H-Diplo | ISSF

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Introduction by Elisabeth King, New York University

In *Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention*, Séverine Autesserre argues convincingly that a wide variety of international peacebuilders, however different they may seem at first glance, form a distinct cultural group who share everyday practices, narratives and habits. Moreover, she argues, these shared everyday elements are counter-productive and actually contribute to peacebuilding ineffectiveness. Weaving together extensive ethnographic research from conflict zones including the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Afghanistan, Burundi, and Timor Leste, alongside reflections of personal experiences as a peacebuilder, Autesserre offers, in the words of reviewer Sarah Bush "many of the best things that social science research has to offer, including a clear, original theory about an important topic (the determinants of peacebuilding effectiveness) and a wealth of new empirical evidence designed to test that theory."

In concentrating on practice, Autesserre's work distinguishes itself from other literature in the growing subfield of peacebuilding, such as that from critics of the liberal peace, which focuses largely on the policies of international peacebuilding. Indeed, the book builds upon, and further advances, the 'practice turn' in International Relations. The book is undoubtedly a strong contribution to academic literature; among many other distinctions, it won the 2016 Best Book of the Year Award from the International Studies Association. Simultaneously, though, it is a strong contribution to policy-making and practice. Cecelia Lynch complements Autesserre for the "extraordinary service she continues to render (from her first book [*The Trouble with the Congo*] to this one) to scholarship and practice alike."

Indeed, in this symposium, four appreciative and insightful reviewers reflect upon the arguments and evidence presented in *Peaceland* and discuss the research agenda they see as emerging from it. If I were to search for common critiques across the reviews, two stand out. First –the kind of critique for which any author might hope – the reviewers wonder if Autesserre might be too modest in the book's claims and applicability. Bush sees "tremendous insight" of *Peaceland* as it applies to her on-the-ground experience with democracy assistance programs. Timothy Longman suggests that Autesserre "identifie[s] a more extensive problem about international engagement in the world. The growing hostility to area studies in many disciplines reflects a more general hostility to local expertise that undermines all sorts of international interventions, not simply peacekeeping operations." Susanna Campbell pushes readers to consider whether there is really anything different about peacebuilders in *Peaceland* as opposed to humanitarian and development actors who may operate in post-conflict environments. Second, the reviewers are so convinced by Autesserre's argument about the existence of a shared *Peaceland* culture that they worry that the solutions she proposes may be insufficient to bring about real change. Longman praises Autesserre's inclusion of a practical plan but worries that the suggestions may not be enough, if "the broader international affairs community, including increasingly the academic community, fails to take areas studies more seriously." Bush is likewise concerned that the everyday elements that Autesserre discusses may be insurmountably entrenched without a change of incentives stemming from government donors and even taxpayers.

The reviewers also see *Peaceland* as opening many avenues for future research. For example, Bush and Campbell discuss Autesserrre's definition of success: "when a large majority of the people involved in it – including both implementers (international interveners and local peacebuilders) and intended beneficiaries (including local elite and ordinary citizens) – view it as having promoted peace in the area of intervention" (8) and propose that future studies may examine possible correlations between this definition and others. Another avenue for research proposed by several of the reviewers is to think about what *Peaceland* looked like more

historically (Bush) and how the processes that inhere to it coincide with other broader historical forces such as neoliberalism and postcolonialism (Lynch). Finally, the reviewers want to learn more about the exceptions: what organization and individuals differ from the dominant *Peaceland* culture and why? Indeed, Autesserre's work opens, in Campbell's words, an "exciting new research agenda" upon which I hope readers of H-Diplo may build.

Participants:

Severine Autesserre is an Associate Professor of Political Science at Barnard College, Columbia University. She works on civil wars, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and African politics. Autesserre has written two award-winning books and a series of articles. In addition to *Peaceland*, she is the author of *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (Cambridge University Press, 2010). She holds a post-doctorate from Yale University (2007), a Ph.D. in political science from New York University (2006), and master's degrees in international relations and political science from Columbia University (2000) and Sciences Po (France, 1999).

Elisabeth King is Associate Professor of International Education and Politics, and 2015-6 Prins Global Scholar, at New York University. Her research focuses on peacebuilding, development and conflict, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. She is author of *From Classrooms to Conflict in Rwanda* (Cambridge University Press, 2014), a Choice 2015 Outstanding Academic Title, and her work has appeared in such journals as *World Development* and *African Studies Review*. Alongside other projects, she is currently working on a manuscript examining the prevalence and effectiveness of ethnic recognition in post-conflict institutions. King holds a PhD in Political Science from the University of Toronto (2008).

Sarah Bush is an Assistant Professor of Political Science at Temple University. Her research focuses on democracy promotion, gender and human rights policy, and non-state actors in world politics. She is the author of *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators* (Cambridge University Press, 2015). Her other research has been supported by the National Science Foundation and published in *International Organization*, *International Studies Quarterly*, *Review of International Organization*, *Comparative Political Studies*, and *Comparative Politics*. She obtained her Ph.D. from Princeton in 2011.

Susanna P. Campbell is an Assistant Professor at American University's School of International Service (SIS). Her research and teaching address war-to-peace transitions, peacebuilding, peacekeeping, international development and humanitarian aid, global governance, IO and INGO behavior, and the micro-dynamics of civil war and peace. She does mixed-method research and has conducted extensive fieldwork in conflict-affected countries including Burundi, Democratic Republic of Congo, Nepal, Sudan, South Sudan, and East Timor. Campbell's first book, *Global Governance and Local Peace: Performance and Accountability in International* Peacebuilding, is forthcoming with Cambridge University Press. She is working on a second book project, *Aiding Peace? Donor Behavior in Conflict-Affected Countries*, funded by a Swiss (SNIS) research grant. Campbell received her PhD in 2012 from Tufts University and was a Post-Doctoral Researcher at Columbia University's Saltzman Institute of War and Peace Studies and The Graduate Institute in Geneva. She also has extensive experience with international peacebuilding, peacekeeping, development, and humanitarian aid agencies.

Timothy Longman is director of the African Studies Center and associate professor of political science and international relations at Boston University. His book *Christianity and Genocide in Rwanda* was published in 2010 by Cambridge University Press, and his book *Memory and Justice in Post-Genocide Rwanda*, will be published by Cambridge in 2016. In addition to his academic work, Professor Longman has served as a consultant in Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo for USAID, the Department of Justice, the International Center for Transitional Justice, and Human Rights Watch, for whom he served as director of the Rwanda field office 1995-1996. He has conducted research in Rwanda, Congo, Burundi, Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda, and South Africa.

Cecelia Lynch is Professor of Political Science and International Studies at the University of California, Irvine. She specializes in international politics, focusing on questions of peace and security, religion and ethics, humanitarianism and civil society, and interpretive/qualitative methodologies. She is the author or co-author of three books and two edited volumes, most recently *Interpreting International Politics* (Routledge 2014). She was awarded two book prizes for *Beyond Appeasement: Interpreting Interwar Peace Movements in World Politics* (Cornell University Press 1999), and has also received several mentoring and scholarship awards as well as fellowships from the Social Science Research Council/MacArthur Foundation, American Association of University Women, Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, and the Henry Luce Foundation. Her articles on IR theory, humanitarianism, law, diplomacy, religion, ethics and social movements have appeared in *International Theory, Millenium, Ethics & International Relations, Global Governance, International Journal, Journal of Peacebuilding and Development,* and numerous edited volumes. She co-founded and co-edits the blog, "Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa," or The CIHA Blog, at www.cihablog.com, which brings critical and religious perspectives into humanitarian debates.

