

Review

## PBC- A commission for hegemonic peace building?

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The United Nations' (UN) organ, the Peace-building Architecture (PBA) directed by Peace-building Commission (PBC) is yet to become a distinct player in peace-building. Arguments articulate well how it continues to find it difficult to tackle challenges that mar world wide support for peace-building. It seems to display behaviours that are assumed in the modernization theory and has a vague approach to the concept of peace-building. According to the North Countries it can mean development, security or organizing elections while to the South Countries it means literally negotiating for peace. However, the PBC has excelled in securing resources for quick impact projects that delivered immediate key dividends of peace to traumatised war victims. All countries on the Commission's agenda have so far received funding through the architecture's PBSO. On the same note, It is the worry of this study that the PBC focuses exclusively on financing or rebuilding states and the fear of this author is that the PBC has just become another donor forum ('burden sharing enterprise' as this author prefers to call it), by former colonizers. This research finds out how the PBC and the PBSO add to the use of institutions to formalize power, thus making peace-building a very hegemonic and political enterprise.

**Key words:** Peace building, United Nations, Peace Building Commission, Africa.

### INTRODUCTION

Key to the analysis of the United Nations Peace Building Architecture (UNPBA) is the many issues which have risen and still make it difficult for peace in war torn countries to be found. Since the inception of the PBA, mandated and entrusted by the international community with building peace in countries on its agenda, many commentators contest its nature and membership. Questions on its scope of authority have sufficed too. The fear that has existed before its inception is that states design institutions accordingly in order to use them to further their own goals (Koremenos et al., 2001). The UN remains divided by political friction: the Security Council

versus the General Assembly and also the North versus the South States. In addition, the 2010 review of the body reveals that the aspiration that drove the creation of the commission has lost some of its fervor and no countries on its agenda have 'graduated' from the program. Faltering commitments by many of its creators has frustrated the commission's ability to maximize its contribution to peace-building progress.

The ontological concern and question of this paper is that the PBC is marred with power politics. It appears to be a disguised guarantor of business for 'imperialist multi-national companies or colonial masters who benefit from

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conflict-related activities and later carry out a burden-sharing scheme<sup>i</sup> in war torn countries. Related to this, is the North-South dimension of peacebuilding operations. Interventions to date have tended to reflect asymmetrical distributions of power in which Northern states have determined why, where, when and how such interventions will occur. It is clear that the PBC has failed to meet most people's expectations, but this is largely because many of these expectations have been too unrealistic. Therefore, this paper tries to analyze debates about 'imperialistic peacebuilding' that emerge still, in the PBC, in order to clarify and understand its character, so it can arrive at a clear picture of what animal it is in Africa and elsewhere. Clearly as Coning (2010) points out, there are institutional issues that can and should be addressed now, to ensure that the PBC is providing the best possible support in the efforts to consolidate peace in the countries on its agenda, as will be indicated in this and the other chapters ahead.

### **History of colonial intrusion in Africa**

Before expressing suspicion of the PBC, it is important to bring any history of powerful countries' existence in Africa to surface in order to understand what brings about the suspicion. The objectives of establishing colonialism according to Prof. Mapangala (2000) were obvious in that "it was an instrument of imperialism whose central motive was to advance the interests of capitalist expansion in the colonies and semi colonies of Africa, Asia and Latin America." He underscores that such interests included production of raw agricultural and mineral materials for the Industries of Western Europe and North America and creation of markets for the industrial commodities. His explanation is that this capitalist expansion and the drive to fulfill objectives mentioned above, it became necessary to dominate and control societies in these continents politically and ideologically. This resulted in the establishment of colonial states in Africa.

His Excellency Paul Kagame, Former President of the Republic of Rwanda, adding to the African concern, emphasized that "the colonial system was greatly responsible for the post-independence conflicts within and between African countries" (Kagame, 2002). Some of the aspects through which the seeds of conflicts are believed to have been sown under colonialism include the following: firstly, colonialism created and consolidated divisive ideologies of ethnicity, racialism, regionalism and religious antagonism (Mpangala, 2000). Secondly, Kagame noted that colonialism divided people through the policy of divide and rule and the creation of artificial borders between colonies. Artificial borders divided people who before colonialism were under the same political organizations. Neo-colonial forces came when African countries achieved independence (Kagame, 2002). Kagame notes that this move was believed to be

a new form of extending the same imperialist economic interests by controlling the economies of the independent African countries. This was partly to be done by ensuring the establishment of puppet regimes. Today, Central Africa and Africa's Great Lakes region continue to experience serious and repetitive conflicts in the immediate post-Cold War years, despite many repeated interventions. Instead of the forces internal to a country, critics have emphasized the presence of external factors which bore hallmarks of neo-colonialism. The Congo (DR) provides us with a good example of how neo-colonial forces created conditions for post-independence conflicts and instability, according to Kagame.

