

The Peacebuilder's Contract:
How External State-building Reinforces Weak Statehood

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Complex peacebuilding operations are reasonably successful at ending violence.¹ Yet they generally aspire to do more than end violence – they also intend to remove the root causes of violence and create the conditions for a positive peace. It is not enough that former combatants go to their respective corners, disarm, or recognize that a resumption of violence will generate more costs than benefits. In order for there to be a stable peace, war-torn societies must develop the institutions, intellectual tools, and civic culture that generates the expectation that individuals and groups will settle their conflicts through non-violent means. Peacebuilders aspire to remove the root causes of violence and create this pacific disposition by investing these postconflict societies with various qualities, including democracy in order to reduce the tendency toward arbitrary power and give voice to all segments of society; the rule of law in order to reduce human rights violations; a market economy free from corruption in order to discourage individuals from believing that the surest path to fortune is by capturing the state; conflict management tools; and a culture of tolerance and respect.

There are various explanations for why peacebuilding operations have fallen far short of this ambitious goal of creating the good society. Perhaps the simplest explanation is that peacebuilders are expecting to achieve the impossible dream, attempting to engineer in years what took centuries for West European states and doing so under very unfavourable conditions. Peacebuilding operations confront highly difficult conditions, including a lack of local assets, high levels of destruction from the violence, continuing conflict, and minimal support from powerful donors and benefactors.² Another explanation faults the peacebuilders, failing to realize that their goal of transplanting a liberal-democracy in war-torn soil has allowed former combatants to aggressively pursue their existing interests to the point that it rekindles the conflict. In their effort to radically transform all aspects of state, society, and economy in a matter of months, peacebuilders are subjecting these fragile societies to tremendous stress. States emerging from war do not have the necessary institutional framework or civic culture to absorb the potential pressures associated with political and market competition. Consequently, as peacebuilders push for instant liberalization, they are sowing the seeds of conflict, encouraging rivals to wage their struggle for supremacy through markets and ballots.³ Shock therapy, peacebuilding-style, undermines the construction of the very institutions that are instrumental for producing a stable peace.

¹ For statistical evaluations of their rates of success, see Doyle and Sambanis 2006, Fortna, 2003, , Zürcher 2006.

² Chesterman 2004, Doyle and Sambanis, 2006, Orr 2004.

³ Paris 2004, Zakaria 2003.

In this paper we offer an alternative explanation: peacebuilders have adopted strategies that have reinforced previously existing state-society relations - weak states characterized by patrimonial politics and skewed development. Specifically, we develop a model of peacebuilding operations that helps explain why peacebuilders transfer only the ceremonies and symbols of the liberal-democratic state. The model, in brief, is as follows. We begin with the preferences of three key actors: peacebuilders, who want stability and liberalization; state elites of the target country, who want to maintain their power; and rural elites, who want autonomy from the state and to maintain their power in the countryside. The ability of each actor to achieve its goals is dependent on the strategies and behavior of the other two. Peacebuilders need the cooperation of state and rural elites if they are to maintain stability and implement their liberalizing programs. State elites are suspicious of peacebuilding reforms because they might usurp their power, yet they covet the resources offered by peacebuilders because they can be useful for maintaining their power; and they need local rural elites and power brokers, who frequently gained considerable autonomy during the civil war, to acknowledge their rule. Rural elites seek the resources provided by international actors to maintain their standing and autonomy, yet fear peacebuilding programs that might undermine their power at the local level and increase the state's control over the periphery.

Because peacebuilders, state elites, and rural elites are in a situation of strategic interaction, where their ability to achieve their goals are dependent on the strategies of others, they will strategize and alter their policies depending on (what they believe) others (will) do.⁴ Peacebuilders will have to adjust their policies and adapt their strategies to take into account their dependence on state elites, adjustments and adaptations that are likely to incorporate their preference for arrangements that safeguard their fundamental interests. State elites will have to acknowledge the legitimacy of peacebuilding reforms if they are to receive the stream international resources.

Their strategic interactions can lead to one of four possible outcomes: *cooperative peacebuilding*: local elites accept and cooperate with the peacebuilding program; *co-optive peacebuilding*: local elites and peacebuilders negotiate a peacebuilding program that reflects the desire of peacebuilders for stability and the legitimacy of peacebuilding and the desire of local elites to ensure that reforms do not

⁴ In this following discussion, we distinguish between state elites and rural elites. We acknowledge that in many situations the two are virtually indistinguishable to the extent that rural elites are part of the central government. However, we will insist on their differentiation in order to highlight that there are frequently (at least) two independent sets of elites in any country and that those outside the capital city often have independent powers that enable them to either block or frustrate any dreams of centralization by state elites. Finally, at times we will speak of local elites, a shorthand for a situation when state and rural elites can, for analytical purposes, be treated as one.

threaten their power base; *captured peacebuilding*: state and local elites are able to redirect the distribution of assistance so that it is fully consistent with their interests; or, *conflictive peacebuilding*: the threat or use of coercive tools by either international or domestic actors to achieve their objectives.

We argue that co-opted peacebuilding is, in most cases, the equilibrium outcome because, once both parties arrive at this result they have little incentive to defect. Co-opted peacebuilding, with its allocation of roles and responsibilities to each of the parties, represents something of an informal contract – a peacebuilder’s contract. Peacebuilders recognize the interest, power and authority of local elites, although this may not be compatible with the objective of building the good peace. State elites acknowledge the legitimacy of the reforms proposed by peacebuilders, but are intent to minimize the possible risks to their fundamental interests. Peacebuilders and local elites pursue their collective interest in stability and symbolic peacebuilding, creating the appearance (and opening up the possibility) of change while leaving largely in tact existing state-society relations.⁵

This model has several advantages over existing explanations for why peacebuilding fails to accomplish its stated goal of transformation and tends to reinforce the existing pattern of power relations. To begin, it brings “domestic politics” back into the explanation. Existing approaches tend to be systemic-centric, focusing on the international actors, treating domestic politics as “constraints,” and thus failing to incorporate fully the preferences and strategies of local actors. Relatedly, by treating the interactions between external and local actors as game we are able to offer a model that is applicable to diverse regional settings and has leverage over divergent outcomes. Third, because we treat peacebuilding as a form of state-building, we are able to identify why the “degree of the state” is possibly strengthened (and thus helped to contribute to stability) but there is little transformation of the “kind of state.” Fourth, our model provides not only an explanation for these post-conflict outcomes, but also insight into how international peacebuilders might change the terms of the contract to further real, and not faux, transformation.

The paper has two sections. Section I develops our model of the peacebuilder’s contract. We begin by noting how peacebuilding is statebuilding, offer a distinction

⁵ Cooley 2005 advances an ambitious theory of hierarchy that offers potential insight into the relationship between peacebuilding and state-society relations. He observes two kinds of hierarchical governance structures, a U-form and an M-form, and argues that the latter “tends to institutionalize patrimonial institutions in peripheries” (p. 57). Although we predict similar outcomes, we do not develop his argument as an alternative explanation for several reasons. One, it is not clear whether the structure of peacebuilding operations conform to a U or M-form. There is an argument that its centralizing characteristics tend to resemble the latter form yet this probability gives it more coherence than probably exists. Two, although his model takes into account the different actors that are part of each governance structure, there is little consideration of the interaction between the actors.

between the degree of the state and the kind of the state, and then discuss statebuilding in the post-colonial, postconflict context, highlighting the patrimonial politics that characterizes these states. We then develop the peacebuilder's contract. We begin with a simple model in which there are two actors, peacebuilders and state elites, that eventually coordinate their actions around coopted peacebuilding. Afterwards we complicate the game by introducing a third actor – rural elites, suggesting that it might lead to coopted peacebuilding between peacebuilders and state elites but captured peacebuilding between peacebuilders and rural elites.

Section II illustrates the utility of our model in Afghanistan and Tajikistan. Although these cases arrived at similar outcomes, they differ considerably with regard to the duration and nature of the war and the scope and intrusiveness of the peace building project. Afghanistan is arguably one of the most intrusive, ambitious and well-funded missions ever and the international coalition clearly aims at building-up a modern democratic state from the scratch, in a few years time, with the help of about 30,000 troops and annual aid of around \$2.5 billion. By contrast, the mission in Tajikistan is very small in scope and much less intrusive. It was established in 1994 to monitor the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition. Following the signing by the parties of the 1997 general peace agreement, UNMOT's mandate was expanded to help monitor its implementation. The mission nevertheless helped to attract considerable flows of aid, which amounted to the single most important resource flow in Tajikistan. We conclude by speculating as to whether and how this contract might be changed so that the development of a more responsive and accountable state might be nurtured, whether co-opted peacebuilding is such a disappointing outcome, and how co-opted peacebuilding might be consistent with a reasonably successful outcome – putting into place an institutional framework that can promote a more deliberative, inclusive, and accountable state.

