

id21 insights

research findings for development policymakers and practitioners

Retaining legitimacy in fragile states

Globalisation, liberalisation, and the withdrawal of external support from Cold War alliances have placed enormous strains on some developing countries – best described as ‘fragile states’. These are states with high levels of poverty and inequality and low levels of state capacity. They are particularly vulnerable to internal and external shocks as well as domestic and international conflict.

International attention is focusing more and more on fragile states as sites of potential violence and warfare. State fragility can lead to devastating humanitarian crises: 3.9 million people died in the war in the Democratic Republic of Congo between 1998 and 2004 for example; at least 200,000 people have died in the current conflict in Darfur whilst as many as two million have been displaced.

Fragile states are also seen as potential sites of terrorist activity – as in Afghanistan under Taliban rule where the self-proclaimed perpetrators of the attack against the World Trade Centre on 11th September 2001 found refuge and a base for their activities.

Yet many fragile states have managed to avoid political violence and state collapse. In countries like Tanzania or Zambia, for instance, despite deeply rooted poverty and repeated economic crises, political authority has remained intact and conflict has largely been managed peacefully.

This issue of *id21 insights* explores different dimensions of state fragility, sources of political legitimacy and strategic considerations for the donor community. How can interventions in fragile states contribute effectively to securing peace and development?

Defining political legitimacy

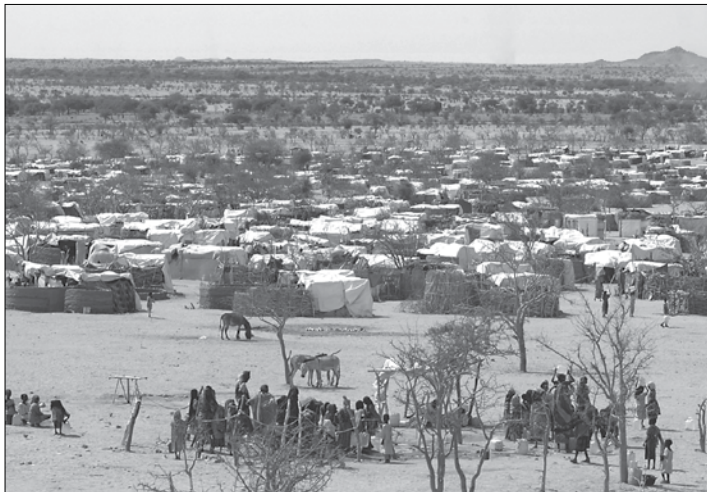
A state enjoys political legitimacy when the people over whom the state exercises its

authority accept ‘its right to rule’. In order to manage the conflicts within a society peacefully, a state needs (at least) passive acceptance of its right to rule by the majority of people. The state also requires the active support of the most powerful people – those who command economic and political power, like big businesses, large property owners, major religious leaders or regional power brokers.

Even non-democratic regimes need to achieve a degree of legitimacy to survive over time. In Indonesia, the Suharto regime (1967 to 1998) achieved significant legitimacy for many years despite its military origins and authoritarian character. This was done by ensuring the basic delivery of education and health services, and paying attention to rural development. Once those close to President Suharto started to pay more attention to personal enrichment than national development, the regime began to unravel through processes described by **Graham Brown**.

Alternative sources of legitimacy

In a basic way, legitimacy is determined by a state’s performance – the extent to which those who control public authority deliver what they promise. This is grounded mainly in the economic sphere, but alternative sources of legitimacy exist. Fragile states, by definition, are particularly susceptible to legitimacy challenges. When economic performance is poor



Sudanese refugees at Iridimi refugee camp near Iriba in Chad. They fled their homes after being attacked by Janjaweed militias. At least 200,000 people have died in the current conflict in Darfur whilst as many as two million have been displaced. A 60-day ceasefire was agreed on January 10th 2007 including the beginning of a new round of diplomacy involving Sudan, rebel leaders, the African Union, United Nations and other countries.

Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures 2004

and a state’s legitimacy is challenged, non-economic factors can become an important basis to challenge or defend state legitimacy, including:

- ensuring order and security in society in the face of all sorts of threats (as in Indonesia during the early years of Suharto)
- defending the integrity of the nation (Nigeria under Olusegan Obasanjo)
- promoting a particular ethnic agenda (as in Kenya under Daniel Arap Moi) or a non-ethnic one (Tanzania under Julius Nyerere)

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- ▶ ● defending or challenging (often invented) tradition (at different moments in Congo/Zaire Mobutu sought legitimacy in challenging or defending traditional authority)
- promoting reforms that increase participation (as in Bolivia under Evo Morales) or perhaps decrease it (as in Chile under Augusto Pinochet).

Democratic rules not necessarily a source of legitimacy

There is a tendency in the international community to see the introduction of competitive politics – the holding of an election or the passage of a democratic constitution – as a means to ensuring the legitimacy of a state in reconstruction. But many long standing 'democratic' regimes in Latin America, or those set up in the wake of independence in Africa or Asia, have been easily deposed by authoritarian regimes. These democracies failed to deliver meaningful economic change, or presided over highly unequal societies, or simply could not ensure basic security.

Despite prolonged economic crisis, the state in Tanzania maintained stability and peace largely due to the legitimacy of its leading party, Chama Cha Mapinduzi (CCM). Despite presiding over a one-party state, CCM maintained the state's presence often down to the village level: there was a real sense that the state acted in the interests of poor people. The military coup in Pakistan that brought General Musharraf to power was welcomed by the population given the failure of the former democratic regime to deliver development or security; the declaration of emergency rule in Bangladesh in January 2007 was met with considerable popular support for similar reasons.

Holding elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo without making significant progress in establishing integrated armed forces and effective policing or in delivering economic opportunities to an impoverished population has not removed the sources of violence

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Transitional government soldiers patrolling the streets of Mogadishu, Somalia, two weeks after they recaptured the city. Backed by the Ethiopian military, transitional government troops quickly took territory previously held by the Union of Islamic Courts. *Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures 2007*

Jack Snyder and **Edward Mansfield** warn of over-estimating the potential of democratic processes to secure peace in post-war countries. A hasty move to introduce electoral politics or democratic rules in the wake of war may only lead to further violence and democratic failure. It may first be necessary to establish or strengthen state administration, a fair legal system or secure an open media. Holding elections in the Democratic Republic of Congo without making significant progress in establishing integrated armed forces and effective policing or in delivering economic opportunities to an impoverished population has not removed the sources of violence.

Reconstructing legitimacy in the wake of war and state collapse

After the end of war, establishing a functioning state that can deliver security, enable a revival of productive economic activity and ensure a degree of fairness is crucial.

Establishing security is probably the single most important way to win legitimacy for a state after prolonged violence. **Deepayan Basu Ray** and **Richard Jolly** argue that to be effective, a state needs to be guided by a notion of 'human security' that addresses political, economic and social sources of insecurity along with threats to physical security.

A second priority is the need to establish a basic capacity for taxation – a highly political task rather than a simple technical challenge, as **Jonathan Di John** explains. A taxation system is essential for any long-term delivery of services including security; it also needs to be perceived as fair.

States need to manage conflict and the character of judicial processes is central to long-term legitimacy. **Clarence Dias** argues that this involves establishing the rule of law as well as providing access to justice through participatory mechanisms. **Tobias Debiel** and **Conrad Schetter** further argue that judicial and government systems

need to be based on indigenous and often traditional norms if the state is to secure effective legitimacy at the local level.

The international community needs to pay far more attention to preventing conflict before it erupts. When conflict does flare up, interventions often do not have the long-term commitment necessary to make a difference

Interventions by the international community

As international donor agencies and non-government organisations attempt to intervene in fragile states, they need to reject simplistic solutions and design appropriate policies that fit local realities. **David Malone** argues that the international community needs to pay far more attention to preventing conflict before it erupts. When conflict does flare up, interventions often do not have the long-term commitment necessary to make a difference.

Every intervention needs to be judged in terms of its effects on the consolidation of a legitimate public authority. This may mean departing from standard formulas of economic management or political design.

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See also

Economic and Political Foundations of State-making in Africa: Understanding State Reconstruction, Working Paper 3, Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics, by Gabi Hesselbein, Frederick Golooba-Mutebi and James Putzel, 2006

War, State Collapse and Reconstruction: Phase 2 of the Crisis States Programme, Working Paper 1(2), Crisis States Research Centre, London School of Economics by James Putzel, 2005

From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict, London: W.W. Norton, by Jack Snyder, 2000

Risking civil war by promoting democracy

Promoting democracy abroad may seem like a good way to promote peace. Mature, stable democracies have not fought wars against each other, and they rarely experience civil wars. But the path to a democratic peace is not always smooth.

