

Broadening the Study of Peace Operations

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The academic literature on peace operations has flourished in recent years, particularly since the early 1990s, when the United Nations launched a flurry of new missions in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. By one measure, the number of articles in academic journals on the subject of peace operations increased by more than 350 percent from the 1980s to the 1990s.¹ Two new scholarly journals sharing the same title, *International Peacekeeping*, came into being in the mid-1990s, and articles on peace operations now regularly appear in the mainstay publications of the international relations (IR) discipline, including *International Security* and *World Politics*.

Nevertheless, even though the study on peace operations is burgeoning, it remains largely cut off from the rest of political science. Contributors to this literature have focused primarily on practical, policy-related issues such as the design and conduct of particular missions, rather than building bridges between the study of peace operations and larger theoretical debates in the discipline.

The pragmatic focus of the existing peacekeeping literature is understandable. Improving methods for dealing with civil conflicts and their humanitarian effects remains an important goal for policymakers in national governments and international agencies, particularly in the light of such recent events as the crises in Kosovo, East Timor, and the Congo. But the literature on peace operations is too limited in the scope of its inquiry and devotes too much attention to “policy relevance,” or the goal of offering advice and recommendations to decisionmakers. Building the study of peace missions into a mature academic subfield will require a concerted effort to move beyond the current preoccupa-

¹*Social Sciences Index* (New York: H.W. Wilson) cites 330 articles under the subject heading “United Nations—Armed Forces” between April 1990 and March 1999. This yields an annual average of 37 articles for the 1990s. From April 1980 to March 1990, by contrast, the index identifies 92 articles on the subject, for an annual average of nine articles during the 1980s.

tion with practical operational issues, using these missions, instead, as windows into the larger phenomena of international politics.

The first part of this article describes the current state of research into peace operations and explains why it is necessary to broaden its scope. The second part presents three possible projects, or future research agendas, each of which would link the study of peace operations to ongoing theoretical debates among scholars of IR. As I argue below, peace missions are intrinsically interdisciplinary, so linkages between these missions and theoretical controversies in fields *other* than IR are also possible. This article focuses on largely unexplored connections between peace operations and IR theory.

PEACE OPERATIONS RESEARCH: WHAT'S MISSING?

A recent conference explored the nexus between “theory” and “policy analysis” in the field of international security, focusing on the study of peace operations.² Conference organizers explained the rationale for the meeting by quoting two commonly heard laments: “Too little theory informs the work of policy analysts” and, second, “Theorists have nothing to say to policy analysts.” The first lament presumably comes from more theoretical scholars, who contend that the existing literature on peace operations pays too little attention to the testing and development of general theories. The second lament is seemingly a retort from contributors to this literature, who respond that “abstract” scholarly theories have little relevance to the study of peace operations. The goal of the gathering was to identify ways in which these two academic communities might communicate with each other more extensively and productively.

The premise of the conference seemed to mischaracterize the current scholarship on peace operations. If “theories” are, as Stephen Van Evera writes, “general statements that describe and explain the causes or effects of classes of phenomena,” then there is no shortage of theory in the existing literature on peace operations.³ Several scholars have formulated or tested general explanations for the outcome of peace operations. Stephen John Stedman, for instance, identifies different types of intransigent local parties, or “spoilers,” in peace processes and argues that the ability of international intervenors to keep the peace in a given case

²The conference, “International Peace and Security: Theory and Policy,” was held on October 2, 1998, and was sponsored by the Ford Foundation and jointly hosted by Brown University’s Watson Institute and *Global Governance*. For other thoughts arising from this conference, see Craig N. Murphy and Thomas G. Weiss, “International Peace and Security at a Multilateral Moment: What We Seem to Know, What We Don’t, and Why,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 20, No. 3 (1999); reprinted in Stuart Croft and Terry Terriff, eds., *Critical Reflections on Twenty Years of Change* (London: Frank Cass, 1999).

³Stephen Van Evera, *Guide to Methods for Students of Political Science* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 7–8.

will depend on the fit between intervenors' policies and the particular characteristics of the local spoilers.⁴ William Zartman posits that third-party interventions are likely to be effective only when local parties have reached the stage of a "mutually hurting stalemate"—that is, when each party believes that it can no longer benefit from using armed force to pursue its goals.⁵ Fen Osler Hampson concludes that the degree of commitment among third parties to uphold the peace settlement, and the resources available to those third parties, is the key factor explaining the failure or success of the peace operations that he examined.⁶ Hampson's conclusion complements Barbara Walter's finding that civil wars are unlikely to end unless third parties make credible promises to guarantee the safety of the belligerents in the post-conflict period.⁷ These studies are all theoretical in the sense that they self-consciously seek to develop explanations for a class of phenomena—peace operations—rather than treating each operation as *sui generis*.

The academic literature on peace operations, in other words, does not lack theory. What is missing from this literature, rather, is a serious effort to engage the central theoretical debates of IR. To date, most studies of peace operations have focused on the design, conduct, and outcome of the operations, while paying relatively little attention to the broader implications of peace missions for our understanding of international politics.⁸ Both types of inquiry are worthwhile: the former, which might be called "micro" approaches to the study of peace operations, can help to identify circumstances in which peace missions are more or less likely to succeed; the latter, or "macro" approaches, permit us to gain a better understanding of these missions as products of the international

⁴ Stephen John Stedman, "Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes," *International Security* 22, No. 2 (1997), pp. 5–53.

