



NEW YORK UNIVERSITY

CENTER ON INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION



Deep Dive on Fragile States

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The world faces old and new security challenges that are more complex than our multilateral and national institutions are currently capable of managing. International cooperation is ever more necessary in meeting these challenges. The NYU Center on International Cooperation (CIC) works to enhance international responses to conflict, insecurity, and scarcity through applied research and direct engagement with multilateral institutions and the wider policy community.

CIC's programs and research activities span the spectrum of conflict, insecurity, and scarcity issues. This allows us to see critical inter-connections and highlight the coherence often necessary for effective response. We have a particular concentration on the UN and multilateral responses to conflict.

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Deep Dive on Fragile States

Background

Today, roughly a third of the world's poor live in fragile states. A further significant percentage of the world's poor live in middle income countries with sub-regions affected by conflict – arguably a very different challenge.¹ The OECD projects that by 2015, 50% of the world's poor will live in fragile states, though that number is contested. Still, depending on projections in the rates of growth and poverty reduction in countries like India, Nigeria, China and Pakistan, the percentage of the world's poor living in low-income fragile states is certain to rise, at least to 50%, perhaps above.

The situation is even more dire when it comes to social development indicators. In 2011 fragile states hosted 77 percent of the world's children that do not attend primary schooling, 70 percent of infant deaths, 65 percent of the global population without access to safe water and 60 percent of the world's starving.² By 2012 no-low income, conflict affected state had achieved a single Millennium Development Goal.

No wonder, then, that fragility and conflict are increasingly seen as centrally relevant to the challenge of underdevelopment. It has not always been so. For much of the post-Cold War period, even as the Security Council and other parts of the international system turned their attention to civil conflict – the form of conflict most consistently present in poor countries, though not the only one – development attention lagged behind. However, as economic growth in Asia and Latin America has led to substantial declines in overall poverty numbers, it is increasingly understood that poverty in fragile states is a central part of the remaining challenge of poverty.

The changing geography of poverty has driven two related trends. First, there has been shift in per capita ODA spending towards fragile states. (For an excellent account of changing patterns of ODA use in fragile states, see OECD *Ensuring Fragile States are not left behind: 2013*

Factsheet on resource flows and trends.) Second, we have seen increased policy attention to fragile states in major development institutions and financiers – starting in bilateral development agencies like the UK Department for International Development (DfID). For many Western governments, this trend was spurred by their experience of deployment in Afghanistan, and the need to develop stabilization tools. The idea of conflict and fragile states as more central to the development challenge is never still, and symbolized by the decision of the World Bank to allocate its 2011 World Development Report to issues of conflict, security and development. The UN Task Team that prepared a report on possible approaches to the Post-2015 Millennium Development agenda included “peace and security” issues as one of four priority topics.³

Fragility takes several forms. Variations of fragility encompass at least the following variants: states with weak institutions; divided states; authoritarian security states; and post-conflict states. Analysis of response should be mindful of such distinctions, while recognizing that these are not mutually exclusive categories: Syria, to take one example, is an authoritarian security state with weak institutions and important sectarian divides. (It is not a post-conflict state, of course – at least, not yet...) Each of these types of fragility calls for different response measures (some being more amenable to either internal or external treatment than others), and calls therefore on different elements of the UN system.

But even this is complicated by the fact that any of these different forms of fragility may exist in different regime types: large, populous monarchies (Saudi Arabia); large, populous quasi-democracies (Indonesia); large, populous, religious states (Iran); small, poor, secular states (Togo); etc.

There is also, however, variation by region. Europe, Latin America and Asia are, at this stage in their development, by and large regions with the resources and political structures to manage their own crises. There are exceptions to this, but mostly in small states at the periphery of the regions: in Kosovo, Haiti, and East Timor, the UN plays the kinds of robust roles that we see otherwise only in Africa.

1. OECD *Ensuring Fragile States are not left behind: 2013 Factsheet on resource flows and trends*. (Paris, 2013)

2. World Bank, *World Development Report 2011* (the World Bank, Washington DC).

3. A badly chosen formulation, given that the term ‘peace and security’ invokes the language of Chapter VII of the Charter and the UN Security Council's role in interventions. Still, the salient point here was the inclusion of conflict and ‘fragility’ issues (the UN does not use that term) in the post-2015 agenda.

The UN in Fragile States – Scale and Presence

The UN's development engagement in fragile states long precedes this new attention. A crude but broadly accurate statement on this issue is that the UN's impact varies substantially with type of regime and, to over simplify, is in directly reverse proportion to the scale of the states (substantial impact in Nepal, negligible impact if any in Pakistan) or the wealth of the state (moderate to substantial impact in Mozambique, negligible impact – at this moment in history – in Egypt.) No surprise there: large states can afford the mechanisms by which states protect de jure sovereignty from outside interference, no matter how hollow the de facto sovereignty inside the states borders.

Most UN resources, then, are concentrated in two under-developed regions at opposite extremes of the geopolitical compass: Africa and the Middle East. Both continents comprise large numbers of regimes carved out of previously existing territorial arrangements by European colonials in the late 19th and early-to-mid 20th centuries. Both regions have a large number of countries in which a substantial portion of the population lives in poverty, often acute poverty; and during the 1980s and the 1990s, the two regions dominated the bottom rungs of international league tables in terms of civil and political rights (though Africa has of late been making substantial changes in this sphere.) Yet the two regions occupy fundamentally different spaces in international politics, and the UN plays very different roles in them.

The Middle East, of course, has the blessing and curse of being the world economy's main source of energy, as well as being host to what is arguably the world's most protracted and inflamed conflict, that between Israel and the Palestinians. These two factors combine to make the region extraordinarily salient to the interests and strategies of the world's major powers; the UN is a small actor on this stage, albeit an increasingly present one. Africa, of course, is host to a large number of the world's poorest countries, and hosts fully 75% of the UN's Blue Helmets and a substantial portion of its humanitarian presence.

