Challenges of Post-conflict Reconstruction: What Have We Learned in the Past Decade?^{1}

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President Muta, Judge Owada, Dean Saito, Professor Matsuo, distinguished members of the Graduate School of International Development and Cooperation (IDEC), Graduate Students, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen;

It is both a pleasure and an honor for me to mark, with you today, the 10th anniversary of IDEC. UNITAR has a great depth of gratitude to Hiroshima University in general, and to IDEC in particular. Over the past few years IDEC has provided our new office in Hiroshima with a crop of outstanding graduates who are now rising to become the future pillars of UNITAR. It is in fact a truthful statement to say that, without IDEC, the UNITAR Hiroshima office would not have been what it is and I often contend that IDEC practically runs UNITAR, though I am sure Dean Saito will not agree! At any rate we have been a great beneficiary of the excellent scholars you have trained. I also wish to seize the opportunity here to thank the Prefecture of Hiroshima, in particular Governor Fujita and his very capable staff. Without the support that they have given UNITAR for the last years, and without their vision and commitment to a UN presence in Hiroshima, we would simply not have been here. Last but not least, I wish to thank my mother and my aunt, both on a short visit to Japan and who have sacrificed, along with the rest of you, this beautiful afternoon to come and listen to this lecture.

I’m not here to talk about UNITAR, this is not the purpose of this lecture. Suffice to say that we are a small -- in fact the smallest -- agency within the larger UN family. Our headquarters are in Geneva, we have one office in New York, and Hiroshima is our third office, opened last year. We provide executive type training programs, mainly for developing countries and mostly for government officials, but the

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number of representatives from academia and civil society in general, too, is increasing. The topics on which we design training are many and diverse, and reflect the key mandates of the United Nations, namely the achievement of peace and security on the one hand, and economic and social development on the other.

One part of UNITAR’s work, however, very directly relevant to this lecture, is our work in post-conflict reconstruction. Initially, and during the last ten years, UNITAR became involved in peacekeeping work. This consisted of a series of high-level conferences as well as a programme designing grassroots-level training packages. Increasingly, the work has expanded beyond peacekeeping only, to post-conflict reconstruction, which as you know requires a far more comprehensive approach. The fact that we are now based in Hiroshima, which has such a universal resonance when it comes to post-conflict reconstruction, is obviously additional reason to further continue this work. At any rate there is clearly a pressing, even rising need in many countries for appropriate training in post-conflict reconstruction.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as we look around us today, it is a rather turbulent world that we see. Divisions seem to be appearing everywhere, and the clash of civilizations, infamously predicted by Samuel Huntington of Harvard University\(^2\), seems to have become a self-fulfilling prophecy. Young professionals and scholars from IDEC who are heading out into the world in the months and years ahead have a difficult world to deal with. Many may be getting involved in post-conflict reconstruction work, some may indeed be heading out to Afghanistan, to Cambodia, to the Democratic Republic of Congo, and yes, in due time, also to Iraq. This lecture is intended to give you an overview of what we think we have learned in the more recent past about post-conflict reconstruction, and I hope that one day all that we have learned is actually turned to practice. Naturally, post-conflict reconstruction is a vast theme and, perforce, this talk will only deal with a fragment of the whole picture. There are some good publications in this area. As was said earlier, UNITAR itself released two books in the last few years on the theme. So I hope at a minimum that you would leave this lecture with more interest to learn about post-conflict reconstruction and what we mean when we talk about nation-building.

Allow me to start with few notes of caution.

First, I think that pragmatism and efficiency are important, and of course the more so in our highly globalized world. But as we approach the topic of nation-building I think it is equally important to keep alive both a sense of marvel and idealism as well as some humility: marvel and idealism at the work thus far accomplished and at the international architecture that many generations have strived to build. All the aspects of this international body that we have created – though at times seemingly complicated or even ineffective, are nevertheless the fruit of many, many years of collective effort. I think we need to remember that though not perfect, the United Nations is the best instrument we have, and also that it is still *alive*. One of its key attributes seems to be that it is different from its predecessor, the League of Nations. The UN has never yet lost a single Member State; it has continued to grow. It is up to us to make it function. Criticizing it without bringing forth practical solutions for improvement seems to be a cheap and intellectually lazy way out of our collective responsibilities. Sergio Vieira de Mello, a role model for me and many of us in the international community, one of the rare true humanists I ever knew and who was killed in the bombing of the United Nations in Baghdad in August of 2003, once said at a conference, and I paraphrase “It is important to get the facts right and it is important to work with pragmatism and efficiency, but we must be careful not to err too much on the side of pragmatism at the expense of idealism.” I think I fully understand now what he intended to convey then. The UN itself is a child of idealism. The Organization was born in the darkest days of World War II, imbued by a sense of hope. It is of course imperfect as we are imperfect – both as individuals and as nations. Its work has to be relevant and efficient, yes, but, without idealism, it simply cannot carry the day.