Section I:

The Peacebuilder's Contract

As can be expected with any recently invented concept, peacebuilding exhibits an impressive range of definitions. Yet underlying this diversity is a unity. There is general agreement regarding what peacebuilding is *not*. It goes beyond the attempt to “strengthen the prospects for internal peace and decrease the likelihood of violent conflict.” Instead, it involves an effort to eliminate the root causes of conflict, to promote the security of the individual, societal groups, and the state, and to nurture features that create the conditions for a stable peace. “Ultimately, peacebuilding aims at building human security, a concept which includes democratic governance, human

rights, rule of law, sustainable development, equitable access to resources, and environmental security.”⁶ This multidimensional and highly intrusive undertaking, involving a reconstruction of politics, economics, culture, and society, leaves no stone unturned.

Standing behind peacebuilding is statebuilding. The modern state “exists when there is a political apparatus (governmental institutions, such as a court, parliament, or congress, plus civil service officials), ruling over a given territory, whose authority is backed by a legal system and the capacity to use force to implement its policies.”⁷ State-building concerns how the modern state comes into existence, that is, how this process is accomplished. Most discussions of state-building generally attend to one of two elements. One concerns the specific instruments states use to control society. Attention is directed to the monopolization of the means of coercion and the development of a bureaucratic apparatus organized around rational-legal principles that has the capacity to regulate, control, and extract from society. The concern, then, is with the degree of the *state*.

The other dimension concerns how states and societies negotiate their relationship - that is, the *kind* of state. Attention is directed to the organizing principles that structure the state’s rule over society. Two distinctions are particularly important for conceptualizing postconflict state-building. One is between mediated and unmediated states. Mediated states exist when state elites rule through alliances with local notables. In this context, rule (or, more accurately, stability) is accomplished through indirect means as the state elite broker deals with and rule indirectly through local elites. Unmediated states exist when state institutions replace state elites in governing central features of the economy and society. In this context, state institutions are now more involved in providing public goods for local populations and state elites are no longer essential “middle men.”⁸ The other distinction is between inclusionary and exclusionary regimes. Regimes can be distinguished according to whether or not they contain institutions that are designed to incorporate diverse views, hold the state accountable, and safeguard basic individual rights and liberties. Those that do are inclusionary, those that do not are exclusionary.

Because we are interested in post-conflict peacebuilding activities, operations that nearly always occur in the Third World, it is important to address what are the

⁶ Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade and Canadian International Development Agency 2002. See Barnett et al., 2007, for a review of how different organizations use the term of peacebuilding.

⁷ Giddens 1993, p. 309.

⁸ Waldner 1999, p. 2

fundamental characteristics of the Third World state and the post-conflict politics that shape the state-building challenge.

The Post-colonial Context

Although state-building exhibits tremendous variation depending on the global context, the economic structure, patterns of authority relations and political power, and elite networks, what distinguishes Third World state-building from Western state-building is the attempt to create centralized, legitimate, bureaucratic states in a post-colonial context. Colonialism had a profound effect on the Third World state. The colonial state was a creature of foreign forces and much of the internal apparatus, political system, and political economy was designed to protect the interests of foreign actors and those local elites that were given a cut. Consequently, the state was fundamentally alien to the society that it was charged with overseeing and controlling. The result, following Michael Mann's distinction, was that the colonial state was simultaneously strong and weak. Its infrastructural power was nonexistent, unable to mobilize or extract from society because it had little legitimacy. Its despotic power was high because of its authoritarian style.⁹

These characteristics of the colonial state frequently survived the transition to independence. Famously, Robert Jackson argued that many newly independent states were "quasi-states" because while they had juridical statehood they lacked empirical statehood.¹⁰ This lack of "empirical reality" led Third World governments to develop a Janus-faced survival strategy. They viewed the international system as containing a set of normative, political, economic, and security resources that might help them further their goal of regime survival. Sovereignty became a normative shield to guarantee their borders. During the cold war they might play up to and off the superpowers to extract strategic rents. They might rely on the former colony or great power patrons for security assistance and survival in the last resort. These international resources proved crucial for domestic survival; because they ruled states that had little legitimacy and state capacity, the government was unable to undertake extractive measures such as taxation. Regime stability was produced by a narrow coalition and various forms of patrimonial politics. Toward this end, state elites engaged in the costly process of building and monitoring networks, distributing payoffs and perks to contenders, and providing some public goods to particularly important coalitions (especially in the urban

⁹ Mann, 1984.

¹⁰ Jackson 1990.

areas).¹¹ To pay for these activities, they not only attempted to extract resources from the international environment but also to use the state as a private good, hence encouraging forms of corruption, and to create shadow networks and tolerate illicit economies.¹²

The Post-conflict Context

Postconflict statebuilding is distinguished from “normal” state-building by the existence of a dual crisis of security and legitimacy. What makes postconflict statebuilding postconflict, obviously, is the prior existence of conflict. Indeed, postconflict is frequently a misnomer for societies that are still experiencing periodic flashes of violence. Moreover, the history of violence and the continuing climate of fear means that individuals and groups are unlikely to trust that the state will be an impartial force that can provide credible security guarantees. Until that happens, individuals will continue to seek security from alternative security organizations and militias will be unlikely to demobilize.

States after conflict also face a crisis of legitimacy. This is not terribly surprising. Domestic conflict largely erupts in illegitimate states and the subsequent conflict rarely invests the postconflict state with legitimacy. The challenge, then, is to create public support and a modicum of legitimacy for the postconflict institutions. Their effectiveness depends on it. The willingness of individuals to comply with the government’s decisions depends on whether they believe it is legitimate. Moreover, the lack of legitimacy can contribute to the resumption of violence.

International peacebuilders are intervening in a post-colonial and post-conflict context as they attempt to socially engineer the post-conflict state-building process. Simon Chesterman defines international activities for state-building as “constructing or

¹¹ Here is how one student of Soviet state formation characterized the 1920s: “Personal networks originated in the prerevolutionary underground, but became better defined and more cohesive in the civil war. The major battle fronts of the civil war gave rise to informal groups of fighter organizers, who used their personal network ties to carry out territorial conquest and political consolidation. When hostilities finally ended, these wartime networks were not dismantled but adapted to the new challenges of the post-revolutionary regional administration. During the 1920s, center-regional relations were hampered by poorly developed bureaucratic lines and institutional incoherence. Consequently, the center was reconnected to the regions through personal network ties. In the regions, rival networks competed over access to and control over scarce organizational and material resources distributed by the center. Those networks that were most successful in that competition eventually came to dominate the administrative apparatus in their region. In the process, their network rivals in the region were either displaced or subsumed by these dominant networks.” Easter 2000., p. 12. Easter’s description of the post civil war Soviet Union captures much of the “post conflict” processes; the only important difference is that in the “new wars” these peripheral networks are sustained by shadow economic networks, thus giving them a fair bit of autonomy, power, and control.

¹² For discussions of the post-colonial state, see Ayoob 1995, Clapham 1996.

reconstructing institutions of governance capable of providing citizens with physical and economic security. This includes quasi-governmental activities such as electoral assistance, human rights and rule of law technical assistance, security sector reform, and certain forms of development assistance.”¹³ In our terms, peacebuilding is designed to enhance the degree and develop a particular kind of state. The state’s effectiveness is defined by its ability to provide basic services and deliver public goods. Its legitimacy (and effectiveness) is also related to the development of a particular kind of state, a liberal-democracy.¹⁴ Consequently, unlike European state formation, where there did not exist a hegemonic image of the ideal state, in the contemporary period the presumption is that modern states should have rule of law, democratic institutions, and market-driven development.¹⁵

The Peacebuilder’s Contract

The concept of the peacebuilder’s contract is intended to capture why peacebuilders begin with grand notions of transformation but adopt strategies that reinforce the existing state-society relations. Before proceeding, a few words about the nature of the modeling exercise and our application to peacebuilding. Game models are particularly useful for attempting to “explain a wide range of behavior within the confines of a single overarching explanation.”¹⁶ Our model, therefore, is intended to identify the conditions that lead peacebuilders to adopt strategies that reinforce (or possibly even transform) existing arrangements. The intent, in other words, is to be able to understand the origin and development of peacebuilding strategies in a range of postconflict cases and examine some of the consequences of these strategies. Moreover, similar to other strategic approaches, we are interested in the “connection between what actors want, the environment in which they strive to further those interests, and the outcomes of this interaction.”¹⁷ In other words, we are in the realm of strategic interaction.

¹³ Chesterman,.. 5

¹⁴ Sens 2004, Paris.

¹⁵ Akin to the postcommunist experience, “those making institutional choices thus face not only greater time constraints but also more intense international scrutiny. In contrast to previous episodes of state-building, international influence has not only become more acute, but it has had a profound effect on the very nature of state-building by changing the formal institutional requirements for becoming a full-fledged member of the international system.” Gryzmala-Busse and Luong, 2002, 529-554.

