### I. INTRODUCTION

The United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) is one of the few concrete institutional legacies of former Secretary General Kofi Annan's ambitious agenda for reforming the world body. The PBC came formally into existence in June 2006, six months after identical resolutions authorizing its creation were passed by the General Assembly and the Security Council.<sup>1</sup>

The PBC was conceived to fill a perceived gap in the United Nations's institutional fabric. In the words of Annan's 2005 manifesto for U.N. reform, *In Larger Freedom*, "there is a gaping hole in the United Nations institutional machinery: no part of the United Nations system effectively addresses the challenge of helping countries with the transition from war to lasting peace."<sup>2</sup> The logic behind the PBC's creation, first formally proposed in December 2004 in the report of the Secretary General's High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change, was as follows: the Security Council is charged with maintaining peace and security; the Economic and Social Council is responsible for long-term development issues; but no dedicated intergovernmental machinery exists for addressing the needs of countries that have emerged from a period of war—particularly civil war, during which governmental authority evaporates—but have not yet achieved the degree of state consolidation required to pursue a

---

\* Professor of Political Science, Hunter College, and Fellow, Ralph Bunche Institute for International Studies, The Graduate Center, City University of New York.

<sup>1</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1645 (Dec. 20, 2005) [hereinafter S.C. Res. 1654]; G.A. Res. 60/180, U.N. Doc. A/RES/60/180 (Dec. 20, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> The Secretary-General, *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All—Reports from the Secretary-General*, ¶ 114, delivered to the General Assembly, U.N. Doc. A/59/2005 (Mar. 21, 2005).

systematic development agenda.<sup>3</sup> They are still “fragile” states, not yet even regular “developing” or even “least developed” countries.

What the United Nations needed, according to the September 2005 U.N. Summit *Outcome Document*, through which heads of state and government endorsed the proposal to create a Peacebuilding Commission, was a new body that could exercise oversight over the slow and uneven process by which—if circumstances permit—systemic violence and fragmented authority structures give way to civil politics and state consolidation.<sup>4</sup> A new intergovernmental institution was required to (1) coordinate the efforts of international actors, within and beyond the U.N. system, working to rebuild failed states; (2) sustain global public attention to “post-conflict” countries that threaten to slip down (or off) the international community’s radar; and (3) marshal additional external resources for post-conflict countries so that financial flows (the lifeblood of nascent states) are made more predictable.<sup>5</sup>

Whether this was, in fact, a logical conclusion for the international community collectively to have reached—especially when considered alongside the organizational pathologies that have long plagued the U.N. system<sup>6</sup>—is debatable. Arguably, the United Nations has faced severe difficulties rebuilding failed states, not for the lack of an intergovernmental body devoted to a particular phase in the continuum between war and peace, but because of larger, more systemic problems, which an intergovernmental body possessing no executive authority stands little chance of rectifying.<sup>7</sup>

Among the most visible of these challenges is the proliferation of U.N. entities engaged in various aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding, such as reforming security agencies, monitoring elections, establishing institutions to hold war criminals to account, rebuilding the economic infrastructure, promoting inter-communal tolerance, enhancing the capacity of civil society advocates to lobby for democratic

---

<sup>3</sup> U.N. High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes, *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*, (Dec. 2, 2004), <http://www.un.org/secureworld/report.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> See G.A. Res. 60/1, ¶¶ 97–105, U.N. Doc. A/RES/60/1 (Oct. 24, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1, Preamble.

<sup>6</sup> See MICHAEL BARNETT & MARTHA FINNEMORE, *RULES FOR THE WORLD: INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS IN GLOBAL POLITICS* 34–41 (2004).

<sup>7</sup> The primacy of politics, rather than bureaucratic efficiency, is emphasized in such studies as SIMON CHESTERMAN, *YOU, THE PEOPLE: THE UNITED NATIONS, TRANSITIONAL ADMINISTRATION AND STATE-BUILDING* (2004).

development, and so forth.<sup>8</sup> But without direct or indirect control over a critical mass of the humanitarian and development agencies concerned, a new commission, working with little more than a mandate to “coordinate” the efforts of U.N. and other actors working in post-conflict countries, would seem to be of dubious value.<sup>9</sup>

The somewhat vague and meandering resolution that created the PBC duly emphasizes the other reasons a new body was seen to be needed: the lack of sustained international attention to post-conflict countries once an accord is signed or peacekeepers begin departing; the absence of predictable flows of external finance for post-conflict governments; and onerous procedures for reporting to the huge array of donor agencies—multilateral, bilateral, and non-governmental—from which aid is received.<sup>10</sup> But coordination—developing common approaches among external actors and instituting rational divisions of labor among all actors, both domestic and international—is in a sense the PBC’s core objective, which if realized would, in theory, enable others fulfillment of the others.<sup>11</sup>

As a mechanism for coordinating the international community’s efforts to rebuild failed states, the PBC can point to few tangible successes of its own making. Sierra Leone’s successful elections of 2007, in which power changed hands with a minimum of violence, had lit-

---

<sup>8</sup> The gradual expansion of the various dimensions of peacebuilding is documented in HO-WON JEONG, *PEACEBUILDING IN POSTCONFLICT SOCIETIES: STRATEGY AND PROCESS* (2005), as well as in policy-analysis documents such as Shepard Forman, *Building Civilian Capacity for Conflict Management and Sustainable Peace* (2004), available at <http://www.cic.nyu.edu/archive/conflict/Forman-%20Building%20Civilian%20Capacity.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> This was a prominent view in the extensive consultations on institutional design that preceded the PBC’s establishment—among member-states, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), U.N. officials, and policy academics. See, e.g., CTR. ON INT’L COOPERATION, *CONSULTATION REPORT: POST CONFLICT TRANSITIONS, NATIONAL EXPERIENCE AND INTERNATIONAL REFORM* (2005); INT’L PEACE RES. INST., *TOWARDS A FRAMEWORK FOR PEACEBUILDING: GETTING THEIR ACT TOGETHER: OVERVIEW REPORT OF THE JOINT UTSTEIN STUDY OF PEACEBUILDING* (2004).

<sup>10</sup> See generally S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1. These general preoccupations are outlined in the preamble to Resolution 1654, but are made specific “purposes” of the PBC in the various sections of paragraph two. The financial aspects of peacebuilding receive special mention in a number of places, including paragraph twenty-four, which calls for the creation of a Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), and paragraphs that mention the need for coordination with the International Financial Institutions (IFIs). *Id.* ¶¶ 7(e), 9, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Paris & Timothy D. Sisk, *Understanding the “Coordination Problem” in Post-War State-Building*, in *THE DILEMMAS OF STATEBUILDING: CONFRONTING THE CONTRADICTIONS OF POSTWAR PEACE OPERATIONS* (forthcoming 2008) (discussing the international community’s preoccupation with coordination—and the tendency of this obsession to obscure more fundamental problems).

tle to do with the PBC. By the same token, had things turned out badly, the PBC could not reasonably have taken the blame.

Whether the PBC has made substantial contributions to state-rebuilding in the countries in which it has worked is a matter of interpretation. The verdict depends critically on which benchmarks are considered reasonable.<sup>12</sup> Regardless of which standards one applies, however, PBC-defenders are liable to reply that the PBC must be cut greater slack. As a new institution, it was forced to incur the inevitable (one-off) start-up costs of devising organizational structures, agreeing on working methods, and finding suitable channels for relating with other parts of the United Nations, notably the Security Council. Moreover, the acrimony that attended the prior debate concerning whether a PBC should be created—and if so, of what type—meant that the PBC went through a traumatic pregnancy and difficult birth, from which it is still convalescing.<sup>13</sup>

One way in which the PBC is supposed to enhance coordination in the rebuilding of post-conflict states is by devising “integrated peacebuilding strategies” (IPBSs). These are mentioned in the PBC’s founding resolutions generically, as among the PBC’s responsibilities, but with no definition of what they should include, what purposes they should serve, and how they should be operationalized.<sup>14</sup> Handed a blank slate, the Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) took the lead in developing these IPBSs as “compacts”—emulating the terminology of the post-conflict, aid-coordination agreement used in Afghanistan following the Taliban’s demise in late 2001. Compacts of this type specify a range of goals and actions that development agencies and government authorities will pursue. The word compact struck some (mainly developing country) PBC members as too legalistic for what Resolution 1645 calls merely a “strategy.” The term “framework” was ultimately agreed upon, although these IPBS (or Framework) documents structurally adopt much of the form of a compact, indicating commitments on the part of donors, government authorities, and the PBC itself. By the end of 2007, the PBC had developed “Peacebuilding Frameworks” for Burundi and Sierra Leone,

---

<sup>12</sup> A group of NGOs that produced a first-year report card on the PBC in June 2007 found that, procedurally, the PBC had made great progress—especially in terms of consulting civil society—but that the PBC did less well when it came to appreciating the “political” aspects of peacebuilding in Burundi and Sierra Leone. See ACTION AID, CAFOD & CARE INTERNATIONAL, CONSOLIDATING THE PEACE? VIEWS FROM SIERRA LEONE AND BURUNDI ON THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEBUILDING COMMISSION (2007).

<sup>13</sup> Interview with a consultant to one of Kofi Annan’s key advisers during 2005, in New York City, N.Y. (Feb. 13, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1, ¶ 2.

the first two countries on its agenda. Each national Framework ostensibly represents a common approach to rebuilding state authority that all actors—national and international—have agreed jointly to pursue. In theory, a shared vision, complemented by an agreed division of labor, should mitigate the debilitating fragmentation of the international community's work in post-conflict environments.

Substantively, the PBC-brokered Frameworks for Burundi and Sierra Leone are mainly collages of existing national strategy documents. They, for the most part, reaffirm the importance of policy measures and institutional reforms that had already, in one form or another, been agreed to between each of the governments and its respective consortium of donors. The Framework documents for Burundi and Sierra Leone do assign general responsibilities to government actors, external donors, and indeed the PBC.<sup>15</sup> But in the end, the PBC has no authority to insist that independent donor agencies—the bilateral aid programs of leading member-states as well as planning and operational staff of multilateral agencies—restructure their country strategies if these appear to duplicate (or in some other way undermine) the work of peacebuilding actors, domestic or external.

Moreover, there are scant grounds for believing that the “monitoring and tracking” mechanisms devised for each of the two countries' Peacebuilding Frameworks will influence the behavior of government authorities or donor agencies that may find it convenient to stray from agreed commitments.<sup>16</sup> This is only partly because the Frameworks lack viable enforcement mechanisms. As important is the difficulty of identifying agreed benchmarks for measuring progress in the typical “priority areas” identified: youth employment, governance reform, capacity-building, and so forth.