My second note of caution: it is important to realize that we do not have all the answers to the many challenges of nation-building, nor, frankly, is having all the answers a prerequisite for action. In a remarkable report on the topic called “Breaking the Conflict Trap - Civil War and Development Policy,” the World Bank suggests parallel and complementary initiatives and a combination of small incremental measures to bring about peace where there has been conflict. This pragmatism, a more centered approach rather than an either/or one is, I think, one of the more important lessons we

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have learned from recent experiences.

Thirdly, Ladies and Gentlemen, I think it is legitimate to ask ourselves why we should care about countries at war, if these countries cannot get their own act together. This question has been repeatedly asked (recently, in the case of Haiti⁴ for example). Japan raised it more globally, and I would say quite convincingly, at the June 2004 session of the Finance Committee (Fifth Committee) of the UN. Japan asked how big a bill was the international community ready to foot for post-conflict work, and at what cost to many other initiatives – such as education, health, human rights? I do not know the answer to that question, nor do I have a dogmatic position on this issue, though I think that a common sense approach would apply and that a case-by-case reflection and overview would be necessary.

Lastly, the reminder that even if my objective here is to be as neutral as possible, clearly I bring to this discussion my own personal biases, formed by my life experience, and this has been squarely in the internationalist camp. More deeply maybe, I am convinced that there is such a thing as “universal and humanistic values” and also that in politics as in life, all is interrelated – that the shabby treatment of our planet and environment or the often selfish trade policies of wealthier states, for example, have direct consequences in the current wars raging in the Middle East and in Africa. Our world is complex and we are required to push our mind to the test, my point of caution is that there are no simple answers to any of these questions. We can take comfort in what F. Scott Fitzgerald once said – that the proof of a capable mind is in its ability to hold many complex, and even opposing ideas, at the same time. This is the challenge of our times.

Let me now move to some definitions and historical perspectives, and give you an idea of the evolution of post-conflict reconstruction. I may be intermittently using different terms – “peacekeeping,” “peace-building,” “nation-building,” and “post-conflict reconstruction,” to refer to the same thing. Actually none of these terms are explicitly defined within the UN Charter, because the Charter still reflects, to this day, the world as it existed in 1945. Rather, these terms have emerged and evolved over time and through practice. As to the exact meaning of post-conflict reconstruction,

interpretations vary. Let me start with the easiest, a rather specific focus proposed by James Dobbins\(^5\). Dobbins simplifies the term thus: “post-conflict reconstruction is the use of military force in the aftermath of conflict to underpin an enduring transition to democracy.” A more comprehensive description may be that found in the *Agenda for Peace*, proposed by the former UN Secretary-General, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. In the *Agenda for Peace* in 1992, and in the *Supplement to the Agenda for Peace* in 1995, these issues were addressed in depth, and the United Nation’s efforts in the area of peace and security were spread out over a number of coordinated actions, inclusive of preventive diplomacy, peace-making, peacekeeping, and peace-building. The *Supplement to the Agenda for Peace* explicitly states, and I quote: “[The] validity of the concepts of post-conflict peace-building has received wide recognition. The measures it can use, and there are many, can also support preventive diplomacy, demilitarization, the control of small arms, institutional reform, improved police and judicial systems, the monitoring of human rights, electoral reform, and social and economic development. These are all valuable in preventing conflict, as a healing for the wounds after conflict has occurred.” We do know for fact that at least four elements must come together for peace to hold and for there to be a foundation for the transition from war to peace. These are, and I insist on the order: security, the rule of law, good governance, and economic opportunities. You need to look at the state of security in Iraq to understand why good governance and economic opportunities are still not working.