### **Africa as a testing ground**

History reveals that Africa has been one of the principal continents where new instruments have been tried out, refined and then exported to big powerful countries e.g peacebuilding or post conflict apparatus. Since 2000, international concern for African conflicts increased exponentially<sup>ii</sup>. Examples are interventions led by the United Kingdom in Sierra Leone (2000), France in Ivory Coast (2002)<sup>iii</sup> and the European Union (EU)'s Operation Artemis in DRC (2003). The continent therefore became the main theatre of operations owing to the high number of missions (over 20), the budget, and personnel deployed.<sup>iv</sup> There are many African countries currently benefiting from peace-building activities under the UN PBA and the rest are the Comoros, Nepal and Haiti.<sup>v</sup> This shows how the PBA has been more visible in Africa than other continents. Automatically, this portrays Africa as a region of instability for which attention in terms of resources, capacity and coordination strategies should be focused. This precipitates the worldwide perceptions and descriptions of Africa as the poorest and most conflict-prone region in the world. Richard Dowden says that the African "reputation" is often cast in the indivisible realities of poverty, disease and war (Aning and Lartey, 2010).

### **Hegemonic interventions**

Hegemony, derived from Gramsci's work, refers to the forms of consent, which develop within a society between dominant groups and wider social forces.<sup>vi</sup> In light of this explanation, from the days of colonization to date; powerful countries and coalitions of the willing and the rich have increasingly carried out projects in developing countries, and recently all in the name of peace building. Former colonial powers such as the UK, France, and Belgium, etc. have and continue to play significant roles in recent peace building operations. However, their motivations for doing so are questioned primarily because of their exploitative colonial past. They have interfered with outsiders' direct influence on the domestic

affairs of countries of the South. One wonders why, but according to Bretton Woods, hegemony has always needed a strategy for dealing with challenges to the status quo (Schellhaas and Seegers, 2009). It is understood that the quest for regional or world hegemony may unfortunately be one of the powerful motivating factors for this involvement of powerful nations in countries of the South in the name of the PBC. Desperate times call for desperate measures; as the 'coalition of the willing' cobbled by the US practically disintegrates, these countries can find other ways of staying on top as the US sank in the quagmire in Iraq and Afghanistan and its recent pronouncement of its pivot to the South East Asia.

### PBC-Disseminator of Western Norms

The PBC seems to provide yet another forum where great powers co-operate to impose a common juridical framework over the entire globe. This author is tempted to see the PBC as an industrial-strength disseminator of Western norms to post-conflict states. In its deliberations, such cosmopolitan values as the need for elections, gender equality and transparent governance are discursively reinforced. This is just a repeat of what used to happen in the past, where for centuries stronger powers intervened along their peripheries to establish politically acceptable forms of order (Barnett, 2006). The former Secretary of the UN was quoted in 2000 as saying,

"There are many good reasons for promoting democracy...not the least in the eyes of the United Nations is that, when sustained over time; it is a highly effective means of preventing conflict, both within and between states."<sup>vii</sup>

The general concern has been that the universalization of liberal values such as democracy, capitalism and secularism undermines the traditions and practices of non-Western cultures. To add to this, the host countries regard the Western liberal democracies that dominate the international development assistance as more or less seeking to rebuild failed states in their own image. It also suffices that the PBC uses foreign resources of the same types to build acceptable states in areas that pose a perceived threat to powerful actors or international security. Nevertheless, the motive always comes to the surface; post-war operations attempt to transform states, rather than absorbing them into other, more powerful, units.<sup>viii</sup> For example, Jenkins (2008) observes that donor governments and UN agencies saw the IPBS preparation process as a means of steering the policy and institutional-reform agendas in Burundi and Sierra Leone toward issues that, they felt, had been under emphasised in previous national framework documents. In the case of Burundi, for instance, the establishment of a Truth and Reconciliation Commission was a key priority for many PBC member-states. In the Sierra Leone case, considerable discussion centred on the need to place the issue

of natural resource extraction as a potential source of misgovernance and renewed conflict higher up on the policy agenda. This has not been easy. Part of the problem where war torn countries seem not to achieve any peace, lies in the inability of localities to adapt to foreign structures and demands which are alien and distort the indigenous and locally preferred constructions.

### Politico-military focus for transformation

Although the UN has no clear standards for the type of government legitimate for its members but the big powers which dominate the PBC, emphasize the democratic and capitalist systems, which have sharpened confrontations in already divided societies of the focus countries. These have shown peacebuilding to have a progressive rhetorical cover that it is in fact a tool of riot control or even neo-imperialism designed to re-colonize regions of the South. In the Burundi context, several statements emphasize security actions as the most important condition in order to achieve peace: "the return to peace and security in Burundi requires a return to the barracks of members of the Forces de Defense Nationale (FDN)".<sup>ix</sup> Training and reforming security agencies is equally political, as the PBC introduced some army and police projects in these countries.