Democratic transitions attempted recently in Lebanon, Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Palestinian Authority have been very violent. Elections in Algeria, Burundi, and Yugoslavia in the 1990s also led directly to major civil wars.

States unable to complete transitions to democracy are more likely to become involved in international and civil wars (see graph below). In some cases, elections are a sideshow during struggles for political control. This is particularly so in states with weak political organisations and institutions. In other cases however, the democratisation process itself has created the conflict.

The most fundamental cause of war in transitional states is the gap between demands for political participation and the political institutions and organisations necessary to meet those demands.

When authoritarian or colonial regimes break down, elite factions and popular groups often struggle for power. This occurs when repressive state authority has weakened and democratic institutions and organisations are not sufficiently developed to take its place. These conditions can lead to civil war since there are no institutional means to address grievances or concerns.

Civil war can also occur when governments are unable to appease or suppress the rise of mass ethnic, sectarian, or class-based movements. Incomplete



In the small village of Jabal-o Saraj in Afghanistan, a candidates' list exclusively for women (left), and men queuing to vote outside the polling station (above). Amid accusations of serious flaws in the democratic process, Afghanistan held its first ever presidential election on the 9th October 2004. Jeroen Oerlemans/Panos Pictures

democratisation provides particularly fertile ground for nationalist and sectarian agendas. Threatened elites sometimes use nationalist, ethnic, or religious messages to create fear and gain a mass following. Ethnic or cultural groups are the easiest to mobilise when governance institutions that reach beyond traditional cultural groupings are poorly developed.

Outside powers can promote premature democratisation in a country lacking the organisational capacity to conduct open, competitive politics. This can increase the risk of violence, as Burundi in 1993 showed. Outsiders need to make sure that their well-intentioned efforts do no harm.

One solution is to promote democracy in the right sequence: state building first, then free and fair elections.

- First, strengthen the organisations of state administration. If there is no state, elections to decide who runs the state are meaningless.
- Second, support a political coalition that believes it will benefit from governing impartially and sticking to rules.
- Third, help the coalition to stop corruption, create honest courts, and allow professional, objective journalists to start practicing their profession.

The most fundamental cause of war in transitional states is the gap between demands for political participation and the existence of political institutions and organisations necessary to meet those demands.

Once these building blocks are in place, free and fair elections can lead to good results, and violence is less likely. Successful recent democratic transitions in South America, Eastern Europe, Korea, Taiwan, and South Africa have had many preconditions of democracy in place before the voting started. Violent transitions in the Middle East, the Balkans, and elsewhere have not.

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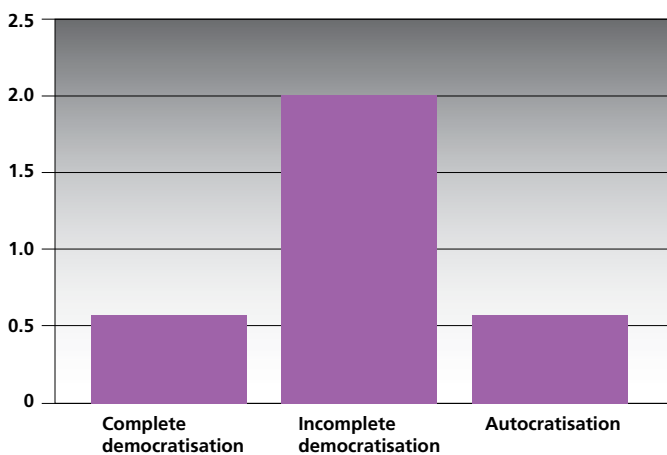
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See also
Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, by Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, 2005

'Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992', *American Political Science Review* 95(1), pages 33-48, by Harvard Hegre, Tanja Ellingsen, Scott Gates, and Nils Peter Gleditsch, 2001

Note: The height of each bar is determined by the ratio of the likelihood of a civil war for a given type of regime change to the likelihood of a civil war for a state that is not undergoing a regime change. These probabilities are derived from our statistical model of civil war.

