

## The EU and the Peacebuilding Commission

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**Abstract** *What can the world hope for from the Peacebuilding Commission, given the record of the United Nations in this area? And what contribution can the European Union (EU) offer, given its own record in engaging with countries emerging from violent conflict? The essential task in peacebuilding is to restore a war-torn society's capacity to manage its own conflicts. The priority for the Peacebuilding Commission should be to develop international support and legitimacy for this task, avoiding muddying it with the foreign policy objectives of donor states. The EU has much to offer and much to gain from establishing this growing area of global governance on sound principles and internationally accepted lines. The paper argues that the EU can and should play a leading part in developing the Peacebuilding Commission. It reflects on principles that could be applied and practices that should be avoided.*

### Introduction

Since Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called for the United Nations (UN) to take up post-conflict peacebuilding as a 'new concept' in 1992, the international community has greatly expanded its investment in this field. Formerly war-torn societies attract the attention not only of the UN but also of the European Union (EU), its member states and most other developed countries. Country strategy papers, conflict-sensitive development projects, and donor conferences have become a part of the landscape of post-conflict societies, alongside war damage and refugees.

Internal conflicts are massively destructive to the affected populations and spill over international borders to affect neighbouring countries and the international community at large (Collier et al 2003). There is a strong and widely recognised humanitarian and international interest in preventing such armed conflicts where possible and bringing them to a peaceful conclusion where feasible. Given that about half of all armed conflicts since the end of the Cold War have relapsed into war after reaching a peace settlement, effective measures are clearly needed to avoid a return to violence and establish the conditions for self-sustaining peace.

In response, the last decade has seen a proliferation of efforts by intergovernmental, governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) aimed at reconstructing societies and rebuilding peace. With a view to making such efforts more coherent and coordinated, the High Level Panel (UN 2004) identified the need for 'a single intergovernmental organ dedicated to peacebuilding, empowered to monitor and pay close attention to countries at risk, ensure concerted action by donors, agencies, programmes and financial

institutions, and mobilise financial resources for sustainable peace'. Secretary-General Kofi Annan proposed the establishment of a Peacebuilding Commission in his report, *In larger freedom*, alongside a range of other proposals for the reform of the UN system (UN Secretary General 2005). The Peacebuilding Commission was duly set up in December 2005 and held its inaugural meeting on 23 June 2006.

Paradoxically, the birth of the Peacebuilding Commission coincided with a period of sustained doubts about the ability of the UN to discharge the tasks it has been given. Perhaps most serious was the long-term loss of confidence in the UN in the United States (US). This came to a head in 2003 with the crisis over Iraq and the corruption scandal over the oil-for-food programme, but US hostility towards the UN has been palpable since 1994, when the Republicans gained control of both chambers of Congress.

Doubts about the UN's effectiveness are widely shared. Critics point to poor coordination, slow decision-making and weak operational control of local missions. The inability of peacekeepers to prevent genocide in Srebrenica and Rwanda tarnished the UN. After the initial successes in bringing wars to an end at the end of the Cold War, the record of success in peacebuilding has become patchy (Doyle and Sambanis 2000; Paris 2004). Cases claimed as clear successes in the early 1990s, such as Mozambique, Honduras and Cambodia, have not returned to war, but it is unclear whether they have met the conditions of a self-sustaining peace (Paris 1997). More seriously, leading members of the Security Council have taken enforcement operations outside the UN framework. Where peacebuilding becomes a reconstruction operation directed by the states that were themselves leading protagonists in the war, the whole concept of UN peacebuilding as an impartial and legitimate application of an international 'responsibility to protect' becomes compromised.

In this context, critical voices have questioned whether the UN Peacebuilding Commission is capable of fulfilling the high expectations that have been placed on it. For example, speakers at the European Policy Centre (EPC)—Japan Foundation—National Institute for Research Advancement (NIRA) roundtable held in Tokyo in 2005 doubted the value of the Peacebuilding Commission proposal, and argued that peacebuilding was best left to NGOs. While noting that failed states would continue to be a security concern, they observed that the UN 'lacks the resources to establish an effective Peacebuilding Commission' (EPC—NIRA—Japan Foundation 2005).

The issue of resources seems likely to be an immediate hurdle. The UN Budget Committee turned down the Secretary-General's request to create 22 new positions to staff the Peacebuilding Commission, and required that it be financed from existing resources. A new Peacebuilding Fund is to be established, with a target of US\$250 million, but the funds are to come from voluntary contributions. It remains to be seen how much will be forthcoming. The Fund is intended to help kick-start peacebuilding activities in war-torn countries at an early stage, but its size indicates that the Peacebuilding Commission will have little financial clout on its own. To contextualise this figure, peacebuilding in Bosnia cost US\$16 billion between 1995 and 2001 (Stedman 2003) and the Afghanistan government requested US\$27.5 billion for reconstruction at the Bonn donors' conference in 2004.

