

# The United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture

*A Constructivist Approach to the  
Formulation of Peacebuilding Policy*

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**13 August 2010**

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A thesis submitted to the Board of Examiners in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree of Master of Arts in Conflict Studies and Human Rights

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**Date of Submission:** 13 August 2010

**Number of Words:** 14.851

**Program Trajectory:** Research and Thesis Writing (15 ECTS)  
Internship (15 ECTS - see Internship Report)

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## Preface & Acknowledgements

This thesis is the concluding part of an interesting and pleasant year as a student at the Utrecht University. Participating in the Master program Conflict Studies & Human Rights, I had the possibility to learn from and work with the brightest professors and students I met in my life. I would like to thank all the people that I got to know this year and who inspired me to follow the Master and to write this thesis. There are several persons who I wish to thank in particular.

First of all, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor Chris. I am extremely happy with the guidance he provided me while writing this thesis in such a short amount of time. Always with a smile on his face, interested in my stories and never too busy to help me out when necessary.

Second, my thankfulness goes to my former colleagues at the Permanent Mission to the United Nations of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in New York. Especially Jean-Pierre, Bartjan and Mark were a source of interesting ideas and useful guidance during my internship.

Third, I wish to thank Julie for the fact that she served as my proofreader and as a point of reference during this process. My thesis gained quality from her remarks and input.

Finally, I wish to express my greatest gratitude to, and appreciation for, my family and friends who have supported me. Especially my parents Nic & Marianne, my sister Stéphanie and her family, my grandparents and, of course, the woman who controls my heart, Dieuwke.

Nothing in this thesis can be attributed to or seen as the opinion of the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations.

Facts, opinions and possible mistakes or omissions all fall under the responsibility of the author.

*Has Bakker*  
*Utrecht, August 2010*

## List of Abbreviations

BCPR	Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery
CAR	Central African Republic
CSM	Country-specific Meetings
DPA	Department of Political Affairs
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations
ECOSOC	Economic and Social Council
GA	General Assembly
IMF	International Monetary Fund
IPBS	Integrated Peacebuilding Strategy
IO	International Organization
IR	International Relations
OC	Organizational Committee
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission
PBF	Peacebuilding Fund
PBSO	Peacebuilding Support Office
SC	Security Council
SG	Secretary-General
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund

## Introduction

*“There’s something happening here,*

*What it is ain’t exactly clear”*

- Buffalo Springfield / ‘For What It’s Worth’ (1967)

During the reign of Secretary-General (SG) Kofi Annan, the United Nations (UN) began a long and thorough process of reform. To play a key role in our market-oriented and highly globalized world, the UN had to adapt to recent global challenges and developments. Reform became a ‘buzzword’ in the UN Headquarters in New York, Geneva and on the ground at the field level. With the 2005 World Summit in New York, the 192 Member States of the UN gave way to some of the high ambitions of Annan.<sup>1</sup> One area of reform consisted of the peacebuilding activities and structure of the UN. No topic was and still is getting so much attention as peacebuilding is these days. Based upon the experiences after the Cold War and supported by the Brahimi Report in 2000, the report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change in 2004 and Annan’s *In Larger Freedom* in 2005, the UN Member States decided during the 2005 World Summit to create a new UN peacebuilding architecture.<sup>2</sup> Consequently, the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and the Peacebuilding Fund (PBF) saw the light. With the creation of the new peacebuilding architecture, the UN Member States tried to respond to the increasing importance of peacebuilding. Until the PBC was created, there was no commission or body within the UN solely responsible for the field of peacebuilding. The concept of peacebuilding is as topical as it is vague. For some UN Member States peacebuilding is nothing more than (socioeconomic) development. For other States it is a matter of peace & security. While there was a sense of urgency within the UN to create an architecture that is solely dealing with peacebuilding, it is like Buffalo Springfield’s song quoted above: there is something going on, but it still is not exactly clear what peacebuilding is.

There is not much written about the actual formulation and negotiation of peacebuilding policy within international organizations (IOs) like the UN. The black box of the decision-making process of the relatively young PBC is not yet opened. While several scholars look to the application of peacebuilding policy in the countries on the PBC agenda, in this thesis I want to explicitly study the process of policy formulation at the UN Headquarters. Given the fact that the UN has 192 Member States, it is already remarkable that as many states with many different

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<sup>1</sup> The 2005 World Summit took place in New York from 14 until 16 September 2005. The Summit was attended by the largest amount of world leaders ever gathered and described as: “a once-in-a-generation opportunity to take bold decisions in the areas of development, security, human rights and reform of the United Nations.” (UN 2005).

<sup>2</sup> With the UN peacebuilding architecture I mean the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF. The architecture is centered around the PBC and therefore the Peacebuilding Commission receives most of the attention in this thesis when compared to the PBSO and the PBF.

views on peacebuilding can find a consensus in the peacebuilding policy. In this thesis, I try to get a better understanding how concepts like peacebuilding, mutual accountability and national ownership are perceived by the different Member States of the UN and how these concepts serve to find (or 'fake') consensus. Also, I will give attention to the role and the power of the UN as an international bureaucracy next to the UN as an intergovernmental institution.

In this thesis I argue that due to the fact that there is no one and common understanding within the PBC (and the UN) of what peacebuilding is, the policy documents (called Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies) of the PBC remain abstract and vague. The formulation process of policy makes use of a set of concepts and language that can be described as the lowest common denominator that could be achieved within the PBC. Policy documents are not determined by the needs and the dynamics of the peacebuilding processes in the countries on the PBC's agenda, but the consensus-based negotiation language that characterizes the UN is at the core of the policy documents. Notwithstanding the different views and perceptions of the PBC members, the PBC does play a role in the international field of peacebuilding and this makes it interesting to study the PBC. Contrary to the neorealist and neoliberal perspectives on international relations (IR), the constructivist theory seems more relevant to understand the working of the PBC. This is due to the fact that constructivism gives us the possibility to study international organizations as purposeful and independent actors in international politics, with special attention for the role of the IO as a bureaucratic organization. Seen from a constructivist perspective, the policy outcome of the PBC is not a product of clashing national material interests (economical or military power) but a socially produced *intersubjective* (non)meaning given to the concept of peacebuilding.

Consequently, this thesis will answer the following question: *Looking from a constructivist perspective, how is peacebuilding policy formulated within the UN PBC and how are the different perspectives of the PBC members on the concept of peacebuilding reconciled in the PBC policy documents?* The first chapter of this thesis deals with the creation of the new peacebuilding architecture and the PBC's mandate. In the second chapter the theory of constructivism is explained and linked to the analysis of policy formulation in the context of international organizations like the UN. In the third chapter the question will be answered how peacebuilding policy is formulated in practice. Firstly, I will focus on the discourse that is used regarding to the concept of peacebuilding. Secondly, I will look to the decision-making process, especially to the so-called Country-specific Meetings (CSMs) and the role of the PBSO in this process of policy formulation. Thirdly, I will analyze in which way different views on the concept of peacebuilding are reconciled when policy documents are negotiated and which benchmarks for success are used. In the concluding chapter, the central research puzzle will be answered and special attention will be given to the constructivist perspective of this thesis.

As a matter of methodology, I base this thesis on a profound research of the existing literature concerning the PBC and the policy documents of the PBC itself, on my work as an intern at the Permanent Mission of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to the United Nations in New York in the period from February until May 2010, on the several interviews I conducted and on the meetings, workshops and lectures I attended while working in New York. Because of time constraints, I did not have the opportunity to speak to all the people within the (Missions to the) UN that might be relevant for this research. Lastly, this thesis is oriented on the UN Headquarters level in New York. In order to write a more comprehensive analysis of the work of the PBC, it is necessary to include perspectives from the field level (see for example Iro 2009). All in all, I am confident that my observations and findings are sufficient to make valid statements about the work of the PBC. Especially the internship gave me a valuable and unique insight in the working of the UN and the PBC.



## 1. The UN Peacebuilding Architecture

*“There are few topics that here in New York generate so much attention as peacebuilding does today.”*

- Robert C. Orr (Assistant Secretary-General for Policy Coordination and Strategic Planning)<sup>3</sup>

The new peacebuilding architecture of the UN was created at the 2005 World Summit. With the creation of the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF the UN Member States tried to respond to the changing global political environment after the end of the Cold War. Also, the UN Member States wanted to create one body within the UN system that was responsible for peacebuilding. This chapter will deal with the changing role of the UN in and after conflict situations, the new peacebuilding architecture and the PBC’s mandate.

### 1.1 The Changing Role of the UN in (Post-)Conflict Situations

With the end of the Cold War, the number of internal conflicts within states had a quick – but temporary – rise in the 1990s (Human Security Report 2005). After the so-called first generation of peacekeeping missions during the Cold War, peacekeeping missions became more robust after the Cold War ended. In post-conflict countries, the UN became involved in *inter alia* organizing elections, rebuilding the country’s security sector and the (re)building of state institutions in post-conflict situations (Ponzio 2007:6). After the so-called first generation of peacekeeping, where the UN only sent its troops to monitor the peace process, since the 1990s the UN deployed its troops to areas where conflicts were still going on or where peace was ‘build’ by the UN. Often these involvements and new approaches are labeled the so-called second and third generations of peacekeeping. The changing role of the UN in (post-)conflict situations asked an involvement of the UN that was unprecedented (Ramsbotham et al. 2005:134-138).

The tasks of the UN were extended from *keeping* the peace, to the wider scope of *building* the peace since the end of the Cold War. In addition to the peacekeeping missions, the UN peacebuilding missions in the post-Cold War era were focused on helping war torn countries to make a transition from a ceasefire to a stable and sustainable peace (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:55). Originally coined by Galtung (1975), the concept of peacebuilding gained more attention when UN SG Boutros-Ghali elaborated in his *Agenda for Peace* (1992) on peacebuilding. According to the *Agenda for Peace*, peacebuilding is: “[...] the action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid relapse into conflict.” (Boutros-Ghali 1992:§21). After the publication of the *Agenda for Peace* the meaning of

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<sup>3</sup> Quote taken from meeting at the UN Headquarters (New York City) on 17 March 2010, attended by the author.

the concept of peacebuilding became the subject of an open-ended discussion, within and outside the UN. Ever since, it has been used as an 'umbrella' concept for projects, initiatives, strategies and programs of all levels, magnitudes and types that aim to achieve sustainable peace in post-conflict societies (Doyle & Sambanis 2006). Nowadays, as stated in the quote from Orr, there are few topics receiving so much attention as peacebuilding.