Effects of regime change on civil war



Bridging security and development

People-centred approaches needed



Strategies for securing peace that have worked in Afghanistan are unlikely to work in Iraq or Somalia. Yet, interventions by international organisations and countries in crisis areas continue to follow the same formula: first condemnation, then sanctions, then military action.

Military interventions in Somalia, Afghanistan and Iraq have failed to bring peace or prevent crises from spiralling out of control. Clearly, the international community needs a new framework for engagement in fragile situations.

To address this problem, the Human Security framework has been developed by academics and policymakers. At its core, human security prioritises an individual's fears and needs over that of a country or government.

A good description of human security can be found in the 1994 UNDP Human Development Report: 'safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression; and protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily lives, whether in homes, jobs or communities'. This inter-connected multi-dimensional approach aims to build contextual and focussed policy responses to security threats.

Researchers from the Institute of Development Studies in the UK have analysed thirteen UNDP National Human Development Reports on human security. Findings include:

- The causes of insecurity in the surveyed countries (including Latvia, Mozambique, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, and Sierra Leone) are a combination of social, political, and economic factors,

and cannot be solved by addressing any in isolation.

- In countries such as Latvia, East Timor, Mozambique, and Bangladesh, shortcomings in the delivery of basic social services such as healthcare, education, jobs and social security networks tend to rank as high as threats to individual and national security.

What is human security?

'... safety from such chronic threats as hunger, disease, and repression and; protection from sudden and hurtful disruptions in the patterns of daily lives, whether in homes, jobs or communities'.

UNDP Human Development Report, 1994

- Poor people tend to lack awareness of laws and their rights, making structures of public accountability useless in countries such as Bangladesh and Afghanistan.
- Holistic or integrated approaches such as the sustainable economic, community, political and livelihood development policies adopted in Sierra Leone have the best chance of success.
- Analysis of the needs of vulnerable groups, such as children, ethnic minorities, women and older people in Moldova have helped shape a number of new social and economic policies.

The research also found that the biggest challenge to implementing a human security approach in fragile conditions is the inability of donor agencies and national governments to adopt holistic strategies.

During the disarmament and demobilisation process in Monrovia, Liberia, a former child soldier hands in ammunition to a United Nations peacekeeping soldier. The UN peacekeeping force in Liberia began to disarm former President Charles Taylor's militias in December 2003. The beginning of the disarmament was marked by riots, leading to a suspension of the programme until April 2004. But soldiers and child soldiers came in their thousands to the disarmament camps on the outskirts of Monrovia. By the end of the process in December 2004, 103,000 soldiers, including women and children, were disarmed in camps around the country. *Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures*

The problem is aggravated by some who dismiss the human security approach as too vague and too closely linked to security rather than development.

The surveys also show that people's perceptions of insecurity affect their lives beyond most other considerations. Policies that bridge security and development, therefore, will best address the challenges faced in fragile states.

Recommendations for fragile states include:

- policy initiatives based on human security in fragile states need to be formulated on a case-by-case basis
- policymakers in donor institutions and countries must focus on people-centred security and development policies
- new policies must be based on evidence gathered from comprehensive surveys and interviews of people living in insecure environments
- the new UN Peace Building Commission should base all its activities in fragile states on the principles of human security.

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See also

The Human Security Framework and National Human Development Reports: A Review of Experiences and Current Debate, HDRO Occasional Paper 5, Human Development Report Office, UNDP, by Richard Jolly and Deepayan Basu Ray, 2006 (PDF)
http://hdr.undp.org/docs/nhdr/thematic_reviews/human_security_guidance_note.pdf

Human Development Report 1994, United Nations Development Programme, Oxford University Press: New York, 1994
<http://hdr.undp.org/reports/global/1994/en>

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Good intentions do not prevent conflict

When we speak of the international community we think of states, the United Nations, development agencies, or non-government organisations. Yet other groups and individuals are often as relevant to development: multinational and local companies and private security firms.

These groups, however, often fail to unite behind effective strategies for conflict prevention: reconciling positions, reaching compromise and securing consent are often difficult.

While states, multilateral organisations and NGOs claim to be struggling for peace, an end to poverty and for human rights, their actual strategies are not always helpful. Take the 1994 genocide in Rwanda: the UN's stock approach demanded a cease-fire which would have immobilised the only source of protection for Tutsis from Hutu militias.

