DIIS REPORT

FRAGILE SITUATIONS
BACKGROUND PAPERS

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DIIS REPORT 2008:11

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Introduction

Lars Engberg-Pedersen

The chapters in this DIIS report were commissioned by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as background papers in the context of a study on current debates and central dilemmas in relation to fragile situations. The background papers discuss the emergence of the concern with fragility, the attempts to define and categorise fragile situations, the available historical experience with state building and state formation, and issues in international support to fragile situations. The papers constitute a collection of reflexions and views on central themes in relation to fragile situations and do not seek to provide one coherent argument about fragility.

The first paper, by Louise Andersen, looks at the international context and explores how the concern with fragile states has emerged. The paper argues that two themes have merged in the debate on fragile states; one being the increasing interest in states and state functions both from a conflict and security perspective and within the development discourse, and the other being that no region, country or locality is irrelevant to the international community. This security-development nexus has produced three significant claims guiding international discussions: First, that state fragility is a source of transnational threats; secondly, that 'bad' governance is a root cause of state fragility; and, thirdly, that there is a need for 'integrated approaches' to address both the causes and consequences of state fragility. The paper goes on to discuss the commonly supplied answer to fragility, namely state building, and notes that there is little agreement neither of the precise content of this notion, nor of what external actors can and should do in that context.

The second paper, by Finn Stepputat and Lars Engberg-Pedersen, deals with types and processes of fragility and seeks to provide an overview of the variety of definitions, measurements and typologies of state fragility. The two authors are generally sceptical as to the endeavours to standardise and categorise fragile states as a basis for organised external interventions. While the concern to support people and societies in great difficulty is imperative, much of the debate on fragility suffers from three interlinked weaknesses: (i) it assumes that different fragile situations share sufficient characteristics to allow for similar types of support; (ii) it is based on the technocratic approach of conventional aid interventions assuming that social change can be engineered through careful planning; and (iii) it presupposes that a Weberian ideal of what a state should look like is a relevant goal in all societies struggling with fragility.

In the third paper, by Dietrich Jung, a historical and sociological perspective on state formation and state building is presented. The paper begins by summarising the views in historical sociology on the creation of modern statehood in Europe. It emphasises the typically violent and protracted process through which, first, a monopoly of physical violence has been established and, secondly, how the control of this monopoly has moved from private to public spheres. Charles Tilly's description of the early European state-builders as 'criminal' racketeers is recalled. The paper continues by emphasising that the modern state as an institution, as an image and as social practice is far from always a coherent entity. Particularly the post-colonial state has typically suffered from incoherent demands from social actors with very different perspectives and backgrounds. Basically, the paper argues that there is very little basis for turning the particular European experience of state formation into a blue-print model for present day attempts to build fragile states.

Tentative suggestions as to international support are presented in the fourth paper, by Lars Engberg-Pedersen, given the diversity of fragile situations, the different possible domains of intervention, and the differing nature of international actors. After a presentation of what appears to have contributed to 'turnaround' in different specific settings, the paper proposes a particular conceptualisation of fragility as well as a number of themes of significant importance when analysing fragile situations. Two general conclusions emerge from this discussion: First, fragility is not only a state problem and state building is not necessarily the adequate response, and secondly, there is a strong need to look for causes of fragility in the interaction of national and international processes. The paper ends by listing five issues that should be thoroughly analysed when organising international support to fragile situations.

1. Fragile States on the International Agenda

Louise Andersen, March 2008

> "One of the great challenges of the new millennium is to ensure that all States are strong enough to meet the many challenges they face. If States are fragile, the peoples of the world will not enjoy the security, development and justice that are their right."
>
> *Kofi Annan, 2005*

Introduction

After years of neo-liberal attempts to roll back the state, the state has returned to favour. Strong states are now seen as a prerequisite for both human and international security. Highly influential reports on *Human Security* and *Responsibility to Protect* have linked the fulfilment of human rights, human security and human development directly to the capacity of the state. It is a state's responsibility to ensure that its citizens are 'free from want' and 'free from fear'. However, the reports are also indicative of a more interventionist international role: if states do not live up to their responsibilities, it is the task of the more responsible members of the international community to intervene – for the sake not only of the beleaguered citizens, but also of wider international peace and security. This shift has been ongoing since the end of the Cold War and has gained increasing momentum in the aftermath of 9/11.

Concern for state fragility covers a broad spectrum, embracing claims that fragile states present direct threats to Western national security, alongside arguments that dysfunctional state institutions are the key obstacle to sustainable development. The debate thus links security and development communities in a vague, yet firm, claim that addressing state fragility is one of the most pressing policy questions of our time. Beneath this broad consensus, a number of often contradictory perceptions of the nature of the problem and the appropriate solutions to it lingers. The debate on fragile states is thus infused with politics. This chapter provides an overview of the main points of tension. It is not about state fragility as such, but rather about the different aspects that are brought to bear in the debate over fragile states.

