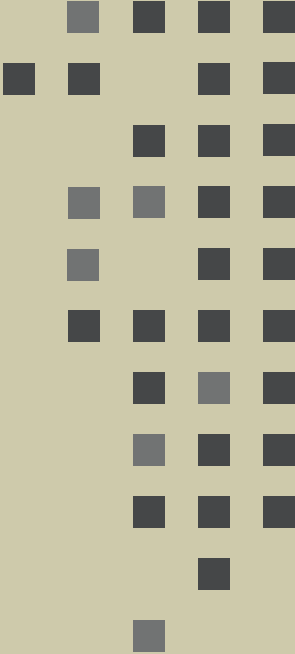


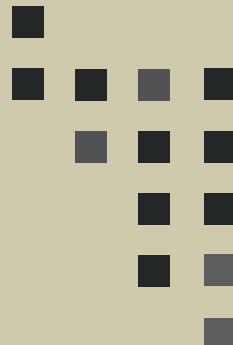
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The United Nations and Civilian Crisis Management

Independent study by
Anja T. Kaspersen and Ole Jacob Sending

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Norwegian Institute of International Affairs
Norsk Utenrikspolitisk Institutt



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Contents

5	Foreword
7	Executive Summary
9	Introduction
13	UN coherence
24	Funding and donor coherence
29	Ownership and capacity building
33	Conclusion
35	Endnotes

Foreword

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During the 1990s, the UN got involved in ever more complex crisis situations in which humanitarian, security and development issues were deeply intertwined. The term “peacebuilding” was integral to this development, signalling a commitment to both immediate relief and peacekeeping tasks and to long-term development assistance. While progress is noticeable in some areas, member states and the UN bureaucracy alike are still trying to come to terms with how best to address these multi-dimensional challenges in an effective way. The High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change noted that the way the UN deals with civilian crisis management and peacebuilding is inadequate and overly fragmented. It proposed several measures to rectify this problem, including the establishment of an intergovernmental Peacebuilding Commission as well as a Peacebuilding Support Office in the Secretariat. The on-going debates about this proposal and the larger question about the role of the UN in building peace are critically important. It is therefore a pleasure to introduce this report, which has been commissioned by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations. The report seeks to capture the field perspective, and it is intended to inform debates about how to make the UN more effective in peacebuilding and civilian crisis management.

Executive Summary

Building peace in a war-torn society is a daunting task that requires the re-building and transformation of institutions and socio-economic structures. Measured against the challenge of peacebuilding, the UN has yet to develop a sufficiently robust and comprehensive mode of intervention. The UN often acts too late and with limited resources. When the UN gets involved, its efforts are often hampered by incoherent peacebuilding strategies and by ineffective implementation. The report identifies four major reasons for these limitations of UN peacebuilding.

The first is the lack of integration at headquarters level, which invariably trickles down to the field. This makes formulation of an overall strategy defective, and consequently makes it difficult to effectively implement peacebuilding policies at country level. The UN's reliance on "coordination" as a method for ensuring strategic coherence is not effective, and often produces a self-defeating tendency to devote too much time and resources to internal coordination. More integration between the UN's peacekeeping, humanitarian, development and political sides at headquarters level is needed to get more coherent and effective peacebuilding policies at country level.

The second is the lack of predictable funding for critical assistance in post-conflict settings. The establishment of separate evaluation criteria for countries in special circumstances is one way forward. Lack of funding for critical post-conflict reconstruction efforts, such as reintegration of ex-combatants, often undermines long-term peacebuilding strategies. Donors' tendency to fund specific programs directly undercuts the ability to establish a coherent peacebuilding policy, and it exacerbates turf battles between different UN actors. Trust fund mechanisms are one way of resolving this deficiency, giving the UN the necessary discretion to actually implement the tasks that member states identify as crucial.

The third is the existence of a plethora of planning-, program- and assessment tools, none of which are systematically understood and applied, and many of which are counter-productive in ensuring cooperation from key UN actors, let alone buy-in from local participants. Fewer and simpler tools for planning and assessments should be established.

The fourth is the lack of commitment to, and understanding of, the central goals of building local capacity and ensuring local ownership. Securing ownership and building capacity seem to require more delegation of authority to UN presence in a country, enabling decisions to be made as close as possible to those in need.

This report's overall conclusion can be summarized in the claim that the UN should delegate more authority to the field, but for this to happen more integration is required at headquarters. Coordination alone does not ensure the type of coherence that is required for UN peacebuilding efforts. Integration implies functional centralization through a streamlining of mandates, budgets and decision-making authority. Moreover, geographical decentralization could serve as means to sensitise UN strategies and planning to local contexts and developments on the ground.

In the spirit of functional centralization, an intergovernmental body should assist in ensuring that UN planning and funding underpin overall peacebuilding objectives. Similarly, a secretariat function in charge of formulating strategy and planning should be given the appropriate authority to guarantee cooperation from relevant departments, funds and programs.

Geographical decentralization implies requires that regional sub-offices be strengthened to backstop country-level operations. Moreover, the UN should establish mechanisms whereby issues requiring local involvement and ownership are included in the planning of UN peacebuilding efforts.

Introduction¹

The challenges of civilian crisis management and peacebuilding concern nothing less than a comprehensive re-structuring of institutions in a given country.² This is a daunting task even for a legitimate and capable national government. Attempting to do so in a post-conflict context, through intervention from the outside, often without a functioning state, would appear an impossible challenge. And yet, this is precisely what the UN has been increasingly called upon to do after the Cold War. Recognizing the high potential for a relapse into conflict after a peace agreement has been signed, the UN today often intervenes on the basis of complex mandates that extend well beyond responding to humanitarian needs and the monitoring of a peace agreement. At heart, the emergence of complex civilian crisis management and peacebuilding as a central activity for the UN is based on the recognition that securing the peace and building lasting structures conducive to development require a more robust and comprehensive intervention that borders on “state building”.

The UN was established in 1945 principally to prevent inter-state war. Issues pertaining to “security” were politically and institutionally separated from the emerging policy field of “development” within the UN. This policy field, moreover, was functionally organized according to specific issue areas, with different and semi-autonomous specialized funds and agencies. This organizational set-up was a reflection of the then-prevalent notion that states may come to cooperate more easily with each other when cooperation was confined to clearly defined technical issues.³ This structure may have been conducive to creating good conditions for inter-state cooperation. It has become increasingly clear, however, that this does not sit well with the tasks that the UN has set itself in the field of peacebuilding and crisis management.

