

## **CONVERGING PRIORITIES:**

### TOWARD A COHERENT FOUNDATION STRATEGY ON POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION CHALLENGES



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A REPORT OF A MEETING CONVENED BY  
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AND THE UNITED NATIONS FOUNDATION

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Cover photo: Habibia High School in Kabul on Thursday, January 22, 2004. Habibia High School is being rebuilt after having been completely destroyed in Afghanistan's civil war. SYED JAN SABAWOON / AP / WIDE WORLD PHOTOS

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Post-conflict reconstruction has become a test of the capacity not only of the United States but of all countries and of the UN to ensure that peace and stability are restored so that development and progress can embrace the widest sector of the world's neediest people. Foundations can play a vital role in this process by engaging those who can bring the most relevant information, cogent analysis and creativity to what may well be one of the most critical challenges that we, as a global community, will face in the 21st century.

—Timothy E. Wirth  
President, United Nations Foundation  
and Better World Fund

For all of its 93-year history, Carnegie Corporation of New York has been dedicated to supporting efforts to bring about international understanding, tolerance and peace. Working toward these goals is an act of faith in the continuity of humanity—work we are privileged to do. In that connection, we are pleased to join with our colleagues in the community of foundations seeking new interconnections among research, analysis and policy that will lead to new approaches to one of the most daunting but critical challenges of the 21st century.

—Vartan Gregorian  
President, Carnegie Corporation of New York

## **Converging Priorities: Toward a Coherent Foundation Strategy on Post-Conflict Reconstruction Challenges**

### **Preface: From a Post-Cold-War to a Post-September-11th World**

Is it really almost 15 years since the Berlin Wall came down? Who can forget those images of Berliners dancing atop the barrier, smashing the graffitied concrete with hammers and pulling slabs down with ropes? The first President George Bush took such pains not to gloat that White House reporters wondered if he understood the enormity of the moment. The president and his lieutenants were circumspect because they feared saying something that might impede democracy at floodtide. Communism had loosed its grip on Eastern Europe after nearly half a century. The Cold War was over, and the United States and the West had won.

Today, many of the countries of the former Eastern Bloc either belong to or aspire to membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the European Union. After nearly a century of totalitarianism, even Mother Russia herself has emerged as a democracy-in-the-making. For the generation that fought and won the Second World War, and aging children who remember ducking under school desks in the 1950s in preposterous preparation for a nuclear attack, the turn of events was breathtaking.

But the promise of the immediate post-Cold War years was soon derailed. The first Gulf War, precipitated by Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait, shattered any illusion that the end of the 20th century would be irenic. By the U.S. Agency for International Development's tally, there were 111 armed conflicts in 74 places around the world in the decade after the Cold War ended—most involving disputes within

rather than between states. Academics have placed the death toll from wars and conflicts since the end of World War II at 40 million. Millions perished in civil wars, starvation and genocide in a half-dozen African nations over the past decade; an estimated one million died in Afghanistan under the Taliban's harsh rule and some 300,000 lives were lost in ethnic conflicts in the Balkans. Roughly 100,000 were slaughtered in East Timor in 2000 before Indonesia relinquished its grip on the former Portuguese colony.

And then, of course, terror came to America's shores. September 11th, 2001, made Americans painfully aware of our vulnerability to international terrorism, waged by foes who draw no distinction between military and civilian targets. The worst nightmare for the Cold War generation was mutually assured destruction (MAD), the nuclear standoff between two hostile superpowers, held at bay by the threat of an instant, global holocaust. Now the nightmare confronting us is that mass destruction can be inflicted not by intercontinental missiles or submarines lurking off our coast, but by determined, hate-filled ideologues bearing death in a van or a suitcase.

After Al Qaeda's strikes against New York and Washington, the United States and its allies went to war to unseat the Taliban and deny terrorists a haven in Afghanistan. Last year, without the support of the United Nations, a coalition led by the United States and Great Britain returned to Iraq to oust Saddam Hussein and his B'aathist regime. The dictator and his vaunted Revolutionary Guard put up little fight. The war was quickly won, but not the peace. The global solidarity that Americans felt in the aftermath of September 11th has been fractured. The world again seems a hostile place, fraught with political, economic and ideological dangers and implacable, unreasoning foes.