¹⁶ McGinnis 2006, 1

¹⁷ Lake and Powell 1999, 20

We assume that the actors are unitary and goal-oriented. Although there is probably little controversy regarding the claim that actors are goal-oriented, potentially problematic is the notion that these actors are unitary in any way, shape, or form. We readily acknowledge that this contrivance masks what invariably are important cleavages, cleavages that frequently derive from different conceptions of interests and alternative rank orderings of these preferences. Most international peacebuilding operations include an assortment of international actors, including UN peacekeepers, troop contributing countries, regional organizations such as the African Union and the European Union, international financial institutions such as the World Bank, and nongovernmental organizations such as Oxfam and World Vision International. State elites that are part of the post-conflict government also will evidence divisions. Not only can we expect all politicians to disagree on basic issues, these divisions might be greater in a postconflict government where there frequently is a power-sharing arrangement between former combatants and shotgun coalitions that include rival politicians that represent distinct identity-based populations. Rural elites also can have divergent interests, generated by distinct relationships to different socio-economic conditions and groupings. In addition, we assume that there is no overlapping relationship between state and rural elites, when, in fact, rural elites are frequently directly or indirectly represented in the post-conflict government. Finally, our model is elite-centric to the extent that we do not consider mass publics a significant independent actor that need to be considered as part of the equation. These simplifying assumptions are crucial to the modeling exercise and justified to the extent that they help us capture critical dynamics and divergent outcomes. Later, in fact, we will suggest that relaxing these assumptions does not weaken our analysis and observations, and possibly strengthens them.

The ability of these goal-oriented actors to achieve their preferences is dependent on the strategic choices and behavior of others. Although not all strategic interactions will gravitate toward a focal point, indeed, in many games they do not, we are particularly interested in developing a model that can help us understand the underlying logic that might lead to an equilibrium outcome.

A final, critical, comment about the setting. We assume that this game unfolds against the backdrop of a peace agreement that is accepted by the key parties on the ground; reflects the balance of political forces in the country at the time of the cessation of hostilities; and probably contains provisions that are designed to safeguard their power. We acknowledge that there is considerable variation in the domestic setting in any post-conflict process; sometimes there is a stable peace agreement and at other times there is a peace agreement existing alongside a continuation of the fighting. Different backdrops, of course, will have quite different implications for the dynamic interactions between the actors. But, we have to make choices in order to get the model up and running, and we assume that there is a peace treaty that represents a turning

point from the conflict to the post-conflict setting. Still, violence is hardly a distant memory. Not only are there daily reminders there also are patterns associated with a security dilemma, including, most importantly, the inability of foes to distinguish between behavior driven by lack of trust and behavior driven by predatory ambitions, are likely to persist.¹⁸ Still, the simultaneous presence of a signed peace agreement and international actors signify that the parties have moved into a post-conflict stage and the peace accord typically includes “a set of mutually-agreed benchmarks to guide the process and that can be used to assess progress.”¹⁹ Furthermore, we assume that the parties are generally committed to the implementation of the peace agreement. The parties might have signed the treaty for a variety of sincere and insincere reasons. They might have reached a hurting stalemate and concluded that because they cannot win through violence there is no rational alternative to a brokered deal. They might have decided to use the peace agreement to try to achieve through politics what they could not achieve through violence; in other words, the peace treaty does not signal the end of elite competition but rather a new phase. Consequently, we make no assumptions about the motives of the signatories but do assume that they are reasonably committed to their agreements. Although we do allow for the presence of spoilers who would prefer to fight than compromise, we assume that they do not have the political or military strength to act unilaterally to undermine the political process.

What They Want

Although peacebuilders (PBs) can have a variety of preferences and preference ordering, in our model they have two critical preferences. They want to implement reforms that lead to a liberal peace. In other words, they want to deliver services and assistance that will create new institutions that (re)distribute political and economic power in a transparent and accountable way. However, they operate with limited resources and seek to minimize casualties. Hence, they desire, first and foremost, stability, and, secondarily, liberalization. Stability, that is, the absence of war and a stable partner in the capital, is an important precondition for the security of the peacebuilders and their ability to implement their liberalizing reforms. Consequently, peacebuilders prioritize stability over the kinds of structural reforms that are posited to produce the kind of liberal peacebuilding they desire.

State elites (SEs) and rural elites (REs) want to preserve their political power and ensure that the peace implementation process either enhances or does not harm their political and economic interests. As we have already argued, the political and economic survival of SEs depends on their ability to co-opt or deter challengers from the

¹⁸ Jervis and Snyder 1999, Kasfir 2003, Walter 2002.

¹⁹ Goodhand and Sedra 2006, 5

periphery; their complicity usually does not come cheaply, which means that they must finance their patronage system. SEs will thus try to balance the opportunities that peacebuilders offer with the threats that the implementation of liberal peacebuilding poses to their survival strategy.

REs generally want to maximize their power and their autonomy from the central government. In fact, the war might have strengthened their hand. A typical consequence of war and the collapse of state services (if they ever really existed) is that individuals and groups looked beyond the state and toward their local communities and parallel organizations for their basic needs. Consequently, rural elites can be a relative beneficiary from the conflict. In any event, they will want to make sure that they do not lose in any peace dividend or post-conflict state-building process. Like state elites, rural elites will attempt to capture the resources offered by peacebuilders while minimizing the costs reforms might pose to their local power and autonomy vis-à-vis the central government.

The ability of peacebuilders, state elites, and rural elites to achieve their preferences is dependent on the behavior, strategies and perceived power of others. There are significant material and normative international constraints on peacebuilders. They are condemned to get results with limited resources, under high time pressure, and with minimal casualties. The international community has rarely spent lavishly on peacekeeping or peacebuilding exercises; indeed, the higher the projected cost the less likely is the UN Security Council to authorize the operation. Not only are peacebuilders expected to perform near miracles without requisite resources, but they are expected to do so with amazing speed because the international community suffers from attention deficit disorder and will quickly lose interest and patience. There also are normative constraints.²⁰ Indeed, peacekeepers and peacebuilders operate according to the principles of consent; they are expected to negotiate with and gain the cooperation of the targets of their intervention in order to ensure that the intervened gain “ownership.” In fact, the more necessary are enforcement mechanisms to achieve the mandate the greater are the costs of the intervention; and as the costs increase so, too, does the likelihood of the cessation of the peacebuilding operation. These constraints generate a strong desire by peacebuilders for *security on the cheap*. Consequently, local actors (SEs and/or REs) who are necessary for the production of stability will have a strengthened hand. Furthermore, the ability of peacebuilders to enact their liberalizing reforms also is highly dependent on the cooperation of local elites. Peacebuilding will succeed only if elites cooperate with a process that they are presumed to own.

The ability of state and rural elites to achieve their preferences is dependent on the actions of peacebuilders and each other. The resources that peacebuilders can

²⁰ Paris 2003.

allocate, however limited, usually dwarf those of the state budget of the target country, and their allocation can have important consequences for the distribution of political and economic power.²¹ Consequently, state elites will treat the international presence not only as a potential constraint but also as a potential opportunity. This is not a new development. During the age of imperialism local actors frequently attempted to attract international attention and resources in order to enhance their political position vis-à-vis local rivals, and during the Cold War state elites attempted to attract the attention of Cold War in order to garner strategic rents that they, in turn, can distribute domestically to bolster their political support.²² Moreover, peacebuilders can confer legitimacy on local elites, choosing to treat some as important political powers or as agents of political communities, thus enhancing their bargaining power over rivals.²³ Yet in a situation of elite competition, what is viewed as a positive externality by one party is likely to be treated as a negative externality by another. Consequently, state elites will attempt to steer international peacebuilders in a direction that furthers their interests.

A Simple Game: Peacebuilders and State Elites

The game begins when the peacebuilders (PB) undertake a set of activities that can generate negative or positive externalities for populations in the country. PBs bring highly needed resources that can be life-saving in many instances and critical for rebuilding the country. PBs also can have goals that are diametrically opposed by local elites, especially when PBs encourage the pluralization of politics or enhance the position of rivals. Thus, externalities, in their intensity and in their sign, will differ depending on how they are viewed by distinct constituencies. Local elites can respond to these externalities in a variety of ways, from coercive to noncoercive. At one extreme, they might intimidate, threaten or carry out violence against PBs. At the other extreme, they might actively cooperate with PBs, contributing manpower, resources, and time. It is beyond our capacity to delineate an exhaustive list of responses. Nor is it necessary. For our purposes here the crucial issue is whether local elites accept the peacebuilding reforms as presented or insist on a modification. When local populations accept, they engage in activities that support, encourage, or reward PBs; when they insist on modification, they engage in activities that are intended to force peacebuilders to alter the content and delivery of programs so that they are more consistent with their preferences. As outlined in Table One, we imagine four different kinds of outcomes:

²¹ On this point, see Boyce 2002, 367.

