



The Peacebuilding Puzzle

Political Order in Post-Conflict States

Transformative peace operations fall short of achieving the modern political order sought in post-conflict countries because the interventions themselves empower post-conflict elites intent on forging a neopatrimonial political order. *The Peacebuilding Puzzle* explains the disconnect between the formal institutional engineering undertaken by international interventions and the governance outcomes that emerge in their aftermath. Barma's comparative analysis of interventions in Cambodia, East Timor, and Afghanistan focuses on the incentives motivating domestic elites over a sequence of three peacebuilding phases: the elite peace settlement, the transitional governance period, and the aftermath of intervention. The international community advances certain forms of institutional design at each phase in the pursuit of effective and legitimate governance. Yet, over the course of the peacebuilding pathway, powerful post-conflict elites co-opt the very processes and institutions intended to guarantee modern political order and dominate the practice of governance within those institutions to their own ends.

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*To my parents, Tarifa and Haider
and my madricha, Barbara*

Contents

<i>List of figure and tables</i>	<i>page</i> ix
<i>Acknowledgments</i>	x
Introduction	1
The Politics of Peacebuilding	2
The Argument and its Significance	3
Structure of the Book	8
1 Rethinking the Peacebuilding Puzzle	11
What is Peacebuilding?	12
The Transitional Governance Approach to Transformative Peacebuilding	13
What Do We Know About Peacebuilding?	17
Rethinking the Peacebuilding Puzzle	22
A Unique Approach to Understanding Peacebuilding	27
2 Political Order in Post-Conflict States: A Theoretical Framework	41
The Pursuit of Political Order	43
The Neopatrimonial Equilibrium	47
Elites and Transformative Events	50
Elite Settlements: The Continuation of War by Other Means	53
Transitional Governance: A Process of Inherent Contradictions	56
Neopatrimonial Political Order: A Hybrid Form of Governance	61
The Peacebuilding Pathway	66
3 From Violent Conflict to Elite Settlement	70
The Cambodian Civil War	72
The Paris Peace Agreement on Cambodia	77
The East Timorese Resistance to Occupation	80
The East Timor Independence Referendum	90

The Afghan Civil War	93
The Afghanistan Bonn Agreement	101
Elite Settlements in Comparative Perspective	103
4 International Intervention and Elite Incentives	107
Transitional Governance in Cambodia	111
The Cambodian Elections of 1993	115
Transitional Governance in East Timor	120
The East Timorese Elections of 2001	130
Transitional Governance in Afghanistan	133
The Afghan Elections of 2004 and 2005	142
Transitional Governance in Comparative Perspective	147
5 Neopatrimonial Post-Conflict Political Order	152
Post-Intervention Cambodia: Exclusionary Neopatrimonialism and the Threat of Violence	154
Post-Intervention East Timor: Inclusionary Neopatrimonialism and Latent Conflict	164
Post-Intervention Afghanistan: Competitive Neopatrimonialism and Persistent Insecurity	174
Neopatrimonial Political Order in Comparative Perspective	186
Conclusion: The Paradoxes of Peacebuilding	190
The Mirage of Modern Political Order in Post-Conflict States	191
Transformative Peacebuilding Elsewhere	194
Whither Peacebuilding?	198
Sequencing the Pursuit of Effective and Legitimate Governance	200
Six Principles and a Caveat for Modifying Peacebuilding Practice	205
Future Research and Theoretical Implications	218
Conclusion	222
<i>Appendix: Interviews Conducted</i>	224
<i>Bibliography</i>	230
<i>Index</i>	256

Figure and Tables

Figure

1.1 The transitional governance approach to transformative peacebuilding	page 16
--	---------

Tables

3.1 The Cambodian, East Timorese, and Afghan conflicts and settlements in comparative perspective	104
4.1 Transitional governance milestones in Cambodia, East Timor, and Afghanistan	148
5.1 Electoral results in Cambodia, 1998–2013	160
5.2 Electoral results in East Timor, 2007–2012	168
5.3 Electoral results in Afghanistan, 2005–2014	178

Acknowledgments

This book emphasizes the importance of viewing international peacebuilding with an expanded horizon, thereby better situating it in the context of what came before and after. In acknowledging the numerous intellectual and personal debts upon which the researching and writing of this book rests, it occurs to me that they, too, must be viewed with a long temporal lens. I started this project in 2004 as a doctoral candidate at the University of California, Berkeley, but the initial inspiration came when I was working at the World Bank before graduate school, circa 2000. It was then that I took my first trips to war-torn countries (Cambodia and East Timor), as one small cog in the vast, bright-eyed machinery of the post-conflict reconstruction bureaucratic machine. I was instantly enthralled – even after spending two dank weeks living in a fevered haze in a container in Dili, East Timor, and suffering a waist-deep fall into an uncovered drain in the pitch-black night that left me limping for weeks. I knew that this major contemporary policy challenge was what I wanted to study at graduate school, which I began in 2001. Having done so – and, quite simply, figured out what on earth was going on and how to fix it all – I was resolved to then return to the policy world to continue working operationally in fragile countries.