Now, approaching the November 2004 elections, Americans are divided over domestic and foreign policies. The failure to find weapons of mass destruction in Iraq cast doubt on the Bush administration's main premise for the invasion and occupation of Iraq. No one disputes that Saddam Hussein was a brutal, ruthless dictator, but opinions differ on how much of a direct threat he posed to peace in the region and the world and to the United States. Moreover, with Osama bin Laden at large and with Islamists striking again in lethal fashion from Madrid to Mosul, it remains unclear whether we are safer today than on that fateful morning when 19 fanatics with box cutters seized four crowded jetliners. Polls show deep-seated hostility throughout the

diverse and complex “Islamic world” toward the United States, and broad concerns among allies about U.S. foreign policy and leadership in the war against terror. Economic pressures compound our anxieties, as we worry not only about how to lead a troubled world but how to maintain our competitive advantage in a globalized economy.

President George W. Bush, enunciating a new National Security Strategy on September 17, 2002, said: “The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states.” In an oft-quoted passage, the strategy explicitly recognizes that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.”

Apart from thwarting terrorism and trying to get democratic self-rule to take hold in Iraq, preventing the failure of more states—preventing the next Afghanistan, Congo or Sudan—is among the most difficult challenges confronting the United States and the rest of the civilized world. Lawlessness can devastate entire societies and inflict mass casualties faster than HIV/AIDS or an epidemic of disease.

### **Can Foundations Help Make the World Safer?**

How can the international community more effectively help states recover from the ravages of war and civil strife and avoid the anarchy leading to a social and political vacuum that invites more bloodshed, serves as a breeding ground for terrorism, drug trafficking and crime, and threatens neighbors, regions and the world? And what possible role can U.S. philanthropy play in helping international agencies address the many challenges confronting “states at risk” and bring “failed states” back from the abyss?

Those questions were the impetus for a February 11, 2004, meeting on “Supporting Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Maximizing Donor Effectiveness” that brought foundation leaders and academics together with representatives of U.S., European and UN agencies directly involved in the arduous work of reconstructing failed states. The conference, held at the Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars in Washington, D.C., was convened by Carnegie Corporation of New York and The

United Nations Foundation to consider how U.S. foundations can best lend their expertise and limited resources to addressing the urgent problems posed by failed or failing states. Other partnering foundations included The William and Flora Hewlett, Harry Frank Guggenheim, and Stanley foundations. As Stephen Del Rosso and Johanna Mendelson Forman\*, senior program officers at Carnegie Corporation and the UN Foundation respectively, explained in the letter of invitation:

*Rebuilding states after war is not a new activity for the international donor community. Sadly, the last decade has provided us with ample examples of states that have emerged from internal wars, leaving behind a wide range of concurrent tasks that must be undertaken to avert even larger humanitarian crises or a resumption of violence.*

*As a community we have also learned lessons about what must be done to move countries away from the abyss...But the ever-growing literature about state failure, post-conflict reconstruction and other state-building agendas has created a demand on scarce resources of both states and private foundations that have supported knowledge building and on-the-ground application in this area.*

*As donors, we hope to support strong, intermeshing research and practice agendas. This meeting will focus on strategies for supporting the more effective management of post-conflict and state-building challenges.*

The operative word there was “intermeshing.” No one was under the illusion that major U.S. foundations with long and deep interests in international affairs were contemplating subsuming their independence. But, clearly, a compelling case could be made, based on the enormity of the problems posed by collapsing states, the apparent

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\*Other representatives of the partnering foundations were Terry Amsler, Program Director, Conflict Resolution Program, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation; Karen Colvard, Senior Program Officer, Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation; Thomas J. Leney, Director of Programs and Operations, United Nations Foundation; Jeffrey R. Martin, Vice President and Director of Programs, The Stanley Foundation; Stephanie Smith, Consulting Program Officer, Conflict Resolution Program, The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

failure to learn much from how these crises were handled in the past decade and the reality of limited foundation resources, that there was much to gain and little to lose from foundations' examining closely how better to target and coordinate their efforts.

