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Bush, Kenneth David orcid.org/0000-0002-3557-2389 (2004) *The Commodification, Compartmentalization and Militarization of Peacebuilding*. In: Keating, Tom and Knight, W. Andy, (eds.) *Building Sustainable Peace*. United Nations University Press , pp. 23-46.

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The Commodification, Compartmentalization and Militarization of Peacebuilding

Bush, Kenneth, (2004) "The Commodification, Compartmentalization and Militarization of Peacebuilding" from Keating, T. & Knight, W.A. (eds), *Building sustainable peace* pp.23-46, Edmonton: University of Alberta Press

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Commodification, Compartmentalization, and Militarization of Peacebuilding

Kenneth Bush

You have to relinquish a lot until the reckoning comes, you snap off a twig, examine it and realize it's just the relationship between yourself, killers and victims that counts. Look some more and you see there is not much gulf at all between the three. Close your eyes, open your fingers and discover you are a hybrid. Open your eyes again, look in the mirror and someone else looks back: someone older and degraded. People call it wisdom but it is just a substitute for hope.¹

THIS ESSAY IS A PART OF A PROJECT that critically examines the "instruments of reconciliation, retribution [sic], and peacebuilding."² More specifically, the project seeks to reflect upon our peacebuilding experiences and capacities, and to assess the effectiveness of our instruments, leading to the development of recommendations. In its effort to be genuinely critical, I do not take "peacebuilding" initiatives at their self-described face value. Indeed, my starting point is the observation that there are instances where so-called peacebuilding initiatives have had negative peace-

building consequences; and where other activities—which are not conventionally understood within the rubric of peacebuilding—have had positive peacebuilding impacts. This alone should be sufficient to evoke a much more self-critical examination of so-called peacebuilding projects. However, this has not been the case.

An explanation of the absence of such an examination may be related to what we find when we probe the various activities that have positive and negative peacebuilding impacts. It is argued here that we are beginning to see the rise of a phenomenon that could be called “the commodification of peacebuilding”—initiatives that are mass-produced according to blueprints that meet Northern specifications and (short-term) interests, but that appear to be only marginally relevant to or appropriate for the political, social, and economic realities of war-prone societies. Indeed, as peacebuilding is commodified, there is a decreasing interest among increasingly “professionalized” peacebuilders to engage in a truly critical examination of the impact of their work.

The current discussion is meant to be an invitation into a critical discussion of the practice and politics of peacebuilding. If we ignore the phenomenon of the commodification of peacebuilding, then the best we can hope for is incidental positive impacts or no impact at all. At worst, we will continue to see conflict exacerbation in the name of peacebuilding.

An honest answer to the question concerning the “efficacy” of our peacebuilding instruments is: “we haven’t got a clue.” The current study proposes a number of conceptual, technical, and political reasons for this state of ignorance and suggests that it may be linked to the rise of the commodification of peacebuilding. More importantly, it offers a way of overcoming it by calling for the acceptance of a straightforward understanding of peacebuilding as an *impact* rather than a taxonomic set of activities. Only then will we be able to recognize and measure when, why, and how Northern activities or Northern-supported initiatives can have peacebuilding or conflict-nurturing impacts. While the eventual development of tools for

“Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment” (PCIA)³ may help us to identify instances where peacebuilding has been commodified, ameliorative action will require many more political resources than analytical and technical ones.

To address these issues, discussion is structured around analyses of the concept of (1) “peacebuilding”; (2) a number of conflict-nurturing peacebuilding initiatives; (3) the militarization of peacebuilding; (4) the peacebuilding impacts of some nonpeacebuilding initiatives; and (5) the underpinnings of the commodification of peacebuilding.

Any critical discussion of peacebuilding must begin by revisiting our vocabulary. Thus, it is useful to begin with a brief discussion of the term “peacebuilding”—particularly in light of the intentional and unintentional fuzziness in its current use.⁴

Here, “peacebuilding” is used in its broadest sense to refer to those initiatives which foster and support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation of violent conflict.⁵ This process entails both short- and long-term objectives, for example, short-term humanitarian operations and longer-term developmental, political, economic, and social objectives. Peacebuilding is therefore a twofold process of *deconstructing* the structures of violence, and *constructing* the structures of peace. These are two interrelated *but separate* sets of activities that *must be undertaken simultaneously*. Any intervention that includes one without the other is guaranteed not to have a net positive peacebuilding impact. Clearly, the instruments required for peace construction are different from those required for violence deconstruction.

Peacebuilding is not about the imposition of “solutions,” it is about the creation of opportunities. The challenge is to identify and nurture the political, economic, and social space, within which *indigenous* actors can identify, develop, and employ the resources necessary to build a peaceful, prosperous, and just society. Ultimately,

peacebuilding entails strengthening or creating democratic structures and processes that are fair and responsive to the needs of an entire population—e.g., institutions which protect and advance the political rights and responsibilities of state and civil society, and which strengthen human security through the promotion of robust and sustainable economic, judicial and social practices.