Again, it was argued that "improving Burundi's security situation after over a decade of conflict is a *sine qua non* condition for restoring an environment conducive to economic recovery and national reconciliation"<sup>x</sup>. This informs the argument that the PBC focus was undoubtedly on political (to democratize countries of the South) and military measures at the expense of psychosocial aspects, which to a large extent have been neglected. For instance, despite much focus on the political and military dimensions, the March 2009 violence in Sierra Leone and the Guinea Bissau assassinations of top Government officials after elections reveal that elections are being rushed before necessary stable platforms have been constructed. Yes, the PBC simultaneously carry out disarmament campaigns, collect illegal weapons, reintegrate militia members and support the return of refugees after elections. However, intended results are never achieved, it shows that it is important to bear in mind that the physical effects are much easier to treat than the invisible psychological wounds, and that Development can only take place in a stable environment.

### Imported Peacebuilding

Currently, countries on the agenda feel left out in all decision making. Efforts to achieve local ownership in connection to peacebuilding operations seem to focus on creating local support for the already defined mandate of the operations. This means that local ownership is thus

not seen 'as an ultimate goal or vision but as a practical strategy for action'.<sup>xi</sup> What is to be owned is clearly, in other words, an externally defined agenda.<sup>xii</sup> This proves that even the local actors, talent, and wisdom seem not to be drawn upon at any stage of the peacebuilding process Agenda. Even though the PBC's founding resolutions 'Notes the importance of participation of regional and local actors' and 'Encourages the Commission to consult with civil society, non-governmental organizations, including women's organizations, and the private sector engaged in peacebuilding activities, as appropriate'<sup>xiii</sup> this allows for the participation of regional and local actors, but they are not seen as central actors. It does not suffice that the civil society consultations were conducted in the countries. This proves the contention that the role of external actors in peacebuilding is more dictatorial, instead of being supportive.

This has resulted in programs that do not support indigenous capacity for locals to address the root causes of conflict on their own. In addition, some programmes usually include certain methodologies, objectives and norms. Since the problem is pre-defined as a lack of liberal institutions etc., local preferences, culture and practices are devalued, often seen as part of the problem, and knowledge about these factors is considered to be relevant insofar as it will help implementing the liberal peacebuilding model (Call and Cousens, 2008). The universality assumption means that the gathering of 'lessons learned' from previous engagements is seen as a useful way to better fine-tune future peacebuilding practices. The fine-tuning is therefore merely a repackaging of hegemonic practices.<sup>xiv</sup> This is despite the fact that the level of state fragility in Africa varies in degrees and scope of security threats that prevail in focus countries.

To cite an example of 'ownership' according to the PBC; the texts of the IPBSs are drafted in the capitals, giving the host governments a central role in developing the contents of the IPBSs. However, the texts are then negotiated, almost word-by-word, in New York, and are thus affected by the usual intergovernmental dynamics of the UN (Stamnes, 2010). This is in spite of the originally proposed idea of PBC that the strategies would be developed in the field with additional support from New York. Now, representatives of the Burundi and Sierra Leone governments have argued that the process has been New York-centric and has not empowered local governments.<sup>xv</sup> Even if it intended to, some have argued that "there is nothing in them that is not already in the Poverty Reduction Strategy"<sup>xvi</sup>. This has caused a number of actors, including EU donors, to think that PBC, thereby, duplicates other processes without adding value. For example, while stressing that Germany strongly supports PBC, Dr Rudolf Fetzter from the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development called for PBC to leave the preparation of country strategies to other organizations to avoid duplication

(SEF News, 2008). Moreover, one should not forget the asymmetric power relationship between the donor states that are members of the PBC and the focus countries. A major motivation for inviting the international community to take part in discussions of their internal affairs is arguably the expectation that this will lead to financial benefits.<sup>xvii</sup> Given that the PBC is made up of member states, it means that the organization is too much 'the servant of the present state system, responsive to the existing configuration of power', however, it has an option of turning into an interlocutors for the new forces that, in the long run, can change forms of states and the very nature of the state system (Cox, 1997).

### Power politics in the PBC

Since its inception, the debate on the PBC in the General Assembly has been in a struggle about the balance of power between the Security Council (SC), the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and the GA as revealed by the report on the conference organized by FES and GMZ.<sup>xviii</sup> At one extreme is the US position that has contended that the PBC should report exclusively to the Security Council, a condition for effectiveness and a reflection of the US lack of trust in ECOSOC. At the other end is the effort of Egypt, shared in different shades by a number of southern countries, to prevent the creation of a PBC from reinforcing a trend visible over the years before the advent of the PBC. The Southern countries have always contended that the Security Council has been gradually expanding its mandate and increasingly encroaching upon the prerogatives of ECOSOC and the GA. Other states have remained passive members of the PBC, generally following the lead of the few activist members. Like all organizations, they are interested first in their survival and expansion and are viewed fundamentally as bureaucracies.<sup>xix</sup> As such, they are populated by unelected and overpaid international civil servants who are not publicly accountable and are highly susceptible to interest group pressure and the PBC is not excluded in this group. Nevertheless, the PBC's design also recognizes that some constituencies have a greater stake than others do.