Also, maybe a word of caution about our preconceived ideas on armed conflict: I think the most important change that we have seen in this regard is in the nature and the structure of current conflicts. Conflicts have moved from interstate to intrastate: roughly thirteen out of the fifteen UN peacekeeping operations in the past decade or so dealt with cases of war within a country, that is, intrastate war, mainly ethnic and communal strife, revived and fired by a very heavy trade in arms and drugs and by the more than four hundred billion dollars a year spent by the international arms industry (the politicians and businessmen who support this must, one day, be made accountable for the poisonous contribution that they make to keep these wars alive). Another point regarding current conflicts is that, even though there seems to be a global perception of

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\(^5\) Director, RAND International Security and Defense Policy Center, RAND Cooperation, USA.
lack of security, there are in fact less armed conflicts today than twenty five years ago. It is an illusion to think that the Cold War was a better time, it was not a better time, a lot of bloody conflicts occurred. The numbers of victims were higher, roughly twice as many people were killed in conflicts in the 80’s than are now. This is of course not a justification, but it should give us some perspective. In the 80’s, there were regional wars in the Horn of Africa, Southern Africa, South East Asia, and Central America and they were all, directly or indirectly, flamed by the Cold War.

Within the UN itself, the most important transformation is the changing role of the Security Council (which has to authorize all UN peacekeeping operations). Throughout the Cold War, the Security Council was paralyzed. It was a point of oppositions and containment was its main and at times only objective. After the end of the Cold War, however, a major shift occurred. Members of the Security Council, especially the five permanent members, realized that they could actually work with each other. I recall from my days in New York in the late 90’s that the Security Council was meeting informally, behind closed doors, almost daily – I am sure that Judge Owada will remember because Japan was a Member of the Security Council then. Those were difficult but almost heady times, a period when everyone working with the UN felt, truly, that the Organization could make a difference and that the Security Council was the primary instrument for making that difference.

The pictures in the next page may give you a visual sense. They are from the UN archives: The top was the first session of the Security Council. The UN was not yet at its current location on First Avenue – this was a few years before. The second is a snapshot of the Security Council in the 60’s and except for the fact that you see more women now, it has changed very little in terms of its format. The third image is of the Security Council in the 90’s, and this last picture is the Security Council today.

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UN Security Council

First Security Council meeting
London, 17/1/46
24481 UN/DPI/M, Bolomey

UN Security Council
(1960’s)

Security Council debates Cuban missile crisis
New York, 25/10/62
77304 UN/DPI

UN Security Council
(1990’s)

The Security Council votes on Angola
New York, 8/2/95
189133 c UN/DPI/E, Schneider

UN Security Council
(2000’s)

UN Photo #NICA 70172, Rick Bajornas
So there was a heady moment in the 90’s – a brief moment when the Security Council was revived and felt legitimate in acting on behalf of the world community and, also, powerful. But, in parallel, another development was happening, this one far less auspicious. Many of the frozen conflicts that had simply been simmering throughout the Cold War started boiling – it happened with particular virulence in the Balkans and in Central Africa. Many countries, held together till then because of the competition between the two superpowers, started to unravel. And they posed challenges to the international community which it was, simply and woefully, either unable or unwilling to address.

We tend to assume that post-conflict reconstruction can only take place when the situation is clear, i.e. post-conflict. In fact rarely, if ever, is the situation as clear-cut as one would like it to be and clearly a lot of reconstruction actually needs to be planned during conflict. Also, in some cases, such as East Timor, how to talk about “re-” construction – there was almost a sense of dealing with a tabula rasa -- at least institutionally. I recall my first trip to East Timor in 2001 as an example of how complex the situation was – when we arrived at the airport in Dili for example, there were no East Timorese flags, no officials, and no offices, except for UN staff. The blue flag of the UN greeted us, and our passports were stamped ‘UNTAET’, the UN Transition Administration of East Timor.

In terms of the chronology of events, too, the understanding of post-conflict reconstruction has been changing. Initially we thought this to be somewhat orderly: military would arrive and establish peace, then humanitarians would come and tend to emergency issues, and then the development actors would start the reconstruction process proper. But we know now that a smooth continuum, emergency-rehabilitation-reconstruction does not happen at all, there is no orderly unfolding. In fact there is constant overlapping, so we need to get all the pieces right, and we need to get them right from the start and at the same time.