There is also a question over the authority that the Peacebuilding Commission will have. It will be advisory rather than executive. The Organizing Committee

will have 31 members, seven from the Security Council (including the Permanent Five), seven from the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), elected from regional groups, to include countries with experience of post-conflict recovery, five from top donors to UN finances, five from top contributors to UN peacekeeping and civilian police, and seven additional members to be chosen by the General Assembly (UN Security Council Resolution 1645, 2005).<sup>1</sup> The Committee will operate by consensus, so all of these members will be able to exercise a veto. It will be supported by a Peacebuilding Support Office under the UN Secretariat, but the capacity of this office is limited. There will also be country-specific commissions, though the Peacebuilding Commission has restricted itself at first to only two countries, Burundi and Sierra Leone.<sup>2</sup> Provision for consultation with civil society and NGOs is being developed through the Global Partnership for the Prevention of Conflict.

Notwithstanding resource and institutional constraints, the Peacebuilding Commission is a significant innovation. Like other UN instruments, it has the capacity for evolution and development over time. It offers scope for strengthening 'chapter six and a half' actions and for developing a capacity in conflict prevention as well as in peacebuilding. The EU has a stake in making it a success. While the US eschews 'nation-building', the European countries have taken a leading role in civilian conflict management. For the EU countries, the UN symbolises multilateralism, legitimacy and the aspiration for a rule-bound international society. The EU being an actor with global aspirations, the shaping of rules and procedures for handling civil conflicts forms an important part of its 'milieu goals'.<sup>3</sup> In this sense, the EU has a strategic interest in organising peacebuilding through the UN.<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding the low expectations in some quarters, the EU welcomed the development of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Peacebuilding, like conflict prevention, is a site of global governance, and its institutional organisation matters for the developing international order.<sup>5</sup> Though the number of armed conflicts has fallen since the early 1990s, one or two new armed conflicts continue to ignite each year and the number of countries at risk of armed conflict or state failure remains significant (Erikkson and Wallenstein 2004). The trend toward international management of post-conflict societies is likely to continue. More states are likely to join those who have experience of peacebuilding. The international community has a collective interest in universalising the norms and values of peaceful settlement of conflicts. There is

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<sup>1</sup>For 2006, the 31 members will be: (Security Council) China, Denmark, France, Russia, Tanzania, United Kingdom, US; (ECOSOC) Angola, Belgium, Brazil, Guinea Bissau, Indonesia, Poland, Sri Lanka; (top providers of assessed contributions) Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, Norway; (top providers of military personnel and civilian police) Bangladesh, Ghana, India, Nigeria, Pakistan; and (General Assembly) Burundi, Chile, Croatia, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Jamaica.

<sup>2</sup>For discussions of the scope and challenges facing the Peacebuilding Commission see, for example, International Peace Academy (2006) and Wilton Park Conference (2006).

<sup>3</sup>For the distinction between 'actor goals' and 'milieu goals', see Arnold Wolfers (1962).

<sup>4</sup>The European Council (2003, paras 84–87) set the strategic objective of 'making effective multilateralism a central element of its external action', with 'a strong UN' at its heart.

<sup>5</sup>For a discussion of conflict prevention as a site of governance, see Hugh Miall (2004).

a clear need for international capacity to manage and sustain the protracted process of implementing peace agreements and sustaining peacebuilding over the long term. If this capacity is to be widely accepted as legitimate, it is important that it should not be identified too strongly with the interests of any single state or group of states. As Roland Paris (1997; 2004) has argued, Western insistence on democratic elections, market economies and economic liberalisation has sometimes exacerbated the difficulties of peacebuilding in war-torn states. More radical critics argue that peacebuilding and conflict prevention are instruments of a 'liberal peace' that constitutes a form of hegemony (Duffield 2001). For some, a return to old-fashioned conflict, which is seen as necessary to achieve social change, is preferable to international intervention. One may reject this conclusion, but still accept that there is a legitimate concern about the close association between peacebuilding and the foreign policy interests of a limited group of states, which opens peacebuilding to the charge of neocolonialism. There is good reason, then, for diversifying the group of states involved in peacebuilding and carrying it out under the legitimacy and impartiality of a UN mandate.

The argument to be made here is that peacebuilding essentially involves restoring societies' capacities to manage their own conflicts. It is widely recognised, by the UN and others, that it is for local people to resolve their own conflicts. The role of outsiders is to facilitate this process, not impose their own solutions. The emphasis therefore is on restoring or establishing workable institutions and procedures that are acceptable to the concerned populations. Of course, this is not an easy task in a post-war environment. It requires local capacity, international capacity, and sensitivity to the impact of the wider international environment on conflict. It is often difficult to engage the will of the populations concerned when the politically dominant groups are leaders of formerly warring factions, and when these factions are typically divided and not necessarily representative of the wider population. Where all local capacity for managing conflict has been destroyed and the protagonists would return to war otherwise, there is a justification for international capacity to replace local capacity, on a transitional basis. But the emphasis must always be on means to restore this capacity to the people concerned as soon as possible.