⁵ I. William Zartman, *Ripe for Resolution: Conflict and Intervention in Africa* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 1985).

⁶ Fen Osler Hampson, *Nurturing Peace: Why Peace Settlements Succeed or Fail* (Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1996).

⁷ Barbara F. Walter, "A Critical Barrier to Civil War Settlement," *International Organization* 51, No. 3 (1997), pp. 335–364. These ideas are further developed in Barbara F. Walter, "Designing Transitions from Civil War: Demobilization, Democratization, and Commitments to Peace," *International Security* 24, No. 1 (1999), pp. 127–155, and in Barbara F. Walter and Jack Snyder, eds., *Civil Wars, Insecurity, and Intervention* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999). See also Caroline A. Harzell, "Explaining the Stability of Negotiated Settlements to Intrastate Wars," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 43, No. 1 (1999), pp. 3–22.

⁸ In their review of the peace operations literature from 1989 to 1996, Cindy Collins and Thomas Weiss also lament the field's preoccupation with "lessons learned" and put forward several alternative research programs. See Cindy Collins and Thomas G. Weiss, *An Overview and Assessment of 1989–1996 Peace Operations Publications* (Providence, R.I.: Watson Institute, 1997), pp. 13 and *passim*. Watson Institute Occasional Paper, No. 28.

system. For reasons that are not immediately clear, the study of peace operations has generated a great deal of microtheory but very little macrotheory. With little to say about the relationship between these operations and the larger dynamics of international politics, the literature on peace operations has consequently remained something of a secluded outpost within IR.

There are exceptions to this rule. Michael Barnett, for example, traces the relationship between the shifting character of U.N. peacekeeping and changing ideas about international order—an analysis that emphasizes the importance of constitutive norms in world politics and builds directly upon the “international society” approach to IR theory.⁹ Another scholar who links peace operations and IR theory, William Robinson, uses a neo-Gramscian framework to make the case that peacekeeping in Nicaragua and Haiti involved the incorporation of these countries into the fundamentally unequal structure of the global political-economic system.¹⁰ William Stanley and Mark Peceny, by contrast, draw upon both neoliberal and constructivist theory to explain the effects of international peacekeeping operations in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatemala. They argue that neoliberalism elucidates the role that international institutions played in facilitating cooperation among the formerly warring groups, while constructivism explains how domestic actors in these countries “internalized” the liberal norms promulgated by the international agencies.¹¹ François Debrix takes a postmodern view of these missions, arguing that the visual symbols and rhetoric of peacekeeping profoundly shape our understanding of both the local situations and the international context in which such operations take place.¹² David Campbell’s recent book on Bosnia similarly applies postmodern theory to the war in the former Yugoslavia and the international response to that war,

⁹Michael N. Barnett, “The New United Nations Politics of Peace: From Juridical Sovereignty to Empirical Sovereignty,” *Global Governance* 1, No. 1 (1995), pp. 79–97.

¹⁰William I. Robinson: *Promoting Polyarchy: Globalization, U.S. Intervention, and Hegemony* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), chaps. 5 and 6; and “A Case Study of Globalisation Processes in the Third World: A Transnational Agenda in Nicaragua,” *Global Society* 11, No. 1 (1997), pp. 61–91. For neo-Gramscian critiques of the United Nations and multilateral institutions more generally, see Kelley Lee, “A Neo-Gramscian Approach to International Organization,” in John Macmillan and Andrew Linklater, eds., *Boundaries in Question: New Directions in International Relations* (London: Pinter, 1995), pp. 144–162; and Robert W. Cox, “Multilateralism and World Order,” in Robert W. Cox with Timothy J. Sinclair, *Approaches to World Order* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 494–523.

¹¹William Stanley and Mark Peceny, “Neoliberalism, Social Reconstruction, and the Resolution of Civil Wars in Central America”; manuscript prepared for the 1999 annual convention of the International Studies Association in Washington, D.C.

¹²François Debrix, *Re-Envisioning Peacekeeping: The United Nations and the Mobilization of Ideology* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

with very interesting results. He maintains that “settled norms of international society,” including a predilection for “demarcated territory and fixed identity,” have shaped the basic design of the peacebuilding mission in Bosnia.¹³

While the quality of these works is generally high, they are among the very few examples of macrotheory in the literature on peace operations—a literature that remains dominated by microtheoretical works, and by nontheoretical narratives. Consider, for example, William Durch’s well-regarded two books on U.N. peacekeeping.¹⁴ Durch imposed a certain discipline on his contributors; he required them to describe the origins, mandates, funding, and implementation of each peacekeeping mission that they examined. This uniformity allows readers to compare key aspects of the various cases, and it permits Durch to draw general conclusions about the design and conduct of peace operations across many cases. But Durch, like many other contributors to this literature, seems to be primarily interested in identifying the particular conditions that have contributed to the success or failure of peacekeeping operations rather than exploring the connections between these operations and existing theories of international politics.