Review by Sarah Bush, Temple University

T he experience of reading Séverine Autesserre's most recent book, *Peaceland*, is both pleasurable and painful. It is pleasurable because the book exemplifies many of the best things that social science research has to offer, including a clear, original theory about an important topic (the determinants of peacebuilding effectiveness) and a wealth of new empirical evidence designed to test that theory. Yet it is also painful to read the book. Time and time again, the reader must confront examples of how the everyday elements of international intervention preclude peacebuilding success. How can it be that interveners repeat the same mundane mistakes everywhere from Kosovo to Congo and from Israel to Timor-Leste? Why are they not learning?

Autesserre lays the blame for peacebuilding failures primarily on the shared culture of the expatriates who work as part of international interventions focused on promoting peace. The residents of this community, which Autesserre refers to as 'Peaceland,' are diverse – they include UN peacekeepers, diplomats, and development workers – but they share common practices, habits, and narratives. Their common culture helps them survive in challenging conflict zones far from their homes. Yet it also separates them from the very people whom they are 'there to help,' among other deleterious, if unintended, results. As a consequence, well-intentioned interveners usually lack an adequate understanding of the contexts where they work and often engender resentment and resistance among the people that they are trying to assist.

Autesserre reaches these troubling conclusions on the basis of an impressive ethnography of Peaceland. Her research is grounded in more than a year of interviews, field and participant observation, and analysis of documents in Congo, and she also draws on shorter research trips to Burundi, Cyprus, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, and Timor-Leste. In addition to drawing on her experiences as a scholar in various conflict zones, Autesserre also draws on her time working as an intervener herself in Afghanistan, Congo, Kosovo, Nicaragua, and New York. Her personal experiences enrich her understanding of the ideas and interests that shape interveners' lives abroad and allow the reader to feel like a 'fly on the wall' at the meetings, parties, and workshops that comprise the daily life of an international intervener.

The evidence persuades me. In my book (*The Taming of Democracy Assistance*),[1] I studied a different type of international intervention – democracy assistance – in a different region of the world – primarily the Middle East and North Africa. Yet Autesserre's argument offers tremendous insight into the democracy assistance dynamics that I observed on the ground overseas, even though it was developed mainly to understand peacebuilding effectiveness. Short-term projects – which encourage a revolving door of staff and a focus on thematic knowledge rather than local expertise, pervasive power imbalances between expatriates and locals – which can lead to misunderstandings and distrust, the pressure for quantitative results – which reinforces a technical rather than political approach to intervention – these Peaceland features and many others are all hallmarks of democracy assistance, too. In other words, *Peaceland* succeeds at illuminating not only the challenges that face peacebuilders but also the challenges that face aid workers and humanitarians more generally.

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[1] Sarah Sunn Bush, *The Taming of Democracy Assistance: Why Democracy Promotion Does Not Confront Dictators* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

Even a book as ambitious as *Peaceland* can only do so much, and this book suggests a number of interesting questions that future researchers might address. I focus on three here. First, why have the countries funding international interventions not identified and addressed the pathologies of Peaceland already? If government donors want peacebuilding to succeed, then we would expect them to try to foster common practices, habits, and narratives that would be more conducive to success. Autesserre commendably offers a number of specific, concrete ways that interventions can be improved in the book's conclusion, such as changing recruitment and promotion practices for staff and relying more on local employees (258-262). Government donors have an important role to play in ensuring that her suggestions are implemented. But will the people responsible for designing and funded peace operations listen to Autesserre's advice? I hope so, but I am not sure. Despite a number of high-profile peacebuilding failures over the past twenty-five years, the people making policy in North America and Europe seem locked into the current approach.

My intuition is that the reason why decision makers in government headquarters and national capitals have not insisted on reforms to Peaceland already is that – similar to the on-the-ground interveners Autesserre studies – their jobs are challenging and no one is forcing them to change. As Autesserre notes, "government donors are accountable to their taxpayers and legislators, rather than to beneficiaries" (209). *Peaceland* makes a convincing case that donors' ensuing emphasis on upward accountability has negative unintended consequences on the ground for peace. But taxpayers and legislators do not have the time, resources, or perhaps even the inclination to carefully understand conflict zones and track how and where interventions are going wrong. Autesserre illustrates this point best in Chapter 4 using evidence on the problematic conflict minerals and sexual violence narratives that shaped international intervention in the case of Congo (132-147). But short of taxpayers and legislators that demand more from international interventions, which seems unlikely, how will the incentives for government donors change and thus how will reform occur? Future research could build on Autesserre's framework to better understand the interactions between field offices and government donors in Washington, D.C., New York, and elsewhere, which may create the conditions that allow for Peaceland's practices to flourish.

Second, how has the culture of Peaceland changed over time? Autesserre's ethnography covers an impressive number of years – from 1998 to 2013 – and, as noted above, conflicts (280). But I wonder what Peaceland looked like in the 1980s and early- to mid-1990s, before it reached the state of full-blown professionalism that now characterizes it. Autesserre suggests several interesting ways that the rise of professional institutions – including things such as graduate training programs – have encouraged the peacebuilding industry's focus on thematic rather than local knowledge (75-79) as well as a recent tendency towards "bunkerization," or cloistering itself off during missions as a strategy of staying safe (220). Though conducting ethnographic work on historical interventions as detailed as in *Peaceland* is likely not possible, other researchers might rely on retrospective interviews and archival analysis in order to look back in time and understand how interveners navigated their work prior to the development of a fully professional world of intervention.

Such a historical analysis would be particularly interesting because some readers may wonder if the shared practices, habits, and narratives of Peaceland are inevitable features of intervention work because of the material and political constraints faced by those who work in this field. Though Autesserre already has a solid rejoinder for them – "constraints do not appear out of nowhere; they must be accounted for" (50) – looking back in time to earlier interventions would still be helpful from the perspective of research design. I suspect that similar constraints may have been in existence in the past, but that the culture of Peaceland was less uniform then. If that were the case, then it would support a further observable implication of Autesserre's theory, which is that approaching peacebuilding as a technical problem to be solved – which is typical of

Peaceland professionals – inhibits peoples' understanding of the local environment and thus undermines effectiveness.

Third, to what extent do peoples' perceptions of peacebuilding effectiveness match other indicators of effectiveness that scholars could use? One of the innovations of this book is that it emphasizes the role of *perception*, defining intervention success as "when a large majority of the people involved in it – including both implementers (international interveners and local peacebuilders) and intended beneficiaries (including local elite and ordinary citizens) – view it as having promoted peace in the area of intervention" (8). This is a welcome move because it enables Autesserre to uncover new variation, examining instances of success even in interventions generally classified as failures, and vice versa (24). But it would be helpful to understand to what extent peoples' perceptions of success and failure are correlated with other, arguably more objective indicators. There is a possibility that implementers or beneficiaries will perceive certain efforts as successful even though they fail according to other indicators, and vice versa. In those cases, interveners face a conundrum: Should they take the steps that enhance perceived success or the steps that enhance actual success according to other dimensions?