The specific nature of individual situations needs to be studied, understood and respected. Kosovo is not like East Timor. Transposing strategies from Mozambique to Angola is unlikely to work. If the riskiest moments during crises are not recognised or understood – sharp economic decline or political transitions, for example – preventative strategies cannot work.

International actors have a shocking record of failure in conflict prevention – including the failure even to try. This is hardly surprising: the international media and large NGOs can only focus meaningfully on a few issues at once – generally those of greatest geographically strategic concern. They rarely focus on crises that actually or potentially cost the most lives.

The current focus includes Iran, North Korea, Afghanistan, Iraq, the Israel-Palestine-Lebanon situation and occasionally, Darfur. While discussions on Iran and North Korea are preventative, the others constitute full-blown crises. In Darfur, the problems have been known for some time and a peace agreement between several of the parties was reached in May 2006, but power politics (and local actors) have impeded its implementation.

We now know that countries previously at war are most likely to experience conflict again. Yet East Timor was removed from the UN Security Council's active agenda not long before serious rioting in early 2006 highlighted continuing instability. Other countries with experience of past conflicts continue to remain at acute risk.

Innovative preventative strategies occasionally break through. For instance, efforts by the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum successfully prompted the largest UN human rights monitoring mission, in Nepal in 2005.



Dinka grandmothers and women with their children sit on a barge travelling up the River Nile, as it returns Dinka tribespeople from Juba to their homeland of Bor after the civil war. The resettlement programme is organised by the International Organisation for Migration and United Nations bodies. Thousands of Dinka tribespeople are among the estimated 3.8 million people displaced during the 20-year conflict between the government and the Sudanese People Liberation Army.
Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures 2006

Useful web links

Aid Effectiveness in Fragile States, DFID
<http://tinyurl.com/2rpy5g>

Chatham House
www.chathamhouse.org.uk

Conflict and Security Resource Guide, ELDIS
www.eldis.org/conflict

Conflict Prevention Pools, UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office
<http://tinyurl.com/ytausa>

Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP
www.undp.org/bcpr

Conflict, Security and Development Research Programme, King's College London
www.kcl.ac.uk/schools/sspp/ws/research/groups/csdpr

Crisis States Research Centre
www.crisisstates.com

Democracy and Governance, USAID
www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance

Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford
www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/peace/tmp/centres

Development Assistance Committee, OECD
www.oecd.org/dac

Fragile States, the LICUS Initiative, World Bank
www.worldbank.org/licus

Governance and Social Development Resource Centre
www.gsdr.org

IDS Governance Team
www.ids.ac.uk/ids/govern/index.html

Institute for Security Studies, South Africa
www.iss.org.za

International Conflict Research
www.incore.ulst.ac.uk

International Crisis Group
www.crisisgroup.org

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Prevention is important for countries immediately affected and for neighbouring states. Much of West Africa was affected by the conflicts in Liberia, Sierra Leone and beyond. The conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo involved armies of six neighbouring states. Colombia's conflict affected border areas of Peru and Ecuador.

Conflict prevention strategies can work but only with sustained attention and adequate resources. In addition, it is necessary to:

- tailor strategies to individual situations
- recognise the role of economic issues and actors in generating and sustaining conflict
- have a long-term approach
- be sensitive to regional factors.

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These views are David Malone's and not those of the Canadian Government

Making justice sector reform work

The legal system and the judiciary have very important roles to play in maintaining or restoring legitimacy in fragile states. Injustice, deeply embedded in both the legal system and a partial or ineffective judicial system, tends to weaken state legitimacy and sometimes contributes to the eruption of armed conflict.

It is therefore hardly surprising that in post-conflict situations, multilateral and bilateral development assistance places high priority on reforming legal and judicial systems. Yet, despite generous funding, progress has been slow and achievements few as experience in Bosnia and Afghanistan indicates.

Legitimacy – defined as ‘acceptance of the right to rule’ by the ruler and the ruled – requires a legal system based on two elements: the concept of the rule of law and access to a judicial process that solves disputes and resolves conflicts in a timely and visibly equitable manner.

Effective peace-building

Based on experience, peace-building in post-conflict situations requires the following elements to be effective:

- Appropriate models of legal systems are needed as: simplistic models implanted in Afghanistan and Timor Leste have failed.
- Multiple sources of legal pluralism such as traditional courts and customary law, and the role of internal institutions are essential for dispute resolution (Afghanistan, Iraq).
- Strong local human resources are crucial: lawyers and judges were extremely scarce in Cambodia and Timor Leste – bringing in international outsiders as an interim response failed to build either legitimacy or sustainability.



