FBA Brief 05/2016

Governance, Peacebuilding and State-Society Relations
International Expert Forum (IEF)

At the moment, over one quarter of the world's population lives in states facing fragility and out of those states at least half are estimated to be affected by armed conflict. In settings such as these, a crisis may have detrimental effects on the legitimate functioning of government and it can easily jeopardize existing state-society relations. Supporting delicate peace agreements, institutional recovery and political processes in a fragile state constitutes a great challenge and poses several dilemmas. How can those challenges and dilemmas be met within the efforts of building sustainable peace? How can the relationship between citizens and the institutions affecting their lives be strengthened within current and future peacebuilding efforts?

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SUMMARY

This meeting brief summarizes the presentations and discussion that took place during the seventh International Expert Forum (IEF) that aimed to assess the state of the art in knowledge and practice at the crossroads of governance and peacebuilding, and to unpack the state-society relationship in a way that could help to inform stronger policymaking in consolidating peace and building inclusive and ultimately more resilient societies.

› *Experience from the past two decades of peacebuilding suggests that a lot remains to be done when it comes to including local voices and building strong social contracts in peacebuilding efforts.*
› *The existing peacebuilding architecture leaves a need for more innovative and flexible measures. There is a need to re-assess its current use of templates and adjust them so that they become broad-based multiple-actor strategies.*
› *When aiming at creating national resilience in fragile settings, the international community needs to not only ensure local ownership and participation in order to balance the partnership between the interveners and local actors but also to let the transitions take the time needed, often decades rather than years, and to ensure adequate funding throughout the entire period.*

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INTRODUCTION

Building, or rebuilding, functioning state institutions has long been recognized as important to peacebuilding.[1] While there is an overall consensus that internal security and stability is a prerequisite for peacebuilding, building local capacity to improve decision-making processes and legitimacy, in the form of constitutional processes, parliaments, and elections, as well as building solid foundations for economic recovery, in the form of rule of law, revenue generation, and the provision of core public services, have all been indicated as priorities. The latest emphasis is on supporting inclusive and sustainable institution-building as noted in Goal 16 of the newly minted Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs.[2] All in all, the consensus is on the importance of supporting governance to consolidate peace, as summed up in the core message of the often-cited World Bank's 2011 World Development Report: "strengthening legitimate institutions and governance to provide citizen security, justice, and jobs is crucial to break cycles of violence".[3]

Still, building legitimate, inclusive, and responsive institutions in post-conflict and fragile contexts is an elusive goal, as proven by the persistence of the same countries over the years to remain in the top ranks of fragility indices. This is because fragility erodes the basis for effective and efficient governance, with public authorities being demonstrably unsuccessful in guaranteeing security, facilitating or delivering services, and peacefully managing their societies' differences. But it is also clear that in post-conflict countries and cities efforts to build peace and strengthen governance can risk being counter-productive. Post-conflict ceasefires and peace agreements can end violence, but may fail to address the many causes of the deteriorated relationship between the state and its citizens. Peace efforts can also, unintentionally, undermine state capacity, especially when power-sharing deals are cut with former armed groups who seek to control resources and support exclusionary policies. Moreover, efforts to enhance centralized institutions' capacity can create more insecurity and exclusion among minorities or marginalized groups, feeding resentment and even armed resistance.

A MISSING LINK

A peacebuilding gap has emerged. Specifically, the improvements in the quantity and quality of the relationship between citizens and the institutions affecting their lives, are a missing link in many peacebuilding efforts. Too often, peacebuilders over-emphasize the elites' capacity to ensure law and order and basic services. They also tend to focus narrowly on institutional reforms in the public sector, and they relegate the more sensitive and complex issues of inclusiveness, representation, and legitimacy to the holding of elections. Yet, as previous IEF seminars have shown, without proper preparation, electoral processes themselves are potentially conflict-generating triggers.[4] The health of the political settlement between the state and its people, what is commonly known as a "social contract," is receiving growing attention.[5] However, external donors' recipes and local elites' priorities often side-track societal needs and preferences, and state resources and capacity fail to respond to societal expectations. Spoilers, whether internal or external, can also impede or disrupt efforts to build or rebuild the social contract.