---

<sup>15</sup> U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, *Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi*, U.N. Doc. PBC/1/BDI/4 (June 22, 2007); U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, *Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework*, U.N. Doc. PBC/2/SLE/1 (Dec. 3, 2007).

<sup>16</sup> For Sierra Leone, issues of “Review and Tracking Progress” are treated in Sierra Leone's Framework document itself. U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, *Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework*, ¶¶ 30–35, U.N. Doc. PBC/2/SLE/1 (Dec. 3, 2007). “Monitoring and tracking” for Burundi's Framework are dealt with in a separate document. See U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, *Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi*, U.N. Doc. PBC/2/BDI/4 (Nov. 27, 2007). The intergovernmental discussions that preceded the adoption of the “Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism” for Burundi revealed the discomfort of many states with the vague—and seemingly unenforceable—provisions for systematic follow-up action. See U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, Burundi Configuration, *Chairman's Summary: Informal Meeting on Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi*, (Oct. 18, 2007), available at [http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/Country-Specific%20Configurations/Burundi/Chair%20summary\\_18Oct07.pdf](http://www.un.org/peace/peacebuilding/Country-Specific%20Configurations/Burundi/Chair%20summary_18Oct07.pdf).

There is, in short, little evidence that the PBC has promoted substantive coordination among the donors and other external actors operating in the first two countries placed on its agenda. This has prevented the achievement of the PBC's other main objectives, all of which rely, in one respect or another, on enhanced coordination. There are various reasons for this, most of which, I have argued elsewhere, stem from the PBC's organizational design, which all but ensures a North-South deadlock on many crucial issues.<sup>17</sup>

On the other hand, the PBC has had a number of small successes that could, on a more expansive reading of the term, be considered examples of improved coordination. They are extremely varied—everything from strengthening links between the PBC and the Security Council, to participation in interagency processes by the PBSO, whose creation was specified in the PBC's founding resolution.<sup>18</sup> These minor triumphs are usually of limited short-term consequence. But they at least stand a chance of adding up over time.

This essay examines a sample of these institutional developments to provide a fuller account of what actions the PBC—and crucially, as we shall see, each of its component parts—has been taking, and why the pattern that is emerging may be significant. The examples discussed demonstrate how successful the PBC has been when measured against a quite different yardstick, that of institutional survival in a very densely populated organizational habitat: the community of international post-conflict reconstruction and state-building agencies centered in the United Nations, which is itself undergoing near-constant change.<sup>19</sup> New institutional structures either adapt to their ecological context or wither, remaining in form even if empty of substance. The PBC, whatever else may be said of its operation to date, is not empty of substance. It has adapted and survived its institutional

---

<sup>17</sup> See Rob Jenkins, *The U.N. Peacebuilding Commission and the Dissemination of International Norms*, (London Sch. Econ. Crisis States Res. Ctr., Working Paper 39, 2008), available at <http://www.crisisstates.com/publications/phase2papers.htm>.

<sup>18</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1, ¶ 23.

<sup>19</sup> That arrangements for post-conflict planning and operations have been in a state of organizational flux for a considerable period can be seen from U.N. reforms instituted in 1997 to give the “lead peacebuilding role” to the United Nations’s Department of Political Affairs, which was expected to oversee country-level “Peace Building Support Offices” (PBSOs). The role of these country-level PBSOs was to encompass, among other things, “confidence-building and political stabilization efforts, electoral support, [and] efforts to strengthen and legitimate a new government established through political support.” See James Busumtwi-Sam, Alexander Costy & Bruce D. Jones, *Structural Deficits and Institutional Adaptations to Conflict and Peacebuilding in Africa*, in *DURABLE PEACE: CHALLENGES FOR PEACEBUILDING IN AFRICA* 354, 378 (Taiser M. Ali & Robert O. Matthews eds., 2004).

infancy, and its emerging shape is largely a reflection of the political and organizational context into which it has been born. It is an actor with which other institutional stakeholders must contend. This is no mean feat. The PBC has taken its place in a crowded field as much through improvisation on the part of key actors associated with this complex organ as it has through the rational development of clear operational guidelines.

This essay makes the case that observing and analyzing the process by which the PBC attempts to strike roots—that is, to occupy an institutional niche by creatively interpreting an imprecise and malleable mandate—is revealing about the micro-dynamics of U.N. reforms. Member-states, U.N. agencies, Secretariat departments, insider non-governmental organizations (NGOs), various U.N. Councils and Commissions—each seeks to steer the new structures to its own purposes, or to ensure that, at a minimum, any newly created body does not stray onto its turf. This is a recipe for institutional gridlock. But possibilities exist for the organizationally entrepreneurial.

Finally, it will be argued that a significant factor in explaining the PBC's ability successfully to begin occupying an organizational niche within the U.N. system—and within the post-conflict state-reconstruction community more generally<sup>20</sup>—is the set of incentives facing key actors within the PBC. PBC actors are strongly motivated to focus on their own “sub-institutional” *component* of the PBC. The PBC has, in effect, disaggregated itself into these component parts (or sub-institutions) to maximize its chances of survival.

The three main components of the PBC were outlined in Security Council Resolution 1645: the intergovernmental PBC itself, the bureaucratic PBSO, and a standing Peacebuilding Fund (PBF), consisting of voluntary contributions. Though originally thought of and referred to collectively as the PBC, they are now more commonly regarded as elements comprising the United Nations's new “peacebuilding architecture,” with the moniker “Peacebuilding Commission” correctly reserved for the intergovernmental component. This shift in terminology is significant, representing an attempt on the part of both the PBSO and the PBF to assert their own relative autonomy from the PBC. The adaptive strategies deployed by both the intergovernmental Commission itself—including its member-states, with all their conflicting perceptions and interests—and the

---

<sup>20</sup> Roland Paris, *Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism*, 22 *INT'L SECURITY* 54, 54–89 (1997).

bureaucratic PBSO are analyzed in more detail than is the PBF, which for reasons of space receives only cursory treatment.<sup>21</sup>

The remainder of the essay will proceed as follows: Part II briefly outlines the PBC's basic structure and mandate and makes the case for seeing the PBC's adaptive success as a product of the individual strategies of its three main components. Part III examines the inter-governmental face of the PBC. The bureaucratic PBSO is analyzed in Part IV. Part V concludes with a summary of the argument, an overview of how the PBF—the third of the UN peacebuilding architecture's three components—is identifying and beginning to occupy its own institutional niche, and an assessment of the forces most likely to impinge on the PBC's future institutional trajectory.

## II. THE PEACEBUILDING ARCHITECTURE: THE PBC'S MISSION AND STRUCTURE

Before proceeding to an analysis of key events that took place during the PBC's first two years in existence, a brief description of the structure, procedures, and formal mandate of the PBC is in order.

The PBC's mission is to assist states “emerging from conflict” to avoid lapsing back into violence—an all too familiar occurrence.<sup>22</sup> As an intergovernmental body composed of thirty-one member-states, the PBC's core mission is to galvanize the international community around the challenge of rebuilding collapsed states and, in particular, to translate this interest into concrete commitments of long-term financing, of transformed donor practices, and of coordination among the U.N. agencies, bilateral donors, and non-governmental organizations contributing to these peace- and state-building efforts.

While, strictly speaking, the PBC itself is an intergovernmental body, the term “Peacebuilding Commission” is commonly (if incorrectly) used to refer to the triad of institutional pillars on which the United Nations's new “peacebuilding architecture” rests. The three pillars are outlined in Resolution 1645, passed simultaneously and identically by the Security Council and the General Assembly in December 2005, little more than three months after the World Summit endorsed the PBC's creation.<sup>23</sup> The three pillars are:

---

<sup>21</sup> The PBF will be discussed in greater detail in a forthcoming book-length analysis of the PBC. See ROB JENKINS, *PEACEBUILDING: FROM CONCEPT TO COMMISSION* (forthcoming 2009).

<sup>22</sup> HUMAN SECURITY CENTRE, *HUMAN SECURITY REPORT 2005: WAR AND PEACE IN THE 21ST CENTURY* (2005).

<sup>23</sup> See generally S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1.

2008]

*U.N. Peacebuilding Commission*

1335

1. The thirty-one-member-state PBC itself, which convenes in two forms:
  - a. as the Organizational Committee (just the thirty-one members), which decides on the structures and procedures through which the commission is to undertake its work; and
  - b. in Country-Specific Configurations (CSCs), wherein the PBC engages with particular post-conflict countries on its agenda, and which includes, in addition to the thirty-one core members, the following: a selection of member-states selected on the basis of proximity to the post-conflict state in question or recent experience recovering from conflict; relevant U.N. agencies, secretariat departments, and senior field managers; regional and sub-regional bodies (the African and European Unions, for instance); and the Washington-based International Financial Institutions (IFIs), notably the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).
2. The PBSO, which is a relatively small bureaucratic entity located within the Executive Office of the Secretary General and, therefore, independent of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), that (a) provides administrative and analytical support to the PBC; and (b) is responsible for refining U.N. peacebuilding doctrine by developing best-practice notes and operational metrics, and for disseminating these throughout the U.N. system and the larger peacebuilding community of practice.
3. The PBF, which relies on voluntary contributions from member-states, multilateral donors, and individuals—and seeks to maintain a US \$250 million replenishable fund available, was conceived as a quick-disbursement funding source for catalytic actions to address crises that may threaten a fragile peace or projects that temporarily fill gaps in a post-conflict country's peacebuilding strategy.

Member-states that serve on the PBC are drawn from a series of functional and organizational constituencies, or stakeholder groups: seven members from the Security Council (the Security Council's permanent members automatically occupy five of these seats); seven members from the General Assembly; seven members from the Economic and Social Council; five members from among the top ten Troop Contributing Countries to U.N. peace operations; and five

members from among the top ten financial contributors to U.N. peace operations. Due consideration to regional balance is to be given in the implementation of this formula. In the months following passage of Resolution 1645, an enormous amount of energy went into establishing the specific criteria for PBC membership-eligibility for each stakeholder category and the procedures through which members would be selected from within each group.

While the resolutions that created the PBC and its component parts contains a fair helping of ambiguous language and stray turns of phrase, its mandate centers on actions that might allow the PBC (i) to perform a coordinating function, herding together the hugely diverse array of aid agencies (official and non-governmental, national and international) working in a given post-conflict setting; and (ii) to ensure that optimal levels of funding are attained, that donors do not undermine one another in their choice of programmatic interventions, and that internationally funded work is based on a thorough analysis of which state-rebuilding strategies have worked in the past, and why. The resolution identified, in effect, three broad functions for the PBC:<sup>24</sup>

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

The vague language in which laws or legal agreements are expressed as often reflects uneasy compromise among those who framed them as it does intellectual laziness. Ambiguous phrases and unspecified concepts are helpful to contracting parties who must find ways of deferring conflict over certain matters—by expressing them in terms that invite future interpretive contention—in order to secure agreement on other, related issues of immediate importance. In the case of the PBC, the profusion of ambiguities has fueled efforts by various

---

<sup>24</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1, ¶ 2.