The same may be said of Paul Diehl’s seminal but now somewhat dated book, *International Peacekeeping*, which lays out the origins, principles, and prospects of peace operations but does not consider the broader significance of these operations for our understanding of international relations.¹⁵ Perhaps sensitive to this lacuna in the literature, Alan James once promised to place the study of peacekeeping “firmly in the context of international politics,” but his compendium of peacekeeping missions is striking for its failure even to mention the major traditions of international theoretical thought or to explain how the practice of peacekeeping might relate to these traditions.¹⁶ Missing from these works, and from the study of peace operations more generally, is not theory per se, but macrotheory.

WHY IS MACROTHEORY IMPORTANT?

Although some students of peace operations may be reluctant to delve into the seemingly arcane world of international relations theory, there are several reasons why scholars of both peace operations and IR theory would benefit from a meeting of minds. First, the core preoccupations of IR theory—such as the role

¹³ David Campbell, *National Deconstruction: Violence, Identity, and Justice in Bosnia* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1998); quotations from p. 13.

¹⁴ William J. Durch, ed.: *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1993), and *UN Peacekeeping, American Politics, and the Uncivil Wars of the 1990s* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1996).

¹⁵ Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

¹⁶ Alan James, *Peacekeeping in International Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1990), p. 13.

of interests, ideas, and norms in international politics, the possibility of cooperation among international actors, and the interaction between domestic and international politics—are questions that peace operations also raise. For students of peace operations, a well-developed body of theoretical literature on the nature of the international system represents a rich repository of possible insights into the relationship between peace operations and international politics. Conversely, IR theorists would profit from a closer study of peace operations—no least because these operations represent a historically unprecedented form of international collective action that bears directly on the theoretical debates taking place in the field, as I argue below.

Second, broadening the study of peace missions in this manner would likely inject new puzzles and perspectives into the literature on peace operations at a time when fresh ideas are needed. Many contributions to the literature ask the same few questions of the same few cases: Why are some peace missions more successful than others? Why do some peace agreements last while others fail? How can we improve the techniques employed in future operations? These are undoubtedly important questions, but there is also room in the literature for studies that ask larger questions about the international context in which peace operations take place. In short, there is a need for studies that “problematize” the very existence of peace operations rather than taking the existence of these operations for granted and treating them as merely technical exercises in conflict management. Recall what Kenneth Waltz once said about the study of politics: “It is necessary to look at the matrix of action rather than simply the discrete activities that fill it.”¹⁷ This is not only good advice for political scientists in general, but also a recipe for reanimating and refreshing the study of peace operations.

A third reason to devote more attention to macrolevel theory is to uncouple the academic study of peace operations from the perceived utility of these missions as policy instruments. As noted above, the literature on peace operations has been largely geared toward the production of policy-relevant research. This emphasis on policy relevance has succeeded in increasing the level of communication between scholars and practitioners, but it has also imposed hidden costs on the academic participants in this partnership: it has hitched the fate of the study of peace operations to fluctuations in the perceived importance of these operations as policy instruments. As a result, many scholars of peace operations have ended up “chasing headlines,” altering their research priorities to accommodate the vacillating interests of policymakers in order to continue producing work that is deemed to be policy-relevant.

Since the early 1990s, interest among policymakers in launching new peace operations has diminished, making it more difficult for scholars of peace oper-

¹⁷Kenneth Waltz, “The Myth of National Independence,” in Charles P. Kindleberger, ed., *The International Corporation* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1970), p. 220.

ations to justify the policy relevance of their work. If the study of peace operations is to continue thriving as a scholarly endeavor, academics in this field must resist the Faustian bargain of buying into the narrowly pragmatic and transient research interests of the policymaking world. A more sensible research strategy would be to hedge against inevitable downturns in the “market demand” for policy-relevant research by broadening the scope of the field beyond its current preoccupation with improving the effectiveness of future missions.

This prescription may not be welcomed by those who advocate more, not less, intellectual collaboration between practitioners and scholars of peace operations. Yet these two constituencies have different job descriptions. The academic’s mandate is not primarily, or necessarily, to contribute to policy discussions; it is to analyze and explain complex phenomena, even if doing so yields no specific policy recommendations. Unfortunately, this is not the ethic that has informed most recent scholarship on peace operations. The preoccupation with policy relevance, and the corresponding lack of attention to issues that might not have a direct bearing on policy, have linked the fate of the field to the perceived utility of peace operations as policy instruments, isolating the field from the rest of the political science discipline. Meanwhile, the relationship between peace operations and the structure of the international system remains largely unexplored. The remainder of this article outlines three possible research agendas that address macrolevel issues for students of peace operations and IR theory.

THREE RESEARCH AGENDAS

What macro questions do peace operations raise for students of international relations theory? To answer this question, I focus on one type of peace operation, known as *post-conflict peacebuilding*. The principal aim of peacebuilding is to prevent violent civil conflicts from reigniting after the fighting has stopped.¹⁸

¹⁸There is no universally accepted definition of peacebuilding; an analysis of the competing interpretations of the term would make an interesting study. The most commonly cited definition appeared in Boutros Boutros-Ghali’s *Agenda for Peace* (New York: United Nations, 1992), para. 20, which defines peacebuilding as “action to identify and support structures that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict.” Others argue that peacebuilding should be viewed as part of the larger enterprise of Third World development, which is itself a contested concept. See Kenneth D. Bush, “Beyond Bungee Cord Humanitarianism: Towards a Developmental Agenda for Peacebuilding,” *Canadian Journal of Development Studies*, special issue, 1996, pp. 75–92; and Lloyd Axworthy, “Canada and Human Security: The Need for Leadership,” *International Journal* 52, No.2 (1997), pp. 183–196. For a good discussion of the differences and linkages between peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding, see A.B. Fetherston, *Toward a Theory of United Nations Peacekeeping* (London: Macmillan, 1994), chap. 5.