It cannot be overemphasized that at its essence, peacebuilding—like reconciliation—is an *impact* or *outcome* more so than a type of activity. Over the last few years, peacebuilding instruments have typically focused on such activities as human rights projects, security sector reform, democratic institution strengthening, public sector reform, and more nebulously, “good governance” projects. It is essential that we consider the peacebuilding and peace-destroying impacts of those *development* activities that are not conventionally framed or analyzed in this context—for example, activities and initiatives in agriculture, irrigation, health, or education. If we understand peacebuilding as an impact, then it is necessary to delineate the “peacebuilding impact” of an initiative from its developmental impact, economic impact, environmental impact, or gender impact. When we do so, we see that positive humanitarian or developmental impacts are, at times, coincident with producing a positive peacebuilding impact; however, disturbingly, sometimes they are not.

When we understand peacebuilding as an impact, we are compelled to reassess Northern-supported activities in war-prone regions regardless of whether they are labeled developmental, humanitarian, “peacebuilding,” commercial, or cultural. We then begin to unearth some unsettling instances where so-called peacebuilding initiatives (and other kinds of initiatives) have had conflict-nurturing impacts.

Some preliminary thinking on this phenomenon has been undertaken by the well-marketed work of Mary Anderson, who points out that the economic and political resources bundled into International Assistance may affect conflict in many ways, such as (1) aid resources are often stolen by warriors and used to support armies and to buy weapons; (2) aid affects markets by reinforcing either the war

economy or the peace economy; (3) the distributional impacts of aid affect intergroup relationships, either feeding tensions or reinforcing connections; (4) aid substitutes for local resources required to meet civilian needs, freeing them to support the conflict; and (5) aid legitimizes people and their actions or agendas, supporting the pursuit of either war or peace.⁶

While Anderson is concerned largely with humanitarian assistance in conflict-prone regions, the examples below illustrate two self-described peacebuilding initiatives that appear to have had negative impacts. One is a large scale, high profile “operation.” The other is a small scale, low profile project. Following these two cases, discussion turns to a related phenomenon: the militarization of peacebuilding.

Iain Guest of the Overseas Development Council outlines the first example in an editorial entitled “Misplaced Charity Undermines Kosovo’s Self-Reliance.”⁷ He develops the contentious argument that the \$456-million UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) operation “was squandered on a foreign-driven emergency relief operation that has undermined Kosovo’s [significant] indigenous capacity for recovery.” According to Guest, International aid officials brought a profound misconception to their work in Kosovo. They viewed the returning Kosovar refugees as victims in need rather than survivors with strengths.

In some respects, Kosovo’s civil society emerged tougher and more mature from the ordeal. Yet, this was not the way it looked to Geneva and New York. From the start, the international agencies assumed they were dealing with a “humanitarian emergency.” At first sight this was not surprising. Sixty thousand houses were destroyed. Heating, water, and electricity had stopped functioning. Over 10,000 Kosovars were missing. Mass graves were being found. Kosovo’s minorities—the Gypsies (Roma) and Serbs—were isolated and frightened. It is easy to see why governments (and multilateral agencies) threw humanitarian aid at Kosovo, and why so many seasoned international nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) res-

ponded. As of the beginning of December, 285 NGOs were registered in Pristina.

Throughout the second half of 1999, UNMIK, NATO, and their NGO partners mounted a classic relief operation. They delivered food aid, handed out shelter kits, and dispatched patrols to guard Orthodox churches and rescue individual families. Yet, by December, there was little to show for the effort. Garbage was still piled high in the streets of Pristina. Electricity, water, and heating were intermittent. Only one class of Kosovar police had graduated from UNMIK's police training academy. Most Serbs and Roma had fled or were in hiding.

None of this is to underestimate the difficulty of rebuilding Kosovo. But it is to argue that reconstruction would have been put on a more solid footing if it had been built around civil society instead of humanitarian commodities and services. The massive concentration of international aid in such a tiny country has had a devastating impact. By December 1999, car accidents had overtaken landmines as a source of injuries. Less visible, but equally damaging, was the inflation caused by agencies snapping up houses at prices way beyond the means of Kosovars. Unable to pay rents, and with their families on welfare, many students were forced to sleep in classrooms. But nothing caused more distortions than UNMIK's policy on salaries. Kosovar teachers, doctors, and police officials receive between \$100 and \$150 a month. But a Kosovar could earn over ten times as much by working for an international agency as a driver, watchman, or interpreter. Guest mentions one of Kosovo's most experienced human rights activists who had helped to establish a women's legal aid center and had attended lengthy human rights training courses in Norway and Geneva during the 1990s. But as a "local employee" of the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), she now translates for international staff with a fraction of her experience. Officially, she is unable even to take testimony from victims. It is a "scandalous misuse of local talent." This reservoir of local talent should have been the centerpiece of UNMIK's recon-

struction strategy. The ultimate net impact was a contribution to the incapacity—rather than capacity—of civil society to rebuild itself upon a foundation of tolerance and respect.