Several major U.S. foundations have long had a focus on international development and efforts to promote peace and conflict resolution. Some have a presence in far corners of the world and are significant funders of efforts to address the dire problems caused by disease, poverty and dysfunctional governments and economies. The Ford Foundation has more than a dozen offices across Latin America, Africa, Asia and Russia. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation has devoted hundreds of millions of dollars to the global fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other deadly diseases. George Soros, the financier/philanthropist, his Open Society Institute and its offshoots support democracy and economic and social reforms in scores of nations, including many fledgling democracies.

However, for most U.S. foundations interested or involved in post-conflict reconstruction, their most important contribution is not programs they run or services they deliver overseas, but their efforts to help build the knowledge base and skills so that all parties engaged in this work—international and donor country agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), humanitarian and relief groups on the ground and foundations and philanthropies—can operate more effectively in helping with the recovery and reconstruction of the world's most desperate places. It is evident that not enough has been learned about how to make this difficult enterprise work. We are decades removed from the killing fields of Cambodia and 10 years have passed since the genocide in Rwanda, but governmental stability and economic viability remain only partially realized in those troubled lands. War and famine have claimed more than two million lives in the Sudan and displaced four million people since 1983. The toll in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in the past six years stands at a horrific 3.5 million, according to the CIA *World Factbook*. Bosnia remains a powder keg, Haiti, poorest of the world's have-nots, still spirals downward, and a new humanitarian and human rights crisis has erupted in the Darfur region of Sudan.

As trouble and terror force Americans to pay closer attention to foreign affairs, some U.S. foundations are reassessing their involvement in the international arena, often as part of a foundation-wide reevaluation of mission. For many, the 2000-2002

market downturn and contraction of endowments and operating budgets have made mission reconsideration inescapable. But foundations are also conducting reassessments for strategic purposes, looking at what they do best. Like well-managed businesses, foundations want to concentrate on activities that yield the highest return on their investments of time, expertise and resources. This adds a compelling argument for doing what the conveners of this conference had in mind: taking a fresh look at how foundations can serve as an outside partner with and source of support for experts and varied international players that try to bring order and life to places that have known little but disorder and death. Given the magnitude of the tasks at hand, foundations can ill afford to allow themselves to be “balkanized” or to be oblivious to issues such as whether they are raising the right questions, whether anyone is listening and whether they are working at cross purposes.

The Pentagon demonstrated, in both Afghanistan and Iraq, that its military planners had planned well for the rapid ouster of the regimes in control of Kabul and Baghdad. But it proved much harder to plan for the peace, especially in Iraq. The research literature on post-conflict reconstruction did not seem to help in either place. Or were there insights that policymakers and interim authorities could have profited from had they only known where to look?

## **The Beginnings of a Dialogue**

The following pages cull insights on this challenge from the not-for-direct-attribution discussion at the Wilson Center. The conference took a hard look at why so little use has been made of the existing research on rebuilding failed states, and how such work might be made more useful and accessible to policymakers. Indeed, bookshelves are brimming at foundations, think tanks, research centers, relief agency headquarters and even inside the State Department with studies analyzing past interventions and suggesting best practices for the future. But when a Mogadishu or Srebrenica or Brazzaville descends into chaos, those who bear the responsibility for making decisions in Foggy Bottom or Turtle Bay may not have the time, distance or perspective to carefully

search the literature before they act, and neither do their operatives on the front lines of intervention and reconstruction.

Several themes and threads emerged from the colloquy at the Wilson center. Here are some of the main points to consider:

- A. What are the gaps between theory and practice? Why does the existing research so often fall on deaf ears? What have we learned from the past? Where is more research needed?**
- B. What do foundations have to offer?**
- C. Post-conflict reconstruction requires a complex mix of military and civilian skills and capacities. How can military peacekeepers and civilian humanitarian and development specialists work in concert?**
- D. Where are more resources for post-conflict reconstruction needed? How can foundations advance this work?**
- E. Summary**

**A. The Gap Between Theory and Practice.** Donor nations pledged more than \$60 billion in the 1990s to support recovery in war-torn countries and World Bank lending increased almost ten-fold, according to the U.S. Agency for International Development. Still, the international community responds to crises in lawless states around the globe on a case-by-case basis, as if each new eruption were the first. Why were the lessons of the past decade—lessons from Bosnia, Rwanda, East Timor and other places—only half digested and why did they prove of little use in the chaos of Afghanistan and Iraq? How can ideological and political obstacles be overcome?