A prison guard at the detention centre of the Special Court for Sierra Leone set up jointly by the government and the United Nations to investigate war crimes. This cell had been prepared for former Liberian president Charles Taylor, who was eventually transferred to the court in March 2006. He is to be tried for war crimes in Sierra Leone at the International Criminal Court in The Hague. *Sven Torfinn/Panos Pictures 2005*

Rebuilding the revenue base for sustainable peace

The challenges of tax collection are formidable in low-income and post-war economies. War economies give rise to a wide range of illegal and informal economic activities beyond the control of the state. This makes tax collection in post-war states particularly difficult.

Taxation is one of the principal lenses for measuring state capacity, legitimacy and power relations in a society. Following the fiscal crises in sub-Saharan Africa and Latin America in the 1990s, designing tax systems that provide incentives for growth, meet distributional demands, and increase revenue collection is central to state effectiveness. In post-war economies, rebuilding the revenue base is essential to reconstruct a viable state and sustained peace.

In policy circles, tax reform is often discussed in technical, non-political terms. This limits understanding of the political and institutional processes underlying the power and legitimacy a state requires to extract and mobilise resources.

Direct taxation

The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund say: ‘don’t try difficult interventions and reforms at home’. They have promoted tax simplification and value-added taxes, which are supposedly easier to collect than income taxes and are more business-friendly. Long-term strengthening of states, however, requires moving towards more direct and progressive income and property taxation. This is particularly the case in countries with very unequal income distribution.

The most prominent features of post-war

- Legacies of the recent past require more than law reform alone. Such legacies include: impunity and corruption (Cambodia), erosion of the rule of law (Iraq), and systematic dismantling of legal and judicial infrastructure (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq). Aside from dealing with issues of transitional justice (including recovering truth and reconciliation), promoting the rule of law and an appreciation of the values of human rights can help confront such legacies.
- International Peace Accords need to have realistic expectations (unlike in Bosnia and Afghanistan) and a greater focus on equitable and just strategies rather than expediency (Iraq).
- Local ownership in constitution-making processes is crucial to retain credibility and legitimacy as highlighted by the experiences in Afghanistan and Iraq.

The legitimacy of a state is determined by its performance in demonstrating and enforcing the rule of law and securing

economies are that the tax base is relatively low, dependent on trade taxes, and extremely narrow. ‘Large’ payers contribute between 40 and 70 percent of domestic revenue collection. The need to widen the coverage of the tax base is urgent in these countries.

Trade taxes

Dependence on trade taxes presents specific policy challenges. Trade liberalisation has led to reductions in trade taxes, the main source of revenue in low income states. Evidence presented by the International Monetary Fund shows that low income countries only recover 30 cents on each dollar lost from reducing taxes on trade.

Trade liberalisation can undermine tax capacity in low income and post-war economies. Indeed, the case against rapid tariff reduction as a means of maintaining and increasing fiscal resources – a key element in state consolidation and state-building – is one of the main lessons in post-war reconstruction.

Taxation and legitimacy

Perceptions of fairness across groups and regions in taxation are central to improvements in revenue collection. If a tax is considered fair, the number of taxpayers that voluntarily pay their taxes increases. When large numbers of potential taxpayers evade or under-report their tax liabilities, the administrative costs of detecting and enforcing such cases increases the costs of collecting taxes substantially.

A main goal of tax reform, therefore, is to increase the level of voluntary compliance. Although technical aspects of tax reform are crucial, more political analysis is needed if we are to understand how and why tax reforms become legitimate.

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access to justice for everyone. Multilateral and bilateral development assistance must therefore prioritise reform of legal and judicial systems, and strive for greater effectiveness by:

- acknowledging legal pluralism and the complementary formal and informal legal systems that balance the internal and external responsibilities of states
- prioritising the development of local human resources including effective mentoring programmes
- prioritising truth, justice and reconciliation in the provision of transitional justice and to overcome legacies of the past
- facilitating constitution-making processes that are fully inclusive and participatory
- ensuring that principle prevails over expediency and impunity in all aspects of interim administration
- making conflict assessment and conflict prevention integral aspects of all development programming, especially those in the legal and justice sectors.