With protests and social unrest affecting many countries across the globe, the issue of state-society relations, trust in institutions, and government capacities

1. Research has been pointing to the importance of institutions in building peace for at least a decade. See, for example, S. Krasner, "Shared Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States," International Security 29, no. 2 (2004); K. Marten, Enforcing the Peace (New York: Columbia University Press, 2004); R. Paris, At War's End (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004); S. Stedman et al., Ending Civil Wars (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2002).
2. A/RES/70/1 – Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, available at http://bit.ly/1Y3D3sN
3. World Bank, World Development Report 2011, Conflict, Security, and Development (2011), available at http://bit.ly/1oRnF1V
4. Briefs covering previous IEF seminars are available at http://bit.ly/1UOGdkP
5. This was the core message of the United Nations Development Programme report Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract (2012), available at http://bit.ly/1PqsiOo

to respond to new societal demands are hardly questions restricted to fragile and post-conflict settings. However, in countries and cities where the social fabric is torn apart by years of armed conflict and organized crime, with complex multi-ethnic contexts, deeply-rooted grievances, and lack of capacities and resources, these questions become more daunting, and urgent.

LOCAL OWNERSHIP

When it comes to building peace and institutions based on functioning state-society relations, the centrality of local agency and empowerment of the local population cannot be overstated, as it emerged from the scholars' presentations of their latest research.[6]

THE ROLE OF THE INTERVENERS

In order to understand the challenges connected to the creation of strong and durable state-society relations, Séverine Autesserre, Associate Professor of Political Science at Bernard College, has shifted the perspective and taken a closer look at the micro-level explanations of why many interventions aiming at creating good governance, fail. Findings from her ethnographic research in conflict zones (mainly the Democratic Republic of the Congo but also six other conflict stricken countries)[7] has demonstrated the importance of the "everyday" elements of field work.

"The everyday practice of peacebuilding on the ground matters tremendously. And it is by looking at these everyday practices and habits that we can understand why interveners contribute to understanding modes of operation that they know, that we all know are inefficient, ineffective and even counter-productive".

Practices, habits and narratives shape interveners' understanding of the world as well as their perception of appropriate, legitimate and effective actions. In return, these actions reproduce and reinforce existing practices, habits and narratives. This, in combination with an assumption that external actors, or outsiders, can solve complicated and complex problems in conflict-affected contexts, gives the interveners' thematic expertise superiority over local knowledge. According to Autesserre this leads to, and is sustained by, a number of practices such as the recruitment and deployment of expatriates, accountability towards donors instead of the host country and its population and the near obsession with impartiality. The end result tends to be bad programming and implementation and in the worst-case even resistance among the local population, reducing the effectiveness of the intervention even further.

In order to break this cycle of ineffectiveness, Autesserre suggested that the international policy community should realize and take into account the importance of the everyday practices, habits and narratives in the various areas of operations in order to improve international peacebuilding efforts. She also stressed the need to rebalance the role of local and thematic knowledge and to break down the barriers and boundaries between interveners and the local population.

LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS: FOCUS ON THE YOUTH

There are a record number of young people in the world today, and in some countries where peacebuilding efforts take place, they make up for more than half of the population. Therefore, when talking about local stakeholders and ownership youth should not be overlooked.

Elisabeth King, Associate Professor of International Education at New York University, who has examined the results of education and youth programs on violence

6. The presentations can be watched at https://www.ipinst.org/2015/11/twenty-first-century-peacebuilding-international-expert-forum#15

7. Autesserre Séverine, Peaceland: Conflict Resolution and the Everyday Politics of International Intervention (Cambridge: 2014).

in the Global South, suggested that international policy makers should pay youth extra attention. She explored the phenomenon known as the "youth bulge" and the fact that this large demographic of young people can represent quite different things depending on the audience.

"Youth are either a peril or a promise, a disaster or a dividend, troublemakers or peacemakers, depending on global, national and local priorities. The policy-maker's opinion about the youth bulge has implications on programs and policies that are meant to address youth, especially on education."

Taking an overly simplistic view, assuming that education and jobs-skills training will universally prevent youth from participating in conflict or violent extremism, will unavoidably lead to a highly dangerous and problematic waste of resources, according to King. In order to create peacemakers rather than troublemakers, the international community needs to see beyond the dominant logic that education is a bulwark against violence and terrorism, and dare to see the more complex reality on the ground. Many highly educated youths, even those with employment, remain drawn to violence in certain contexts. This demonstrates the need for designing programs that not only care for their material needs, such as earning a future income, but that tackles questions of self-identity and the desire to have an impact on your own community.