The UN's developmental roles in fragile states have evolved along two overlapping but distinct dimensions. From the earliest part of the post-Cold War era, when response to internal conflict exploded as part of the international agenda, the UN's humanitarian engagement in conflict-affected states brought into the picture UN agencies like UNICEF that have both humanitarian and developmental roles. And because the UN development system has a more or less global presence, even in the early 1990s the UN's resident coordinator and UNDP offices were present in crisis settings, though often in minimalist ways. In that period, conflict tended to displace development activity, and the focus was on humanitarian coordination – symbolized by an agreement between UNDP and OCHA that in conflict settings the UN would replace established RCs with RC/HCs usually recruited from OCHA or the UN's humanitarian agencies. Deeper attention by development agencies began in the late 1990s and early 2000s. The establishment of the Emergency Response Division (ERD) in UNDP in 1995 now the Bureau for Conflict Prevention and Recovery (BCPR), constituted the first organizational reflection of this change. The essential condition for this was the conclusion of several civil wars in the late 1990s, in the Balkans and in sub-Saharan Africa, which created post-conflict opportunities and a sense of the possibility of the return to stable development.

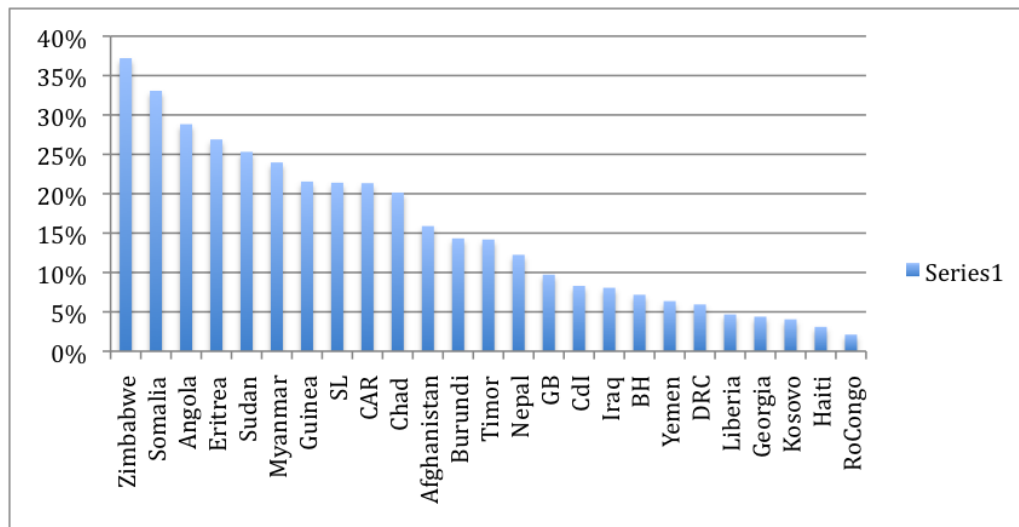
Over time, the challenges of post-conflict development were increasingly recognized and encoded under the rubric of 'peacebuilding', still the dominant conceptual framework for UN developmental or quasi-developmental engagement in conflict affected states or sub-regions.

Since, the growth in UN development programming in conflict-affected states has been steady. By the end of the 2000s, operations in fragile states had come to be a dominant part of the UN's operations in development. The numbers tell the story. In 2011, the UN spent just over \$6 billion in development and humanitarian assistance in 25 fragile states – double what it spent in all low-income states that were not affected by conflict, and the equivalent to what it spent in xx middle income countries globally. Whereas humanitarian spending accounted for 9% of all ODA disbursements by OECD countries, it represented fully 41% of UN spending.

Even more telling are staffing numbers. In 2011 UN development agencies had just over 25,000 staff in 25 fragile states – more than it had in the entire rest of the world (excluding headquarters staff). While this number includes civilian personnel of peace operations, it is nevertheless the case that even excepting those personnel, the development staffing presence of the UN in fragile states weighs heavily. For example in Sudan, non-peacekeeping UN personnel totaled over 1300 – compared to average staff presences in the 10s or the low 100s (again except where there are regional headquarters) in middle income countries and the high 100s in the top range of low income countries.

This degree of presence conveys an impression of scale and significance of the UN’s activities in fragile states. In some cases, the impression holds true when we look at spending. In five countries – Zimbabwe, Somalia, Angola, Eritrea, and Sudan – the funds spent by or through the UN on development account for more than 25% of all ODA spending; in Zimbabwe, the number reaches 37%. In a further six countries the UN’s share is between 15% and 25%: in Myanmar (for now), Guinea, Sierra Leone, the Central African Republic, Chad, and Afghanistan. In the remaining countries, however, the UN share runs from just under 15% to as little as 2% in the Republic of Congo and 3% in Haiti. The average across fragile states is 15%. When humanitarian spending is added in, the numbers are somewhat higher; in some cases (Sudan, Chad) reaching above 60%, but on average totaling 26%.

Figure 1: UN Development Spending as % of Total ODA⁴



4. Sources: World Bank Data 2010; and United Nations Report of the Secretary-General Analysis of the Funding of Operational Activities for Development of the United Nations System for the Year 2010 - Statistical Annex (July 2012), Office for ECOSOC Support and Coordination.

A comparison with World Bank shares is interesting. In some cases, the fact of a given fragile state being in arrears means that the Bank maintains no staffing or lending or IDA allocations in the country. Where that is not the case, the Bank averages 11% of total ODA. (Of course that does not account for WB loan activity.) But there is a lot of country-by-country variation, with the World Bank having the larger share of ODA in roughly half the cases where it is present.