It is important to note that perceived success and failure matter even if peoples' perceptions are not entirely correlated with other indicators of effectiveness. Research on the credibility of elections, for example, suggests that peoples' perceptions are quite important for their decisions about how to engage in the political process in the future (e.g., will they vote or will they protest?), even holding the actual quality of elections constant. Perceived peacebuilding effectiveness is likely at least as important as perceived election credibility. Nevertheless, it would be helpful to know how perception maps onto other indicators, the extent to which perceptions differ from other indicators, and what drives any differences that do exist.

That *Peaceland* suggests these exciting questions – and certainly many other ones – for future research is a testament to its contribution to the study and practice of world politics. I expect and hope that many students, scholars, and practitioners will read it in the coming years. When they do, they will learn a great deal not only about how to ask and answer important questions through innovative research methods but also about how to more effectively promote peace in the countries that need it most.

Review by Susanna Campbell, American University

Thirty years ago, international peacebuilding was the remit of a small group of International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs) who aimed to empower local leaders to make their societies more equitable.[1] Today, international peacebuilding is a global, multibillion-dollar business that operates in several dozen countries, aiming to transform war-torn countries into those that can sustain equitable peace. The United Nations, the European Commission, Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) development donors, most international humanitarian and development NGOs, and a multitude of private contractors now count peacebuilding as a core area of expertise.[2] In any given conflict-affected country on any given day, dozens of these international interveners are implementing security, socio-economic development, justice, and governance activities that aim explicitly or implicitly to build peace. In *Peaceland*, Séverine Autesserre presents an elegant and compelling narrative of the daily practices of these international interveners, explaining how these practices prevent them from understanding the local contexts that they aim to transform.

The inhabitants of *Peaceland* are international staff, whether from Western or non-Western countries, who work as international interveners and share the common goal of helping "to build peace in the host country" (249). Autesserre argues that the shared practices of the inhabitants of *Peaceland* lead them to behave in ways that undermine the effectiveness of their peacebuilding interventions. Their ineffectiveness, she argues, results primarily from the strong barriers that these practices create between international interveners and local actors, preventing international interveners from responding effectively to the local context. Three of *Peaceland's* practices seem to be most detrimental.

First, Autesserre argues, international interveners value thematic and technical expertise over contextual and local knowledge. International staff are deployed to complex, conflict-affected countries with little or no background in the country or its culture. Once they arrive, they are not expected to gain a detailed understanding of the local context or interact much with local actors. International staff are valued for their sectoral expertise in health, education, water and sanitation, or some other thematic area of expertise, not whether or not they can adapt their thematic knowledge to fit the specific needs, capacities, and culture of the particular conflict-affected country.

Second, Autesserre argues that because these organizations value international thematic expertise over local expertise, they import their own prefabricated solutions to a country's problems. Echoing the authors of other peacebuilding literature, Autesserre argues that these top-down technical solutions are mismatched with the complex problems that conflict-affected countries face.[3] Because the inhabitants of *Peaceland* prioritize international over local knowledge and simple quantitative over more nuanced qualitative performance

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[1] See, Jean Paul Lederach, Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1998).

[2] See, Michael Barnett, Hunjoon Kim, Madalene O'Donnell, and Laura Sitea, "Peacebuilding: What Is in a Name?," *Global Governance* 13:1 (January-March 2007): 35-58.

[3] Astri Suhrke, *When More is Less: The International Project in Afghanistan* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

measures, Autesserre argues, these organizations lack the information and knowledge necessary to develop more contextualized solutions.

Third, the social environment in which the expatriates of *Peaceland* subsist further insulates them from the country that they aim to transform, Autesserre argues. They are present in the country for only a year or two, and even less in countries with active conflict. Their security guidelines prevent them from walking around freely or conducting regular field visits to see the projects they are funding or 'implementing,' creating a climate of fear and preventing expatriates from interacting with 'locals.' Furthermore, many inhabitants of *Peaceland* are not allowed to bring their families to live in the country with them for security reasons, leaving them without their normal social support mechanisms. Their alienation from the local context and their families, Autesserre argues, creates a bizarre insular expatriate environment where people work hard and play hard, as also depicted in such books as *Emergency Sex (And Other Desperate Measures): True Stories from a War Zone*.[4]

These practices, Autesserre argues, prevent interveners from understanding and influencing the local dynamics of conflict and peace. They prevent true local ownership and create resentment, antagonism, and resistance among local populations. Combined, Autesserre argues, these practices lead the international interveners in *Peaceland* to perpetuate modes of operation that they know to be counterproductive and ineffective.

Peaceland addresses a crucial gap in the existing peacebuilding literature by examining in detail the country-level behavior of peacebuilding actors and identifying their shared practices. The existing peacebuilding scholarship has been dominated by a debate between the 'liberal peace critics' and the 'problem solvers.'[5] In simplest terms, the former critiques international peacebuilding as the neocolonial imposition of Western norms while the latter assess the reasons why international interveners fail or succeed. Both of these strands of literature share a similar problem: they are preoccupied with the policies of international peacebuilding, which prevents them from understanding the actual practices of peacebuilding. Autesserre addresses this crucial gap in existing scholarship. Building on research conducted in such ominous locations as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burundi, and Timor-Leste, she argues that the international interveners' reification of international knowledge, cumbersome security procedures, short deployment and project timeframes, and social isolation prevent them from understanding or influencing the local context. By identifying the shared culture and patterns of behavior of international interveners, Autesserre also makes a crucial contribution to the global governance literature by demonstrating how a focus on practices unveils the inner workings of one most prominent areas of international engagement today.

As Autesserre acknowledges, because *Peaceland* aims to provide a uniform description of the shared practices of intervening actors, it does not describe or explain the heterogeneity of the hundreds of international actors who inhabit *Peaceland*. Consequently, it is not always clear who these actors are, what evidence there is of their successes or failures, or why they behave the way that they do.

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[4] Kenneth Cain, Andrew Thomson, and Heidi Postlewait, *Emergency Sex (And Other Desperate Measures): True Stories from a War Zone* (New York: Miramax Books, 2004).

[5] Susanna P. Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, eds., *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

Who are the interveners in *Peaceland*? Autesserre says that they include "all of the foreign entities – people, countries, and organizations – whose official goal is to help build peace in their countries of deployment, regardless of whether or not they have other objectives alongside that goal" (10). Autesserre does not explicitly identify all of these actors or their characteristics, which presents several problems. First, in the absence of information on the actual characteristics of the interveners (i.e., structure, size, mandate, governance structure, leadership, training), we cannot identify which organizations (or individuals) are more or less likely to perpetuate ineffective practices. Second, Autesserre focuses her study on a very narrow slice of interveners: those who actually self-identify as 'peacebuilders.' Yet, her observations about the practices perpetuated by individuals and organizations refer to, and often use examples from, the broader set of humanitarian and development actors who operate in post-conflict environments. Autesserre differentiates her work from ethnographies of development or humanitarian interveners and yet she studies many of the same types of interveners, if not the same organizations. What, then, is distinct about *Peaceland* and its interveners? Without capturing the heterogeneous characteristics of the actors in *Peaceland*, we cannot understand why some inhabitants perpetuate its ineffective practices while others do not – the exceptional cases that Autesserre argues are important to study.