### **The peacebuilding task**

The mandate given to the Peacebuilding Commission by the General Assembly states that its main purposes shall be:

- (a) To bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;
- (b) 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;
- (c) 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 postconflict recovery. (UN General Assembly 2005)

Even before the Peacebuilding Commission had been set up, the plans for its scope were scaled down. The High Level Group envisaged a body whose tasks would range across the spectrum from conflict prevention to post-conflict peacebuilding. It proposed that the Peacebuilding Commission should take on an early-warning function, and that it should be a subsidiary organ of the Security Council, set up under Article 29 of the Charter (Wallensteen 2005). But following consultations between Kofi Annan and Member States, the remit was limited to post-conflict peacebuilding and the membership was widened. Given the resources available, the narrower scope may be prudent in the first instance. It is arguable, however, that peacebuilding is better seen as operating throughout the conflict cycle (Smith 2003). It is difficult to separate post-conflict peacebuilding (preserving a settlement) from peacemaking (reaching a settlement) and peacekeeping (policing a settlement), since political conflict generally continues after a settlement, armed conflict may recur and the terms of settlements may need to be renegotiated as conditions change. Long-term prevention is also very similar in content to long-term peacebuilding (Ramsbotham et al 2005, 12–14). Contemporary conflicts do not fit with the conception of linear cycle from pre-conflict intensification, through crisis and war, to post-conflict de-escalation. More typically they dip in and out of violent episodes, which may not necessarily affect the whole of a country, and do not have clear beginnings or endings. In such conflicts it is perfectly possible, and often desirable, to initiate peacebuilding activities before the end of violent conflict.<sup>6</sup> It is to be hoped, therefore, that the remit of the Peacebuilding Commission can be expanded, to enable it to take a strategic overview of which measures for peacebuilding are required, throughout the conflict cycle.

The nature of the peacebuilding task varies with the country and the conflict. The conditions that appear to have been most conducive to peacebuilding have been where a conflict has a clear political outcome, for example, where the colonial power has withdrawn (as in Namibia) or where the nature of the political transition is beyond doubt (as in South Africa). In other cases initially promising peacebuilding has been closed off by authoritarian governments representing one side of the former conflict (as in Cambodia). Where a number of factions remain divided but a peace settlement exists, outside bodies may be crucial in monitoring ceasefires and demobilisation plans (as in Central America), helping to negotiate at points of crisis (as in Northern Ireland, Aceh and Macedonia) and assisting in the implementation of peacebuilding plans. In situations where the international community has been obliged to take over the governance of countries, peacebuilding becomes a form of trusteeship (as in Bosnia and Kosovo). The danger then is that the priorities of governance take over, peacebuilding is put on hold and the international direction of government allows rejectionist factions to block progress and domestic political progress to freeze, rather as peacekeeping freezes some conflicts. The challenge in such situations is to preserve political momentum and the capacity for change.

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<sup>6</sup>Indeed, the EU currently supports peacebuilding efforts in situations of ongoing violence, as in Sri Lanka.

The UN developed a relatively clear 'standard operating procedure' from the peacebuilding operations of the 1990s. The task was typically seen as a fourfold challenge: demilitarising the conflict and providing a basis for security, steering a course for a political transition, re-establishing a functioning economy and healing the social wounds of war by dealing with perpetrators, compensating victims and rebuilding broken relationships. There were complex issues of sequencing, made more difficult by the interdependent nature of the problems. In general, the agreed main sequence was to insist on physical security first, by ending the fighting and starting the process of disarmament and demobilisation. This would provide sufficient conditions for the protagonists to move towards negotiating a constitutional or institutional basis for a new government. Often the key stage here would be the holding of elections, which served to legitimise the settlement and mark the transfer of power from military factions to civil politics. This would then provide a framework for the other related tasks: economic recovery; truth commissions; war crimes tribunals; re-establishment of law, justice and policing; re-settlement of refugees; re-establishing economic activity; and the first steps towards reconciliation (Smith 2003; Ramsbotham et al 2005).