Since the end of the Cold War, several such operations have been conducted in countries that recently emerged from civil conflicts, including Namibia, Nicaragua, El Salvador, Cambodia, Angola, Mozambique, and Bosnia. A diverse assortment of international actors has sought to create the necessary political, social, and economic conditions for a lasting peace in the states that have hosted these missions. These actors range from the United Nations and its specialized agencies to regional organizations such as the Organization of American States and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, as well as international financial institutions, including the World Bank and International Monetary Fund, national development and relief agencies, and a panoply of nongovernmental organizations (NGOs).

There are at least three potentially fruitful avenues of research that might connect peacebuilding and IR theory. First, the practice of peacebuilding sheds light on the role of norms in world politics, ultimately lending weight to “constructivist” understandings of international norms, while simultaneously highlighting weaknesses in constructivist theory. Second, peacebuilding can be seen as an illustration of Harold Lasswell’s notion of “world revolution” in international politics—a concept Lasswell developed in the 1930s, and which is surprisingly relevant today. Third, peacebuilding missions provide an opportunity to explore the notion of “international governance,” or the capacity of the international system to perform government-like functions in the absence of a centralized governmental authority.

Any of these three research agendas, pursued in a serious and sustained manner, would greatly enrich both the study of peace operations and IR theory. They are not exhaustive; students of peace operations could draw upon theoretical debates in disciplines other than IR, as several already have done. Michael Pugh, for example, applies concepts from “disaster research” to the study of peace operations,¹⁹ and others draw upon the cultural anthropology literature to describe the “organizational culture” of peacekeeping agencies.²⁰ Indeed, there is tremendous potential for cross-disciplinary work on peacebuilding, given its relevance not only to international relations, but also to the study of civil and ethnic violence, conflict resolution, democratic theory, transitions to democracy and capitalism, international ethics and law, post-conflict justice, economic development, humanitarian assistance, psychological effects of conflict, and physical reconstruction of war-damaged infrastructure.

¹⁹ Michael Pugh, “Peacebuilding as Developmentalism: Concepts from Disaster Research,” *Contemporary Security Policy* 16, No. 3 (1995), pp. 320–346.

²⁰ Amitav Ghosh, “The Global Reservation: Notes Toward an Ethnography of International Peacekeeping,” *Cultural Anthropology* 9, No. 3 (1994), pp. 412–422; Michael N. Barnett, “The UN Security Council, Indifference, and Genocide in Rwanda,” *Cultural Anthropology* 12, No. 4 (1997), pp. 551–578.

Agenda 1: Peace Building and International Norms

One of the central debates in IR theory concerns the role of norms (loosely defined as formal and informal rules) in world politics. The literature amply documents the two principal axes in this discussion. The first is between neo-realists and neoliberals. Neorealists hold that norms do not play a significant or independent role in world politics, but, rather, mirror the interests of the world's most powerful states,²¹ whereas neoliberals contend that norms create incentives and constraints for states to behave in ways that do not necessarily reflect the interests of the most powerful states.²² The key issue dividing these two approaches is whether the behavioral effects of international norms on state behavior are merely artifacts of power politics (the neorealist position) or whether these norms have significant effects that are independent of power politics (the neoliberal claim).

The second axis in the ongoing debate over international norms pits neoliberals against constructivists. Constructivists argue that international norms “do not merely constrain actors by changing the incentives that shape their behavior [but] also help to constitute the very actors whose conduct they seek to regulate,” meaning that international norms change the basic character of states themselves, rather than merely altering the way in which states behave.²³

What is the connection between these theoretical debates and the practice of post-conflict peacebuilding? First, the literature on international norms encourages us to think about peacebuilding in different ways. Although many students of peacebuilding have portrayed these operations as ideologically neutral efforts to assist states in making the transition from civil conflict to lasting peace, attention to international norms should lead us to question the ideological underpinnings of these operations. In fact, the practice of peacebuilding has not been

²¹ Kenneth N. Waltz, *Theory of International Politics* (Reading, Mass.: Addison-Wesley, 1979); Joseph Grieco, *Cooperation among Nations* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1990); John J. Mearsheimer, “The False Promise of International Institutions,” *International Security* 19, No. 3 (1994/95), pp. 5–49.

²² Robert O. Keohane, *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1984); Robert Axelrod, “An Evolutionary Approach to Norms,” *American Political Science Review* 80, No. 4 (1986), pp. 1095–1112; Robert O. Keohane and Judith Goldstein, eds., *Ideas and Foreign Policy* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1993); Robert O. Keohane and Lisa L. Martin, “The Promise of Institutional Theory,” *International Security* 20, No. 1 (1995), pp. 39–51.

