# State Building as a Challenge of Development and Security Policy

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This article aims to reflect about state building, which is one of the most important crossroads of security and development policy. Afghanistan is the most prominent example for that at present, aspects of which have to be considered in order to understand the problem and challenges of state building.

## FRAGILE STATEHOOD AS A SECURITY PROBLEM?

The expectation of ever-lasting peace in relief at the end of the Cold War in 1989/90 has been a heavy disappointment. Not later than 1993/94, the international crisis—created through the civil war in former Yugoslavia—made rather clear that the "end of history" was not about to start. Security and its guarantee should stay as a relevant topic on the world stage—this trend was confirmed by the attacks on the United States in September 2001 and the following wars in Afghanistan (2001-today) and Iraq (2003). Consequently, Islamic terrorism is seen as one of the main threats of our time, together with transnational crime and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

Furthermore, new powers appear on the world stage, represented by their share in trade and economic strength that are rising higher-than-average compared to the "old powers" in Europe, North America or Japan. Economic policy reflects this most clearly through the enlargement of international fora (i.e. from G8 to G20). Nevertheless, this growing economic and financial strength translates also into political power—and will increase the responsibility of these powers (i.e. China and India) for the stability of the international order at the same time.

Simultaneously, the increasing dynamics of globalisation changed the setting of the global stage during the 1990s.

Globalisation can be understood as a condition defined by mutually assured dependence and as being not controllable. The dramatic rise of interconnectedness in nearly all dimensions (communications, economy, ecology, and social life) changed the strategic framework fundamentally and continues to do this until today. Furthermore, economic, social or ecological risks can have global impact on security (i.e. climate change and migration). Through this interconnectedness, functioning statehood gains even more importance as a pillar of international stability than it used to have before.

Additionally, we have seen in the last twenty years a growing number of intra-state conflicts with massive violence and human rights abuses, especially in sub-Sahara Africa. These dramatic intra-states conflicts feature the potential of destabilising whole regions through flows of refugees; often mingle with organised crime that offers the necessary resources to continue with fighting (i.e. "blood diamonds"); and offer terroristic structures the freedom to act as they wish in state-free areas. Non-state actors play a major role in these kinds of conflicts, which means that many of those groups are not interested in (peace) agreements. Therefore, "governance" (and the question of how to create it in complex scenarios like Afghanistan or the Democratic Republic of Congo/DRC) became a major topic of security and development policy discussions at the same time.

If the 1990s witnessed the death of the old rule-sets in international politics and security, the new century has not yet brought the new ones clearly into the spotlight. However, it became clear that fragile statehood is not a problem as such for international security necessarily, but has to be seen as a promoting factor for risks and evolving threats. Therefore, strategies of securing stability for the international order have to start with "governance" if they want to succeed. The creation of governance must be accompanied by development successes in order to keep it sustainable. That means that for the emerging new rule-sets, security became unthinkable without development.

## Who is Affected by Fragile Statehood?

Experiences have shown that the global scope of the problem is remarkable. Different rankings by various development institutions

illustrate that clearly (i.e. List of Low Income Countries/World Bank, Human Development Index/UNDP, Governance Indicator/World Bank, Country Policy and Institutional Assessments/World Bank, and Failed States Index/Fund for Peace). Surely, one can doubt the methodology and statistics outreach of single statements made in these rankings, but they all conform to the overall picture: fragile statehood is a global phenomenon.

These rankings show also that the following characteristics of countries are affected by fragile statehood: they are higher-than-the-average affected by poverty or by war and violent conflict. Often they are countries in post-conflict situations bearing a high risk of falling back into violent conflict or they show characteristics of authoritarian rule that excludes huge parts of their populations from political and economic participation. Usually, one may find these characteristics in combinations. Geographically, countries affected by these symptoms are mainly located in sub-Sahara Africa, but also in Southeast and Central Asia.

## Getting Closer to Fragile Statehood

The ideal state assures a stable framework for its citizens in three dimensions: security, rule of law, and welfare. In these dimensions, the state defines the standards and—most important—is capable of enforcing them. But as usual, the picture is more complex: a state's ability to enforce standards can differ in the aforementioned dimensions—being strong on security, but being weak on welfare at the same time. That means: if one speaks about fragility, one has always to speak about a spectrum of fragility in specific cases. Failed states are rare, but failing states are more common.