For example, the EU and the Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) have both applied to be formally recognized as key actors in the affairs of the peacebuilding. Some would question whether African countries have sufficiently coalesced as a group and developed a coherent identity to effectively influence policy development at the UN. Normally the Africa Group expresses itself through the auspices of the African Union. The AU issued a position on UN reform and in particular on the reform of the Security Council by noting that "in 1945, when the UN was formed, most of Africa was not represented and that in 1963, when the first reform took place, Africa was represented but was not in

a particularly strong position" (Ezulwini Consensus<sup>xx</sup>). Africa's capacity or lack thereof, to represent its security interests at the UN may be attributed partly to the lack of permanent African representation on the UN Security Council – an issue that is still the subject of considerable debate. Africa has two rotating seats of two years each in the present composition of the Council. Concerning the AU's non-membership to the PBC, Ezulwini Consensus notes that the AU has not made a similar request even though the work of the PBC is, and will be, vital to a significant number of African countries.

### **Membership Issues of the PBC's Organisational Committee (OC)**

Issues surrounding the membership of the Organizational Committee are a bone of contention within the UNPBC. The current international approach to peacebuilding tends to be compartmentalized in order to easily manipulate, with inadequate links between decisions made by major financial actors such as the IMF, the World Bank, and the UN development system, and political support offered by the United Nations (McCandless, 2010). The membership issues fall into two categories: firstly, the contribution of the different membership streams; secondly the representation of the PBC. To start with, in general terms it is the Western powers that are seen to dominate the agenda of peacebuilding and, within the West, one nation and its allied multinational corporations are in charge (Shaw, 2002). Intense competition within the Group of Latin America and Caribbean Countries (GRULAC) for PBC membership during the Commission's very first rotation of members in June 2008 and the resultant postponement of the turnover of PBC membership suggest that the PBC is highly vulnerable to member state politics to the extent of disrupting the Commission's work. Much of the year 2008 in the OC was dominated by a nine-month disagreement regarding representation on the PBC by regional representatives of the members of the troop-contributing countries (TCC), ECOSOC and the General Assembly. The OC was able to arrive at a solution acceptable to all its members in December 2008. The high degree of interest and competition among member states regarding the elections to the OC resulted in postponement of the decision from April until December.

As per country reports of the PBC, mainly donor countries took on heavy responsibilities as chairs of various configurations of the PBC. Other countries that are neither among the five Permanent-Five (P5), nor major financial or troop contributors, are keen to preserve their rights of oversight of the PBC via the General Assembly GA. The perception that the SC is extending its scope of activities at the expense of the GA and ECOSOC is always clearly reflected in all conferences held. At issue is not only the relationship, which the PBC

should entertain with these stakeholders, but also the number of members each group of stakeholders should be entitled to on the Commission. The 5 year review report<sup>xxi</sup> of the PBC reveals that currently the decision-making structure of the PBC follows a narrow vertical chain from the UN country teams to the Commission in New York, in which a point of weakness at any level can affect the work of the entire architecture. Furthermore, in such architecture, national ownership is dictated by the New York based PBC leadership, whose priorities may not match those of the wider population, the report explains. Consequently, the report notes that peripheral issues are often prioritized at the expense of the core conflict legacies, such as inter-ethnic reconciliation or problems related to complex state formation processes.

In the absence of a serious conflict analysis informed by broad social representation, decisions are made before a consensus on priorities has been reached and countries on the agenda are the victims of a multi-tiered colonial power presence. However, in this new phase, non-western states (among them Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana and China<sup>xxii</sup>) supplied most of the troops, as western countries were extremely reluctant to contribute to UN missions. Jenkins (2010) writes that most of the top Troop Contributing Countries, as it happens, are mainly developing countries; so are the majority of PBC members drawn from the GA and ECOSOC quotas.

### **Security Council VS the PBC: A war of attention seekers?**

This Commission, despite its pretended good intentions, merely augments and reinforces the Security Council as an instrument of aggression and plunder in the South countries. Jenkins (2010) reveals that in its first years the Commission has had an awkward relationship with the Security Council. In addition, due to this influence, the Peacebuilding Commission has precisely turned into nothing but the discredited Security Council in a more malignant and obnoxious form. Already, the structure of the PBC is loosely attached to the UN system as it only acts as an advisory body to the General Assembly and the Security Council with no apparent powers to directly influence strategic political decisions regarding peacebuilding activities (Severine, 2009).

Here is a clear example by Jenkins (2010): the Security Council's quota of seven seats (five of these automatically assigned to the Council's five permanent members) represents the group of states that, for any case under consideration, will have to decide whether to wind down an existing peace operation, whether to change the terms of an operation's mandate, or whether to begin a new one. This means the Security Council can tout procedural issues and adopt a posture of pushing through agendas, dictating and pronouncing on issues that related to Africa, without adequate consultation or due diligence of the

ramifications and consequences of such a top-down approach. This is especially true because the P5 can, and still do, prevent resolutions that are important to Africa from even being considered as was the case with the genocide in Rwanda in 1994. According to review reports of the PBC, there are concerns among many delegates to the UN about the way the P5 members of the Security Council “insinuated” themselves into the OC of the PBC. Some delegates believe that this has not set the right tone, as far as the objectives and operationalisation of this Commission are concerned, particularly given its focus on “soft” security issues rather than the “hard” security issues which are rightly the preserve of the UN Security Council.