In June 2000, I had the opportunity to review a number of youth programs in the Republika Srpska ("RS"), many of which included "conflict resolution" workshops. I left Bosnia Herzegovina asking what, if any, positive peacebuilding impacts are being generated by the hundreds of internationally supported workshops in the ethnically cleansed post-/prewar reality of Serbian Bosnia Herzegovina.

What would peacebuilding look like in postwar Germany if the Nazis had won? In the shadow of some of the dirtiest ethnicized violence of the 20th Century—which included the butchering of 200,000 to 250,000 children, women and men—one cannot but be struck by the realization that this question is no longer hypothetical.⁸ In many cases, the willingness of internationally supported projects to work within "the givens" on the ground, effectively accepts, excuses, and ultimately legitimizes the atrocities that created the current political dispensation. The subtlety with which some project officers achieved this was impressive. One informed me that his conflict resolution workshops worked within what he called "geographical communities"—which, when translated from English to English, meant the Serb areas in RS. This sleight of hand avoided the question of whether in fact the Canadian-funded project worked to build bridges between ethnic communities. Without mentioning the fact of ethnic cleansing, the impression is created that they were working in the intergroup arena, whereas this was not the case. The workshops themselves did not create a multiethnic space within which youth and young adults from all communities could begin to address the many unburied issues of such conflicts. When pushed on this issue, he argued that the distance was necessary "in light of the intergroup hyper-violence."

As a result, workshops of homogenous groups of Serbian youth dealt largely with various interpersonal problems universal to adolescents and youth around the world. When their wartime experiences

were addressed, it appeared to reinforce a sense of common victimhood and a need to maintain ethnically cleansed geographies—rather than initiate contacts across the interethnic divide.⁹ The memories of close friendships with kids from other ethnic groups were fading with time, allowing those personal linkages and opportunities for peacebuilding to fade also. The foundation of peacebuilding was being allowed to crumble in the same way as the burnt out houses on the Bosnian landscape. Sadly, biographical borders were being reshaped along with ethnicized geographical borders—with the help of internationally supported peacebuilding projects.

How can there be any semblance of genuine peacebuilding if there is no contact with members of other ethnic groups? The result of conflict resolution workshops in RS is not peacebuilding, but the reinforcement of apartheid geographies sought and achieved by the Balkan génocidiers.¹⁰ Interestingly, and disturbingly, despite the fact that every male in the region over the age of 22 would have been directly involved in the militarized cleansing campaigns, to my knowledge there is not a single project addressing the individual and collective pathologies that must inevitably have accumulated during the war on civilians.

While there are often clear military security tasks in "post"-conflict settings that are best undertaken by military actors, it is an increasingly common mistake to cast military activities as the cardinal referent from which all other activities take their bearing. International intervention in Somalia, where ten dollars were spent on the military-security requirements for every one dollar spent on humanitarian assistance, demonstrates how this may jeopardize peace and reconstruction efforts.¹¹ Peacebuilding is essentially a developmental initiative with a crucial security component, rather than the other way around. While the military security dimension should not be neglected, the prospects for longer-term development are compromised to the extent that it is dominated by military security logic. It needs to be emphasized that the militarization of peacebuilding does not simply refer to the use of military personnel

in nonmilitary self-described peacebuilding or humanitarian roles. It refers to the application of a militarized logic and approach to the peacebuilding problematic.

In many ways, the *modus operandi* of military organizations runs contrary to most approaches to a sustainable developmental approach to peacebuilding. Military-led approaches minimize local inputs and place a priority on self-sufficiency; development approaches tend to maximize local inputs and build on local resources. Military-led approaches bring with them the material and human resources for their anticipated job; development actors attempt to develop state and community capacities to identify problems and formulate solutions. A military-led approach is task-oriented, short-term and dependent on high institutional support; a development approach is process-oriented, long-term, and minimally dependent on institutional support.

In an already militarized situation, a trained and disciplined military force is essential for some tasks in the first stages of demilitarization—for example the decommissioning of arms, demobilization of soldiers, and de-mining. Also, the contributions of military engineers in the areas of logistics and infrastructural construction in the immediate postconflict setting are sometimes invaluable, as Ankersen notes.¹² This is where the military's talents are best used. However, the military does not possess the necessary skill set to play effective nonmilitary roles.

A fine example of a study advocating the militarization of humanitarianism and peacebuilding is the CARE Canada-sponsored study entitled *Mean Times: Humanitarian Action in Complex Political Emergency* that makes the recommendation that NGOs should "consider the privatization of security for humanitarian purposes."¹³

The expanded use of "professional security/military private companies" is an especially dangerous path to follow. Notwithstanding the very real and serious human rights, humanitarian law, accountability, transparency and funding problems inherent in these companies (KMS, Sandlines, Executive Outcomes, MPRI, etc.), an approach which

increases the "privatization of security" at the international level further erodes the legitimacy of the state as an institution and the very idea of the state as the sole actor with legitimate recourse to the use of armed force. Unfortunately, the checks and balances which allow private security instruments at the sub-national level are not present internationally to a degree which would ensure that legal, humanitarian and human rights abuses do not take place.