²³ Peter J. Katzenstein, “Introduction: Alternative Perspectives on National Security,” in P. Katzenstein, ed., *The Culture of National Security: Norms and Identity in World Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), p. 22. On constructivism more generally, see Alexander Wendt, *Social Theory of International Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

normatively neutral: all of these operations have promoted free and fair elections, the construction of democratic political institutions, respect for civil liberties, and market-oriented economic reforms—or the basic elements of Western-style liberal market democracy.²⁴

Further, if these observations are correct, then perhaps a set of *domestic* governance norms exists at the international level—that is, norms that define how states should organize themselves internally. Peacebuilding agencies may serve as “transmission belts,” conveying these domestic governance norms from the international domain directly into the internal affairs of war-shattered states, an idea explored in greater detail below.

Second, not only can the literature on international norms encourage us to think about peacebuilding in novel ways, but the study of peacebuilding may also contribute to ongoing debates over the nature and function of international norms. Specifically, if the goals of peacebuilding operations reflect international norms of domestic governance, and if the states hosting these operations have been fundamentally transformed in accordance with these norms, then constructivism may provide a more compelling explanation of peacebuilding than does neoliberalism, since neoliberals portray norms as having much more limited effects on states.

Several countries hosting peacebuilding missions have emerged with new political institutions and policy preferences that replicate, albeit imperfectly, the Western model of liberal market democracy. In Namibia, for example, the South West African People’s Organization (SWAPO), which formed the new government after an internationally sponsored transition to democracy, had been hostile to the principles of liberal democracy and free market economics for most of its organizational life, espousing the principles of “scientific socialism” in both economic and political affairs.²⁵ Yet during the international peacebuilding mission that oversaw the country’s transition from war to peace, SWAPO suddenly shifted its position at the behest of international agencies and Western states, and began to advocate the principles of liberal market democracy, including constitutional protections of civil liberties, regular elections, and the pursuit of a “free-market path to development.”²⁶ Since then, Namibia has

²⁴ Roland Paris: “Peacebuilding and the Limits of Liberal Internationalism,” *International Security* 22, No. 2 (1997), pp. 54–89, and “Building Peace in War-Shattered States,” Ph.D. dissertation, Yale University, May 1999. For a wide-ranging description of the various activities conducted by peacebuilding agencies, see United Nations, *An Inventory of Post-Conflict Peace-Building Activities* (New York: United Nations, 1996).

²⁵ See Per Strand, *SWAPO and Nation Building in Namibia* (Windhoek: Namibian Institute for Social and Economic Research, 1991), pp. 27–28.

²⁶ Lionel Cliffe, *The Transition to Independence in Namibia* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner, 1994), p. 230; Roger Murray, *Namibia through the 1990s: Turning Rich Resources into Growth* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1992), p. 34.

maintained its commitment to liberal principles in both the political and economic realms, holding new elections in 1994 and continuing the market-oriented economic policies.

While peacebuilding seems to support constructivist arguments about the relationship between international norms and the properties and identities of states, it also allows us to explore, in detail, a question that constructivist scholars have generally neglected: What are the precise mechanisms by which states are brought into conformity with international norms?

At least four mechanisms appear to be at work in the case of peacebuilding. First, international agencies and third-party states tend to promote the model of liberal democratic domestic governance during the negotiation of peace agreements among local belligerents. Second, after post-conflict peacebuilding operations are deployed, international agencies typically offer technical advice and experts to help implement political and economic reforms. Third, some of these agencies explicitly require local parties to undertake political and economic liberalization policies in exchange for financial and other forms of international assistance. Fourth, in some instances, international agencies assume direct control over some aspects of governmental administration in war-shattered states, while they promote the goals of political and economic liberalization. Careful exploration of these and other mechanisms by which international peacebuilders have promoted domestic governance norms might help to flesh out the empirical foundations of constructivist IR theory.

Further, the study of peacebuilding could also shed light on whether international norms primarily serve the interests of the world's most powerful states, which is a neorealist position. It is true that the norms promoted by peacebuilding agencies closely mirror the domestic political and economic predilections of the world's greatest military and economic powers—the industrialized democracies. In practice, however, few if any peacebuilding missions have advanced the strategic interests, including the military and economic capabilities, of these already-powerful states: most peacebuilding missions have taken place in parts of the world where the presence or absence of violent conflict has little bearing on the military security of the industrialized democracies. (The possible exception is Bosnia, where fear of a wider European war posed a potential threat to European security.) Yet these operations have tapped deeply into the treasuries of the industrialized democracies—America's share of U.N. peacekeeping expenses surpassed \$1 billion in 1993 alone.²⁷ Given the expense of these missions and the lack of discernible material gains for the industrialized democracies, most peacebuilding operations appear to have been a strategic net loss for the world's most powerful countries, a conclusion that challenges neorealism.

²⁷ Durch, ed., *UN Peacekeeping*, p. 14.

