

Crisis States Research Centre

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Core case studies: Afghanistan, Colombia, DR Congo, Mozambique, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia

Secondary case studies: Pakistan, Philippines, Sudan, Tajikistan

Research Questions

Why are some 'fragile states' more vulnerable than others?

CSRC set out to investigate the causes of crisis and breakdown in the fragile states of the developing world and the processes of avoiding or overcoming them. Our overarching research questions ask why, when challenged by crises, some political, economic and social systems have been able to survive and reform while others have experienced a radical escalation of conflict and violence. Research was divided into three streams in response:

1. Development as State Making

- *What causes state resilience, or conversely, state fragility?*

Contrary to much of what has been written about fragile states, we argue that what is responsible for 'state resilience' may be quite distinct and at times even at odds with what accounts for 'development'.

- *What accounts for the rise of a state with the capacities to promote sustained accelerated growth and expanded welfare?*

We argue that the character and shape of political organisation is decisive in determining whether a state moves towards resilience or fragility or takes measures to promote development.

These thematic questions were applied in specificity to the four main research focus areas of this research stream: economic resource mobilisation, patterns of political organisation, administration, and security.

2. Cities and Fragile States

The Cities and Fragile States programme was conceived and launched at the outset of Phase 2 as a 'blue skies' initiative, and was ground breaking in its exploratory nature. Our approach emphasised a critical re-examination of the literature related to state-building, conflict and development from an urban perspective, and an inductive approach to original empirical research. Research responded to two overarching questions:

- *In what ways do cities determine whether or not a state moves from fragility to resilience, or vice versa?*
- *What is the relationship between cities and conflict?*

3. Global and Regional Axes of Conflict

- *What factors determine the effectiveness of regional organisations in relation to regional security and the prevention, management and resolution of violent conflict?*

Key Findings

What makes for a resilient state does not necessarily make for a developmental state.

- State resilience often is achieved at the cost of accelerated development.
- Specific 'elite bargains' underpin the state at any given time.
- Establishing rudimentary taxation capacity is central to the long-run evolution of a state that enjoys legitimacy and is capable of financing its own operations independent of foreign assistance.
- Donor interventions need to focus much more on processes of internal national and economic integration, which are crucial to processes of state-making, but often underplayed by the international community in its efforts to open up economies to benefit from globalisation.
- Without the establishment of programmatic political parties, standard templates of democratic political reforms – particularly competitive elections - are at best problematic and at worst conflict-promoting in post-war states.
- In countries where much of the population lives in rural areas and subsists on the basis of agriculture or livestock, the state's failure to address development in this sector can create extreme vulnerabilities to its authority.

Rapid urbanisation is putting demands on fragile states beyond their capacity to respond. As effective cities are critical to state resilience and development this makes for a vicious circle, implying more support to cities rather than less.

- Cities constitute critical sites of intervention under conditions of state fragility and reconstruction.
- Decentralisation strategies have been geared to the district level and have not served cities well.
- Metropolitan government is a critical but largely unrecognised governance tier for state reconstruction. In the case of national state fragility, security, growth and welfare needs are met or compensated for at city level either privately or by local government or both. If needs are met privately and without local government involvement or national government support, state fragility is reinforced from the bottom up.
- Policies aimed at state building and conflict prevention cannot solely focus on the poor or on elites but must address the relationship between them and the role of the urban middle classes for outcomes to be sustainable.
- The relationship between elites and the urban popular classes largely hinges on the quality of life in urban areas and ability of governments to provide a basic level of security, growth and welfare in urban areas.
- Urban and national (including rural) development are not 'either/or' but coterminous strategies.

The donor community has a poor understanding of the security architecture in fragile states and external assistance for military reconstruction is piecemeal and inadequate.

- Building an effective and accountable national armed force that is organised around a unified chain of command remains a crucial step in state-building and failing to do so undermines possibilities for the promotion of more democratic forms of government or economic development.
- Armed challenges to state authority may be constitutive of state-making and establishing the grounds of development: every major armed movement must be evaluated in terms of the cause for its appearance, its objectives and the basis of its support in society.
- Crises of domestic security can beset relatively resilient states and usually reflect a lack of resources for police and judiciary organisations within the state, which lead to their capture by those who are complicit in criminal or socially oppressive behaviour. Such crises are symptoms of state weakness and call for well-rounded interventions that will increase the resources and accountability of state organisations.
- Fragile states are characterised by institutional multiplicity such that when state security and justice sectors are weak, non-state competitors, with independent sources of legitimacy can compete as security actors. While the turn towards private provision of security at times appears efficient and legitimate, by definition these actors function outside the framework of law and operate without adequate accountability and so tend to degenerate over time becoming sources of insecurity.
- The prevalence, nature and intensity of intra- and inter-state conflict shape a regional organisation's ability to implement its peace and security agenda.
- Donors that promote regional co-operation and co-ordination tend to view these strategies as objectively and indisputably necessary and beneficial: they may not be.
- A high level of regional co-operation and co-ordination, particularly in the political and security realms, requires the pooling and partial loss of sovereignty.
- In many regions it is not simply the role of the local hegemon but rather the relationship between the two most powerful states that is significant for security.
- DDR programmes have succeeded only where real opportunities existed for former officers and soldiers to earn a living and provide for their families in civilian life
- Military interventions since 1945 have: primary been launched by democracies; been inflicted on vulnerable and poor populations; had a negative effect on democracy in the target country indefinitely; had a negative effect on growth for several years.