Such "privatization" would allow for the further militarization of an already difficult, complicated and violent situation in a variety of ways. For peacebuilding initiatives, the extent to which actors work through and adopt a "culture of violence,"¹⁴ determines whether they are legitimizing and subsidizing the further militarization of the conflict. This approach includes treating warring factions as if they were the legitimate representatives of a terrorized population and includes the use of militarized forces to "protect" the delivery of humanitarian assistance, often with no thought as to the "safety" of the civilian recipients.

In particular, such an approach would serve to legitimize gun-based authority structures, undermining attempts to identify and strengthen the often voiceless masses who were silenced through policies of intimidation and terror during a conflict. Surely, the real challenge we are called upon to answer is how to deligitimize violent gun-based authority structures and to religitimize traditional and/or alternative authority structures based on the constructive conflict management techniques of discussion and compromise.

The militarization of society takes on many forms. There is the increasing prevalence and influence of military and paramilitary actors in the political-economic and social decision-making apparatus of the communities engulfed in the conflict. There is also a shift of priorities and resources from civilian, humanitarian and human rights needs to warfighting. Then there is the large influx of small arms into the hands of civilians, especially children, on the streets and fields of conflict.¹⁵ Most importantly, it refers to the tendency for intergroup relations and conflict management to be

defined solely in narrow military-security terms. Hence, social and political problems come to be represented as "military-security" problems that justify and require military-security solutions. The fact that the political, economic and social root causes of these violent conflicts require appropriate corresponding political, economic and social strategies and instruments seem to be largely ignored. Military instruments alone cannot provide sustainable solutions to deep-rooted sociopolitical conflicts. Indeed, it is a well-known lesson of fieldwork that when humanitarian actors arm themselves, the local dynamics escalate and further polarize an already extremely difficult situation.

If armed forces are employed by so-called "humanitarian" actors, and are to be used for something more than window dressing, then at some point they will have to pull their triggers. In crude terms, the following questions must be addressed: what is an acceptable ratio of "locals" killed to assistance delivered? Perhaps both "humanitarians" and peacebuilders would be better served by following strategies which support community-level constructive conflict management rather than hiring mercenaries (directly or indirectly) to fight their way into situations. This would be one way of shifting from a culture of violence to one of sustainable peace.

If the examples above illustrate the conflict-nurturing impact of self-described peacebuilding activities, the next two examples focus on less glamorous types of "instruments" which have had significant and positive peacebuilding impacts but are not usually identified as "peacebuilding instruments" *per se*. As peacebuilding is modified, these are the types of projects that are likely marginalized from peacebuilding discussions.

The first example is the national immunization days project in war zones that, in addition to having measurable health impacts, has also created the space within which health benefits led to the recognition of common interests and the measurable expansion of peacebuilding space. In active war zones around the world, ceasefires have been arranged to enable the mass immunization of children

inside and outside war zones as part of the massive effort to eradicate polio from the face of the planet.¹⁶

There can be little doubt that the health impact of the polio eradication initiative has been profound in both war and non-war zones—having succeeded in eliminating polio from large parts of the planet. The access that has been achieved under difficult circumstances has exceeded all expectations. For example, the “National Immunization Days” in the DRC from 13 to 15 August 1999 reached an estimated 80 percent of the approximately ten million children in that country. Despite fighting in the northeastern city of Kisangani, 91 percent of the children there were immunized.¹⁷ Similarly, in Sri Lanka, in September and October 1999, “Days of Tranquility” were established to permit the immunization of all children in the country—for the fifth time since the conflict spiraled into violence in 1983. According to some experts, Sri Lanka may now be free of polio.¹⁸ The success of this initiative illustrates that children’s health can become a superordinate goal around which interests can converge across battle lines to induce the cooperation necessary for immunization campaigns. Cambodia, El Salvador, Lebanon, and the Philippines provide important instances from which lessons can be learned.

The challenge for health workers is to monitor the impact of the conflict environment on immunization initiatives. However, it is equally important to consider the impact such initiatives may have on the peace and conflict environment, because this may be the critical factor in explaining how interventions of this kind are possible in the midst of brutalizing wars.

There is a growing understanding among development workers on the ground that immunization days may have a positive impact on efforts to end conflicts. For example, in the Batticaloa District of Sri Lanka, the process of organizing Days of Tranquility in the war zone cultivated important informal channels of communication and cooperation across political and ethnic divides. These channels appear to have been central to the negotiations that finally brought elec-

tricity back to the region.¹⁹ They have also been essential in defusing local level tensions following the formal ceasefire in February 2002.²⁰ In Somalia, the demand from the local population that their children be immunized led local leaders to de-mine roads to permit access for vaccination teams. Decrees were issued that no weapons were to be displayed on the days of the immunization campaigns.²¹ Such events have contributed both directly and indirectly to peacebuilding.

The second example is the USAID-supported Gal Oya water management project in Sri Lanka, which provides an excellent example of a project that generated both developmental and peacebuilding benefits.²² Interestingly, its peacebuilding function was entirely incidental to the project. By cultivating the mutual interests of members from different ethnic and socioeconomic groups, the project managed to thrive even in the midst of severe communal conflict. And perhaps more importantly, it resulted in the construction of ad hoc institutions of intercommunal cooperation beyond the scope of water management. In other words, it had a significant, positive impact on the incentives for peace within a particular area of Sri Lanka.

