

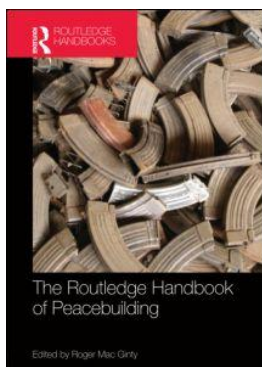
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### **Statebuilding**

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# STATEBUILDING

*Susanna Campbell and Jenny H. Peterson*

International statebuilding aims to build states that will sustain domestic and international peace. Western governments and international organizations have come to see statebuilding as the antidote to ‘weak’, ‘failing’ or ‘failed’ states, which they blame for many of today’s most intractable security threats. International peacebuilding, on the other hand, aims to build peace, *in part* by building peaceful and just states. Because peacebuilding and statebuilding try to achieve similar results in countries affected by violence, they are often conflated by both scholars and practitioners, masking important differences and potential contradictions.

The merging of statebuilding and peacebuilding has pushed peacebuilding to the background, stifling local and international efforts to reinvigorate informal institutions that may be critical for sustained peace. In fact, the current predominance of top-down statebuilding may be as likely to cause violent conflict as it is to cause peace. This chapter explains this disconnect. It unpacks the conceptual distinction between peacebuilding and statebuilding and examines the reasons for statebuilding’s general failure to achieve its aims in conflict-affected countries.

### **Linking statebuilding and peacebuilding**

Statebuilding aims to ensure that the government is representative of the population, can deliver services to the population, and is responsive to the needs and demands of its citizens (OECD 2011). To achieve these qualities, international actors promote a model of the state that they believe will sustain peace: one grounded in democracy, rule of law, and a market-oriented economy. Although recent statebuilding policies have focused on the importance of supporting locally-led institutional change, in practice statebuilding programming focuses on the physical creation of institutions, not on supporting endogenous processes that may allow peaceful institutions to emerge (OECD 2011).

Similar to statebuilding, peacebuilding seeks to strengthen systems, structures, and behaviours that will enable a war-torn country to sustain peace. In the *Agenda for Peace* (UN 1992: para 21), UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali defined peacebuilding as

‘action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’. It aims to transform the causes of conflict into the foundations for sustainable peace. Institutions that promoted inequality and exclusion should become inclusive and protect minority rights. People who abused power should be held accountable for their crimes and systems should be set up to ensure that those in power are not able to abuse it. Individuals who used violence to resolve conflict and gain economic advantage should be given peaceful means of resolving conflict and making a living. Former enemies should work together to construct a new society that guarantees respect for all people’s rights.

Initially, peacebuilding was largely the work of a few small non-governmental organizations. But peacebuilding is no longer ‘localized’ and small-scale. The original peacebuilding NGOs view peacebuilding as a ‘long-term project of building peaceful, stable communities and societies’ (Lederach 1997). These see peacebuilding as a process that aims gradually to ‘strengthen and restore relationships and transform unjust institutions and systems’ (Lederach 1997). They tend to try and support individual and intergroup change, using tools of conflict resolution, dialogue, and training. To achieve these aims, they seek to work with influential individuals, both within and outside of the state (Lederach 1997). For most of these actors, peacebuilding does not necessarily privilege state powers and institutions. Although there may be a degree of focus on altering citizens’ relationship with the state, there is simultaneously an emphasis on human security and local or informal relationships. These actors aim to liberate, or emancipate, the citizens from an oppressive state and society (Booth 2005; Jones 2005; Richmond 2007a, 2007b). Under these models, peace is not defined as stability (or the absence of physical violence) but as the absence of social, economic and political inequality that may paradoxically be caused by a strong state.

In the 1990s and 2000s, the number of international actors engaged in peacebuilding grew exponentially. Peacebuilding was no longer the purview of only a few process-focused NGOs, but was now the business of International Organizations (IOs) and bilateral donors who worked directly with war-torn states. As these bigger actors have become involved in peacebuilding, the policies of many IOs and bilateral donors have focused on the statebuilding aspect of peacebuilding (OECD 2011). This has sidelined the more process-focused approach of many INGOs for a focus on constructing the type of state that international actors believe will sustain peace. Consequently, peacebuilding became largely focused on statebuilding.