What are success and failure in *Peaceland*? Autesserre offers two conceptualizations. First, she argues that the inhabitants of *Peaceland* fail because they do not implement their own best practices. When they do not implement their best practices, they fail to enable local ownership, apply universal templates, remain ignorant about the language and culture of the host country, and live in an expatriate bubble with little interaction with locals. Conversely, Autesserre implies that when these international actors implement their best practices, they are more likely to succeed. When "interveners stay for several years and focus on developing their knowledge of local conditions and their network of grassroots elites" and when local "staff and counterparts are in charge of conceiving, designing, and executing the projects," interveners are more likely to contribute to peace in that country (258). On the one hand, this recommendation echoes the one point of consensus among almost all of the peacebuilding literature: interventions must be adapted to the specific context.[6] On the other hand, it does not tell us how to make interventions context specific. Will carrying out a conflict analysis make an intervention context specific, as almost all peacebuilding best practice guides claim?[7] Will developing community-based monitoring mechanisms lead to context specific interventions, as other best practice guides claim?[8] Many peacebuilding organizations are already implementing these best practices and

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[6] For a review of the basis of this consensus see Susanna Campbell, "Routine Learning? How Peacebuilding Organizations Prevent Liberal Peace," in Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, eds., *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding* (London: Zed Books, 2011), 89-105.

[7] Saferworld, International Alert, and FEWER, *Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding: A Resource Pack* (London: International Alert, 2004); Reflecting on Peace Practice, *Reflecting on Peace Practice: Participant Training Manual* (Cambridge: CDA Collaborative Learning Projects, 2008).

[8] John Paul Lederach, Reina Neufeldt, and Hal Culbertson, *Reflective Peacebuilding: A Planning, Monitoring, and Learning Tool Kit* (Notre Dame: Kroc Institute for International Peace Studies, 2007); Susanna P. Campbell, "When Process Matters: The Potential Implications of Organizational Learning for Peacebuilding Success," *Journal of Peacebuilding and Development* 4:2 (2008): 20-32.

are not achieving their peacebuilding aims, by subjective or objective measures.[9] *Peaceland* thus leaves the open question: What is it that intervening actors should be doing differently to be more successful at peacebuilding?

Second, Autesserre argues that peacebuilding is successful when the interveners and their beneficiaries view it as successful. This self referential definition of success makes sense from the perspective that 'peace' is locally and socially constructed. Nonetheless, as with other socially-constructed phenomena, conceptualizations of peace may change from day to day, altered by events in the broader context, individuals' fluctuating moods, or other factors. Furthermore, evaluations of peacebuilding projects show that they were judged as highly unsuccessful at the mid-way point but highly successful at their end-point, and vice versa.[10] Focusing solely on subjective assessments of effectiveness thus does not tells us about the sustainability of a peacebuilding project's success, either during or after implementation. Autesserre does not present comprehensive data on the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions. She draws on several evaluations of peacebuilding activities, but her main data seem to focus on the practices of international interveners, not the effect of those practices on peacebuilding success and failure.

By making claims about the effectiveness of peacebuilding interventions, Autesserre may lessen the strength of her claims about the practices of the inhabitants of *Peaceland*. She compellingly identifies many of the common practices of international interveners and discusses the potential ramifications of these practices for peacebuilding effectiveness. This alone sheds crucial insight on the behavior of the actors in *Peaceland*. But by making claims about the relationship of this combination of practices to peacebuilding effectiveness, Autesserre's argument seems to stretch beyond the data that she presents. Furthermore, we do not know whether one practice, such as the lack of knowledge of the host country's historical context, has a more detrimental effect than another, or whether practices are additive, having an increasingly detrimental effect when combined together. What we do know from Autesserre's evidence is that these practices exist and that they contribute to creating potentially harmful barriers between *Peaceland* and the local context that it aims to influence.

Why do the detrimental practices of *Peaceland* exist? Autesserre argues that interveners' human resource systems, which focus on short-term deployments and prioritize thematic over context-specific knowledge, and security procedures, which focus on physical rather than relational forms of security, are two of the main causes for the counterproductive practices of *Peaceland*. She argues that these systems lead to practices that discourage the inhabitants of *Peaceland* from gaining local knowledge, which in turn dissuades them from attempting to fill this gap in knowledge. While Autesserre provides a convincing narrative of this vicious cycle of international irrelevance, she does not fully explore the potential reasons for existence of these detrimental practices. What are the different causes of poor local knowledge in international institutions? Why should we expect international institutions, which function in the global marketplace, to prioritize local knowledge? In this respect, Autesserre's discussion of the dysfunctional practices of international peacebuilders raises as many

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[9] Susanna Campbell, *Independent External Evaluation: United Nations Peacebuilding Fund Projects in Burundi* (New York: United Nations, 2010).

[10] Susanna Campbell and Peter Uvin, "The Burundi Leadership Training Program," in Michael Lund and Steve McDonald, eds., *Across the Lines of Conflict: Facilitating Cooperation to Build Peace* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015) 281-314.

questions as it answers. Consequently, Autesserre opens the door for an exciting new research agenda on the subnational behavior of international actors. Further research is needed on the shared practices of international interveners, as Autesserre calls for, as well as the particular characteristics of individuals, organizations, and global structures that explain the heterogeneous local-level behavior and performance of international actors.

Review by Timothy Longman, Boston University

Regional studies have fallen sharply out of favor in recent years in a wide range of academic disciplines. For example, in political science, the field in which Séverine Autesserre is trained and teaches, departments once commonly advertised for specialists in fields such as Latin American or East Asian politics, but today departments increasingly define searches for faculty positions according to broad themes such as international political economy or conflict resolution or ethnic and racial politics. Preference is given to those whose research spans regions, rather than being rooted in a particular place. Similarly, the main journals in the discipline have moved away from publishing articles focused on specific countries or regions to articles with cross-regional analysis. This shift reflects an ongoing attempt to make political science more systematic and scientific, so that it has greater predictive value and practical application. The trend is reflected in a shift toward research methods that are more quantitative and formal, involving developing cross-national data sets, using computers to analyze big data, and conducting field experiments. This formalistic approach to political science assumes that political phenomena are generalizable across the globe and that local contexts matter very little. A similar shift away from valuing regional expertise has affected a variety of other disciplines - economics, sociology, international relations, public health, and others.

Far from being a scholarly development of interest only inside the rarefied walls of the academy, the devaluation of area studies and the deep knowledge of specific places that it provides have serious real world consequences. In her first book, *The Trouble with the Congo*,[1] Autesserre explored how failures by the international community to understand the local dynamics of violence led them to undertake interventions that actually exacerbated social divisions and intensified conflict. Failing to include experts in the specific history, culture, and politics of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and listening to too few local voices, specialists in conflict resolution and peace building ended up applying a crude analysis to the country's problems as a clash between regional governments driven by conflict over resources. This approach overlooked the ways in which the conflict affected local-level dynamics, as local actors and ethnic groups sought to promote their personal and community interests through calculated engagement and shifting alliances. Misunderstanding these local dynamics led international peace builders to take actions that unwittingly heightened competition for land, natural resources, and power, fueling ongoing conflict.