Against this background, a loose consensus has emerged about the need to bring the political, developmental and humanitarian

sides of the UN closer together in an effort to make peacebuilding efforts more coherent. The challenge has been defined in terms of how best to harness the expertise and resources in these respective policy fields – all of which are critical to the task of preventing violent conflict and rebuilding war-torn societies.⁴ Given the current political and institutional structure of the UN, however, the formulation and implementation of an effective peacebuilding policy have proved difficult.

As noted by the High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, there is no institutional home for peacebuilding activities in the UN system, as there exists an intergovernmental policy vacuum between the Security Council and ECOSOC, and a concomitant program vacuum between the UN Secretariat and the UN specialized funds and agencies in the field of development and humanitarian work. This formed the context for the proposal to establish a Peacebuilding Commission and a Peacebuilding Support Office. Commissioned by the Permanent Mission of Denmark to the United Nations, this report seeks to contribute to the on-going dialogue on these and other reform proposals in the Secretary General's report *In Larger Freedom*, involving the UN's capacity to respond to the challenges of peacebuilding and other complex emergencies.

The reform proposals in the SG's report concern principally UN bodies at headquarters level, not how the UN operates in the field, which is arguably one of its main weaknesses. This report attempts to provide a snapshot analysis of the UN in the "field", in particular two countries where the UN is involved in peacebuilding efforts - Burundi (ONUB) and the Sudan (UNMIS). The study furthermore builds on a recently completed study of "Integrated Missions".⁵

The European Union security strategy⁶ broadly defines the task of civilian crisis management as helping to restore civil government after crises. Peacebuilding can thus be seen as interchangeable with civilian crisis management.⁷ In this study, focus is very much on what is arguably the core issue of peacebuilding and civilian crisis management, namely the immediate and long-term challenges in a post-conflict situation. The study focuses on the extent to which the UN is able to effectively formulate a common strategy and to harness the different units, funds and agencies of the UN to work coherently towards that end.

The study thus pays particular attention to coordination between UNCT and UN missions, to integrated planning, to needs assess-

ments and to funding mechanisms. We also discuss in some detail two policy concepts that appear to be critical for ensuring a degree of success in terms of building a stable peace. These are the concepts of “ownership” and “capacity building”. While frequently mentioned in key policy documents, it is not clear what the concepts mean in practical terms, and there appears to be little strategic thinking on ways of adapting them to differing circumstances.

When analyzing the role and effectiveness of the UN in peacebuilding it is important to bear in mind the inherent difficulties involved in preventing the outbreak or re-emergence of violent conflict through outside intervention. There are limits to what outside actors can do, however effectively these interventions are organized. In short, the standard against which the UN’s efforts are to be measured must be sensitive to the complexity of the problem and the inherent limits of state building by external actors.

The structure of the report is as follows: Section 2 covers UN coherence, focusing on planning, strategy, and coordination. Section 3 deals with donor coherence and discusses in some detail the problems of, and possible solutions to, funding for complex peacebuilding and humanitarian activities. Section 4 focuses on two critically important factors for all peacebuilding efforts, namely “ownership” and “capacity-building”, and Section 5 provides concluding remarks.

UN coherence

Strategy and planning

Providing assistance in rebuilding a war-torn society requires a comprehensive strategy. As noted in several studies⁸, however, there is today no overall strategy for UN peacebuilding activities. Peacebuilding involves elements of already institutionalized activities of peacekeeping, humanitarian relief, and long-term development. However, there is no centre for the formulation of a peacebuilding strategy that can bring these together. Typically, the UN Security Council formulates a mandate that identifies a number of goals, but includes no description of *how* these goals are to be achieved or the sequencing or prioritisation of goals. Moreover, the Council formulates a broad range of goals to be achieved without due consideration to the funding required to achieve them through consultation with the General Assembly and the ACABQ.⁹ At the bureaucratic level, the formulation of what is called a peacebuilding “strategy” is often a “shopping list” of tasks reflecting the interests of different departments, funds and programs. Thus, it appears to be a strategic policy vacuum at HQ level with respect to the formulation of a comprehensive strategy for peacebuilding – a gap also reflected in humanitarian and development activities.¹⁰

At country level, the existence of a comprehensive and coherent strategy is important for ensuring consistency between peace agreements and their implementation. Such consistency is crucial as it reduces the possibility that potential spoilers take advantage of delays and ambiguities. Moreover, as one study notes, the lack of a consistent strategy between mediation and implementation opens up space for “bureaucratic politics and institutional rivalry [that] can disrupt a smooth transition between lead institutions.”¹¹ A key ingredient for successful peacebuilding efforts is thus the existence of an institutional mechanism that can ensure both consistency between different phases of a peace process and a crucially important

involvement of the UNCT and local stakeholders. However, to the extent that current UN peace operations have an overall strategy formulated through extensive consultations with UNCT and local participants, this is more to the credit of the initiative and qualities of specific individuals than to institutionalized mechanisms within the UN.

Although so-called “integrated missions” are intended to improve UN coherence, there is no mechanism to ensure that this translates into an effective and country-specific strategy containing priorities, and that division of labour and accountability is formulated and implemented. In light of the importance of these proposed bodies, the following presents some findings on the overall question of UN coherence in the field.

Formulating a strategy aiming at the formation of a legitimate and effective state that can provide security and other basic public goods must start with a thorough analysis of the country in question. Today, the primary planning unit for peace operations – the DPKO – certainly outperforms other UN entities in some aspects of mission planning. However, it is not set up to devise a strategy for long-term peacebuilding. Neither is that the case for the current “focal point” for peacebuilding, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA).¹²

A recurrent theme from field visits, echoed in existing research, is the lack of an institutional mechanism for ensuring broader participation in the strategy and planning formulation for UN peacebuilding. For example, DPKO-formulated strategies are not sufficiently informed by the experience of counterparts involved in peace talks or with already present UN actors in a country, both of which are critically important. Moreover, senior personnel in different UN missions, including SRSGs and DSRSGs, noted that they received little in the way of strategic guidance before assuming their posts, in particular concerning concrete issues evolving from broad peacebuilding mandates, thus revealing a gap in the strategy and planning of different phases of UN operations.