The Gal Oya Water project was one of the largest and most complex water schemes in Sri Lanka. It faced daunting obstacles—physical, infrastructural, bureaucratic, and political. To top it all off, the project was confronted with an over-arching ethnic dimension: the Tamil-Sinhalese divide, which constitutes the main battle line in the ethnic violence at the national level, was paralleled at the local level of the project. In the context of ethnic tensions, if water did not reach the Tamil “tail-enders,” there would be good chance that this would be attributed to the “maliciousness” of the Sinhalese “head-enders” rather than to geographical or other factors. In other words, the incentive structure was not especially conducive to cooperation between the communities.

The specific impact on the incentive structures for peace is most evident in the detailed studies of the Gal Oya project undertaken by Norman Uphoff, who, in the midst of a project set in the context

of escalating intergroup violence, expressed surprise at seeing "demonstrations of co-operation and generosity—within farming communities, between ethnic groups, on the part of officials, and between officials and farmers."²³ He recounts incidents during communal riots when Sinhalese farmer representatives took it upon themselves to guard the homes of the Work Supervisor and Technical Assistant (Tamil) in Gongagolla. Uphoff explains the interest-based component of why this was so as follows:

Water distribution creates foreseeable incentives for co-operation among users. There is likely to be some competition, even conflict, among users within any given command area if the supply of water from a common source is inadequate to meet all the demand. At the same time, there are incentives for co-operation to increase that supply, if possible, thereby reducing conflict and enhancing productivity, converting a zero-sum situation to a positive-sum one by collective action. Farmers on different field channels who may clash over the distribution of their water among their channels have reason to co-operate when it comes to getting more water supply into the distributary channel that serves their respective field channels.²⁴

Gradually however, there evolved not only a common set of interests, but a shared common identity among Tamils and Sinhalese.²⁵ Mutually exclusive ethnic identities gradually gave way to a shared identity as farmers. The combination of contact, interest, and participation helped to forge strong bonds of friendship that "took on practical meaning with the emergence of co-operation and energization in Gal Oya."²⁶

What does the Gal Oya project teach us about successful peacebuilding? It appears that some of the factors that contributed to its success as a development project also contributed to its success in peacebuilding. The fact that it is a thoroughly participatory development project may be an important factor in explaining its success

in both areas. The emphasis on promoting participation generated a number of operating principles which have clear peacebuilding implications: (1) ensuring continuity of personnel to make a learning process more feasible; (2) having a network of supportive, committed persons in a variety of positions; (3) avoiding partisan political involvement; (4) attracting and retaining the right kind of community leadership; and (5) going beyond narrow conceptions of self-interest. Particularly relevant to the argument that peacebuilding requires a strong participatory dimension is Uphoff's observation that "more important than knowing *how much* participation is occurring is knowing *who* is or is not involved in different kinds of participation."²⁷

It is possible to identify other lessons from Gal Oya that may be generalized and applied to the explicit cultivation of a peacebuilding dimension in development projects. There was an emphasis on local capacity building in self-management and self-reliance in both resource use and communal relations. The project steered away from too much government involvement and, perhaps most importantly, it accepted, genuinely and fully, that intended beneficiaries have intelligence and social skills, not just labour and funds, that can be useful for project design and implementation. The poor can even usefully comment on technical design questions, but more important, they can help to plan and carry out the management of project activities.²⁸

Although some of the factors that contributed to the development success of the project may also have contributed to its peacebuilding success, there is still a need for a different set of criteria to assess the peacebuilding impact of the project.

Within the spatial constraints of this current study, the empirical discussion above sets the context for a more explicitly political analysis of the commodification of peacebuilding.

There are many possible approaches to the examination of peacebuilding. One approach has been the development of taxonomies

of instruments that are sometimes accompanied by case studies claiming to assess the efficacy of different instruments in different settings.²⁹ The comparison of different instruments in different contexts is meant to provide the basis for determining more systematically how and why certain instruments are more or less suitable and effective in particular settings. In other words, it might help to match instruments to the operational environment. Thus, for example, it might enable us to better understand the sociopolitical postconflict conditions that make South African style Truth Commissions a better bet than International Criminal Tribunals—*or vice versa*.

Taxonomic approaches work when they increase our understanding of a phenomenon by highlighting its elemental features while muting extraneous or tertiary features. Such approaches might be seen as methodologically prudent, even elegant. However, I confess to being wary about adopting them in the current examination of peacebuilding—*not* because they unavoidably exclude more than they include, but because of competing inflationary and deflationary tendencies by practitioners and policymakers in the application of the label “peacebuilding” to their initiatives. On the one hand, it seems that from a field perspective almost any project set in a region of militarized violence can be labeled a “peacebuilding project.” On the other hand, from a donor and policy perspective, the label is typically applied to a narrow set of activities such as human rights projects, security sector reform, democratic institution strengthening, public sector reform, and more nebulously, “good governance” projects (typically focusing on government rather than civil society or the private sector or the relationships between the three entities). In the worst case scenario, this leads to the commodification of peacebuilding: a process in which peacebuilding as an idea and as a set of practices is simply stuffed into the standard operating systems of the standard international actors who do the same old song and dance. When “new monies” are found, or existing monies are reallocated to support “peacebuilding activities,” the old wine-new bottle

syndrome is as prevalent as the faces at the funding trough. Nowhere is this more evident than in the continued militarization of peacebuilding interventions.

