

Forum: Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

Issue: Reconstructing infrastructure in post-conflict zones

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Introduction

Out of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the 9th goal “Build resilient infrastructure, promote inclusive and sustainable industrialization and foster innovation” aligns with the agenda item at hand. It is the responsibility of humankind to bring back peace to all regions to ensure the equal life standards that everyone has the right to have. However, priority should be given to those who are in extreme conditions that no human should be put through. The starting point being the reconstruction of infrastructure in areas where it is urgent, like post-conflict zones.

Conflicts weaken the infrastructure of the place it is present, thus resulting in a lack of infrastructure when the aforementioned place is considered a “post-conflict” zone. Acknowledging the fact that most modern conflict zones, before the conflict started, were faced with infrastructure problems; therefore, with the outbreak of the conflict, these infrastructure issues worsen, intensifying the conflict. This situation goes on as an inevitable loop until the conflict ends. Nevertheless, this doesn't mean that the infrastructure challenges end along with the conflict. When a conflict is brought to an end, only the open warfare ends and the zones remain tense for an extended period. The tense that lingers around enables the conflict to start again if precautions are not taken into consideration. Basically meaning that the absence of war never means peace is present until something is done.

To establish peace, precautions need to be put in place. Even though these precautions range in numerous domains, reconstructing the critical infrastructure of these post-conflict zones is necessary for the rest to be done virtually and ensure its longevity.

Definition of Key Terms

Infrastructure: The fundamental services and processes that a country or an organisation needs to function properly, such as transportation and electricity.

Critical infrastructure: The physical structures, facilities, networks, and assets that are essential to provide services to the social and economic functioning of a community or society. (UNDRR)

Rehabilitation: The process of returning anything that has deteriorated or been damaged to its original state.

Phoenix country: A nation that has gone through destruction or hardship but has managed to rebuild and rise again.

Standardization: The process of making things of the same type all have the same basic features. (Cambridge Dictionary)

Imperialism: Advocacy of extending power and dominion, especially by direct territorial acquisition or by gaining political and economic control of other areas for benefit. (Brittanica)

General Overview

The rehabilitation approach was first put in place after World War II with the “Marshall Plan”, more known as the “European Recovery Program” (ERP) by the United States between the dates of April 1948–December 1951. The ERP had the significant goal of effectively reconstructing infrastructure in post-World War II Europe along with the goals of the successful revival of the European economy and the stabilization of the societies that were devastated because of the war. The program was indeed exceptionally successful and encompassed broader goals such as rebuilding institutions, stabilizing currencies, etc... The reason for such success with the program was the key component of all the outcomes: the reconstruction of infrastructure. The participant countries of the ERP were: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and western Germany. It is important to note that all of these countries above are all countries geopolitically European countries that are similar to the initiator country of the program, the United States of America.



Picture 1: POTUS Truman signs the European Recovery Plan (ERP).

Later the ERP was extended by the President of the United States (POTUS) at the time, Harry S. Truman, to include less-developed countries around the world, under the “Point Four Program” in 1949. However, this program was not as successful as the ERP for many reasons, such as the uncertainty of the form of aid that would be done, other problems reinforced by donor countries for their strategic interest and resource rent, and more. From 1949 up until today, the Point Four Program and such programs similar to it, have all failed to reach the target of rehabilitation, thus reconstruction of infrastructure. Even though there have been “Phoenix” countries that have successfully implemented the development in the face of adversity, only a limited number of countries have been considered as one while a large number of countries have not been able to rehabilitate for many years. This failure to do so is always because of the same reasons and these reasons, even though there are not many, are all connected and result in a vicious cycle of repeated setbacks and systemic inefficiencies that the world continues to face and ignore at the same time. As James D. Wolfensohn, president of the World Bank in 1998, had said “The sustainable reconstruction of

countries emerging from long periods of conflict is a challenge we ignore at our peril.”¹ In his foreword to “Post-Conflict Reconstruction: The Role of the World Bank”.

Shifting Essentials Over Time

Modern conflicts last over an extended time period. Examples of such disputes can be the Sri Lankan Civil War, which started in 1983 and ended in 2009 or some conflicts that started decades ago but still have not concluded, even though periods of relative peace were present, like the Somali Civil War, that started in 1991 and is still ongoing to this day. With the constant modernization of technology and evolving basic life necessities, rehabilitation efforts may not be useful for the



Picture 2: A picture of former Secretary General of the United Nations Ban Ki-moon (L) and former Prime Minister of Sri Lanka Ranil Wickremesinghe (R) shaking hands at their meeting of 2016 about the reconstruction of post-conflict Sri Lanka.

development of the infrastructure.