“A lot of research has been done. We know where the problems are. We need to fix them,” said one academic at the conference. But most academic case studies and thick position papers remain gathering dust on shelves. Why is valuable research overlooked, even when policymakers are desperate for sound, seasoned advice? One analyst,

speaking from experience, said the attitude on the inside is, “Government knows it all. Don’t tell us anything.” Additionally, institutional memories are short or nonexistent, and there is a gap between what is remembered and what is later applied. There are also surprisingly few specialists in post-conflict reconstruction at senior levels in the State Department and there also is no agreed framework for addressing issues and sequencing assistance. “But the biggest problem is that policymakers, particularly at the more senior level, don’t have time to read these reports,” the analyst said. “The challenge is how to make this great body of work accessible and implementable to policymakers.” One suggestion: playbooks written by former policymakers for those now in positions of authority, perhaps on CD-ROMs. Someone else stressed the importance of boiling recommendations and advice down into crisp policy briefs—“And making sure there’s an executive summary on the first page.”

There is a wide gulf between the worlds of academic research, and government policymaking and implementation. Senior policymakers may have short attention spans, but those on the outside also bear responsibility for this failure to communicate, a foundation official said. “It’s not only that policymakers don’t listen to researchers, but researchers rarely have any idea of the demands and constraints of politics.” Hindsight, naturally, is always clearer than foresight; critiques are more sharply reasoned and argued than proactive advice. “The scholars we fund are much better at saying what not to do or what went wrong than they are in formulating any notion about what ought to be done in the future” this speaker observed. Researchers need to concentrate more on making progress than on kicking over failures.

Others suggested that another reason for the gap between theory and practice is that the discussion about civil society and state building has largely been a dialogue among elites. Even in lands and regions gripped by violence and disorder there are local people who need to be brought into this dialogue, along with “non-state actors” on the ground, such as human rights groups, NGOs and even corporations, one participant said. More inclusive efforts have been tried, such as The War-Torn Societies Project (WSP), an experimental project of the United Nations (1994-99) that sought to engage local, national and international actors in peace-building processes, but many challenges remain—not the least, involving timing and access.

A government executive who personally has managed reconstruction efforts in

troubled lands said, “I look at foundations and most of the talk [they promote] is at a pretty high level. It’s hard to see the connection.” This comment raises larger questions about whether and how foundations can take their knowledge and use it as a point of entry for discussion with policymakers.

But others reminded the audience that there is both a long- and short-term purpose to the type of research that foundations sponsor that analyzes states in their death spiral and rebirth. Some research programs also can provide early warning mechanisms for impending crises, such as the concerns raised by the Post-Conflict Reconstruction project at the Center for Strategic and International Studies, among others, which prompted greater discussion about Afghanistan and Iraq. The analysts may be insiders themselves in the next administration. As one veteran of the revolving door put it, “A lot of what we do is training of replacements. What you use while you’re in is what you gathered while you were out.”

Another observed, “You do a lot of work without knowing whether it’s going to have much of an impact. There are moments of opportunity when there is a real policy dilemma. Unless you’ve (already) done the work to be an interlocutor, it’s too late to start” when a crisis thrusts a country or region into the news.

**B. What do Foundations Have to Offer?** Post-conflict repatriation and reconstruction involves a broad, complicated array of military, civilian, diplomatic, humanitarian and development tasks that need to be addressed simultaneously. Most of this work is funded by donor governments through international agencies. This remains a job for the international community. Not even the largest foundation has resources sufficient to cover these costs. As one foundation speaker said, the task for private philanthropy is to “identify the niche where we can make a difference, where our money can quickly start projects where governments are slower to respond, where we can work in partnership on a public-private basis.” Building knowledge, conducting field assessments, and supporting human resources are areas ripe for such partnerships.