The Security Council was established to “ensure prompt and effective action by the United Nations” for maintenance of international peace and security (UN Charter, Article 24); it is seen as a Holy Crusade by the imperialist countries headed by the US in the 21st century in order to further dominate the South countries under the shibboleths of neo-liberalism and sham democracy.<sup>xxiii</sup> According to the UN Charter, the Security Council should carry out its duties on behalf of *all* members of the UN. Unfortunately, even when the majority of Security Council members have agreed that it is necessary to undertake collective measures to restore security, too often one of the P5 Council members has vetoed or threatened to veto a proposed action based on its own narrow national interests. In the most recent case, Russia vetoed to condemn as illegal a referendum on the status of Crimea which switched hands from Ukraine in February 2014 to Russia Federation’s control, a status not recognized by the United Nations.<sup>xxiv</sup> The UN charter for permanent members to exercise the veto has been abused to advance extraneous national political interests. Through the use of veto, the PBC has simply become an extension of the Security Council. Therefore, procedural processes of the PBC are surely subjected to the internal dictates and pace of commitments by the major powers, especially the permanent members of the UN Security Council. For example the 2013 report notes that there is a significant overlap between the membership of the Security Council and the PBC, and some members of the Security Council have shown more interest than others. For countries that left the council in 2012 South Africa was intensely interested and the UK, among the P5, was cited as having had shown “the more consistent and informed interest while the rest showed almost no interest.”<sup>xxv</sup> Moreover, the priority given to the permanent members of the UN Security Council over and above other considerations such as troop and financially contributing countries in making a determination on peacebuilding responses have raised potential tensions among key actors, which have in turn derailed the strategic coordination objectives of the PBC. A living example is that the United States has reservations against the proposed reforms in the Security Council, which will ease

the envisioned political pressure. In addition, The 2011 Council has a large number of members who are also members of the PBC’s OC and whether this will allow for innovative ideas on how to develop an organic relationship between the Council and the PBC is unclear.

### **United Nations: Guarantor of the status quo**

It is clear that the relations among the major powers of the global politics determine the future of key agencies (UN) with the inclusion of the PBC. This is fueled by the assumption that the United Nations sources of influence come from the moral authority of the international community, the military power of member states and the political and financial backing provided by the members themselves (Bertram, 1995). As it stands, the PBC is overly influenced and guided in this way and uses internationally generated models and theories of change. It is obvious that powers could be possibly using it as an instrument to exert and legitimize their power and substantially increase their presence in the countries of the South. To attest to this, the Independent League of People’s Struggle organization<sup>xxvi</sup> slammed the UN World Summit that resolved that the PBC be created as having a pretentious and deceptive agenda, from supposedly solving global poverty, debt and development to reforming the UN’s two major organs - the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council.

It is possible that these powers find it convenient to use the UN in an attempt to cover and share with other countries the rising political and material costs of occupation and to counter the increasingly effective, broad-based resistance of the South Countries’ people against the US and its allies’ imperialist domination. Through a powerful Organizational Committee that includes all the permanent members of the Security Council, the US is assured of a leading role in the Commission. This could bear some level of truth since membership in the Organizational Committee of the PBC is based solely on the amount of regular and special contributions to the UN.

The Peacebuilding Commission comes across as an organ intended to further unify the imperialist countries against the people within the frame of the US-instigated schemes of neoliberal globalization and escalating repression and aggression under the pretext of peacebuilding. For instance, Sison (2005) saw it as the real objective of US imperialism and its allies to give the UN imprimatur to the US invasion and occupation of Iraq and Afghanistan through the creation of a Peacebuilding Commission. She believes that the UN has been an instrument to window-dress the bullying by the “great powers,” notably the United States, of small and weaker developing states and seeks to continue this role through the PBC. For example, the support rendered by the UN allowed the intervention in Afghanistan to enjoy

international legitimacy (no state opposed it) and considerable support in Afghanistan, where Afghans saw it less as destroying sovereignty than as potentially restoring it after years of interference by neighbouring countries. Right now, many cry foul and see the intervention as a mistake because it is considered to have brought more harm than good to the country. Sison also thinks that through the PBC, the UN seeks to provide the US with a political and economic mechanism that allows it to appear as exiting from Iraq but at the same time to retain military bases for directing the puppet regime and controlling the oil resources and all major business enterprises and contracts.