In *Peaceland*, Autesserre takes the failures of the international community in Congo as a starting point and argues that similar misunderstandings of domestic cultures and politics have undermined interventions in various other post-conflict settings. She draws on her own experience as an intervener in Kosovo, Afghanistan, and Nicaragua and on research for this book in Cyprus, Israel and the Palestinian Territories, South Sudan, Burundi, and Timor-Leste to assert that the lack of local knowledge is widespread: "[T]he manner in which foreign peacebuilders construct knowledge of the countries in which they work often prompts them to rely on narratives that are misleading or incomplete. Since interveners usually value technical proficiency over country-specific expertise, the vast majority arrive with little to no understanding of their locale of deployment. … [T]o make sense of their environments, they tend to use prevailing but oversimplified narratives as substitutes for more nuanced explanations of dynamics on the ground. … Because interveners depend on these dominant narratives instead of on in-depth analyses of the local contexts, they regularly misunderstand the phenomena they are trying to address, such as the causes of and potential

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[1] Séverine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacekeeping* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

solutions to violence. As a result, although some projects eventually better the lives of the local people, others fail to bring about significant improvements, and some even compound the problems that the interveners originally sought to address" (12).

In *Peaceland*, however, Autesserre goes beyond merely describing the inadequacies of international intervention to an attempt to explain why so many interventions experience limited success. She contends that international peace interveners, who include military personnel, police, and civilians such as doctors, lawyers, diplomats, engineers, and mechanics, form a distinct cultural group, with identifiable values, norms, and practices and a unique language (full of acronyms and technical jargon). Although interveners come from diverse disciplines and hail from countries across the globe, through their work, they are quickly integrated into this common culture. Autesserre analyzes a number of aspects of the culture that lead to inefficient and ineffective engagement that can sometimes prove counterproductive. Most problematic is the sharp line drawn between Peaceland and local cultures and communities. The culture of Peaceland values "thematic expertise over local knowledge" (70), and in practice, the interveners maintain a careful distance between themselves and the populations of the countries in which they work. The residents of Peaceland socialize mostly with other foreign nationals and remain suspicious even of educated and professional locals who could otherwise be treated as peers. Security concerns become an excuse for maintaining a strict physical separation between locals and expatriates. As a result, the interveners develop only a cursory knowledge of the countries in which they are working. They enter a country knowing only the dominant narrative of the conflict that they are charged to alleviate, and because they do not value the expertise of country specialists and do not include them in their ranks and because they do not develop strong connections with local individuals, no one is able to correct the inaccuracies of the dominant narrative nor to add complexity and nuance. The programs and policies that the interveners thus implement often fail to address the actual needs and problems. Locals resent the arrogance and aloofness of the interveners, lack ownership in peacemaking programs, and may thus resist and sabotage programs.

For anyone who has worked in post-conflict societies, Autesserre's description of interveners should ring true. Leading a human rights non-governmental organization office in Rwanda shortly after the genocide, I interacted extensively with people from the UN human rights mission, the UN military force (UNAMIR), and various diplomats and international Non-Government Organization (NGO) workers. Having lived in Rwanda prior to 1994 and knowing the local language, I had many close connections with Rwandans, but I saw how most other expatriates formed a tight-knit community where they primarily socialized with one another. In fact, many of the expatriate workers had friendships that pre-dated their posting in Rwanda, having previously worked together in Haiti or Bosnia or another crisis zone. They were mostly good people who sincerely wanted to help Rwanda rebuild, but they knew very little about Rwandan history and culture, and their understanding of the local situation was thus easily manipulated. In *Re-Imagining Rwanda*, Johan Pottier effectively explores the ways in which the post-genocide Rwandan government developed a narrative of Rwanda's past that emphasized the centrality of the genocide, highlighted international responsibility, and completely suppressed any memory of crimes by the ruling Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF).[2] My own observations confirm Pottier's conclusion that much of the international community embraced this official narrative. Pottier contended that in Rwanda, "Western humanitarian practices reinforced the essentialist

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[2] Johan Pottier, *Re-Imagining Rwanda: Conflict, Survival and Disinformation in the Late Twentieth Century*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002.

discourse on ethnicity."[3] Buying into the RPF's narrative, international interveners unwittingly helped to solidify RPF rule and actually exacerbated the country's social divisions.

Even today, a contentious relationship prevails between academic specialists on Rwanda from disciplines such as anthropology, political science, and history, on the one hand, who often emphasize the complexity of identity in the country and the degree to which local populations experience RPF rule as repressive, and humanitarian and development specialists, on the other hand, who praise the RPF as efficient and effective and who embrace its narrative of reconciliation and national unity. The fact that more than twenty years after the genocide a division persists between country specialists and international interveners in Rwanda, most of whom focus on development rather than rebuilding the country, suggests that the problem Autesserre identifies is broader than the limited community of post-conflict interveners. If this is true, then it raises questions about the degree to which Peaceland should be considered a distinct community. I would suggest that Autesserre is identifying a more extensive problem about international engagement in the world. The growing hostility to area studies in many disciplines reflects a more general hostility to local expertise that undermines all sorts of international interventions, not simply peacekeeping operations.

Rare in academic works, Autesserre's *Peaceland* does not simply identify a problem but develops a practical plan for addressing that problem. In her conclusion, she goes into some depth explaining how to correct the shortcomings of peacekeeping intervention by hiring country specialists and taking their work more seriously, breaking down the barriers between expatriate and local communities, such as integrating local staff more into operations and making socialization across cultural lines more possible. She does not deny the importance of thematic expertise but argues that it needs to be augmented with expertise in local situations. While these suggestions could in fact improve peacekeeping interventions, I worry that they are not enough if the broader international affairs community, including increasingly the academic community, fails to take area studies more seriously. Autesserre should be praised for opening a window into a serious problem, even if she keeps her own claims modest, to focus just on peacekeeping. One hopes that students, academics, and professionals in a wide range of fields will read *Peaceland* and take seriously its warnings about the consequences of technocratic arrogance that assumes that specialists always know best and that the local is irrelevant.

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[3] *Ibid.*, 130.

Review by Cecelia Lynch, University of California, Irvine

It was a beautiful evening in September 2012, and I was standing outside of the National Theatre in Dakar, waiting to hear a benefit concert on behalf of people made homeless by recent floods. I had debated whether or not to spend the $100 required for the ticket (a splurge for me in the U.S., let alone Senegal). But the headliner was Youssou N'Dour, who was coming out of musical retirement (he was then the Senegalese Minister of Culture) to perform along with three other famous Senegalese musicians, Ismael Lo, Thione Seck, and Omar Pene. And it was for a 'good cause.'

Despite the impressive line-up, the audience filled less than half of the 1,800-seat theatre, probably due to the steep ticket price. As I waited in line to enter, I could not help overhearing conversations around me. In addition to well-dressed groups of people who were likely Senegalese speaking Wolof or French, and the occasional lone Senegalese student or office worker with whom I spoke, there were clusters of Anglo-American and European folks speaking mostly English, except that these people seemed to have something else in common. Eventually, one man said to another woman in a nearby cluster, "Weren't you in Kosovo in '98?" Their two groups started to meld together.

These were some of the 'international interveners,' the people whose culture and practices Séverine Autesserre dissects so well in *Peaceland.* Autesserre's ethnographic gaze provides a much-needed look inward for the peacebuilding, aid and humanitarian industry as a whole, and she argues that such seemingly innocuous socializing is part of the problem. According to Autesserre, interveners of all nationalities travel in packs, hang out almost exclusively with others of their own ilk, and engage in numerous other practices that reinforce boundaries between them and local populations. This is not because they are bad people or that they completely fail in 'doing good,' but rather because they fall into patterns, structured by organizational overreactions to dangers, the need to please donors, and ignorance of local contexts and customs, among other issues, that thwart the very work of peacebuilding they set out to accomplish.

