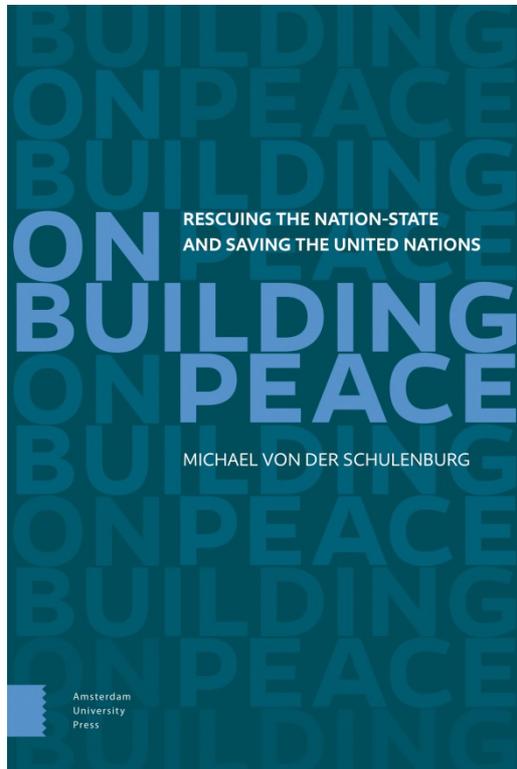


By Michael von der Schulenburg

On Building Peace

Rescuing the Nation-state and Saving the United Nations



Michael von der Schulenburg escaped communist rule, studied in Berlin, London and Paris, and worked for the United Nations and shortly for the OSCE, including as UN Assistant Secretary-General, in many of the world's trouble spots, such as in Haiti, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Syria, the Balkans, Somalia, Sierra Leone and the Sahel. Many issues that are raised in *On Building Peace* are heavily influenced by his unique first-hand experiences.

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What is it about?

On Building Peace examines two destabilizing geopolitical developments and argues that these will force us to radically re-think how we maintain global peace and security. The book outlines a new approach for a future peace order built around two rather unfashionable proposals. First, building peace must focus on rescuing the nation-state – not despite, but because, of globalization. Second, building peace needs an enlarged UN Charter that, in addition to regulating interstate relations, will also provide the legal and normative framework for dealing with collapsing nation-states, belligerent non-state actors and intrastate armed conflicts.

Today, the post-Cold War Western-dominated world order is crumbling. Hopes of 25 years ago that, following the collapse of the Communist system, liberal democracy would spread globally and become the unifying political and economic system bringing peace and prosperity around the world have turned out to be an illusion. On the contrary, global Western leadership is fading and liberal democracy is on the retreat. Instead of bringing peace, repeated Western military interventions have, and continue to, destabilize entire regions. Instead of a commonwealth of like-minded democracies, the world is seeing the rise of competing global and regional powers with different political systems and interests.

At the same time, threats to global peace and security have drastically changed. Though the risk of interstate wars may still exist, they hardly occur nowadays. Interstate wars have been replaced by the triple security threats emanating from failing nation-states, increasingly powerful belligerent non-state actors, and intrastate armed conflicts. Today, failing nation-states trigger irregular mass migration, belligerent non-state actors are responsible for most of our internal security threats, and intrastate armed conflicts cause virtually all battle-related deaths and war destructions as well as refugee movements and internal displacements. Local and foreign armies no longer battle enemy countries and regular armed forces. They now fight almost exclusively in intrastate conflict environments between local government forces and armed non-state actors.

Liberal peacebuilding has not helped stabilize failing nation-states or end intrastate armed conflicts. The book suggests, therefore, to develop a collective security system that is less based on trying to promote a Western political system and more focused on internationally accepted political norms designed to deal with intrastate relations and armed conflicts.

Such international norms for intrastate conflicts may range from good governance issues to human rights. But, foremost, they must restrict foreign financial support and the delivery of arms to conflict parties in intrastate armed conflicts; unilateral military interventions without a Security Council mandate should be banned. Norms would have to regulate when governments can seek foreign military support against its internal opponents and when a government would come under international sanctions for its actions.

The book further discusses norms to balance the principle of national integrity with the right for greater self-determination, the principle to uphold national constitutions with the right to hold local referenda, the principle of protection of civilians with the right to seek asylum and the legal status of internally displaced, and the principle of non-interference with the need to create in-country safe-zones for those seeking safety. To implement these norms, the UN needs a more inclusive UN decision-making framework. The book presents several proposals for this.

Why is it important?

The book responds to the newly emerging global security threats of collapsing nation-states, the rise of armed non-state actors, and the spread of intrastate armed conflicts. With Western leadership declining and the UN collective security system remaining marginalized, ever larger regions could become ungovernable. The world order could tumble into chaos.

In the future, weak nation-states and intrastate armed conflicts, and not interstate wars, will pose the prime threats to global security. With the world's population soon reaching 11 billion, competition over rare resources, the effects of climate change, the collapse of traditional social structures, youth alienation, deepening of social inequalities, the spread of diseases, and all in all: the fight for survival, is likely to accelerate intercommunal and intrastate conflicts. Increasing numbers of poor and badly governed nation-states may buckle under such pressures, with belligerent non-state actors filling the vacuum.

Today's mass migration, refugee flows, terrorist attacks and transnational organized crime may only be an early warning of greater dangers to world peace and security. In the not so unlikely event that belligerent non-state actors will be able to deploy weapons of mass destruction, even if only rudimentary, global security threats would reach frightening new dimensions. Compared to this, the conflicts with Russia and China over some distant peninsulas and islands appear antiquated, Western-centered and out of touch with changing global realities.

The West will no longer have the influence or credibility to enforce global peace unilaterally. It cannot continue trying to solve intrastate armed conflicts, failing nation-states and the rise of belligerent non-state actors with aerial bombing raids, special forces, arms exports, financial support to conflict parties, and by sending foreign experts to organize elections, draft Western-type constitutions and introduce open-market policies. To rescue weak nation-states, we will need collective political answers, and the combined efforts of strong nation-states, including the USA, the European Union, Russia and China as well as other up-and-coming regional powers.

The proposals the book makes for preventing chaos are based on the author's real-life experiences that he has made working for decades in many countries suffering from wars and armed conflicts – and not the product of academic study.

Perspectives

In 1945, on the backdrop of two devastating World Wars, the founding members of the United Nations took a truly epochal decision: they banned the threat and use of military force in pursuit of political aims. But at that time, they had only considered security threats from conflicts among nation-states and their alliances. The UN Charter was never designed to also deal with failing nation-states, belligerent non-state actors and intrastate armed conflicts.

It is time for UN member states to reach what the book calls a new "Grand Bargain" to complement the UN Charter by providing a legal framework addressing intrastate armed conflicts. This should be possible. In 1945, the antagonism among the five principle UN member states was much greater than today. Then, the Soviet Union was ruled by a mass murderer, China by a brutal general fighting a civil war, the UK and France were trying to maintain their colonial empires, and large parts of the United States were under strict apartheid laws. Still, they came to an agreement! So why not today?

Then, it was fears of another World War that brought these unlikely leaders together. Today, fears over an emerging global chaos should motivate UN member states to strike a new deal for collective security in the 21st century built on **strong nation-states** and a **revamped United Nations**.