2008]

*U.N. Peacebuilding Commission*

1337

actors throughout the U.N. system, and beyond, to use the new body to further their agendas and to enhance their visibility. It has also, not surprisingly, caused stakeholders in each of the PBC's three components to seek ways of demonstrating their component's unique comparative advantage in the field of post-conflict peacebuilding.

At this early stage in its institutional development, the PBC is still grappling with how its fuzzy mandate can be translated into operational terms. Determining the precise relationship between the three pillars of the peacebuilding architecture is a major part of this process. For instance, the PBSO and the PBF both engage with the same country cases that the intergovernmental PBC does. And, yet, both the PBSO and the PBF deal also with cases that are not on the PBC's agenda, furnishing them with distinct organizational missions and identities.

Similarly, the links between each of the three pillars and *external* actors continue to be subjected to trial-and-error experimentation. It remains unclear, for instance, precisely how the PBC is to advise the Security Council or the General Assembly. Proposing "integrated peacebuilding strategies" for the countries on its agenda is about as specific as it gets. It is not apparent how detailed such strategies ought to be, how they should be carried out, or what the proper mechanisms for monitoring their implementation and impacts are. The only more or less unambiguous feature of the relationship between the PBC and external bodies has been the lack of operational authority that the PBC possesses over any U.N. department, agency, fund, office, or program.

Despite these limitations, it was hoped that the PBC's broad membership would furnish its deliberations with the clout necessary to play two crucial brokering roles. The first, as mentioned above, would be a coordinating role, forging agreements among the many international agencies operating in post-conflict countries. The PBC, working with the PBSO, was expected to perform a second, analytical function as well—that is, to draw on the experience of actors throughout the U.N. system and beyond to identify examples of "best practice" in post-conflict peacebuilding and state-building—these "lessons learned" to be disseminated throughout the international community of peacebuilding agencies.

While the PBC was conceived as an advisory body to the Security Council—additional reporting to the General Assembly was included at the insistence of a highly vocal group of mainly developing coun-

tries—the PBC’s architects<sup>25</sup> still believed that the inclusion as non-voting participants of U.N. bodies and other global or regional bodies most directly involved in post-conflict peacebuilding (including the IFIs), would make it a sufficiently comprehensive forum, convened at a high enough level, for binding commitments by agency principals to emerge through a process of facilitated negotiation. The PBC would perform this function in two ways: first, through engagement with specific country cases (these having been referred by the Security Council or the Secretary General, with the consent of the government concerned); and second, through its advisory function, which would take the form of recommendations rendered directly to the Security Council and the General Assembly as well as through the dissemination of best-practice guidelines in post-conflict state-building.

By adjusting our analytical perspective in two key respects—first, by focusing on institutional survival and the adaptability that makes such survival possible, and second, by assessing each of the PBC’s three components individually—we can discern how the PBC has used the less-visible aspects of its mandate to demonstrate its institutional value-added.

We turn now to an examination of how each of the PBC’s three components has leveraged a slice of the organization’s mandate to secure a niche within the international peacebuilding community. Institutional disaggregation is a critical factor in explaining the PBC’s ability to adapt to the unpromising institutional environment into which it was thrust at birth—an atmosphere wherein organizational interests within and beyond the United Nations work tirelessly to re-make the still-plastic term peacebuilding into what they want it to mean.<sup>26</sup>

---

<sup>25</sup> It is worth noting that at least some supporters of the original PBC concept privately disown the compromise institution that member-states ultimately agreed upon, viewing the PBC as presently constituted as a disfigured version of their original conception. Interview with a consultant to one of Kofi Annan’s key advisers during 2005, in New York City, N.Y. (Feb. 13, 2007); and interview with a high-ranking official from a developing country mission that played a central role in negotiating the PBC’s institutional design, in New York City, N.Y. (Nov. 2, 2007).

<sup>26</sup> For an analysis of the various (mainly self-serving) meanings attached to the term peacebuilding by bilateral aid agencies, multilateral institutions, and other institutional actors, see Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O’Donnell & Laura Sitea, *Peacebuilding: What Is in A Name?*, 13 GLOBAL GOVERNANCE 1, 35–58 (2007).

## III. THE INTERGOVERNMENTAL PBC: COUNTERBALANCING THE IFIS

Each of the three components of the peacebuilding architecture—the intergovernmental PBC itself, the bureaucratic PBSO, and the PBF—must confront a unique set of challenges and face a distinct array of institutional stakeholders. There are clear and intentional points of overlap between the three sub-institutions. Were they not at least *conceived* as an integrated system, the PBC’s mission to promote coherence would appear even more unattainable than it does already. In order to secure an organizational role for itself, each of the three institutional components must identify and play to its strengths. This entails, among other things, demonstrating its value to one or more constituencies in the wider international community. Organizational positioning of this type is more effective if buttressed by other sources of institutional legitimacy – for instance, association with a widely held norm, such as ‘human rights’ or ‘the protection of civilians.’<sup>27</sup> The three PBC components do not necessarily share the same interests. Indeed, not only are there significant points of friction among the three, there are serious conflicts *within* each of them as well.

None of this should be surprising if we consider that the PBC is itself a site of contestation, another arena in which long-running political battles are played out. These include ideological differences between groups of states: the North-South divide—the gulf separating the developing from the developed world—is perhaps the most visible. As an arena for contestation, the PBC and its component parts also attract attention from bureaucratic and political interest groups (within and outside the United Nations) that seek a platform from which to advance their agendas and amplify their organizational voices.<sup>28</sup>

---

<sup>27</sup> This distinction, which might usefully be contrasted as output and input legitimacy, is contained within several of the contributions to *THE LEGITIMACY OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS* (Jean-Marc Coicaud & Veijo Heiskanen eds., 2001). See Gerd Junne, *International Organizations in a Period of Globalization: New (Problems of) Legitimacy*, in *THE LEGITIMACY OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS* 189–220 (2001); Jean-Marc Coicaud, *International Democratic Culture and Its Sources of Legitimacy: The Case of Collective Security and Peacekeeping Operations in the 1990s*, in *THE LEGITIMACY OF INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS* 256–308 (2001).

<sup>28</sup> Both civil society groups and bureaucratic actors have repeatedly pointed to the PBC as a key institution for the advancement of sectoral or thematic issues of particular concern to them. For instance, in late-2006, the Secretary General’s representative on Human Rights for Internally Displaced Persons informed the General Assembly’s “Third Committee” that he expected the PBC “to be an extremely important body to address situations of internal displacement.” Press Release, General Assembly, Expert in Third Committee Cites “Suprising Lack of Awareness”

The PBC's intergovernmental machinery, as noted, consists of both an Organizational Committee and Country Specific Configurations, in which PBC members (plus an assortment of other invitees, including the IFIs) consider cases on the PBC's agenda. Burundi and Sierra Leone were the only two cases on the PBC's agenda for its first eighteen months in existence, with Guinea Bissau and the Central African Republic added in late-2007 and mid-2008, respectively. The designers of the new U.N. peacebuilding architecture considered its intergovernmental pillar the institution's crucial feature: the collective moral weight of member-states, with their links to systems of popular political representation, was seen as an indispensable tool for international "engagement" with countries attempting to transit from war to peace.

In the cases of Burundi and Sierra Leone—the two cases on which this essay focuses—the PBC has not necessarily brought about the deep, strategic coherence among external development actors that its architects may originally have hoped for,<sup>29</sup> let alone more harmonious relations between international agencies and post-conflict governments themselves. In fact, there is some evidence that the PBC has in some cases exacerbated latent antagonisms between Burundi and Sierra Leone, on the one hand, and their respective international donors, on the other. This is the antithesis of coordination.

Paradoxically, these heightened tensions, which are little more than a ratcheting-up of the donor-recipient sparring that goes on all the time, have contributed to enhanced coherence of another kind. In particular, by broadcasting donor-recipient squabbles to a wider audience of member-states and other important stakeholders, the PBC's structured deliberations have created openings for a coalition of (mainly) developing country member-states, abetted by motivated elements within the United Nations's extended bureaucracy, to counter what is widely regarded as the excessive influence of the Washington-based IFIs in fragile and post-conflict countries. It has

---

Among Government Officials of Torture as Most Serious Human Rights Violation, U.N. Doc. GA/SHC/3860 (Oct. 23, 2006). The jockeying for position began even before the PBC came into being. See *Building a New Role for the United Nations: The Responsibility to Protect*, (Carlos Espósito & Jessica Almqvist eds., FRIDE, Working Paper No. 12, 2005), available at <http://www.fride.org> (click on the "Publications" tab, and then on the link for 2005 articles).

<sup>29</sup> Interview with an official from a developing country mission to the United Nations, New York City, N.Y. (Nov. 7, 2008).

long been a complaint among U.N. staff and academics<sup>30</sup> that the rigid economic policy prescriptions of the World Bank and the IMF are a significant problem from a peacebuilding perspective. For instance, an insistence on privatization—whether on narrow fiscal grounds or for other reasons—can, under certain circumstances, prove disastrous, depriving states of the opportunities to accommodate potential spoilers with high-level positions beyond the security sector—posts with significant patronage potential that could form the foundations of a (non-violent) political career.<sup>31</sup> A shrinking public sector payroll in general can prove problematic when the promise of government jobs, to be distributed among competing groups on the basis of a negotiated formula, was integral to the structure of a given peace agreement.

Whatever the merits or shortcomings of privatization (or state retrenchment generally) as a policy choice, the relevant point is that policy *outcomes* that IFI officials might regard as unpleasant but unavoidable economic dislocations—short-term corrections undertaken to secure higher long-term growth—often have extremely grave political and security implications that go unnoticed.<sup>32</sup> Policy decisions—particularly those with a fiscal dimension, or those which have distributional implications of a spatial nature, especially if the decision maps onto a particular pattern of ethnic geography—can all too easily undermine extremely delicate mediation and verification processes that U.N. officials and other diplomatic actors have in some cases spent years setting in motion. In private conversations, U.N. officials specializing in post-conflict environments complain that their work in post-conflict countries is directly undermined by inflexible IFI policy, which tends to regard as wasteful subsidies the state-rebuilding activities that are necessary to convince large numbers of people that peace dividends do exist and will continue to be forth-

---

<sup>30</sup> See, e.g., ROLAND PARIS, *AT WAR'S END: BUILDING PEACE AFTER CIVIL CONFLICT* 167 (2004) (that “neoliberal” policies had been thrust on post-conflict states in ways that threatened the establishment of a sustainable peace was a key argument of the author); Roland Paris, *Broadening the Study of Peace Operations*, 2 *INT'L STUD. REV.* 27, 35–36 (2000) (explaining the role of ideas, as opposed to interests or institutions, in the adoption of this overall policy framework).