Except for overlooking the complexity and nuances needed to create effective programs, King raised another factor that is currently left out of the dominant logic that needs to be considered; the social structures within which the youth exist. Poverty, corruption, generational conflicts, tribal and religious identities are factors that affect the outcome of the programs. She advocated for more awareness that programs aimed at creating peace may end fuelling conflict depending on who participates, who sets the agenda, and who decides on the content.

When looking at the programs that are designed today, the dominant logic seems to be that "opportunity costs", that education is costly not only in the sense that the schooling itself costs but also in the sense that it's costly for the families in relation to the manpower they lose by sending their children to school. According to King more of the same is unlikely to contribute to change and that it is time for international policy makers to rethink the way they promote youth issues and programs and dare to assign the appropriate resources in order to create change. This would require the policy makers to truly include youth voices and aspirations, to take into account the social structures within which their efforts and programs will be implemented as well as accepting and analysing the complexities and nuances mentioned above.

A NEW KIND OF GOVERNANCE

One of the most widely supported methods of resolving social conflict in a non-violent manner is that of democratic governance. Yet the route to democracy can in itself be conflict-generating, involving dramatic transformations in states and societies which do not come without a price. Efforts to support democratic governance in conflict-stricken and fragile states, often internationally supported, inevitably lead to re-occurring tensions and certain trade-offs. Trade-offs that challenge the interveners own definition of good governance as well as their ability to adjust to the local context. Dipali Mukhopadhyay, Assistant Professor of International and public Affairs at Colombia University, looked at modern state formation in conflict and post-conflict settings with a focus on the challenges weak political centres face as they attempt to grow their authority in the midst of formidable competitors. She presented findings from her fieldwork in Afghanistan where she has examined the role of local warlords in the formation of the new democratic order, challenging the concept of what is commonly referred to as good governance. Mukhopadhyay talked about what she calls a new kind of governance that she has seen emerging

in Afghanistan under President Karzai in the early 2000s. The new government drew on historical precedent from the Ottoman period and designed a highly centralized state and appointed governors as proxies to extend the then weak rule beyond Kabul to the 34 provinces. A majority of the new governors were warlords from the former regime who had consolidated their power as a result of the US-led intervention that armed and funded them in order to overthrow the Taliban rule. This tactic led to mixed results according to Mukhopadhyay;

"Not all warlords were created equal, not all were capable or interested in governing on behalf of the central government, but there were a few that were just strong enough to infuse a weak government position with their strength. But they also had rivals and needed help from the government in Kabul, in order to become dominant. They were therefore more likely to do what was good not only for them but also for the regime in Kabul."

Drawing on her almost decade long fieldwork in Afghanistan, Mukhopadhyay concluded that under certain conditions warlords can become effective governors on behalf of the state and that this can even be necessary for the weak state to be able to transition from a state of fragility and conflict to a stable democracy. This kind of governance is a far cry from our common conception of good governance, she said, but it represents a new kind of political order in places where it did not exist before and in a country which we have seen has been incredibly challenging to govern, not only in the past 15 years but also historically. The key here might be in acknowledging the tension between the dominant perceptions of what traditional democratization is supposed to look like and the local context. Accepting differing views and embracing the local population might be a good starting point in combination with the re-evaluation of the timeline inflicted on countries going through the democratization process.

TAKING STOCK AND MOVING FORWARD

Over 20 years ago Boutros Boutros-Ghali's influential "Agenda for Peace", as mentioned by Ambassador Gert Rosenthal, Chair of the UN Advisory Group on Experts on Review of Peacebuilding Architecture[8], paved the way for a new way of thinking about peace; not merely as a ceasefire, an absence of fighting, but as a presence of social, economic and political order and the creation of a stable and flourishing society. This, then, new approach to thinking about peace, focusing not only on deterrence and security as traditionally defined, required a re-examination of the peacebuilding concept and an expansion of the toolbox used in order to support the efforts of reconstruction, reconciliation and long-term conflict prevention. Since then, several major policy review processes have explicitly linked governance in fragile and conflict-affected settings with wider peacebuilding and statebuilding goals.[9]