Two elements have been selected for particular scrutiny. The first is the *security-development nexus*, which provides the overall framework for the discussion of *why* fragile states are relevant. The second is *state-building*, which in a variety of forms defines suggestions of *how* to deal with fragile states. To set the scene for these discussions,

the concept of state fragility – and the framing it provides – is briefly presented below. The final section of the paper sums up the discussions by identifying the major fault lines running through the debate.

State Fragility

There is no authoritative definition of state fragility, nor is there an agreed list of fragile states.[1] This spurs considerable debate on what the term actually refers to. Broadly speaking, however, the policy debate is framed by two basic assumptions: first, the idea that all states can be placed on a continuum of strength, based on their fulfilment of basic state functions; and secondly, the notion that there is a need to rethink engagement and identify new approaches.

The idea of a continuum of state strength is reflected in the growing number of schemes that measure and rate states according to performance. Such schemes tend to reflect a belief that 'to achieve maximum stability a regime must both carry out the tasks expected of a competent government, and maintain legitimacy by being perceived as just and fair in the manner it carries out those tasks' (Marshall and Goldstone, 2007: 13-14).[2] In recent years, 'fragile states' has become the catch-all phrase for states at the low end. In the development community, it has replaced labels such as 'poor performers', 'low-income countries under stress' and 'difficult partnership'. In academia and security circles, terms such as 'failed states' and 'collapsed states' remain common. Sometimes these terms indicate differences in degrees of state weakness: a fragile state has not yet failed, and a failed state has not yet collapsed. Frequently, however, they are just used as different words for problems that are seen as related to the state's lack of will or capacity to perform core state functions. For reasons of convenience, this paper will use primarily the terms 'fragile states' and 'state fragility'. Only if it is necessary to clarify a specific point will other terms be used.

The second assumption – that there is a need to redefine international engagement – is based on the claim that 'it is no longer possible to ignore distant and misgoverned parts of a world without borders, where chaos is a potential neighbour anywhere from Africa to Afghanistan' (Straw, 2002: 98). This sets the fragile state debate in direct communication with the pre-9/11 concern for *development effectiveness*. The 1990s saw a major shift in aid flows towards the so-called 'good performers'. The obvious

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[1] For a more elaborate discussion, see the chapter by Engberg-Pedersen and Stepputat.

[2] The quote indicates a strong tendency in the debate to equate 'state' with 'central government'.

flip-side was a tendency to abandon states that performed poorly, i.e. states with weak institutions and a lack of reform-friendly elites. It is this group of states that is now being re-invented as fragile and – precisely because of their fragility – being seen as both needy and worthy of international support. The predicament for donor agencies, however, is that the aid flow cannot simply be shifted towards fragile states. The mechanisms for delivering long-term aid do not work in fragile states: budget support, sector programmes and alignment behind government policies make little sense in settings where the authority, effectiveness and legitimacy of national governments are severely limited. Related to this, the 'absorptive capacity' of fragile states is found to be lower than in non-fragile states (McGillivray and Feeny, 2007). Needs may be considerably greater in fragile states, but part of the predicament is that they lack the institutional set-up required to translate foreign assistance into domestic changes. The challenge for donor agencies is therefore presented as not merely a matter of providing more aid to 'forgotten' states, but rather one of providing aid differently, in a new manner (Dollar and Levin, 2005).

However, few if any of the problems and phenomena related to state fragility are in themselves new. What is new is first and foremost the high-level of political attention. And in a sense, this is not even that new. Most of the aspects have been on the global agenda for almost twenty years under headings such as humanitarian intervention, post-conflict reconstruction and peace-building. The search for 'new' approaches to fragile states thus draws on and continues policy debates that date back at least to the end of the Cold War.

The Security-Development Nexus

When the Cold War ended, security and development were no longer confined within the bipolar logic. Security came to reflect a broad range of 'new threats', many of which were seen to stem from the global South. Similarly, the field of development was expanded, and politicized. Economic growth and poverty reduction remained overall objectives, but good governance, democracy and market economies were increasingly understood as the sine qua non for development and stability in the poor and disorderly periphery.

The simultaneous broadening of security and development has implied that many issues are now falling within the domains of both policy fields. This overlap, which is often referred to as the security-development nexus, provides the overall framework for the fragile states debate. It reflects a dual claim, on the one hand, that *security is*

fundamental for reducing poverty; and on the other hand, that a *lack of development causes conflict*. It suggests that development and security are inherently related – one cannot be pursued in isolation from the other. As indicated above, however, the nexus also implies a third claim, namely that *security is indivisible*: poverty and conflict in one part of the world creates problems of insecurity and instability in other parts. In order to achieve security at home, Western governments must pursue development abroad (Duffield, 2001; Beall et al., 2006).

Most accounts of the security-development nexus draw on the *liberal peace thesis*, which argues that democratization will create the conditions for peace and development both locally and globally. International order *and* human security can thus be promoted simultaneously by 'improving' existing states through democratic reforms, that is, by supporting values and norms such as human rights, participation, inclusion, transparency and accountability. These values are seen as the necessary foundation for a stable relationship between state and society. They constitute a set of international standards that fragile states have difficulty in fulfilling – hence their fragility. The core question is therefore not whether these standards and values are universally applicable, but rather how they can be put into practice in fragile states.