UN agencies on the ground repeatedly stressed that the UN country team are there before, during and after the mission, yet are left out of critical planning and strategy formulation. The exclusion of UNCT in these processes undermines the overall coherence of UN activities for at least two reasons. First, the UNCT possesses knowledge not only about the country in question, but also, evidently, of the existing program activities. Ensuring that this knowledge is fed into the planning process on the ground is essential for the

formulation of country relevant strategies. Second, the overall goal of “integration” cannot be attained unless all parts of the UN are committed to the same overall strategy. That is: true commitment to a common strategy cannot be established by dictate, but requires consultation and dialogue between all actors involved.

There is arguably a risk that an inclusive planning and strategy-formulating process could become too supply-driven when performed at the country level.¹³ One way to limit such organizational inclinations is for an intergovernmental body such as the Peacebuilding Commission to define a set of parameters within which the country-based strategies must operate. Such an arrangement would guarantee control of overall peacebuilding policy, while at the same time ensuring that those involved in the formulation of country-specific strategies and plans should also be involved in implementing them.

The principle of proximity between strategy formulation and implementation sums up what emerged as a common theme in the field: strategies and plans developed in New York, with little or no consideration for either on-going country programs or contingencies on the ground, run the risk of becoming obsolete.

To ensure that key strategies and plans are attuned to the changing conditions and “owned” by implementing actors, they should be formulated as closely as possible to these actors. This is an argument for decentralization aimed at making UN strategies less textbook driven and adaptable to local contexts.

Such a model of decentralization finds support in organizational theory: The theory posits that decentralization is generally the preferred option if the challenges to be addressed by different parts of an organization are diverse. Peacebuilding would clearly fall in this category. While there are certain common themes and challenges, and certainly a need to formulate overall strategy at headquarters, the concrete problems and challenges on the ground vary considerably. It makes sense to decentralize decisions that are best made on the basis of hands-on involvement and in-depth knowledge of the situation on the ground. The World Bank is a case in point as it has sought to address the challenges of ownership, local knowledge and hands-on strategy formulation by delegating decision-making authority to their country Directors.

The problem of duplication

As peace operations have become increasingly complex, they have come to take on a wider range of civilian functions pertinent to both immediate recovery and long-term development efforts. Many of these functions are already performed by UNCT, albeit in a different way and with a different mandate. Civil Affairs and Rule of Law are a case in point. Both of these functions were integrated into mission structures in the “executive missions” in Kosovo and East Timor, but this model has now been adopted also in non-executive missions, such as in Sudan (UNMIS), Burundi (ONUB) and others.¹⁴ In Burundi, ONUB has a gender task force, while UNFPA has long since been working in this area in Burundi. Similarly, both ONUB and UNDP run programs on justice and security sector reform (JSSR). This feature of UN operations reinforces the image of a fragmented organization without a clear strategy for its operations.

A central challenge is how to produce a coherent UN policy by bringing together the activities of different parts of the UN. While integrated missions now emerge as the key model for establishing coherence, there is still the problem of how to assess which programs should be continued as part of an overall peacebuilding strategy. Today, the UN has no mechanisms by which to perform such a critical task. The undg recently noted, for example, that “There is currently no feedback mechanism for assessing contributions of individual organisations to the overall United Nations country team performance.”¹⁵

Representatives of UNCT have argued that the mission should be seen as adding political clout to the established programs of UNCT. In this way, the long-term work of the UNCT and the alleged trust built up over years to host governments are not, it is argued, disrupted by a peace operation that will invariably have a different relation with the government. These concerns reflect a more general question about the appropriate relation between the UN’s political, developmental and humanitarian activities. The UNCT will resume responsibility for the UN’s efforts to build institutions to safeguard the peace after the peacekeeping component exits. Thus, the work of the UNCT is critical to manage the transition from war to peace. While these are valid points, the challenges in a post-conflict situation are qualitatively different, and the demands for UN effectiveness point in the direction of integration under overall political leadership exercised by the SRSg and Deputy SRSGs where appropriate.

To avoid duplication, some have suggested that the existence of a UNSC mandate and the arrival of a peace operation should be used as an opportunity to evaluate the performance of different programs and agencies within the UNCT. Such an evaluation could, it is held, serve as a platform to decide which programs should be continued and which other programs and tasks should be established within the mission. Such assessments would have to identify the most effective form of integration given the central function or goal of the mission.¹⁶ This proposal has a lot of merit. However, given the current institutional structure, where members of UNCT have separate mandates and budgets, it is of critical importance that this evaluation includes members of the UNCT and is perceived as fair and objective.

Leadership and management

Many studies have noted that the SRSG in a country is crucially important for ensuring overall coherence and integration.¹⁷ In interviews with UN staff in the field, a common theme was that much hinged upon the quality and personality of the SRSG and other key staff, and that, in general, overall coherence and cooperation between UNCT and the mission depended on personalities. This is undoubtedly true. The quality and personalities of leaders and staff matter crucially. But this should not be seen as the correct problem description of the UN. In fact, a crucial argument here is that the central challenge of every organization is precisely to ensure that its success does not depend on the qualities of individuals, but rather on the quality of the organizational mechanisms that guide individuals' behaviour. Improving the process by which SRSGs are appointed is important, but this should not detract attention from the underlying organizational challenges facing the UN. Currently, the degree of integration pivots crucially on how the SRSG manages the challenge of forging a coherent UN operation from a fragmented UN organizational structure.

A commonly shared view in the field of the importance of leadership says that it depended on where respondents worked, with whom and for whom. For some, the SRSG was seen as having too little authority over the programs and funds of UNCT. Conversely, SRSGs were viewed by members of the UNCT as being too powerful in both designing and running missions. For them, the problem was not so much lack of power, but the lack of accountability of the SRSG to the full spectrum of UN actors. As we will discuss in some

detail later, one way to rectify these limitations is to strengthen and clarify the authority of the SRSG in relation to the UNCT, while at the same time strengthening the accountability of the SRSG to UNCT senior management at HQ-level.

The limits of coordination

The UN must, in some way, deal with the problem of duplication. Given the lack of a clear division of responsibility, authority and accountability between different parts of the UN, such problems today are addressed through “integrated missions”, and through the method of “coordination”. As noted by the ECHA-UNDG study on transition, there is a potential for improved coherence when the DSRSR assumes the dual role as Resident Coordinator and Humanitarian Coordinator, yet this has limited impact when “there is no similar mechanism at senior working level at HQ to provide coherent support to the RC/HC and the UNCT.”¹⁸ A close observer of the UN made this point by saying that “Whatever happens in the field, it all starts here (in New York).” Lack of political-institutional integration at HQ level, in other words, can never be fully rectified by country-level integration or coordination.