However, the past two decades of peacebuilding experience suggests that much remains to be done. Efforts to include the local voices and to build strong social contracts have failed more than once. In the subsequent sessions of the round-table discussions, which took place under the Chatham House rule of non-attribution, lessons and implications for strategic and programmatic development of peacebuilding initiatives were presented and debated.[10]

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8. H.E. Mr. Gert Rosenthal's keynote address can be watched at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Q0VvLwOFwDw
9. UNDP, Governance for Peace: Securing the Social Contract (2012), available at http://bit.ly/1PqsiOo
10. Other speakers included Ali A. Jalali, Distinguished Professor, Near East Asia Center for Strategic Studies (former Interior Minister of Afghanistan), Ken Menkhaus, Professor and Chair, Political Science Department, Davidson College, Shane Quinn, Acting Head of Rule of Law, Folke Bernadotte Academy, Henk-Jan Brinkman, Chief, Policy, Planning and Application Branch, Peacebuilding Support Office, United Nations, Marco Donati, Civil Affairs Team, Policy and Best Practices Service, DPKO/DFS, United Nations, Jago Salmon, Advisor UN/WB Partnership in Fragile and Conflict Affected States at the United Nations and Charles Chauvel, Team Leader, Inclusive Political Processess, Governance and Peacebuilding, BPPS/UNDP, United Nations. They gave their remarks under the Chatham House Rule.

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In the discussion three main themes kept reoccurring: 1) the need to revise the current international approach to peacebuilding; 2) the inclusion of the local population; and 3) the time factor.

THE STRATEGIC STATE OF PEACEBUILDING

Over the past couple of decades, the international community has made important strides in building international institutions and expertise to reduce the incident of civil war.[11] What the system has not been adjusted to however, is to keep up with the pace of the emerging analysis of conflict and specifically the recognition of the recurrence and interlinked nature of today's conflicts and the attempts made at creating durable peace. Problems connected to the top-down nature of major international stabilization and reconstruction missions were discussed, the risk of them resulting in low-quality or stalled peace that suffers from deficits in areas of local ownership, local empowerment and legitimacy was brought up repeatedly. As mentioned by Séverine Autesserre during the ignite session as well as several other participants, both scholars and practitioners, the introduction of a large foreign presence has the tendency to generate a number of conditions that are not conducive to the creation of durable peace. Instead, it can result in undermining it by creating an economy that caters to the expatriates and mounting friction between locals and internationals which in turn risk resulting in the debilitating sense of national dependence on powerholding outsiders. The standard templates used by those types of missions were also discussed at length, as several of the speakers questioned their lack of flexibility and the belief that "one size fits all" still tends to endure. The fact that the templates may do little to boost local capacities and only marginally contribute to the improvement of the often deep psychological, social and economic impacts of violent conflict calls for urgent action and a new focus for the future development of peacebuilding programming. In order to avoid that peace becomes something that happens to the local population rather than something in which they participate, the international community needs to re-assess its current use of templates and adjust them so that they become broad-based, multiple-actor strategies that are flexible enough to tap into local resources and let the local population become active agents in the construction of their new future.

INCLUSION – WHOM, WHEN AND HOW?

Inclusiveness, however, raises many questions: whom to include, at what stage of the process, and at what level of the society. Even though the participants overall agreed on the need to include the local population, the views differed somewhat on when, how and who. The phrase inclusive enough was brought up as a middle-ground approach that can help deliver the early results that subsequently allow for a more profound, long-term process of institution building and the restoration of confidence of the citizens. Others stressed the need for a balanced partnership between the interveners and the local actors, viewing local culture as an asset rather than a constraint that needs to be dealt with, as mentioned in Mukhopadhyay's presentation, in combination with the recognition that there are limitations to the extent to which external interveners can bring peace to a foreign context. In order to move away from the existing approach to peacebuilding, where the dominant logic seem to be that its focus should lie on technical experts providing capacity development and not much else, a new mind-set is needed, that allows for the peacebuilders to move into new territory and to act with a different timespan in mind.