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Beyond anarchy in Somaliland and Afghanistan?



Since the attacks on the USA on September 11th 2001, the weakening and re-building of states has ranked high on the political and research agenda.

Mainstream models of state-building assume that state legitimacy can be established and collapse avoided through:

- international intervention and military presence
- huge amounts of aid
- democratic local elections

However, realities on the ground are different. External interventions rarely work. International organisations, military actors, bilateral donors, and international NGOs are insufficiently or not at all prepared to engage in the complex process of bargaining (with war lords or tribal authorities for example). Neither are they prepared to engage in power relations (between the centre and the provinces or between parliament, the courts and political parties for example) or in re-building war-torn societies.

Research at the Center for Development Research at Bonn University and the Institute for Development and Peace at the University of Duisburg-Essen in Germany has focussed on local and national governance and power structures. In two provinces of Afghanistan (Kunduz and Paktia) and Somaliland (Awdal and Sanaag), a number of groups and individuals took over when the state collapsed. These included military faction leaders and 'warlords', former civil servants, tribal authorities, religious courts and local businessmen.

Somalia

Somalia remains fragmented. Backed by the Ethiopian military, transitional government troops quickly took territory previously held by the Union of Islamic Courts in January

Children playing on a disused tank in Khanabad, Afghanistan Photo by Conrad Schetter

2007. An estimated 340,000 people fled fighting in Mogadishu in the following months. In April 2007, heavy fighting occurred in the capital. Somaliland, which declared independence from Somalia in 1991, has achieved remarkable internal stability. A new system of governance that draws heavily on the traditional 'elders' system has enabled:

- the restoration of public security and order
- local, presidential and parliamentary elections
- the establishment of administrative structures
- economic reconstruction – supported substantially by the Diaspora.

Afghanistan

Afghanistan remains delicately balanced five years after the fall of the Taliban. While full-scale insurgency by the Taliban is underway in the south, a multitude of warlords still dominate the north. In the southern province of Paktia, tribal strength guarantees some degree of security for the local population; tribal order demarcates social interactions. The presence of foreigners, either from Kabul or outside Afghanistan, is sometimes considered an open provocation with serious consequences for legitimacy of the state. However, in the northern province of Kunduz, warlords co-exist peacefully with the state and the international community – so long as their influence and economic base is not threatened.

What are the policy implications?

- Local elites gain legitimacy through

social customs and traditions. This restrains their freedom of action and in turn creates expectations amongst their constituencies. External groups – be they international organisations or international NGOs – should be thorough in their search for appropriate partners and institutions to cooperate with. 'Short cuts' providing support to strongmen and warlords make it more difficult for communities to control their leaders.

- Re-vitalised traditional institutions have been a powerful tool in addressing 'warlordism'. The governance potential of traditional institutions is however limited to their own reference groups: their underlying values may challenge 'western' norms. Development policy has to engage in new forms of co-operation; bridging the gap between traditional and newer forms of authority is crucial. Giving those involved locally clearly defined roles whilst simultaneously allowing modern state institutions to enforce minimal standards on the rule of law will also help.

In culturally homogeneous communities (Paktia, parts of Somaliland), respected local institutions minimise the possibilities for individuals to profit from illicit economic activities, including exploiting natural resources or trading in drugs. Culturally varied communities seem more prone to strongmen and warlords (Kunduz) who promote their own interests through violence and illicit incomes.

Conclusions

Instead of fighting these economies of violence, development and security policy should support local institutions which are seen as legitimate and can bring these illicit activities under social control. Promising examples of this approach include:

- supporting Somaliland's parliamentary system which is amalgamated with a national Council of Elders (guurti)
- active involvement of local institutions such as the Tribal Liaison Office in Paktia, Afghanistan.

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See also

Rebuilding Somaliland: Issues and Possibilities, Academy for Peace and Development and War-torn Societies Project, Lawrenceville, NJ: Red Sea Press, 2005

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Strong but fragile

Horizontal inequalities in Indonesia

Today, most of the international community sees Indonesia as a 'fragile' state, with a recent history of violent conflict and a poor record of access to government services.

In the early 1990s, commentators on Indonesia often expressed a grudging admiration for the New Order regime of President Suharto. In power since 1965, he kept tight political control while achieving significant economic growth. The July 1997 currency crisis, however, undermined the entire regime.