With the changing global political environment in the 1990s, a multiple actor approach inside and outside the UN came into fashion when it came to post-conflict situations and peacebuilding (van der Borgh in: Kremer et al. 2009). Firstly, inside the UN peacebuilding system, the coordination of the different actors was - and still is - lacking. Currently, the UN Secretariat has a Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) that is responsible for the deployment of military peacekeeping missions and a Department of Political Affairs (DPA) that is responsible for non-military peacemaking operations, mediated peace processes and political analyses. The areas of economic development and institution building, both at UN Headquarters' level and at the field level, are divided in a less than satisfying way between the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the UN Development Program (UNDP), other UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF) and the 'Heads of Mission' on the ground. The problematic fact is that most of these offices, departments, agencies and individuals are competing and fighting turf battles instead of working together (Doyle & Sambanis 2006:344, I will come back to this subject in 3.2.2). Secondly, outside the UN, several international agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) created their own conflict and peacebuilding offices. These developments caused a messy situation in the peacebuilding field, where the number of actors involved was increasing and the lack of one common peacebuilding strategy became more striking. It seemed that the actors involved were situated on their own island and that there was no such thing as 'coordination' between them (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:54-56).

## 1.2 A New Peacebuilding Architecture

The 1990s became known for the failures of the UN missions in Somalia, Rwanda and Srebrenica. Genocide could not be prevented in these cases and lessons had to be learned from the dramatic decade. The *Report of the Panel on Peacekeeping Operations*<sup>4</sup> (Brahimi et al. 2000) assessed the problems that became evident with the failing UN peacekeeping missions. The importance of peacebuilding was stressed in the report: "History has taught that peacekeepers and peacebuilders are inseparable partners in complex operations: while the peacebuilders may not be able to function without the peacekeepers' support, the peacekeepers have no exit without the

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<sup>4</sup> Better known as the 'Brahimi Report' after the Chair of the Panel on Peacekeeping Operations, Lakhdar Brahimi.

peacebuilders' work." (Brahimi et al. 2000:5). With the failure of the missions in mind and influenced *inter alia* by the Brahimi Report, the UN started a process of reform of their peacekeeping and peacebuilding apparatus that at the moment still is not finished. The recommendations of the Brahimi Report initiated an attempt in the beginning of the millennium to integrate civil and military missions and to establish more coordinated peacebuilding missions. While the UN tried to prevent countries from slipping into conflict, it was clear that the UN was lacking the ability to create a coordinated approach to its peacebuilding operations (Ponzio 2007:9).

Former UN SG Annan described this coordination problem as a 'gaping hole' in the machinery of the UN institutions (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:57). Annan installed the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change and asked them to come up with recommendations for UN reform that could be implemented at the 2005 World Summit. Among a wide range of other topics, the High-level Panel (2004) focused on the peacebuilding coordination problem and pushed in their report *A more secure world: our shared responsibilities* for the installation of a new peacebuilding architecture consisting of a Peacebuilding Commission, a Peacebuilding Support Office and a Peacebuilding Fund. The Secretary-General underlined the importance of the reform of the peacebuilding architecture and the creation of these bodies in his report *In Larger Freedom* (Annan 2005). Consequently, at the 2005 World Summit the UN Member States officially established the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF. The PBC was created with the aim to build a bridge between all the relevant stakeholders, both within and outside the UN, that were 'doing' peacebuilding. The PBSO was established to assist and support the PBC and to coordinate the peacebuilding efforts within the UN. The PBF was created to fund immediate response activities before donors arrive and to fund peacebuilding activities where attention from donors is lacking (i.e. funding of the 'donor orphans'). With the establishment of the new peacebuilding architecture in 2005, the United Nations undertook a serious step to overcome the 'gaping hole' in post-war peacebuilding (Ponzio 2007: 7-8, Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:64-75).

### **1.3 The Peacebuilding Commission's Mandate**

Initially the High-level Panel advised to create an independent PBC. This would mean that the PBC could make binding decisions and that it could decide, instead of advise, on policy matters. During the 2005 World Summit, the UN member states concluded that this would be a bridge too far and decided that the PBC would be an advisory body to both the Security Council (SC) and the General Assembly (GA). Consequently, the PBC is officially only allowed to make recommendations. This construction was and is disappointing. The fact that the PBC is 'only' an advisory body means that the coordinating role of the PBC in the peacebuilding field is limited to their advising role and the willingness of other actors within and outside the UN to cooperate

with the PBC (Ponzio 2007:7-8). The decision of the 2005 World Summit to make the PBC only an advisory body proved that there existed fear with some UN Member States that the PBC would become too influential. Peacebuilding was, and still is, a sensitive and topical field within the UN mainly because it entails so many different actors and institutions inside and outside the UN. Different views on the concept of peacebuilding and turf battles between the many actors involved characterized the creation of the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF (I will return to this discussion in chapter 3).

The mandate of the PBC is as follows, as decided by the GA on 20 December 2005 in the founding resolution of the PBC:

- “1) To bring together all relevant actors to marshal resources and to advise on an propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery;
- 2) To focus attention on the reconstruction and institution-building efforts necessary for recovery from conflict and to support the development of integrated strategies in order to lay the foundation for sustainable development;
- 3) To provide recommendations and information to improve the coordination of all relevant actors within and outside the United Nations, to develop best practices, to help to ensure predictable financing for early recovery activities and to extend the period of attention given by the international community to post-conflict recovery.” (UN GA 2005)

The PBC consists of the Organizational Committee (OC) and several Country-specific Meetings where the countries on the PBC agenda are discussed. The members of the OC (see Annex 1) take part in all the PBC meetings such as the CSMs and the Working Group. Other UN Member States, international and regional organizations, civil society members and the private sector can take part in the CSMs if that is necessary or useful (Q&A 2006, see 3.2.1).

After its establishment, the main challenge for the PBC was to agree on what exactly had to be done. The OC agreed for several times that substantive steps had to be taken and that progress was an eminent factor in the success of the PBC. Yet, the member states hardly ever agreed on *what* those steps and that progress should be and how it would look like. Much of 2006 was spent on procedural matters within the PBC, while it was unclear how the PBC was going to strengthen the UN and fight the coordination gap that characterized the field of peacebuilding. However, the content of the meetings became slightly more substantive and in the end of 2006 the first CSMs were held on Sierra Leone and Burundi. Also, thematic discussions were organized on e.g. good governance and justice reform. In 2007 the CSM members visited respectively Sierra Leone and Burundi and held meetings with the national governments and key actors involved in the peacebuilding process (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:67-68). The year 2007 was spent on developing the Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBSs) for Sierra Leone and Burundi. The IPBSs are agreements between the national government and the PBC and should

be used as a road map for all the relevant actors involved in the peacebuilding process. In 2008, the scope of the CSMs was extended with the cases of the Central African Republic and Guinea-Bissau (I will come back to the CSMs and the IPBSs in chapter 3).

While substantive steps were taken, five years after its establishment the PBC is still looking for its added value. At the 2005 World Summit the UN Member States agreed that the PBC would be reviewed after five years. Under the leadership of the three co-facilitators Mexico, South Africa and Ireland, the PBC is currently in the process of taking a look in the mirror. After several consultations the co-facilitators published their first report on the 19<sup>th</sup> of July 2010 (UN PBC 2010a). The co-facilitators are reluctant to open-up Pandora's box and to start the discussion about the PBC's mandate and structure. Instead, they want to have a substantive review of the added value and the shortcomings of the PBC. The general trend in the debates of the 2010 PBC Review was that, according to the PBC members, the PBC is doing a good job, but it can do better and it can do more (IPI 2009).

#### **1.4 Conclusion**

This chapter has shown how and why the PBC, PBSO and PBF were established in 2005. In order to make useful recommendations for the future role of the PBC, it is necessary to analyze the dynamics that surround the formulation of peacebuilding policy because this is under researched and a hiatus in the current academic knowledge exists. After formulating a theoretical approach to IOs in chapter 2, I will return to the PBC and analyze the formulation of peacebuilding policy at the level of the UN Headquarters in chapter 3.

## 2. Constructivist Approach in International Relations

*“How are things in the world put together so that they have the properties they do?”*

- Alexander Wendt (1998, in Barnett & Finnemore 1999:701)

The formulation of (peacebuilding) policy within international organizations differs from the more traditional policy process within national governments. Therefore, when the policy process of a UN body is studied, it is necessary to first determine through which theoretical ‘lens’ we look at IOs. In this thesis, IOs are approached from a constructivist perspective on international relations. This theoretical point of view is chosen because it provides us with a relatively new approach to the working of IOs. In the light of this thesis, constructivism is better equipped to understand the way in which the PBC is working than the traditional theories of neorealism and neoliberalism. This is because constructivism gives attention to the creation of socially constructed ideas and beliefs, for example in the case of the concept of peacebuilding. To better understand the formulation of (peacebuilding) policy, I make use of a policy cycle, explained in the second part of this chapter where I will give special attention to the political discourse, the decision-making phase and the formulation of formal policy.

### 2.1 Constructivism and International Organizations

When researching the policy processes within international organizations such as the United Nations it is necessary to first determine *how* we look at international organizations.<sup>5</sup> The traditional theories of international relations are more concerned with the entity of states than with IOs. *Neorealists* see the state as a unitary and rational actor and place the state at the core of the international system (Viotti and Kauppi 1999:55). IOs are seen as a by-product of international relations and as an outcome or consequence of state behavior. Although IOs are not studied intensively by neorealists, IOs are not considered irrelevant by neorealist thinkers such as Gilpin (1984:300) and Waltz (1983:680). However, IOs are not treated as a unit of analysis by neorealists.

The field of *neoliberalism*<sup>6</sup> (also referred to as *pluralism*) adds more value to non-state actors (such as the UN) than neorealism. The state is seen as a plural and not as a unitary actor. Neoliberals challenge the neorealist assumption that the state is a rational being, given the fact

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<sup>5</sup> International Organizations are intergovernmental organizations that consist of official state representatives, i.e. the member states. IOs (often) have a secretariat that is responsible for the day-to-day running of the IO. In the case of the UN, these are all the UN departments and offices such as the Secretary-General. Benner (2008:22) calls this the ‘Headquarters Level’. Contrary to IOs, non-governmental organizations such as Amnesty International or Oxfam are independent from states and have no representation of states.

<sup>6</sup> Not to be confused with the neoliberalist theory of (international) economics.

that the state consists of a plural society. Regarding to IOs, neoliberalism stresses the important role IOs can play in IR. In the fields of agenda setting and provision of knowledge and information, the staff or secretariat of an IO can influence the interest of a particular state (Viotti and Kauppi 1999:199). The neoliberals Keohane and Nye (1977, in Viotti and Kauppi 1999:316-317) explicitly stress the power of IOs' secretariats and staff during negotiation processes. Though neoliberalism gives more importance to IOs, they still aren't dealt with as independent actors in IR.

Next to the traditional theories of neoliberalism and neorealism, the relatively new field of *constructivism* approaches IR in general, and IOs in particular, in a different way. Constructivism is not a substantive political theory but a social theory that intends to understand social processes. Contrary to neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism does not make "claims about the content of social structures or the nature of agents at work in social life", neither makes it predictions about political outcomes that could be tested in social science research (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001:393).<sup>7</sup> While neorealism and neoliberalism claim that states are maximizing absolute respectively relative gains in material security and wealth, constructivism makes no substantive claims about the behavior of actors in international politics. Before I explain how constructivism approaches the position of IOs in international politics, I will first look to the core features of constructivism.

