

THE RALPH BUNCHE FORUM

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Mon, 18 Mar; 6-8pm

Room C201

If Nation-Building is Out, Can Peace-Building Be In?

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Weakly governed or conflict-ridden lands have invited external intervention throughout history, but the delegitimation of empire and concomitant development of international institutions over the past century have transformed what is expected and tolerated from external actors in these situations. Powerful states have experimented with various forms of post-war and in-war “nation building,” but their track record is discouraging and public tolerance for these projects has diminished. In the past two decades the United Nations has carved out a unique vocation in “peace building,” but its efforts to formalize this mission institutionally, most notably through creation of a Peacebuilding Commission, are sputtering amid familiar problems of overlapping responsibilities, scarce resources, and the international community’s fitful attention span. Can this emerging system be rationalized?

Ralph Bunche (1904-1971) was an American scholar, civil-rights campaigner and diplomat. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1950. During his nearly quarter century as a UN official, Bunche aided decolonization and helped to invent peacekeeping. He enjoyed and encouraged vigorous debate.

Jeffrey Laurenti became senior fellow at The Century Foundation in 2005 and works on issues relating to international law and institutions, the United Nations and related agencies, the maintenance of international peace and security, and the politics of American foreign policy. He was executive director of policy studies at the United Nations Association of the United States until 2003, and served as deputy director of the United Nations Foundation's United Nations and Global Security initiative, which provided expert inputs to the work of Kofi Annan’s High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges, and Change.



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