I did exactly that, finishing my PhD at Berkeley in 2007 and going back to the World Bank. And then I realized, as I gained more exposure to the realities of governance and institutional reform in post-conflict and developing Asia and the Pacific, that my intellectual journey was very much incomplete. In many ways my own trajectory mirrored that of the international peacebuilding endeavor: the hubris that came with the end of the Cold War peaking at the turn of the century, followed by the often grim reality and soul-searching that soon followed. My task became how to find my own stance between Pollyanna's unrealistic expectation and Cassandra's cynicism. I wanted to understand better what I had seen on the ground, instead of wringing my hands in despair.

Acknowledgments

xi

The intellectual side of it called to me – and I was extremely fortunate to be offered in 2010 a tenure-track position at the Naval Postgraduate School with the promise of being able to focus my scholarly research on contemporary policy challenges.

This book is the combined result of my dissertation, my time in the policy world, and my return to academia. At Berkeley, I was supported by a dissertation committee composed of four brilliant scholars who had the grace to let me do what I wanted without letting me take any shortcuts. Steve Weber, my advisor, has been an exemplary mentor, always pushing me, often by example, to ask big questions and to find creative and elegant answers to them. Margaret Weir, Peter Evans, and Pradeep Chhibber together inspired me to think systematically about the state and how elites govern society and equipped me with the intellectual appetite and tools to do so. Only now do I fully recognize my great fortune in having these extraordinary scholars as guides in the early stages of my own scholarly journey. I sincerely hope that they will be proud of the way this book turned out. While at Berkeley, I also had the formative opportunity to learn from Steve Vogel, Nick Ziegler, John Zysman, and the late Don Rothchild of UC Davis, among others. I was very fortunate to receive major funding from Berkeley's Political Science Department and Institute of International Studies; as well as the University of California's Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation and the United States Institute of Peace.

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As I reconsidered the puzzle that motivated this study and turned my dissertation into this, quite different, book, I have incurred numerous additional debts of gratitude that it is a pleasure to acknowledge. When Barbara Nunberg hired me to work with her at the World Bank in 1998 she quite literally set my life on a new pathway. She has shaped my intellectual outlook and my political and global sensibilities and she has been for almost two decades a dear friend and mentor. I am also indebted to her and another amazing boss and friend, Nick Manning, for my introduction to the three countries on which this study is built. My respect and thanks, too, to the other colleagues and friends I picked up through the World Bank: especially, Jana Orac, Amanda Green, Elisabeth Huybens, Mark Abdollahian, Mick Moore, Shabih Mohib, Saysanith Vongviengkham, Habib Rab, Catherine Anderson, Doug Porter, and Lorena Viñuela; and my YPeeps, Peter Lafere, Jamus Lim, Elizabeth Ninan, and Peter Dulvy. I am also grateful to my other DC pals, especially James Kvaal, Oliver Fritz, Sara Porsia, and Ely Ratner, for all the rollicking conversations and warm friendship. Each of these folks has influenced the way I see the world and the practice of development, politics, and public policy – and I admire them greatly for their commitment to making the world a better place and the integrity with which each of them pursues that goal.

Two major intellectual realizations shaped the rewriting of my dissertation into this book: both a product of what I was reading and teaching and what I had learned on the ground. First, I came to see that peacebuilding operations can only be truly understood if they are viewed as temporal sequences that link conflict, intervention, and aftermath. In this regard, this book is singularly inspired by Paul Pierson's

Acknowledgments

xiii

Politics in Time, which led me to more consciously apply a historical institutionalist lens to this study. Second, I also grasped that post-conflict countries could fruitfully be viewed as a special subset of the developing world, which brought me back to the foundational concept of political order and a political economy lens.

As I grappled with the implications of these new viewpoints, I received a great deal of help along the way. I am grateful to John Haslam, my editor at Cambridge University Press, for two extremely thoughtful and constructive anonymous peer reviews, and to the production team who helped shape this into a book. I am deeply indebted to those who read large portions of this book or helped me think through different parts of its argument, providing insightful comments as well as generous encouragement: Kent Eaton, Maiah Jaskoski, and Ben Read for that wonderful impromptu book workshop; and, also, Ed Aspinall, Susanna Campbell, Bjoern Dressel, Paul Hutchcroft, Naomi Levy, Clay Moltz, Jessica Piombo, and Sarah Stroup. Their feedback has improved this book immeasurably. I am grateful to others for timely advice on the mysteries of academic careers and publishing and, more importantly, their warm collegiality and support: Séverine Autesserre, Joshua Busby, Anne Clunan, Jeff Colgan, Erik Dahl, Mike Glosny, Jim Goldgeier, Bruce Jentleson, Matt Kroenig, Mohammed Hafez, Aila Matanock, Abe Newman, Jordan Tama, Chris Twomey, and Rachel Whitlark. I owe more than I can say to my book buddy extraordinaire, Brent Durbin.

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