Before 1991, Iraq was a relatively strong client state economically and strategically, but it repeatedly showed disobedience to US dictates. Now Iraq is in danger of disintegration as a nation-state and fragmentation into smaller and weaker entities organized along sectarian lines. While the US has so wantonly violated the norms and instruments of international law and the principles and charter of the United Nations, the invasion of Iraq is only one of a long list of cumulative examples of such outlawry. Nations have been calling for the PBC to take over from the US. Iraq and Afghanistan are seen as two countries that deserve the attention of the PBC. The US has since shown no intention of relinquishing its paramount role in determining their strategic direction. Failure to undertake any such effort in Afghanistan and Iraq has showed that, while the end of zero-sum strategic competition made co-operation possible, it also lowered the stakes for major powers, who were content to allow some problems to fester. Now the challenge that still lies ahead is to square the heterogeneity of UN member states' interests with the requirements of efficacy and efficiency. As indicated earlier, the PBC is operating by consensus, which Africa is not party to. It seems the PBC is often not able to address certain countries and issues and its agenda is dominated by the biggest UN member states. Preventive and conciliatory maneuver dominates member states' negotiations regarding the countries that are on the PBC as well as who chairs it. This is revealed as another example of power politics.

### **The North/South Politics**

Interestingly, the 'negatives' such as war, underdevelopment, barbarism etc. are located in the global South. Critics take issue with the fact that the promotion of what are essentially Western values is treated as having universal validity. In other words, these are values that are historically and spatially specific but are portrayed as being timeless and spaceless truths. Moreover, derived from these values are particular forms of state, economy and social structure. By insisting on their universality there is little room for alternative interpretations (Pugh, 2004). So, not only does this approach presume that it is possible to establish a set of

'root causes' to conflict, and an ever valid recipe to address them, it also allows for 'the pre-representation of the political interest of war-torn societies'. Politics and context are thus taken out of the equation. The universal presentation and apparently altruistic and benign motivations behind these prescriptions make them very persuasive and critics like Cox (2005) and Panitch (2000) are convinced US hegemony is deeply malignant, unaccountable and unopposed<sup>xxvii</sup> even though finely materialistic (Rothschild, 2003). Ginty (2007) adds that the prescriptions or interpretations of the US and the UK (on peacebuilding) are always associated with the United Nations and the 'international community. If indeed this is the case then a possibility for alternative interpretations of the liberal peace based more solidly in the culture and conditions of the recipient societies will be clouded. The inherent 'goodness' and desirability created by the rhetoric of peacebuilding serves to appease fears of Western hegemony (Peterson, 2010).

Forman (2005) sees the PBA as a natural follow-on to efforts by governments, such as the UK and the US, to develop their own civilian-response capabilities, the shortcomings of which had become apparent soon after the US-led invasions of Afghanistan in 2001 and Iraq in 2003. A dedicated intergovernmental body was needed because of the risk that, as new crises crowded their way onto the international agenda. Hence, many post conflict situations would 'fall into the category of forgotten or neglected crises,' as Forman put it, for which it would prove increasingly difficult to secure the requisite financing, expertise, diplomatic backing, and logistical support. In simple terms, his opinion is suggestive that the PBC is a scheme for countries that would otherwise be forgotten. The PBC relies on willing financiers, an old mechanism, and it is yet to gain credibility as a new mechanism with new approaches to sustainable peace. This is so because with the current turn of events, the PBC may (if it has not already) become politically polarized as competition for its capacity and resources intensify. Of course lack of funding could render the PBC meaningless.

### **Entry and Exit: Peace building is a process**

It is the view of this author that dealing with situations of risk of relapse into conflict is likely to remain the focus of PBC work. This view is informed by the fact that since the end of the cold war, post-conflict peace-building operations have been conducted in eight states: Namibia, Cambodia, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Mozambique, Angola, Rwanda, and Bosnia. Of these eight cases, only Namibia has achieved stable peace to date (Paris, 1997). The founding Resolutions (Operative Paragraph 12) identify four avenues by which countries may come on the PBC Agenda: referral by the Security Council, the General Assembly, and ECOSOC and by the Secretary-General. All referrals to date have been made by the Security

Council, and (despite the reference to regional balance in the Resolutions) all are African countries. Interestingly, all countries currently on the PBC's agenda are also on the Council's agenda. The question arises as to why not a more diverse range of countries – in terms of size, regional background, and the stage of the peacebuilding process, which has been reached – has not been referred. Jenkins (2010) says that there were some who felt that Sierra Leone was too far along the post-conflict path to even make a good case for a new inter-governmental body dedicated to smoothing the path from peace implementation to development. A similar reaction was mooted out when Guinea Bissau was announced as the third case on the PBC's agenda. It would have been fair to select and include a case from outside Africa, for instance East Timor for the sake of 'regional balance' to the PBC's portfolio. Jenkins notes that Guinea Bissau was an intriguing choice because it represented a different kind of post-conflict country one whose brief period of open conflict had ended almost eight years earlier, in 2000. Political instability has clearly afflicted Guinea Bissau in the interim. Nevertheless, She clarifies that to classify Guinea Bissau or Sierra Leone (which seemed more of a post-post conflict) as states 'emerging from conflict' is fundamentally to redefine this category of cases.