Rehabilitation, as explained above in the “Definition of Key Terms” part, is a process of bringing something back to its original state. The D-day of most modern conflicts is remarkably far from its conclusion date, or if the conflict hasn’t even ended, the conclusion and start dates will be in two different ages of humanity. Hence, there is or will be a major shift in the infrastructure needed in the post-conflict zone. An infrastructural

component that used to be a must in the pre-conflict zone, might not be necessary for the present time, and it can be the other way around. As a result, the rehabilitation efforts can result in the post-conflict zone falling behind the modern-day requirements for a developing country.

Post-Conflict Situation Differences

Standardization is a major reason why not all post-conflict regions reach their necessary infrastructure goals. Standardization is mainly done to ensure consistency of quality and reduce costs. Basically to make everything the same, to ensure a pattern, and to make everything more predictable. However, all regions are embedded with different climates, landforms, water resources, nationalities, races, cultures, etc. These differences ought to be understood, if not, all the efforts made to reconstruct the infrastructure will go to waste. The main explanation for why the Point Four Program and such programs similar to it have not worked out is that the initiators of the programs are far off in understanding the countries that require aid. Considering that the roots of such programs are based on the ERP, a program that is aligned exclusively with European standards, the newer programs are bound to not work out as they don’t provide the infrastructural needs of specific post-conflict zones.

Furthermore, the severity of the physical damage in the post-conflict zone can change. Some might have little to no damage to their infrastructure, like post-war Japan and Germany, thus resulting in their effective reconstruction, and some might have such deterioration that the prior infrastructure

¹ <https://documents1.worldbank.org/curated/fr/175771468198561613/pdf/multi-page.pdf>

can be considered as destroyed. Due to this difference, the amount of effort put into reconstructing the infrastructure can change.

Standardization can be considered as a form of ignorance when it comes to extreme cases that are connected to conflicts. While the goal of reconstruction is to restore peace in the zone by solving the problems, it can create many more dire issues such as the recurrence of the conflict, prolonged instability, humanitarian crises, and corruption in the government. In order to present oneself as the “savior” of a region, many donors create more obstacles for the ones who need to be helped.

Increased Expectations

With the establishment of international organizations such as the United Nations, other international forces that have a platform on an international basis, or the establishment of a non-permanent transition authority in the post-conflict regions by these international organs, there will evidently be a recognition of international assistance by the local people and foreign spectators. This type of awareness of global attention will result in the increment of expectations of the aid the post-conflict zone will get from the donors by the local people. This is mainly because the donor countries are More Economically Advanced Countries (MEDCs) and the locals anticipate receiving the same infrastructure systems that these MEDCs have without having any regard for the appropriateness and the price of such expectations.

On the other hand, the enthusiasm for receiving humanitarian relief from foreign countries, international organizations or forces, and NGOs can unintentionally result in high levels of dependence on foreign powers while reconstruction efforts are done to help a post-conflict zone return to its pre-conflict independence.

Challenges Brought with the 21st Century

One of the main reasons why the ERP was so successful, especially for the Axis powers during the post-conflict time, is that during the conflict times, the people of the region stayed in their country. Whereas, in most modern conflicts, a grand evacuation is done willingly by the public that has some acquisition of liquid assets. This is because they are quite likely to find a way to leave the conflict area with whatever they have for their individual benefit rather than the benefit of their country, their homeland. In addition to this reality, inhabitants of the conflict zone are less likely to return to their country at all, or if they are willing to return, it won't be done as quickly as it is needed for the rehabilitation of the post-conflict zone. This is because, as these people migrate to other countries, they establish their livelihood, and this brings in reluctance to go back and start a new life in adverse circumstances when they are living in a much favorable environment.

The cruciality of the presence of inhabitants comes because of the reason of the necessity of physical work power in post-conflict zones, especially for infrastructure purposes, as it is unavoidable for the infrastructure of a conflict zone not to be destroyed or at least be damaged after all it has been through. For the reconstruction of such structures; manual labor, skilled trade work, project

management, and engineering and design are necessary. Two of the Phoenix countries that are great examples for this case are Japan and Germany. Nearly all Japanese and German citizens had returned to their pre-war occupations in their country during the post-conflict time, thus not resulting in a labor shortage. On the other hand, most modern post-conflict regions such as Iraq, South Sudan, Afghanistan, etc. all currently have a severe problem with insufficiency of the workforce.