UN v WB ODA in Fragile States

	UN Dev as	WB IDA as
Country	% of Total	% of Total
Afghanistan	16%	3%
Angola	29%	4%
BH	7%	22%
Burundi	14%	17%
CAR	21%	7%
CdI	8%	24%
Chad	20%	3%
DRC	6%	33%
Eritrea	27%	4%
GB	10%	5%
Georgia	4%	10%
Guinea	22%	0%
Haiti	3%	3%
Iraq	8%	3%
Kosovo	4%	0%
Liberia	5%	6%
Myanmar	24%	0%
Nepal	12%	18%
RoCongo	2%	14%
SL	21%	12%
Somalia	33%	0%
Sudan	25%	0%
Timor	14%	1%
Yemen	6%	22%
Zimbabwe	37%	0%

A Brief Discussion of Causes

It matters, to an understanding of the UN's performance, to detour briefly to a discussion of causes of conflict in under-developed states.

For too long, the study of violence and the study of development were fields that operated in distinct silos. More recently, development practitioners and scholars have begun to recognize the importance of political and security issues to the challenge of development and statebuilding, especially in fragile states, and security studies have placed greater emphasis on the kinds of violence – especially civil wars – most likely to be experienced in low-income fragile states. Understanding the connection between violence, underdevelopment and recovery is the central research challenge for responses to fragile states.

The first major effort to connect the study of underdevelopment in fragile states to that of violence was the work undertaken by the World Bank in the late 1990s under the direction of Paul Collier. Collier was not the first to write about civil wars. The decade had already witnessed large-scale international attention to civil wars in Central and East Africa and the Balkans. From a distance, these wars appeared to be motivated by long-standing ethnic rivalries – seemingly the source of potential quagmires and failures like Somalia and Rwanda. Political scientists who studied these wars found that these were not ethnic wars in a narrow sense: rather, a complex mix of political, security, identity, institutional and leadership factors were at play.⁵ Security studies of civil war had little purchase on development policy though.

Collier's work was different. Emanating from the World Bank, which had a large, built-in audience, Collier's studies gained real policy traction, as the development community in particular took to the finding that "greed", more than "grievances", caused civil wars. (Collier's conclusions were actually more nuanced than this; but a distilled, simplified version of those conclusions were what entered the policy stream.) Economic motivations could be measured, and addressed through existing mechanisms, such as aid.

5. Stedman 1995; Brown 1995; Stedman & Rothchild 1996.

The development community was not the only one to embrace the findings on economic causes of violence. The political science field was in the midst of a turn away from comparative or qualitative work, towards an embrace of quantitative methods. Collier was among the first to employ quantitative methods to study the onset of civil wars. With the enthusiasm of the development community and the embrace of political scientists, Collier's work shaped an entire decade of research on economic motivations and causes of civil wars - natural resources,⁶ low per-capita income,⁷ income inequality,⁸ etc. - and reinforced the aid community's focus on poverty reduction as a strategy for dealing with fragile states.

There was only one problem: the "greed" thesis was flawed.

Collier is first and foremost a scholar. And like the best scholars, he constantly questions his own findings. In his further research, Collier began to modify the "greed" story line. In his most recent book on civil wars, Collier places little emphasis on economic factors at all, focusing on security concerns, political factors and institutional questions - some of the very factors the early political scientists were examining before the "greed" hypothesis focused attention elsewhere. Nor is he alone: several new major studies have found that "greed" explanations are not sufficient to explain civil wars or patterns of under-development.⁹

In a parallel development, the OECD's Development Assistance Committee (DAC) had begun to investigate a new line of thinking, related to statebuilding. This work tapped into not the usual stream of development economics literature, but rather the political science and historical literature on the construction and development of states. From this work emerged a more political focus: a concern with legitimacy, with political settlements, and with the relationship between various statebuilding enterprises - building institutions, meeting social needs, fostering national identity.¹⁰

6. Collier 2003; de Soysa 2000.

7. Fearon 2010; Keefer 2008.

8. This relationship is measured by homicide rates: Fajnzylber, Lederman, Loayza 2002; Messner, Raffalovich and Shrock 2002.

9. Fearon 2010; Goldstone 2010.

10. Jones and Chandran 2008; Papagianni 2009.

In 2011, the World Development Report undertook a comprehensive review of the economics, political science, and policy-relevant literature on fragile states and violence. It drew on research in multiple languages, especially French, Spanish and Arabic, in addition to the voluminous literature in English. It retested every major quantitative study, reviewed the qualitative and comparative literature, tested the OECD findings, and commissioned exhaustive new work on both single cases and cross-national factors. It held consultations with policy makers and local scholars, in South Asia, the Middle East, the Gulf, Latin America, Central, West and North Africa, and the Balkans. It made data about institutional factors available to social scientists. One of the eye-opening findings about the review of earlier quantitative studies is that many of them simply did not have data on political or institutional factors; it is easier to access and measure economic variables. Correctly read they did not say "economic factors matter more", but "*given available data, economic factors appear to matter more.*" The WDR 2011 for the first time made the World Bank's own massive data bank of institutional variables for every client country available for study and testing.

In essence, the WDR's findings take us back to the point that comparative political scientists reached in the late 1990s and that the OECD had started to point to: fragility and war are complex problems, with complex causes. Collier's new book, new research by Fearon, and a major, multi-author study on political violence reach similar conclusions.¹¹ The fact that these findings have been replicated in several separate studies solidifies confidence in the findings.