The outbreak of violence after 1998 was largely linked to policies which contributed to social exclusion and created 'horizontal' inequalities between various ethnic communities. Under the transmigration programme, for example, thousands of families were relocated from Java and Bali to the 'Outer Islands', where political resistance and sporadic rebellion had existed since the early years of Indonesia's independence.

Although the transmigration programme was meant to relieve population pressures in Java, it was also a means of providing 'loyal' Javanese support for the territorial units of the armed forces. These migrants were often allocated prime agricultural land, sometimes displacing local people. The graph above shows the relative proportion of local people and migrants in the agricultural sector according to land-holding size (calculated from a sample of the 1990 census). It shows that Java/Bali born agriculturalists were heavily concentrated in the larger land holdings.

When the regime collapsed in 1998, the country experienced many forms of fragility: access to government services declined sharply and state legitimacy suffered. But key to the ethno-communal violence were tensions between migrant and local communities, often made worse by religious differences. Econometric analysis shows that the communal violence was more intense in areas with higher horizontal inequalities. In this case, the transmigration process led to state fragility by contributing to the conditions for ethno-communal conflict.

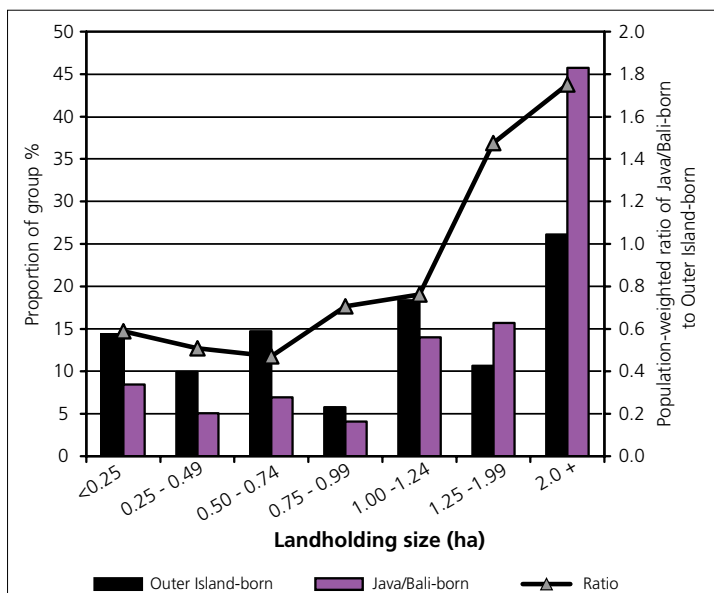
Indonesia's experience under Suharto is similar to the 'strong' state in pre-revolutionary France, which was able to withstand social pressures for an extended period. When it eventually gave way, the built up tensions resulted in revolution.

In a similar way, with its military strength, Suharto's regime was able to suppress social and communal discontent over exclusion and inequalities. When the regime finally collapsed, all the destructive social forces built up during this period were unleashed: the New Order was a fragile regime.

An important lesson from Indonesia's experience is the inter-connectedness of the various dimensions of state fragility. In Aceh and East Timor, for example, a vicious cycle developed:

- poor and exclusionary service delivery, creating horizontal inequalities along regional and ethnic lines
- declining / absent state legitimacy
- challenges to state authority
- military responses, which reinforced local perceptions of the illegitimacy of the regime
- further undermining of access to government services.

A final conclusion from the Indonesian case emphasises the importance of horizontal inequalities as a driver of state fragility. Even when overall service delivery is good, sub-national inequalities and exclusionary practices across communal or regional groups can ultimately undermine the legitimacy and authority of the state.



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See also

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Members of the Kosovo Protection Corps attend a ceremony in Pristina, Kosovo. The Kosovo Protection Corps, formed from the ranks of the rebel Kosovo Liberation Army, will be disbanded under the independence plans for Kosovo and its soldiers retrained. Since the end of the Kosovo war in 1999, the territory has been under the jurisdiction of the United Nations, although technically still a province of Serbia. Asked by the UN to work on a solution for Kosovo, Martti Ahtisaari (former President of Finland) says: '... the only viable option for Kosovo is independence, to be supervised for an initial period by the international community'. Andrew Testa/Panos Pictures 2007



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