A basic assumption of constructivists is that agents are influenced by the structure as much as the structure is influenced by the agent (Wendt 1992:434-438, 1999:1). This belief is based on the sociological theory of *structuration* and is at the core of Wendt's (1987:355) and Barnett & Finnemore's (1999) constructivist theory of IR. Structuration theory is the brainchild of Giddens (1984) and attempts to find a middle ground between the rigid theory of structuralism and the individualist or rationalist theories. In short, the core of Giddens' idea is that the agent and its behavior is influenced and bounded by the rules of society and the structures in which the actor is placed. Both the agent and the structure influence and affect each other, which is called the 'duality of structure'. In this way the actor is not an individual predictable agent as rational choice theory suggests, nor is the structure an absolute concept that determines the behavior of the actors. In Giddens' structuration theory the actor is able to make an individual choice, but the actor is not self-contained. There is a constant interaction between the structure and the agent in such a way that both influence each other (Jabri 1996:76-81). Thus, the agent and the structure are 'mutually constitutive' but yet the two remain ontological distinct

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<sup>7</sup> In this way constructivism is similar to rational choice: "In a rational choice analysis, agents act rationally to maximize utilities, but the substantive specification of actors and utilities lies outside the analysis; it must be provided before analysis can begin. In a constructivist analysis, agents and structures are mutually constituted in ways that explain why the political world is so and not otherwise, but the substantive specification of agents and structures must come from some other source. Neither constructivism nor rational choice provides substantive explanations or predictions of political behavior until coupled with a more specific understanding of who the relevant actors are, what they want, and what the content of social structures might be." (Finnemore & Sikkink 2001:393).

categories (Wendt 1987:360). Constructivism contests the *individualist* or *rationalist* claim made by neorealists and neoliberals that social structures in international politics can be reduced in the end to individuals (i.e. agents or actors). Constructivists adhere a more *holistic* or *structuralistic* approach to IR than neorealism and neoliberalism (Finnemore 1996:22-24).<sup>8</sup> Therefore, I distinguish agents and social structures in this research as two independent ontological categories.

Wendt's article *Anarchy is what states make of it* (1992) lays, among others, the foundation for the constructivist idea that international politics is "socially constructed" and makes use of the ideas of Giddens about structuration (Wendt 1999:1). The two major assumptions of Wendt's perspective on constructivism are: "(1) that the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and (2) that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature." (Wendt 1999:1). The "shared ideas" are often called 'intersubjective' beliefs, which cannot be reduced to individuals (i.e. they are a result of a social process). These intersubjective ideas construct the interests and identities of purposive actors, and are not – like neorealists and neoliberals would say - 'given by nature' (Adler 1997, Price and Reus-Smit 1998, Ruggie 1998, Wendt 1999, Finnemore & Sikkink 2001).

When we look at the field of IOs, and specifically the UN, neorealism and neoliberalism is much critiqued by constructivists for their ontological position on international organizations. Especially the claim that international organizations are no independent or constitutive agents in international relations is much contested (Wendt 1987, Barnett & Finnemore 1999). Barnett & Finnemore formulated a constructivist view on IOs that explicitly moves away from the traditional ontological assumption about international organizations. They see IOs as independent agencies in IR and not as by-products of IR between states. Barnett & Finnemore (1999, 2004) base their constructivist theory of IOs in the first place on Wendt's *structuration* theory (see above) and in the second place on Weber's theory, which states that bureaucracies have normative power. Barnett & Finnemore deal with IOs as being *international bureaucracies*. The IO has become an independent actor in world politics, comparable with the more traditional idea of a *bureaucracy*. This approach is based on Weber's theory about bureaucratic power. Weber defined two sources of authority of which the first is the so-called *rational-legal authority*. This means that bureaucracies possess an impersonal rationality that is embedded in rules, procedures and legislation (Gerth and Wright Mills 1977:196). It is not a single person working at a bureaucracy that determines whether or not you are e.g. granted a visa, but the rules of the organization are. The second source of authority is the bureaucracy's *control of knowledge* (Gerth and Wright Mills 1977:196). With knowledge is not only meant information, experience and

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<sup>8</sup> Giddens (1984) identifies three types of structures: (1) signification: produces meaning through organized webs of language, (2) legitimation: produces a moral order via naturalization in norms, values and standards, and (3) domination: produces and is an exercise of power, originating from the control of resources.

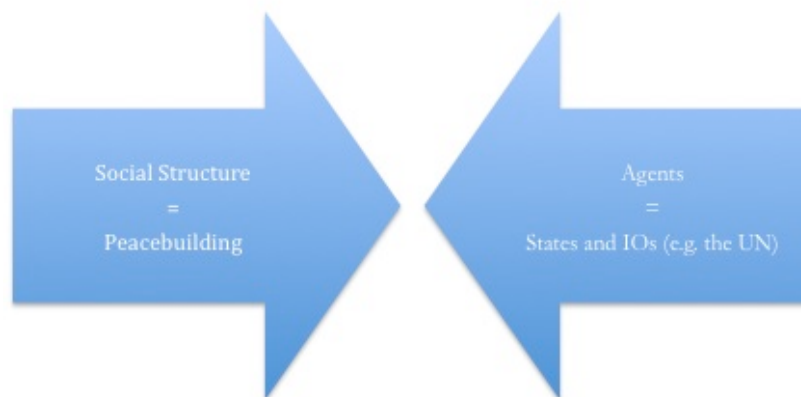


expertise. Bureaucratic power based on knowledge is also the power to “transform information into knowledge, that is, to construct information in ways that give it meaning” (Barnett & Finnemore 2004:29). This phrase is at the heart of constructivist thinking; IOs have the ability to construct knowledge in a way that it determines our “social reality” and thus it can determine to some extent what ‘we’ find important (Barnett & Finnemore 2004:30). In the light of the PBC, the meaning that is given to the concept of peacebuilding is to a large extent determined by the UN itself (see 3.1.2).

Next to the belief that IOs (i.e. the UN/PBC) are agents in IR, I perceive peacebuilding as an intersubjective idea. Therefore peacebuilding is a social structure that determines agents in IR. To conclude the constructivist approach to the agent-structure debate, I give a schematic overview to clarify the assumptions I make:

### Figure 1 – Agent-Structure Debate

Source: created by the author.



Regarding to constructivist research, *understanding* – contrary to *explaining* - how things are put together so that they have the properties they do, is at the core of constructivists’ puzzles. Understanding is not solely a matter of describing:

“Understanding the constitution of things is essential in explaining how they behave and what causes political outcomes. Just as understanding how the double-helix DNA molecule is constituted materially enables understandings of genetics and disease, so, too, an understanding of how sovereignty, human rights, laws of war, or bureaucracies are constituted socially allows us to hypothesize about their effects in world politics.” (Finnemore and Sicking 2001:394).

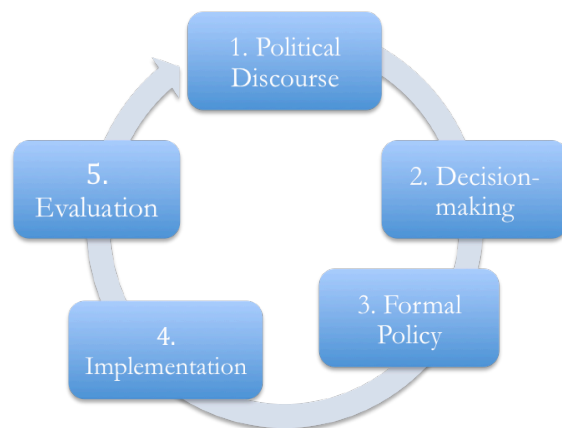
Therefore, in this research I will first focus on the constitution of the PBC’s policy documents in chapter 3 (understanding) before I come to the conclusions about the PBC and the concept of peacebuilding (explaining).

## 2.2 The Policy Cycle

Now that we have determined, looking from a constructivist perspective, the ontological position of IOs as independent actors in IR and analyzed the pillars of IOs' authority – rational-legal authority and knowledge - our next questions is: how is the theory of constructivism relevant when we look at the policy formulation at the level of IOs, in particular the UN Peacebuilding Commission and the Peacebuilding Support Office? Policy is a broad and ambiguous concept that is often used in the media and the political debate. Policy is a complex, long-term and non-linear process with many input and output factors. It is interesting to analyze policy because it gives us a better understanding why certain practice is (not) happening. Furthermore it will give us a better understanding of the reasons why policy makers come to certain decisions. In political science, policy processes are often captured in a policy cycle. Schematic the policy process looks like this:

**Figure 2 – Policy Cycle<sup>9</sup>**

Source: Van Audenhove (2004), edited by author.



- (1) *Political Discourse* – what different parties say about policy before decisions are made.
- (2) *Decision-making* – processes of negotiation to actually come to a choice on policy.
- (3) *Formal Policy* – ‘official’ policy as written down in documents, laws, constitutions, etc.
- (4) *Implementation* – translation of formal policy into concrete action.
- (5) *Evaluation* – review of effectiveness and efficiency of policy.

The use of the policy cycle has some advantages and disadvantages. A major disadvantage is the fact that the cycle creates an artificial idealistic view on policy. In reality the course of policy is

<sup>9</sup> I chose to use the policy cycle of Van Audenhove because it is the best-suited and clearest model to analyze policy formulation within the UN. However, there exist many versions of policy cycles that are comparable to Van Audenhove’s cycle.

much more unpredictable and policy is not always a rational and goal-oriented process. With the use of the cycle, it seems that policy is a smooth process with a beginning and an end. In reality policy can jump from one phase to the other, policy is therefore not a linear process. A major advantage of the cycle is that it makes policy processes more comprehensible and research stages are easier to delineate. Each phase can be looked at separately and phases can be compared in terms of evaluation or when comparing goals with results (Van Audenhove 2004). When doing research on policy processes, the 'ideal situation' will never occur. Still, it is useful to distinguish the different phases of policy development. As stated above, constructivism deals with the meaning that is given to certain norms, values, concepts and principles. Looking from a constructivist perspective, the first three stages of the policy cycle are most relevant when studying policy development.<sup>10</sup>

The first phase of the policy cycle deals with the political discourse. In the light of the subject of this thesis and when researching the first phase, it is relevant to look at the actors involved in the PBC and PBSO, the rhetoric they use and their different points of view, assumptions and contradictions relating to the concept of peacebuilding. The second phase is about the actual decision-making process. In this phase it is relevant to look at the negotiation process, specifically how the decision-making procedures are working in practice and which actors play a role in this phase. I will focus on the relationship and the interaction between the PBC and the PBSO and the turf battles that are fought when policy is negotiated. In the third phase the policy documents (i.e. the IPBSs) are written down. In this phase it becomes visible how the discourse is translated into formal (written) policy. I will analyze the general trends in the IPBSs, specifically how the different views on peacebuilding are reconciled in the policy documents through the use of consensus-concepts.