<sup>31</sup> This is a consistent theme in the research emerging from the Crisis States Programme Development Research Centre, which is funded by the United Kingdom's Department for International Development. See James Putzel, *Politics, the State and the Impulse for Social Protection: The Implications of Karl Polanyi's Ideas for Understanding Development and Crisis*, (Crisis States Programme Working Paper No.18, 2002), available at <http://www.crisisstates.com/download/wp/WP18JP.pdf>.

<sup>32</sup> See generally MARK DUFFIELD, *GLOBAL GOVERNANCE AND THE NEW WARS: THE MERGING OF DEVELOPMENT AND SECURITY* (2001).

coming if agreements are heeded and a democratic culture becomes entrenched.<sup>33</sup> U.N. officials also argue that Security Council mandates to prevent the recurrence of violence should not be hemmed in by economic orthodoxy. The early phases of peacebuilding almost by definition involve more strengthening of the state's hand in the economy than orthodox economists would generally feel comfortable advocating. This is a built-in tension that the PBC may prove able to dampen.

Officials in the United Nations's specialized agencies have long sought ways of countering the IFIs's influence over national development planning in aid-recipient countries.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, the promotion of the concept of human development in the 1980s, and its institutionalization in the form of the annual *Human Development Report*, can be seen as part of a larger effort on the part of U.N. actors to restore balance between the two institutional clusters—the IFIs and the U.N. system. The objective was to establish rough parity in the levels of influence of, on the one hand, the IFIs (which possess greater *financial* resources) and, on the other hand, the U.N. system (which generally possess greater *legitimacy* resources).<sup>35</sup> The impulse toward institutional equality continues. From 2006 to 2007, the United Nations commissioned a study to identify (and assess the merits of) methods for increasing the United Nations's "voice" in the creation of national Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSP).<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>33</sup> Interview with a high-ranking official of one of the United Nations's key social development agencies, in New York City, N.Y. (Dec. 12, 2006).

<sup>34</sup> As Ramesh Thakur, a long-time observer of the United Nations, stated, "[T]he U[nited] N[atations] was instrumental in broadening the concept of development to make it more human . . . . Since the 1980s this has taken the form of constructive dissent to the prevailing Washington consensus among the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the US Treasury." RAMESH THAKUR, *THE UNITED NATIONS, PEACE AND SECURITY* 360 (2006).

<sup>35</sup> The *Human Development Report* was established and named precisely to contrast with the World Bank's productivity-, growth-, and trade-oriented *World Development Report*. For an account of the personalities and ideas that spurred the creation of the Human Development Report Office, located within the UNDP but possessing its own mandate from the General Assembly, see TATIANA CARAYANNIS ET AL., *UN VOICES: THE STRUGGLE FOR DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIAL JUSTICE* (2005).

<sup>36</sup> The commissioned study, *The UN and PRSPs: Process, Content, and Outcomes Amid Changes in the Architecture of Aid*, which covered of eight countries, was conducted for the United Nations Development Program by an interdisciplinary group of scholars based at the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, from 2006 to 2008. Among the more revealing country reports emerging from this study were James Manor, *The United Nations and Zambia's Fifth Plan: Process, Content and Outcomes amid Changes in the Architecture of Aid* (2007), available at <http://www.undg.org/docs/8969/Zambia-PRS-study.pdf>.

Creating and sticking to a national PRSP is a requirement that recipient governments must fulfill to be eligible for concessional lending or long-term debt-relief from the IFIs. A country's PRSP spells out a comprehensive, operationalized vision of how the state, international donors, and civil society will collaborate to achieve national human development objectives, progress on which will be monitored by a national statistical office. But from the point of view of many field-based U.N. officials, the priorities and concerns of the IFIs receive disproportionate weight when national authorities devise the terms of reference for statistical offices.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, approval by the governing bodies of the IFIs to a large degree determines entry-point eligibility for funding programs supported by bilateral aid donors (USAID, UK DFID, Sweden's SIDA, etc.). This leads national authorities in aid-recipient countries—including, but not limited to, those in post-conflict states—to be unduly influenced (in the eyes of critics) by World Bank and IMF staff, who assiduously cultivate relationships with government officials from aid-recipient countries. This frequently involves temporary Washington consultancies, training opportunities, and study leaves for those deemed promising. The IFIs additionally possess a much larger cadre of professional, technically capable economists, covering almost every sub-discipline, which provides the World Bank and the IMF a serious agenda-setting advantage.<sup>38</sup>

Of course, there is considerable doubt as to just how powerful the IFIs are in the countries where they operate. This has been a longstanding concern in the study of the IFIs and the aid community more generally.<sup>39</sup> There are two dimensions to this vein of skepticism, concerning respectively: (a) how much autonomy IFI officials and Executive Board members genuinely possess vis-à-vis the leading states that collectively control the management of these institutions; and (b) how much leverage the World Bank and the IMF can exert in

---

<sup>37</sup> Rob Jenkins & Maxton Tsoka, *Institutionalization and Malawi's PRSP*, 21 DEVELOPMENT POL'Y REV. 197, 197–215 (2003).

<sup>38</sup> Lyla Mehta, *From Darkness to Light? Critical Reflections on the World Development Report 1998–99*, 36 J. DEVELOPMENTAL STUD. 151, 151–61 (1999) (discussing the World Bank's various attempts to attain ideological hegemony over the field of development practice).

<sup>39</sup> The failure of conditionality-based development was a subject of considerable academic research in the 1990s. See, e.g., PAUL MOSELY, JANE HARRIGAN & JOHN TOYE, AID AND POWER: THE WORLD BANK AND POLICY-BASED LENDING (1991); Nicolas van de Walle & Timothy A. Johnston, *Improving Aid to Africa*, (Overseas Development Council, Policy Essay No. 21, 1996); Craig Burnside & David Dollar, *Aid, Policies, and Growth*, (World Bank Development Research Group, Working Paper No. 1777, 1997).

their negotiations with individual debtor states to change behaviors and/or outcomes.

Even so, U.N. agencies continue to be disconcerted by World Bank and IMF dominance of national economic planning. This has been the case in highly indebted and aid-dependent countries in general (for instance, in Malawi);<sup>40</sup> but animosity toward IFI dominance of the PRSP process has been particularly acute in post-conflict countries, where the United Nations's acknowledged preeminence in security matters causes U.N. officials to demand a lead role in such contexts.<sup>41</sup>

This pent-up rancor immediately spilled over into the operation of the PBC once it was up and running with an initial caseload of two post-conflict countries (Burundi and Sierra Leone). Given the depth of feeling on both sides of the U.N./IFI divide, it is little surprise that various U.N. actors have sought to transform the PBC into a lever for enhancing the U.N. system's influence over policy and institutional development in post-conflict states.

Indeed, one of the PBC's potentially most important functions could be to counter the influence of the World Bank and the IMF over economic policy in post-conflict countries.<sup>42</sup> The support for this kind of role not only reflects the views of PBC members from developing countries, many of which consider themselves past or current victims of high-handed actions by World Bank and IMF staff; it also corresponds with the perception of many donor governments and U.N. staff members that the approaches taken by the IFIs are often simply too rigid in post-conflict contexts. Partly, the critique reflects a belief that IFI policy prescriptions are excessively market-oriented. A number of U.N. actors (bureaucratic and political) have thus coalesced around the position that the PBC could be a useful instrument for rectifying a perceived imbalance between the degree of influence wielded by, respectively, U.N. missions in post-conflict

---

<sup>40</sup> See Linda Waldman, *The United Nations and the Malawian Growth and Development Strategy Paper: Process, Content and Outcomes amid Changes in the Architecture of Aid* (2007), available at <http://www.undg.org/docs/8969/Malawi-IDS-study.pdf>.

<sup>41</sup> See Steve Darvill, Humanitarian, Multilateral and Community Programs Branch AusAID, Address at the Conference on Post-Conflict Assistance (July 11, 2002) (transcript available at <http://www.inwent.org/ef-texte/conflict/darvill.htm>). (noting "the utility of the PRSP process as a peace-building tool").

<sup>42</sup> Interview with a high-ranking official from a developing country mission that played a central role in negotiating the PBC's institutional design, in New York City, N.Y. (Nov. 2, 2007).

countries and the IFI staff who negotiate policy-reform agendas with the governments of these countries.<sup>43</sup>

The influence of a U.N. mission, if headed by a strategically minded Special (or Executive) Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG or ERSG, respectively), is of course at its height during the immediate post-conflict stage, when U.N. forces are on the ground in large numbers. As the security situation stabilizes and comes increasingly under the control of a state's sovereign authorities, and U.N. forces are drawn down, the clout of U.N. mission personnel begins to diminish. In contrast, the World Bank and the IMF are enjoined by their charters from engaging in a full array of donor activities in countries where legitimate national authorities are not yet fully installed. But as circumstances change and a more predictable legal framework returns, the role of the World Bank and the IMF expands enormously, as we shall see.

It is in this context that an impressive cross-section of PBC member-states has rallied behind the currently fashionable aid-community rhetoric of "national ownership"—the idea that policy and institutional reforms cannot, and should not, be imposed on recipient countries through conditionality-based aid agreements. This preoccupation with reaffirming the principles of the March 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness<sup>44</sup> (which calls for donors to take a back seat to national authorities in devising development strategies) reflects the large representation of developing countries in the PBC and their longstanding frustration with the IFIs, whose commitment to Paris principles is considered suspect among developing country governments as well as international civil society.<sup>45</sup>

---

<sup>43</sup> The need for a coherent U.N. response to continued World Bank/IMF hegemony—and therefore the utility of a coordinating institution such as the PBC—was stressed in an interview with a senior official in the U.N. Department of Economics and Social Affairs (DESA), in New York City, N.Y. (Jan. 26, 2008).

<sup>44</sup> The Paris Declaration was an outcome of the "High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness," held in Paris from February 28 through March 2, 2005, which included representatives of donor and recipient countries, multilateral institutions, and civil society organizations. The Forum was the culmination of a deliberative process undertaken by the Working Party on Aid Effectiveness and Donor Practices, established in 2003 by the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC). World Bank, High Level Forum, *Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness: Ownership, Harmonisation, Alignment, Results and Mutual Accountability* (2005), available at <http://www1.worldbank.org/harmonization/Paris/finalparisdeclaration.pdf>.

<sup>45</sup> See, e.g., ActionAid International, *What Progress? A Shadow Review of World Bank Conditionality* (Aug. 2006), available at [http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc\\_lib/what\\_progress.pdf](http://www.actionaid.org.uk/doc_lib/what_progress.pdf); Goran Hyden, *After the Paris Declaration: Taking on the Issue of Power*, 26 DEVELOPMENT POL'Y REV. 259, 259–74 (2008) (explaining the reasons why it is difficult to determine the content of national ownership).