The reliance on “coordination” as the central mechanisms of ensuring coherence of the UN in a country is a concrete expression of this institutional lacuna. The practice of “coordination” quite simply falls short of the task of ensuring overall UN coherence. The problem with coordination is that it does not ensure responsibility, authority or accountability. In fact, it is a recipe for continued bureaucratic infighting and turf battles over scarce resources, which is encouraged by donors’ tendency to earmark funding for specific agencies and projects rather than pooling resources to a central trust-fund mechanism managed by the UN.¹⁹

Perhaps more disturbingly, the current emphasis on coordination between different parts of the UN has produced an inward-looking organization that devotes far too much time and energy to coordination meetings and inter-agency needs assessments. This was a recurrent theme in talks with UN personnel as there was frustration about the time spent on internal coordination. A former senior UN official with broad experience both from HQ and peace operations expressed this frustration by noting that “the way UN does business” is characterized by “too much attention to paper”. Several respondents mentioned the need for a body to coordinate all the coordination and the fact that most agencies do not have the

personnel resources required to be able to attend all the coordination meetings, as many take place in parallel. Similarly, a member of UNCT pointed out that a workday of ten hours could easily be filled by participating in different coordination meetings. The overall impression was perhaps best summed up in the comment by an NGO representative about how “coordination has become an end in itself”. This is serious problem for the UN, as energy and resources spent on internal coordination detract attention from the reasoning behind their presence in a given country.

Against this backdrop, a central goal for UN reform should be the establishment of a more thoroughly integrated structure. A functionally centralized UN would significantly reduce supply-driven programming and turf battles, and it would make it possible to formulate and implement a peacebuilding strategy that would draw effectively on the full spectrum of the tools and expertise of the UN system. There are certainly pros and cons to such a systemic reform, but it is nevertheless instructive to revisit the central conclusion from the so-called “Capacity Study” of the UN development system. The report, published in 1969, held that “In the past, governments have consistently postponed making major decisions bearing on the organization of the UN system. Even the fundamental problem of overlapping responsibilities has not been faced squarely, let alone addressed. It is not only governments that have side-stepped difficult issues. On their part, the Specialized Agencies have also resisted change, for perfectly understandable reasons. Today, there is agreement on all sides that *changes must be far-reaching if the UN development system is to expand effectively and the Third World is to receive the service to which it is entitled.*”²⁰

It should be recalled that the functional decentralization that came to characterize the formation of the UN was a direct result of then-prevailing functionalist ideas about how states could be encouraged to cooperate by focusing on clearly defined technical issues, thus reducing the threat of interstate war. Today, when the central challenge for the UN is to formulate and deliver coherent development and peacebuilding policies, such a functional decentralization severely impair the UN’s performance.

The UN faces a dual challenge. It must, on the one hand, formulate more long-term and clear peacebuilding strategies drawing on different parts of the UN. The strategy should emanate from the UN’s principal organs and be applied consistently if peacebuilding is to succeed. This cannot be achieved solely through coordination, but requires *functional centralization*, whereby relevant actors

within different sectors work together. On the other hand, the UN must, as we will discuss in more detail below, become more sensitive to country specific issues and challenges and join efforts on critical issues of capacity building and ownership. To ensure this, however, *geographical decentralization is necessary* for planning and decisions to happen with due regard to the ever-evolving situation on the ground.

Today, the UN is arguably functionally decentralized and geographically too centralized, resulting in incoherent peacebuilding policies *and* insufficient attention to any given country specifics. Functional centralization and geographical de-centralization go hand in hand precisely because the latter depends on there being unity and consistency at headquarters level. Absent such a fundamental change in how the UN is organized, however, coordination will remain a central feature of UN operations. The following section thus identifies potential ways of improving coordination-mechanisms.

Making coordination work

Typically, organisations commit to coordinate when there are clear benefits. Current UN structures provide few such incentives. Allan Doss has summed up this tendency by noting that “most organizations subscribe to the theory but not the practice of coordination, in particular when they have a preponderant share of financial resources”.²¹ The central challenge of coordination is getting all participating actors to commit themselves to an overall strategy and plan. A central theme emerging from interviews is that coordination cannot be achieved by dictate but requires genuine participation and influence of all relevant actors. One practical step would be to co-locate all actors. The full inclusion of OCHA into the wider mission structure, e.g. Liberia, Burundi and partly in the Sudan, has been tested, yet with mixed feedback. The coordinating functions of OCHA seem, on balance, to be working quite well given the larger structure within which it operates. Criticism was voiced against OCHA assuming operational responsibilities as this was seen to create an imbalance in terms of its coordination functions of the UN system. The office in charge of coordination should not be operational, it was held, because it renders the coordinating actor biased in favour of own programming activities.

The same criticism was frequently voiced against the UNDP. If the UNDP is to have a coordinating function, it was held, it should

not be operational and run programs. In many cases, the UNDP present itself as an actor with competence in virtually all sectors, ranging from the environment and HIV/AIDS to crisis prevention, rule of law and governance.²² The urge to expand programs and budgets is common to all organizations. It is, however, a question beyond the scope of this report whether UNDP has successfully identified its core competence and most valuable contribution to overall effectiveness in taking on a role as both coordinator *and* operator in so many issue areas.

Another area in which coordination can be improved is the identification of “comparative advantages”. This cannot be performed by the agency in question, as it only serves to perpetuate the already destructive practice of each actor seeking to broaden its own turf. This could be rectified by establishing a peer-review mechanism involving local participants, NGOs and IFIs to lay the ground for a more objective assessment of each actor’s respective strengths (and weaknesses).