Put simply, the storyline on causes of civil wars is this. First, and critically, violence should not be assumed to be an irrational or emotive response - for many actors in many settings, violence is a *rational* choice of strategy. Second, in a given setting, any one of a number of factors can motivate political leaders/entrepreneurs to pursue a violent strategy. Those factors can be political in basis: the exclusion of an ethnic or religious or territorial group from the trappings of power can create powerful motivations to challenge the existing order, including through violence. They can be security oriented: minority groups can fear (or

11. Ibid.

actually experience) persecution or oppression, and turn to arms to redress the situation. External security factors – including the threat of invasion and spillover factors like cross-border militants, equipment, resources, criminal networks, finances, and refugees – can also trigger violence.¹² Motives can also be economic: if marginal groups are blocked from accessing a state’s budget and the private sector is limited and controlled, powerful economic incentives exist to challenge the existing order – amplified when the state has significant natural resources.¹³ These motives are primarily internal, but they can be amplified, manipulated, supported or restrained by regional and external dynamics.¹⁴

to violence grow. Indeed, weak financial, administrative and coercive capacities are a better predictor of the onset of civil war and extreme violence than other aspects, including economic predation, political grievances, and ethnic inclusion.¹⁶

And of the myriad institutions that may be relevant to development, the WDR 2011 found that those that were most relevant to the onset or recurrence of civil war were three: security institutions; justice institutions; and institutions for job creation. The WDR 2011 also found that these institutions could only productively be developed when transformations took place on the back of *inclusive* political settlements.

Table 1: Internal and External Stresses Triggering

Stresses	Internal	External
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legacies of violence and trauma 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invasion, occupation External support to rebels
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Low income levels, low opportunity cost of rebellion Youth unemployment Natural resource wealth Severe corruption Rapid urbanization 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Price shocks Climate change
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ethnic, religious, or regional competition Real or perceived discrimination Human rights abuses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Perceived global inequity and injustice in the treatment of ethnic or religious groups.

Violence¹⁵

Third, and crucially, such motives exist in many more countries than actually experience civil wars. Another critical factor helps explain why some states experience war, while others do not: weak institutions. Where political and accountability institutions are strong, challenges to the existing order can often be accommodated through political dialogue, legal action, non-violent civil strife, or similar. It is when institutions are weak that the incentives

16. Fearon 2010.

12. Brown 1996; Puerto Gomez and Christensen 2010; Gleditsch 2007; Fearon and Laitin 2003; Saleyhan 2006, 2007; Collier 2003; Craft 2002.

13. For example, Auty 2001; de Soysa 2000; and Karl 1997.

14. See, for example, Fearon 2004; Auty 2001; de Soysa 2000; Ross 2004; Svensson 2000.

15. World Development Report 2011.

UN Roles and Comparative Advantages in Fragile States

All of this is relevant, because it speaks to the core comparative advantage of the UN development system in dealing with fragile states – its link to the political and security tools of the UN. With the exception of NATO operations in Afghanistan, UN peacekeeping operations have been the dominant international security response to fragile states. Rhetorical attention is often also paid to regional organizations, but the numbers tell a clear story: over the course of the post-Cold War period, a steady rise in UN blue helmets on the ground, the large majority of them in fragile states, have outpaced regional organizations deployments by an order of magnitude.

It helps too, to have the link to UN humanitarian agencies. The 1990s and the 2000s have seen steady increase in both the absolute volume of spending through the UN humanitarian agencies, and of their percentage share of humanitarian spending. Because these agencies form part of the broader UN development family (UNDGO, now UNDOCO), they provide the UN a window into fragile states and a platform for engagement.

These links would not matter were it not for the fact that the UN, in a way surprisingly, is a policy environment that supports integration. More and more entities – governments and multilaterals – recognize that ‘whole of government’ approaches are necessary in conflict settings; but multilaterals other than the UN have come late to this conclusion. For example, NATO adopted its ‘comprehensive approach’ only in 2010. The UN first outlined guidance on integration across the humanitarian, development, political and security sectors in 1998.

The basic model that has been pursued is integration of the UN’s field presences under the authority of an SRSB. The norm has evolved to have the UN Resident Coordinator serve as Deputy SRSB for economic or developmental activities, sometimes for humanitarian activities as well. There are strengths and weaknesses of this model: where the SRSB has a good instinct for how development action can reinforce inclusive political process, the integrated mechanisms can help translate

strategy into action. On the other hand, many SRSBs do not have such instincts, nor a basic understanding of what institutional development entails. Moreover, this form of UN integration neglects some basic facts: the recognition that the UN mission is not the focal point of all aspects of strategy, nor is the UN Country Team. In the humanitarian/social sphere, UN agencies play key roles. In the economic sphere, the international financial institutions and bilateral donors carry more weight.

Several variants on the UN’s model have been tried, which highlight both the challenge and the options:

- Informal collaboration between the political, military and/or aid presences (Lebanon, Nepal)
- An international presence-wide process for joint planning (MONUC)
- Integration of the international financial institutions into the UN mission structure (UNAMI early stages)
- Use of several Deputy SRSBs in different ‘pillars’ – e.g. for political, rule of law / public administration, economic development (UNMIK, UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) at times)
- Use of a Strategic Planning Cell to forge joint operations between different mission components and other actors (UNMIK, early stages)
- Development of an in-country ‘strategic compact’ that forge national and international commitments (Afghanistan, in 1998 and in 2005)
- PBC Country-specific mechanisms – which link the national authorities, the SRSB, the UN country-team, the International Financial Institutions (IFI), bilateral donors, and key regional actors, and have also used ‘compacts’ (Burundi, Sierra Leone).

The pros and cons of different models of integration of strategy are beyond the scope of this report. What can be briefly noted is that the weight of the UN mission as lead actor in coordinating the international effort is likely to shift over time, as political and security conditions stabilize

and a broader suite of actors' programming comes into play. And briefly put, ten years of experimentation with 'integrated missions' and variations on that theme have taught two lessons.

First, the UN's performance in integrated strategy is still rather weak. Among the reasons is the reality that the UN's 'integrated missions' model (until recently the dominant model) displaces a focus on integration of *strategy* by a focus on integration of *organizations* (with a narrow focus on the UN family in particular). Thus, integrated missions by default comprise units that reflect the entire organigram of the UN family of agencies, and have multi-dimensional strategies that reflect all of these actors' interests. The Security Council too has adopted an 'everything we can think of, or be accused of neglecting' approach to drafting mandates, pulling UN actors on the ground in myriad directions rather than allowing a concentration on core strategy.