Autesserre's narrative is comprehensive and compelling: her research is top-notch and her analysis of interveners' positive and negative characteristics is spot-on. She also writes with both authority and understanding – she is a former intervener as well as an academic who specializes in peacebuilding. She weaves her own experiences into her vast accumulation of evidence (which she discusses thoroughly in both the first chapters and an appendix), to demonstrate the counterproductive effects of the 'bubble' inhabited by interveners in *Peaceland*. For example, security measures prompted by concerns for interveners' safety border on the ludicrous, including all of the things that frustrate or amuse both local populations and outside critics: enclosing themselves in white, four-wheel drive vehicles with their organizational logos prominently displayed, living in separate compounds or facilities in the best parts of town, and staying away from the very people they are supposed to help. These and other practices turn what should be more effective partnership into top-down impositions that are often resisted (even more effectively) by the recipients of their efforts.

Ultimately, however, what is at issue are unequal relations of power (regarding knowledge, resources, and access), and corresponding attitudes of superiority on the part of the interveners' vis-a-vis recipient populations. Autesserre also analyzes the dedicated interveners who recognize these problems and work hard to counteract them. She carefully draws from this analysis specific prescriptions for change that, if followed, can make a tangible, constructive difference in future peacebuilding efforts.

Autesserre is both precise and catholic (with a lower-case 'c') in her documentation and recommendations, in that she has thought through and organized into themes the very specific ways that practices hinder peacebuilding. Moreover, she addresses a range of alternative explanations in her analysis, asserting that her focus on the practices of interveners is meant more to complement, rather than replace, many of these alternatives. The focus on practice, of course, draws from the work of Pierre Bourdieu, among others.[1] But those chary of social theory can rest easy: Autesserre approaches Bourdieu and his followers with a thoroughly pragmatic touch, which allows her to appeal concisely to the recent 'practice turn' in international relations while zeroing in on her primary goal – to document problems and make concrete suggestions for better ways to do the work of peacebuilding. She builds on her own previous work as well as that of others, to whom she gives full credit. Given that she also states that one of her goals is to open up additional questions for future research, I want to suggest several issues she touches on that should be analyzed further. I also have one clarification, or possible disagreement, with her discussion of alternative explanations for her findings. These two points – future research and other frameworks for analyzing the problems of interveners -- are related. I hope they will open up a productive conversation with Autesserre, given that hers is the most detailed and compelling analysis of the practices of interveners, the problems of peacebuilding, and the possible (and practicable) solutions to these problems that exists, to my knowledge.

Among other alternative frameworks, Autesserre discusses and mostly dismisses liberalism and the liberal peace as explanations for why peacebuilders engage in counterproductive practices (see, for example, 51-55, 98, 190). But in doing so she appears to conflate liberal values, theories and critiques of the liberal peace, and critiques of neoliberal constructs of power and governmentality, including those from postcolonial perspectives. Each of these perspectives is broad, perhaps too broad, and their terminologies sometimes serve as tropes for critical international relations scholars. I, too, have critiqued neoliberal mechanisms of control and funding for promoting many of the techniques and pressures in humanitarianism that Autesserre finds problematic in Peaceland. Resulting problems include the search for quick results and quantifiable metrics that generally do not tell us anything about the actual worth of the programs implemented, and the assumption that local people must implement training and capacity-building efforts that they may or may not find useful.[2] Indeed, all of these patterns and practices can be seen as part and parcel of the rise of market forms of philanthropy that compel pressures for rapid returns on the dollar. This critique of neoliberal practices need not, however, accord with that of proponents or critics of the so-called liberal peace, which refers to the proposition that modern liberal democracies do not fight each other and the conclusion that we

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[1] Pierre Bourdieu, *Outline of a Theory of Practice* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977). In international relations, Anna Leander and Didier Bigo are prominent exponents of Bourdieu. See, among other contributions, Leander, "Do we really need reflexivity in IPE? Bourdieu's two reasons for answering affirmatively," *Review of International Political Economy* 9:4 (2002): 601-609, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/0969229022000021817, and Bigo, "Pierre Bourdieu and International Relations: Power of Practices, Practices of Power," *International Political Sociology* 5:3 (2011): 225-258. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2011.00132.x

[2] Cecelia Lynch, "Neoliberal Ethics, the Humanitarian International, and Practices of Peacebuilding," in Jackie Smith and Ernesto Verdeja, eds., *Globalization, Social Movements, and Peacebuilding* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2013), 47-68, and Cecelia Lynch, "Religious Humanitarianism and the Global Politics of Secularism," in Mark Juergensmeyer, Jonathan VanAntwerpen, and Craig Calhoun, eds., *Rethinking Secularism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 204-224.

need to create more of them. Nor does it necessarily rely on an argument that 'liberal values' are at issue when interveners behave similarly no matter what part of the world they are from.

It may be that some liberal aid donors, including those who fund peacebuilding organizations, are trying to create conditions for the liberal peace to be achieved, even when their attempts are counterproductive. While critiques of such efforts are important,[3] they are not necessarily the same critique as that of many scholars who worry about the neoliberal character of donor pressures and intervener practices. The latter critique of neoliberalism does not assume that all interveners instantiate and display 'liberal values.' Rather, following James Ferguson and Ole Jacob Sending and Iver Neumann, among others, in their use of a partially Foucauldian analysis, the critique of neoliberalism aligns with Autesserre's own findings: the practices of international interveners are frequently counterproductive, with policies that demonstrate ignorance of local and regional histories and norms.[4] As Ferguson shows, moreover, interveners' practices can create forms of governance by (unelected) non-government organizations (NGOs) on the ground and donor governance from afar. In fact, interveners from all over the world can behave similarly because neoliberal mechanisms of governmentality, both discursive and material, place enormous pressure on them to do so. Nevertheless, some still attempt to disrupt such neoliberal pressures and mechanisms.

This kind of critique of the 'humanitarian international' (Alex de Waal's 1997 term for the composite of Autesserre's aptly-named 'Peaceland' plus other aspects of the humanitarian world)[5], also aligns with critiques based on post-colonial and neocolonial analyses. Many, though not all, of the anthropologists that Autesserre suggests interveners read are concerned that contemporary peacebuilders, humanitarians, and development experts engage in practices that recall (at best) or replicate (at worst) colonial forms of paternalism and external control, even when such consequences are completely unintended. One of the major insights of anthropological as well as historical work is to expose these kinds of relationships, which many (but not all) interveners from the former colonial powers mistakenly, in my view, see as long-ago histories that do not affect their work in the field. It is of course true that many people in postcolonial societies also want to move on from complaints about colonial legacies of violence to deal with issues of peacebuilding in the midst of problematic governance today. But we need to remember that many people alive today were born into racialized colonial constructs and lived through often bloody struggles for independence, and that those in the younger generations continue to debate these issues vociferously. As a result, those of us concerned with humanitarianism, aid, and peacebuilding in international relations need not see the issues of colonial legacies, neoliberal pressures, and intervener practices as completely unrelated. Indeed, many of Autesserre's own interlocutors indicate that these legacies or their relationship to neoliberalism are both present and powerful, and merit further conceptual as well as pragmatic attention (see, for example, 100, 132, 171, 181, 197, 202-204, 233, 253, and 286). Just because the 'neoliberal humanitarian international' or Peaceland includes

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[3] See Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam, eds. *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding.* (London: Zed Books, 2011).