When looking to policy formulation within the UN, in the light of Barnett & Finnemore's constructivist approach to IOs as bureaucracies, it is necessary to look how the UN manifests itself. I do this by dividing two faces of the UN. First, the UN is known as an intergovernmental organization consisting of 192 Member States (the so-called 'first UN'). Besides from this, the UN is also an international bureaucracy (the so-called 'second UN'). The first UN consists of all the intergovernmental bodies, such as the GA, the SC and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Also the PBC is part of the first UN. The 'second UN' (i.e. the bureaucratic layer) consists of the Secretariat (i.e. the SG and the departments, e.g. DPKO and DPA) and all the UN agencies specialized organizations. The PBSO is part of the second UN (Weiss 2009:4-11). The working and the dynamics of the two UNs is interesting and provides us with a better understanding of the PBC and the formulation of peacebuilding policy. The

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<sup>10</sup> Because of the focus on the first three phases of the policy cycle in chapter 3, I will not delve deeper in the fourth and the fifth phase of the policy cycle. Also, because my research is focused on the Headquarters' level, I have not sufficient information to make valuable analyses of the last two phases of the policy cycle.

interaction between the UN as a bureaucracy vis-à-vis the UN as an intergovernmental forum is a field of misperception and therefore a source of tensions and turf battles. In my opinion, Barnett & Finnemore (1999, 2004) tend to ‘ignore’ in their case studies of the UN agencies the more *political* processes (i.e. the first UN) that also characterize the UN.<sup>11</sup> Therefore I will pay attention to both the first and the second UN in the next chapter (see Annex 2 for an overview of the UN’s peacebuilding system).

### 2.3 Conclusion

Concluding, constructivism challenges the static ontological stand of neorealism and neoliberalism and perceives IOs as agents in international politics. In other words, IOs (like the UN) are not a by-product of IR but are independent and influential actors who possess authority and autonomy. Social structures, according to constructivists, are made of intersubjective beliefs that are constructed through a social process. In this thesis, I make the assumption that peacebuilding is a social structure in itself. Since constructivism sees the agent and the structure mutually constitutive, IOs (agents) affect the beliefs and the discourse that makes the social structure as much as the beliefs and the discourse surrounding the structure affect the IOs. Translated to my research, the PBC (first UN) and the PBSO (second UN) are part of a purposeful actor (the UN) that is related to the social structure of peacebuilding. Constructivism does not claim to know in which way the actors are behaving in IR, therefore chapter 3 will focus on understanding the working of the UN peacebuilding architecture. I will do this by making use of the policy cycle’s first three phases. In the concluding part of this thesis, I will come back to the constructivist approach to the agent-structure debate about peacebuilding.

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<sup>11</sup> Barnett (2003) himself approaches this interaction in a useful way in his book *Eyewitness to a Genocide*. Barnett gives an excellent ethical history of the interactions at the UN Headquarters between the Secretariat (second UN) and the Security Council (first UN) before and during the genocide in Rwanda, based on his own experiences when he worked for the Permanent Mission of the United States to the UN in that period. The book shows that the interaction between the bureaucratic and the intergovernmental parts of the UN is highly important when analyzing policy processes at the level of the UN.

### 3. The Formulation Process of Peacebuilding Policy

*“[H]erein, the social constructivist might argue, also lies an opportunity, for “effective peacebuilding” is as much about sharing a common set of ideas and a common vocabulary, as it is about deploying material resources to those who need them most”*

- Thomas Biersteker and Oliver Jütersonke (2010:12)

Based on the theoretic framework formulated in the previous chapter, I will combine the constructivist perspective on the first three phases of the policy cycle with the practice of the UN peacebuilding architecture. The policy cycle provides us the opportunity to better understand the process of policy formulation of the Peacebuilding Commission on the UN Headquarters' level in New York. In this chapter I will deal with first three phases of the policy cycle in the respective three sub-chapters.

#### 3.1 Peacebuilding Discourse

The first phase of the policy cycle deals with the political discourse that surrounds the PBC. The different points of view, assumptions and contradictions relating to the concept of peacebuilding are relevant to better understand the working of the PBC. When SG Boutros-Ghali published his *Agenda for Peace* in 1992 he widely introduced the concept *post-conflict peacebuilding* in the UN discourse. There was a sense within the UN that peace is more than the absence of conflict. In line with Galtung's (1975) perception of *positive peace*, the Member States and the UN institutions agreed that a peace agreement and a peacekeeping mission were not enough to prevent a country's relapse into conflict. Besides peacemaking and peacekeeping, post-conflict peacebuilding became a widely used concept within and outside the UN (Doyle & Sambanis 2006). I will first look to the (run-up to the) 2005 World Summit and the North-South divide and then to the framing of the concept of peacebuilding by the UN Secretariat.

##### 3.1.1 The (Run-up to the) 2005 World Summit and the North-South Divide

As described in chapter 1, there existed unease about the lack of coordination between the several UN departments, agencies, programs and funds that were working in the field of peacebuilding. This was repeatedly expressed by UN Member States (the first UN) and by UN officials working at Headquarters and field level (the second UN). The solution for this problem was seen in the creation of a new bureaucratic layer: the PBC and the PBSO. This is in itself a remarkable step. The fact that there were too many activities, actors and institutions working in the field of peacebuilding without effective coordination, was solved by the creation of a new

institution. It appeared that the lack of coordination functioned as a convenient catch-all for the problems relating to peacebuilding that popped up during the 1990s and the beginning of the new millennium (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009). It seems that the Member States and the UN officials in the run-up to the 2005 World Summit were very much focused on the bureaucratic and procedural dimension of the problem in the field of peacebuilding in a way that there was no attention given to the fact that all those different actors, inside and outside the UN system, based their approaches on different views on and perceptions of what peacebuilding is or should be (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:59). Moustafa (Senior Peacebuilding Officer at the PBSO) who was at the time of the 2005 World Summit one of the chief negotiators in the Egyptian delegation, underlined this analysis.<sup>12</sup> Moustafa, based on his own experiences, explained that the most important goal during the 2005 World Summit in New York was the achievement of a consensus. The negotiators had to achieve some kind of an agreement on multiple issues in order to prevent the whole Summit from failing. According to Moustafa, the negotiators pursued the 'low-hanging fruit' with the decision to establish a new institution without agreeing on the core question what peacebuilding is.

This reflex to rely on - what Paris (in: Paris & Sisk 2009:59) calls - "procedural discourse" is often seen within bureaucracies that face "ambiguity and uncertainty". In the light of the creation and existence of the PBC this reflex caused two problems. First, the solution that was agreed on during the 2005 World Summit caused an artificial belief that the coordination problem was (going to be) fixed with the creation of the PBC. According to several Member States and UN officials the Summit was a success where the UN proved to be capable to solve some of its major challenges. In fact, and this is the second problem, the real discussion about the question what peacebuilding is, was postponed to another moment. Talking about procedural and institutional matters moved the attention away from the deeper, more political issues that the UN was facing. However, the way in which the PBC was created also served a goal. A Dutch diplomat made the comparison with a stick that is thrown away without knowing how we would ever find the stick back: 'we'll solve that when we get there.'<sup>13</sup> This approach was also seen by Moustafa as the only way of making progress during the negotiation phase of the World Summit: 'let's learn by doing and give it a try, progress over time is the name of the game.' Thus, the fact that a substantive discussion about peacebuilding was omitted, proved to be the only way to achieve a consensus during the 2005 World Summit.

The reason why the debate about the different views on peacebuilding did not take place at the 2005 World Summit, was because the negotiators were afraid to open Pandora's box. With

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<sup>12</sup> Author's interview with Ihab Moustafa, Senior Peacebuilding Officer at the Peacebuilding Support Office, on 27 May 2010 at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations.

<sup>13</sup> Author's interview with Dutch diplomat on 15 April 2010 at the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the United Nations. Due to confidentiality and privacy reasons, the author cannot publish the name of the diplomat.

192 members who perceive the concept of peacebuilding in different ways, the negotiators were afraid that the UN Member States at the 2005 World Summit could not agree on substantive questions relating to peacebuilding. If we look to the different points of view, there are two sides within the UN that can be divided regarding to peacebuilding. On the one hand, there is one group of countries that is more developed, 'western' and in the literature usually called the 'global North' (e.g. European Union, United States). On the other hand there is the group of less developed countries that is usually called the 'global South' and unites itself in the Group of 77 (social-economic affairs) and the Non-Aligned Movement (peace & security affairs). The global North perceives peacebuilding more as a matter of good governance, fighting corruption, obeying to human rights and Security Sector Reform (SSR). The global South is in the opinion that social-economic development and (financial) resources are more at the heart of successful peacebuilding (Weiss 2009:49-71).

Within the PBC (i.e. after its creation) the divide becomes often visible. The Peacebuilding Fund serves as a clear example to portray the North-South cleavage. The PBF was created to be an independent fund that could serve as a catalytic funding instrument for immediate response activities and to fund peacebuilding activities where attention from donors is lacking. The PBF's decision-making structure is messy and subject to certain 'turf battles'. The SG, through the PBSO, is tasked to manage the PBF, the GA oversees the entire fund, while the PBC can give recommendations to the SG whereto allocate funding. Additionally, the PBF Advisory Board provides advice and oversight on the speed and appropriateness of the fund's allocations and examines performance and financial reports (UN PBF 2010). Within the PBC the Northern member states, on one hand, try to keep the decision-making authority out of the PBC's mandate and attempt to make the PBF as independent as possible. The Southern countries, on the other hand, try to open-up the structure of the PBF and want to restrain the power of the Advisory Board and the PBSO in the allocation process of PBF resources. During the beginning of the PBC 2010 Review and during several Country-specific Meetings (CSMs), primarily Egypt touched upon this topic.<sup>14</sup> Egypt, as one of the leaders of the global South, wanted a larger say in the allocation of funding. Jenkins (2010:17) warns that if the PBC were to gain too much control over the allocation of PBF resources, this could lead to a decline in contributions to the Fund because the donors of the Fund (the global North) are afraid that the allocation of PBF funding becomes too political. With 19 out of the 31 members being from the global South, the PBC membership is bound towards the Southern countries. Generally, the deep division within the PBC has made the PBC itself a forum where turf battles between the North and South are being fought.

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<sup>14</sup> Based on the opening session of the PBC Review, 17 February 2010 (UN Headquarters New York) and attended by the author.