²² For the case of imperialism, see Curtin 2000, Robinson 1986. For cold war see Clapham 1996, Ayooob 1995.

²³ On impact of aid, see Boyce, Terry 2002.

cooperative peacebuilding, co-opted peacebuilding, captured peacebuilding, and confrontational peacebuilding.

What are the likely dynamics between liberal peacebuilders and status-quo oriented elites? Later we will introduce rural elites into the game, but for the moment we want to consider a game restricted to peacebuilders and state elites. If the SEs accept the peacebuilding program, then the game ends at cooperative peacebuilding. Peacebuilders are able to design and implement their programs with the knowledge that they will receive the cooperation and assistance from local elites. More likely, however, local elites will attempt to alter the content and implementation of these programs so that they are consistent with their interests. If PBs accept these conditions, then the outcome is captured peacebuilding. Peacebuilders become little more than the agent of local elites and international resources are transferred from international to local actors, who have control over its allocation and use.²⁴

It is doubtful, though, that peacebuilders will accept a situation in which they become the patron of a transitional government, especially one that is comprised of warlords and former combatants. Consequently, they are likely to present conditionality criteria that demand that local elites accept the legitimacy of local reforms in return for international support.²⁵ If state elites accept these conditions, then they and peacebuilders are engaged in co-opted peacebuilding: both peacebuilders and local elites have altered their policies and strategies in order to accommodate the preferences of the other.

There is the possibility, though, that peacebuilders and state elites are not able to reach a compromise, continue to resist the demands of the other, and begin to consider more coercive instruments. Although peacebuilders have few coercive measures available to them, in rare circumstances they might threaten to go to the Security Council and ask for enforcement action or armed protection; more likely peacebuilders will threaten either to curtail their activities or withdraw altogether. State elites might resist the incursions of peacebuilders or attempt to modify their policies by resorting to a range of coercive tactics, from intimidation to the threat and use of violence. In such a scenario, the game turns confrontational and possibly deadly.

Co-operative peacebuilding is the equilibrium outcome of this game (see Table Two). This is so because, in terms of preferences over outcomes, PBs prefer cooperative peacebuilding to co-opted peacebuilding to conflictive peacebuilding to

²⁴ This situation is more likely in situations of extreme violence and instability, when peacekeepers and aid workers are dependent on local warlords, militias, and combatants in order to carry out their mandates and for access to populations at risk.

²⁵ Goodhand and Sedra., p. 3

captured peacebuilding, and SEs prefer captured peacebuilding to co-opted peacebuilding to conflictive peacebuilding to cooperative peacebuilding (see Table Three).

Neither will be able to achieve its preferred outcome of either cooperative or captured peacebuilding (these are ordinal rankings); both would prefer conflictive peacebuilding to either captured or cooperative peacebuilding because it would distort (in the case of peacebuilders) if not threaten (in the case of state elites) their core interests. Co-opted peacebuilding, therefore, becomes the equilibrium outcome because the parties have little incentive to defect.

There are various reasons why peacebuilders and state elites will be satisfied with this outcome. Peacebuilders achieve security alongside an acknowledgement of the legitimacy and desirability of reforms. They have developed a culture of principled pragmatism, ready to make compromises in the face of hard realities. They have an organizational interest in demonstrating success, especially once they have committed resources to the operation. Finally, they know the preference rankings of state elites and thus can anticipate that if they defect and attempt to revise the bargain then state elites are likely to resist. There are various reasons why state elites also will be satisfied with this outcome. They receive international resources that they can use to maintain their support at home. They receive international recognition of their political standing. Finally, they know the preference rankings of peacebuilders and thus can anticipate that if they defect and attempt to revise radically the bargain in their favor, peacebuilders might depart.

Co-opted peacebuilding becomes something of a peacebuilder's contract – they have negotiated an arrangement in which each party has specific responsibilities and receives specific rewards. Peacebuilders agree to provide international resources and legitimacy for state elites in return for stability and acknowledgement by state elites of the legitimacy of peacebuilding reforms. Consequently, this contract reinforces the status quo even as it leaves open some possibility for reform. In other words, the reforms that do take place will unfold in a way that protects the interests of local elites. This outcome also can be seen as *symbolic peacebuilding*. In this way, it resembles what sociological institutionalists call “ceremonial conformity.” The actor, or organization, wants to maintain the stream of material and normative benefits required for its legitimacy and survival, but fears that full compliance will be too costly.²⁶ Consequently, it adopts the myths and ceremonies of the organizational form, but maintains its existing practices (and in this way organizational form and practices become decoupled). It is symbolic, or ceremonial, peacebuilding therefore, in that the

²⁶ Meyer and Rowan, 1977, 50.

symbols of reform have been transferred and thus there is the surface appearance that there has been a transformation of the kind of state, that is, toward a liberal-democracy, even though the existing power relations have largely emerged unscathed. That said, symbols can matter. Once state elites have committed themselves to certain principles these public commitments can be used by liberalizing elements at home and abroad to try and force them to keep their word. Moreover, these symbols can encourage existing actors to reprioritize their interests and develop new networks of associations that can, over time, build support for liberalization.

A More Complicated Game: Rural Elites Get Involved

So far, for the sake of simplicity, we have presented an extended game between peacebuilders and state elites and thus have omitted rural elites from our scenario. Yet, as we previously argued, in most postconflict settings rural elites are critical to stability and thus their presence is likely to affect the outcome. Accordingly, let us now consider a second game, which is an extension of the first. Imagine that peacebuilders and state elites have settled on co-opted peacebuilding. Rural elites might very well fear that this arrangement will threaten their goals of preserving their power and maintaining their autonomy from the central government. Why? Peacebuilders are pressing reforms that are intended to pluralize power and recentralize the state. Consequently, rural elites might respond by playing the spoiler or using their power to raise the cost of peacebuilding and threaten the regime's survival. (Indeed, because frequently rural elites are strengthened by a collapsed state, their bargaining leverage might be higher after the war than before). In short, rural elites are likely to resist an arrangement that might come at their expense.

What other outcomes are possible? Following on the same logic that led peacebuilders and state elites to accept a co-opted peacebuilding outcome, rural elites might accept the legitimacy of peacebuilding in exchange for resources and recognition from peacebuilders. Yet an additional possibility is captured peacebuilding (see Figure Three). There are several reasons why rural elites might be able to achieve what state elites could not. To begin, in comparison to state elites, rural elites might have greater bargaining leverage. Peacebuilders are increasingly and notoriously out of their depth the further they get from the capital city, tend to be more isolated and thus more dependent on rural elites to provide security, and are more dependent on rural elites to provide critical information and protection. Peacebuilders might be willing to be "captured" for what they believe are tactical reasons, betting that a bad agreement is better than no agreement and might be renegotiated at a later date. They also might not even know how captured they truly are.

Captured peacebuilding is not necessarily the only possible outcome or the stable one. There is, of course, the distinct possibility that, in response, state elites will want to renegotiate the contract. Indeed, at issue is more than sheer jealousy or some notion of fairness among potentates. Instead, rural elites might be able to use this flow of resources to further their power vis-à-vis the central government. It is doubtful, however, that state elites will be able to achieve the same outcome because they do not possess the same bargaining power and peacebuilders will be resistant to being captured – particularly in public. There is a third possibility: state elites, fearful that rural elites are about to gain relative power, will strike out against the rural elite. If so, this might very well increase the bargaining advantage of the peacebuilders and allow them to steer their interactions down the path of co-opted peacebuilding. Recognize that under any scenario the best that peacebuilders can expect to achieve is co-opted peacebuilding.

In sum, our models suggest that given the resources, commitments, and preferences of the players, the best outcome from the perspective of liberal peacebuilders is symbolic peacebuilding. Cooperative peacebuilding is possible if and only if peacebuilders come in with tremendous resources and a strong commitment to liberalization. Even then, they will have to anticipate that local elites, both in the capital and in the countryside, will resist or attempt to change the peacebuilding program so that it more fully incorporates their preferences. In fact, we anticipate that captured peacebuilding, especially between rural elites and peacebuilders, is more likely than cooperative peacebuilding. For these and other reasons, liberal peacebuilding is more likely to reproduce than transform existing state-society relations and patrimonial politics.