One participant said it would be “enormously helpful” if a clearinghouse were created to make evident who is doing what and what initiatives are underway around the world in efforts to help failed states regain their footing. It is possible to go on the United Nations web site and in a few clicks find a map and detailed information on all

13 current UN peacekeeping operations around the world, but there is no analogous source of information on humanitarian and nation-building activities.

In a similar vein, an international agency administrator said, “It would be really great if foundations (could) identify some of the critical glue that we need” in rebuilding states. “We do need some research studies, but more importantly it would be great to have a mechanism to find out what you have already supported; what institutions your foundations have funded throughout the world. Where are the capacities you have helped develop, whether in institutions of higher education in South Africa...or around the globe so that we can build on those projects and that knowledge?” the official asked. “If we want to write a constitution, who knows about Sharia Law constitutions? Who knows about Latin American constitutions? We need to have that map and to know who you know is the best in the field. We need the best.” A foundation’s ties with law schools in Africa could be invaluable when a magistrate is needed who is familiar with the legal system in Sierra Leone or the Democratic Republic of the Congo, instead of “sending in a lawyer from Des Moines.”

Another speaker said that research on post-conflict reconstruction is still a young field with uncertain boundaries. Most research falls into three categories: academic literature and case studies that seek to identify the causes of a country’s problems; action-oriented reports by policymakers and those engaged in reconstruction work; and attempts by think tanks and government agencies to distill lessons learned from a crisis intervention. Little comparative analysis exists of what works from region to region, such as whether an approach that proved successful in East Timor might contribute to state building in West Africa.

Some studies commissioned by government entities—whether U.S., UN or multilateral—are the equivalent of applied research. The sponsor may have a large say in both the shape and content of the report. Foundations often sponsor more basic research that is of broader scope but also possibly has less direct application to a crisis boiling over in a particular corner of the world. Beyond government-to-government dialogue, there is also a need for promoting more public-private dialogue, especially between the UN and NGOs.

Some conference participants argued that foundations were “too shy” about pressing their own views upon policymakers. If they wish to have an impact on policy,

they cannot afford to be reticent because the decisions made about how to respond to the latest global hotspot inevitably are political, whether those decisions are made at the White House, the United Nations or in other international agencies. The very mention of politics can provoke anxiety in foundation circles. “We get butterflies in our stomachs and get very nervous about how our agenda and the work we do intersects with the political environment,” said one foundation veteran. But, “No matter how great the ideas, no matter how beautifully distilled the complex research,” policymakers determine their course largely on their perceptions of how it will play politically, the speaker said. Foundations need a better understanding of just how active they can be in putting forward ideas and suggestions for solutions to international political problems without crossing the line toward partisanship or running afoul of restrictions on lobbying by tax-exempt organizations. In the post-Iraq war context, with controversy still swirling around the U.S. decision to go to war against Saddam Hussein’s regime, the American public is more interested than ever in hearing about alternatives to military intervention, this speaker said. “There is in this country a hunger among the citizenry to talk about the international situation and how we can respond to it. People are looking for ideas. They want to know that there are concrete workable ideas for interacting with the world in ways other than sending the military in and sending the bombers out first,” the speaker said.

**C. Harmonizing the Military and Civilian Responses.** In the post-September-11th world, rising anti-Americanism and anti-Western sentiments throughout the Muslim world have complicated the work of post-conflict reconstruction, even for non-governmental actors. As Westerners, “You are part of the conflict merely by opening your mouth in Bosnia or Kosovo,” one academic said. “If you get into the wrong circles, you are an enemy.”

The U.S. military has a quarter-million troops deployed around the globe, in addition to some 140,000 in Iraq. It is playing a larger role in peacekeeping operations now than it did at the outset of the 1990s, one speaker noted. Inevitably, after September 11th, the United States became more concerned with its military strategy for wiping out Al Qaeda in Afghanistan than about post-conflict reconstruction there. “The only reference we saw to state building in Afghanistan and Iraq was in the mili-

tary sense, where efforts were made to get warlords under control” and to get the civil service, police and justice systems running so the countries could start dealing with their own problems, one participant said.