The North-South problem that the PBC is facing is not unique. The entire UN system is captured by the North-South cleavage and it seems that dramatic and confrontational rhetoric, especially used by the South, has become the way to proceed within the UN (Weiss 2009:53). McAskie (2010:24) recommends in her *2020 vision* for the UN peacebuilding architecture to “[...] have a frank debate outside the UN walls on how to get over the sterile North-South debates and reach a partnership of trust [...]” I argue that the North-South divide within the PBC and the UN is not a result of clashing national interests to maximize their own power (security or wealth) in the way neorealists and neoliberals would perceive it. The artificial division of the world in two parts is a construction of a social belief or idea that influences the states and the UN itself, as much as the actors influence that idea or belief. It seems from one hand that the states (and the UN itself to some extent) are captured by the North-South cleavage in such a way that they cannot escape from it; on the other hand the states and the UN itself frame their interventions and actions usually in the framework of the North-South divide (e.g. the European Union vis-à-vis the Non-Aligned Movement).<sup>15</sup>

### 3.1.2 The UN Secretariat: Framing Peacebuilding

As discussed in chapter 2, Barnett & Finnemore (1999, 2004) give explicit attention to the power of IOs as international bureaucracies as part of their constructivist thinking. According to Barnett & Finnemore not only the UN Member States play a major role within the UN, also the IO itself is an actor on the world stage of international politics given the fact that IOs possess authority and autonomy. I will now focus on the role of the second UN in discourse setting and framing relating to the concept of peacebuilding. The UN Secretariat has played a major role relating to two topics. First, the framing of actors and activities as peacebuilders respectively peacebuilding; and second, the changing of the meaning of the concept of peacebuilding. These two topics show the power that the second UN, independent from the UN Member States, has.

First, the Secretariat – mainly the Office of the SG – has framed “each and every actor and activity that is linked to a post-conflict setting [...] as being part of, or in an as yet to be defined relationship with, the goal of peacebuilding” (Biersteker & Jütersonke 2010:11). Since the publication of the *Agenda for Peace* of SG Boutros-Ghali, the concept of peacebuilding gained importance within the UN. Ever since, peacebuilding became one of the leading concepts within and outside the UN and a catch-all for almost all actors and activities that were dealing with conflict. With the report of the High-level Panel and Annan’s *In Larger Freedom* it was mainly the UN Secretariat that gave so much attention to peacebuilding and pushed for the creation of the PBC, the PBSO and the PBF. One of the goals that the UN Secretariat tried to achieve, was to

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<sup>15</sup> This is based the author’s own experiences as an intern at the Permanent Mission of the Netherlands to the UN. The author attended several CSM meetings during his internship.



bridge the rigid dichotomy that existed within the UN between the (more traditional) peace & security side and the (socioeconomic) development side of the UN. Peacebuilding proved to be the perfect bridge between the peace & security and the development discourse.

Second, the UN Secretariat proved to be capable of shifting the meaning given to the term 'peacebuilding' from an idea of a longer-term project to 'the immediate aftermath of conflict', meaning the first two years after the main conflict has ended, as a widely used concept in the UN discourse. The majority of the UN Member States did not use the terminology of 'the immediate aftermath of conflict' before and it is interesting to see that the UN Secretariat can 'impose' this meaning of the concept of peacebuilding on the UN Member States. The best example of this changed meaning given to the concept, is the report *Peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict* of SG Ban (2009). In the report, the SG provides advice on the role of the UN in peacebuilding and "how to support national efforts to secure sustainable peace more rapidly and effectively" (Ban 2009:1). The SG, as the most important exponent of the Secretariat, chose to 'frame' peacebuilding in such a narrow definition as 'within two years' thereby "helping to articulate and diffuse the norm that this narrow conceptualization of peacebuilding constituted" (Biersteker & Jütersonke 2010:11).

With these examples, the high level of influence and even power of the second UN regarding to the discourse setting of the concept of peacebuilding is illustrated. Barnett & Finnemore (1999:710) state that: "The ability to classify objects, to shift their very definition and identity, is one of bureaucracy's greatest sources of power." With the power of IOs as independent actors with autonomy and authority, also comes the possible pathology of the IO's power (Barnett & Finnemore 1999). In this case, it is questionable whether it is desirable – especially for the countries coming out of conflict – to have such a narrow definition of peacebuilding as being used by the UN Secretariat right now. Also, many practitioners and scholars stress that the UN Secretariat is too much emphasizing on *post-conflict* peacebuilding and not on *prevention*. Peacebuilding has "as much to do with prevention as recovery" (Ponzio 2007:5).

### **3.2 Decision-making Process**

In the second phase of the policy cycle it is relevant to look at the negotiation process, specifically how the decision-making procedures are working within the CSMs and which actors play a role in this process. I will also focus on the role of the PBSO in the negotiation phase of peacebuilding policy.

### 3.2.1 Country-specific Meetings

As discussed in chapter 1, the Country-specific Meetings are the most important forums of the PBC. When in June 2006 it was decided - with the agreement of the two countries - that Sierra Leone and Burundi would be the first countries on the PBC agenda, the PBC members decided to – according to the PBC mandate – formulate Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies (IPBS) for the two countries (UN SC 2006). The CSMs of Burundi and Sierra Leone met for the first time in late 2006. Two years later, in 2008, it was decided that Guinea-Bissau and the Central African Republic (CAR) were added to the list. It is not my purpose to analyze the detailed procedures and minutes of the CSMs here. In stead, I will look to the more general trends that occur in the four CSMs. (In 3.3 I will further elaborate on the content of, and concepts used in, the IPBSs.)

Flexibility is at the core of the PBC's working methods. This is a key asset of the CSMs' work. By allowing CSMs to adopt their own working modalities and adapt their engagement in response to changing conditions and reflection on effective engagement, the PBC has shown early signs of incorporating good practices and learning. It is a sign of what Moustafa called 'progress over time is the name of the game'.<sup>16</sup> With the high level of flexible working methods, the PBC wanted, in line with the founding resolution (UN GA 2005), to get all the relevant actors involved on board. In the UN GA resolution, it was also decided that the CSMs – taking place at the UN Headquarters - could be attended by:

- “(a) The country under consideration;
  - (b) Countries in the region engaged in the post-conflict process and other countries that are involved in relief efforts and/or political dialogue, as well as relevant regional and subregional organizations;
  - (c) The major financial, troop and civilian police contributors involved in the recovery effort;
  - (d) The senior United Nations representative in the field and other relevant United Nations representatives;
  - (e) Such regional and international financial institutions as may be relevant.”
- (UN GA 2005:25)<sup>17</sup>

Besides the flexible membership, the working methods of the CSM were also innovative (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:68). In late 2006, the CSMs held consultations with the respective host governments of Burundi and Sierra Leone, civil society groups, the IMF and the World Bank. The host governments were asked to come up with presentations about the critical challenges to consolidating peace in their countries. Consequently the members of the two CSMs

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<sup>16</sup> Author's interview with Ihab Moustafa, Senior Peacebuilding Officer at the Peacebuilding Support Office, on 27 May 2010 at the Permanent Mission of Finland to the United Nations.

<sup>17</sup> It is the aim that the relevant actors, as described in the list, take part in the CSMs that take place in New York at the UN Headquarters.

visited the respective countries in the beginning of 2007 and after one year the CSMs came up with the two IPBSs (UN PBC 2007a and UN PBC 2007b). In the case of Guinea Bissau and the CAR, the procedures were identical and in 2009 the CSMs came up with the IPBSs (UN PBC 2008 and UN PBC 2009).<sup>18</sup>

While looking to the working of the CSMs there are two points that need to be stressed. First, the (de)selection of countries on the PBC agenda is surrounded by ambiguity. While the UN Secretariat did their best to frame the activities of the PBC as ‘peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict’ (i.e. less than two years after the conflict ended), two countries on the agenda the PBC can hardly be placed in this category. The conflicts in Sierra Leone and Guinea-Bissau ended respectively in 2002 and 2000. Sierra Leone was titled a ‘post post-conflict’ country when it was put on the PBC agenda. Some felt that Sierra Leone was “too far along the post-conflict road to constitute a good case for a new intergovernmental body dedicated to smoothen the path from peace implementation to development” (Jenkins 2010:15). The case of Guinea-Bissau constituted a new category in itself. While political instability surrounded the first decennium of the new millennium in the country, Guinea-Bissau cannot be compared with the ‘classical’ cases of countries emerging from conflict (Jenkins 2010:15). With the last two cases (Guinea-Bissau and CAR) on the PBC agenda, the PBC chose to engage in a context surrounded by bigger political challenges, mostly because of the fact that the two countries are “lacking governments with full control over their territories” (McAskie 2010:15). It is questionable whether the PBC can make a difference in this kind of countries, when there is no effective government in place. Only Burundi seems to fit in the profile of a country emerging from recent conflict. Apart from the *selection* of countries on the PBC agenda, the question rises when a country will get off the PBC list.

Second, the formulation of the IPBSs is a lengthy process and its necessity is often disputed. It took the four CSMs more than one year to come up with the respective IPBSs that contain each 15 to 20 pages. In a context where the timely implementation of peacebuilding activities is necessary, one year is a long time. The IPBSs have been conceived as strategic planning tools, competing in a space where a plethora of planning tools already exist. For example, in the case of Sierra Leone there was already – with the help of the international community - a Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRSP), a Medium-Term Expenditure Framework and a Peace Consolidation Framework in place before the IPBS was formulated (Ponzio 2007:10). Surprisingly, after the formulation of the IPBS, the government replaced the IPBS as

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<sup>18</sup> The four IPBSs have, more or less, the same structure: first the context; second the objectives, challenges and risks; third mutual engagements between the host government, the PBC, stakeholders and international partners; and fourth review and monitoring of progress.

the core framework by the *President's Agenda for Change* (Koroma 2008).<sup>19</sup> It is questionable whether the lengthy process of policy formulation within the UN in general and the CSMs in particular provides the added value for the countries on the PBC's agenda that was perceived when the PBC was created. In the case of Sierra Leone, the fact that the government rejected the IPBS and decided to use the *President's Agenda for Peace* as the peacebuilding policy document, shows how minor the importance of the IPBS and the PBC can be in a country's peacebuilding process.

Within the CSMs, the procedure that was used while formulating the four IPBSs was labeled a 'heavy footprint' (UN PBC 2010a) approach. In this approach nearly all the aspects of post-conflict peacebuilding were touched upon. Therefore, the CSMs were - off the record - often called 'talk shops' by UN diplomats. In short, the working methods of the CSMs were too demanding for an intergovernmental forum like the UN (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:69) and, with the eye on the future of the PBC, the procedures of the CSMs need to be changed. One way of doing this is the application of the 'light footprint' approach where only the most important and necessary areas of post-conflict peacebuilding are touched upon by the CSMs (UN PBC 2010a). Still, it is questionable whether the members of the CSMs can identify two or three focal points in the 'lighter' IPBSs for new countries on the PBC's agenda. The German Permanent Representative suggested to focus on "areas that have a direct and traceable link to the causes of conflict" (Mutussek 2007). However, identifying the root causes of conflict is an extremely hard task in general and specifically in a political context such as the United Nations. Bearing in mind the different views on peacebuilding that exist within the PBC, talking about the root causes of conflict and thereby making the IPBSs more 'political' could be the start of a never-ending discussion. Regarding the heavy footprint IPBSs, the co-facilitators of the 2010 PBC Review conclude in a very strong statement: "On balance, however, it seems that the stand-alone Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies have generated more difficulties than benefits." (UN PBC 2010a:12).