The move toward a “balancing” role for the PBC vis-à-vis the IFIs is reflected in two developments during the PBC’s first eighteen months in existence. The first involved the means of operationalizing the Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBSs) devised for Burundi and Sierra Leone by the PBC in consultation with officials from these governments, with civil society representatives, and with a broad range of external stakeholders.<sup>46</sup> These IPBSs, or “Framework” documents, as noted earlier, draw liberally on existing national strategy papers, including each country’s PRSP or PRSP-equivalent. The process of devising a Framework document does, however, provide the PBC (and the U.N. system by extension) the chance to influence national priorities by indicating which actions are of immediate practical importance to the maintenance of peace and political stability.

In terms of process, the PBC has also sought to ensure that the United Nations’s voice is given sufficient amplification, and its stature as the primary international organization responsible for maintaining peace and security formally reaffirmed. An important victory—symbolically, at least—in the U.N. system’s quest for parity with the IFIs is the “monitoring and tracking” mechanisms devised by the PBC for overseeing the implementation of the Peacebuilding Frameworks for Burundi and Sierra Leone.<sup>47</sup> Despite the weakness of their enforcement provisions, the formal reporting relationships outlined in these monitoring procedures make clear that the review of the national Peacebuilding Frameworks happens in parallel to, and should carry the same weight as, the IFI-led reviews of national PRSPs.<sup>48</sup> Commitments under the United Nations’s Development Assistance Framework and the IFI-led PRSP are accorded equal significance and operational relevance (at least in the eyes of the PBC).<sup>49</sup>

The second indication that the intergovernmental PBC is carving out a role for itself as a counterweight to the IFIs’ dominance over economic policy and governance reform issues is more substantive in nature and has had practical implications in both countries on

---

<sup>46</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, *supra* note 1, ¶ 21 (specifying the provision regarding consultation with civil society). Elsewhere in the resolution, the term “local groups” is used. *Id.*

<sup>47</sup> See, e.g., U.N. Peacebuilding Comm’n, *Sierra Leone Peacebuilding Cooperation Framework*, ¶¶ 30–35, PBC/2/SLE/1 (Dec. 3, 2007); U.N. Peacebuilding Comm’n, *Monitoring and Tracking Mechanism of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi*, PBC/2/BDI/4 (Nov. 27, 2007) [hereinafter *Monitoring the Burundi Framework*].

<sup>48</sup> An indication of the mild nature of the follow-up action recommend as part of the monitoring process can be found in U.N. Peacebuilding Comm’n, *Recommendations of the Biannual Review of the Implementation of the Strategic Framework for Peacebuilding in Burundi*, ¶¶ 5, 11, 31, PBC/2/BDI/9 (June 23, 2008).

<sup>49</sup> *Monitoring the Burundi Framework*, *supra* note 47, at ¶¶ 27(b), 28(c).

2008]

*U.N. Peacebuilding Commission*

1347

the PBC's agenda. Some PBC members claim that on certain rare but significant occasions during the PBC's first 18 months in existence the World Bank and the IMF felt compelled to modify (or at least be seen to be rethinking) their approaches to Burundi and Sierra Leone. These course corrections, it is asserted, resulted from pressure by PBC members deliberating collectively.<sup>50</sup>

The most frequently cited example was the PBC's response to Burundi's budgetary crisis during the summer and autumn of 2007. As explained below, this case involved the IMF in one of its least popular roles—as a reform 'gatekeeper' that must certify the macroeconomic rectitude of recipient governments before even bilateral donor funds can legally begin flowing.

In September 2007, the chair of the PBC's Country-Specific Configuration (CSC) for Burundi (the Permanent Representative from Norway) visited Burundi to apprise himself of recent developments and to assess the general condition of the country's core institutions. Following the Chair's return to New York, the PBC held a series of meetings at which his findings were discussed. The visit to Burundi had highlighted a number of problems. Some of these challenges were by then reasonably well known by key members of the international community, not least because they had been discussed in formal and informal settings in Bujumbura over the previous several months.<sup>51</sup> Many of the acute difficulties that were facing the country were political in nature, such as the breakdown of the agreement under which Burundi's remaining rebel forces were to be disarmed and the parliamentary gridlock that was preventing the passage of legisla-

---

<sup>50</sup> Interview with an official in one of the three institutional pillars of the U.N. peacebuilding architecture, in New York City, N.Y. (July 1, 2008).

<sup>51</sup> See U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, *Report of the mission of the Peacebuilding Commission to Burundi*, ¶¶ 9, 15, 18, PBC/1/BDI/2 (May 21, 2007). For a chronology of the deteriorating situation in Burundi, see the successive reports of the Secretary General to the Security Council on the situation in Burundi mission (known by its French acronym, BINUB). The Secretary-General, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, delivered to the Security Council, S/2007/287* (May 17, 2007) (a hopeful report given investment by subregional states, especially South Africa, in monitoring the peace); The Secretary-General, *Second Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, delivered to the Security Council, S/2007/682* (Nov. 23, 2007) [hereinafter *Burundi, Second Report*] (providing a bleaker assessment); The Secretary-General, *Third Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Integrated Office in Burundi, delivered to the Security Council, S/2008/330* (May 15, 2008) (conveying the Secretary General's view that Burundi had relapsed into violence).

tion to which the government had committed itself in negotiations with donors.<sup>52</sup>

But the issue that received the most direct attention from PBC member-states was Burundi's perilous fiscal situation. Burundi's dire economy has its roots in a wide variety of complex developmental pathologies. What was causing the immediate pain in mid-2007, however, was fairly straightforward: the government was effectively bankrupt. Burundi had borrowed as much as international markets (and official institutions) were willing to lend it. The donors that Burundian leaders were hoping might bail them out were unable to act because most bilateral and multilateral agencies operate under financial rules that prohibit the disbursement of aid until, as mentioned, the government's handling of the macroeconomy is certified by the IMF.

The Chair's mission report noted that the deteriorating social, political, and economic situation was being seriously exacerbated by the IMF's failure to complete the Sixth (and Final) Review of Burundi's economic situation, as required under the terms of the IMF's Poverty Reduction Growth Facility<sup>53</sup> financing agreement with Burundi. The delay in completing the Review was widely seen as a negotiating tactic deployed by the IMF, which was seeking action from the Burundian authorities on unimplemented reform measures.<sup>54</sup> The practical result of this stand-off was that \$93 million in bilateral and other multilateral budget support for 2007 could not reach Burundi's treasury.

In the course of the PBC's subsequent deliberations, Burundi's permanent representative to the United Nations expressed his government's concern regarding the IMF's inflexible and doctrinaire approach to his country's financial-cum-political crisis.<sup>55</sup> To cope with Burundi's budgetary crisis, the IMF allegedly pressed the government to reduce the burden on the exchequer by raising the price

---

<sup>52</sup> Int'l Crisis Group, *Burundi: Finalising Peace with the FNL*, Africa Report No. 13, Aug. 28, 2007.

<sup>53</sup> The IMF's Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF) offers concessional finance at 0.5% per annum to qualifying countries. The loans are repayable over ten years, with a sixty-six-month grace period on principal payments. Such loans are very attractive to governments of poor countries with weak or non-existent tax bases. See Int'l Monetary Fund [IMF], *The Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF)*, <http://www.imf.org/external/np/exr/facts/prgf.htm>.

<sup>54</sup> Interview with an official working in one of the three institutional pillars of the U.N. peacebuilding architecture, in New York City, N.Y. (Oct. 31, 2007).

<sup>55</sup> Provisions referred to in some instances are those found in documents such as IMF, *Burundi: Fifth Review Under the Arrangement Under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility and Request for Waiver of a Performance Criterion—Staff Report* (Mar. 21, 2007); Press Release, IMF, Executive Board Discussion (Mar. 21, 2007).

2008]

*U.N. Peacebuilding Commission*

1349

at which state-owned distributors sold petroleum.<sup>56</sup> Such an approach, Burundi's ambassador told the PBC, ignored the fragile nature of Burundi's political situation, which had been unsettled not only by continued difficulties in implementing an agreement between the government and remaining rebel forces, but also by a series of destabilizing political events, including a strike threat by magistrates. An absence of budget support meant that the government could not meet its core civil service payroll, a recipe for further instability.

Egypt, Jamaica, and other typically vocal Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) members chimed in sympathetically and quickly requested more detailed information from the IMF on the nature of its negotiations with the Burundian authorities.<sup>57</sup> Corruption had been a key element of the IMF's "governance concerns" during negotiations with Burundi's leaders over the timing and terms of reference for the Sixth Review. Burundi's representative informed PBC members that his government had met almost eighty percent of the policy and institutional reform benchmarks set by the IMF, and that disrupting the flow of funds was not going to make achieving the other twenty percent any easier. He characterized the IMF's concerns about nepotism and probity in public office as an unwarranted extrapolation built upon a single incident of corruption, which the government had (allegedly) already addressed.<sup>58</sup>

In a statement that invoked the PBC's mandate to promote coordination, the Burundian representative suggested, in a euphemistic formulation that attracted as much attention as it deflected, that "[p]erhaps the IMF was not working hand-in-hand with the [PBC]."<sup>59</sup> Burundi's position, combined with support from Egypt, South Africa, Rwanda, Angola—and to a lesser extent other members of the PBC as well—cast a stark spotlight on the work of the IMF.

For the first time since the PBC had come into being, the IMF began deputing high-level officials to engage in dialogue with the PBSO. After the formal discussion of the Chair's report these more senior IMF representatives met with PBC members to discuss the Bu-

---

<sup>56</sup> The long-term effects of not doing so may well have been felt in any case. IMF, *Food and Fuel Prices—Recent Developments, Macroeconomic Impact, and Policy Responses*, June 30, 2008, available at <http://www.imf.org/external/np/pp/eng/2008/063008.pdf>.

<sup>57</sup> Press Release, U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, Peacebuilding Commission Adopts Recommendations to Shore Up Peace in Burundi, U.N. Doc. PBC/21 (Sept. 19, 2007).