Section Two: Coopted and Captured in Kabul and Dushanbe

Afghanistan and Tajikistan share much. They share a 1300km border, are landlocked, mountainous, largely rural, and very poor. Both emerged from disastrous civil wars in which the fault lines along ethnic, regional and religious identities made for a very complicated peace process and post conflict reconstruction project. Neither had very well developed indigenous capacities for peace- and statebuilding – and both would look to and rely heavily on international actors to provide critical resources. Because of geopolitical circumstances, Afghanistan commanded considerable international attention; it experienced one of the most intrusive, ambitious and well-funded peace building mission ever. In contrast, the mission in Tajikistan was much

smaller in scope and much less intrusive; however, the peacebuilding operation represented a large percentage of total available resources. In both cases, moreover, international actors entered with a broadly liberal agenda, proposing to reform the state, society, and economy in order to promote a durable peace.²⁷

The results of these peacebuilding operations also are similar in important respects. Both travelled down a path of co-opted peacebuilding as international peacebuilders traded stability for a more genuine commitment to liberal reforms, and state elites accepted the legitimacy of liberal reforms in return for a continuation of international assistance. Consequently, in both cases there was a modest increase in the *degree* of state while the *kind* of state had a liberal shell atop a mediated, exclusionary, and patrimonial state.²⁸ These cases differed in a critical respect, though: in Tajikistan rural elites were weak, state elites relatively strong, and well-funded but disarmed peacebuilders led to a more stable form of co-opted peacebuilding. In Afghanistan the combination of a U.S.-led war against terrorism and presence of strong and determined rural elites, aka warlords, led to captured peacebuilding in the countryside, which, in turn, further complicated the hopes for liberal reforms. Tajikistan thus represents a simple game, whereas in Afghanistan the outcome of the game that was influenced by the presence of strong rural elites.

Tajikistan

There are several features of Tajikistan's history that are important for understanding the challenges faced by peacebuilders. On the economic front, it was heavily agrarian, had been the least developed Soviet republic, and had been dependent on Moscow for 40% of its budget. On the political front, akin to other central Asian republics, Tajikistan had a hybrid political system that resulted from a Soviet state and party institutions that aspired to create a centralized rule that penetrated society down to the village level but nevertheless relied on informal middlemen and one particular regional grouping ("clan"), the Leninabad in northern Tajikistan.. On the socio-cultural front there were very strong regional identities, due in part to the very mountainous

²⁷ We treat these cases as illustrative and suggest that future research select on the critical variables in order to see whether and how a change in the preferences and constraints might lead to different outcomes.

²⁸ There are, of course, various alternative explanations for these results, including the lack of coordination among the peacebuilders, which increased the autonomy of local elites and thus gave them the ability to escape any kinds of control mechanisms that might have been established; the American obsession with the war on terrorism; the American invasion of Iraq, which consumed the kinds of international military and financial assistance (and attention) that might otherwise have gone to Afghanistan.

terrain and poor infrastructure that hindered communication and strong ties between different regions.

The collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 meant the end of its generous subsidies support for the ruling Leninabadis, which, in turn, triggered a civil war. Although the war involved a clash of ideologies – communism and secularism versus Islamism; democracy/liberalism versus authoritarianism – the main divisions were between regionally based clans.²⁹ The civil war brutalized the country, destroying infrastructure, reportedly killing 50,000 people, and leaving homeless hundreds of thousands.³⁰

The international reaction to the war began in late 1992. In January 1993 the UN established the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), a skeletal operation tasked with helping to coordinate humanitarian assistance. It would take another two years and a radical change in the region's strategic context before there would be further international action. What grabbed everyone's attention was the successful consolidation of the Pakistan-backed Taliban over large swathes of Afghanistan and the prospect that its influence, politics, and violence might spill over into Tajikistan. Alarmed by this possibility, in 1995 the UN and the CIS, with Russia as its driving force, increased their efforts to establish a political settlement. The UN undertook a fairly intensive shuttle diplomacy between Tajik leader Emomali Rakhmonov (leader of the Kulyob grouping) in Dushanbe and opposition leader Sayed Abdullo Nuri in Kabul that led to negotiations, but little else. In 1996 the fighting resumed.

In the aftermath of the war, Russia and Uzbekistan increased their military cooperation and their support for Emomali Rakhmonov. On December 23, 1996 Rakhmonov and Nuri met in Moscow. This time they crafted a comprehensive agreement which laid the foundation for a peace treaty. After considerable international pressure and further internationally-sponsored negotiations, in June, 1997, President Rakhmonov and the leader of the UTO, Nuri, signed the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord in Tajikistan. Among its more important features, the agreement called for: the creation of a Commission of National Reconciliation; the incorporation of UTO representatives into the government on the basis of a 30% quota; an end to the ban on UTO party activities; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of UTO forces; and a general amnesty for all combatants.

²⁹ Akiner 2001, Atkin 1999, Rubin 1998.

³⁰ Akiner and Barnes 2001.

To support the signed agreement and the post-conflict process, in June 2000, the United Nations disbanded UNMOT and created in its place the United Nations Tajikistan Office of Peacebuilding (UNTOP), which had a mandate to: provide the political framework and leadership for post-conflict peace-building activities of the United Nations; promote an integrated approach to the development and implementation of post-conflict peace-building programmes; foster reconstruction, economic recovery, poverty alleviation, good governance, democracy and the rule of law; and organize the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) program.³¹ Although there were no explicit statements about the need to establish a liberal democracy in Dushanbe, the UN's mission included the standard checklist of activities that suggested this very goal.

In the wake of 9/11 and the US war against the Taliban, the peacebuilding mission in Tajikistan acquired a new strategic significance. UNTOP became the centrepiece of a booming peacebuilding industry, INGOs flocked to Tajikistan, NGOs mushroomed, and an impressive flow of money streamed into the country. Aid as a percentage of the central government's total expenditures climbed from 5% in 1993 to 27% in 2001 and then to a staggering 37% in 2004.³² Official development assistance reached \$240 million in 2004, compared to \$180 million for the government's outlays. Aid, together with revenues from labor migration³³ and drug trafficking, became Tajikistan's blood and oxygen.³⁴

What quickly emerged was co-opted peacebuilding. President Rakhmonov had a clear preference for maintaining political power, ensuring stability throughout the region, and continuing the flow of international resources that was so critical for regime survival and stability. Toward that end, he cooperated with peacebuilders when there was a convergence of preferences, but when they did not converge he favored symbolic peacebuilding. He was not alone in his stated preference for stability over all other goals. All parties feared a resumption of hostilities (arguably exaggerated by Rakhmonov's regime in order to attract aid money and to ensure domestic compliance), and Rakhmonov's policy of stability was strongly supported by the population. Rakhmonov could play the "stability" card for political purposes, and during his national campaigns urged national reconciliation and portrayed himself as Tajikistan's best hope for stability.

³¹ UNTOP: <http://www.untop.org/> (02/06/2006).

³² World Bank Development Indicators.

³³ Business & Economics: RUSSIA, TAJIKISTAN SPAR OVER ILLEGAL LABOR MIGRATION, 1/09/03. (<http://www.eurasianet.org/departments/business/articles/eav010903.shtml> 3.1.2004)

³⁴ IOM 2003, Makarenko, 2002,

The central government cooperated with the peacebuilding operation in various areas. It supported the DDR process, which, accordingly, was a relative success. A resource-starved government gladly outsourced welfare services in the rural areas to an eager INGO community. The result was a major increase in basic goods as international actors became the major provider of food security, basic infrastructure, energy supply, education and health care in the countryside, especially in the former oppositional regions of Garm and Badakhshan.

There was little more than symbolic peacebuilding, though, when the preferences of state elites diverged from the international peacebuilding program. UNTOP attempted to promote the very idea of pluralizing politics and establishing a culture of dialogue and peaceful dissent. Toward that end, it initiated the Political Discussion Club (PDC) project, which brought “together representatives of central and local government, heads of political parties, citizens, NGOs, and representatives of private business and the independent mass media in sessions across the country.... Topics for discussion rotate each year, and have included the themes of democratization, economic transition, security, local governance, and electoral laws and procedures”³⁵ All well and good, but this arguably represented more ceremony than substance. Tajikistan, has no independent media, no robust political party system, no civil society outside of the fledgling and internationally-supported NGO community, and no meaningful institutions for local government.³⁶ Little wonder, then, that the Political Discussion Club had difficulty “promoting political tolerance and dialogue.” In a country without an independent media or electricity in the rural areas, it is difficult to accept the conclusion that “coverage of discussions in local and national mass media, multiplied the effect of each session, increased the outreach in distant regions.”³⁷

There were various other reforms that were intended to increase public security, but in many cases they were undermined by the half-hearted and foot-dragging behaviour of local elites. UNTOP instituted training seminars for state officials and community leaders on conflict prevention and resolution, but there is little evidence that such training was anything but pro forma and perfunctory. To promote the rule of law, UNTOP supported local capacity-building for law enforcement agencies, seeking to accelerate their reform, combat corruption, and increase professionalism. In the realm of human rights, a needs assessment mission of Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) concluded that “although Tajikistan was

³⁵ <http://www.untop.org/> (02/06/2006)

³⁶ See Bertelsmann Transformation Index BTI, country report Tajikistan 2006, [http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/157.0.html?L=1\(2006/06/26\)](http://www.bertelsmann-transformation-index.de/157.0.html?L=1(2006/06/26))

³⁷ Ibid.

party to all major human rights conventions, it lacked national capacities in treaty reporting and had not established the necessary mechanism to implement its obligations.”³⁸ As a remedy, it recommended that UNTOP assist in providing technical support in the area of treaty reporting and human rights education. Although it is quite possible that the primary obstacle toward improvement in this area is “technical,” there is ample alternative evidence that it is fundamentally political.