### **3.2.2 Peacebuilding Support Office and Turf Battles**

The Peacebuilding Support Office is the bureaucratic counterpart of the PBC and a part of the second UN. The PBSO plays an important role in the decision-making process of the PBC. The Peacebuilding Support Office has two main tasks: it needs to support the PBS (i.e. it is the 'PBC Secretariat') and it has to ensure a comprehensive and common approach on peacebuilding within the UN system. I will discuss these two roles of the PBSO below.

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<sup>19</sup> The government of a country on the PBC agenda is – as this example shows – not obliged to use the IPBS as its main peacebuilding framework. However, this was the explicit goal when the PBC was created in 2005.

First, the supportive role of the PBSO in the country processes starts when ‘rumors are heard that a country is willing to be put on the PBC agenda’.<sup>20</sup> Then the PBSO starts to write a background document for the members of the PBC and it tries to identify possible priorities for (early) peacebuilding. Officials of the PBSO, together with the Chair of the CSM, try to visit the country on an early basis and they start the dialogue with the national authorities, civil society, private sector, NGO’s and (if present) members of the UN Country Team. Based on this dialogue, the PBSO presents a draft version of an IPBS to the members of the CSM. Besides the more ‘secretarial’ functions of the PBSO (e.g. planning and preparing meetings, distribution of agendas and minutes), the PBSO tries to develop itself as a ‘centre of excellence’ for good practices and lessons learned on peacebuilding. An example of this is the creation of web-based networks to bring together the increasing number of academics, civil society groups and government officials that are dealing with peacebuilding (McAskie 2010:18).

The PBC Member States often complain about the low analytical quality of the PBSO documents. The background and ‘pre-IPBS’ documents are said to be vague and lack direction, according to several countries that spoke during the first meeting of the PBC 2010 Review.<sup>21</sup> On the one hand the documents produced by the PBSO *are* vague and don’t possess the choices regarding to the development of peacebuilding policy. For example the *Partnership for Peacebuilding* non-paper (UN PBSO 2010) ends with five analytical questions that one could expect to be answered in the paper itself. Instead the PBSO non-paper is highly descriptive and serves as background material. The PBSO itself is in the opinion that the members of the PBC should answer these ‘analytical’ questions, and not the PBSO. In this sense, the PBSO is an example of the ‘classical’ second UN that leaves the decision-making up to the Member States. On the other hand, Helminger argues that the input from the Member States is vague: ‘if the Member States want more substance, what substance do they want?’. When producing the documents, the PBSO has to find the middle ground between the different views on peacebuilding that exist within the PBC, according to Helminger. It seemed that the members of the PBC were blaming the PBSO for their own inability to come to a specified and common understanding of the concept of peacebuilding. There exists a lot of frustration and misperception on both the PBC side and the PBSO side, while the two should be mutually reinforcing.

Second, the PBSO ought to be the main peacebuilding coordinator within the UN system. While this is not directly linked to the phase of decision-making, more generally the policy and the mandate of the new UN peacebuilding architecture depends on the work of the PBSO. A central theme in the UN dynamics is ‘bureaucratic jealousy’ (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009) and the turf battles that are fought between the UN departments, offices and agencies. In New

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<sup>20</sup> Author’s interview with Philip Helminger, Political Affairs Officer at the Peacebuilding Support Office, on 27 April 2010 at the UN Peacebuilding Support Office.

<sup>21</sup> Based on the opening session of the PBC Review, 17 February 2010 (UN Headquarters New York) and attended by the author.

York diplomats even speak about ‘one side of the street’ (the UN Secretariat) and ‘the other side of the street’ (*inter alia* UNDP and UNICEF). The PBSO is directly located under the Executive Office of the SG in the UN system, which means that it has a direct link to the SG and finds itself in a high hierarchical position. The location of the PBSO within the system led to a lot of frustration by the other UN agencies and departments that were dealing with peacebuilding. I will discuss the relation of the PBSO with the most relevant institutions: the Department of Political Affairs, the UN Development Programme’s Bureau of Crisis Prevention and Recovery (UNDP-BCPR) and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations.

DPA felt that the PBSO ought to be located within the Department as the DPA’s ‘Peacebuilding Unit’. According to Helminger other agencies (mainly DPA, DPKO and UNDP-BCPR) perceived the creation of the PBSO as a threat to their work and property. As the PBSO Officer Helminger said, it was their (i.e. DPA’s) business that was endangered. Even worse, according to DPA, was the fact that the PBSO was created to play a coordinating and leading role in the field of peacebuilding. How could such a new Office lead the way? Although Lotz (Peacebuilding Specialist at the UNDP-BCPR) did not agree with so many words, his message was more or less the same as Helminger’s: ‘the key problem are the different cultures of our organizations, we all come with different mandates.’<sup>22</sup> He stressed that there still exists unresolved overlap between the BCPR and the PBSO and that this is a source of tension. Regarding the different mandates relating to peacebuilding, Lotz spoke about two practices of peacebuilding. DPA and DPKO work with SC mandates that are based on the *consent* of national authorities. The focus of DPKO and DPA missions is always short term and focused on exit strategies, it is a success to leave a country fast. Contrary to this, UNDP and the other development agencies of the UN work with long-term projects that are based on national ownership. According to Lotz, the potential success for the PBSO is to bring together these two views on peacebuilding. Both Helminger and Lotz said that the relation on the working-level between the different departments and agencies and the PBSO improved markedly during the last five year. Lotz: ‘Now, it has to become a win-win situation’.

The relation between DPKO and the PBSO is more complex and can be seen as a metaphor for a broader discussion within the UN, namely the relation between peacebuilding and peacekeeping. With the increasing importance of peacebuilding, a discussion within the UN has started to perceive the peacebuilding and peacekeeping as the same side of the coin. The SG said many times: “peacekeepers are early peacebuilders” (UN SC 2010). More than any other department, DPKO feared the ‘encroachment’ of other institutions on the prerogatives of DPKO. Striking in the peacekeeping-peacebuilding debate is that the *New Horizon* strategy of DPKO (UN DPKO 2009) only modestly touched upon peacebuilding and the potential for the

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<sup>22</sup> Author’s interview with Christian Lotz, Peacebuilding Specialist at the UNDP’s Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, on 21 April 2010.

PBC/PBSO in post-conflict countries. The relatively small and new PBSO is still not taken really serious by DPA, UNDP and DPKO. Although the situation is improving over time, the PBSO has a hard time trying to coordinate the peacebuilding actors within the UN system and it is questionable whether the PBSO is suited to do this job. The conclusion of the co-facilitators in this regard is striking: “In the course of our consultations, the co-facilitators did not form the impression of an office<sup>23</sup> that is seen as a significant player across the Secretariat.” (UN PBC 2010:34).

### 3.3 Formal Policy

In the third phase of the policy cycle it becomes visible how discourse and decision-making is translated into formal policy (i.e. the IPBSs). I will analyze the general trends in the IPBSs of the four countries on the PBS agenda, specifically how the different views on peacebuilding are reconciled in the policy documents. Also, I will look into the (non-existing) benchmarks that the PBC is using to evaluate the implementation of the policy.

#### 3.3.1 Reconciliation in Integrated Peacebuilding Strategies

The approach of the PBC is based on the two concepts of *mutual accountability* and *national ownership*. These two concepts are at the heart of all the IPBS documents and are labeled ‘principles of cooperation’. In the Sierra Leone IPBS – and other PBC documents - the two concepts are explained as:

“National ownership: the primary responsibility and ownership for peace consolidation and the development of a prosperous and democratic Sierra Leone rests with the Government and the people of Sierra Leone.

Mutual accountability: sustainable peacebuilding requires a strong partnership on the basis of mutual respect and accountability between the Government and the people of Sierra Leone and their international partners.” (UN PBC 2007a:2)

When we read this explanation, it means that the host government is the owner of the peace process and that the (local) people and the host government and the international partners (i.e. the UN, the World Bank and other actors) can hold each other accountable for the commitments they make regarding to the peacebuilding process.

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<sup>23</sup> I.e. the PBSO.

When the PBC was established, it was decided that the policy recommendations of the PBC should be based on the concept of national ownership. Not the UN (i.e. the PBC) ought to be the designer of the peacebuilding policy, but the national governments and the civil society had to 'own' the (formulation of the) peacebuilding policy. The PBC members in nearly all their interventions that are made within the PBC meetings touch upon national ownership. Regarding to mutual accountability, the term 'partnership' is often used to describe the relation between the UN and the countries on the PBC agenda. Partnership meant that peacebuilding had to be done by the government and the civil society together with the UN and the other members of the international community.

It seems that national ownership and mutual accountability became 'feel good' or consensus-concepts that no one can reject or disapprove, at least not initially. However, I argue that both concepts are as vague as the concept of peacebuilding itself. It sounds promising that the peacebuilding process is 'owned' by the national authorities and/or the civil society, but how can the PBC guarantee this ownership when peacebuilding policy is formulated at the UN Headquarters in New York? How can you have national ownership when a country (like CAR) lacks a government that possesses any authority outside the country's capital? And, how and by whom can the UN agencies, the international and regional partners and the national authorities be held 'mutual' accountable for their deeds?

First, the countries that are on the agenda of the PBC are emerging from years of conflict, without working state entities and often characterized by corruption, human rights violations and a high level of political instability (Collier et al. 2003, Frerks 2006, Call & Cousins 2007). It is risky to put so much emphasis on national ownership and partnership when the countries that are on the PBC agenda are lacking the system and the stability to act as a reliable partner. For example the government of Guinea-Bissau cannot be called a stable partner that possesses control over its territory. A striking example is the coup that took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of April 2010, when army officers captured the prime minister and the army chief of staff (BBC 2010). As an American diplomat during one of the PBC meetings summarized: 'One bad night at the saloon and there is a new sheriff in town.'<sup>24</sup>

Second, it is extremely hard to really include all the relevant members of the civil society in the formulation process of the peacebuilding policy. This is because the civil society - if present before - is damaged and affected by the conflict (van der Borgh in: Kremer et al. 2009:310). Keulen (Policy Officer at the PBF) touched upon the situation in CAR, where one cannot speak of a functioning political system outside of the capital.<sup>25</sup> NGOs that are present in the country are often international. The peacebuilding efforts that take place in CAR, are located

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<sup>24</sup> Quote taken from meeting at the UN Headquarters (New York City) on 18 May 2010, attended by the author.