Second, despite this, the UN performs better than any other international organization on questions of integrated strategy. And of late there are some interesting variations, particularly in Libya, where a very experienced SRSG knew how to use the system effectively to keep out agencies' presences that were not helpful to strategy, to say no to a variety of pressures to multiply UN roles on civilian aspects of governance, and to say yes to finding creative links to the World Bank (which plays an outsized role in Libya because of its role in the management of Libya's oil finances.)

Gaps in Performance

However, none of these efforts at integration have quite solved the following key problems. The goal of mounting early, effective action to foster inclusive politics and begin the process of transformation of key national institutions still constitutes one of the weak spots of international support. Effective action to foster recovery has dogged efforts at reform. In the first period after conflict ends (the first 12-24 months) these tasks are assigned to ad hoc and fractious groupings of bilateral and multilateral development actors for whom conflict response is not core business; who have no reserves of civilians and public administrators to draw on; and whose funds are raised voluntarily, sporadically, and slowly.

The unsurprising consequences are that early initiatives to build core government capacity and jump-start economic activity are frequently not launched. Lapses include investment in public administration, vital to the functioning of the state and service delivery; investment in agricultural recovery, vital to livelihoods; and security-sector reform, vital to sustained peace. Confidence in the political process is not maintained. All this contributes to poor outcomes: either international actors are compelled to stay longer (Bosnia); or recovery efforts falter (Afghanistan); or both (Timor-Leste).

There are three primary weaknesses in international performance in early recovery: there is a strategy gap (i.e., few tools to link strategy for implementation of peace agreements to other aspects of recovery); a financing gap (i.e., funding instruments that are neither flexible, rapid nor dynamic); and a capacity gap (especially in terms of civilian capacity in areas like the rule of law.) These weaknesses reduce the ability of missions and others to support the restoration of national political authority. (An additional flaw of early recovery efforts is that they do not start with an assessment of national capacity, both within and outside the state.)

Post-conflict financial assistance is also locked into a development orthodoxy that many post-conflict authorities themselves have argued is not suitable for recovery. An example of the phenomenon of 'supply-

driven' aid: since 2000, in post-conflict cases, an average of 3% of development assistance has gone to agriculture; in those cases, on average, the agricultural sector constitutes 70% of GDP. Moreover, donors have not yet completed the necessary political reforms (for example to OECD official development assistance (ODA) criteria) to allow for sufficient spending on critical recovery programs in such areas as the rule of law and policing – though very recently there has been some change in this direction.

Second, there is still a paucity of efforts to support national efforts to transform political, security and justice institutions. This goes beyond the UN; it's a core lacuna in international stabilization or fragile states response efforts. Broadly speaking, the problem is as follows. The international system has tools for short-term response to political and security challenges, basically through the UN but also with NATO (and to a much lesser degree, regional organizations.) These mechanisms – the Security Council, DPKO, DPA, etc – can perform important stop-gap measures that create space for new bargains and/or institutional transformations, but they do not in and of themselves support those institutional transformations. On the other hand, some development actors see institutional transformations at the core of their agenda. But for the reasons outlined in Section 2, most development actors have not so far engaged substantially in the transformation of political and security institutions. There are exceptions – some DfID programming, a Dutch program on SSR in Burundi, Canadian efforts on justice institutions in Haiti, etc. But these are still the outliers, not the core.

Thus there is an essential gap between our increasing understanding of the underlying causes of recurrent conflict – lack of inclusive political settlements and weak institutions for justice, security and jobs – and the way the international system, including the UN, is organized for response.

Nor have the innovations around the PBC, PBSO and PBF as yet solved these problems. A central purpose behind the founding of the PBC was to develop better linkages between political and financial aspects of post-conflict

recovery – or to build security-development links, to use terminology more familiar at the UN. In the PBC's first two cases, Burundi and Sierra Leone, the principal means by which it strove to fulfill this function was through the articulation of integrated peacebuilding strategies.

Early discussions about the merits of such an approach were drawn out, and the process for elaborating the strategies laborious – an issue addressed further below. The approach to developing a strategic framework was different in each case and the experience mixed. However, through the dialogue it fostered among the relevant stakeholders, the PBC has demonstrated its value as a platform for addressing the important linkages between the political/security and economic/financial aspects of peace consolidation.

Moreover, the process – and the simple fact of the relevant actors participating together in the process and in the body – created opportunities to resolve tensions between the financial and political aspects of peacebuilding in each country, or to build synergies between them. Two episodes had particular impact on members' attitudes, and highlight the unique advantages of the PBC in bringing the key actors together at headquarters.

The first of these was the PBC's response when the IMF signaled its intent to delay completion of its Sixth Review in Burundi. In-country actors including senior personnel of the UN mission saw this as potentially destabilizing to the country and the peace process. The potential crisis was defused in substantial part through active work by the PBC – especially the Chair of the Burundi Country-Specific Meeting – to create political space for dialogue between the government and the IMF, signaling the strong imperative for the government to resolve key governance issues and for economic actors to consider the impact an economic crisis would have on the political and security situation. That work took place both at headquarters and in the field, and directly linked political decision-making at headquarters to field realities.

In Sierra Leone, similarly, the recent incorporation of energy as a priority in the strategic framework highlights an important principle: specifically, that economic risk can

be as significant a threat to peace as security or political risks. In this case the PBC fostered negotiation among the relevant stakeholders to garner political support for the inclusion of energy – normally considered a medium-to-long-term development concern – in a framework for peace consolidation.

Both cases reinforce the essential point that political and financial aspects of recovery need to reinforce each other. Institutionally, this means that the UN and the IFIs must work together to drive coherent strategy for recovery, and the PBC is contributing to that objective. However, there are have been few further examples in the ensuing years.