Usually when the international community sends peacekeepers and humanitarian help to a war-torn country, it “is looking for a quick fix: What can we do in six months so we can pull our troops out?” the speaker said.

“The downside of drawing attention to the terrorist threat is that for want of another strategy, the approach towards post conflict-reconstruction or...prevention of state failure becomes a military strategy,” an academic said. Making sure that Afghanistan no longer poses a threat to the United States “is different from making Afghanistan a peaceful, prosperous place to live.” Another speaker said the overlap between the global war on terrorism and state building was a double-edged sword. It raises the profile of organizations devoted to nation building, but also “shapes what you’re trying to do on the ground.”

UN peacekeepers and humanitarian agencies are skilled at demobilizing fighters after civil or regional conflicts—in UN parlance, the acronym is DDR, for Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration—but the emphasis here, too, is on the short term. “There’s no continuing focus on how you build the security institutions and get rid of the militarists and the arms control traffic,” another speaker said. “After you’ve turned in all the guns, a whole, new market comes right back in.”

The problem of failed states has converged with the threats of international terrorism and the spread of weapons of mass destruction. These give a new urgency to the task of rebuilding failed states. The problems posed by the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, drug smuggling and other cross-border crimes will keep growing “as long as we continue to have black holes around the world where anything can happen,” one participant said.

**UN Secretary General Kofi Annan on DDR**

“In the civil conflicts of the post-cold-war era, a process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration has repeatedly proved to be vital to stabilizing a post-conflict situation; to reducing the likelihood of renewed violence, either because of relapse into war or outbreaks of banditry; and to facilitating a society's transition from conflict to normalcy and development.”

**D. The Resource Gap and What Foundations Can Do.** There is also a wide gap between the resources available and the amounts needed to rebuild countries that have descended into lawlessness. As the United States has learned, the costs involved in rebuilding Iraq are enormous. At a donor's conference in Tokyo in 2002, dozens of nations pledged \$5 billion in aid for the reconstruction of Afghanistan. Those costs were then estimated at \$15 billion but more recently, the Afghan finance minister has placed the price tag at \$28 billion. A steep price, perhaps, but not as steep as the costs of letting Afghanistan once again become a haven and exporter of global terrorism.

Another scholar observed that the gaps between relief and development are far wider than initially thought by the international leaders who set the Brookings Process (see sidebar, p. 18) in motion, a late 1990s coordinating effort involving several UN agencies. This scholar saw three critical needs in this arena:

- Recognizing the centrality of the state in reconstruction aid and peace building.
- Ensuring that the reconstruction and peace-building capacity are on a par with that of the humanitarian and security segments of these operations.
- Establishing a mechanism to bring donors, the intervening agencies, NGOs, international agencies, and local actors together to agree on a program, do joint planning, assign tasks and monitor progress. The agency that coordinates these efforts must have funds at its disposal, especially for early recovery.

Sometimes the resource gap is most critical at the very start of recovery and reconstruction. It was a Roman aphorist, Publius Syrius, who coined the phrase, "He gives twice who gives quickly" (*bis dat qui cito dat*). Several speakers indicated this was an area where foundations might be of great help. Government bureaucracies, however well-intended and well-financed, need time to swing into action. "As agile as we are, there definitely are times we are slower than we'd wish," admitted one multilateral agency official. "I could see an opportunity for foundations to go out and do very small but high impact intercessions—if you could spend your money fast enough." In a country such as Liberia, where the outcome of the peace process was still in doubt, it

would be “immensely helpful” if foundations could mount a small media effort to explain the peace process and get local people involved, the official said. “There are always lots of opportunities if you can move very quickly to get people to begin to buy into the process.”

It is also vital for international relief and reconstruction agencies to understand how important it is to embark on state building as quickly as possible. Afghanistan is no poster child for the success of this enterprise, but humanitarian and relief agencies did respond quickly to the needs of the interim government authority in Kabul after the ouster of the Taliban. Under the December 2001 Bonn agreements, the interim Afghan authority was supposed to establish ministries, form a human rights commission, reconstitute a civil service and convene a *loya jirga*, a traditional Afghan assembly, “And they had nothing,” one speaker recalled. International agencies pooled \$73 million to hire help for the new ministries and to get them desks, phones, computers and vehicles.