This diagnostics does not mean that no set of rules or instruments are existing in the dimensions of weak statehood. Mechanisms of local governance fill the blank space left by the incapable public structures: clientelism, informal power sharing, instrumentalisation of violence or conflicts, mobilisation of traditional structures or the optimisation of external influence for own goals can be named. These management instruments of local elites for coping with fragility might change quickly or exist in parallel. Against this background of complex and too often unknown local structures, the promotion of "governance" becomes a very different task if the decision was made to intervene in a

specific scenario.

Security policy actors have accepted the logic that interventions far away might be needed in order to keep threats at a strategic distance, although this approach comes into conflict with the classical understanding of national sovereignty. Additionally, actors out of the field of humanitarian assistance and development have designed a universal "responsibility to protect" that was adopted by the UN finally. The atrocities in Rwanda (1994) accelerated this openness on the international stage for interventions in a state that is not at war with the acting states. For future approaches of stabilisation and state building in the framework of the UN, it will be important whether emerging global powers like China will share this analysis. Until today, China keeps up the classical understanding of sovereign nation states.

## STATE BUILDING AS AN ANSWER?

If "governance" is the answer to the strategic quest of both development and security in areas of special interest, state building comes to the fore. It can be defined by its goal: the sustainable consolidation of state structures and institutions. In general, state building consists of three phases, although they are not strictly sequential:

1. Stabilisation of existing structures (if useful),

2. Transformation of existing structures (to enable them to perform better),

3. (Re-)Construction of non-existing structures.

That is easier said than done. As showed, the mechanisms of local governance have to be understood extremely well, which requires cultural, regional, and historical expertise of the given scenario. Even if one understands the scenario and the conflict history fully, one has to consider and bear in mind that state building is multi-level politics. The intervening force has to handle the interaction between the local actors, between the local and the external actors, between the different external actors in the field, and between the external actors on the strategic level. How difficult that multi-level politics is has been demonstrated by the ISAF mission in Afghanistan every day.

Finally, state building should not be confused with nation building or peace building, although it overlaps. The latter aims to build peace and reconciliation within a society, and is far more ambitious and requires a longer engagement than state building.

## STRATEGIES OF STATE BUILDING

State building is complicated. Thus, the reflection about different approaches or strategies in order to decide how to achieve the objectives in the most efficient way is of great importance— simply said: it needs a lot of time and requires a lot of resources (personnel, budgets, etc.). Four main schools of thought exist:

I. Liberalisation first

a) Priorities:

- Promotion of human rights and democratisation

- De-regulation and privatisation

- Integration into the world market

b) Time Horizon: short / medium-term

c) Paradigm of political theory: Liberal approaches (i.e. democracy/peace theorem, market-oriented integration/trade).

II. Security first

a) Priorities:

- Strengthening of security sector (i.e. SSR, DD&R)

- Strengthening of monopoly of coercion

- Disarmament and segregation of conflict parties

b) Time Horizon: Short / medium-term

c) Paradigm: Realism (i.e. overcoming the intra-state security dilemma)

III. Institutionalisation first

a) Priorities:

- Strengthening "rule of law"

- Strengthening of administrative capacities (i.e. budgeting, taxes)

- Strengthening / establishment of institutions for peaceful conflict negotiation

b) Time Horizon: medium / long-term

c) Paradigm: Institutionalism (i.e. bargaining processes, socialisation of actors)

IV. Civil Society first

a) Priorities:

  - Promotion of non-state-actors (i.e. NGOs, unions, parties)

  - Improvement of political participation

  - Mobilisation of marginalised groups, policies of reconciliation.

b) Time Horizon: medium / long-term

c) Paradigm: Social constructivism (i.e. change of identities).

Reasonably, these strategies will not be implemented purely, but rather combined with each other, depending on the needs of the specific scenario. Furthermore, flexible thinking has to be in place: if the overall situation changes, the strategic emphasis might have to change as well.

The current ISAF mission in Afghanistan is again a good example: once, it started with a two-fold emphasis on liberalisation and security, which was expressed by the first democratic elections of president and parliament on the one hand and the defeat of the Taliban on the other hand. Since 2007/08, the single emphasis of the international engagement is on security and accompanied by the postponement of the elections for parliament in 2010.