[4] James Ferguson, *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'Development,' Depoliticization, and Bureaucratic Power in Lesotho* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990); Ole Jacob Sending and Iver B. Neumann, "Governance to Governmentality: Analyzing NGOs, States, and Power", *International Studies Quarterly* 50:1 (2006): 20-55. DOI: https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2478.2006.00418.x

[5] Alex de Waal, *Famine Crimes: Politics & The Disaster Relief Industry in Africa* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997/2009).

interveners from formerly colonized territories does not mean that they cannot be socialized into the same discourses and practices that continue to treat many of their societies as inherently inferior.

Bringing neoliberalism and postcolonialism more fully into Autesserre's analysis is productive, in my view, because it can give us some purchase on how inegalitarian practices became instantiated in Peaceland and what is at stake in their continual reproduction by interveners. It also gives us an idea of the kinds of challenges that confront those who attempt to change these practices. Such lenses are compatible with Autesserre's important analysis. They can also strengthen her emphasis on the power differentials of the structures in which harmful practices are embedded. Seeing these structures clearly enables agents – both recipient populations and interveners – to challenge neocolonial patterns and assumptions of superiority that are, I think, at the heart of the problematic hierarchy of knowledge that Autesserre deplores. Moreover, there are local and regional actors in postcolonial societies (Somalia and Kenya, for example) who are currently using these very lenses to reconfigure both Peaceland and the humanitarian international. One example is the recent proposal for a Global Network for Southern NGOs that is intended to bypass the current system of interveners.[6]

Finally, Autesserre's analysis suggests that the role of religious peacebuilders, or 'faith-based organizations' (FBOs), also deserves further exploration. At several points, she refers to groups such as Caritas and Catholic Relief Services as some of those providing a different model that helps to equalize relationships with local populations. She also mentions 'missionaries' as refusing many of the protections that interveners take for granted. Autesserre's research thus complements the work on 'strategic peacebuilding' done by the transnational Catholic Peacebuilding Network (CPN) and practitioners and scholars at the University of Notre Dame.[7] Pursuing this line of research should not, however, result in the attempt to find yet another silver bullet – i.e., that FBOs are the answer to interveners' problems -- but instead could provide examples, both positive and negative, of religious peacebuilders who both embody and potentially reconfigure the long and complex histories of mission and colonialism, further complicating the postcolonial perspective I advocate including above.

My discussion reflects the energy and power of Autesserre's thesis and research, and the extraordinary service she continues to render (from her first book to this one) to scholarship and practice alike.[8] It attempts to respond to her call to further research in these areas, and also to probe more deeply the nuances and similarities of post-colonial contexts and the power – and openings – in neoliberal forms of governmentality. As a final point, I would add to her recommendations the necessity for interveners to familiarize themselves

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[6] Imogen Wall, "'We are demanding change': the Somali woman taking on international NGOs." *The Guardian*, 21 March 2016, http://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2016/mar/21/degan-ali-somali-woman-taking-on-the-humanitarian-system; "In the News: Demanding Change in Humanitarian Aid", 13 April 2016. *The CIHA Blog (Critical Investigations into Humanitarianism in Africa).* www.cihablog.com.

[7] Atalia Omer, R. Scott Appleby, and David Little, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of Religion, Conflict and Peacebuilding* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015); Daniel Philpott, and Gerard F. Powers, eds., *Strategies of Peace: Transforming Conflict in a Violent World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

[8] Severine Autesserre, *The Trouble with the Congo: Local Violence and the Failure of International Peacebuilding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

with the work and impact of writers, artists, and scholars in the societies where they are stationed. I was surprised at a recent conference, for example, to learn that a Western intervener with many years of experience in Kenya had never heard of Ngugi wa Thiong'o, an eminent writer who was forced into exile by former Kenyan dictator Daniel Arap Moi. Ngugi's works have long been required reading for students in many parts of Africa and elsewhere. His recent books provide deep (and humorous) insights into the intersecting influence of international interveners, international institutions, transnational religious movements, and sub-Saharan African history and politics.[9] Understanding the richness and variety of sources of knowledge within 'recipient' societies, and something of their reach *across* the post-colonial world (i.e., they are not simply 'local' sources), could generate more humility and reflexivity on the part of interveners regarding their assumptions about 'helping' people in these societies.

I have not socialized much with internationals, but I have interviewed quite a few of them, along with at least as many 'nationals' and 'locals' involved in humanitarian efforts in many parts of East and West Africa, the Middle East, and the North American and European centers of NGO power, for a current book project focusing on the ethics of Christian and Muslim humanitarians. I have also attended my fair share of conferences about aid, humanitarianism, and peacebuilding. Autesserre's work is an extraordinary and indispensable contribution not only for my work but for that of numerous others. May the conceptual and pragmatic aspects of this critically important conversation – and concrete moves to rectify serious problems – continue.

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[9] See, especially, Ngugi Wa Thiong'o, *The Wizard of the Crow* (New York: Anchor Books, 2006).

Author's Response by Séverine Autesserre, Barnard College, Columbia University

The most heartening part about reading reviews of *Peaceland* is to see that the analysis rings true for people who have worked as (or with) interveners – a common thread in the reviews for this forum. I am also elated and humbled by all the praise that the book has received. Before going any further, I would like to thank H-Diplo for putting together this roundtable and all the reviewers for taking the time to offer such thoughtful comments on my work.

I have presented the book to 60 different scholarly and policy audiences since its publication two years ago. The most common reactions of policy-makers, practitioners, academics, and students are of two kinds. The first is to emphasize the broader applicability of the argument. The second is to discuss and critique the policy recommendations. As Elisabeth King notes in the introduction to this roundtable, these themes are also at the heart of Sarah Bush's, Susanna Campbell's, Cecelia Lynch's, and Timothy Longman's reviews. In addition, the contributors emphasize a third theme that is dear to academics and one that I find particularly stimulating: suggestions for further research. My response will address each of these topics in turn.

Broader Applicability of the Argument

Peaceland examines all of the actors who directly or indirectly help build peace in their countries of deployment, "regardless of whether or not they have other objectives alongside that goal" (10-11). The interveners at the heart of the analysis thus includes several of the development experts that Campbell and Longman discuss, some of the humanitarian aid workers that Campbell mentions and that Lynch has analyzed, and many of the democracy-makers that Bush studies. The book's conclusion also devotes a few pages (251-254) to emphasizing the broader applicability of the argument. Building on the fascinating literature on foreign actors in conflict zones, it argues that the humanitarian, development, and democracy actors whose goals are often unrelated to peacebuilding, as well as business expatriates, colonial officials, and military and diplomatic personnel working on counter-insurgency efforts share many of the practices, habits, and narratives documented in *Peaceland*.

Through the course of presenting the book since its publication, I became aware that the generalizability of the argument was even wider than I had initially theorized. Audience members have noted, for instance, how the dynamics analyzed in *Peaceland* remind them of communities as diverse as agronomists involved in forest conservation efforts, human rights campaigners, and activists and government officials working with Native American people in Canada. As the contributors to this roundtable emphasize, the focus on thematic and technical knowledge at the expense of local expertise, the obsession with quantitative results, the short-term outlook of personnel, along with other features of 'Peaceland' are unfortunately the hallmarks of many efforts beyond just peacebuilding.