Maybe now is a good time to look at the historical evolution of post-conflict reconstruction. The two cases that often come to mind are Germany and Japan – they are frequently used as shining examples of what is possible. And of course, no one who has studied this part of history can doubt of the extraordinary successes of Japan and Germany – and Italy to some extent – in rebuilding their shattered countries in a rather short span of time. I would like to promptly add here that a ‘short span of time’ was in
fact never less than seven, ten years in each case. There is a photo in the archives of 
Hiroshima Museum of Modern Art – it is December, 1952 – it shows Kenzo Tange, the
architect of the Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and Isamu Noguchi, the sculptor,
standing in front of the Peace Museum – the building has clearly only just been
completed and one can see the rest of the city around it, a pile of rubble. And the same
holds true for many other bombed cities across Japan, Germany, and the rest of Europe.
So, it seems that the estimate now being given by many researchers – that you need five
to seven years at least for laying the foundations of post-conflict reconstruction, is quite
accurate.

Additionally, the situation in Germany and Japan, inspiring as it may sound, was
specific: both these countries had attributes lacking in most of the failed states we are
dealing with today. Both countries had – long before the war – educated populations and
some prior experience of democracy, especially in the case of Germany; both had come
to the end of the war in unconditional surrender; both still had national cohesion, unified
leadership, and a strong tradition of economic development. Conversely, one can say
that both countries had “enlightened” occupying forces; in Germany carried out by the
far-sighted and massive aid under the Marshall Plan, and in Japan by a powerful,
autocratic, but at least in the beginning idealistic, American occupation under Douglas
MacArthur. Shoichi Koseki has written that the US occupying forces in Japan were
quite well prepared for the task\textsuperscript{7}. Civil Affairs Training Schools, called CATS, were set
up at some of the best Universities of the time – Harvard, Yale, Chicago, Stanford, and
Northwestern. Already in 1944, one year before the end of the war, these courses
provided training to some one thousand US military officers so as to prepare a cadre of
nation-builders to go to Japan after the war. Many US commanders of the time were, in
fact, quite familiar with Japan, and especially with the seminal work of Ruth Benedict,
the sociologist who wrote \textit{The Chrysanthemum and the Sword} and which had a huge
influence on a generation of post-conflict nation-builders at the time. So there is the
perception– and I am not enough of a historian to realize if it is true or not, but there is a
perception that both idealism and competence were far more the norm then, amongst
‘nation-builders’. Somehow I can hardly envision that abuses of power such as those at

\textsuperscript{7} Shoichi Koseki, “An Historical Perspective of Japan,” in \textit{Post-Conflict Reconstruction}, ed. UNITAR
the Abu Ghuraib Prison could have happened in those earlier years of post-war nation-building. Of course the brutality and horrors of war remain unchanged but maybe one detects a deeper sense of purpose in the conduct of reconstruction that does not quite exist in our epoch. Maybe there was a greater exhaustion from war and a greater commitment to the bigger picture, and to the ideal that it should not happen again.

You have seen these archive photos, but I think it is good sometimes to look again, to remember what these countries came back from. These are images of German cities after the Allied bombings and of the Nuremberg Trials, and the next ones are of Hiroshima, right in the aftermath of the Bomb.

Source: retrieved from http://hsqm.free.fr/recent/
Allow me a few words now on the evolution of nation-building for the UN itself. Nation-building came to the UN rather late, really and fully only in the late 80s and 90s. Until then, a strict adherence to peacekeeping proper was the extent of UN interventions – and even those operations were quite limited in mandate when compared to PKOs today. In the late 40s and early 50s, UN peacekeeping operations were mostly technical in nature – monitoring in Jerusalem, truce observation in Cyprus, etc. In the next page you can see the time-line between 1948 when the UN dispatched its first peacekeeping operation and 2003. You will see, by the change in the volume and the number of peacekeeping operations, what really occurred in the 90s. So the first UN peacekeeping operation was in Jerusalem, it was mainly a truce-monitoring mandate. In the 60s, under
Dag Hammarskjöld, there were much more vigorous attempts to use the peacekeeping instrument, especially in Africa. But the real expansion of UN peacekeeping operations occurred in the 1990s, roughly at the end of the Cold War. Some of those operations, especially in Mozambique and in Cambodia, which I will take up later, were considered so revolutionary and in some ways so successful that I think the United Nations and Member States became somewhat emboldened. But in the wake of these successes came some of the worst disasters ever known to the Organization, in Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia. After these calamities, especially the genocide in Rwanda and the killings in Srebrenica, the UN went into a period of retreat. I think this was a time of questioning, especially after Rwanda, about what the Organization was capable of, if anything.