Integral to the commodification of peacebuilding is its compartmentalization and perhaps, eventually, its ghettoization—not unlike the less-than-effective mainstreaming of gender and the environment into our development thinking and programming. Discussions of peacebuilding have so far excluded the vast majority of activities supported or undertaken by international actors that directly affect the dynamics of peace and violent conflict, such as “conventional” development and humanitarian initiatives by aid agencies (health, education, agriculture, and so on); the business practices of multinational corporations; or foreign economic policies of states that often subsidize corrupt, human rights-abusing regimes in the South.

Without the compartmentalization of our peacebuilding thinking and programming, we would have to confront the big, and uncomfortable, contradictions between peacebuilding rhetoric and standard international practices. How, for example, can we take seriously the peacebuilding rhetoric of the permanent members of the UN Security Council when they are also the world’s largest arms traffickers?³⁰ Or how can we take seriously the US concerns about East Timor when it supported training programs for the Indonesian military forces (following in the US tradition of the School of the Americas in the United States that trained the military and paramilitary arms of human rights abusing regimes throughout Latin America) implicated in the atrocities that preceded East Timor’s independence?³¹ Or how can we take seriously the US’s concern for Palestinians in the Fall 2000, when it sat mute as the Israeli State used its helicopter gunships, tanks, and full military force against Palestinian children, women and men? Or how can we take seriously the rhetoric of the UK, when its so-called “Ethical Foreign Policy” allowed for the sale of military equipment to Pakistan (only ten months after it condemned the military regime that overthrew the elected government) and to the Mugabe Regime in Zimbabwe while it is embroiled

in military adventurism in the DRC—not to mention its vicious attacks on internal political opponents and white farmers?²²

It is for this reason that this study is prefaced by the quote from Anthony Loyd, which is meant to underscore the moral and political ambiguity of the motives and impact of the Northern-driven Peacebuilding Project. The quote would fit perfectly if the final sentence read, "People call it *peacebuilding* but it is just a substitute for hope."

How do we know that any self-described peacebuilding instrument/initiative even works, aside from anecdotal stories shared over warm beer in generic bars in war-prone regions around the world? An unsettling characteristic of the proliferating self-described peacebuilding projects has been the failure to evaluate them systematically—a situation not unique to this particular set of international activities, by any means. There are many reasons for this, but three in particular need to be highlighted in the current context. One is political; the other two are technical.

The political reason is tied directly to the need for Northern donors to show their domestic constituencies that they are programming in the area of peacebuilding—a need heightened by (1) the public nature and scale of post-Cold War massacres of civilians (epitomized in the hyper-violence of Rwanda and the Balkans) and (2) the conspicuous failure of Northern States to intervene effectively in such dirty militarized violence—or worse, to fuel it implicitly through acts of commission and omission. For this reason, in the mid- and late 1990s, Northern donors became quite desperate to be seen as funding anything that could plausibly be construed as peacebuilding in intention. In such circumstances, the profile of an initiative was more important than the potential impact. Accordingly, we saw the rise of high profile, media-savvy, low-impact-on-the-ground projects like the War-Torn Societies Project and the Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict. In some of these projects, a bizarre funding dynamic appeared to set in whereby the very lack of substantive impact by the project encouraged some donors to continue

funding it just to avoid being seen as having backed a loser—classic cases of good money following bad. The absence of independent audits and evaluations of these projects, in effect, served the interests of both donors and recipients.

The technical obstacles to the evaluation of self-described peacebuilding projects are twofold. The first is simply the absence of appropriate methodological tools and the means to apply them. The second is the application of inappropriate existing programming and evaluation tools. Thus, some efforts to examine peacebuilding-related programs (such as governance programs) that use conventional evaluation methods have generated rather bizarre indicators—such as the World Bank's use of "length of time it takes to have a telephone line installed" as a governance indicator.³³

It is becoming increasingly clear that there is a fundamental mismatch—not a "gap"—between the planning, implementation and evaluation tools at the disposal of international actors in conflict settings and the types of challenges they are ostensibly meant to address.³⁴ The current focus on so-called "gaps" by many within the academic, policy and operational communities³⁵ may inhibit us from critically assessing the structures, processes, and standard operating procedures that currently define and limit bilateral and multilateral developmental humanitarian "institutions"/organizations. The logic and rules of the conventional humanitarian, development, and peacebuilding "game" often undercut peacebuilding impacts/outcomes. The conventional programming logic of efficiency, product-over-process, linearity, and "results-based management" inherent in Northern-control projects (under the guise of monitoring and accountability) is at odds with what is often required for sustainable, effective, humanitarian/developmental peacebuilding initiatives, e.g., approaches that are organic, process-oriented, community-controlled, responsive, and nonlinear. If our current approaches—our standard operating procedures—are at odds with our peacebuilding objectives, then we require a new and different approach to our work in conflict-prone regions—an approach that is very different from our standard oper-

ating procedures; an approach that may be antithetical to our current methodologies and tools.