The new government also demonstrated very little interest in promoting power-sharing or the pluralization of political power. There have been a series of elections - parliamentary and presidential elections in 2000 and a referendum in 2003 on whether Rakhmonov should be allowed to serve two consecutive seven-year terms when his current term ends in 2006 – but they were hardly free or fair. Moreover, the government slowly reversed the key point of the peace agreement that had assured UTO 30% representation in the government. Today, most of the key positions are occupied by loyal followers of President Rakhmonov’s home region of Kulyob. All of these reversals have been tolerated by the peacebuilders because Rakhmonov is viewed as a guarantor of stability in a country which appears to be vulnerable to internal cleavages and external destabilization. In fact, rather than using aid as a lever for greater democratization, aid has increased as democracy has become a more distant possibility.

Peacebuilding in Tajikistan has increased the degree, but not altered the kind, of state. Rakhmonov’s regime has gained considerable strength (enough to rig two elections and a referendum) and successfully co-opted or sidelined oppositional state elites. World Bank indicators reflect the institutionalization of one-party rule, patrimonial politics, and authoritarianism. The voice and accountability indicator, an aggregate measure of civil liberties, has declined since 2002, while indicators measuring government effectiveness have improved.³⁹

The current political system in Tajikistan is characterized by highly entrenched patron-client networks supported by an increasingly coercive and arbitrary state apparatus. Governance is exercised mainly through informal channels. Civil society is weak and hardly existent beyond the village communities. Nevertheless, the institutional framework for democracy and market reforms is formally in place and Tajikistan’s high dependence of international cooperation makes it - theoretically - more responsive to incentives for policy changes than, for example, isolationist Uzbekistan. In general, while there are important symbolic differences between the

³⁸ <http://www.untop.org/> (02/06/2006)

³⁹ The figures are for Voice and Accountability: 2000: -1,76; 2002: -1,31; 2004: -1,35; for government effectiveness: 2000: -1,39; 2002: -1,13; 2004: -1,05. Source: Kaufmann, Kraay, and Mastruzzi 2005.

Tajikistan that was a Soviet republic and the sovereign state of Tajikistan, many of these differences are ceremonial and not substantive.

The international community has contributed to this outcome. It has generously funded a regime that is maintained more by “by raw power” than by “institutions”.⁴⁰ State elites have continuously renegotiated the peacebuilders contract in their favor, emphasizing stability over liberal reforms, and peacebuilders were willing to renegotiate because they, too, ranked stability over liberalization. In this way, both actors achieved their highest order preferences: the regime has helped to produce stability and a relapse into civil war is increasingly remote, and Tajikistan’s state elites accepted the legitimacy of liberal reforms.

Afghanistan

When in 2001 international peacebuilders launched one of the most ambitious peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations ever, Afghanistan was a poor, highly fragmented country that had just emerged from more than two decades of disastrous wars. After the withdrawal of the Soviet Union in 1989, fighting continued among the various Mujahidin factions, eventually giving rise to a state of warlordism. The chaos and corruption that dominated post-Soviet Afghanistan in turn spawned the rise of the Taliban. After several years of further fighting, the Taliban laid claim to Afghanistan in fall 1996.

The possibility and desirability of an international peacebuilding in Afghanistan was the obvious result of the September 11th attacks on the United States and the American-led response the following month that successfully routed the Taliban government and al-Qaeda forces. US forces supported heavily the Northern Alliance, a military-political coalition of various Afghan groups fighting against the Taliban. With extensive U.S. military assistance, the Northern Alliance captured most of Afghanistan from the Taliban in early 2002. The defeat of the Taliban led to the broader debate about how to both promote a government that would join in the war against terrorism and create the structural underpinning for a stable peace. While the former objective might have suggested something of a devil’s bargain between the U.S. and whomever emerged victorious in Kabul, the latter insisted on a broader peacebuilding operation. Although the victorious Northern Alliance, which represented mainly the Tajik and Uzbek population of Afghanistan, heavily influenced the new transitional authority, the international coalitional forces insisted on a broad coalition that would also represent the Pashtu population. In fall 2001, various representatives of influential Afghan groups under the auspices of the UN convened in Bonn, Germany, to discuss the future of the country.

⁴⁰ Ottaway, 2002.

Liberal peacebuilders confronted enormous challenges. After two decades of war, peacebuilders were having to start from ground zero and confronted considerable obstacles as they imagined beginning a state-building and peacebuilding project. Most infrastructure had been destroyed by the wars. The state, which barely existed even in the “golden age,” was now decimated and had little capacity. The union of military forces that produced the victory could not mask the significant political cleavages that threatened to boil to the surface. The Taliban continued to exist and could play spoiler. Most societal groups were mistrusting of any statebuilding process. Society was largely organized around regional, ethnic and religious ties, and the rural elites—large landowners, religious leaders, and Jihadi commanders—were content with a decentralized arrangement.⁴¹

The emerging game between peacebuilders and state elites was influenced by a number of factors. To begin, peacebuilders were willing to make Afghanistan a flagship project; toward that end, they committed significant resources (manpower, soldiers, and money). Furthermore, the new state elites owed their positions to the victory over the Taliban and the subsequent peacebuilding operation; consequently, their preferences corresponded with those of the international peacebuilders. That said, they were in no great position to command anyone to do anything because the governing elites had little leverage over competing elites, especially outside Kabul. Regime survival, and presumably their physical survival, depended on whether they successfully accommodated their rivals. Finally, the U.S.’s focus on the war against terror led it to support individual warlords and local strongmen who, in its view, were instrumental for hunting down the Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters; consequently, the U.S.’s preference of security over liberalization strengthened the power of those parties that opposed the creation of a liberal, democratic state. The weakness of state elites, the strength of rural elites, and the ambiguous policies of the main peacebuilder, the U.S., explains why the peacebuilding game in Afghanistan veered down two different paths: cooperative peacebuilding between the new Afghan government and the peacebuilders, and captured peacebuilding between the rural elites and peacebuilders.

The cornerstone of the political process emerged in the Bonn agreement of December 5, 2001. Under the auspices of various international sponsors, four central Afghan factions met in Bonn, Germany, in late Fall, 2001, to discuss the country’s interim political authority and the process of establishing a new government. The resulting agreement created an Afghan Interim Authority and a road map for political and economic prosperity. The agreement’s explicit goal was to produce a state that would be democratic, efficient, rational, and limited, committed to Islamic values, social justice, and market-led growth, and contain a single army.⁴² A major task of the Afghan

⁴¹ Rubin 2002.

⁴² Suhrke 2006.

Interim Authority was to convene an Emergency Loya Girga (Grand Assembly of Elders), which would select a transitional government until national elections for a permanent government.⁴³ Furthermore, while the agreement did contain transitional benchmarks and a timeframe, these were vague and disconnected from formal conditionalities. The reluctance to impose conditionalities owed to the international community's priority of stability and fear that these conditionalities might exacerbate the already existing divisions within the government.⁴⁴ The agreement's vagueness and unwillingness to undertake a set of actions that might threaten stability was particularly evident regarding the militias and warlords. The agreement presented a 'declaration of intent' but no details about the mechanisms for the transfer of authority, the composition of future state apparatus, or clear timelines.⁴⁵ In marked contrast to elaborate and detailed political agenda, the vagueness of the language in the security protocols suggests that peacebuilders wanted to avoid getting caught up in costly and dangerous struggle against rural elites and thus chose to give the Northern Alliance maximum room for manoeuvre and politico-military freedom.⁴⁶

Because of its perceived importance to the new security agenda and the war against terrorism, the international community immediately provided support for the political process. In comparison to its funding for other operations, the international community was incredibly muscular and generous. Although its exact numbers have varied since late 2001, it has typically had around 30,000 U.S. troops and 7000 ISAF troops. Although the exact aid amounts have fluctuated both in terms of numbers and priorities, the relative generosity became apparent at the first donors conference in January 2002, when \$4.5 billion was pledged for postconflict reconstruction; at a subsequent donors conference in March 2004 in Berlin, there were pledges of \$12 billion through 2007.