**Timeline 1948-2003 (1)**

Source: UNITAR HOAP Compiled

**Timeline 1948-2003 (2)**

Source: UNITAR HOAP Compiled
But the horrors of Somalia, Rwanda and the Balkans should not completely overshadow previous operations that were, I think to a large extent, quite successful. The first of these was one of the most comprehensive peace operations the UN had ever undertaken till then, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia, UNTAC. You are familiar with the facts of the conflict in Cambodia in the wider context of the
Vietnam War: the Khmer Rouge Genocide, which killed more than one million Cambodians (roughly one in seven Cambodians); the unveiling of the horrors of the killing fields and the beginning of a series of negotiations that were spearheaded by a few states and by the United Nations between the four parties in Cambodia, and which led to the Paris Agreement of 1991 and the creation of UNTAC. The Transitional Authority’s main mandate was to lead Cambodia from the state of war and conflict to free and fair elections – and that was the main objective of UNTAC. UNTAC remains, to this day, one of the largest UN peace operations, 16,000 military, 3000 civilian police, roughly the same number of civil administrators. The military were called for the first time to take on a variety of tasks other than just maintaining security; de-mining, disarming former combatants, monitoring elections, safe-guarding election workers, repatriating refugees, establishing the basics of human rights and laws, reforming the administration. Many have asked the question as to how well the UN really did in Cambodia?8

The judgment of the Cambodians who look back and assess the legacy of UNTAC is mitigated, but many agree that Cambodia is probably better off today than it was before the UN’s arrival. The United Nations deployed thousands of troops, civilian experts, human rights monitors, volunteers from many countries in Cambodia. A host of numerous government organizations, government ministries, and other civil institutions were recreated. At least 360,000 refugees were returned from camps along the Thai-Cambodian borders where some of them had lived for a decade or more. Under UNTAC, the United Nations ran Cambodia from 1992 to 1993, all at the cost of roughly three billion dollars. Being such a novel enterprise, UNTAC of course committed many errors, large and small. The most important criticism that has been directed to UNTAC is that it was not forceful enough vis-à-vis the Parties, notably the Khmer-Rouge in the beginning and the ruling party, who refused to play by the rules of the game, thus creating a political legacy that to this day haunts Cambodia. AIDS, prostitution and grave environmental problems also continue to strangle Cambodia, and many of these pains, critics claim, are legacies of UNTAC. But of course there were many positive sides to the UNTAC legacy as well: to this day UN experts are advising government ministries, prodding reform; the Cambodian office for the UN high commission of human rights, the first of its kind anywhere, functions despite occasional government pressures; hundreds of non-governmental organizations in myriad fields operate in the

country – having first found some political space to breathe under the UN protection and never quite relinquishing it. In the private sector, too, there are lively Cambodian newspapers, a phenomenon not seen in neighboring Laos or Vietnam. Phnom Penh is gradually becoming the cosmopolitan city that it was half a century ago. And talented Cambodians who fled abroad are, slowly, starting to come back. It is a mixed picture, but I think it gives more signs of hope than of despair⁹.

I would like to say here a few words about two issues that are important in all three cases – Cambodia, East Timor, and Afghanistan – we are discussing today: one is the question of unity of command, military command that is - and the other is a proper exit strategy. Both these issues are terribly important and continue to bedevil the United Nations. Yasushi Akashi in Cambodia, and Sergio Vieira de Mello in East Timor, the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General, had total control over the military component of the peace operation. In the case of Afghanistan, it was different: Lakdar Brahimi had full authority over UNAMA (UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan) but the mission itself had no control over the NATO forces or the US Special Forces (one can argue of course that the difficult security situation in Afghanistan would have been quite beyond the powers of any UN peacekeeping presence). I personally think that once you send an envoy, someone representing the international community, he or she must de facto be vested with full powers. Of course we are still learning and there is certainly no single model that prevails.

The other issue is about a proper exit strategy. UNTAC in Cambodia had an exit strategy, though I think the exit part was maybe better thought out than the strategy… The main purpose seemed to be to hold the elections and then leave – and the mission cannot be really faulted for this, there was no mandate to do otherwise and surely there was some degree of wisdom in that option. With hindsight though, one would have wished for something better planned and orderly. In East Timor, on the contrary, there was a real exit strategy. When we were doing research on East Timor shortly after the start of the mission, there were already people in the mission working on how they would proceed with the winding down of the mission. So, there was a real strategy. In Afghanistan, I am not certain what the plan is, though of course the dictates of the government and other major players is far more important than it ever was in

⁹ ibid
Cambodia or East Timor. Different scholars have different views of the exit strategy. People like James Dobbins claim that “if you are going in with the idea of getting out, the best thing to do is not to go in.” Others, including Yasushi Akashi, feel that, since by its very nature a UN peace operation has a lot of energy and momentum vested in it, you cannot maintain this over the long run. It is not a development assistance effort, rather it is a much more ad hoc, one time effort – you can go in, do the job, and get out, otherwise you start losing power. Again, I do not have a dogmatic position, but history has shown us, if we look at the cases of Japan and Germany, that you need some staying power, there is the need to plan for more than a year or two. You do not address the problems of war and it’s aftermath in a year or two. You cannot even do that in times of peace, let alone when there is conflict. So I leave the question open.