A large part of the resource problem is that the United Nations and other international relief organizations involved in putting failed states back together often lack the resources to do an effective job, while the World Bank and other lenders that have the money lack the mandate, one speaker said. Complex, time-consuming and politicized decisionmaking mechanisms also complicate the challenge. Foundations don’t have the resources for the job, but their stock in trade is support for policy analysis, which might hold the key to helping those in authority break these bottlenecks.

There may also be mismatches between a troubled country’s actual needs and what a donor nation wants done with its aid. “Every government wants to control its own foreign aid and security assistance,” one speaker noted. Another noted, “Donor countries don’t want to be coordinated. They are suspicious of the various organizations that try to coordinate because they are slow in disbursing funds” and their accountability is weak. The donors want to control where their money is spent, and get credit for it. “The result is that no one wants to pay for military salaries, no one wants to build prisons—and everyone wants to send girls to school,” said the speaker, who believes that local control over how outside aid is allocated is one solution to this problem.

One reconstruction official lamented, “We’ve got a great World Bank, a multi-

donor trust fund that hasn't spent a penny in the 11 countries it's dealing with because it is too complicated." The need for early investments is great, "but the architecture is not right."

**E. Summary.** The Carnegie Corporation/UN Foundation conference was envisioned as the beginning of a dialogue on these issues. The main take-home lessons for the foundation world were as follows:

*Need for a Clearinghouse:* There was support for the idea of a clearinghouse to map and explain what was available and who was doing what. Foundations can support the mapping, not only of foundation efforts in this arena, but of non-governmental and governmental organizations, including an account of how responsibilities are divided internally.

*Further Dialogue:* Clearly, the meeting demonstrated a need to continue the dialogue between policymakers and applied decisionmakers inside government and international agencies and those in academe, foundations and the business sector who want to improve the capacity to bring failed or failing states back into the international community. The job is too big for any organization—public or private—to undertake alone. As one speaker said, "We've got to figure out who does what best." Foundations can play an important convening role in promoting such dialogue.

*Local Input:* The foundation representatives at the conference clearly heard a message from public agencies that they need help in hearing the authentic voices of local people trapped in these crises. This is not a recognized strength of many international humanitarian groups, public or private, or of other actors involved in post-conflict reconstruction. Foundations can promote the inclusion, where applicable and appropriate, of local input into supported projects.

*Knowledge Management:* The meeting pointed out serious shortcomings in the accessibility of foundation-sponsored research on post-conflict reconstruction. It also identified important areas that have not been well researched, including the applicability of findings across regions, and what role factors such as corruption, rigged elections and arms trafficking play in corroding and undermining state institutions. As one participant noted, the problem that foundations face in this arena is one of "knowledge management." It is learning from the material we have and making it easily accessible

to both policymakers and the public, as well as building a broader constituency for post-conflict reconstruction. Foundations need to promote the translation of the best ideas generated by research into action.

*Multi-layered Approach:* It was also clear that state building is not a linear process. A wide range of activities must occur simultaneously to restore a failed state's capacity to function for its people. It must be played out on several levels, like the Chinese game of Go. Post-conflict reconstruction is complicated work. Stopping the armed conflict is just the beginning. It also involves issues of democracy, the rule of law, health and environment, among others. Foundations need to be sensitive to the interconnectivity among the various and seemingly disparate efforts it supports in this area.

*Long-term Perspective and Early Warning:* The importance of patience and long-term commitment was stressed. The international effort in East Timor can be viewed as a success—or a failure, since the world community allowed the mayhem and slaughter to occur in the first place. Foundation-supported research can serve as an early warning device for incipient and festering problems that have yet to reach the crisis stage.

*Supporting the UN:* Some argued that the difficulties the United States has encountered with a largely go-it-alone strategy in Iraq may in the long run bolster support for the United Nations and multilateral approaches to global problems. As one academic put it, “The best case scenario is that the United States didn't need the UN going into Iraq—but it needs the UN getting out.” Foundations can support efforts that complement, promote, and help reform UN involvement in post-conflict reconstruction.