In order to implement this sequence, the UN relied on multifunctional operations that developed out of peacekeeping, but grew in scope as the range of tasks expanded. In charge of these operations would be a special representative of the secretary-general (SRSG), often a leading figure with the skill and ability to bring together the mix of local and international interests involved. For example, Martti Ahtisaari took this role in Namibia, Aldo Ajello in Mozambique, Lakhdar Brahimi in Afghanistan and Bernard Kouchner in Kosovo (Jeong 2005). These SRSGs could be seen as the focal point of two cones, one outside the country—focusing the efforts of national governments, international agencies, donors and non-governmental bodies—and one inside—drawing on the leaderships of the protagonist parties, the local authorities, police, judiciary, social groups, churches, business interests and the general population. When this concept worked, it provided a clear basis for the coordination that was necessary. The SRSGs were supported by resident coordinators and the UN and United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices in the country. As the situation eased, the intention was to gradually put the operations under resident coordinators and then transfer it to local agents (UN Secretary-General 1995).

In practice, coordination has not been straightforward. A large number of outside organisations were soon entering into post-conflict spaces around the world, each with its own agenda and its own view of what should be done. Unity of purpose was difficult to achieve. Turf battles were common, both internationally and on the ground. In some places, coordination has worked well; in others, it has broken down. In Macedonia, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the UN, NGOs, military peacekeepers and civilian officials worked together effectively and developed strong links with local contacts in the Albanian and Slav Macedonian communities. But in other situations, the story has not been so happy. In El Salvador, the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF) failed to consult adequately with the UNDP, and financial austerity programmes undermined peacebuilding programmes. In Angola, the UN, the military and NGOs were at loggerheads. In Bosnia, US military planning dominated the early phases of peacebuilding, to the detriment of the civilian mission. Similarly in Somalia, the military took over operations,

marginalising UN and NGO agencies. Clearly one of the aims of the Peacebuilding Commission is to improve coordination in such cases, but it is unclear as yet how this will take place. The issue is not merely a matter of communications, but one of different philosophies and objectives.

Peacebuilding has been further complicated since the late 1990s by its linkage to the neoliberal agenda. Elections are often a very helpful means of moving away from reliance on force to resolve conflicts, but the assumption that Western models of democracy, thinly applied, will improve the situation in all post-conflict situations is clearly flawed. There is ample evidence that transitional regimes and fledgling democracies are associated with relatively high levels of conflict (Hegre et al 2001). In specific cases, early elections have been damaging to the interests of peacebuilding, as in Bosnia. Similarly, unreflective imposition of market disciplines and trade openness has been counterproductive. A more conflict-sensitive approach to democracy promotion and market reforms would be helpful in peacebuilding as well as in conflict prevention. 'Reconstruction' becomes especially problematic when it can be seen as a continuation of big power intervention. One of the tasks for the UN Peacebuilding Commission is to reclaim the UN's original concept.<sup>7</sup>

At its root, the task of peacebuilding is conflict resolution. The aim should be to assist those affected by the conflict to find a way out of it that is acceptable to them and to others concerned. This requires not 'massive social engineering', as the critics argue, but an elicitive and exploratory process.

The appropriate theoretical construct here is conflict theory and the theory of conflict transformation. A range of valuable theoretical ideas have developed within the academic literature on peacebuilding, for example, on institution-building (Cousens and Kumar 2001); relationship-building and level of interventions (Lederach 1997); security sector reform and disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) (Berdal 1996); spoilers (Stedman 1997); economic development (Collier et al 2003) and political transitions (O'Leary and McGarry 1996; Sisk 1997). But the basic issue to be dealt with remains how to transform or accommodate incompatible interests. For this, what is needed is careful conflict analysis and an open-minded appreciation of the possibilities of change. Conflict transformation tends to proceed in fits and starts and to be frustratingly slow. Yet, it takes place and it is therefore fundamental for peacebuilding. For this reason, as Peter Wallensteen (2005) has argued, an analytical capability should be an important element of the Peacebuilding Commission.

Peacebuilding strategy cannot be 'one size fits all'. It depends on the nature and intensity of the continuing conflict, which is shaped by the degree to which any settlement has satisfied the parties and addressed the root causes. Countries coming out of conflict vary in their state capacity, economic potential and social capital and in the degree to which these have been destroyed. Outside interventions range from massive military and political support for nation-building under close international direction to relatively light measures such as

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<sup>7</sup>Reconstruction implies large, top-down and often temporary activities, aimed at rebuilding a functioning state. Peacebuilding has the implication of a more comprehensive approach to a conflict's root causes, often requiring a comprehensive engagement at other levels of society beside the elite. For a discussion of the differences, see Ramsbotham et al (2005, chapters 10 and 11).

financial support for governance reform or police-training. One of the challenges for the UN and the EU is to match the resources available appropriately to the need, fitting strategies and instruments to the needs of the case, rather than the other way round.<sup>8</sup>