As outlined in the Bonn agreement, a Loya Jirga assembled in June 2002. The delegates were elected from 370 constituencies plus representatives from refugee groups, universities and religious elites, and the governors of all the provinces – mostly warlords. The results of the Loya Jirga were mixed: while major representatives of almost all Afghan groups agreed on the composition of the Transitional Authority, the

⁴³ Bonn, formally known as the "Agreement on Provisional Arrangements in Afghanistan Pending the Reestablishment of Permanent Government Institutions," was brokered by the four major Afghani factions. For discussions of the Loya Jirga, see Giustozzi 2004, Saba and Zakhilwal 2004, Thier 2004, Thier and Chopra, 2002, For a critical commentary, particularly the centralization of power in the hands of a few cliques, see International Crisis Group 2003; and Johnson and Jolyon 2004, chaps. 7, 8.

⁴⁴ Suhrke 2006.

⁴⁵ Suhrke, Harpviken, and Strand 2004.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

actual negotiations were far from fair and transparent. Measured against previous deliberations, the Loya Jirga looked like a model of deliberation, but there was a general feeling that democracy was merely a façade as political power resided and decisions were taken elsewhere.

Presidential elections occurred on October 9, 2004, and Hamid Karzai, who had become the international community's critical partner, was elected with 55.4 percent of the vote. The elections were free, but the playing field was uneven, in part because Karzai enjoyed the undivided support of the international community.⁴⁷ To complete the Bonn agreement, parliamentary elections occurred on September 18, 2005. The winners were warlords and women - reflecting the nature of the peacebuilders contract: rural elites, warlords, and their followers gained the majority of seats in both the lower house and the provincial council (which elects the members of the upper house) but women, which the constitution guaranteed at least 25% of the seats in the lower house, actually won 28% of the seats.

Although Karzai and other reformers in the new government largely supported liberalization, the strong preferences of fairly autonomous regional elites for the status quo and the willingness of the international coalition to provide critical resources to them in exchange for an alliance against the remnants of the Taliban and al-Qaeda propelled peacebuilders and the state elite toward co-opted peacebuilding. Consequently, symbolic politics dominated many aspects of the government's reforms. For instance, in the area of judicial reform various government institutions contrived to outwit an array of poorly coordinated international donors by constructing an obfuscatory smoke-screen around the process of reform, and by cannily provoking competition between donor agencies, thus maximising their benefits while hindering the implementation of real reforms.⁴⁸

The weakness of state elites and the strong position of rural elites contributed to this outcome. President Karzai had to accommodate competing elites and prominent warlords because he lacked the means to crack down on them and did not wish to narrow further his ruling coalition. Specifically, because he could not crush his opposition he tried to coopt or constrain them. Consider the cases of the warlords Rashid Dostum and Ismail Khan. Khan was initially encouraged to relinquish either his executive role as Governor of Herat, or his military role as Commander of 4th Army Corps.⁴⁹ Subsequently, in 2004, Karzai successfully accommodated Khan in the Kabul-

⁴⁷ Gardish, 2004.

⁴⁸ Bhatia, Lanigan, and Wilkinson, 2004, , Goodhand and Sedra.

⁴⁹ Giustozzi 2003.

based central Government as Minister of Mines and Industry while stripping him of his executive authority as Governor in his home province.⁵⁰ In 2003 Dostum was provided with the somewhat ceremonial role of Deputy Defence Minister and was granted executive powers as Karzai's "Special Envoy to the North."

Another favored mechanism for constraining the power of first-order warlords was the instrumentalisation of second-order warlords against their first-order warlord patrons. Karzai, for instance, supported the second-tier warlord, Amanullah Khan of Shindand district, to militarily oppose Ismail Khan.⁵¹ This was conducted through the proxy of Gul Agha Shirzai, a powerful militia leader and subsequent Provincial Governor of Kandahar. Shirzai is a powerful strong-man associated with the monarchist network. Importantly, Amanullah was previously an ally of the Taliban. Karzai and his modernisers are instrumentalising second-tier warlords with previous Taliban connections to weaken recalcitrant first-order warlords, using other first-order warlords as proxies.

The cooptation and inclusion of rural elites and warlords not only limited the space for any substantive reforms but it also contributed to symbolic politics. Under pressure from international human rights groups General Rashid Dostum, one of Afghanistan's most feared and powerful warlords, became a spokesperson for human rights. In May 2002, he issued a public rebuke to human-rights abusers within his militia; however, his message lost some of its power when he threatened to 'kill' any abusers of human rights.⁵² Similarly Hazrat Ali, the Pashtun warlord cum-Chief of Police of Nangahar, participated in the ritual of poppy eradication, (to 'please the U.S. military'), while leaving untouched those poppy-fields that were not visible from the road.⁵³ Many analysts also have observed ritualised and empty disarmament as part of the demobilization, disarmament and reintegration process.⁵⁴ Only antiquated and worn out weapons have been turned in. Commanders have sent only the most unfit and poorly trained militia fighters to the Afghan National Army. State ministries routinely and ritualistically speak in the discourse of western developmentalism, i.e., 'conditionalities', 'financial constraint', 'fiduciary planning,' but there is little evidence

⁵⁰ Dietl, 2004.

⁵¹ Giustozzi.

⁵² *Christian Science Monitor*, May 09, 2002.

⁵³ *Christian Science Monitor*, September 04, 2003.

⁵⁴ Suhrke, Harpviken, and Strand.

that rhetoric matches action. Peacebuilding, in short, is symbolic and nearly empty of substance.⁵⁵

While peacebuilders and state elites struck upon co-opted peacebuilding, peacebuilders and rural elites quickly veered down the path of captured peacebuilding – a result of a U.S. that preferred routing the Taliban over liberalization and regional warlords who were willing to cooperate with the U.S.’s war on terror in return for resources and recognition that could strengthen their political power. In order to further its security interests, U.S. officials and military planners attempted to ‘pick winners’ that are on the ‘right’ side in the war against terror and then give them with nearly unconditional support.⁵⁶ This frequently necessitated military and monetary support of warlords and autonomous militias.

Although the U.S.’s decision to trade security for liberalization would complicate the policies of all other peacebuilders that were not ready to make such a bargain, even if the U.S. had not made this bargain there are reasons to believe that peacebuilders would have been at a growing disadvantage because of their lack of knowledge the further they ventured from Kabul. But the double failure of ISAF to venture outside of Kabul and the U.S.’s bargain with the warlords meant that other peacebuilders would become captured.⁵⁷

Most INGOs cannot help but interact with local strongmen in ways that deliver to them various benefits. They gain economically. INGOs rent offices, buildings, and storage facilities from them and their relatives, typically at prices far above local standards. They invite local strong-men to visit the headquarters of the INGOs, thus conferring on them greater legitimacy. In return, rural elites respect the quid pro quo of the informal ‘contract.’ Local communities are exhorted to support and facilitate the work of the INGOs. Village leaders present a happy and welcoming face to INGO staff. Survey teams from the INGO are indulged. INGO offices, vehicles, and staff are physically secure, at least in the areas of the commanders’ control.

Yet as security became more problematic INGOs became increasingly detached from local politics and more dependent on middle men and other indirect means for gathering information. The ominous security climate caused INGOS to build a fortress

⁵⁵ Sedra 2005.

⁵⁶ Goodhand and Sedra.

⁵⁷ The following section draws on Marc Theuss (Free U Berlin), Jan Koehler (Free U Berlin) and Christoph Zuercher’s (Free U Berlin) field experiences and first hand accounts from rural regions in Afghanistan. Names and details are omitted in order to avoid endangering informants and organizations working in the field.

between themselves and the local population, discouraging first-hand contact, which, in turn, led to a decline in the quality of their information a dependence on locals and information brokers for news, second-hand reports, and secondary (and recycled) data. INGO management retreats further into a comforting, hermetically-sealed, illusion of emails, donor reports, ‘performance appraisals’ and day-to-day operational activity. Expatriate managers, residing in larger provincial centres, operating in an office environment of laptops, satellite phones, spreadsheet, log-frames and assisted by members of the ‘modern’ English-speaking Afghan elite lack the information or the will to change their relationship with local strongmen. They often do not realize how truly captured they are.

As predicted by our model, the development of captured peacebuilding between rural elites and peacebuilders negatively affected the more cooperative contract between state elites and peacebuilders. It had two different ramifications. One, it decreased the incentives for state elites for co-operative peacebuilding and favored a co-opted peacebuilding that more greatly favored stability over reforms. Why? Because of the gathering strength of the warlords and other rural elites, the new central government became more worried about its relative power and thus more interested in regime stability than liberalization. Two, this growing weakness of the state elite made them more insistent on rewriting the contract with the international peacebuilders. Consequently, the “paradox of weakness” was such as their relative power began to decline the more intense they became about regime stability and political power – and thus more insistent on rewriting the contract so that it more fully took into account their interest in regime stability.