It is worthy to note that the reason why there is no regional balance in PBC focus countries is that the PBC's role is not acknowledged or sought after even by key constituencies. Instead, the PBC seems to have fallen into a safe routine replicating its 'one size fits all' approach in each new country with little variation.<sup>xviii</sup> Actually, this approach had to be abandoned in the case of CAR and replaced with one that was deemed to be appropriate for the local situation. Another issue is that there has not been a strong demand from post-conflict countries for PBC's assistance. Due to pressure from developing countries, the PBC only focuses largely on post-conflict reconstruction and not on conflict prevention. Moreover, many Africans remain skeptical based on experiences with the UN in Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and CAR; they are worried that this new body will not make much difference in mobilizing the resources required for post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Africa. Their worry is brought about by the Major Powers' use of the UN to pursue their sometimes very narrow foreign policy interests.

As for the Security Council approach, the Co-facilitators have already indicated a concern about possible circularity – a Security Council that sees the PBC as insufficiently relevant. On the other hand, the PBC feels that it does not have sufficient opportunity to demonstrate its relevance. With the Security Council involved, there is a possibility that some countries on the agenda's involvement was a forced one. However, in early 2006, the Security Council suggested that Burundi and Sierra Leone be the first two countries on the PBC agenda, following requests from these countries. However, the

decision to do so was not automatic. In the case of Guinea-Bissau, it took the Security Council five months to transmit the request because it was not clear on what grounds countries should be placed on the agenda. This reflects confusion within the Security Council over what criteria should guide selection and over the role of PBC, including whether it should deal mainly with countries in relatively late peace consolidation.

As mentioned earlier, PBC has had fewer than six countries on its agenda since its inception to date. Therefore, this brings about possible capacity constraints, as new countries cannot indefinitely be added without the graduation of any of the existing Agenda countries. Jerkins points out that part of the ambiguity that surrounds the role of the PBC in any UN wide comprehensive conflict-prevention system stems from the question of when a post-conflict country stops being a post-conflict country. Is it when a country has progressed to a situation where its challenges are essentially developmental rather than distinctively of a peacebuilding nature? Is it when an Agenda country feels it is ready to graduate? A report issued by DPKO's Best Practices Unit concluded that 'it is the prerogative of the Security Council to decide whether a United Nations peacekeeping operation should hand-over responsibility to another United Nations body or non-United Nations entity, and withdraw.'<sup>xxix</sup> What is important is to move beyond a limited and limiting view of the PBC; the PBC is an instrument that was created and designed to make a real difference and should be challenged to do so. In practice, this would mean a readiness on the part of the Security Council to consider a wider range of situations for referral: these could include larger countries, or sectoral or regional situations. Some national and international officials from Sierra Leone and Burundi seem anxious to initiate a process of disengagement.

## Conclusion

Even though one of the PBC founding Resolutions provides scope for a preventive dimension, the PBC has not carried it out despite the situations on the ground requiring it. It is the author's worry that in Burundi the PBC continues to react to events as they unfold rather than being proactive and bringing necessary attention to looming issues. It seems above that the principal constraint comes from the very nature of the United Nations itself, as a profoundly state-centred organization. States constitute the membership, govern the institution and are given priority in all of its deliberations. Therefore any peacebuilding process undertaken under the United Nations' auspices will tend to privilege state concerns. Although the UN resolutions creating the Commission call for the engagement of local actors from civil society and business organizations, they continue to be marginalized and most attention is invariably given to the priorities identified by Member States, rather than those of local

civil society. The author agrees with Biersteker (2007) who posits that the resolutions that created the Peacebuilding Commission, like most UN resolutions, contain ambiguities and compromise language. There is no clear definition of peacebuilding itself to begin with. Participants in stabilization operations attempt to use foreign resources of the same types to build acceptable states in areas that pose a perceived threat to powerful actors. The threat may derive from the control of a state by an anti-status quo leader ('rogue' states – the main concern of the United States) or the breakdown of control under the impact of strategic or economic competition ('failed' or collapsing states – of greater concern to globalist humanitarians). These operations aim at building states, sometimes after a transitional stage of international administration or occupation. They aim to make such states more effective agents of control over their own territories and population.

In addition, there is no cultural approach to peacebuilding. As Paris (2002) has argued, peacebuilding is founded on liberal institutionalism, which is an entirely western invention. This western culture is not necessarily suitable for a non-western country. For example, it has been argued that the UN often has failed to acknowledge the fact that traditional reconciliation takes a considerable amount of time in certain cultures. PBC's strategies do not empower national leadership, they rather add little value to other strategic exercises and is too labour-intensive looking at the number of people involved. With this approach PBC is limited to addressing very few countries. This author adds to the pressure that seeks to see more and wider range of countries increasing on the PBC docket. The issue of how and when to wind down, disengage or "graduate" a country from the PBC agenda, while sustaining international attention, should also come clear. The PBC must be aware. The risk of directing international attention for the creation of peace to the promotion of democracy could either help or hinder the process as a whole. The resistance of communities to the hegemony of democracy may create insecurities and thus further conflict. As in the Burundi and Sierra Leone cases, the enforcement of liberal internationalism is shown to have devastating effects on the recipient states. Guinea-Bissau and Central African Republic too continue to suffer gravely from political instability. Influence over the domestic patterns of development and organizing principles of state must be eliminated from the PBC and indigenously created democracy must be allowed to function.

