

*Peace after War:
Our Experience*

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CARL BILDT is the former prime minister of Sweden, having served from 1991 to 1994. He was a member of Parliament from 1979 to 2001, and chair of Sweden's Moderate Party from 1986 to 1999. He was also chair of the International Democratic Union from 1992 to 1999. Following his term in government, he was asked to become the European Union special representative to the former Yugoslavia in 1995, and served as co-chair of the Dayton Peace Accords later the same year. He then served as the first high representative of the international community in Bosnia, and as special envoy of the secretary-general of the United Nations. He serves on the board of the Center for European Reform, the Council of the International Institute for Strategic Studies, the European Policy Institute, the Aspen Institute Italia, the RAND Corporation, and the Council of Foreign Relations. He is also associated with the boards of several venture capital firms and international energy companies. He holds various senior honors and decorations from France, Germany, the United Kingdom, Estonia, and Latvia. He also holds an honorary degree from the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, where he is a fellow at its Center for the Study of Terrorism and Political Violence. He is the author of *Peace Journey: The Struggle for Peace in Bosnia* (1998).

It is truly an honour to be invited to Cambridge University in order to deliver the Tanner Lecture here this year.

I have to say that I was rather intimidated by the description of these lectures. They are supposed to “advance and reflect upon the scholarly and scientific learning related to human values,” and Professor Tanner also expressed the hope that they would “contribute to the intellectual and moral life of mankind.”

Well, I am considerably less than certain that I can live up to this. But the fact that I have been asked must be seen as recognition of the importance of the subjects we are to discuss, and the fact that you have invited a person who is more of a practitioner than a scholar in the field is perhaps a reflection that practice comes first and the scholarly studies somewhat later.

Questions of war and peace have always been of importance to humankind. It is in them that we see the very origin of not only our societies but the entire international system.

Much too often, war and peace are seen as two entirely separated processes. But what we have had to learn again during the past decades is that this is not the case. Winning a war might be easy, but winning the peace more difficult, and at the end of the day it is winning the peace that really counts.

During the later part of the last century the world was more or less frozen in the confrontation between the Soviet bloc and the Western powers.

The United Nations was an arena for disputes as well as for practical cooperation, but rarely for very much more. The instrument of peacekeeping—not really foreseen in the Charter of the organisation—developed very gradually and not without its problems.

During these decades, UN peacekeeping operations were nearly always reinforced policing operations of cease-fire lines. There were the blue helmets and the white vehicles in the sands of the Sinai or the hills of Cyprus.

The major exception was the daring operation undertaken in Congo as that state threatened to disintegrate into total chaos immediately after being granted independence from Belgium in 1990. This quickly developed into what we today would call a major peace enforcement effort

with significant combat operations, which included a unit of the Swedish Air Force.

Although the effort was essentially a success—Congo survived, for the time being—the numerous controversies surrounding it forced the UN to retreat into classical peacekeeping operations again. The operation had cost Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld his life.

But as the Cold War came to its end, we were suddenly confronted with a new set of challenges that made it necessary not only to revive peacekeeping but to dash into a series of operations that would fundamentally change the very character of what we had been trying to do.

For me, it is natural to focus on the lessons we had to learn during operations in the Balkans that by now have stretched well over a decade.

As prime minister of Sweden, I was very involved in taking the decisions in the early 1990s on sending Swedish forces to participate in the peacekeeping operation in Croatia, in the preventive deployment in Macedonia, and in the difficult and not too well defined operation in Bosnia.

Later, I was asked to become European Union special representative to Former Yugoslavia and in that capacity serve as the Co-Chairman of the International Conference in Former Yugoslavia, succeeding Lord Owen in these capacities. And when, through a dramatic sequence of events during the summer and autumn of 1995, we managed to secure a peace in Bosnia I was asked to go to Sarajevo and serve there as the first High Representative of the international community overseeing the implementation of all the non-military aspects of the peace agreement.

That assignment lasted until the summer of 1997. But when war broke out in the region again—this time over Kosovo—I was asked by UN Secretary General Kofi Annan to come back and serve as his special envoy to the region, which I did until the second half of 2001.

This was the time when we set up the UN mission in Kosovo, worked to change things primarily in Serbia, set that country on a new start after the defeat of Slobodan Milosevic, and tried—from the UN side—to get the members of the Security Council to understand that they couldn't go on with an open-ended mission in Kosovo for much longer. That message wasn't understood then, although I think it has been understood by now.

During these years in the Balkans, the international community went from efforts at classical peace-keeping operations, through pre-

ventive deployment and very messy operations in the middle of war, to ambitious state-building operations using the authority of Chapter VII of the Charter. It was a decade of huge challenges and profound transformation.

Since then, we have had to face additional state-building challenges. I'm thinking primarily of Afghanistan after the defeat of the Taliban regime but also of the monumental task we are faced with in Iraq after the defeat of the Saddam Hussein regime.

My seven lessons of state-building are derived primarily from the experiences I had myself during more than a decade's involvement with the very different missions in the various parts of the Balkans. But I am convinced that the lessons we learnt during the time between Bihac and Monastir are the same lessons that later have been learnt between Basra and Mosul and should guide us in the different challenges ahead of us.