Strategic Interest of Foreign Nations

Throughout history, colonialism and imperialism have been a daunting ordeal for many underdeveloped countries. Even though on paper these threats may seem to have ceased, it had only adjusted into being more acceptable by changing their noticeable motive to help countries that are in need while still having the underlying objective of protecting their interest and acquiring that interest in any possible way, even if it costs human lives.

Many modern reconstructing plans are initiated by MEDCs and when observing history, most of the MEDCs today were once colonial powers that safeguarded their advantage by destroying the system present in those regions to exploit whatever resources these areas had.

Post-conflict zones are highly receptive to exploitation due to the instability in the region because of the conflict. Especially when countries such as the MEDCs have a long history of exploitation of underdeveloped countries, there is a high level of risk of the same exploitation happening. There have been cases where donor countries have given out infrastructure planning to companies that originate from their countries.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

United States of America (U.S.A.): The United States has been active in international affairs the way it is known today since World War I. Two of the four main foreign policies of the U.S. Department of State are to "advance democracy, human rights, and other global interests" and to "promote international understanding of American values and policies". Even though, in theory, such policies are for the advantage of the international community, there have been many cases where the U.S.A. had entered a country mainly for the American benefit rather than the definitive amelioration of a post-conflict zone. Nevertheless, the U.S.A. has been an important factor in the reconstruction of conflict-ravaged countries with funds or loans, infrastructure planning, and many more with the help of the many plans and programs that they have made.



Picture 3: A picture of General Douglas MacArthur (L) with Emperor Hirohito (R) circa 1945.

Iraq: Iraq is a country where reconstruction efforts have been unsuccessful. After the 2003 invasion of the U.S.A., reconstruction efforts had started and lasted until 2014. More than \$220 billion had been

spent on the reconstruction but flaws were still present. These flaws consisted of the lack of cooperation with national institutions, the absence of flexibility in the adoption of solutions for the infrastructural problems, and dual accountability, so the tendency of prioritization of strategic interests of international donors and organizations. Due to these problems, reluctance has grown in the international community to engage in reconstruction attempts of post-conflict zones.

Syria: After suffering from nearly 15 years of conflict, the infrastructure of Syria had been in a bad condition. The major foreign influences of the Syrian Civil War had already started with the reconstruction way before the war ended.

However, due to instability brought in by the ongoing war, success was not seen. Now that the war is over, with the Assad regime ended, the new regime has set the goal of rehabilitating the country with the help of foreign powers, as it had been agreed that outside help is necessary. The European Union (EU) and its member states had started to make commitments for the reconstruction. Turkey and Saudi Arabia are



Picture 4: A picture of the meeting of former President of Syria Bashar Al-Assad (L) and current President of Russia Vladimir Putin (R) in Moscow, about the rebuilding of Syria in 2018.

two countries that have started rehabilitation efforts in Syria as both countries have indicated that strategic interest is present. On the other hand, Iran and Russia, two of the closest allies of Syria under the Assad regime, had been present in the region to rehabilitate the country.

The European Union Countries: Just like the United States of America, European Union countries such as the United Kingdom, France, etc. are also the main initiators of many programs that have failed to effectively reconstruct and rehabilitate many post-conflict zones. In addition to this, it is worth

mentioning that many UN organs and organizations that are affiliated with the UN are located in European territories as geography is a crucial point for the way plans are made and examinations are done.



Picture 5: Rebuilding in post-war Germany, circa 1948.

Germany: As mentioned above, Germany is one of the best examples of a Phoenix country. Even though the ERP of 1948 was one of the primary grounds for the “economic miracle” or the war-torn Germany in the 1950s and 1960s, initial reconstruction attempts of critical infrastructure started immediately after the end of World War II, in 1944, specifically in the British zone of Germany. These reconstruction efforts consisted mainly of economic policies that were being implemented by the

British. Thanks to these policies, the restoration of transport infrastructure, and the preservation and effective management of national companies were ensured. These achievements aided in the economic recovery and stability in post-conflict Germany as these recovery efforts provided an environment for the establishment and succession of present-day Germany.