At the same time, the international norms that peacebuilders have actually promoted in war-shattered states have closely mirrored the domestic norms of the industrialized democracies, suggesting that powerful states may ultimately determine *which* domestic norms become established at the international level. This observation is problematic for constructivists, who have tended to explain the origins of international norms by focusing on the actions of international actors *other* than the great powers, such as weaker states and nonstate actors.²⁸ Presumably, constructivists have focused on the role of nongreat powers because these scholars are most interested in exploring circumstances in which international norms are not merely artifacts of power politics. But in neglecting the significance of powerful states in the creation of international norms, constructivism denies us the tools to explain why peacebuilding agencies have promoted liberal–democratic norms in war-shattered states, rather than some other principles of domestic governance. At first glance, the record of peacebuilding appears to confirm *and* refute aspects of both realism and constructivism, an observation that calls out for closer examination.

Agenda 2: Peacebuilding and World Revolution

Harold Lasswell is perhaps best remembered for his contributions to political psychology and political sociology, and for his celebrated definition of political science as the study of “who gets what, when, and how.”²⁹ He is less well remembered for his investigation of the process by which political and economic ideologies spread through the international system, which was the subject of one of his earliest works, *World Politics and Personal Insecurity*, first published in 1935. Lasswell argued that every epoch in human history has witnessed the emergence of powerful cultures whose ideas about politics and economics diffused outward across the international system, transforming other societies in their wake. He called these episodes “world revolutions” because they involved fundamental changes in how many people thought about and organized public affairs within their respective states.

Drawing on Lasswell’s ideas, Donald Puchala has used the concept of “world revolution” to explore changes in international politics following the end of the Cold War. Puchala argues that the rise and ultimate demise of Marxism-Leninism should be interpreted as a brief, but intense, challenge to the ongoing “world revolution” of Western liberalism—a revolution that has been diffusing

²⁸For example, Martha Finnemore and Kathryn Sikkink, “International Norm Dynamics and Political Change,” *International Organization* 54, No. 4 (1998), pp. 887–917; Richard Price, “Reversing the Gun Sights: Transnational Civil Society Targets Land Mines,” *International Organization* 52, No. 3 (1998), pp. 613–644.

²⁹Harold D. Lasswell, *Politics: Who Gets What, When, How?* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1936).

outward from England, France, and the United States since the eighteenth century.³⁰

Meanwhile, in the field of sociology, a team of researchers including John Meyer, John Boli, George Thomas, and Francisco Ramirez has developed theories of ideological diffusion in international politics that parallel Lasswell's writings on world revolution but use a different terminology. These scholars, who describe themselves as "institutionalists," argue that a dominant "global culture" has emerged in international politics. It is a culture that is predominantly Western and defines certain forms of political, economic, and social activity as more legitimate than others.³¹ Institutionalists deduce the existence of this global culture from the "extraordinary trend toward isomorphism, or homogeneity, in ideology and organizational structure among all kinds of countries."³² No other explanation, they argue, can account for the fact that so many states have developed common features: constitutional forms that emphasize both state power and individual rights; universalistic welfare programs; mass schooling organized around a standardized curriculum; and development-oriented economic policies, among other things. Put another way, states have internalized a model of domestic political and economic organization that originated in the West and spread outward through the international system over time. In this sense, both Lasswell and the institutionalists suggest that an ongoing process of ideological diffusion is a central feature of international history and contemporary world politics.

As in debates among IR theorists over the role of norms in international politics, Lasswell's "world revolution" concept and sociology's "institutionalism" help us to view peacebuilding through a broader interpretative lens. We might hypothesize that peacebuilding is but a small example of the "world revolution of Western liberalism" or that international peacebuilders currently serve as agents of this revolution by promoting institutions and values of liberal market democracy within the domestic affairs of war-shattered states.

In the language of sociology's institutionalism, we may ask whether peacebuilders convey the principles and customs of the dominant global culture into the countries that host peacebuilding missions. These inquiries generate further questions: Are international peacebuilders conscious of their role as agents of "world revolution" or global culture? Why do peacebuilders present their oper-

³⁰Donald Puchala, "The History of the Future of International Relations," *Ethics and International Affairs* 8 (1994), p. 192.

³¹For an overview of this literature, see John W. Meyer, John Boli, George M. Thomas, and Francisco O. Ramirez, "World Society and the Nation-State," *American Journal of Sociology* 103, No. 1 (1997), pp. 144–181.

³²Connie L. McNeely, *Constructing the Nation-State: International Organization and Prescriptive Action* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1995), p. 1.

ations as ideologically neutral if they are, in fact, ideologically biased? Why do contributors to the academic literature on peacebuilding, most of whom are outside observers rather than active participants in peace operations, also tend to downplay the ideological character and biases of these operations, presenting peacebuilding instead as a technical (that is, nonideological) exercise in conflict management? Moreover, if peacebuilding is only one aspect of a larger process of world revolution, what is the relationship between peacebuilding and other instruments of ideological diffusion in world politics? Is there a story to be told about the evolution of these “diffusion mechanisms” over time that would help us to understand why international peacebuilding agencies have performed this particular role in the post–Cold War period?

Another line of questioning might focus on the responses within war-shattered states to the introduction of liberal market democracy. Lasswell believed that the process of “world revolution” necessarily provoked resistance, and, for this reason, he thought that the universalization of any single world-revolutionary ideology was an unlikely outcome. Any political or economic ideology that achieves international dominance, he argued, reflects the particular conditions of the society or societies in which it originated. This “parochial character” serves to limit the ideology’s appeal within culturally distant societies and consequently increases the likelihood that competing indigenous ideologies will resist the encroachment of the “world revolution.”