Joint programming and inter-agency needs assessments

The Secretary General’s agenda for UN reform called for “increased joint programming and pooling of resources to further enhance the effectiveness of the UN to ensure the system’s combined resources are put to best use.”²³ Responding to this call the United Nations Development Groups Office issued a definition and a guidance note on joint programming: “Joint programming contributes to making the UN support to reaching the national goals more coherent, effective, and efficient. It is meant to avoid duplication, reduce transaction costs and maximise synergies among the national partners and the differing contributions of the UN system organisations – be it in terms of the normative framework and technical expertise, or of expertise in programme areas and strategies.”²⁴

This definition illustrates a problem of establishing effective inter-agency collaboration as it does not say what joint programming *is*, only what it is meant to achieve. The UN relies heavily on different planning and coordination tools to ensure coherence and effectiveness in the field. Among these are CCA/UNDAF, CAP, CHAP, AWP, CPAP, CCPP and CPD.²⁵ It is difficult to see how these fit together and why there is a need to have so many, and so complex, planning, coordination and programming tools. When the same impression emerged from interviews with individuals sup-

posedly involved or responsible for using these tools, it is indeed worrisome. In Sudan, these established mechanisms have been complemented and to some extent substituted by the production of a Work Plan intended to guide the overall UN effort.²⁶ In Burundi, the UNDAF has not taken off due, according to centrally placed actors in the UNCT, to a lack of political will and funding, but also the perception that UNDAF is “too much of a UNDP exercise.” Furthermore, in the case of Burundi, the CAP is reported to be a largely “project-based system” where allocations are not based on an overall strategy, but very much on “the influence of agencies and the interests of individual donors”.²⁷

Some of the tools are simply too complicated and do not clarify and simplify tasks and responsibilities. The example of plans for how to act and coordinate with respect to refugees and displaced persons was mentioned by field respondents as an example where the plans emerging from different UN tools were so complex that they do not assist in simplifying and guiding programmatic activities. One conclusion is thus that the planning and coordination tools should be fewer, simpler (allowing their use in different circumstances) and better institutionalized within UN organizations.

Additionally, the filter of bureaucratization and “inward-looking” mechanisms detracts attention from identifying the needs of people in the country. One senior UN official noted that the UN identifies and interprets the needs of people through the lenses of UN agencies’ interests, thus exacerbating the lack of sensitivity to local needs that emanates from bureaucratic and pre-formulated categories of needs assessments. Needs assessment should be undertaken jointly with all stakeholders within an analytical framework, yet it is important to stress that jointly does not mean simultaneously in this context. More focus needs to be given to sequential needs assessments that are better attuned to address potentially fluid situations on the ground. Moreover, inter-agency needs assessment must be coupled with a parallel process whereby inter-agency monitoring and evaluation processes are strengthened to ensure that actions and decisions are in accordance with identified needs. The actors’ comparative advantage should thus be determined by the context and by identifying the actual needs on the ground rather than current practices whereby the UN’s bureaucratic delineation of tasks sets the agenda. In other words, “form should follow function”²⁸.

The need for effective integration mechanisms has been stressed repeatedly by such organizations as OECD-DAC.²⁹ Such integration seem to require not only an overall strategy, but also clear identifica-

tion of responsibility, coupled with common needs assessments and appropriate tools for evaluation and monitoring.³⁰ While coordination is sometimes an effective tool for ensuring coherence at the country level, these efforts are often undermined by a lack of clear commitment by implementing partners.³¹ For example, the current UNDAF for Burundi is organized around four thematic groups with responsible agencies for each theme (peace and reconciliation, rehabilitation and social services, poverty-reduction, environment and agriculture, and HIV/AIDS). It looks clear and simple on paper, but centrally placed actors noted that only the thematic group on HIV/AIDS really worked, and it did work because it had been established as a thematic group long before the current UNDAF was set up.

Funding demands and priorities, not an overall UN strategy, tend to drive programming activities in the field. A recent study noted that “Often, needs-assessments performed by various agencies are confused with mobilisation of resources for the specific agency.”³² Without a common standard to define needs, which in turn could be applied in different crisis, it is difficult to assess what an adequate or proportionate response would be. At a recent donor conference³³ this was recognised as a central problem, and the urgency of getting both the planning *and* the funding for transition right was stressed.

The problems identified above are primarily due to how the UN is organized, as discussed in previous sections. However, if there is one major cause of these problems it is the perpetual problem of lack of reliable funding and the lack of authority at the country level to disperse of existing funds. Even perfect planning -, needs assessments - and coordinating tools will fail unless this problem is addressed. Against this background, the next section discusses funding and donor coherence.

Funding and donor coherence

One point that is being reiterated time and again is that UN coherence and effectiveness crucially depend on reliable funding. A consistent message from the field was, not surprisingly, that the appropriate leaders – SRSG, DSRSG/HC/RC – need to have access to and decision-making power over budgets. Entrusting SRSGs and DSRSGs with overall responsibility without allowing them to make decisions on funding, seriously undermines their effectiveness. With regard to integrated missions, the current budgetary processes and funding mechanism are not designed to effectively backstop an integrated approach in the field.³⁴ Donors plead to support integrated missions and non-UN humanitarian actors, but it tends to be more rhetoric than action. Current practices of earmarking and channelling funds through specific projects run by specified actors and state-to-state bilateral funding could undermine the UN's overall impact and contribution to peace and development. The UN could, with predictable funding for critical transition phases and with the ability to make decisions on funding, be immensely more effective.

There are few examples of truly collective financing of an agreed-upon action plan, although an interesting experiment is underway in Sudan, where the DSRSG in his HC capacity has been given discretion over a trust fund to underpin the overall mission action plan. However, donors seem generally hesitant to channel aid through collective trust funds. Similarly, many UN agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are sceptical to trust funds, as their scope to determine their own programmes would be constrained. In view of the problems of duplication and lack of coherence discussed above, however, the benefits of trust-fund mechanisms outweigh by far the potential negative impact on specialized agencies and funds independence. Trust funds could potentially provide incentives for all actors to think more strategically about their involvement and

about their comparative advantages. Most importantly, it could contribute to a more output-oriented approach.

Development aid is often delivered with scant attention to the local capacity to both absorb and make effective use of funding.³⁵ This places a heavy burden on countries emerging out of conflict, with weak or sometimes lacking administrative capacities to handle the demands that follow, and could at worst serve counterproductive to sustaining and building capacity. A local government official interviewed in the DRC noted that the foreign assistance provided (mostly technical and basic goods) was too expensive for the local market, making it difficult for the local government to absorb and sustain. The government representative also raised issues deriving from the lack of consultations and involvement when projects and programmes were initiated and run both by UN agencies and international NGOs. A central challenge for the UN is therefore to establish mechanisms that better capture local needs and to use these as guidelines for making strategic funding decisions.