<sup>25</sup> Author's interview with Danielle Keulen, Policy Officer at the Peacebuilding Fund, on 13 April 2010 at the UN Peacebuilding Support Office.



in the country's ministries and 'there is no linkage with the rest of the country'. Besides the problems within the country, the civil society groups cannot easily take place in the policy formulation process in New York because of geographical and financial reasons. The only way the civil society groups can really participate in the process is through the national governments and the field trips that the CSM members make. However, the trips take place only once in the two or three years and are nothing more than a quick visit of a week where there is often only one part of the day available to speak to civil society groups (e.g. UN PBC 2010b). Therefore, if ownership takes place within the policy formulation process, the PBC is using a narrow definition of ownership. Only the national authorities have full-scale access to the CSMs, where the true local ownership of the peacebuilding policy (as put forward in the CSM list in 3.2.1) is an illusion. Apart from the two before mentioned reasons, this is also caused because the national authorities are traditionally the diplomatic partner of the UN. The co-facilitators of the 2010 PBC Review *inter alia* touch upon national ownership in their report:

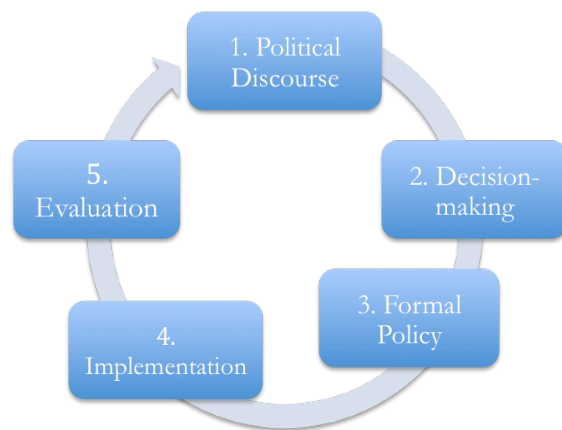
“The experiences in the four Agenda countries illustrate the vital connection between ownership and capacity: unless local actors have the capacity to fully engage throughout all phases of planning and implementation, national ownership will remain theory rather than reality.” (UN PBC 2010a:11)

Sadly, recommendations like this often “remain theory rather than reality”. Concepts like national ownership and mutual accountability are socially constructed through a process of negotiation as the core principles of the formal peacebuilding policy in the four countries on the PBC agenda. The recommendations relating to these concepts are not easily concretized (Chesterman 2007).

I conclude that the formulation of policy within the PBC and thereby reaching a consensus is more important than the content of and the meaning given to the policy. Through a process of consensus seeking, the PBC members have created concepts that are very hard to implement in practice. This is in line with what Mosse (2004:663) concludes regarding to aid policy: “[p]olicy is an end rather than a cause; a result, often a fragile one, of social processes”. His finding can be applied perfectly to the formulation process of peacebuilding policy within the PBC, especially when looking with a constructivist perspective. All in all, this does not mean that the use of vague concepts is without any reason. As discussed in 3.1.1, the fact that the North and South don't agree on the concept of peacebuilding and therefore the meaning of peacebuilding is never openly discussed within the PBC, seems the only way to move forward. National ownership and mutual accountability are concepts through which the PBC members can reconcile their different point of view. No PBC member is against peacebuilding, ownership or accountability. The concepts are relatively 'safe' to use and are a way to reach consensus when the policy documents are formulated.

### 3.3.2 Benchmarks

Recalling the policy cycle, the first three phases deal with the formulation of policy and are dealt with in this chapter. The fourth and fifth phase of the policy cycle deal with the implementation and the evaluation of policy and are not touched upon in this thesis. However, benchmarks are already used in the formal policy and serve as a standard measurement to evaluate the success of the policy and are therefore relevant to study.



During the negotiation phase of the policy documents, the PBC members stressed that “qualitative and quantitative indicators to assess progress” (UN PBC 2007c) were necessary to include in the IPBSs. During the formulation of the Burundi IPBS, the first “monitoring and tracking mechanisms” were listed, consisting of a group of indicators and benchmarks that would indicate whether the IPBS was achieving its goals (UN PBC 2007b). The benchmarks and indicators were an innovative approach to reporting on progress. After monitoring the progress of the already existing Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper and the IPBS by working groups, the Burundi authorities together with the PBC would conduct a high level evaluation. “This institutional design offered the hope of better coordination among international actors and ongoing participation and “ownership” of peacebuilding efforts by the national government” (Paris in: Paris & Sisk 2009:70).

While the monitoring and tracking mechanisms were innovative and promising, the goals that had to be monitored are so broad “that they verged on emptiness” (Paris in: Paris & Sisk:71). The problem became visible that not all the member states of the PBC agreed on the same definition, approaches, goals and strategies. Consequently, the language used in the IPBS remained vague. For example, in the case of Guinea-Bissau, the IPBS identified six priorities:

- “(a) Elections and institutional support to the Electoral Commission;
- (b) Measures to jump-start the economy and rehabilitate the infrastructure, in particular in the

- energy sector;
- (c) Security and defence sector reform;
- (d) Strengthening of the justice sector, consolidating the rule of law and fighting against drug trafficking;
- (e) Public administration reform;
- (f) Social issues critical to peacebuilding.” (UN PBC 2008:5)

After this section, the main challenges of the peacebuilding process in Guinea-Bissau are identified (UN PBC 2008:6-12). Like other IPBSs, the challenges are presented as a technical list and an enumeration with a link to the six areas that are listed above. The translation of these challenges into concrete action by the PBC is problematic. For example in the area of ‘(d) Strengthening of the justice sector, consolidating the rule of law and fighting against drug trafficking’ the PBC commits itself to:

- “(l) Support the efforts of the Government of Guinea-Bissau, including through resource mobilization, to build judicial capacity, including the provision of basic legal services throughout the country;
- (m) Support the Government and civil society in addressing critical challenges for the consolidation of democratic governance and the rule of law, in particular the fight against impunity and corruption;
- (n) Identify gaps in funding and mobilize resources for implementing Guinea-Bissau’s road map to combat drug trafficking, as contained in the 2007-2010 Government Antinarcotics Plan;
- (o) Advocate for regional approaches to combating drug trafficking, including international support for UNODC and ECOWAS regional programmes;
- (p) Support capacity-building efforts in the law enforcement and criminal justice sectors, in particular to strengthen legal frameworks to combat drug trafficking and organized crime, as well as general criminality.” (UN PBC 2008:16)

The language that is used in this part is representative for the other IPBSs. The PBC commits itself to support, encourage, advocate or galvanize. The questions how this will be achieved and how we can determine whether the involvement of the PBC was a success, remains unanswered in the IPBSs. The only part that deals with the monitoring process is, again, without clarity:

“The Government of Guinea-Bissau and the Peacebuilding Commission, through semi-annual country-specific meetings and regular consultations with all relevant stakeholders, will review progress on the implementation of the commitments of the present Framework, particularly with regard to the mobilization of adequate levels of assistance for fulfilling current gaps in peacebuilding priorities.” (UN PBC 2008:20-21)

What determines the success of the PBC in the four countries on its agenda? According to the PBC itself (PBC QandA 2006) success can be measured accordingly: “If post-conflict countries on the PBC’s agenda receive sustained support and attention from the international community and do not relapse into conflict, we will have evidence that the Commission is succeeding in its mission.” This definition is surprisingly short-sided and lacks a concrete definition of the exact role and added value of the PBC in the countries on its agenda. In the 2010 PBC Review numerous PBC members have expressed their dissatisfaction with the added value of the PBC (UN PBC 2010a). Since there is not a common understanding within the PBC of what the PBC should do and what peacebuilding is, it is to be expected that the PBC members are dissatisfied with the results of the PBC. If it is not determined what the goals and thus the success of the PBC would look like, no one can say that the PBC is “succeeding in its mission”.

### **3.4 Conclusion**

This chapter answers the question how peacebuilding policy is formulated within the PBC. The first phase of the policy cycle deals with the political discourse that is surrounding the PBC. I argue that there is no agreement on the concept of peacebuilding within the PBC and that there exists a deep cleavage between the vision of the North and the South on the question what peacebuilding should be. The role of the UN Secretariat in the process of giving meaning to peacebuilding was emphasized by their efforts to frame peacebuilding as the immediate aftermath of conflict.

The second phase of the policy cycle deals with the decision-making process. The working methods of the CSMs regarding the formulation of the IPBSs are called a heavy footprint. It is questionable if the lengthy process of the formulation of the IPBSs is worth the time and the effort. It is not clear what the criteria are to get a country on the PBC’s agenda and how the country can exit the agenda again. Regarding the PBSO (the second UN) the members of the PBC should be clearer on the question what they want from the PBSO. The PBSO itself is facing difficulties in the turf battles that are fought between the different UN organizations and agencies, mainly DPA, DPKO and UNDP-BCPR.

The third phase of the policy cycle deals with the formal (written) policy of the PBC. The core concepts national ownership and mutual accountability prove to be consensus-concepts that, when looked closely, are almost meaningless. As stated by the 2010 Review co-facilitators, the level of national ownership and mutual accountability is low while the concepts are touched upon in all the IPBSs. It seems that formulating peacebuilding policy became an end in itself and not a cause for practice. Because of the fact that there is no agreement on what peacebuilding is and because of the friction between the North and the South, the goals in the IPBSs remain vague and technical. Benchmarks to measure the success are simply not measurable or, even

worse, completely lacking. It is hard to determine the success of the PBC when we do not know if they meet their own benchmarks.

## Conclusions

*“[T]he basic message is unmistakable: that peacebuilding is a litmus test of our Organization and that much more needs to be done, collectively, if that test is to be passed.”*

- 2010 Review of the Peacebuilding Commission (UN PBC 2010a:39)

In the previous part of this thesis I answered, using the policy cycle as a tool, the research puzzle concerning the questions how peacebuilding policy is formulated within the PBC and how different views of the PBC on peacebuilding are reconciled in the IPBSs. In the remaining part of this thesis, it is not my purpose to repeat entirely the conclusions of the three chapters. Instead, I will build a bridge between the theoretical perspective as developed in chapter 2 and the more empirical perspectives on the PBC put forward in chapter 3. I will especially focus on the first part of the research puzzle that deals with the constructivist approach of this thesis.

When we go back to chapter 1 and 2, I perceive peacebuilding itself as a social structure in a way that Finnemore (1996:15) calls “structures of shared knowledge and intersubjective understanding”. From its origin in the 1970s, peacebuilding has developed as an internationally shared belief or principle after the end of the Cold War. Nowadays, the structure of peacebuilding provides agents with the understanding what they find important and valuable, and in that way peacebuilding contributes to the state’s national interests. In contrast to the theories of neorealism and neoliberalism, constructivism does not perceive national interests as an outcome of the pursuit of material wealth and power. National interests are shaped through a social process where agents and structures are mutually constitutive. Next to the structure debate, I perceive IOs, and especially the UN Secretariat (i.e. PBSO, SG, DPKO, DPA and UNDP-BCPR), as purposeful agents in international politics that possess authority and autonomy. In line with these two assumptions, I come to two major conclusions.