One starting point for the casting of a new approach/instrument is to subvert/reverse the principles that, so far, have been guiding our work, as suggested in Table 2.1:

TABLE 2.1

Principles Guiding Present Approach	Principles to Guide Future Approaches
Structured/mechanistic	Less Structured/organic
Control obsessed (externally)	Locally controlled
Ostensibly predictable	Patently unpredictable
Product-obsessed	Process-oriented
Time limited (bungee cord interventions)	Open-ended
Absence	Presence
Rigidly Planned	Responsive
Routine	Creative

Despite the increasing momentum of the commodification of peacebuilding, there is still the space within which to challenge and resist this process. It requires us constantly to ask the following question of all self-described peacebuilding initiatives: "Will/did the activity foster or support sustainable structures and processes which strengthen the prospects for peaceful coexistence and decrease the likelihood of the outbreak, reoccurrence, or continuation of violent conflict?" And it requires us to ask the same question of almost any activity in conflict-prone areas.

The development of the instruments necessary to answer this question is a relatively straightforward technical exercise that will respond to the application of intellectual resources, community participation, and appropriate levels of funding. However, the biggest challenges to answering this question are political not technical.³⁶ Nonetheless, we should recognize that the very posing of this ques-

tion is an essential part of the process of nurturing activities that have genuine, just, and lasting peacebuilding consequences.

We find ourselves at a unique moment in this peacebuilding discussion. There are many allies within gatekeeper organizations that are committed to genuine peacebuilding, but they frequently find themselves stymied by rigid and unhelpful bureaucratic structures and internal political feuding. One colleague at the World Bank explained that his biggest battles in the area of postconflict reconstruction are the daily fights within his organization—leading him to describe himself as a "bureaucratic guerrilla." However, despite the obstacles, there are the opportunities to work both within and outside the "peacebuilding establishment" to move this question to the center of our work.

Notes

- 1 Anthony Loyd, *My War Gone By, I Miss It So* (London: Doubleday, 1999), 7.
- 2 Personal correspondence with Nancy Hannehann concerning the University of Alberta Peacebuilding and Human Rights Symposium, January 2000.
- 3 See Kenneth Bush, "A Measure of Peace: Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment (PCIA) of Development Projects in Conflict Zones," *Working Paper #1* (Ottawa: International Development Research Centre, 1998), http://www.idrc.ca/peace/p1/working_paper1.html (accessed 27 November 2003).
- 4 I recall a former military officer claiming that peacebuilding was simply subset of peacekeeping. He simply replaced "peacekeeping" with "peacebuilding" in his presentations and funding applications. This is a fine example of the way in which institutional interests define terms to suit their existing resources and skill sets.
- 5 This definition is first introduced in Kenneth Bush, "Towards a Balanced Approach to Rebuilding War-Torn Societies," *Canadian Foreign Policy* 3, no. 3 (Winter 1996): 49–69.
- 6 Mary Anderson, *Do No Harm: How Aid Can Support Peace—or War* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 39.
- 7 Iain Guest, "Misplaced Charity Undermines Kosovo's Self-Reliance," *The Overseas Development Council*, <http://www.odc.org/commentary/vpfeboo.html> (password protected site. Accessed 20 March 2000). This section draws directly from the above piece.
- 8 For ground level details, see: Anthony Loyd, *My War Gone By*; Roy Gutman, *A Witness to Genocide* (New York: Macmillan, 1993); Peter Maass, *Love Thy Neighbor: A Story of War*

(New York: Vintage Books, 1996); Nader Mousavizadeh, ed., *The Black Book of Bosnia: The Consequences of Appeasement* (New York: Basic Books, 1996).