### Conflict of Interests

The author has not declared any conflict of interests.

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## End Notes

- <sup>i</sup> This phrase is coined by this study to describe an arrangement that countries come up with in order to assist a country that they would not usually commit to under normal circumstances.
- <sup>ii</sup> Several reports testify to this increasing concern: Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Changes (2004), and the Secretary-General's report "In Larger Freedom" (2005).
- <sup>iii</sup> France maintained a significant military presence in Africa with bases in Djibouti, Senegal and Gabon, and a large contingent (4,600 soldiers) in Ivory Coast.
- <sup>iv</sup> The UN intervened in Burundi (BINUB), Chad (MINURCAT), Ivory Coast (UNOCI), Liberia (UNMIL), Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUC), Ethiopia-Eritrea (UNMEE), Sahara (MINURSO), Sierra Leone (UNAMIS), Sudan (UNMIS), among others. In 2008, of 20 missions worldwide, 10 were in Africa; their budget totalled \$7,000 million and over 70% of the personnel deployed.
- <sup>v</sup> See UN, *Report of the Secretary-General on the Peacebuilding Fund*. A/63/218-S/2008/522 (UN, 2008).
- <sup>vi</sup> See <http://paulstubbbs.pbworks.com/f/PeacebuildingHegemonyandIntegratedSocialDevelopment.pdf>
- <sup>vii</sup> Annan 2000.
- <sup>viii</sup> Robert Jackson & Carl G. Rosberg, 'Why Africa's weak states persist: the empirical and the juridical in Statehood', *World Politics*, 35(1), 1982, pp 1 – 24. For a more recent interpretation, see Michael Barnett, 'The new United Nations politics of peace: from juridical sovereignty to empirical Sovereignty', *Global Governance*, 1(1), 1995, pp 79 – 97.
- <sup>ix</sup> PBSO Priority Plan for Peacebuilding in Burundi
- <sup>x</sup> IMF Country Report No 07/46
- <sup>xi</sup> See Hannah Reich, 'Local Ownership' in conflict transformation projects: Partnership, Participation or Patronage?', *Bergh of Occasional Paper No. 27*
- <sup>xii</sup> Lidén "Building Peace between Global and Local Politics", 626.
- <sup>xiii</sup> A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645, 20 December 2005, paras 19, 21.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Read from Charbonneau, .8; Stamnes, "United Nations Preventive Deployment in Macedonia", 78.
- <sup>xv</sup> See more at <http://www.gsdr.org/docs/open/HD657.pdf>
- <sup>xvi</sup> See, for instance, Geneva Peacebuilding Platform (2008).
- <sup>xvii</sup> See, Action Aid, Cafod and Care, 25.
- <sup>xviii</sup> See more on the report on the conference at <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/iez/global/50189.pdf>
- <sup>xix</sup> R. Vaubel, "International Organization", in C. Rowley and F. Schneider (eds.), *Encyclopaedia of Public Choice* (New York, NY and Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004), 319-20.
- <sup>xx</sup> See [http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/AU\\_Ezulwini\\_0Consensus.pdf](http://www.responsibilitytoprotect.org/files/AU_Ezulwini_0Consensus.pdf)
- <sup>xxi</sup> [http://www.gppplatform.ch/sites/default/files/Consultation%20Report\\_1.pdf](http://www.gppplatform.ch/sites/default/files/Consultation%20Report_1.pdf)
- <sup>xxii</sup> With 1,200 blue helmets in missions such as those in the Western Sahara, Mozambique, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Ethiopia/Eritrea and DRC.
- <sup>xxiii</sup> [http://www.defendsison.be/pages\\_php/0509132.php](http://www.defendsison.be/pages_php/0509132.php)

<sup>xxiv</sup> Read more about Crimean crisis at <http://www.reuters.com/article/2014/03/27/us-ukraine-crisis-un-idUSBREA2Q1GA20140327>

<sup>xxv</sup> See the Special Research Report on the Security Council and the UNPBC at [http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/special\\_research\\_report\\_1\\_pbc\\_2013.pdf](http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/atf/cf/%7B65BF9B-6D27-4E9C-8CD3-CF6E4FF96FF9%7D/special_research_report_1_pbc_2013.pdf)

<sup>xxvi</sup> Read the statement that was given by the Chairman of the International standing Committee Prof Jose Maria Sison at <http://www.josemariasison.org/inps/UNSecCouncilinstimpaggre.htm>

<sup>xxvii</sup> See Shaw, *Exploring imperia*.

<sup>xxviii</sup> The term "path dependence" is used to explain how decisions taken in any given circumstance are limited by previous decisions, even when past circumstances may no longer be relevant.

<sup>xxix</sup> See United Nations Secretariat, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, Best Practices Section, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (New York, 18 January 2008), Para 174.