For many of the IOs and bilateral donors engaged in peacebuilding today, statebuilding has become the primary means by which they aim to attain peace (Barnett and Zürcher 2008: 26). For these actors, developed states in the global north are the model for what a state ‘should’ look like. By assisting conflict-affected states in building state institutions that operate effectively and fairly, statebuilders believe that they can help countries attain and sustain peace. They want to help states form in the ‘right way’—in other words be democratic, accountable, provide security and basic welfare services for their populations through formal state institutions. This is in contrast to the original idea of peacebuilding: to support institutions and mechanisms that will sustain a just peace in a much broader sense, beyond just building effective state institutions. Statebuilding is one of the approaches used by these peacebuilders, but not the only one. Many critical scholars and practitioners object to the increasing focus on statebuilding because

of its emphasis on the state and formal politics. For critical scholars, statebuilding is just one facet of peacebuilding. Peacebuilding is seen as a much wider and diversified phenomenon, focused on formal politics (at international, national, regional and local levels), informal politics and inter-personal relationships and non-political issues, including cultural, economic and social justice.

There are divergent motivations for the increasing focus on statebuilding. From a realist point of view, helping to build strong states abroad is a way of furthering the goals of national security against transnational threats such as crime, terrorism and disease (see Egnell and Haldén 2010; Fukuyama 2004). Strong states are also seen as essential for a functioning and stable global market place. In this sense, the ‘statebuilding as peacebuilding’ agenda can be used by powerful international actors to justify interventions into the core functions of other states in order to create strong states that reduce threats to other states and the international community more generally. From this point of view, statebuilding contributes to the more self-interested political agenda of other states and global institutions, especially when such interventions take the form of bilateral support, assistance in the security sector or sponsoring modes of economic development that in turn benefit the intervening party.

In most of the peacebuilding literature, however, the motivation for an increased focus on statebuilding stems more from idealistic *cum* liberal motivations with liberal goals and rhetoric now underpinning much of the statebuilding and peacebuilding agendas. The aim is to create human security—protecting persons of all nationalities, not simply states. This more liberal approach has been critiqued by some who argue that the focus on peacebuilding has actually pushed the building of strong governmental institutions to the background, and therefore fails to strengthen institutions that could sustain peace (Paris and Sisk 2008). Paris’ (2004) earlier work, for example, argues that for peace to be created, there must be a stronger focus on institutionalization (statebuilding) before the more liberal and relational reforms (peacebuilding) can begin.

In practice, however, international statebuilding and peacebuilding are pursued through the same relatively standard set of activities (Smith 2004: 28). In the security arena, these projects and programmes try to create security through disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of ex-combatants, reforming security-sector institutions so that they are both more efficient and accountable to political and judicial institutions, and the removal of arms from the population. In the governance sector, they aim to establish a political framework that can sustain peace by promoting democratization, accountable institutions of government, and respect for human rights. In the rule of law sector, we see a focus on the reforming of formal judicial institutions, often accompanied by programmes seeking to contribute to reconciliation via dialogue among leaders and grassroots communities, truth and reconciliation commissions, and ‘other bridge-building activities’ (Smith 2004: 28). They also aim to establish the socio-economic foundations for peace through reconstruction of physical infrastructure (building schools, health centres, roads and communication technologies) whilst also helping to establish economic policies that will encourage an open market, and socio-economic programming that specifically targets services to support the integration of returning refugees, internally displaced people, and demobilized combatants (Smith 2004: 28).

By attempting to accomplish peacebuilding and statebuilding through the same set of activities, international interveners have ignored important differences between the

two approaches. At a theoretical level, statebuilding on its own could potentially lead to a limited but sustainable form of peace. It could help to build institutions that ensure that all groups are proportionally, or even disproportionately if this is seen as a way of promoting peace, represented in government. It could help to provide individuals and groups with an equal opportunity for prosperity – reducing intergroup competition and increasing economic growth – by opening up markets and encouraging the free and transparent flow of goods. It could increase the avenues for the peaceful resolution of conflict by strengthening formal institutions that guarantee the rule of law: police, courts, and legislature. However, statebuilding on its own does not necessarily address intercommunal or interpersonal violence which is, in theory, necessary for the broader, more emancipatory mode of peace pursued and discussed by others.