Several of the participants brought up political processes as key, arguing that there is a missed opportunity for the peacekeeping and peacebuilding missions and that durable peace cannot be built without political dialogue. The exclusion

11. World Bank, World Development Report 2011, Conflict, Security, and Development (2011), available at http://bit.ly/1oRnF1V

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of key segments of society from political processes often lies at the centre of the grievances that fuelled the conflict in the first place. This poses an enormous challenge for development agencies and other interveners and often requires a different approach that goes beyond the more common focus on for instance early elections after the end of a conflict. Instead, it requires a redesigning of the basic rules of politics where participation is broadened to include vulnerable groups across civil society and the reintegration of (formerly) armed groups as well as support to electoral and parliamentary processes. These efforts should aim to eradicate the underlying patterns of inequality and exclusion that characterize many conflict-affected societies. The inclusiveness of a settlement and the public perception of its fairness are critical to building state legitimacy and sustaining peace. However, the question of how exactly to go about it remains elusive and calls for local contextualization and the ability to build flexibility in peacebuilding programs within the limits of their mandates.

THE TIME FACTOR

The third reoccurring theme during the discussions was that of time. The 2011 World Development Report stated that the fastest transitions to stable institutional arrangements have taken a generation or more. This shows that there are no short cuts to be taken, because managing governance reforms in fragile environments requires the balancing of short-term priorities, to meet immediate needs and to gain momentum, with long-term planning that covers decades to come and that requires sustained commitment from the parties involved. These transitions from fragility to durable peace are seldom linear and demand continuous re-evaluation and learning throughout the implementation. Even successful transitions can be marred by periodic cycles of crisis and violence. The IEF participants stressed the need for the intervening parties to keep this in mind and to plan for it, so that it does not cause the transition process to come to a halt. A prerequisite for this is that the international organizations must be equipped to anticipate these events and be prepared to address them adequately, something that requires both resources and knowledge as well as patience and the allowance to see beyond early wins and quick fixes. Even though the need for long-term planning has started to gain attention within the international community, the dilemma that states, as well as several of the international mandating bodies, remain reluctant to pursue longer term engagements still remains. Several of the IEF speakers voiced the urgent need to change this, and for more creative solutions to be found. Keeping a presence on the ground over a long period of time is both extremely costly and can also be unwelcome by the host state, instead a more flexible approach was suggested, where you combine different types of interventions such as judicial reform, light monitoring and long-term reinforcements within the security sector as a way to support of the reform process. This, however, requires not only long-term planning but also sufficient and predictable funding, a need that is stressed in the report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, The Challenge of Sustaining Peace.[12] The report recommends "more predictable peacebuilding financing", through, for example, strategic partnerships and pooling of funding between major actors such as the UN, World Bank and other multilateral financial institutions in order to maximize the impact and share the risk.[13] Securing long-term funding would allow for a new thinking regarding timeframes and outcomes. That combined with a coherent, system-wide approach would create a much needed new foundation for peacebuilding and for the creation of resilient and stable societies.

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12. The report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture is available at http://bit.ly/1WmcWzI

13. Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture, The Challenge of Sustaining Peace, 29 June 2015.

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CONCLUSION

A resilient society requires a state with the capacity to, not only predict, but also to manage and respond to crisis in a timely manner. It also entails a society that can preserve and rebound from challenges and stresses with an adequate level of self-sufficiency. It is when a society has reached that desirable state that the relationship and trust between the government and its people can be restored, renewed and maintained. Fostering resilient interactions is both a process and an outcome.[14]

Key takeaways from the discussions can be summarized as follows:

• The existing peacebuilding architecture leaves a need for more innovative and flexible measures. The international community needs to re-assess its current use of templates and adjust them so that they become broad-based, multiple-actor strategies that are flexible enough to tap into local resources and let the local population become active agents in the construction of their new future.

• Ensuring local ownership and building on local knowledge and expertise is vital. There is a need for more balanced partnerships between interveners and local actors, where local culture is viewed as an asset rather than a constraint.

• Successful transitions from a state of fragility to a stable, resilient society takes time. The benchmark for success should not be set in years but rather decades. To insure that positive impact is achieved, long-term planning and the managing of expectations is required.

• The need for predictable and adequate funding has to be met. In order to maximize the impact and share the risk, major actors such as the UN, World Bank and other multilateral financial institutions need to create new, strategic partnerships and new solutions regarding the pooling of funding.

• Adopting a humble approach to what is realistic. International actors and donor states would benefit from being more humble regarding what can be achieved in the lifetime of an intervention, and adjust expectations and metrics of success to more realistic results.

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14. OECD's Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations (OECD-DAC, 2007).

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