<sup>58</sup> *Id.*

<sup>59</sup> *Id.*

rundi situation.<sup>60</sup> The IMF was given a stern “talking to” from several PBC member-states—particularly those developing countries, such as India, that were keen to showcase their anti-IFI credentials given the growing perception among NAM countries that India had strayed too far into the strategic orbit of the United States. The PBC, as usual, proved an irresistible forum for advancing the interests of its members, sometimes in unpredictable and circuitous ways.<sup>61</sup>

The PBC followed its initial deliberations by issuing a report on the Burundi situation that outlined a series of “conclusions” and “recommendations.”<sup>62</sup> The report conceded the need for change in Burundi, and recommended that the Government of Burundi “investigate fully and immediately recent governance issues and take necessary steps to strengthen government controls over its expenditures to effectively prevent misuse and misappropriation of public funds.”<sup>63</sup> But the PBC was unusually direct in recommending to the IFIs that they “take into account, in the context of the ongoing dialogue between the IMF and the Government of Burundi, the fragile situation in the country in early disbursement of financial support.”<sup>64</sup> The report also suggested that the World Bank and the IMF “continue to actively follow-up on the commitments made at the May 2007 Round Table and consider additional and/or alternative financial support in the context of the fragile budgetary situation, bearing in mind the dire needs of the population.”<sup>65</sup>

In related aid-coordination meetings during that period, IMF officials were said to have demonstrated much greater flexibility.<sup>66</sup> On September 20, 2007, the day after the PBC’s recommendations on Burundi were issued, the IMF executive board decided to grant an exceptional waiver to Burundi that extended funding under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility (PRGF). This allowed the government of Burundi to stabilize its fiscal position, alleviating some of

---

<sup>60</sup> Interview with an official working in one of the three institutional pillars of the U.N. peacebuilding architecture, in New York City, N.Y. (Oct. 31, 2007).

<sup>61</sup> Interview with a representative of a prominent developing-country PBC member-state, in New York City, N.Y. (Jan. 26, 2008).

<sup>62</sup> Chairman of the Burundi Configuration of the PBC, *Identical Letters Dated 20 September 2007 from the Chairman of the Burundi Configuration of the Peacebuilding Commission*, at 2–4, delivered to the President of the Security Council, the President of the General Assembly, and the President of the Economic and Social Council, U.N. Doc. PCB/2/BDI/2 (Sept. 19, 2007).

<sup>63</sup> *Id.* at 3.

<sup>64</sup> *Id.* at 4.

<sup>65</sup> *Id.*

<sup>66</sup> Interview with a U.N. mission staff member of a major European bilateral donor country, in New York City, N.Y. (Feb. 1, 2008).

2008]

*U.N. Peacebuilding Commission*

1351

the political uncertainty that had in part stalled the government's legislative agenda.

In mid-January 2008, the IMF formally completed the Sixth (and Final) Review of Burundi's PRGF program.<sup>67</sup> The IMF's official explanation for release of the final *tranche* of funding under the PRGF cited the government's pursuit of what it considered sound macroeconomic policies.<sup>68</sup> But the IMF also referred, obliquely, to the policy- and performance-related reasons for the delay in completing the Review in the first place, not all of which, it was obvious, were dealt with by the Burundian government. IMF officials stressed the results its engagement with the Burundian authorities had achieved, but there is reason to believe that the PBC's intervention in Burundi's dispute with the IMF contributed to Burundi's ability to evade IMF conditions.<sup>69</sup>

Whether, in the absence of protest from PBC member-states, the IMF would have allowed the final \$11.4 million tranche of PRGF funds to be released is counterfactual speculation that defies definitive conclusions. The PBC did, however, provide a high-profile forum in which a cross-section of the international community could collectively reaffirm the imperative of maintaining political stability in fragile states, and the need for other economic considerations—such as fiscal rectitude—to take an occasional backseat. This created an environment in which IMF officials found it more difficult to take a hard line on the Burundian authorities for failing to live up to their reform commitments, not least because the PBC's diverse membership and its status as an advisory body of the Security Council (whose five permanent members are also represented on the PBC) invests its deliberations and pronouncements with considerable weight and legitimacy.

It is reasonable to ask whether pressure from developing country representatives at the UN would have any impact on IFI officials. On their own, developing countries are indeed a weak lobby. But when allied, on an issue-specific basis, with certain progressive northern donors, or even with one or more permanent members of the Security Council, the voices favoring a less intrusive role for the IFIs become more persuasive. Skeptics might also wonder why well-off do-

---

<sup>67</sup> IMF, *Burundi: Sixth Review Under the Arrangement Under the Poverty Reduction and Growth Facility and Request for Waiver of Performance Criteria*, Country Report No. 08/27 (Jan. 23, 2008).

<sup>68</sup> *Id.*

<sup>69</sup> Interview with a U.N. consultant who specializes in police reform in post-conflict countries, in New York City, N.Y. (Sept. 7, 2007).

nor governments would find it either advantageous or necessary to use the indirect route of PBC engagement in order to influence, say, the IMF. Such governments are, in general, well represented on the boards of the IFIs. The most plausible answer is that IFI policy tends to be dominated by a member-state's finance ministry or economic advisers in the office of the president or prime minister, *not* by the foreign ministry. So the PBC route, however indirect, offers foreign ministries—from whom U.N. delegations generally take their orders—an indirect voice in the country-specific deliberations of the World Bank and the IMF. When economic questions are translated as threats to the peace, as issues of basic regime stability, security officials more frequently prevail over their rivals from treasury.<sup>70</sup>

The PBC may not have tamed the IFIs or even reined in rogue U.N. agencies, which are often big and independent enough to ignore pleas for bureaucratic coordination. But the PBC's ongoing engagement with Burundi and Sierra Leone has provided a platform from which alternative views on the role of the IFIs in post-conflict countries can get a hearing. The view that conflict-reducing measures must increasingly trump economic policy preoccupations has been a consistent theme among a vocal minority of scholars and practitioners.<sup>71</sup> One analyst, who has served as a senior official in both the United Nations and the IMF, has argued that economic orthodoxies must yield to security considerations. The former official acknowledged the difficulty she had faced in trying to convince IFI decision-makers of the exceptional nature of post-conflict environments. World Bank and IMF officials—confronted with a distinct set of organizational incentives—tend to favor a limited menu of policy options.<sup>72</sup>

To conclude this analysis of the PBC's intergovernmental machinery (including its Country-Specific Configurations, where much of the substantive action takes place), it is worth noting that the PBC has been able to perform other counterweight functions as well. Just as the PBC was able to counteract the influence of the IFIs in limited

---

<sup>70</sup> Interview with a senior Indian diplomat, in Phila., Pa. (Apr. 18, 2008).

<sup>71</sup> This view is growing, however, and increasingly receives explicit support from member states. *See, e.g.*, Thematic Meeting on Diplomacy, Development, and Integrated Planning in Fragile States, Oslo, Norway, Feb. 11–12, 2008, *Final Outcome Summary*. This group of experts and practitioners, in its second recommendation, said, "Given the fragile context, *political considerations and a conflict analysis* are essential for international interventions" in the development field. *Id.* at 1.

<sup>72</sup> GRACIANA DEL CASTILLO, *REBUILDING WAR-TORN STATES: THE CHALLENGE OF POST-CONFLICT ECONOMIC RECONSTRUCTION* (2008).

but important ways, the PBC may also emerge as an alternative source of information for Security Council deliberations.

It has long been the custom that when the Security Council deliberates on mandate renewal or any other pending decision related to a post-conflict mission, it relies considerably on information provided by the highest resident U.N. official—the Special (or sometimes Executive) Representative of the Secretary General. This information is provided in the form of direct oral briefings as well as through the Secretary-General's Reports on individual country situations, which SRSGs play a very large role in producing. SRSGs are accused of shaping reports to reflect their personal biases or career ambitions.<sup>73</sup> Aware of the potential for ulterior motives, Security Council members frequently eye SRSGs with suspicion. SRSGs are often seen as excessively cautious, fearing tensions with the host government, whose officials the SRSG must work with on a daily basis regardless of the Security Council's decision. Other SRSGs have a reputation for prioritizing changes that can be accomplished within the time remaining in his or her tenure, whether or not such changes are priorities for peace. Officials in the Secretariat responsible for compiling these country-specific reports attempt to make the findings more politically saleable, a process that is visible enough to spur further doubts among Security Council members.<sup>74</sup>

Given that questions surrounding the value of the existing mechanisms of country-specific reporting, the Security Council would arguably benefit from an additional channel of information and analysis. The PBC has managed to position itself as, potentially, a credible, if far from ideal, alternative. This, its members and champions maintain, is because the PBC's members travel regularly to the countries concerned, and because the PBC invites civil society groups to participate in its meetings (though NGOs are carefully screened by the governments whose cases are under the PBC's consideration).<sup>75</sup>

---

<sup>73</sup> The Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone's integrated office mission (UNIOSIL) during 2006–2007, was widely regarded as secretive and unwilling to consult widely with U.N. agencies with a field presence in Freetown. Interview with an official working in one of the three institutional pillars of the U.N. peacebuilding architecture, in New York City, N.Y. (May 16, 2007).

<sup>74</sup> On the changing role of SRSGs see Manuel Frohlich, *The Peace Makers? The Development of the Role of the Special Representatives of the U.N. Secretary General as a Roll of Conflict Resolution* (June 7–8, 2007) (presented at the Annual Conference of the Academic Council on U.N. Studies, New York City).

<sup>75</sup> U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, Organizational Comm., *Provisional Report on the Work of the PBC*, U.N. Doc. PBC/2/OC/L.1 (June 28, 2007); Peacebuilding Comm'n, Organizational Comm., *Draft Report of the PBC on its 2nd Session*, U.N. Doc. PBC/2/OC/L.2 (June 23, 2008).

PBC member-states have tried to make the case, in whichever forums they belong to, that the PBC is uniquely suited to provide an original, and less bureaucratically entrenched, perspective to the Security Council's deliberations.

Thanks to sustained lobbying by a number of states during the PBC's early months, ad hoc invitations were extended by the Security Council to Chairs of the PBC's two Country-Specific Configurations.<sup>76</sup> This precedent became firmly established in December 2007, when the chair of the PBC's Burundi CSC briefed the Security Council. He did so against the backdrop of continued instability in Burundi, at a time when the Security Council was considering the most recent Secretary General's report on the U.N. Integrated Office in Burundi (BINUB).<sup>77</sup> That the CSC Chairs are themselves member-states affords them a more or less respectful hearing from most Security Council members, who might otherwise be dismissive of yet more speechmaking by Secretariat apparatchiks. That CSC Chairs have tended to come from influential countries—the first two were significant donor states, and the third was an emerging power, Brazil—has also helped to ease their passage into the Security Council's institutional milieu.<sup>78</sup>

#### IV. THE PBSO: "KNOWLEDGE" AND INFLUENCE

Among other things, this essay argues that in order to carve out a durable niche for itself, the PBC has effectively disaggregated itself into its component parts, each of which has been waging its own battle for institutional survival. The analytical focus thus far has been on just one of the three components that make up the PBC: its *intergovernmental* Commission itself, which includes the thirty-one-member Organizational Committee and the Country-Specific Configurations adopted to address specific post-conflict cases on its agenda. For reasons of space, only one of the other two PBC components—the PBSO, representing its *bureaucratic* dimension—is analyzed in depth here. Certain similarities in the workings of the third PBC component—the PBF, the PBC's *financial* dimension—are briefly identified in the conclusion.