In sum, five years of peacebuilding in Afghanistan has not furthered the establishment of a modern, democratic state. The government of Karzai became a close associate of peacebuilders. In turn, Karzai and the modernizers in the government have accepted in principle the legitimacy of liberal reforms. But the central state elite remain weak vis-à-vis the well-entrenched rural elites. Warlords are circumspect about engaging in long-term, enduring contracts with the central state and prefer ‘spot’ contracts, which provide opportunities for manoeuvre when international attention has waned.⁵⁸ This creates a self-sustaining dynamic of insecurity, which, in turn, makes Karzai and his reformer more indispensable as a partner for peacebuilders. Karzai and his government have been cautious not to alienate rural elites. In some cases, the warlords have been temporarily “co-opted.” In other cases, warlords have come to de facto control power-ministries.⁵⁹ Decisive steps against the drug economy, widespread

⁵⁸ Suhrke 2006.

⁵⁹ As *The Economist*, July 8, 2006, recently observed, the recent introduction of NATO and its preference for stability has altered what Karzai can hope to accomplish. “This knowledge [NATO’s strong preference for security and stability] no doubt underlies Mr Karzai’s reluctance to upset the opium-cart.

corruption or rent seeking by co-opted members of rural elite were avoided. State elites, who were in principle willing to engage in cooperative peacebuilding, are reluctant to implement those liberal reforms that might alienate rural elites and endanger the fragile stability between state and rural elites. Peacebuilders accepted these conditions because they viewed state elites as indispensable to stability, and did not want to risk a confrontation with rural elites that might endanger domestic stability in Afghanistan and undermine the war on terrorism.

The current situation is captured by the latest big donor conference, which occurred in London earlier this year. The centrepiece of the conference was the discussion of the so-called Afghanistan Compact, a plan that was to guide international efforts in Afghanistan until 2011. Two features of this compact are particularly relevant to the peacebuilding contract. One, the phrases ‘sovereignty’, financial ‘autonomy’ and ‘Afghan ownership’ litter the document. In other words, the compact is presenting a trustee relationship between the international community and the Afghan people – a pledge to help Afghanistan not only reclaim its sovereignty but also complete a successful liberalization project. The compact also acknowledged the destructive influence of militia leaders and warlords and the increasingly ‘criminalised’ nature of the Afghan state. Although diplomatically worded, the document warns against their accommodation and stresses the need for increased mechanisms of accountability and enforcement to be imposed on such political entrepreneurs. However, it neither proposes any measures for addressing these concerns nor threatens to make future aid conditional on a different set of arrangements. However distasteful they might find this devil’s compact, it nevertheless accurately reflects the U.S.-led coalition’s preference for security over liberalization.

Conclusion:

Renegotiating the Peacebuilder’s Contract?

Does liberal peacebuilding have a chance? One answer is: not really. Even under the best of circumstances, and rarely are there good circumstances, the chances are slim. The problem, though, might be less with liberal peacebuilders than it is with the donors, funding agencies, and ultimately Western states, who do not give those in the field the time, money, and backing they need. In addition, the war against terrorism,

He seems resigned to ruling Afghanistan as it was ruled before the war descended: through weak, centralized institutions and by issuing patronage to local strongmen. Last month [June 2006] Mr Karzai floated a plan to authorize pro-government militias in several souther provinces—in effect, rearming some of those disarmed in a \$150 million UN programme. Some of their proposed commanders are unfit to hold a responsible post anywhere at all. But yet again, it is possible to see Mr Karzai’s point: Kabul carries no clout at all in those places.”

as we visibly saw in the case of Afghanistan, has its occasional benefits but its more frequent costs. On the one hand, when the war against terrorism connects with the particular area of operation then Western states are likely to demonstrate more of a commitment to the operation. On the other hand, there might be a high price to be paid for this commitment, as Western states might allow their security interests to hijack their commitments to peacebuilding.⁶⁰ When security interests run at a fever pitch, then peacekeepers and peacebuilders might not mind being co-opted or even captured so long as their security interests are fulfilled. Because liberal peacebuilders operate with one hand tied behind their back (or in some cases both hands), local actors have greater bargaining leverage and can ensure that their interests, which in most cases are status quo oriented, are incorporated into “really, existing” peacebuilding.

How might liberal peacebuilders better their hand? As we have already suggested, if they had more resources and power then their bargaining leverage would improve and presumably local elites would accept not only the symbols but also the substance of liberalization. Yet, there is always the possibility that the harder peacebuilders push and the more they demand the more likely it is that local elites will resist and conflictive peacebuilding will result. There are no easy answers.

Perhaps at the risk of gross rationalization, we are tempted to conclude that co-optive peacebuilding might not be such a terrible result. Cooperative peacebuilding is unrealistic, captured peacebuilding might very well only inflame conflict dynamics, and confrontational peacebuilding would be a no-win situation. So, co-optive peacebuilding does not look so bad given the alternatives. Even if local elites do little more than recognize the legitimacy of liberalization or accept the symbolic reforms, at the very least it creates new expectations and provides new benchmarks against which the performance of the central government and rural elites can be judged. Symbols, as we said earlier, can matter. They can provide new focal points. They can become public commitments that even hypocritical reformers must take into account. They can be used by local and international reformers to continue to press for change.

Co-optive peacebuilding also might be a normatively desirable outcome. Do peacebuilders truly know better? The underlying presumption of the model and many arguments in favour of liberal peacebuilding is that liberal peacebuilders are pure of motives and, in many respects, know what is best for the local population. Yet even if we grant, in a rather paternalistic gesture, that international actors are acting as public trustees, is there any evidence to suggest that they actually know how to socially engineer a liberal peace? Not really. Instead, they are probably ignorant about how to engineer a successful postconflict operation. At present, many peacebuilders escape their uncertainty by relying on general models that frequently are developed from their most recent

⁶⁰ For a similar argument with respect to humanitarianism in Afghanistan, see Donini 2004.

experiences in the field.⁶¹ But universal models can be a false sanctuary. The only way out is for peacebuilders to confess to a high degree of uncertainty - and actively incorporate local voices into the planning process. As Noah Feldman recently warned: “The high failure rate [of nation-building exercises] strongly supports the basic intuition that we do not know what we are doing - and one of the critical elements of any argument for autonomy is that people tend to know themselves, better than others how they ought best to live their lives.”⁶²

Also, co-optive peacebuilding, from the perspective of local elites and societal groups, might very well look normatively desirable because it provides greater opportunity for local voices to participate and affect a process that is supposedly “owned” by them. We readily acknowledge that many elites and politicians are not great democrats and are more interested in preserving their perks and power than in pluralizing politics (and in this respect are no different from politicians all over the world), but their presence does force otherwise steamrolling peacebuilders to go slow and adopt a more incremental approach.⁶³ Co-opted peacebuilding, if done right, might be the best of all possible worlds.

If cooperative peacebuilding is going to be a normatively desirable outcome, then it must do more than simply be consistent with the preferences of local elites – it also must institutionalize a set of principles that might help create a more stable and mutually consensual outcome. What sort of principles might these be? A constitution that helps to distribute political power and forces groups to negotiate and compromise with one another. Deliberative mechanisms that force individuals to state their preferences in public; this publicity principle is likely to force individuals to discover and refer to more community-oriented values and interests in order to legitimate their preferences. And, principles of representation which might or might not include elections in the days immediately following the establishment of a peacebuilding operation.⁶⁴ The object – and thus the measure of success – of peacebuilding must not be the establishment of values that only recently and barely obtain in many advanced democracies - but instead the create of institutions that contain principles that compel individuals to consult, deliberate, and negotiate with one another as they decide what they consider to be the good life.

⁶¹ In a report on Liberia and Sierra Leone, the International Crisis Group observes that peacebuilders possess an “operational checklist” that does not recognize the underlying political dynamics. ICG 2004.

⁶² Feldman 2004, 69.

⁶³ For a related argument, see Barnett, 2006.

⁶⁴ These principles are republican, and not liberal, and are developed in Barnett 2006.

Table One:

Kinds of Peacebuilding

Outcome	Description
Cooperative Peacebuilding	Unimpeded delivery of services and assistance leading to the creation of new institutions that distribute political and economic power to new actors.
Captured Peacebuilding	Local elites are able to shift peacebuilding programs and resources so that they are consistent with their interests.
Co-opted Peacebuilding	Local elites and peacebuilders jointly determine assistance activities.
Confrontational Peacebuilding	Peacebuilders and local elites develop antagonistic and conflictive relations, leading to the suspension of assistance by peacebuilders and active resistance by local elites.

Table Three

Rank Order of Preferences of Different Actors for Different Outcomes

	Peacebuilders	Target Government	Rural Elites
4	Cooperative	Captured	Captured
3	Cooptation	Cooptation	Cooptation
2	Conflictive	Conflictive	Conflictive
1	Captured	Cooperative	Cooperative

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