The key is to explore the scope for political transition, taking into account the goals, interests and needs of the conflict parties and their constituencies, bearing in mind the ways in which goals may be reframed, actors may change and identities may develop. Local and international peacebuilders need to work with a broad range of groups, and to find an acceptable way to balance different demands in workable political structures and voting systems.<sup>9</sup> The approach developed by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities, who was able to negotiate across conflict lines at both elite and social levels, provides worthwhile lessons in this respect.<sup>10</sup>

### **The development of European Union peacebuilding**

As a major participant in the UN with a developing stake of its own in peacebuilding, the EU is in a position to make a leading contribution to the development of the Peacebuilding Commission. Its members have a third of the seats on the Security Council, a fifth of the seats in ECOSOC and an eighth of the seats in the General Assembly. As a contributor of 50 per cent of UN funds, and 39 per cent of the cost of peacekeeping missions, as well as more than half of the world's development assistance, the EU is already in a leading position (Arnould 2005). But it is above all in development of the principles and practice of civilian peacebuilding, in the context of an external policy based on the principle of shared norms and values, that the EU's leadership role should be clear.

João de Deus Pinheiro, Commissioner for Development, stated the principles of the European Commission approach in 1995. The first was ownership: local governments and communities bore the primary responsibility for conflict management and peacebuilding. The second was a long-term approach based on prevention and a focus on root causes. The third was a coherent approach at all points in the conflict cycle to the integration of EU instruments that might enable an environment of peace. The fourth was a concentration on improved analysis, decision-making and a culture of conflict prevention. The fifth was more effective coordination.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>8</sup>For an assessment of what has been counted as 'success' and 'failure' in different peacebuilding efforts, and the extent to which characteristics of the conflict and of the intervention influence outcomes, see Michael Lund (2003).

<sup>9</sup>The benefits of an inclusive approach in peacemaking and peacebuilding are recognised in the literature and evident from settlements that stick. See, for example, John Paul Lederach (1997).

<sup>10</sup>The High Commissioner achieved 'a modicum of trust between would-be warring parties on many of the ragged edges of Europe', *The Economist*, 11 September 1999. For an account of his work, which was carried out in close liaison with governments and NGOs in the Hague and in the affected countries, see Walter Kemp (2001) and Peter Harris and Ben Reilly (1998).

<sup>11</sup>João de Deus Pinheiro (1999), 'Peacebuilding and conflict prevention in Africa', *CPN Yearbook 1998/99* (Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft), 20, cited by Erik J Eidem (2004).

These principles are admirable and have much to offer the Peacebuilding Commission.<sup>12</sup> However, the EU's strategies and practices have not always followed them closely. From 1999, the EU's emphasis turned to crisis management, a concept that has no direct equivalent in UN terminology. The Cologne European Council urged that the EU 'should have the ability to take decisions on the full range of conflict prevention and crisis management tasks' (1999). Since then the EU has invested heavily in military crisis management capabilities, and created a new capacity to deploy civilian crisis management missions. But the effort to develop these new capabilities may have come at the expense of peacebuilding conceived as supporting local capacities to manage conflict. While the EU pressed ahead with its efforts to establish a robust capacity for external action, the strategic coordination of peacebuilding activities fell between the different pillars of the Union, and between the EU, its member governments and non-governmental bodies (Kronenberger and Wouters 2004; Gourlay 2006). The strategic objectives of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) and the EU Security and Defence Policy (ESDP) under the Union, on the one hand, and development and trade policy under the Commission, on the other, have taken priority, and consequently conflict prevention and peacebuilding have not always been developed in the most coherent way, despite efforts to mainstream conflict prevention and improve policy coordination across the Union.

In 2000, the Portuguese Presidency identified four main priorities in civilian crisis management: policing, rule of law, civilian administration and civil protection. These forms of support would involve assembling trained personnel from EU countries to go to areas of crisis, and substitute for or support local personnel. This was an innovation in peacebuilding—blue and yellow starred helmets in civilian clothes. The first missions were deployed in 2003 to Bosnia, Macedonia, Georgia and the Democratic Republic of Congo. But, as Agnieszka Nowak (2006, 27) argues, these four priorities 'represented limited thinking about what was actually required. The EU needed to build civilian capabilities as part of a continuum of interdependent tasks. For example, it was difficult for a police mission to function without a functioning law and police reform.' A more comprehensive approach would require an integrated framework tailor-made for the situation.

The division of responsibilities for strategies and instruments related to peacebuilding between the Union's different pillars, and between the Union and member states, has led to problems that the Peacebuilding Commission will have to find ways to surmount. In Macedonia, for example, competition between the agencies of the European Commission and the European Council over the control of the Proxima policing mission in Macedonia created local difficulties, reflecting the ongoing struggle for control over external relations (Ionnides 2006). Similarly, governments are not always willing to share their Country Papers with the

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<sup>12</sup>Direct application of EU principles is made difficult because these principles have evolved over time and also because of differences in terminology and conceptualisation. The EU defines conflict prevention as 'short-term measures to reduce manifest tensions and prevent the outbreak or recurrence of violent conflict', while peacebuilding is regarded as 'actions undertaken over the medium or longer term to address root causes of violent conflicts in a targeted manner'—a definition different from Boutros-Ghali's; see European Commission (1996).