Most fundamentally, however, UN peacebuilding is undermined by the lack of predictable sources of funding³⁶ and donors' reluctance to coordinate assistance. Donors are clearly attempting to deal with the issue of resource coordination judging from the number of studies and evaluations, and the development of new coordination tools and funding mechanism.³⁷

The SG's proposal to establish a Peacebuilding Commission is undoubtedly a step in the right direction as it would help to co-locate responsibility of funding issues with overall strategic priorities. As proposed by the SG, the Peacebuilding Commission could perform the central function of guaranteeing "predictable financing for early recovery activities, in part by providing an overview of assessed, voluntary and standing funding mechanisms".³⁸ Discussing the proposed Peacebuilding Commission in the field, some respondents put it bluntly, saying that if the Peacebuilding Commission is not given authority over budgets, it should not be established at all", as it would then be unable to perform its suggested duties. While many will contest such a position because it would reduce the autonomy of funds, programs and agencies, this is in our view not a substantive argument against giving a Peacebuilding Commission an appropriate level of influence with regard to funding. A Peacebuilding Commission could, for example, have a key advisory function similar to that of the ACABQ.

Beyond the critical issues discussed above, there is a more general trend in aid allocation that is worrisome in terms of fund-

ing for peacebuilding activities: In many conflict and post-conflict situations, donors are reluctant to provide funding because the situation is unstable. In Burundi, it was reported that it was difficult to get funding for key projects because Burundi has a transitional government, making donors await elections before committing more funds. Meanwhile, the recognized problem of return of displaced persons and re-integration of ex-combatants is seriously underfunded, which may easily undermine the fragile political situation in the country. The same problem was recently reported for Cote d'Ivoire, where donors' interest in funding badly needed health services and programs for children at the risk of being recruited to warring factions is said to wane.³⁹ And in Sierra Leone, the lack of sufficient donor support for the DD&R process was a central cause of the breakdown in the peace process both in 1997 and 2000.⁴⁰

Although there are some promising signs of a momentum in support of "reintegration" also being funded over assessed budgets (i.e. Liberia and most recently, however with restrictions, Sudan), the overall picture is that there is a discrepancy between the demands of peacebuilding activities and current priorities for aid allocation. Increasingly, donors seem to resort to "result-based" or "performance-based" development aid. The US Government's "Millennium Challenge Account" is a case in point, where those countries that do perform well on a set of indicators measuring economic development and political reform, receive progressively more funding. Whereas there are good reasons to adopt such a policy so as to provide incentives for much needed reforms in recipient countries, this very same principle has in several cases worked against the needs of populations whose countries are either in conflict, or are otherwise under heavy strain by insecurity and political instability.

A senior policy advisor at the World Bank referred to this problem as the "80/20" problem: 80% of the political debate in the UN and elsewhere is focused on those countries that are under stress and risk (re-)falling into violent conflict, but these same countries receive only about 20% of development aid. The World Bank has partly launched its initiative on "Low Income Countries Under Stress" (LICUS) based on the insight that these countries will have to be judged and treated differently than other developing countries that are stable and more secure.⁴¹ A recent OECD-DAC initiative to formulate "Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States" is here a positive development and should be encouraged.⁴²

When the Millennium Declaration was formulated five years ago, it contained some crucial goals pertaining to peace and security. The Millennium Development Goals, however, contain no reference to the challenges of seeking to reduce violent conflicts, thereby also making it easier to attain *other* MDGs. One suggestion would be to include one goal in the MDGs that refers specifically to transition and post-conflict situations. Some claim that the work to attain the MDGs is by definition “conflict prevention” as they address “root causes” of violent conflicts. This claim is, however, mainly a “rhetorical re-packaging” aimed at creating an additional and security-based justification for development aid. The substantive argument for the inclusion of a new MDG related to conflict and post-conflict situations is precisely that the current trend in overall development aid works against the huge needs of the countries that are either emerging from, or are at the brink of, violent conflict.

Ownership and capacity building

Coherence and effectiveness of peacebuilding efforts is important, but risk becoming irrelevant if they are not explicitly formulated in a way that encourages local ownership and assist in building local capacity. External involvement in a conflict-ridden country is, after all, ultimately aimed at rendering itself obsolete. Herein, the twin concepts of ownership and capacity building sum up the historically established fact that successful socio-political and economic change cannot be dictated by external interventions, but must be sensitive to local contexts and must ultimately be driven and owned by internal forces.

Against this background, UN peacebuilding strategies appear overly idealized. Too often, it seems, the idea of ideal end state dictates policies and decisions more than concrete challenges on the ground. Other times the UN fails to define an end state – transitioning into what? While concrete programs are sought adapted to local contexts and needs, these are often add-ons to pre-formulated templates and goals. A recent review of peacebuilding policies thus pointed to “the chronic inability of international actors to adapt their assistance to the political dynamics of the war-torn societies they seek to support”.⁴³

This feature of UN policies and programs illuminates on what emerged as a central theme in many of the field interviews undertaken for this report, namely, the frustration with, and lack of clear understanding of, what “ownership” and “capacity-building” imply for the content and focus of concrete programs. For some, capacity building must go before ownership. The argument frequently put forward was that genuine ownership, and by implication the responsibility that comes with it, requires the establishment of sufficient capacity. Issues of sequencing and timing of the handover of responsibilities to local actors are critical. For others, the key challenge was establishing accountability. And yet others again

mentioned that although capacity building is important, “you don’t want to capacity-build a state apparatus in the hands of authoritarian political leaders.” Finally, building capacity and securing ownership is inherently difficult when dealing with a transitional government. Echoing a recent study of the UN’s role in transitional administration, some noted that “ownership” is the end, not the means, of UN involvement.”⁴⁴

By way of example, rule of law programs are notorious for adopting what one author calls a “mechanistic approach” based on the idea that “a country achieves the rule of law by reshaping its key institutions to match those of countries that are considered to have the rule of law”.⁴⁵ Rule of law remains a central feature of contemporary UN operations. The UN is increasingly engaged in efforts to rid impunity by establishing rule of law. Assistance in this regard includes a wide array of issues ranging from providing equipment, technical assistance, police, and judiciary and prison reform. However, it was reported by several respondents in the field that in some cases specific programs aimed at capacity building and ownership amounted to nothing more than seminars and brief training courses. The reason, it was said, are poor understanding of how to build trust in and loyalty to certain processes and institutions – a task that requires long-term efforts and investments which take seriously the content and political import of local structures. As one interviewee put it: “It does not matter whether you know the institutions you seek to install are right. What matters is whether you are able to get others to see this too and to feel ownership to these institutions.” Such long-term requirements often suffer from the short attention span of most donors. A similar point has been made in a recent article on ownership, where ownership is highlighted as a process and an outcome, both of which are critically important. As a process, ownership implies local involvement in defining goals and priorities, and as an outcome, ownership implies the *de facto* commitment by local actors to certain practices and institutions (i.e. rule of law, policing).⁴⁶