LESSON I: IT IS IMPERATIVE TO ESTABLISH A SECURE ENVIRONMENT VERY FAST

To establish a secure environment is far more than separating the major combat units of the different warring parties, as in Bosnia, or securing the withdrawal of an army and the demilitarisation of an armed group, as in Kosovo, or just defeating the armed formations of the regime, as in Afghanistan or Iraq.

The role of force in the postconflict phase is to remove the military or violent options otherwise available to different actors, so that all of them are forced to explore political options and so that all of them feel truly free to do so.

As long as the gun is seen as the fastest way to either power or property we can be certain that it will be used, and there simply will be no room either for a democratic dialogue to develop or for the entrepreneurship that is the basis for economic recovery to develop. The absence of a secure environment also impedes the different international efforts, not least in the humanitarian field, that are essential in the immediate postconflict phase.

In the immediate postconflict phase, there is no alternative to the use of military force to establish this secure environment. It is an illusion to believe that there will ever be international police forces ready to deploy in anything resembling necessary numbers, or that lighter carabinieri-type units will be enough. Any serious security effort must be able to

have escalation dominance in any possible situation, which effectively means that military forces will have to be the critical part.

We have faced the consequences of failure in these respects time after another.

In Bosnia, we failed to secure a peaceful transfer of territories and populations in the critical three-month period after the peace agreement coming into force, thus suddenly getting approximately 100,000 refugees from peace that vastly complicated the subsequent political process as well as the process of refugee return. We failed to secure a truly multiethnic Sarajevo, and we have not even now been able repair the damage caused.

In Kosovo the mandate of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) forces as they entered explicitly gave them the overall security responsibility, but we still failed to provide the remaining minority populations adequate protection. We could celebrate the speedy return of close to a million Kosovo Albanian refugees, but we could not prevent that close to a quarter of a million Serbs and other minorities fled or were driven away, with all the consequences this continues to have.

In Afghanistan, we deliberately limited the mandate for the international security assistance force to Kabul in spite of the requests, not least from the United Nations officials.

And in Iraq, it is obvious that planning for the postconflict phase left something to be desired and that there was a serious shortage of both soldiers and plans for how they should be used.

One sometimes encounters the view that soldiers can't be both good war-fighters and good peace-builders. But this is a myth. During years in the Balkans I have seen first-class fighting units doing first-class peacekeeping work, and I have been listening to the soldiers telling me how rewarding they have found it not only to destroy enemies but also to build friendships.

Often it's a question of training the individual unit and the tradition of the particular army. Training can always be improved, and traditions are also formed by the new experiences gained with each new operation.

Thus, the first lesson that we have learnt is that there should be no military planning for war operations that does not extend into equally serious planning for the postwar task of establishing a secure environment.

LESSON 2: THE CENTRAL CHALLENGE IS NOT RECONSTRUCTION,
BUT STATE-BUILDING

Too often it is said that the task immediately after war is reconstruction, implying that it is primarily a question of pouring in money to rebuild houses, bridges, and whatever else might have been destroyed by the conflict.

But the key to success is to get the priorities right from the very beginning. The central challenge is nearly always state-building. If that succeeds, other tasks will have the possibility of succeeding, while if it fails, we can be certain that everything else will fail as well.

Thus, right from the start the focus of the international efforts has to be on the core task of building a political infrastructure that unites competing forces and ensures some sort of order and an infrastructure of economic governance that promotes jobs and growth.

While we often talk—inspired by the debate on the other side of the Atlantic—about nation-building, the real task is naturally state-building.

The essence of the situations we are confronted with is often that there is too much nation and too little state, and the central task is therefore to build a state that transcends the differing national agendas that otherwise risk tearing everything apart.

LESSON 3: TO BUILD A STATE, YOU NEED TO KNOW
WHAT STATE TO BUILD

States come in different incarnations, and it is important to establish early on which type of state to build. The longer an uncertainty on this central issue lingers, the more difficult it will be to secure the agreement that is necessary for the process to succeed over time.

Normally this requires agreement on a constitution or a constitutional framework.

In many cases this means trying to resolve some of the core issues of the conflict. This was certainly the case in Bosnia, and to a certain extent in Kosovo as well. In Afghanistan there was the need to set up a new constitution, and in Iraq the problem is the same.

In all of the post-Ottoman area from Bihac in Bosnia in the northwest to Basra by the Gulf in the southeast, we face essentially the same challenge of devising a constitutional framework that can be accepted by different national or cultural groups. Yugoslavia and Iraq were formed at

the same time out of the same debris of empire, and the respective areas have many of the same problems in this regard.

The Kosovo issue and the Kurdish issue have obvious similarities. And in between these areas we find the bitterly divided island of Cyprus, where successive peace efforts have so far failed, but a new attempt to bridge the divide and create a single state (although with broad autonomy) must be made very shortly.

In all of these cases, the task of state-building is the task of preventing disintegration and getting different groups to accept that any lasting solution would have to be one that meets the minimum demands of everyone, while not meeting the maximum demands of anyone. It is my belief that this is facilitated by the international community setting out the parameters of what can be accepted very early and with a certain firmness.