The PBC's contributions in Burundi and Sierra Leone can also be attributed to the attention brought to bear by the PBC at a point well after that which would normally receive sustained focus from the UNSC. Political attention to countries emerging from conflict tends to wane after the withdrawal of international peacekeeping forces but before national institutions are fully consolidated, amplifying risks of conflict relapse. However, sustained political attention by the PBC in Guinea-Bissau has been insufficient to prevent serious deterioration of conditions in that country under the PBC's watch – and equally so, in the CAR.

But none of this has really shifted the needle on institution building for stable governance after conflict. This gap has motivated increasing advocacy on the part of conflict-affected countries themselves. Most important in 2010 the "G7+" was created as a grouping of 18 conflict-affected states that aim to provide shared lessons from their respective development experiences and advocate for more effective engagement of international actors in conflict-affected countries. In November 2011, the G7+ presented a "New Deal" at the Fourth High Level Panel on Aid Effectiveness, which for the first time saw fragile states themselves advocating for the use of the International Dialogue on Peacebuilding and Statebuilding's goals as a framework for engagement. The adoption of this set of seven peacebuilding and statebuilding goals (PSG), reflects a concern about this gap.

The PSG are:

- Foster inclusive political settlements and processes, and inclusive political dialogue.
- Establish and strengthen basic safety and security.
- Achieve peaceful resolution of conflicts and access to justice.
- Develop effective and accountable government institutions to facilitate service delivery.
- Create the foundations for inclusive economic development, including sustainable livelihoods, employment and effective management of natural resources.
- Develop social capacities for reconciliation and peaceful coexistence.
- Foster regional stability and co-operation.

These goals were adopted by the G7+ and OECD in Busan in 2011, and thus form an important part of the new development framework. The absence of GA buy-in to these goals may constitute a problem over time, albeit one that may be partially managed in the post-2015 negotiation process. Still, the constitute an important normative step forward in framing the development agenda for fragile states around key causes of recurrent conflict.

How does UN performance measure up against these goals?

In writing an analytical review of the UN in fragile states, it should be possible to rely on more than 20 years worth of evaluation material to draw relatively fine-grained conclusions about the performance of specific UN agencies, or overall country programs, within fragile states – and to analyse the variation in performance by type of fragile state, by scale of peacekeeping intervention, etc. But there is not even a small fraction of the necessary evaluative material for this. A weak culture of self-evaluation in the UN development agencies combines with utter incoherence in donor-led evaluation work to result in a scattershot of episodic, non-comparable project level evaluations that provide no basis for broader assessment of agency performance or country-by-country performance.

Moreover, there is not yet even agreed standards as to what constitutes effective outcomes. How does we know when results are being achieved? The UN, across its work in conflict prevention, peace operations, and peacebuilding, is grappling with the question of how to measure progress. There are challenges here, of course. First, there is diverse understanding of what constitutes minimum progress towards stability. Second, there is a substantial risk that benchmarks driven by the political imperatives of the Security Council and/or donors result in goals that have no national ownership, are unrealistic in content, and/or ambiguous enough to declare success when political and donor fatigue sets in. Third, the critically relevant measures – emergence of a viable, inclusive national political process – is both fluid and exceedingly difficult to measure.

Having a mechanism to pull all of the relevant information into a consolidated picture of progress towards the medium-term goal of political stability was an important rationale for the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission. In authorizing the PBC, the Security Council and the General Assembly also authorized the creation of the Peacebuilding Support Office [PBSO], explicitly mandating it to “measure progress towards meeting short

and medium-term recovery goals”. However, this is one of the weakest areas of PBC/PBSO performance to date.

The G7+ and the International Dialogue (G7+ with OECD INCAF), with some support from PBSO, has begun to grapple with this problem, beginning to articulate a series of measures against the Peace and Statebuilding Goals against which outcomes could be measured. That we are only now, almost 25 years after the end of the Cold War, *beginning* to articulate measures against which to measure progress is beyond appalling; but at least an effort is now underway.

Among the positives of the G7+ and International Dialogue process is that it highlights institution building in the areas of inclusive politics, security and justice – themes also highlighted in the 2011 World Development Report. A closer look at UN performance in these areas is instructive.

A Deep Dive within the Deep Dive: Rule of Law Institutions

Across its multiple roles in fragile states, a common focus has emerged on rule of law institutions. Over the past decade, the UN Security Council has made reference to the rule of law in over 160 resolutions in the context of women, peace and security, children in armed conflict, and the protection of civilians in armed conflict. It has mandated the inclusion of rule-of-law components in twenty-two peacekeeping operations and in eight special political missions (both past and current).

The policy churn at UN HQ on issues related to rule of law has been prolific. In 2004, the Secretary-General presented his first report on “The Rule of Law and Transitional Justice in Conflict and Post-Conflict Societies” to the Security Council. In 2005, the “World Summit Outcome Report” took stock of the changing nature of threats and challenges to global stability and proposed a comprehensive strategy to address these issues that focused on building the rule of law and recommended the establishment of a robust capacity-building mechanism for UN rule-of-law assistance in cooperation with regional organizations and multinational financial institutions. What followed was a flood of official UN policy documentation that included: A second report of the Secretary-General on the rule of law to the Council (2006); Secretary-General report on security sector reform (2008); Guidance Notes on the UN approach to rule of law assistance (2008), transitional justice (2008), and strengthening the rule of law at the international level (2011); Four annual rule-of-law assistance update reports (2008–2011), and: A stocktaking report on UN rule-of-law efforts (2011).

At the field level, and reflecting the importance of combining political, security and development approaches to building rule of law institutions, UN entities involved in this area include: DPA, DPKO, UNDP, UNICEF, OHCHR, UN Women, UNODC and OLA.

To coordinate all of this rule of law work, in 2006 the Secretary-General established the Rule of Law Coordination and Resource Group (RoLCRG). Chaired at the DSG level, RoLCRG was created to act as the headquarters focal point for coordinating system-wide attention on the rule of law, in an effort to minimize fragmentation across all rule-of-law activities. Meanwhile in 2007, DPKO established an Office of Rule of Law and Security Institutions (OROLSI) to provide the holistic approach needed to re-establish systems of justice and security in conflict-affected settings. UNDP, for its part has its Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery supporting implementation of its rule of law work. In 2008 BCPR launched its “Global Program for Strengthening Rule of Law” in 37 fragile states. The DPKO and UNDP programs were co-located in 2012.