First, I conclude that the PBC and the PBSO are no products of *a priori* existing and fixed national interests. As stated in chapter 2, constructivism does not make predictions about the behavior of actors within IR. When we look to the period before the 2005 World Summit, constructivists try to understand *why* and *how* the PBC was created to be able to explain it. The creation of the PBC and the PBSO itself is a product of a constituted feeling of the UN Member States, pushed by the UN Secretariat, to ‘do something’ in the international playing field relating to peacebuilding. The sense that coordination was lacking and that the UN was not an influential player in the field of peacebuilding, built up before the 2005 World Summit. On one hand, the structure of peacebuilding influenced the agents (i.e. the UN Member States and the UN Secretariat) to create the PBC and the PBSO because the structure of peacebuilding ‘made’ peacebuilding so important that something had to be done. On the other hand, the agents influenced the structure of peacebuilding in a way that the importance of peacebuilding increased

significantly from non-existence in the 1970s until today where it is one of the concepts most used within the United Nations. Especially the successive Secretaries-General Boutros-Ghali and Annan, being the protagonists of the UN Secretariat, pushed for a new peacebuilding architecture within the UN prior to 2005.

Within the PBC (i.e. after its creation) this constructivist dynamic remains clearly visible. As I wrote in the introduction, it seems that the PBC members ‘fake’ the consensus reached because the policy documents lack an answer to the question *how* the policy should be implemented in practice. I argue that the different views on the concept of peacebuilding are not the result of clashing ‘material’ national interests between sovereign states (as neorealists and neoliberals would say), but are caused by the different ways in which the PBC members give meaning to the concept of peacebuilding. The concepts used in the formal policy of the PBC are not already ‘out there’ but are constructed through a social process of negotiations within the PBC where ideas, norms and beliefs come together. The real debate about peacebuilding is not about the classic state interest of country A vis-à-vis country B or North versus South. Instead, the debate about peacebuilding within the PBC is about the meaning that is given to concepts like peacebuilding, national ownership, mutual accountability and to benchmarks like supporting good governance. Through a process of discourse setting, negotiation and the formulation of formal policy, the PBC members have constructed meaning to the before mentioned concepts and benchmarks. One could even say that the policy documents of the PBC are determined significantly by the lowest common denominator and that the PBC members in fact give ‘non-meaning’ to the concepts and benchmarks.

This lack of clarity or non-meaning of the PBC policy documents, concepts and benchmarks serve two goals in my opinion. The first is that, due to the vagueness, all the parties involved can have their share in the peacebuilding machinery. Peacebuilding is such an overarching concept, that it became a provision of work for donor countries, developing countries, NGOs, the academic world and international organizations as the UN. In other words, all these actors have something to win now peacebuilding is such an important topic. With the broad approach of the PBC to the concept of peacebuilding, it can mean development, security, organizing elections or building electricity networks; everyone – including the PBC members – can, in this way, frame their activities as peacebuilding. The second goal is the fact that keeping the concepts and benchmarks as vague and non-political as possible is the only way to get all the members of the PBC on board and to reconcile the different views on peacebuilding. Since the PBC is a consensus-based body, all its members need to agree on the outcome documents of the PBC. When peacebuilding becomes very specific and political, certain states from the global North and South will simply not agree on the consensus. With 31 members, it is an extremely difficult process to come to a consensus that is satisfying for all. While it seems that the outcome

of the PBC's policy is only modest and sometimes dissatisfaction, this seems the only way that something is happening in the PBC and policy is formulated.

The second major conclusion I come to relates to the future of the PBC. I distinguish in this conclusion two areas: the North-South division and the role of the PBSO. First, I perceive the North-South divide within the UN as a constructed reality that because of its constructed nature can be changed, although this will not be easy. The North-South cleavage is currently one of the most important reasons of the paralyzed nature of the UN and it seems that the debates on topics that are perceived as important within international politics (among which the debates relating to peacebuilding) only produce the lowest common denominator because of the North-South divide. Often, this inability is attributed to 'the' clashing national interests of the North and the South. I argue that the global North and South are imagined groups that 'believe' in constructed and shared interests. The construction of these interests is shaped by a North-South discourse that is used for decades and that is characterized by the dichotomy of the one versus the other. I think that, regarding to peacebuilding, the two groups do not necessarily need to stand face-to-face but could and should be standing side-by-side. This is easier said than done, but it could help when both sides realize that the cleavage was not out there when the UN was created and that it is a construction of a shared idea that therefore can be changed.

In the second area I identify, the Peacebuilding Support Office and the entire UN Secretariat should play a bigger role and be more steering in the formulation of peacebuilding policy and the working of the PBC. While this may be repugnant to some UN Member States, mainly the PBSO has the possibility to improve the added value of the PBC that is so much needed five years after its creation. The changes have to come from within the PBSO and within the Secretariat. While there is a sense within the PBSO that it should only serve as a secretariat to the PBC and as an extension to the PBC members, the PBSO should and could handle more substantive and analytical issues. In fact, as I noticed in 3.2.2, the PBSO should not only pose relevant questions in its papers but it should answer them. Therefore the PBSO needs staff that is experienced and well equipped to contribute to the PBC's work. Within the Secretariat, mainly the SG needs to do more to increase the coordinating role of the PBSO. Currently the SG is leaving that task to the Assistant Secretary-General for Peacebuilding Support Cheng-Hopkins who was appointed in 2008 and lacks the authority and seniority to improve the PBSO's position within the Secretariat. When the UN truly wants to make work of peacebuilding and be the international coordinator in peacebuilding it can be, mainly DPA, DPKO and UNDP-BCPR need to be forced to stop working as islands in a sea of peacebuilding and start truly working as 'one UN'.

*"The PBC is only as relevant and effective as we enable it to be."*

- H.E. Herman Schaper (2010) - Permanent Representative of the Netherlands to the UN



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## List of Interviews

*In order of appearance:*

- 1) Ihab Moustafa - Senior Peacebuilding Officer at the Peacebuilding Support Office, 27 May 2010, New York (USA).
- 2) 'Dutch diplomat' – 15 April 2010, New York (USA).
- 3) Philip Helminger - Political Affairs Officer at the Peacebuilding Support Office, 27 April 2010, New York (USA).
- 4) Christian Lotz - Peacebuilding Specialist at the UNDP's Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, 21 April 2010, New York (USA).
- 5) Danielle Keulen - Policy Officer at the Peacebuilding Fund, 13 April 2010, New York (USA).

## Annex 1 Members of the Peacebuilding Commission

- **Seven members selected by the Security Council**

China  
France  
Gabon  
Mexico  
The Russian Federation  
The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland  
The United States of America

- **Seven members elected by the Economic and Social Council**

Australia  
Brazil  
Egypt  
Guinea-Bissau  
Morocco  
Poland  
Republic of Korea

- **Five of the top providers of assessed contributions to United Nations budgets and of voluntary contributions to the United Nations funds, programs and agencies, including a standing peacebuilding fund**

Canada  
Germany  
Japan  
The Netherlands  
Sweden

- **Five top providers of military personnel and civilian police to United Nations missions**

Bangladesh  
India  
Nepal  
Nigeria  
Pakistan

- **Seven members elected by the General Assembly**

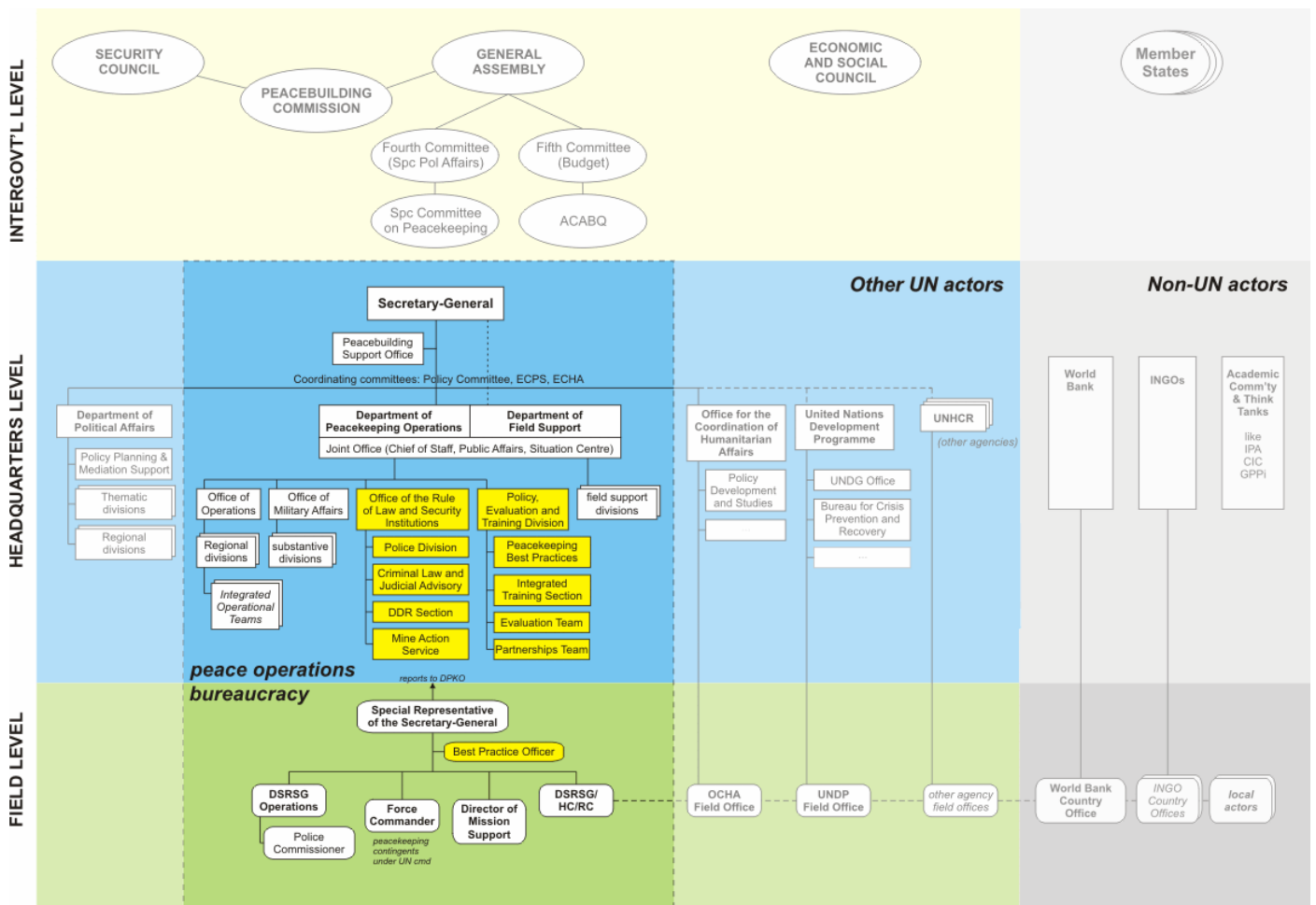
Benin  
Chile  
Czech Republic  
Peru  
South Africa  
Thailand  
Uruguay

Source: UN PBC (2010c)

## Annex 2 Overview of the UN Peacebuilding System

Figure 3 – Overview of the UN Peacebuilding System

Source: Benner et al. (2008)



Sources: Various public UN documents (budget submissions and management reports), interviews with UN officials.