Further, in reality, not only have current practices of statebuilding failed to create peace in a range of cases (Call 2003; Egnell 2010; Goetze and Guzina 2008; Jones 2010), but the policies and practices employed in the name of statebuilding are seen at times to be conflict inducing as opposed to peace building (Angstrom 2008; Call 2008; Goetze and Guzina 2008; Lidén 2009; Menkhaus 2009; Robinson 2007); the increased theoretical and operational focus on statebuilding may actually work *against* the goals of peace and stability (Lake 2010). This may occur for several reasons. The injection of large amounts of statebuilding money into conflict-affected countries creates new incentives and thus potentially new arenas for conflict. In particular, democratization programmes and post-conflict elections, cornerstones of both state- and peacebuilding agendas, can create significant violent conflict by inciting new or deepening old divisions as people fight for power in the new system (Mulaj 2011; Mansfield and Snyder 2007; Paris 2004). In these instances, as opposed to viewing statebuilding as central to solving the peacebuilding puzzle, statebuilding is itself part of the problem. Processes of statebuilding, therefore, do not necessarily have the *peacebuilding effect* that is theoretically assumed. The remainder of this chapter will explore the potential reasons for the failure of statebuilding to promote peace and the ways in which the increasing focus on statebuilding may actually limit the scope for building long-term and sustainable peace.

### **Statebuilding is ahistorical and apolitical**

Statebuilding aims to create formal state institutions that are in many cases poorly matched to the state formation process in war-torn countries (Englebert and Tull 2008; Richmond 2011). It aims to build the components of liberal democratic institutions, but fails to take into account the state formation process that may lead to the long-term and sustainable development of these types of institutions. Historically, in Western Europe, liberal democratic states were formed through violent, tumultuous processes that gradually created a social contract between the state and society over several centuries. Statebuilding aims to create the same type of liberal democratic institutions that emerged from this chaotic decades-long process, but it aims to do so over less than a decade and without a clear idea of the incremental steps or process through which these state institutions could form.

Traditional theories of state formation in Western Europe describe it as a violent process where individuals and communities were coerced into accepting the power and rules of the new state through war or violence (Tilly 1985; Mann 1993). In return for

allegiance to these new formal institutions, people received protection from the state. The military capacity necessary to ensure protection required continuous financing through taxation. This further strengthened these new states by giving them resources to wage war and gain new territories and, in turn, provide protection to and collect taxes from more people. Other theorists focus on the more banal administrative processes that transformed neo-patrimonial states into those grounded in formal, rational institutions that solidified the relationship between the state (the rulers) and the citizenry (the ruled) (Weber 1947; Rueschemeyer 2005). The major changes that have occurred in the international system since the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 prevent the same type of state formation processes from occurring today (Ayooob 2007; Eriksen 2005, 2010; Hagmann and Péclard 2010; Hallenberg, Holm and Johansson 2008; Kostovicova 2008; Vu 2010).

Today, state formation is expected to take place with as little violence as possible and not impact territories and people outside its own borders. In other words, the expansionary elements of traditional state formation processes are no longer seen as acceptable. The move towards statebuilding in the international arena as a path to peace was arguably consolidated in the post-Cold War era where the artificial stability provided by the bi-polar power struggle was removed and states' weaknesses were laid bare (Robinson 2007). There was a recognition that states needed a deliberate hand in becoming strong and functional political entities (via statebuilding) as opposed to allowing them to continue down a more 'organic' path (via state formation) which is seen as inherently violent and thus unacceptable to the wider international community.

Regardless of the mode of state formation one considers, the scholarship points to long, fraught and often violent processes through which peaceful relationships are negotiated. Coercion, competition for legitimacy, power, resources, disagreements over institutional form, and a constant renegotiation of the roles and rights of an ever-growing number of actors, have all shaped the ways in which the form and function of the state is negotiated in both stable and conflict-affected states alike. Peace, when it has been sustained, results from this messy process. Current statebuilding efforts fail to take this into account. They take an ahistoric and apolitical view regarding how 'zones of peace' have been created and seek to impose a static set of institutions on dynamic state formation processes.

Just and sustainable peace may fail to take hold as these new or transformed institutions, built via processes of externally led statebuilding projects, are implanted rather than negotiated. Even if international statebuilders succeed in helping to create state institutions that are well financed, abide by democratic standards, and have well-trained staff, they often lack the legitimacy or authority necessary to contribute to peace. For example, newly trained security services in places such as Kosovo and Afghanistan have had the benefit of years of specialist training, including access to the latest policing technologies, but have often failed to provide the expected levels of security. This is due in part to these forces not being seen as legitimate by some sectors of society (for example sectors of the Serb community do not view the institutions of an independent Kosovan state as legitimate) or as independent and working in the best interests of citizens (as in the case of Afghanistan, where segments of the population view the security services as beholden to NATO as opposed to Afghan interests). Modern international statebuilding, in both its theoretical and practised forms, fail to account for these long-term and intensely political internal dynamics and as such, fail to create the modes of peace that is planned for and desired.