*Strategic Foundation Responses:* The meeting gave a push to the idea that foundations interested in this work should explore the possibility of a division of labor so they can avoid stepping on each other's toes and derive the maximum benefit from their investments. Several participants emphasized the importance of foundations developing a coherent strategy for contributing to post-conflict reconstruction and providing catalytic support for a range of activities. Although the need for such an approach is relevant across a wide range of foundation interests, it is particularly important in this area given both the urgency and complexity of the challenges, as well

as the resource constraints involved.

*Accountability and Evaluation:* While there was talk at the meeting of a need for more accountability among the various actors in this field, one speaker also cautioned about “the possible downside” of moving toward activities that lend themselves to measurement. “We are dealing with war and peace and violence and complex interpersonal relationships.... This desire to measure and know that you’ve had impact may have the downside of shifting out a number of really important human and societal problems that can’t easily fit within the boxes now being created,” the speaker said.

*Global Fund:* Finally, and perhaps most ambitiously, the suggestion was made about the need to create a global post-conflict reconstruction fund to allow more timely, efficient and, ultimately, effective responses to this burgeoning set of challenges.

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### **Post Mortem on the Brookings Process**

Several leading international agencies made a good-faith effort in the late 1990s to bridge the bureaucratic gap that exists between humanitarian and reconstruction aid and activities. After watching the genocide in Rwanda and the ethnic bloodletting in Kosovo, the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, the UN High Commissioner for Refugees and major donor nations began talking and commissioned studies about how to better coordinate efforts and ease the transition from humanitarian to development aid. In what became known as the Brookings Process, they agreed to take a collaborative approach in dealing with post-conflict crises in West Africa, including Sierra Leone, Guinea, and Liberia. A joint mission of deputy ministers recommended more regional initiatives and cross-border programs, as well as tighter security during reconstruction. But the effort to encourage more collaboration among these principal international players stopped there, stymied in part by bureaucracies' guarding their own turf. According to one analyst's post mortem, the proposed partnerships were asymmetrical; some agencies had much more invested in reconstruction than others. Despite a top-level agreement in principle, they never figured out how to mesh their efforts on the ground.

## **The United States and the United Nations**

The Pew Research Center for the People and the Press reported that 55 percent of Americans surveyed in February and March 2004 had a favorable opinion of the United Nations. That rating, down from a peak of 77 percent in 2002, was the lowest Americans have given the world body in 14 years of Pew Research Center surveys. Forty-one percent said their own country should obtain UN approval before resorting to force against an international threat; 48 percent disagreed. Sixty-two percent of Americans thought the Iraq war helped in the global fight against terrorism. In Britain, France, Germany, Russia, Turkey, Pakistan and Morocco, most people surveyed thought the war made the problem worse. With the exception of the British, majorities in those countries and Jordan felt the real purpose of the war on terrorism was to control Middle East oil.

American ambivalence toward the United Nations brings to mind Voltaire's apothegm, If God did not exist, it would be necessary to invent him (*S'il n'existait pas Dieu, il faudrait l'inventer*). When the United States and NATO bombed Belgrade in 1999 to force a Serbian withdrawal from Kosovo, and again when the United States and Britain invaded Iraq in 2003, they did so without the blessings or sanction of the UN Security Council. But the United States has looked to the United Nations for help in restoring tranquility after both military interventions. The United Nations has administered Kosovo since the NATO bombing campaign forced the withdrawal of Yugoslav troops and quelled the fighting between Albanians and Serbs. The United Nations pulled up stakes from Iraq after its chief representative and 19 others were killed in a terrorist bombing of the UN mission in Baghdad in August 2003. Only recently did the world body begin playing a limited role in laying the groundwork for elections in the shattered country. The need for UN peacekeepers expanded exponentially in the 1990s. The UN currently has almost 50,000 peacekeepers in 13 operations around the world, from Liberia to the Congo to Lebanon to Kosovo to East Timor. Often it seems that we can't live with the United Nations, or without it.

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