- 9 This should in no way suggest that Serbian youth have not also been affected profoundly by the wars. However, the experience of the violence varied significantly across "ethnic" groups. In an exhaustive report to the UN, a Special Commission of Experts chaired by Cherif Bassiouni of De Paul University in Chicago, concluded that 90 percent of the crimes in Bosnia Herzegovina were the responsibility of Serb extremists, 6 percent of Croat extremists, and 4 percent of Muslim extremists. The death toll follows similar proportions. See Florence Hartmann, "Bosnia," in Roy Gutman and David Kieff, eds., *Crimes of War: What the Public Should Know* (New York: WW Norton & Co., 1999), 56.
- 10 This harsh assessment is drawn directly from discussions with children and adults in Bosnia in June 2000. I welcome a critical and honest discussion of this unasked question among donors, "practitioners," and researchers.
- 11 Jan Eliasson, former UN Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs quoted in Samuel Makinda, *Seeking Peace from Chaos: Humanitarian Intervention in Somalia*, International Peace Academy Occasional Paper Series (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 1993), 185.
- 12 See Christopher P. Antkerson in this volume (chapter 4).
- 13 Michael Brygus, Bruce D. Jones, and Janice Gross Stein, *Mean Times: Humanitarian Action in Complex Political Emergencies—Stark Choices, Crue Dilemmas* (University of Toronto: Program on Conflict Management and Negotiation Centre for International Studies, 1999). I am indebted to colleagues at DPKO and CIDA for sharing their ideas with me concerning this study. I would particularly like to thank Chris Cushing for his keen insights.
- 14 See Howard Adelman in this volume (chapter 14).
- 15 See Carolyn Elzabeth Lloyd in this volume (chapter 13).
- 16 See R. Tangermann et al., "Eradication of poliomyelitis in countries affected by conflict" *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 78, no. 3 (2000): 330-38; and F. Valente, et al., "Massive Outbreak of Poliomyelitis caused by type-3 wild polio virus in Angola in 1999," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 78, no. 3 (2000): 339-46, <http://www.who.int/bulletin/> (accessed 27 November 2003).
- 17 R. Tangermann et al., "Eradication," 332.
- 18 H.R. Hull, "Fighting stops for polio immunization," *World Health Organization*, <http://www.who.int/docsstore/bulletin/pdf/2000/issue3/bu0424.pdf> (accessed 27 November 2003).
- 19 Personal interviews in Batticaloa, January and February 1998.
- 20 Kenneth Bush, *From Putty to Stone: Report of a Mission Investigating Human Rights Programming Opportunities in Sri Lanka* (Colombo, Sri Lanka: UK Department for International Development [DFID], Sri Lanka, April 2002).
- 21 Hull, "Fighting stops for polio immunization."
- 22 This section draws from: Norman Uphoff, *Learning from Gal Oya: Possibilities for Participatory Development and Post-Newtonian Social Science* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1992); and Norman Uphoff, "Monitoring and Evaluating Popular Participation in World Bank-Assisted Projects" in Bhuvan Bhanuagar and Aubrey C. Williams, eds.,

Participatory Development and the World Bank: Potential Directions for Change. World Bank Discussion Paper 183 (Washington: World Bank, 1992), 135-53.

- 23 Uphoff, *Learning from Gal Oya*, 104.
- 24 Uphoff, *Learning from Gal Oya*, 331-32.
- 25 Uphoff, *Learning from Gal Oya*, 109.
- 26 Uphoff, *Learning from Gal Oya*, 365.
- 27 Uphoff, "Monitoring and Evaluating," 143.
- 28 Uphoff, "Monitoring and Evaluating," 143.
- 29 See for example Elzabeth M. Consens and Chetan Kumar, eds., *Peacebuilding as Politics: Cultivating Peace in Fragile Societies* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2000); and Luc Reyher & Thantian Patfenholz, *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Reinner, 2000).
- 30 A recent study from the International Institute for Strategic Studies reports that the West's three permanent members of the UN Security Council (US, UK, France) account for 80 percent of the World's weapons sales, with the US increasing its share of the international arms market to almost 50 percent. See: "US Takes Lion's Share of World's Arms Exports," *Guardian Weekly*, Oct. 26-Nov. 1, 2000, p.7.
- 31 "US Trained Butchers of East Timor," *The Guardian Weekly*, 23-29 September 1999, 2.
- 32 "Call for Tighter Arms Control," *The Guardian Weekly*, 17-23 Feb. 2000, 8.
- 33 See The World Bank Group, Public Sector Governance, "Institutional and Governance Reviews (IGRs)", <http://www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/igrs.htm> (accessed 27 November, 2003).
- 34 This is a conclusion drawn from interviews conducted from 1998 to 2000 with development workers in war zones in Sri Lanka, Bosnia, and Russia, with policymakers in Ottawa, New York, and Geneva, and with Northern donors in various forums.
- 35 For example, the Brookings Process in 1999 which focused specifically "on the gap between humanitarian assistance and development cooperation" (Jeff Crisp, "Mind the Gap! UNHCR, Humanitarian Assistance, and the Development Process," *Journal of Humanitarian Assistance*, Working Paper 43, <http://www.jha.ac/articles/wp43.htm>, 11 November 2001 [accessed 20 December 2003]) by convening an action group leading up to high level meeting at the Brookings Institute convened by High Commission of Refugees and the President of the World Bank.
- 36 This was a fascinating point of discussion in an electronic exchange of ideas on Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment sponsored by the Breghoff Research Centre for Constructive Conflict Management. See A. Austin, M. Fischer, and N. Ropers, eds., *Breghoff Hand Book for Conflict Transformation* (Berlin: Breghoff research Centre for Constructive Conflict management, 2003). <http://www.breghoff-handbook.net/> (accessed on 27 November 2003). Contributors are: Mark Hoffman, Kenneth Bush, Manuela Leonhardt, Christoph Reyen, Hans Gsaenger, Marc Howard Ross and Jay Rothman.