Commission. The Commission has even taken the Council to the European Court of Justice over where the dividing line should lie between the CFSP and development policy. Perhaps more fundamental than these turf battles, which can ultimately be resolved by clearer political direction and better collaboration, are the differences in philosophy and objectives between different agencies. These are manifest, for example, in the different approaches of development agencies and foreign ministries. This is particularly an issue on the wider international scene, where different philosophies of intervention are current: contrast for example the approaches to 'reconstruction' and 'peacebuilding' by the US Army on the one hand and NGOs on the other. If the EU is unable to overcome differences of perspective in its own backyard, will the Peacebuilding Commission be able to do so with a considerably wider range of countries and philosophies? This may suggest that much will rest on the vision, authority and resourcefulness of individual missions (or National Commissions) in particular countries. What will be crucial will be their ability to mobilise both the internal and external constituencies behind a vision of what peacebuilding can mean in the country concerned, and to call on the resources and capacities that are required.

European Union peacebuilding policy has thus developed unevenly. It is subject to a volatile policy environment; changing officials, politicians and governments; and, of course, rapid and unpredictable changes in the conflicts on the ground. It has been difficult to establish a consistent approach or a long institutional memory. It is perhaps misleading to look for an overall peacebuilding strategy at this stage, since what has emerged is a mixture of responses by different elements of the EU system to different types of conflict. On the one hand, there are approaches to the management of complex emergencies in which the EU has been a significant party in the conflict, as in some of the conflicts in the Balkans. On the other hand, there are situations where the EU's role is essentially that of a donor, providing aid and advice in countries remote from its borders. The development of new EU capabilities and the possibilities opened up by the Peacebuilding Commission may suggest space for activities in the middle ground.

### **EU peacebuilding in the Balkans**

On its own periphery, and especially in countries that are European but outside the Union, member states have been willing to go a very long way to ensure that post-conflict states are stabilised and prepared for ultimate entry.

The areas where the EU has been most successful in conflict prevention and peacebuilding have been those where major conflicts have not ignited, and there are lessons to be learned from this. The EU's role in the Baltic States' conflicts and the active involvement of its member states in the work of the OSCE provide a fine example of constructive engagement. This suggests that where there is a legitimate basis for intervention, and, especially when an element of conditionality provides an inducement, an engagement of long-duration involving respected diplomats and civilian missions on the ground can contribute to the mediation of specific crises and the negotiation of new political relationships and laws.

The conflict in Macedonia also offers a good example of peacebuilding, when the negotiation and implementation of the Ohrid Agreement enabled Macedonia to recover from what could have been a more serious armed conflict. The heavy

international protection for the new state, and Western support for its institutions and finances, provided a positive example of effective peacebuilding, albeit in a state where conditions are relatively favourable. The most important factor in peacebuilding has probably been internal, namely a political system that provided incentives for cooperation between the Albanian and Slav Macedonian parties. The conduct of government remains firmly in Macedonian hands. The international role has been supportive and facilitative. The EU provided both financial and operational support, including an influential special envoy, extensive discussion with all parties in Macedonia, expert advice on constitutional reform, and support for security through police and military missions. The communities remain unreconciled, but the tensions have eased and there is still a grudging willingness on the part of the Slav and Albanian Macedonians to share a common state. The amnesty offered to the rebels, together with the constitutional recognition of a credible offer of eventual accession to the EU, provided a strong incentive to abide by the Agreement. The lesson is that outside support for a fragile state can be significant, although the decisive factor for conflict prevention and peacebuilding is likely to be internal political accommodation.

By contrast, Bosnia has been a searing lesson in the difficulties of intervention and crisis management. The Dayton Accords, which succeeded in bringing the conflict to an end, nevertheless did much to consolidate the power of the nationalist parties. As the nationalist groups proved unwilling to cooperate with the state organs, these organs became dysfunctional, and the international community became obliged to rely on direct powers to make the state work. Bosnia has shown that a heavy and expensive commitment, combined with large-scale military deployment, can prevent a return to war. But the peace is not yet self-sustaining, in that the sovereignty of the state remains in dispute. The international community has had to concentrate power in the hands of the EU High Representative and reduce the powers of the state entities. Further constitutional changes and changes in the identification of the main political parties will be necessary before Bosnia becomes a settled state. The offer of a Stability and Association Agreement provides a measure of conditionality and an incentive for compliance (Blockmans 2004), even if, as at present, the Republica Srpska (RS) risks rejection by stalling on police reform. But a continued international presence is necessary, since, if it was withdrawn, a return to violence would be likely.<sup>13</sup>

The cost of the peacebuilding operation in Bosnia, the retention of a large peacekeeping force and the investment of time by political leaders suggest that this kind of operation will not be duplicated in many trouble spots around the world at once. Nevertheless, it has shown that, with this level of attention, it is possible not only to avoid the relapse into war, but also to hold open the prospect of moving forward to institutions that could be accepted.