**Statebuilding is bureaucratic, fragmented, and projectized**

Although recent definitions of statebuilding emphasize the importance of supporting ‘an endogenous process to enhance capacity, institutions, and legitimacy of the state driven by state–society relations’ (OECD 2011), the practice of statebuilding has not caught up. Most IOs, bilateral donors, and NGOs engaged in statebuilding programming use a relatively standard template of short-term projects and programmes that generally fail to support a state formation process or improve state–society relations. The grand state formation idea has been broken down into small projects and programmes. Even projects that do last for several years often lack continuity because of high staff turnover and the absence of funding for the duration of the project. These interventions are often designed and implemented by international staff who have limited knowledge of the national institutions that they aim to change. They are constrained by one- to two-year funding cycles that limit the scope and nature of the change that they can create.

In other words, statebuilding is bureaucratized, projectized, and fragmented. The parts do not add up to a cohesive whole nor do they support a coherent state formation process. These projects and programmes do not directly engage with or allow for how state–society relations may actually be built. The bureaucratic structure of the IOs, bilateral donors, and many of the INGOs doing statebuilding programming partly explains the current approach. Instead of responding to the needs of the post-conflict state and society, international bureaucracies are likely to recreate institutions and programmes in their own image. ‘The result is that what began as a relatively narrow technical intervention (training police) expands into a package of reforms aimed at transforming non-Western societies (where most peacebuilding takes place) into Western societies’ (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 34). Rather than catalysing a change process, bureaucracies are likely to try to do much of the work themselves in a manner that fits with their standards and approach (Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 34). This tendency to resort to bureaucratic, state-centred solutions is common throughout the development industry, leading it to prioritize interventions that are ‘technically correct’ but whose top-down nature is not responsive to citizens (Pritchett and Woolcock 2004: 207).

Where statebuilders desire a technocratic, predictable, and linear path to peace, the reality of how peace is made is necessarily complex, fraught, and even violent. The negotiations between peoples and their state cannot be managed by external actors in the orderly way that a bureaucratic mind-set requires. This often frustrates both external peacebuilders and internal populations who have been promised that cooperation with international interveners will bring a promised peace that rarely, if ever, materializes. In places like the Democratic Republic of the Congo this has created disillusionment and violent reactions against state- and peacebuilding actors. The liberal democratic system that statebuilders put so much faith into will not exist in their desired form for many years (if ever). The liberal democratic models that they promote demand a degree of social, political, economic, and even cultural negotiation that requires long-term, or even perpetual, negotiation. In its current form, statebuilding practice does not allow for long-term change and ignores the many stages that exist in between weak states submerged in war and strong states capable of supporting peace. The reality of incremental movements towards peace, which may result in a range of trajectories and

institutional forms (just as the historical modes of state formation also led to different forms of the modern state) is neither accounted for nor encouraged in the current approach to statebuilding.

### **Statebuilding is too state centric**

Alongside its focus on short-term technical projects, statebuilding suffers from the continued predominance of the state in international relations theory and interventions in practice. IOs, made up of member states, are most accountable to the host state which can revoke their permission to operate in the country. They work directly with the central government and rarely openly question or condemn the government. Bilateral donors are, of course, states and therefore primarily interact with and support the central government. Their aid instruments privilege aid that goes directly to the state budget, losing all control over its expenditure. In the absence of willingness by the state or individual ministries to be more responsive and accountable to the population, bilateral donors can do little to improve state–society relations or create liberal institutions. Some INGOs may go around the state and work directly with society, but they rarely work directly with local administrations or reinforce state–society relations from the bottom up, particularly where these relationships do not already exist.

IOs, INGOs, and bilateral donors are therefore often beholden to the state in one way or another. They either work through the state or around it, but rarely reinforce accountability between state and society. Once these newly built or reformed institutions are captured by the state, they are often unable to build peace, which requires that they question the often unequal distribution of resources perpetuated by the state. It is cyclical: IOs are beholden to the state, bilateral donors want to work directly through the state, and INGOs often substitute for the state, but none of these actors can easily help a state to build peace if it is against its interest to do so.

International statebuilding is focused on building the central state at the expense of the provincial administrations and the society. Such asymmetric statebuilding leads to situations where islands of stability and relative peace (usually urban areas) become detached from the rest of the country (usually rural areas or borderlands). Not only does this fail to create peace, but it may actually be conflict inducing as divisions between communities and regions are widened. Again, Afghanistan provides a clear example of the impact of such asymmetric statebuilding. Major centres such as Kabul and Kandahar, whilst continuing to suffer from violent attacks, have become fortified cities. In these centres, citizens have access to a range of institutions and economic opportunities unlike their counterparts in rural and border regions. Such divisions are made more obvious by external processes of statebuilding, which are then manipulated by insurgent groups and other non-state actors to entrench themselves militarily, economically and politically in these neglected communities, making the reality of peace within and between communities a less likely outcome. In some cases, such as Kosovo, the strategy of political decentralization has been used as an attempt to alleviate this problem. In such cases some political power and decision making is moved to the provincial or municipal levels with the aim of ensuring decisions are made based on local needs and with the goal of making local government stronger and more accountable to their constituents. However, these programmes suffer from the same issues discussed above related



to legitimacy and projectization and are by no means an easy solution to expanding governing authority or rebuilding the social contract outside of the centre.