## CHALLENGES FOR STATE BUILDING

If one conducts state building, several general challenges have to be observed on the field level:

(a) Interventions always disrupt or at least influence the local power balance, because that is their aim. But the question is how interventions can be conducted in order to avoid escalations, which undermine the goal of intervening itself. Therefore, it is important to understand the different approaches of civilian and military actors.

(b) Interventions usually have to be violent in order to accomplish their goals. On the intervening side there should be a consensus about the handling of escalations and spoilers before the intervention starts and while it is ongoing. Intervention forces have to be prepared properly in order to deal with spoilers if necessary.

(c) Interventions for state building are usually not a national, but a multinational, endeavour that is mandated by the United Nations (UN). Hereby, it is critical for success that there is a coherent understanding of time horizons and resources in order to be successful. The communication has to be trustworthy and stable.

(d) Interventions for state building aim to build up sustainable governance structures, which are still functioning after leaving the scenario. A choice about integration or non-integration of local governance structures has to be made, and this requires a broad knowledge about the scenario. Usually, not all intervening partners have the same knowledge and understanding of the scenario.

But there also typical challenges that have to be taken into account on the strategic level:

(a) Strategic planning of the international community: it seems to be difficult enough to ensure strategic planning in a national context—Germany is a good example with complex structures on national government level. But it gets even more problematic once you need to reach a satisfying compromise with multiple actors and their differing perspectives. Usually, the responsible body for the strategic planning does not have the executive power needed to "force" the contributors (i.e. UN)—it has to deal with the assets that have been given voluntarily by those contributors, but cannot plan with what it requires to solve the challenge.

(b) Coherence of policies on national and international level: the simple fact that the international community has reached an agreement does not mean at the same time that the main elements of this strategy are executed as decided on the national level of contributors. Domestic politics might change the substance of the agreement through a number of reasons (i.e. caveats of NATO member states in ISAF).

(c) Mobilisation of resources: although governments are willing to take responsibilities in international matters and accept resulting obligations, they might find it difficult to mobilise the necessary resources, either because they failed to prepare their institutions structurally (police, armed forces, aid workers, etc.) or they simply underestimated the tasks.

(d) Strategic patience: state building is an endeavour that takes decades, as the case of the former Yugoslavia shows. Against this background, the difficulty to sustain the political support over years is tremendous. Even worse, if the tide of public opinion turns against the strategic aim of the government, it is impossible to succeed in the long run. The volatile strategic patience in contributing countries is the Achilles heel of state building.

(e) Acceptance through local population: if one wishes to succeed with an intervention one should not be blind for the needs of local communities. To forget or underestimate them is one of the most important reasons of failing interventions. It is not sufficient to have them looking neutrally on the activities of the intervening forces—one needs them supporting actively or governance will not be restorable.

(f) Definition of success: experiences of interventions show that it is rather easy to start with an intervention, but nearly impossible to stop the engagement if one wishes sustainable stabilisation. Theoretically, such an involvement could continue into eternity. The challenge lies in the definition of the criteria of success and an exit strategy built upon them. Potential conflicts of objectives between different actors have to be considered.

These challenges illustrate very well why the necessary comprehensive approach (CA) for state building is difficult to realise. Next to the classical blue helmet missions of the UN, different approaches have been tested in order to make CA work: either the Anglo-Saxon approach of close guidance of development in service to security, or the German approach of a limited independence of development from security. Both have been executed in Afghanistan and have only limited results. It is highly recommendable to conduct an analysis about the strengths and weaknesses of both models after the current intensification of all military and civil efforts in Afghanistan.

## Conclusion

Through the changes of the international order and the establishment of new and strong dependencies between its actors, the problem of fragile statehood has become a major topic of international politics since 1990.

In the recent 20 years, many efforts in different regional contexts (i.e., ex-Yugoslavia, Democratic Republic of Congo/DRC, and Afghanistan) have been made in order to find an answer to this challenge. Being far away of ultimate perfection, the thinking about the general idea of state building and both its chances and limits continues in international security and development policy.

Next to the analysed challenges of state building at the crossroads of security and development policy, an important aspect of these future debates will be the interaction with emerging global

powers like China and India. The concept of national sovereignty has changed with the growing number of failed and failing states, because international responsibility with the right to intervene is seen as more important than national sovereignty on the level of the UN and many member states. But this perception is not shared by all relevant powers internationally. The strategic debate about the nexus of power and responsibility has not yet started fully.

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