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<sup>13</sup>Similarly, in Kosovo, the international community's primary role has been to prevent the recurrence of war, rather than to build a peace. The effort to form a unified police force is perhaps the most significant piece of peacebuilding, and some local administrations have Serbs as well as Albanians. The future prospects of the province depend on the outcome of the internationally hosted negotiations over its final status. If these end in something close to independence, many remaining Serbs may leave, and the end state is likely to be an Albanian state with a small Serbian minority rather than a shared state.

This clearly demonstrates that the international community is capable of preventing the recurrence of armed conflict, when it takes enough trouble to do so. It also indicates the potential of regional organisations in peacebuilding, though the EU is clearly in a class of its own in the range of instruments it can deploy and in the diplomatic and financial weight it can bring to bear. The challenge for the Peacebuilding Commission is to determine when and where there is sufficient political will to make efforts on this scale, and what priorities are to be used in committing existing resources. If extended to most post-conflict situations, sustained peacebuilding would involve a scale of commitment and endurance that would be a step change from the present level of international engagement. However, compared with the costs of conflict, the effort may be worthwhile. Certainly a step-by-step enlargement of existing levels of effort is a reasonable aspiration for the UN.

### **EU peacebuilding in Africa**

Since Burundi and Sierra Leone have been selected as the first cases for the Peacebuilding Commission, it is interesting to look at policy towards them in the light of the EU's developing engagement with Africa.

In 1996, the European Commission emphasised a comprehensive approach to African conflicts, based on an examination of the root causes and a preventive approach (European Commission 1996). The overarching aim was 'structural stability', defined as 'a situation involving sustainable economic development, democracy and respect for human rights, viable political structures and healthy social and environmental conditions, with the capacity to manage change without resort to violent conflict'. Again, the principles were admirable, but putting them into practice has not been easy.

In 2000, the Cotonou Agreement<sup>14</sup> provided European Community financial support for local mediation and conciliation efforts, peacebuilding and conflict prevention to the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) states. To further the principle of 'national ownership', it gave the ACP states powers of decision in the selection of programmes and projects, and proposed jointly prepared Country Strategy Papers. The difficulty was the influence this gave to governments over the form of peacebuilding assistance provided. They were able to accept poverty reduction but evade governance reform. In many post-conflict situations, the government sometimes represents only one side of the conflict.<sup>15</sup> It is clearly desirable to reach beyond the government to the whole population, even though this is particularly difficult for intergovernmental cooperation. To avoid partiality, 'local ownership' needs a broad interpretation.

The EU's Development Strategy (EU 2006) emphasises 'a comprehensive prevention approach to state fragility, conflict, natural disasters and other types of crises'. To deal with fragile states, the EU aims to 'assist partner countries' and

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<sup>14</sup>Partnership Agreement Between the Members of the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) Group of States of the One Part, and the European Community and Its Member States of the Other Part, Cotonou, 23 June 2000, *Official Journal of the European Communities* (2000) L 317/3.

<sup>15</sup>In Africa, for example, the government is often a prize and instrument in regional and ethnic contests for power and resources (Clapham 1996).

regional organisations' efforts to strengthen early warning systems and democratic governance and institutional capacity building'. In difficult partnerships, fragile or failing states, the Community's immediate priorities will be 'to deliver basic services and address needs, through collaboration with civil society and UN organizations. The long-term vision for Community engagement is to increase ownership and continue to build legitimate, effective and resilient state institutions and an active and organised civil society, in partnership with the country concerned' (paras 89–90).

The EU has developed a wide range of projects and programmes in many countries, but until recently it has had little capacity to bring together structural and operational policy measures. Significant elements of responsibility for programmes are delegated to NGOs, or left to the countries themselves to carry out with European Commission (EC) funding. The main emphasis is on structural prevention and peacebuilding, carried out mainly through the auspices of development cooperation (Eidem 2004). The EU has also financed peacekeeping and peacebuilding efforts by regional organisations such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) and the African Union (AU).

Compared with its efforts in the Balkans, this was a much lighter approach. It would be fair to characterise the EU's past role as more concerned with structural than operational peacebuilding. Nonetheless, structural peacebuilding is an important contribution. The peacebuilding literature tends to focus on operational measures to prevent the recurrence of violence, but the transition from a post-conflict truce to workable political institutions and a functioning economy, in a way that addresses the root causes of the original conflict, remains crucial. For this, structural measures to improve governance, economic development, administration, policing and the rule of law are very important. The EU has also supported operational peacebuilding by other actors, and has begun to undertake its own policing and peacekeeping operations.