The photos on the next page are some scenes from Cambodia. That, too, was a period of real hope, and though many of us – Cambodians themselves in fact – may have forgotten, when they voted in 1993 during the elections, there was really grave tension, there was fear that the Khmer Rouge would strike at the heart of elections. But ordinary people turned up in the millions to vote, as have just done the Afghans. I think that should be, first, a lesson for those of us who can vote and do not vote; and second, a sign that the country was really ready to turn its back on war.

Cambodia

Cambodians returning from refugee camps aboard a UNHCR train in August 1992
Source: UN High Commissioner for Refugees
Cambodia

UN Military Observer in Ratanakiri, Cambodia 1993

Cambodia

A young girl poses with a United Nations flag in a rice field

Cambodia

UNTAC held elections
UNTAET (The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor) has been used as the perfect laboratory of post-conflict reconstruction. It is almost an easy case, and I am ashamed to say that, because in fact no case of post-conflict reconstruction is easy. But all the elements came together to make UNTAET a success. East Timor, as you know, was for almost four centuries a Portuguese colony. It was granted independence by Portugal in 1975, and thereafter promptly invaded and annexed by Indonesia. One of the things that happened between the mid 70s and the late 90s when the issue again became a concern of the international community was that there was a group of intellectuals and former dissidents who kept the case of East Timor alive in New York and at other capitals in the West and that is how, through a window of opportunity in Indonesian politics actually, elections were held in East Timor in 1999. When the population massively voted for independence, anti-independent militia spread riots and killing. The Security Council came together – I think as it had not done till then, and has not done since – in a real show of unity and resolve. In fact in a matter of days after the riots and the murderous lootings, a five member delegation from the Security Council went to Jakarta and Dili and forced the government of Indonesia to accept the offer of assistance of the international community. The Security Council then authorized a multi-national force, under a unified command headed by Australia. Within a few weeks, the UN Security Council, by resolution 1272 of 1999, established the UN Transitional Administration for East Timor and named as its head the best and brightest of its cadre, Sergio Vieira de Mello, a Portuguese-speaker (He was Brazilian) and as strong in field experience as he was in the negotiating rooms with politicians and diplomats. Again, after a difficult period, it seemed that many things did start going right for East Timor.

UNTAET comprised three main components: a government and public administration component, a humanitarian assistance and emergency rehabilitation component, and a military component with an authorized strength of up to 9000 troops and about 200 military observers. The UN also began a large scale emergency humanitarian relief. At the same time, increasing attention was paid to volunteer repatriation of some 250,000 East Timorese from West Timor, and other areas in Indonesia and the region. Cooperation also worked very well between the United Nations and the international financial institutions, namely the IMF and the World Bank. The cooperation was close and efficient; probably due as much to the will of these
institutions as to the personalities of the heads of the missions representing them.

In April 2002, in another sign of better times for the East Timorese, Xanana Gusmao, the charismatic opposition leader and the national hero of East Timor was elected president, receiving 82% of the votes in the presidential election. The elections went smoothly and I must say that along with the people of East Timor, the UN takes most of the credit for this, and for an outstanding job in terms of monitoring. On 20th May, 2002, East Timor became an independent nation and joined the ranks of the United Nations as the youngest nation alongside Switzerland (one of the oldest countries in the world) joining the UN.

Before concluding on a rosy picture of East Timor, I would say that despite all these positive developments, despite the outpouring of resources, unified leadership and consolidated security, East Timor still remains an open story. It is one of the poorest nations on earth, and until the time when the oil of the Timor Sea will start bringing revenues to the country, it has very few economic options or resources to count on. The UN still has a small follow-up mission in the country, but economic lift-off after the departure of the main bulk of the UN is proving difficult.