Further, the way that statebuilding projects and programmes are implemented assumes a degree of legitimacy of the state that does not often exist in countries emerging from civil war and large-scale violent conflict. Changes to the international system have meant that the state no longer has monopoly over powers of coercion and citizens now have multiple actors to whom they can grant their legitimacy. As a result, many states that are strong and capable of governing no longer command the legitimacy required for top-down statebuilding to act as a successful path to peace. Other actors now stand out as more legitimate negotiators and builders of peace. Current statebuilding models and practice do not account for the reality that actors and institutions outside of the state (be they international NGOs, or informal/parallel governance structures) might make alternative and more convincing claims to the legitimacy bestowed by citizens, or offer alternative visions of peace that the state cannot or will not provide. When there is a clash between a strong central state's peacebuilding priority and local or non-state focused priorities, more conflict and violence can result.

Looking at governance of the border area in the north of Kosovo provides a useful example. Despite difficult beginnings, the UN-run Customs Service gained a degree of legitimacy for monitoring and securing the border (though this first required dismantling a parallel ethnic Albanian structure who were seen by some as the rightful and legitimate monitors of various border crossings). With the declaration of independence and the creation of a Kosovan state-led border service (again dominated by ethnic Albanians) the Serbian community continued to believe that a UN service would be a better protector of the border than the state apparatus. The international community was seen as the legitimate peacebuilder in this instance, not the formal state apparatus. Whilst of course statebuilding must focus on the building of the state, the utility of these processes in building peace must be seen in terms of both synergies and potential conflicts with other actors engaged in peacebuilding efforts. The role of the state must also be more carefully considered vis-à-vis its relationship with other actors whom they may need to share with or hand over to the power or right to engage in particular modes of peacebuilding. More consideration of the role of local, informal or parallel mechanisms in relation to more conventional processes of statebuilding is needed. In some cases there may be scope for a shared division of labour, in other cases statebuilding may come into direct conflict with these alternative modes of peacebuilding.

### Conclusion

International statebuilding threatens to eclipse efforts to build peace. In practice, statebuilding and peacebuilding have been merged into a technocratic set of projects and programmes that tend to strengthen the capacity of the central government, not state-society relations, responsiveness or accountability (Campbell 2012). These efforts often fail to build either an effective state or sustainable peace.

Some scholars have called for institutionalization (Paris 2004) to occur before any other vast changes to social, political and economic systems so that there are bodies in place to manage the conflict and upheaval that such systemic changes entail. In practice, this top-down approach to statebuilding wrongly grants a pacifying role to formal state

institutions and assumes that they will be viewed as legitimate by local actors. The focus on state institutions, at the expense of state–society relationships and informal institutions, threatens to side-line processes and capacities that are necessary for the domestic legitimacy and effectiveness of state institutions. It also ignores the fact that other institutions beyond formal state structures may have greater legitimacy to build peace. For statebuilding to promote peace, as it may have the potential to do, it should pay more attention to the processes through which institutions become legitimate agents for peace.

To improve the odds that international statebuilding and peacebuilding efforts will help war-torn societies develop capacities to sustain peace, innovations are needed in scholarship and in practice. New research is needed to identify the multiple paths of contemporary state formation and how this can contribute to just and sustainable modes of peace. How do different formal and informal institutions combine along a country's contemporary war-to-peace (and possibly back again) transition? How do these institutions balance and counterbalance one another, leading to critical junctures that alter the country's path? How do international actors intentionally or unintentionally influence the direction? Are there common trends among different states' war-to-peace trajectories, or is each one fundamentally unique with no observable patterns? How do these modern state formation processes compare with historical state formation processes and current models influencing statebuilding? By identifying the incremental processes by which state formation actually takes place, new models of statebuilding that more accurately reflect the reality of conflict-torn countries can be developed. This would help to provide practitioners and policy-makers with more realistic aims, should they choose to adopt them, for both statebuilding and peacebuilding, and help to clarify important distinctions between the two.

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