Italy: Italy is also a great example of a Phoenix country. Just like Germany, Italy was in ruins after World War II. Right after the war ended, the Interministerial Commission for Reconstruction (CRT) was established in 1945 for the management of the reconstruction of critical infrastructure in war-crippled Italy. The commission in particular dealt with the management of financial aid the country had received from foreign powers such as the United States of America. In addition to these funds, after the establishment of the ERP, the Italian industry was revitalized, helping in the economic growth of Italy. This development is also known as the “economic miracle of Italy”. It is important to note that no major occupation by foreign powers in Italy was present, unlike the other Axis powers of World War II.

Japan: Even though Imperial Japan was an Axis power in World War II, due to its geographical location, a much different approach was taken for the reconstruction of post-conflict Japan. The United States of America had taken responsibility for the rehabilitation of war-devastated Japan and this was done with the presence of the U.S. occupying forces in the region with 3 phases that passed



Picture 6: A picture of five Japanese children with American goods sent in by Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE).

according to global politics, they were: “the initial effort to punish and reform Japan, the work to revive the Japanese economy, and the conclusion of a formal peace treaty and alliance” (Office of the Historian). It is crucial to note that the ERP was not put in place because of the geographical distinction and especially the strategic interest of the United States of America, as Japan was not located amongst countries that were under a capitalist system. These phases can be deemed a great success as the total rehabilitation of Japan has been reached with the help of a foreign power.

Timeline of Events

September 2, 1945	The end of World War II.
April 1948 - December 1951	European Recovery Program or the Marshall Plan was put in place by the POTUS Truman.
January 20, 1949	The Point Four Program was put in place by the POTUS Truman.

July 7, 1953	The start of the operations of the United Nations Korean Reconstruction Agency (UNKRA) for the reconstruction of the post-war Republic of Korea
1991 - ...	The start of the Lebanon Post-Civil War Reconstruction.
2004	The United Nations Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office (MPTFO) was established.
2005	The establishment of the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) after the adoption of resolutions A/RES/60/180 and S/RES/1645 (2005) by the UNGA and UNSC.
December 14, 2007 - 2013	The EU's Instrument for Stability was established for regions in Africa, Asia, and the Middle East.
July 1, 2010 - ...	The start of the UN Peacekeeping Mission, United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission (MONUSCO) in the Democratic Republic of Congo after the adoption of resolution 1925 by the UNSC.
2011 - ...	The start of the Syrian Infrastructure Reconstruction.
2013 - ...	The start of the South Sudan Infrastructure Reconstruction.
April 25, 2013 - ...	The start of the UN Peacekeeping Mission, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission (MINUSMA) in Mali after the adoption of resolution 2100 by the UNSC.
2015 - ...	The start of the Yemen Infrastructure Reconstruction.
2020 - 2024	The World Bank's Fragility, Conflict and

	Violence (FCV) Strategy was launched for modern post-conflict zones.
2024 - 2027	The start of the Ukraine Facility by the EU.

UN Involvement

The United Nations has been one of the primary contributors to the reconstruction of infrastructure in post-conflict zones throughout the years. The UN has provided financial assistance through its specialized agencies like the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). The UNDP works with local governments to build capacity, eradicate poverty, and more. These are done by the allocation and management of a fund for the reconstruction of the essential infrastructure that is needed for the recovery and development of the post-conflict zones.

Along with the UNDP, the UN and its other specialized agencies coordinate reconstruction efforts by being the line of communication between the national governments, international donors, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to ensure the comprehensiveness and effectiveness of the reconstruction efforts in general.

Relevant UN Documents

The United Nations has adopted many resolutions concerning the issue at hand, some resolutions only addressing the agenda item, and some resolutions with parts of it focusing on it. Below, a few examples have been given for such resolutions:

- [Resolution 1325](#) (S/RES/1325)
- [Resolution 2122](#) (S/RES/2122)
- [Resolution 2589](#) (S/RES/2589)
- [Resolution 1925](#) (S/RES/1925)
The UNSC resolution for MONUSCO.
- [Resolution 2100](#) (S/RES/2100) (the resolution is at the bottom)
The UNSC resolution for MINUSMA.
- [Resolution 1645](#) (S/RES/1645)
- The UNSC resolution for the PBC.
- [Resolution 60/1](#) (A/RES/60/1)
- [Resolution 60/180](#) (A/RES/60/180)
The UNGA resolution for the PBC.