Now, before proceeding to the last case, let me go over these pictures of East Timor. Here is Prime Minister Koizumi with President Gusmao and Sergio Vieira de Mello during an official visit to Dili. Japan has been very generous with East Timor and the Japanese played a positive role in many aspects of the operation of UNTAET. UNMISET, the follow-up mission to UNTAET, is now headed by a Japanese national.

East Timor

PM Koizumi with Mr. Xanana Gusmao and Sergio Vieira de Mello
Source: retrieved from http://www.kantei.go.jp/.../2002/04/29easttimor2_e.html
A United Nations peacekeeping soldier, member of UNTAET’s Portuguese contingent, is accompanied by a group of local children as he conducts a security patrol in the Becora district.


These returnees arrived across the border on foot. Many displaced persons returned exhausted and dehydrated after spending weeks in squalid makeshift camps.


UNHCR provided timber, nails and plastic sheeting to help returnees build shelters, such as this one.

The third and last of these cases, Afghanistan, is more complicated still, a country that endured more than a quarter century of war, occupation and civil strife. What to say of the conflict in Afghanistan? The miseries of Afghanistan started some time before the invasion by the Soviet Union in December 1979, but that moment symbolically remains a wound that to this day has not been healed, even after the US-lead attacked on Taliban forces in late 2001. The Bonn Agreement of December 2001 established the Afghan Transitional Authority, and this was later endorsed by the Emergency Loya Jirga (a communal gathering) in June 2002. It was the first time that this had occurred in decades, people came from all over Afghanistan, it was really a deeply moving experience. You had six hundred people converged under a tent in Kabul. It was again, to his credit, Lakhdar Brahimi’s legacy for Afghanistan and it was very well organized, provided a lot of political space for people to come and talk, and at least, on the surface, to start dealing with the deepest wounds of the war.

In March 2002, by resolution 1401, the UN Security Council had established the UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan, UNAMA, for the initial period of one year. The mission continues to this day. UNAMA was headed first by Lakhdar Brahimi, and today by Jean Arnault. Lakhdar Brahimi was from the start in favor of a light UN footprint in Afghanistan – lighter than in Cambodia or East Timor. He maintained that it was important to keep a low profile, and to delegate to the Afghans themselves any leadership or public role that was required and I think that in the case of Afghanistan, this was a wise decision. Also, there was no unity of command for UNAMA. NATO provided the military force and advisory and technical input for the Afghan military, so it was a very different kind of operation.

The presidential elections in Afghanistan were held barely two weeks ago, on October 9th. Thirteen candidates ran for office. The elections were, by all accounts, free and fair. There were some problems, but, as was written by the Afghan ambassador to Tokyo recently in the Asian Wall Street Journal\(^\text{10}\) “the problem we had in Afghanistan were far less grave than the problems that Americans had in Florida, in 2000.” One must give credit to the Afghans – and to the UN and other international presences that supported them – for having pulled off a very important demonstration of their desire to turn the page. I am going to Afghanistan in November and I hope to bring back good

news.

Afghanistan

Conference "Rebuilding Afghanistan: Peace and Stability", Petersberg, Germany, December 2002

Afghanistan

The Loya Jirga, 2002
Source: retrieved from http://www.suedasien.net/.../juni/loya_jirga_02.htm

Afghanistan

Literacy class for boys, Asciana, Kabul
In my concluding remarks, I would like to make a reference to Haiti, and maybe leave you with few thoughts as to what’s next. I raised the question in the beginning of this lecture as to when should we accept that whatever it is that we, as the international community are doing for a country, is not working? Many people say that the example of Haiti is truly déjà vu, as the French say, and a dear friend of mine quotes Yogi Berra saying “it is déjà vu all over again!” The example of Haiti is sobering. Haiti is a failed state. It is run almost half heartedly by a transitional government. 70% of its citizens live on less than a dollar a day. During the past few months, thousands of Haitians have died in flood and hurricanes that would not have killed a single person in a well-run country. Haiti’s elite and leadership, if one can ever call it that, has most often proven itself to be cruel, corrupt and incompetent. The UN and the international community have tried for years “to fix” Haiti. Between 1994 and 1997, more than 2 billion dollars were sunk into Haiti to no avail. Between 1996 and 2000, the UN worked very closely with the Organization of American States – an exemplary cooperation on many fronts -- but again to no avail. All this may say something about Haitian polity and politics, but I think, most importantly, it says a lot about the difficulties of nation-building. Nation-building is complex. We do not really know how to do it. We know more and more, but we still have not learned all the lessons. I think that the examples of East Timor and of Haiti may be used – one as an ideal, on a small scale, of what we can consider a success, and the other what we can consider as repeated failure, for us as well as for the Haitians. But by no means are these definitions clear-cut or permanent, our body of work simply does not provide for that kind of certitude.