Unsurprisingly, the steady stream of policy outputs paired with a range of UN actors working on rule of law issues alongside other multilateral and bilateral actors at field level have created a significant level of conceptual and operational overlap, resource completion and overall incoherence.

Fundamentally, building the rule of law – as is most institution building support in fragile settings – is an intensely political and long-term endeavor. Yet, the approach overwhelmingly taken by the UN in rule of law programming is largely technical in nature and time bound to donor funding cycles. This is an approach that neglects the most important aspects of building rule of law institutions and has severely impacted the UN’s performance in fragile states. In the field, there are important instances where UN actors have been creative in blending political, security, and developmental approaches to provide suitable responses to rule-of-law challenges in post-conflict and other fragile settings, yet these are far from the norm.

On the other hand, movement towards a rule-of-law framework has also generated bureaucratic entanglement, often rooted in conceptual confusion. Two distinct concepts of the rule of law are embedded in UN policy and practice. One version focuses on developing judicial, human rights, and security institutions, with the intent of binding political leaders to a set of formal decision-making

processes, and thus constraining the state from potential abuses. A “thicker” version denies that mere procedural formality can protect individuals or groups from oppression and insists that effective rule of law requires a deeper set of constitutional and legal norms, ranging from guarantees of full citizen equality, recognition of alternative dispute resolution mechanisms, and political participation, to the panoply of contemporary international human rights and broader range of political institutions that can facilitate the provision of human security and development.

The latter, “thicker” concept of the rule of law has increasingly been encoded in UN policy statements, while the narrower version often characterizes the UN’s operational practices in the field. Neither seem entirely suitable for the contexts where the UN has its largest operational practice, i.e. in low-income, low-institutional countries that have emerged from civil conflict (“post-conflict settings”), nor do they fit into the timeframes that characterize UN engagements whether in post-conflict or traditional development settings. Adding to the confusion, the thicker concept of the rule of law has become almost indistinguishable from the broad concept of peacebuilding that has been adopted by the UN. The co-location of DPKO’s OROLSI and BCPR’s Global Rule of Law program is an important first step in sorting through the conceptual and bureaucratic impediments to impact; but it is at a very early stage.

The other major problem the UN currently confronts is the two-part problem of finding a ready supply of well-qualified people to fill critical civilian posts in peacekeeping and peacebuilding operations, and have a full complement of rule of law personnel and headquarters. This is an issue that cuts to the core of the UN’s ability to support fragile states in building the central rule of law institutions necessary to overcome fragility.

The headquarters problem is a budgetary one – both DPKO and BCPR have slender core budget authorizations for this surely central function. (UNDP has not helped itself here, in that it has not yet fully recognized the huge market opportunity it has here to become the centre of international gravity in this issue – a position it may have lost out with the establishment of OROLSI in DPKO.)

The field problem is a structural one – there simply is not an international surplus of judges, lawyers, civilian administrators, police trainers or police forces, waiting around, under-utilized, to be deployed out to peace operations. This is not just a UN problem: governments are increasingly recognizing the need to have stand-by cadres of personnel for a range of civilian and judicial functions. (Here too the UN is at risk of missing a market opportunity, by not seeing their potential comparative advantage in being a hub of information and light coordination for these disparate national reserves – a role nominally within the mandate of the PBSO but also likely to be actually implemented by DPKO.)

The challenges of mobilizing adequate civilian human resources to support fragile states in 2010 led the Secretary General to appoint a Senior Advisory Group to Review civilian capacity in the aftermath of conflict. The Advisory Group’s report provided recommendations to enhance the availability and quality of personnel to support sustainable peace and development that focused on efficiently drawing across the strengths of the UN system and enhanced partnerships with national counterparts. These recommendations set off a reform process at the Secretariat in 2011 that is now being implemented via the Executive Office of the Secretary General. The principles of the CivCap Review were employed to good effect in the context of the Security Council mandated UN Support Mission in Libya, which was able to rapidly deploy civilians to facilitate planning in post-conflict Libya in late 2011. While this is one positive example, the farther reaching impacts of the Civilian Capacity Review are yet to manifest.

Thus, overall, The UN’s performance in long-term support to rule of law institutions is still in its infancy. There is an inadequate focus on inclusive political settlements; a weak empirical base; and a decision-making architecture and culture that has proved unable to clarify confusion, make decisions, or present member states with a roadmap toward more streamlined arrangements. As with many other areas of the UN’s conflict-related work, limited analysis and weak and competing monitoring and assessment frameworks weaken each aspect of UN engagement in the rule of law field.

The Evolving Context

While the UN grapples with improving its performance in well-established niches and roles, the context in which it operates is evolving – and fast. Since the start of the current decade, the UN has faced five important changes in landscape of response to fragile states, each of which has important bearing on prospects for UN performance ahead.

First, the number of conflicts in sub-Saharan Africa, and in low-income states in general, has steadily declined. This is in part a UN success story: more and more analysis points to the deployment of UN mediators and peacekeepers as a significant part of the cause in this reduction. But it also means a change in the business problem. From a focus on immediate post-conflict recovery – including such functions as early recovery, demobilization and reintegration, and refugee return – the UN now has to grapple with longer-term challenges of development after conflict.

Second, since 2006, we've seen a steady shift in conflict towards the Middle East and North Africa region, and a steady upwards trend in the percentage of conflicts that occur in middle income countries. The consequences of this shift are profound. Oversimplifying somewhat, the UN's role in fragile states in the 1990s and 2000s can be characterized as having taken place largely in states with weak institutions and low geopolitical salience (with exceptions like Kosovo and Afghanistan) In the MENA region, the UN (and other actors) face states with strong institutions (or at least, some strong institutions, particularly in the security sector) and very high geopolitical salience. This is a radical change in the backdrop for new UN engagements, one not yet fully recognized in UN policy.