The longer there is uncertainty over which state to build, the harder will be the positions that one day will have to be overcome. And until there is an agreement on which state to build, progress in setting up different functioning state structures will be limited, with most other tasks accordingly being held up as well.

LESSON 4: THERE MUST BE AN EARLY FOCUS ON THE PRECONDITIONS FOR LONG-TERM ECONOMIC GROWTH

While humanitarian issues are always the focus in the initial phase, it is dangerous to let them dominate over the long-term issues. Instead, there must be an early focus on how to set up the economic frameworks and institutions most conducive to the creation of self-sustaining economic growth.

Thus, there must be an early focus on issues like currency, customs, taxation systems, commercial law, the creation of a banking system, debt restructuring, and clearing away any legal obstacles to accessing international capital markets.

In areas affected by economic sanctions the problems are normally worse than in areas affected only by war. While war destroys physical infrastructure, sanctions destroy the fabric of society by plunging the honest into poverty and propelling the dishonest into sometimes immense richness. Sanctions destroy the hard-working and honest middle class that has to be the basis for any stable society; and while destruction can be fast, rebuilding is a very slow process.

Job creation, and bringing back a vibrant middle class, is the key to long-term stability. Without them, despair and resentment will soon

disrupt even the most ambitious efforts at state-building. But this will come not primarily from foreign aid but from the creation of a social and political environment where honest entrepreneurship pays more than dishonest smuggling or simple aid dependence.

LESSON 5: THERE HAS TO BE A BENEVOLENT
REGIONAL ENVIRONMENT

In the Balkans, regime change in Zagreb and Belgrade was key to improving prospects in Bosnia and Kosovo; in Afghanistan, the open or tacit cooperation of Pakistan and Iran is critical. In Iraq, it is obvious that all neighbouring states, one way or the other, are integral parts of both the problem and the solution.

Any conflict, and accordingly any peace process, must be seen in its regional context. The borders we see on our maps in distant capitals are often far less present in the minds of the peoples of the regions in question. While we might see different conflicts, in the Balkans or elsewhere, as separate from each other, they often see them as part and parcel of the same processes and react and act accordingly.

This has important implications. Instead of seeking a Kosovo solution to the regional issues, we must seek a regional solution to the Kosovo issue. In Iraq, a solution can never be achieved in confrontation with the neighbouring states, but neither can they be allowed to dictate it. There has to be a balance.

The wider context in the region is of enormous importance. In Germany after 1948, the Soviet threat was of crucial importance, since suddenly the Germans and the Western allies faced the same threat. In Iraq, there is an obvious risk of the reverse happening, with a perception that the United States is heavily biased in favour of Israel, creating the feeling that instead of protecting them from a common enemy, as in the case of Germany, the occupying force is allied with what they consider the enemy.

Thus, there is an obvious link between liberating Iraq from its past and liberating Palestine from its present.

LESSON 6: THE GREATER THE INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT,
THE EASIER THE PROCESS

The Balkans provide ample testimony to the destructive effects of dissent in the international community.

If the outside world can't agree on the terms of a political solution, it is hardly surprising that those fighting the different conflicts can't either,

since an important part of their struggle is normally the effort to create support in the outside world for their particular point of view.

We have seen that if there is international disagreement over the state-building process, this sooner or later risks translating into conflicts in the country in question.

Here some sort of United Nations framework normally helps, although it is not a guarantee. There must be some very weighty other reason to abstain from the added resources that the legitimacy given by the United Nations and its Security Council can provide in a state-building process after a conflict. The greater the legitimacy, the less the need for coercion.

Building peace is a far more fragile, complex, costly, and drawn-out process than fighting a war. Accordingly, a peace coalition normally needs to be much broader than a war coalition.

LESSON 7: STATE-BUILDING TAKES A LONGER TIME, AND
REQUIRES MORE RESOURCES, THAN MOST INITIALLY BELIEVE

As the first High Representative in Bosnia, I was told that everything should be concluded within a year. When the folly of this was recognized, a new deadline of two years was given. But five years after that expired, the fourth High Representative is hardly less busy than the first. Bosnia and Kosovo might be easy cases compared with Afghanistan and Iraq.

Peace-building requires an abundance of patience as well as an abundance of resources.

These days, we see the deficiencies in troop numbers for peace operations.

Moves toward settling the Kosovo issue are more likely to increase than to decrease requirements for troops in the Balkans. In Afghanistan, there is a consensus on the need to extend the security operation throughout the country.

And in Iraq, there is the double problem of troop numbers being a third or a quarter of what was considered necessary in Bosnia and Kosovo while present troop strength from key countries is clearly unsustainable within the scope of their present armies and practices.

But for all the deficiencies that often exist in troop numbers, we face even larger deficiencies in other critical areas. Civilian administrators, judges, police, engineers—the list is nearly endless. This only underlines

the wisdom of making a peace coalition as wide as possible, to be able to draw on as large a pool of resources, talent, and experience as possible.

State-building after conflict remains one of the most complex undertakings that the international community can engage itself in. But there is no doubt that we must prepare ourselves for more of these missions in the future.