The few pages that the book devotes to discussing the broader applicability of the argument were meant to open areas for additional study, and I am grateful to the roundtable contributors for further emphasizing this point. Indeed, researchers can consider the influence of everyday practices, habits, and narratives when analyzing a variety of contexts (or issue areas). As the reviewers suggest, it would also be very interesting to check which practices are specific to Peacelanders and which are common to the broader subset of foreigners who work in conflict zones, whether to promote peace or to advance development, democracy, and human rights. There is also much scholarly value in tracing how "the growing hostility to area studies" (to use Longman's phrase) impacts fields beyond Peaceland. Indeed, such an inquiry may influence the way

academics (like me and some of the readers of this roundtable) view our work, the education we should give our students, and the colleagues we should recruit. It would also most likely show that Lynch's final suggestion is as true for college professors as it is for interveners: we too should include much more "the work and impact of writers, artists, and scholars in the societies" that we study in our teaching and research.

Policy Recommendations

During book talks, most – and, at times, all – critiques focus on the policy recommendations. The reviewers similarly raise important questions about my suggestions to enact concrete changes to Peaceland. Expanding the existing policy recommendations and designing concrete, viable, and effective implementation plans is certainly an area for further research that I flag in the book and want to emphasize again here. Scholars can do just that by further examining the everyday dimensions of Peaceland and, as Longman suggests, by thinking about how academics could better train country experts and revalue area studies. That said, peacebuilding practitioners are the ones who have the skills and knowledge necessary to transform my tentative policy recommendations into feasible action plans – and, thankfully, some of them have already started working on that.

As more people tackle this issue, we should keep in mind that problematic everyday practices persist in Peaceland not only because the leaders and decision-makers who could impose the reforms have no clear incentives to do so (as Bush suggests), but also, and more importantly, for two additional reasons. First, as I explain throughout the book, both high-level policy-makers and on-the-ground practitioners view everyday practices as mundane and unimportant. From their point of view, addressing funding issues, mandate constraints, and conflicts among powerful countries would be more useful approaches to increasing peacebuilding effectiveness. Second, once I started presenting the book to the staffs of foreign affairs ministries, international organizations, and non-governmental organizations, it became evident that all of these interveners tend to think they are the exceptions that the book analyzes. Before presenting the book to policy-makers and practitioners, I expected to face a backlash and a lot of hostility and defensiveness on their part. (Academic colleagues who had read the draft book had the same expectations). Instead, surprisingly, most peacebuilders welcomed the analysis. This may be because, as they explained, the portrait of interveners reminded them of many things they had seen and experienced in the field – things that they were often uncomfortable with. After a while, I began to understand that another, more problematic reason was at play. These policy-makers and practitioners – the very same that I analyze and critique in the book – thought that the book accurately described their colleagues (usually from other organizations, but sometimes even from their own). However, they often believed that they, as organizations or individuals, were immune to the issues I raise in the book, and that they were actually offering different, more effective modes of operation. From their point of view, other people and organizations should indeed change, but there was no need for them to do so.

Scholars, policy-makers, and practitioners would do well to keep these two obstacles in mind as they work on potential reform plans. They should also ensure that the recommendations are not only that peacebuilders should "implement their own best practices," as Campbell suggests, but also, and most importantly, that they change their everyday practices (some of which are captured in best practices, and many of which are not). It is by changing the everyday practices detailed in *Peaceland* that we can make interventions more context-specific, as Campbell requests, and more effective in general, as all of the roundtable contributors (myself included) would want.

Avenues for Further Research

I am thankful to the reviewers for suggesting so many other areas for further research. It would indeed be fascinating to know how the culture of Peaceland has changed over time, as Bush suggests. In addition, like all of the reviewers, I too think that that we need to know much more about the exceptional individuals and organizations who challenge the dominant way of acting and thinking in Peaceland. Indeed, to answer one of Campbell's questions, these exceptions are the actors who are less likely to perpetuate detrimental practices. Focusing on such exceptions is actually one of the three main research strategies of my new project (which studies successful international contributions to local peacebuilding). Research on these two topics may help identify everyday practices that either worked better in the past or are currently more effective. In both cases, this would form the basis for policy recommendations and reform plans.

From a scholarly point of view, more research on the relationships between perceptions of peacebuilding effectiveness and other indicators of intervention success – as Bush and Campbell call for – would certainly also help advance the study of peacebuilding. In addition, it would be beneficial to further examine the usefulness of postcolonial theories in order to understand the dynamics at work in Peaceland, as Lynch suggests. A first step in this direction is the forthcoming book *Paternalism Beyond Borders* edited by Michael Barnett.[1] This volume focuses on numerous practices and forms of interventions in addition to peacebuilding, and it takes to heart many of the theories and suggestions that Lynch mentions: the contribution of postcolonial theories, the role of paternalism and external control, the question of "how inegalitarian practices became instantiated," and so on. Contributions by Michael Barnett, Henry Richardson, Didier Fassin, John Hobson, and David Chandler provide a broad theoretical and historical framework; chapters by Aisling Swaine, Ilana Feldman, Sally Engle Merry, Vibhuti Ramachandran, and Stephen Hopgood focus on humanitarian actors and human rights advocates; and my section expands upon the analysis developed in *Peaceland*.

Additional research on this topic would be not only of academic interest. As Lynch rightly points out, "issues of colonial legacies, neoliberal pressures, and intervener practices" are unquestionably related. The funding constraints that Bush flags are often, as Lynch says, born from neo-liberal management techniques and neo-liberal forms of governance. As a result, further research on the impact of these neo-liberal management techniques and forms of governance would most likely help peacebuilders get novel ideas on how to address the challenges they face.

In sum, the suggestions for further research in this roundtable are particularly important not only to advance our understanding of various forms of foreign interventions, but also to inform further policy recommendations and implementation plans. I will flag one more idea for additional research, by way of conclusion. *Peaceland*, like most scholarly and policy works on peace intervention, focuses mostly on explaining failure. But we also need to learn from success. As Page Fortna and Lise Howard note, the obstacles to peacekeeping and peacebuilding are such that the most puzzling question is why international efforts

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[1] Michael N. Barnett, ed., *Paternalism Beyond Borders* (New York: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming 2016).

sometimes succeed, rather than why they fail.[2] Not only is there little work on intervention success in general, but the gap is particularly acute when one looks at peacebuilding success at the local (subnational) level.[3] This is what my new research project focuses on, and this is where I believe we need much more attention from both academics and practitioners. Only when we understand success will we be able to fully address the policy issues that *Peaceland* raises and better comprehend how peacebuilding operates on the ground.[4]

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[2] Virginia Page Fortna, *Does Peacekeeping Work? Shaping Belligerents' Choices after Civil War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008); and Lise Morjé Howard, *UN Peacekeeping in Civil Wars* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008).

[3] Séverine Autesserre, "Going Micro: Emerging and Future Peacebuilding Research," *International Peacekeeping* 21:4 (2014): 496-497.

[4] For preliminary research findings, please see "Here's What Congo Can Teach the World About Peace," *The Washington Post*, Monkey Cage blog, 19 October 2016, www.washingtonpost.com/news/monkey-cage/wp/2016/10/19/heres-what-this-island-in-congo-can-teach-the-world-about-peace, accessed 7 November 2016, as well as the paper "International Peacebuilding and Local Success: Assumptions, Myths, and Reality" that I presented at the 2016 conference of the International Studies Association (available in the ISA online archives; currently under review by the *International Studies Review* for a special issue on "Exploring Peace").