---

<sup>76</sup> Interview with a U.N. mission staff member from a country that chaired one of the PBC's first two Country Specific Configurations, in New York City, N.Y. (May 27, 2007).

<sup>77</sup> Burundi, Second Report, *supra* note 51.

<sup>78</sup> The first three countries on the agenda were assigned the following CSC Chairs: the Netherlands chaired the Sierra Leone CSC, Norway chaired Burundi's CSC, and Brazil chaired Guinea Bissau's CSC.

The portion of Security Council Resolution 1645 that refers to the PBSO specifies its limited role.<sup>79</sup> The “Office” (not a full-fledged “Department”) was to be small and non-operational. PBSO staff were “to assist and support the [PBC]” by, for instance, “gathering and analyzing information” of various types.<sup>80</sup> This was to include information concerning “the availability of financial resources, relevant U.N. planning activities, progress towards meeting short and medium-term recovery goals, and best practices with respect to cross-cutting, peacebuilding issues.”<sup>81</sup>

The process leading up to the establishment of the PBSO, as opposed to its legal authorization in Resolution 1645, was marked by steadfast opposition from developing countries to making the PBSO much more than a back-office for the PBC’s deliberations. Negotiations ensued in the General Assembly’s administrative and budget committees over extremely small sums and minor personnel issues.<sup>82</sup> A concern expressed in developing country delegations (both before and after passage of Resolution 1645) was that the PBC, and by extension the PBSO, could be a Trojan Horse that would allow the P5 and other leading states to further infiltrate the United Nations’s economic and social agencies by emphasizing that development failures and imbalances are key contributors to political instability and conflict, issues squarely in the Security Council’s remit.

At least two factors have helped to make the PBSO potentially a more formidable institutional actor than its modest statement of purpose might otherwise suggest. First, as an independent “Office”—that is, located within neither the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) nor the Department of Political Affairs (DPA)—the PBSO stands in direct, unmediated relation to the Executive Office of the Secretary General. This would be less important if the only implication was that the PBSO’s decisions could not be formally vetoed by intervening department bosses. In practice, however, it means that the PBSO is provided a valuable point of entry into interagency

---

<sup>79</sup> S.C. Res. 1645, ¶ 23, U.N. Doc. S/RES/1645 (Dec. 20, 2005).

<sup>80</sup> *Id.*

<sup>81</sup> *Id.*

<sup>82</sup> The level of discord could be seen in the concluding paragraphs of the December 2005 Report by the General Assembly’s Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ), on the proposed 2006–2007 budget, where the committee chastised the Secretary General for going beyond the remit of the 2005 summit outcome in his preparations for the establishment of the PBSO. See U.N. Administrative & Budgetary Comm., *The Peacebuilding Commission: Programme Budget Implications of Draft Resolution A/60/L.40*, U.N. Doc. A/60/7/Add.25 (Dec. 16, 2005).

structures of various types. Exploiting such opportunities is part of the process by which the PBSO has begun occupying a set of unique organizational niches.

Second, the PBSO is able to draw on the political clout of PBC member-states with whom it must work closely in its role as the secretariat unit “supporting” the PBC’s intergovernmental machinery. The PBSO is able to do this *while at the same time* being able to distance itself from PBC member-states when autonomy is helpful to the PBSO’s pursuit of its own adaptive strategy for institutional survival.

Two examples of the PBSO’s multipronged effort to occupy an organizational niche are discussed here. Both illustrative cases are consciously rooted in what the PBSO calls its “second mandate”—its system-wide knowledge consolidation and dissemination role, as opposed to its function as a secretariat for the PBC’s intergovernmental deliberations. The broad nature of this role was reaffirmed in a May 2007 statement issued by the Secretary General’s Policy Committee.<sup>83</sup> This document is cited frequently by PBSO staff when seeking to justify their presence in one or another interagency process.

Attempting to amass organizational influence by serving as a focal point for the collection and refinement of expert knowledge—especially when this is based on analysis of internal organizational practices—is a bureaucratic strategy with a long and distinguished pedigree. There is nothing particularly surprising about the PBSO pursuing this route. In fact, recent scholarship on international organizations, particularly Barnett and Finnemore’s empirically wide-ranging work, suggests that it is precisely by framing concepts, relationships, and processes in ways that require expert input to operationalize them that international bureaucracies seek to make themselves indispensable, expand their mandates, and (perhaps most significantly) wrest a degree of autonomy from member-states and the vagaries of intergovernmental bargaining.<sup>84</sup>

The first example of how the PBSO followed this strategy concerns its involvement in the United Nations’s Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP). U.N. departments and agencies involved in peace operations have long pressed for a more structured and inclusive process for determining whether, for any prospective country

---

<sup>83</sup> The document, a memorandum from the Secretary General to Members of the Policy Committee (dated May 22, 2007) contained “Decision No. 2007/28 RE: Peacebuilding Support Office.” The decision chiefly concerned the “Conceptual Basis for Peacebuilding,” which was effectively broadened, and a statement on the (expanded) “Role of the Peacebuilding Support Office” (PBSO).

<sup>84</sup> See, e.g., BARNETT & FINNEMORE, *supra* note 6.

case, a multidisciplinary peace operation is feasible and what such an operation might look like given the exigencies of the present and the full life-cycle of an integrated U.N. mission—all the way to the point of “exit.”<sup>85</sup> This has resulted in the IMPP “guidelines,” which remain a work in progress. This foundational policy document outlines how the IMPP should work in practice. It outlines phases, lead organizations, decision points, and so forth. Its production entailed intense, line-by-line negotiations over an extended period of time and involved a huge range of bureaucratic and political stakeholders. Some of the roles and responsibilities, not to mention mandates and time-frames, remained a point of contention up to the time of this writing in mid 2008.

Even before the PBSO was fully functional, officials associated with its creation lobbied for the PBSO’s substantial inclusion in the IMPP guidelines in as many roles as possible. These lobbying efforts—only partly successful—benefited from the assistance of PBC states that supported the idea that the eventual transition to post-conflict peacebuilding must be considered even in the early stages of devising a strategy for *peacekeeping*.

The degree of contention over the PBSO’s potential role is apparent from the various versions of this capstone document, formally entitled, *Integrated Missions Planning Process (IMPP): Guidelines Endorsed by the Secretary-General*.<sup>86</sup> The tentative nature of PBSO involvement is evident from the version dated June 13, 2006, which was issued just as the PBC and the PBSO were coming formally into being. As noted, lobbying on behalf of the PBSO had begun considerably earlier, with several donor states seeking to increase the new unit’s organizational heft—a strategy that, as we have seen, generated opposition (and much enlivened proceedings) in the General Assembly’s committee rooms. Several roles for the PBSO and the PBC are envisaged. But interpreting the guidelines is ultimately as much a matter of political negotiation as their formulation had been in the first place. To date,

---

<sup>85</sup> See Panel on U.N. Peace Operations, *Report of the Panel on U.N. Peace Operations*, U.N. Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809 (Aug. 21, 2000).

<sup>86</sup> A footnote in the June 13, 2006, version clarifies that the guidelines apply only to peace support operations occurring in a “post-conflict setting” where the U.N. “mounts multi-disciplinary peace support operations of which a peacekeeping mission is a component.” U.N., INTEGRATED MISSIONS PLANNING PROCESS (IMPP): GUIDELINES ENDORSED BY THE SECRETARY-GENERAL ON 13 JUNE 2006 (2006), available at [www.undg.org/docs/8481/IMPP.pdf](http://www.undg.org/docs/8481/IMPP.pdf) [hereinafter JUNE GUIDELINES]. The guidelines state explicitly that “[d]ifferent processes may apply for United Nations peace support operations where no peacekeeping operation is involved.” *Id.* at 2.

the PBSO has proven reasonably adept at making the most of its marginal presence within the IMPP guidelines.

The PBSO is mentioned in the preamble to the guidelines, which are structured like a decision-making flowchart, with various U.N. entities drawn into (and lifted out of) the activity matrix as their participation ebbs and flows. There is mention of a (relatively unspecified) role for the PBC in the “pre-decision” stage of the mission-planning process. “Prior to a decision by the Secretary General to initiate detailed planning,” the PBSO would (in order to provide the Security Council and other relevant actors with a full, longitudinal picture of the commitment envisaged) be “responsible for devising longer-term strategies to help countries fully recover from conflict, help bring the U.N. system together, and also draw together non-U.N. actors, including IFIs and regional organizations in support of a common strategy.”<sup>87</sup> This language echoes the wording of the resolution creating the PBC, but *applies the tasks to the PBSO independently of the intergovernmental PBC*. According to the IMPP Guidelines, if a decision is taken to begin more detailed planning for a *potential* (still yet unapproved) peace-support operation, three stages would ensue: (1) advanced planning; (2) operational planning; and (3) review and transition planning. Each stage has multiple levels and triggers for decision-making and action.

Two of the four triggers for initiating the IMPP involve the PBC and/or the PBSO: (i) “a recommendation by the [PBC], or a request by a Member State or regional organization, to the U.N. Secretary-General to consider possible options, including a peace support operation”; and (ii) “[t]he development by the PBC or PBSO of an overarching strategy for U.N. peacebuilding support.”<sup>88</sup> Though the PBSO is not mentioned in the first of these, it would play a critical yet indirect role by shaping the analysis of the PBC’s “recommendation.”<sup>89</sup> In practice, the PBSO will not trigger anything on its own. It is nevertheless significant for a small U.N. entity to be part of the process for deciding which country situations are ripe for a mission-level intervention.

Once it is decided to “initiate the IMPP,” the “advanced planning” phase begins, carried out by an Integrated Mission Task Force (IMTF), which is led by the Department of Political Affairs, but with inputs from the PBSO. The key activity during this initial stage of the IMPP is the “Strategic Assessment,” which outlines what functions the

---

<sup>87</sup> *Id.*

<sup>88</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>89</sup> *Id.* at 5.