Lasswell might have concurred with Puchala’s analysis that the rise and fall of Soviet-style communism represented a brief but intense challenge to the more enduring “world revolution” of Western liberalism, but he would almost certainly have rejected, for the reasons just mentioned, Francis Fukuyama’s thesis that the collapse of the Soviet bloc signaled “the end point of mankind’s ideological evolution and the universalization of Western liberal democracy as the final form of human government.”³³ For Lasswell, there is no such end point: the historical process of “world revolution” involves successive waves of ideological diffusion that lose energy as they spread outward from their originating cultures and meet resistance from competing ideologies. Eventually, each world revolutionary system will fizzle out and yield to a newly ascendant ideology, thus continuing the cyclical historical process that Lasswell describes. Against this backdrop, peacebuilding takes on new significance. No longer is it simply a technique for preventing the recurrence of violence in war-shattered states; it is a central mechanism in the spread of world revolutionary ideas.

Agenda 3: Peacebuilding and International Governance

The concept of international governance describes the dimensions of world politics that are regulated by rules, norms, or shared understandings. Unlike

³³Francis Fukuyama, “The End of History?” *National Interest* 16 (1989), p. 4.

“governments,” which are tangible bureaucratic organizations, governance is what governments *do*. This distinction serves an important purpose, for it allows IR scholars to argue that international rules, norms, and understandings exercise “governance without government” and that regulation exists, even though the international system is technically an anarchy (in that it lacks a central government).³⁴ Hedley Bull’s description of international politics as an “anarchical society” also captures this paradox.³⁵

Yet students of global governance define the term in different ways. Most adopt a fairly narrow definition, focusing on the international regulatory structures that states have created to address transnational problems. According to Leon Gordenker and Thomas Weiss, for instance, global governance is comprised of “efforts to bring more orderly and reliable responses to social and political issues that go beyond capacities of states to address individually.”³⁶ Oran Young similarly writes that governance “involves the establishment and operation of social institutions. . . capable of resolving conflicts, facilitating cooperation, or, more generally, alleviating collective-action problems in a world of interdependent actors.”³⁷ James Caporaso puts it this way: “Governance refers to collective problem-solving in the public realm.”³⁸

All of these definitions are narrower than the one supplied by Paul Wapner, who views governance as “the employment of means to order, direct, and manage human behavior.”³⁹ In this broader sense of the term, international governance may regulate the outward behavior of international actors such as states and, in addition, influence the behavior of actors *within* these states, perhaps by altering the ideas that animate domestic politics. For example, Wapner argues that transnational environmental activist groups (such as Greenpeace) have succeeded in disseminating an “ecological sensibility” among particular popula-

³⁴ See, for example, James Rosenau and Ernst-Otto Czempiel, eds., *Governance without Government: Order and Change in World Politics* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1992); and Martin Hewson and Timothy J. Sinclair, eds., *Approaches to Global Governance Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999).

³⁵ Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977).

³⁶ Leon Gordenker and Thomas G. Weiss, “Pluralizing Global Governance: Analytical Approaches and Dimensions,” in Leon Gordenker and Thomas G. Weiss, eds., *NGOs, the UN, and Global Governance* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1996), p. 17.

³⁷ Oran Young, *International Governance: Protecting the Environment in a Stateless Society* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), p. 15.

³⁸ James A. Caporaso, “The European Union and Forms of the State: Westphalian, Regulatory or Post-Modern?” *Journal of Common Market Studies* 34, No. 1 (1996), p. 32.

³⁹ Paul Wapner, “Politics beyond the State: Environmental Activism and World Civic Politics,” *World Politics* 47, No. 3 (1995), pp. 311–340.

tions that has, in turn, engendered pro-environment constituencies and transformed the behavior of large groups of people, ultimately leading to changes in state policies as well.⁴⁰ Others have suggested that international market forces also represent a form of global governance: although markets are not unitary actors, they nevertheless order, direct, and manage human behavior both within and between states.⁴¹ Numerous institutions and impersonal forces appear to be simultaneously engaged in governance internationally, and they collectively comprise a decentralized “structure” of international governance. This insight has provoked some commentators to talk about the disaggregation of state sovereignty from territoriality,⁴² or the rise of an “international state” that lacks a centralized organizational apparatus but exercises some of the governance functions previously performed only by traditional territorial states.⁴³

How does this conception of international governance relate to the phenomenon of peacebuilding? Because peacebuilding operations are conducted by a diverse assortment of NGOs and intergovernmental organizations, with the ostensible goal of rehabilitating states that are just emerging from civil war, the most obvious connection is that the existence of the international agencies that engage in peacebuilding reflects a previous history of institutionalized cooperation across and among states. In other words, the bodies that conduct peacebuilding are themselves the products—the residue—of previous efforts to resolve transnational problems by creating international institutions.

A less obvious, but perhaps more interesting, possibility is that international peacebuilding agencies are not merely the products of previous exercises in global governance, but rather, in working to rehabilitate war-shattered states, these agencies perform international governance functions themselves. The agencies act on behalf of the international system to reconstruct the constituent units of that system in accordance with a widely shared conception of

⁴⁰ Ibid. For a similar argument that transnational civil society organizations exercise governance functions, see Ronnie D. Lipschutz, “From Place to Planet: Local Knowledge and Global Environmental Governance,” *Global Governance* 3, No. 1 (1997), pp. 83–102.