Treaties and Events

Treaties

After World War II, many treaties, programs, and plans were signed with the goal of the rehabilitation of post-conflict zones. However, the effectiveness of these treaties is not fulfilled to the necessary extent in war-torn regions. Here are some examples of treaties that had been signed in the past by the international community:

- [The European Recovery Plan \(ERP\)](#)

Popularly known as the Marshall Plan, is a plan that is sponsored by the United States of America. The aim of this plan is the rehabilitation of the economies for the establishment of stable conditions after World War II. The participant countries of the ERP consist of Austria, Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, the United Kingdom, and western Germany.

- [Dayton Agreement](#)

Though not exactly a reconstruction plan, the Dayton Agreement enabled the reconstruction of Bosnia and Herzegovina as it put an end to the Bosnian War after three and a half years and created the needed stability in the region. For the effective implementation of the agreement, it was required the reconstruction of the region.

Events

Throughout the years since World War II, many events such as conferences for reconstruction planning, agreement signings, etc. were held. Though these conferences are held, not much has been seen to happen regarding the rehabilitation of post-conflict zones. Here are some examples of such events:

- **Paris Conference for Lebanon**

The Paris Conference for Lebanon was held on 24 October 2024 to gather the international community to find ways to strengthen Lebanon's institutions, particularly the Lebanese armed forces, which ensure the nation's internal stability, and to respond to the demands of the Lebanese people for emergency relief and safety.

- **Berlin Conference on Libya**

The Berlin Conference on Libya took place on 19 January 2020 with attendees from foreign powers that influence the conflict. The aim of the conference was the creation of suitable framework conditions for the establishment of an intra-Libyan political process.

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

There have been many previous attempts to resolve the issue in the past and present. Given that the reconstruction of infrastructure in post-conflict zones is still an issue to this day, this means that none of the solutions were effective enough. As explained in the “General Overview” part, all the programs of restoration have the same problems due to the initiator of all programs being MEDCs. These problems are all based on the lack of assessment of the necessities of the local people. Due to this failure to do so, the local people resort to not coming back to their country, instability continues, or even becomes more unstable, resulting in the conflict starting once again, the corruption of the local government, as the donor countries push them to reach their interests.

Possible Solutions

International Support and Funding

With the help of multilateral organizations that are public or private, financial assistance to rebuild critical infrastructure can be possible. In addition, because of the international aspect of the support, transparency will be guaranteed and problems such as exploitation and corruption in governments can be avoided. This support can also include Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in order to bring in private sector expertise and investment in infrastructural development in post-conflict zones. It is important to note that the cooperation between national and international organizations is a necessity for the reconstruction of infrastructure to ensure the longevity and stability of the post-conflict zones.

Inclusive Planning and Stakeholder Engagement

The involvement of local communities and governments in the planning and decision-making can ensure the projects meet the necessities of the population and avoid making unwanted efforts to rebuild such systems that are not suitable for the local population. This can be done with the help of consultations with the affected communities as they are some of the most knowledgeable groups about the post-conflict region and the needs of the local population. The acquisition of regional information is a must for effective rehabilitation.

Use of Technology for Efficient Reconstruction

Technology-driven solutions can be used for the development of the post-conflict zones, for them to catch up to the 21st century standards. These solutions can be smart infrastructure that uses sustainable and renewable energy, energy-efficient buildings that were built with the help of 3D printers, and more. Digital mapping can also be used to assess the extent of damage in the post-conflict zones and understand the geographical differences to ensure effective reconstruction.

Notes from the Chair

The two reports mainly used for this chair report were:

- [Getting Infrastructure Priorities Right in Post-Conflict Reconstruction](#) by P. B. Anand
- [Reconstructing infrastructure for resilient essential services during and following protracted conflict: A conceptual framework](#) by the Red Cross

I recommend all delegates check out these two reports for this agenda item. They provide much more detail with many country examples of rehabilitation.

In addition to these reports, the “Timeline of Events” section includes more examples of recent post-conflict zones and plans of International organizations that might be useful to research before the debate.

Furthermore, the list of post-conflict zones is not limited to this chair report, research about post-conflict regions besides the ones in this report can bring in more information into the debates.

Bon courage ! Je vous attends à RCIMUN'25 !

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