Third, the emerging powers – particularly China, India, Brazil, Turkey, and the UAE – have substantially increased their economic engagement in fragile states. Some of this is in the form of financing that looks similar to ODA, some of it in the form of FDI, all of it consequential. This

was a growing trend in the 2000s but largely limited to efforts in the emerging powers' neighborhoods (India in Afghanistan, Brazil in Haiti, UAE in Yemen etc.) That has progressively changed, with several of the emerging powers launching important initiatives beyond their immediate neighborhood (Turkey in Somaliland, UAE in Somalia, Brazil in Mozambique, India and China in several African countries.)

Fourth, the increased awareness and attention to conflict and fragility issues in traditional development actors. This is notable in an OECD context, and at the World Bank, where operational guidance to implement key elements of the WDR 2011 and the establishment of the Fragile States Hub in Nairobi signal a renewed engagement – one now fully embraced by new World Bank President Jim Kim.

Finally, the fifth change that is just beginning to impact the UN's operational context is the 2008 global financial crisis. It was anticipated that national austerity measures among donors would have knock-on effects for UN operational budgets, but in reality the impact of the crisis was not immediate. In fact, in the two years following the financial crisis, operational expenditures among the UN's primary actors in fragile states, DPKO and UNDP, continued on the steady growth trajectory. But in 2011, it became apparent that the UN would not be immune to the impacts of the crisis. The growth trend in operational expenditures stalled, with operational expenditures leveling off for DPKO, and declining for UNDP.

Meanwhile, and more indicative of the still evolving context, during 2011 ODA fell for the first time since 1997 falling 2%, and then fell by a further 4% the following year. 17 In the first half of 2013, several traditional development donors announced their intention to cut aid budgets. This evolving reality is something that the UN development system does not appear to have anticipated, yet it will have profound impacts on its operations as donors ask the institution to do more with less in the coming years.

17. OECD, "Aid to Poor Countries Slips Further as Governments Tighten Budgets" (Paris, 2013)

Conclusion

Each of these developments has consequences for the UN's role and work. Each of them is potential positive. A longer-running agenda for institutional development in post-conflict states is in some ways easier to navigate than immediate post-conflict challenges: there is less immediate violence and uncertainty; and the job of institutional transformation is closer to the core development agenda, albeit in unfamiliar fields. A shift to the Middle East is incredibly complicated but if successfully navigated would have the upside of generating substantially higher geopolitical interest in the UN's work than currently holds. Engagement by the emerging powers should in theory strengthen the centrality of the UN, since the emerging powers have no other instrument where they carry weight through which to operate at a global level. And the emerging powers bring an additional comparative advantage – lessons from their own, comparatively recent experiences in development and (for some) democratization, lessons which might apply quite usefully to contemporary fragile states and certainly have more resonance than the over-developed, over-institutionalized modes of operating that constitute the modern Western norm. And finally, deeper engagement by the World Bank could add depth and punch to development actions in fragile states, if they are effectively coordinated – or better still, fused – with UN operations.

In practice, though, only the growing World Bank role is so far a positive for the UN. The positive relations that have developed between SG Ban Ki-Moon and World Bank President Jim Kim are a good sign, and while cooperation to date has focused on issues outside the fragile states realm that could change. For the rest, there's less good news.

First, the emerging powers so far have increased their engagement almost entirely outside of the UN, opting for South-South or occasionally triangular cooperation rather than multilateral engagement through the UN. The only substantial exception to this is Brazil's role in Haiti, which combined a leadership role in peacekeeping with substantial development innovation especially in Port

au Prince. Elsewhere, though, Brazil has chosen to work through bilateral ties, and where it's turned its attention to multilateral reform has focused not on this issue but on sustainability issues, and is a leading advocate of the BRICS Bank. Turkey has devoted considerable policy attention to increasing its role in mediation in fragile states, even setting up a center to support mediation – outside the UN. Just so with Qatar. India's rapidly expanding development and investment engagement in Africa almost totally bypasses the UN.

Second, the shift to the MENA region has so far been extremely fraught, and relative positives like the UN in Libya and Yemen have so far been outweighed by irrelevance and floundering in Egypt and Tunisia. Despite having a strong normative foundation on the rule of law – arguably the core challenge across the Arab Spring – the UN has not found a coherent way to stand on that normative ground to support either national transformations or to frame or lead international support. And this is to say nothing of the utter disaster of the UN's engagement so far in Syria.

Third, the UN is only beginning to work through the implications of the need to shift towards a longer-term focus on institutional transformations – particularly for inclusive politics, for security, for justice, and for job growth – in fragile states that are a step further removed from the immediacy of conflict. The entry point where the UN has begun to step up its engagement is on rule of law institutions, and here there are substantial weaknesses of both concept and practice. Still, this is a promising terrain for the UN and the international community as a whole.

There remain substantial challenges ahead, some of them new, some infuriatingly enduring. The most important are:

- Deepening both the conceptual and policy clarity and operational integration of UNDP, UNHCHR and DPKO/DPA's work on rule of law institutions for states that have emerged from conflict but remain at risk of relapse
- Adopting an effective normative stance on rule of law as it pertains to the crises of the Arab Spring
- Building on positive developments in the relationship

between Ban Ki-Moon and Jim Kim to move towards genuinely joint operations between the World Bank and the UN in fragile states

- Moving past organizational integration through the integrated mission model to a genuine integration of tools around common strategy
- Substantially deepening the policy and operational links to emerging powers, including through the civilian capacity exercise.

Notwithstanding the ongoing need for change, there is little doubt that fragile states will remain central to the work of the UN development system, and that the UN will remain central to development efforts in fragile states.



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