A long time observer noted that “The entire corpus of learning about how to leave behind a functioning state and consolidate a peace is in conflict with decisions taken and with little or no relation to developments at the country level”.⁴⁷ This conforms to the experiences emerging from the field: there appears to be a lack of commitment to secure local ownership in UN programming, as the self-understanding of the UN in the field seems to be that it is better to “do” than to “enable”.⁴⁸ The UN has to learn how to bet-

ter synchronise its activities with the developments on the ground rather than with pre-set timetables.

The fundamental question to be raised here is not whether the UN should promote liberal values and institutions. It should. The question is *how* it can adjust and sensitize its policies to ensure that they are effective and sustainable given the challenges on the ground. Four issues stand out as critical in this regard. First, it must be recognized that ownership and capacity building are something that should be applied as overall principles at the earliest possible stage, including relief efforts. Promoting national ownership at central and community level in this stage is fundamental to a successful transition.⁴⁹ Again, decisions about whether the UN should “do” or “enable” are difficult, but the latter should be the rule to the extent possible, also in relief efforts and in transition from relief to development.⁵⁰

Second, “ownership” is no panacea for ensuring peace and stability. In some cases, it may be necessary for the UN to regard ownership as the end, not the principal means, of its presence in a country. Typically, this would apply when insecurity demands the UN to assume state-like functions, and when state structures are so fragile that they are incapable of taking on the responsibility that follows with ownership. Clarity as to why and when the UN does assume such functions is crucial, and guidelines should be developed to this effect. In such situations, the UN must communicate clearly to the population the rationale for the UN’s decisions in this regard. The concept of “shared sovereignty” suggests a way forward in this regard: the UN may share authority with the state in question over certain issues for which the state has not sufficient capacity to deal with. To “ground” such temporal authority in local needs and concerns, however, it is important that local actors are involved in formulating the goals and parameters of the UN operations.⁵¹

Third, there are no inherent reasons why the UN should not make more use of secondment mechanisms to ensure local ownership. Today, the UN employs this method to ensure that particular expertise is placed in the relevant organization rather than serving as an outside expert that provides guidance and advice, and it should be used more extensively. Seconding UN personnel to assist local governance institutions would ensure that ownership and responsibility are placed with local actors, not with the UN. It moreover serves to “embed” overall UN presence within established institutions, and thus reducing the image of the UN “descending” upon the country.

Fourth, the “one size fits all” that characterizes much of UN peacebuilding policies would benefit by being adapted in light of recent findings about how to tailor peacebuilding strategies to the specific types of political problems facing a country. In a recent review of the dilemmas of “state building”, for example, the impact of differences in party systems, electoral systems and constitutions can provide some guidance for decisions regarding both which actors and which types of political system to advance in a country.⁵² In sum, a key challenge is to know which actors and which institutions to support and capacity-build to institutionalize the peace.⁵³

While such guidelines must be treated with caution, they do point to the importance of coupling detailed knowledge about the history and political dynamics of a country to some general guidelines about what type of political system to promote at the national level. Guidelines can help make decisions about ownership and capacity building integral to an overall peacebuilding strategy. In this context, ensuring that the UN has sufficient country-specific knowledge and a communication strategy that fits in with a political strategy is important. Because: When expectations exceed performance, trust and legitimacy are undermined, and the work of UN actors becomes much more difficult.

Conclusion

The UN has yet to develop a sufficiently robust and comprehensive mode of intervention in response to the challenge of peacekeeping, and its efforts are often hampered by incoherent peacebuilding strategies, limited funding and ineffective implementation. The report identifies four major reasons for these limitations of UN peacebuilding. The first is the lack of integration at HQ level, which invariably trickles down to the field. The second is the perpetual lack of predictable funding for critical assistance in post-conflict settings, and the trend of “performance-based” aid, which reduces the effectiveness of funding for post-conflict peacebuilding strategies. The third is the existence of a host of coordination and needs assessment tools and mechanisms that appear unable to forge a common approach and are not sufficiently attuned to local needs. The fourth is the lack of understanding of and commitment to the central principles of “local ownership” and “capacity building”

This report’s overall conclusion suggests that in the absence of integration at HQ level, the strategic coherence and effectiveness of UN peacebuilding policies at the country level can only be marginally improved. *The UN should thus aim at becoming functionally more centralized and geographically more decentralized.* Functional centralization could facilitate more consistency in developing strategies, planning and budgets. Moreover, functional centralization is needed to make possible geographical decentralization in the form of delegation of appropriate decisions about planning and operations to the regional and country level. Geographical decentralization allows the UN more flexibility, ensuring that responses are well attuned to the realities on the ground.

Endnotes

- 1 Aina Holm has been our excellent research assistant. Thanks to the following for comments and suggestions: Espen Barth Eide, Kari Osland, Turid Læg Reid, Fernando de Hiraldo Castillo, Razeen Sally, Marina Throne-Holst and Andreas Vogt. Errors and omissions are, of course, our responsibility.
- 2 In this report, the terms civilian crisis management and peacebuilding are used interchangeably. See below.
- 3 For a discussion of the origins and impact of functionalist theory, see Haas, Ernst B. (1958) *Beyond the Nation-State*.
- 4 The debate about humanitarian space will not be covered in any detail. When referring to the need for more “integration” below, this should not be taken to imply that this is a simple task. However, a discussion of this problem would require a separate study. For a discussion of this issue, see Eide, Espen B. *et al.* (2005) “Report on Integrated Missions”
- 5 Espen B. Eide *et al.*: “Integrated Missions: Practical perspectives and recommendations” (May 2005)
- 6 EU (2003), “*A secure Europe in a better world - The European Security Strategy*”. 12 December 2003.
- 7 Renata Dwan (2003) Presentation to Seminar on “The European Union Security Strategy: Coherence and Capabilities Seminar: Capabilities in the Civilian Field”, 20 October 2003, SIIP.
- 8 See, for example, Dahrendorf, Nicola *et al.* (2003) *A review of Peace Operations: A case for Change*. London: Kings College; Durch, William *et al.* (2003) *The Brahimi Report and the Future of UN Peace Operations*. Washington D.C: Henry L. Stimson Center. For an overview, see Tschirgi, Necla (2004) Tschirgi, Necla (2004) *Post-conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges*. New York: International Peace Academy. See also the report of the Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004) *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*.
- 9 Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ). Eide, Espen Barth *et al.* (2005) *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations*. London/Oslo: King’s College/Norwegian Institute of International Affairs. For an overview, see Tschirgi, Necla (2004) Tschirgi, Necla (2004) *Post-conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges*. New York: International Peace Academy. See also the report of the Secretary General’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004) *A More Secure World: Our Shared Responsibility*.
- 10 UNDG/ECHA (2004) *Report of the UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition Issues*.
- 11 Jones, Bruce D. (2001) “The Challenges of Strategic Coordination: Containing Opposition and Sustaining Implementation of Peace Agreements in Civil Wars”. New York: International Peace Academy. p. 12.
- 12 Call, Charles (2004) “The Problem of Peacebuilding: How UN Thinking Has Evolved