United Nations might credibly perform, what assumptions have been made about the nature of the conflict in question, and the potential scenarios that might affect the conduct of such a mission. In doing so, the IMTF is expected to “draw on the strategic analysis of the PBSO,” among others.<sup>90</sup>

If it is determined that the Strategic Assessment provides a basis for moving forward, the Secretary General issues a Strategic Planning Directive, which outlines the objectives of the mission. In the “operational planning stage,” the DPKO takes the lead. The guidelines indicate, however, that the *draft* Strategic Planning Directive would be prepared “in consultation with the PBSO,” providing another opportunity for the PBSO to shape, even if only at the margins, the parameters of a proposed peace operation.<sup>91</sup> The PBSO also has a role in the “review and transition planning” phase. “[T]he PBSO should be regularly updated” on the conduct of the mission, the purpose being to allow input from the PBSO on the likely implications of decisions that will profoundly affect the post-conflict environment and, therefore, the range of options facing peacebuilding agencies.<sup>92</sup>

The section of the guidelines on “Initiating Transition and Exit Planning” indicates that the “Mission Plan should contain triggers and benchmarks for initiating transition and exit planning,” and that these will have been “developed in close collaboration with,” among other entities, the PBSO.<sup>93</sup> The issue of “transition” (an operation’s multi-stage exit from a post-conflict situation) is also reflected in the second example of the PBSO’s ability to adapt itself to a difficult environment. Indeed, the PBSO has sought to make use of its knowledge consolidation and dissemination role in order to influence what it sees as a key Security Council priority—understanding the conditions that can facilitate exit.

To influence the Security Council’s decisions regarding the gradual drawing-down of peace operations, the closing of post-conflict missions, or indeed Security Council doctrine on transitions more generally, the PBSO saw the need to combine its knowledge-consolidation mandate with its participation in relevant interagency initiatives. Among the forums in which the PBSO has been engaged is the U.N. Interdepartmental Framework for Coordination on Early Warning and Preventive Action. The “Framework Team,” as it is known, is coordinated by the UNDP’s Bureau of Crisis Prevention

---

<sup>90</sup> *Id.* at 6.

<sup>91</sup> *Id.* at 7.

<sup>92</sup> JUNE GUIDELINES, *supra* note 87, at 8–12.

<sup>93</sup> *Id.* at 15.

and Recovery. Its mission is to refine methods for anticipating the outbreak of violence, assessing the likely severity of nascent conflicts, and recommending the most appropriate programmatic interventions.<sup>94</sup>

The Framework Team maintains an informal “watch list”—though it does not use this term—of countries to be monitored, which includes those residing in conflict-ridden regions. It devotes attention to all countries where regime stability is threatened by systemic violence—not just states “emerging from conflict,” which is the PBC’s designated area of responsibility.<sup>95</sup> The Framework Team—which seeks to expand the remit and enhance the stature of the Peace and Development Advisors it has helped to deploy in various conflict zones—provides a point of access for the PBSO into a policy arena (conflict-prevention in states that have not recently experienced war) where it is otherwise short on influence.<sup>96</sup>

Perhaps as importantly, the Framework Team provides a forum in which the PBSO can attempt to steer the debate on the conditions under which “transitions” (toward full de facto state sovereignty) are best undertaken. The PBSO has done this by seeking space on the agenda of the Expert Reference Group (ERG), which supports the Framework Team in planning U.N. system-wide program interventions by refining the analytical tools at its disposal. The ERG, for instance, assesses the relevance of competing models of conflict dynamics and the applicability of various risk indicators.<sup>97</sup>

The PBSO has cultivated relations with other agencies and offices represented on the ERG and the Framework Team, and it has, in accordance with its mandate, attempted to influence the choice of analytical instruments used in assessing post-conflict situations. In late-2007, the PBSO commissioned a study of potential transition in-

---

<sup>94</sup> The mission and structure of the Framework Team, as well as the Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery, which is part of the U.N. Development Program, is available at <http://www.undp.org/cpr/>.

<sup>95</sup> *Id.*

<sup>96</sup> The Expert Reference Group associated with the Framework Team outlined its conclusions concerning the future role of the Peace and Development Advisors—and hailed the “historic” work of the Framework Team itself. Experience-Sharing and Capacity Development Workshop for U.N. Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Practitioners to Enhance Conflict Prevention Programming, Oct. 30–Nov. 2, 2007, *The Naivasha Process Report*.

<sup>97</sup> The emphasis on analytical tools and the identification and dissemination of best practice is evident from a funding application devised by the Framework Team in 2006. Memorandum from the U.N. Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery, Funding Proposal: Enhancing the Framework Team (May 2006) (on file with author).

dicators and relevant datasets whose findings were disseminated through the ERG.<sup>98</sup> This represented an effort to build support for the creation of a model of conflict-to-peace analysis that could guide U.N. agencies in planning for the transition from a country situation defined by its post-conflict status to one focused on a longer-term developmental agenda. The PBSO's proposals received a mixed response—at least in the early stages of the process covered in the research for this essay—but the fact of having asserted a legitimate interest in this issue has positioned the PBSO to continue participating in negotiations on these and related matters.

## V. CONCLUSION

This essay has argued that, despite the PBC's weak mandate, its highly contingent "advisory" status, and its politically contentious origins, this still-fledgling body has emerged from its first two years in existence as a significant force in an unpromising institutional environment. The PBC and the PBSO are now visible actors in the community of international actors engaged in the rebuilding of post-conflict states. As envisaged by their architects, both institutions participate in broader institutional discussions on the causes of violent conflict and the best means of preventing its eruption or recurrence.<sup>99</sup> Given the speed with which newly minted international bodies can begin slipping into terminal irrelevance almost from the moment of inception,<sup>100</sup> this is a considerable accomplishment.

The ability of the PBC to carve out a role for itself—even if its precise value-added is difficult to pin down—has rested on the relative freedom granted by Resolution 1645, which effectively allowed each of the PBC's component parts (the three pillars of the U.N.'s 'peacebuilding architecture') to pursue its own means of ensuring institutional survival. It is worth noting that certain aspects of the PBC's adaptive response challenge the conventional wisdom on why international organizations (IOs) evolve as they do. The PBSO is a good example of a bureaucratic entity created by states *not* as a way of investing an existing IO with greater decision-making autonomy, the phenomenon with which most international relations scholarship is

---

<sup>98</sup> Memorandum from the U.N. Peacebuilding Comm'n, *Measuring Peace Consolidation and Supporting Transition*, (Dec. 2007).

<sup>99</sup> The need for such a capacity is evident from theoretically informed empirical research. *See, e.g.,* PAUL COLLIER ET AL., *BREAKING THE CONFLICT TRAP: CIVIL WAR AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY* (2003).

<sup>100</sup> A classic example is the long-dormant Military Staff Committee created under Article 47 of the United Nations Charter. NAT'L WAR COLLEGE, *THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL MILITARY STAFF COMMITTEE: RELIC OR REVIVAL?* (1994).

concerned. Indeed, discussions leading up to the creation of the PBC and the PBSO—and the subsequent negotiations over operational rules once the PBC had come formally into being—were marked by a strong insistence by many states that ambitions for the PBC be scaled back. Initial plans for the PBSO to possess an “early warning” capacity—along the lines of what it is now engaged in through its work in the Framework Team—were successfully resisted by a coalition consisting mainly of developing-country member-states. Yet, the PBC and its various components have managed to find ways of “remaining relevant.”<sup>101</sup>

This essay has focused on two of the three pillars of the peace-building architecture—the PBC and the PBSO. But it should be noted that the third pillar, the PBF, has also managed to play an out-sized role in the field of post-conflict financing—again, by stressing its autonomy from the PBSO and the PBC. The PBF was dismissed originally by many observers as: (a) yet another multi-donor trust fund; (b) inadequate for the size of the peace and post-conflict operations the United Nations would need to mount; and/or (c) too tethered to an intergovernmental process (the PBC), which would stifle innovative ideas.

Thanks to efforts by actors operating within the PBF’s multistakeholder governance structure, the PBF has become a far more important sub-institution than was initially predicted. The Secretary General’s cabinet now regards the PBF as a strategic resource—a pool of untied funds that can be used to initiate timely action even in pre-conflict situations. This is a complicated story that cannot be fully explicated here. But the crucial point is that it was the creative interpretation of the PBF’s underspecified mandate and the vagueness concerning aspects of its institutional location, which allowed it to achieve the institutional relevance it now enjoys. In effect, while the PBF responds to the requests of the PBC’s member-states for catalytic funding in priority areas identified by its Country Specific Configurations, the PBF operates “windows” for other countries in crisis or at critical breaking points. At this writing, these have included Chad, Cote D’Ivoire, the Central African Republic, and Liberia. For donor countries that are not PBC members—and even for some that *are*—the PBF represents an attractive channel of influence.

---

<sup>101</sup> Interview with a U.N. mission official from one of the leading aid-donor member-states on the PBC, in New York City, N.Y., May 18, 2007.

Non-governmental advocacy organizations are similarly seeking to influence the procedures and priorities of the PBF's grantmaking.<sup>102</sup>

Finally, let us briefly consider two factors that might shape the PBC's institutional trajectory and the roles to be played by its various components. The first concerns the PBC's future caseload. If the PBC continues to be assigned cases, like Sierra Leone and Burundi, where conflicts are long past their "hot" phases, then the types of engagement that the PBC can play will remain limited. It will engage with governments for which aid priorities have, for the most part, already been agreed. On the other hand, if countries are placed on the PBC's agenda at a much earlier phase in the peacemaking process—as is the case with Guinea Bissau and the Central African Republic—then the various pillars of the peacebuilding architecture are likely to encounter expanded opportunities for influence.

The second factor that may make a difference in determining how the PBC's component parts go about adapting to an institutional environment in which they remain, in many respects, minor players is the trajectory of other elements of U.N. reform. To date, the PBC has benefited from certain aspects of the ongoing reform agenda. It is often claimed, for instance, that the leading states represented in the PBC faced enormous pressure to avoid "failure" during its initial eighteen months in existence. This is because the other main institutional reform produced by the 2005 World Summit—the Human Rights Council—was being written off as little better than the discredited Human Rights Commission it replaced. At several low points in the PBC's short history, its member-states, as well as the PBSO, have worked assiduously to dispel the impression that the PBC might be similarly dysfunctional. This resulted in strenuous efforts to avoid delays in meeting organizational milestones and to defuse conflict within the ranks of the PBC's member-states. Had this kind of external motivation not materialized, it is doubtful whether the PBC would have accomplished as much as it has.

The PBC's components may be forced to adapt to the implications of potential changes, such as the consolidation of U.N. entities (following recommendation of the High-Level Panel on U.N. System-Wide Coherence) or aspects of management reform.<sup>103</sup> In the mean-

---

<sup>102</sup> Int'l Crisis Group, *Sierra Leone, A New Era of Reform?*, Africa Report No. 143, July 31, 2008.

<sup>103</sup> High-Level Panel on U.N. System-Wide Coherence in the Areas of Development, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Environment, *Follow-Up to the Outcome of the Millennium Summit*, U.N. Doc. A/61/583 (Nov. 20, 2006).

time, the mere possibility of these or other frequently discussed reforms taking place is sufficient to fuel a great deal of anticipatory posturing on the part of U.N. agencies of all types. To the extent that these actors see the PBC as a terrain upon which the struggle for influence can be played out, it has valid hopes for continued relevance.