In Burundi, for example, the EU has supported the AU's peacekeeping force and the AU-led peace process. It also supported training workshops aimed at security sector reform.<sup>16</sup> The EU has also helped to finance the recent elections. These are examples of positive measures, coordinated with other actors, that have contributed towards the improved situation. Nevertheless the peace remains fragile and the situation is challenging for outside interveners. Léonce Ndikumana (2005) argues that the conflict is over the control and distribution of resources between regional and ethnic groups, the army playing a key role in this competition. Any outside intervention that supplies additional resources, especially if these resources are channelled through the state, risks exacerbating these conflicts. A very careful approach is needed, which attempts to convince the major groups that they share an interest in sustaining the peace. This implies providing public goods, such as better education, particularly important in the Burundian context, and improving the quality of governance and public institutions. Perhaps a miracle, and certainly sustained commitment and effective leadership, is needed to overcome the history of massacres and exclusive rule in Burundi's history. Much will depend on the

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<sup>16</sup>These were part of an impressive set of efforts designed to elicit better relationships and new agreements between the army and other groups in Burundi, led by Ambassador Howard Wolpe at the Woodrow Wilson Center.

quality of leadership that the Working Group of the Peacebuilding Commission can provide. The EU will continue to be important as a provider of funds, for example for demobilisation and security sector reform. The resettlement of refugees and the land reforms required will need both outside financial support and careful, conflict-sensitive handling.<sup>17</sup>

Sierra Leone is another case where there is a strong case for structural peacebuilding to support the country's revival. In the short to medium term, the country needs further support with reintegration of demobilised soldiers into civilian life, economic recovery, better governance, and, above all, education, the key to long-term development and inclusion. The Peacebuilding Commission's engagement offers an opportunity to sustain international commitment, avoiding the rapid stabilisation and withdrawal model that seems unlikely to lead to a lasting peace.

If the Peacebuilding Commission succeeds, it will have brought together key communities in the country affected, elicited a sufficient consensus on the way forward and drawn on sustained international support. The Utstein Report, an evaluation of the peacebuilding activities at the national level of four leading European donors (Norway, Germany, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom), found that many peacebuilding programmes lack a clear connection to an overall peacebuilding strategy (Smith 2003). If the Working Groups set up to coordinate the Peacebuilding Commission's activities include leading figures from within the country and outside who can provide such a strategy, and if they can win sufficiently wide support from the local communities and the international community, they may have a chance to succeed.

### **Conclusion: the potential EU contribution to the Peacebuilding Commission**

The EU and its member states will be the most important bloc of donor governments for the Peacebuilding Commission. As this paper has demonstrated, they have a rich body of experience to draw on. There are principles and practices from the EU's engagement with peacebuilding that can be of direct relevance, but there are also examples of institutional incoherence, mixed objectives and poor institutional memory that the Peacebuilding Commission would do well to avoid.

The principles of capacity-building and local ownership of the process, which have been enunciated but not always practised in EU programmes, should inform the Peacebuilding Commission's work. It is particularly important to find ways to extend the ownership of a peacebuilding process beyond the state, especially when competition over the state is a driving factor in the conflict. If the Peacebuilding Commission's national commissions can consult with a wide range of social actors, and at the same time draw on a sustained commitment of resources from the international communities, they may be able to offer a new approach that builds on the examples of the most successful peacebuilding programmes to date. Peacebuilding could be added to peacekeeping as a new 'chapter six and a half' instrument for the UN. This suggests a greater level of international commitment, and an effort to bring together operational and

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<sup>17</sup>For another discussion of what the Peacebuilding Commission could do in Burundi, see Gareth Evans (2006).

structural peacebuilding. But it may not require efforts as extensive as those in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the international community has partly taken over local governance. The international community is not ready to finance many more Bosnia operations. Some intermediate form of peacebuilding is required, between the light footprint of past EU peacebuilding in Africa, and the heavy footprint of its efforts in the Balkans. The Peacebuilding Commission may be able to develop such a model.

The observation made by Gareth Evans (2006) provides us with an appropriate conclusion to this article: 'The roles identified here just for one country seem a tall order for an institution that doesn't even have offices, staff or a clear vision yet. They are especially difficult for an institution whose costs beyond basic operations will come from a voluntary fund rather than assessed contributions.' And yet, if the international community wishes to invest in it, the Peacebuilding Commission could have a valuable future. If the EU is serious about its aspirations for leadership and its vision for conflict prevention, it should aim to do all in its power to make the Peacebuilding Commission's work in its first two cases a success.

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