- in Recent Years”. Draft paper for Department of Political Affairs.
- 13 See Eide et al. (2005) Op. cit
 - 14 See, for example, Anja T. Kaspersen, Espen Barth Eide and Annika S. Hansen (2004) "International Policing and the Rule of Law in Transitions from War to Peace" NUPI Working Paper no. 4.
 - 15 E/2005/4-DP/2005/13) of 30 November 2004, paragraph 32.
 - 16 See dictum in IM study that "form should follow function".
 - 17 See, for example, Eide, Espen B. et al. (2005) op. cit; Dahrendorf, Nicola et al. (2003) op. cit;
 - 18 UNDG/ECHA (2004) "Report of the UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition Issues"
 - 19 Trust fund mechanisms are discussed in section 3 below.
 - 20 United Nations (1969) *A Study of the Capacity of the United Nations Development System*. Vol. 1. Geneva: United Nations. DP/5. p. 18. Emphasis added.
 - 21 Doss, Allan (2003) *Squaring the Circle: Can Coherence Work*.
 - 22 See, for example, UNDP Annual Report 2003.
 - 23 A/57/387, 9 September 2002
 - 24 Guidance Note on Joint Programming, UNDG, 19 December 2003, page 2
 - 25 Common Country Assessments (CCA), United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF), Consolidated Appeals Process (CAP), Common Humanitarian Action Plan (CHAP), Annual Work Plan (AWP), Country Programme Action Plan (CPAP), Common Country Programming Process (CCPP), Country Program Document (CPD).
 - 26 Press Release # 0004 from the Office of the Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Sudan: *Launch of the United Nations and Partners 2005 Work Plan for Sudan*
 - 27 DFID – Burundi Good Humanitarian Donorship Pilot: ToR External Baseline Evaluation (2004)
 - 28 Eide et al. (2005) op. cit. page 17
 - 29 OECD/DAC (1998) "Conflict, peace and development co-operation on the threshold of the 21st Century". The report notes that "the functional distinctions of the various agencies involved" must be overcome and that there is a need to "integrate rather than merely coordinate, relief, rehabilitation and development objectives within the framework of a long term strategy" p. 48.
 - 30 Shepard Forman and Dirk Salamons (1998) "Meeting Essential Needs in Post Conflict Recovery". Working paper. New York University Center on International Cooperation.
 - 31 Ibid.
 - 32 Development Initiatives (2004) "What type of funding models best support funding according to need", Resource Document for Ottawa meeting on Good Humanitarian Donorship.
 - 33 Donors' retreat on the CAP and Coordination in Humanitarian Emergencies, 24-25 February, Mountreux Switzerland.
 - 34 Independent Integrated Missions Study, May 2005
 - 35 OECD (2005) *Doing Aid Better*. Paris: OECD. February/March 2005. A comment piece by Johnston, Donald And Richard Manning.
 - 36 In *Larger Freedom*, Para 205
 - 37 In the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, excessive fragmentation of aid at global, country or sector level was identified as an impairing factor on effectiveness on country assistance programmes. See Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness. High Level Forum, February 28 – March 2., 2005.
 - 38 In *Larger Freedom*, paragraph 115
 - 39 Human Security Gateway, May 5, 2005. Integrated Regional Information Network.

- 40 Dahrendorf *et al.* (2003) Ibid.
- 41 For an overview of the LICUS Initiative, see www.worldbank.org/licus
- 42 OECD (2005) Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States. Draft, DCD(2005)8/REV2. April 7, 2005.
- 43 Tschirgi, Necla (2004) "Post-conflict Peacebuilding Revisited: Achievements, Limitations, Challenges". New York: International Peace Academy. p. i
- 44 Chesterman, Simon (2004) *You, the People*. Oxford University Press. Chesterman here refers to so-called "executive missions", as in Kosovo and East-Timor.
- 45 Carothers, Thomas (2003) "Promoting the Rule of Law Abroad" Working Paper, no. 34. Carnegie Endowment. p. 9
- 46 Hansen, Annika S. (2005) "Building Local Capacity for Maintaining Public Security", Draft paper, DCAF Author Workshop, April, 2005. Oslo: Norwegian Defence Research Establishment.
- 47 Woodward, Susan (2004) "Peace Operations: Civilian Dimensions - Accounting for UNDP and the Specialized Agencies". p. 13.
- 48 Foreman, Shep (2004) op. cit.
- 49 Wilton Park Conference report on "Humanitarian Coordination". April 21-23, 2004. para 23
- 50 Report of the UNDG/ECHA Working Group on Transition Issues, February 2004, page 22.
- 51 The concept of "shared sovereignty" is formulated by Stephen Krasner (2004) "Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States", *International Security*. Vol. 29, no. 2. pp. 85—120.
- 52 "The international community", the authors argue, "have been singularly hesitant to explore the connection between differences in institutional arrangements and local variables with a view to maximizing the prospects of liberal democracy and market economy taking root and flourishing". Ignatieff, M., S. Chesterman and R. Takur (2004) "Making States Work" IPA-report. p. 4.
- 53 For a related argument, see Call, Charles (2005) "Institutionalizing Peace: A review of Post-Conflict Peacebuilding Concepts and Issues for DPA".