⁴¹ Benjamin Cohen, *The Geography of Money* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1998), pp. 144–145.

⁴² John Gerard Ruggie, “Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations,” *International Organization* 47, No. 1 (1993), pp. 139–174; R.B.J. Walker, “Sovereignty, Identity, Community: Reflections on the Horizons of Contemporary Political Practice,” in R.B.J. Walker and S. Mendlovitz, eds., *Contending Sovereignties* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner, 1990), pp. 159–185. See also Thomas W. Pogge, “Cosmopolitanism and Sovereignty,” *Ethics* 103 (1992), pp. 48–75.

⁴³ Alexander Wendt, “Collective Identity Formation and the International State,” *American Political Science Review* 88, No. 2 (1994), p. 392; Robert Cox, *Production, Power, and World Order* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987), pp. 253–265.

how political authority should be exercised—namely, by territorial units called states. Instead of allowing “failed states” to evolve new forms of domestic governance or disappear into the dustbin of history, peacebuilders work toward reestablishing these states as effective sovereign entities. Even though these agencies collectively form a decentralized international governance structure, their efforts are, paradoxically, geared toward preserving a different type of governance structure—the modern territorial state.

We could take this argument one step further. Let us recall that most peacebuilders have promoted a particular model of political and economic organization within war-shattered states—liberal market democracy. To the extent that this model constrains the ability of war-shattered states to choose their own political and economic development strategy—that is, something other than liberal market democracy—peacebuilding agencies perform governance functions that penetrate deeply into the internal affairs of particular states. These international agencies not only serve as a surrogate government while domestic political authority is being reconstituted, but they also set relatively narrow limits on the type of polity and economy that will be allowed to emerge.

This observation raises important questions relating to the democratic control of international governance structures. Because these structures are, by definition, decentralized and lacking a single corporate identity, they lack clear lines of accountability, meaning that even if we (whoever “we” might be) disapproved of the actions of the network of international agencies engaged in peacebuilding, there is no single mechanism through which we could demand a change of peacebuilding policy. Nor is there a single actor whom we could collectively hold responsible for the outcome of particular operations.

It should be noted that this problem applies more generally to any decentralized international governance structure. As governance functions are increasingly exercised not by traditional territorial states but by a congeries of subnational and transnational actors and impersonal forces such as global markets, it becomes harder to determine where the buck stops. Several commentators have suggested ways of addressing this “democratic deficit.” But most of the proposed solutions—including the “formation of an authoritative assembly of all democratic states. . . , the curtailment of the power of multinational corporations. . . and the restriction of the activities of powerful transnational interest groups”⁴⁴—seem so infeasible (at least in the current political climate) that they serve mainly to underscore the difficulty of dealing with the problem.

The broader point is this: students of peace operations have paid too little attention to the implications of peacebuilding for our understanding of international governance. Future research might start from the observation that the

⁴⁴David Held, “Democracy, the Nation-State and the Global System,” *Economy and Society* 20, No. 2 (1991), p. 166.

contemporary peacebuilding enterprise appears to be historically unprecedented, and the closest parallel is the policies of the occupying Allied forces in Japan and Germany following World War II. In Japan and Germany, governance functions were performed by the victorious states rather than by a decentralized network of intergovernmental and nongovernmental organizations, as has been the case in recent peacebuilding missions. Does the rise of peacebuilding reflect a broader shift in the nature of international governance since these earlier times? Is it necessary to adapt existing theories of international politics to accommodate the phenomenon of peacebuilding? Does peacebuilding highlight larger problems, such as the issue of democratic accountability, that might bear on the study and practice of international governance more generally? As these questions suggest, much interesting work remains.

CONCLUSION

The scholarly literature on peace operations does not lack theory, as some commentators have suggested. What it lacks is a sustained effort to engage the central theoretical debates of the international relations discipline. I have presented three research agendas that would help to remedy this problem by analyzing the relationship between peace operations and international norms, “world revolution,” and international governance.

While it is true that some theoretical work in political science seems unduly abstruse and detached from the real world, reflecting what one commentator calls the “cult of irrelevance” in contemporary social science,⁴⁵ the existing literature on peace operations appears to suffer from the opposite malady—a “cult of policy relevance.” Students of peace operations, apparently preoccupied with the practical problem of improving the effectiveness of future missions, have neglected broader macrotheoretical questions about the nature and significance of these operations for our understanding of international politics. This omission has stunted the intellectual development of the field and isolated the study of peace operations from other branches of international relations.

This is not to say that scholars should shun policy-relevant research, but that the study of peace operations could benefit from a somewhat reduced emphasis on policy relevance. Broadening the scope of the field by incorporating insights from IR theory, for example, would reduce scholars’ dependence on the shifting research priorities of policymakers and, more important, propel the study of peace operations in unexpected and more productive directions.

⁴⁵ Stephen M. Walt, “Rigor or Rigor Mortis? Rational Choice and Security Studies,” *International Security* 23, No. 4 (1999), p. 46.