Why is post-conflict reconstruction important? It is important firstly because we will increasingly have to deal with it in the future. It is also important because it has security, development, and moral imperatives deeply embedded into it. It is in our own interest to not let those countries – at least those where there seems to be a majority desire to end war and get to peace-down. We have interest in not letting these nations unravel completely. In Afghanistan, the presence of the Taliban, the nurturing of the terrorists, the immense arms and drug trafficking – which I recognize is still continuing – the presence of Al-Qua’ida who turned Afghanistan into a training haven for terrorists, had devastating consequences, not just for the Afghan people but also, as we saw it clearly on September 11, 2001, for people on the other side of the world. In Haiti, a node for
traffic of arms and drugs has been created across the Americas, and is overwhelmingly spreading corruption and misery across entire regions. Cycles of violence never remain contained, they are like cancer, and they have to be stopped when they can be stopped.

In conclusion, what are the three main points that you can remember as you leave this room this afternoon? I think if I were to leave you with three points, they would be the following:

First, post-conflict reconstruction needs time, resources and a smarter approach. As I mentioned, many recent studies point to the fact that on average, plans for a five year presence and a transition of five years are required\(^\text{11}\). Yes, post-conflict reconstruction takes time. It takes concerted efforts and resources. And it takes smarts and experience – we must just get better at doing it and not repeat the same errors every time.

Second, I think that it is now becoming clear that we need to create, at national and international levels, an institutional focal point for post-conflict reconstruction. In the US Congress, some key figures are now proposing the idea of the creation of a post of the post-conflict reconstruction czar. We must try, even as we are dealing with the immediate aftermath of war, to lay the foundations for sustainable peace, to avoid the resurgence of conflict. Those who forget history are bound to repeat its mistakes, I think I do not need to remind you of that.

Third, it is true that we have to correct the systems that we already have. We do not need to re-invent the wheel all the time. We can move and we can progress incrementally, even as we strive to take bold action – these two approaches are not mutually exclusive. The reform of the Security Council is one; the creation of a standing army for the UN is another. We have discussed the possibility of a standing army for the UN now for more than a decade – it is time for the Member States to get serious about what we need to do collectively, to ensure our collective security. Here, I have to quote Winston Churchill. I quote Winston Churchill reluctantly. My father, like many nationalists in the Middle East, Africa and Asia at that time, did not like Winston Churchill and all he represented in terms of the colonial attitudes and ambitions of Great Britain of those days. But I think that at some point in the history of his country and, I would say, in the history of humanity at large, Winston Churchill proved himself to be

\(^{11}\) James Dobbins et al., America’s Role in Nation-Building: from Germany to Iraq (Pittsburgh: Rand Corporation, 2003), p.166. This study, comparing seven cases of post-conflict reconstruction, concludes that any intervention that lasts less than five years runs the risk of leaving the job undone.
an indispensable and, truly, great figure. Churchill said the following: “To build may have to be the slow, laborious task of many years; to destroy the thoughtless act of a single day.”

Ladies and Gentlemen, what role will the UN and prosperous nations, what role will each of you, each of us, be called upon to play in helping countries emerge from war to rebuild? What is the vision and blueprint that we have with us? What model are we supposed to follow? What kind of obligations does this role impose upon us? These are the great questions of our times and the answers are not easy, requiring that we think long and hard about what universal values for humanity are, and what it is that we are trying to promote in reaching out to countries and people less fortunate than us. Natsume Soseki, the great Japanese novelist of the 20th century, in one of his last public lectures at Gakushuin University in November of 1914, said something that seems to me now as pertinent and pressing as it was then, and applicable equally to nations as to individuals. Soseki cautioned his young audience – and us indirectly – thus: “Unless a man has attained some degree of ethical culture, there is no value in his developing his individuality, no value in his using his power or wealth. When a man is devoid of character, everything he does presents a threat. When he seeks to develop his individuality without restraint, he obstructs others. When he attempts to use power, he merely abuses it. When he tries to use money, he corrupts society. Someday, you will be in a position where you can do all these things quite easily. That is why you must not fail to become upstanding men of character.”

I thank you for your attention.

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12 Soseki Natsume, Watakushi no koinshugi (My Notion of Individualism)(Tokyo: Gakushuin University, 1914).