Apart from this very general concern, the security-development nexus frames the debate by making three different claims: first, that state fragility is a source of transnational threats; secondly, that 'bad' governance is a root cause of state fragility; and thirdly, that 'integrated approaches' are needed to address both the causes and consequences of state fragility. These claims are discussed in turn below.

Transnational Threats

The importance of al-Qaida's link to Afghanistan cannot be overestimated when trying to grasp the current concern with fragile states. One element in the declared war on terror is an undeclared war on state fragility, based on the assumption that terrorist networks can take advantage of the lack of government control. However, the relationship between terrorism and state fragility remains poorly understood. On the one hand, there is not much empirical evidence to underpin the assertion of a general relationship between the two (Hippel, 2002; Menkhaus, 2004; Patrick, 2006; Møller, 2007). As highlighted in a recent study by the RAND Corporation, 'not all ungoverned territories are equally suitable as terrorist sanctuaries' (RAND, 2007: xvi). On the other hand, domestic terrorism and other forms of political violence are more prevalent in fragile states than in non-fragile states. The lack of institutional

mechanisms to deal with crises further implies that the costs of terrorism are greater in fragile states (Keefer and Loayza 2007). The possible linkages are thus considerable more complex than the policy debate suggests.[3]

The point to be made here is that fragile states are seen as sources of all sorts of cross-border threats. State fragility is being linked to problems as diverse as mass migration, organized crime, violent conflict, communicable diseases and environmental depletion. It is to this long list of 'ills' that terrorist threats have now been added. By referring to something as a national security problem, that 'something' becomes more important and more likely to 'win' in the battle for scarce resources. This does not mean that the problem or phenomenon is being 'invented' in the sense that it is somehow less 'real' than other 'non-securitized' problems. The dire living conditions in many fragile states are very real indeed, as is the poverty, the violence, the insecurity. Framing such issues as a direct threat to Western security, however, casts them in a specific light which may have implications for the sense of priority and the type of policy solutions they inspire (Beall et al., 2006).

Governance Matters

The security-development nexus also provides the dominant explanation of what causes state fragility. The explanation largely holds that it is because the domestic institutions of public authority are not working as they are supposed to that some states are fragile (Rotberg, 2003). This implies that state fragility is seen as the result of internal malfunctions and not – as alternative explanations claim – as linked to the global political economy and fragile states' positions in the world economy (see e.g. Clapham, 2002). The internal 'flaws' which are seen as the main causes of state fragility are repression, corruption and patrimonialism – all of which are related in their turn to self-serving elites that have 'captured' the state and created state institutions that benefit only themselves and their clients (Sørensen, 2008). As a result, the *social contract* that is supposed to secure a dual bond of rights and obligations between the people and the state is broken. The state does not deliver to its people, and the people accordingly have to turn to non-state communities (ethnic groups, clans, tribes, religion) for the satisfaction of their material and non-material needs (Sørensen, 2008: 5).

In the policy discourse, this is translated into a concern for the efficiency and legitimacy of the governance arrangements. Efficiency is perceived as a matter

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[3] See Møller 2007 for a comprehensive discussion.

of whether or not the state is delivering public services to the population, while legitimacy is related to the perception of the state's rule: is it widely accepted or not? In keeping with the idea of a social contract, the two tend to be seen as directly related in the sense that legitimacy depends on efficiency: the fewer public goods the state provides to the people, the less legitimate – and hence fragile – it is. Reforming governance arrangements to ensure that they 'deliver' is thus seen to have both curative and preventive power: good governance is the medicine needed to heal a fragile post-conflict state, an antidote that can prevent a fragile state from collapsing into violent conflict.

The main criticism of this perception is that it draws on a normative model of the state, which, first, does not take into account the context and history of the state in question and, secondly, downplays the fact that governance is not just about delivering services but primarily about allocating who has the right to rule over whom. The legitimacy of governance arrangements does not necessarily flow from efficiency.

Integrated Approaches
The fragile states debate has accelerated the merger of security and development agendas. In doing so, it is accentuating the limitations of the present international architecture. The Cold War disconnect between security and development continues to structure most of the multilateral institutions, as well as most of the governments that are engaging in the fragile states debate. ECOSOC, the Bretton Woods institutions and the specialized UN agencies remain primarily concerned with development, while the Security Council and military alliances are responsible for matters of peace and security. The same division of labour is found between national ministries of foreign affairs, defence and development cooperation.

A major argument of the security-development nexus is that such stove-pipe thinking is counterproductive, particularly in war-torn fragile states. To ensure turnaround, security and development must be addressed simultaneously and in an integrated manner: military and civilian actors must work in concert. This has spurred the establishment of new UN agencies and offices – most recently the UN Peacebuilding Commission – and UN peace operations are being transformed into *integrated missions*. Comparable efforts are ongoing in the EU to improve cross-pillar cooperation when dealing with fragile states, and most OECD governments are formulating 'whole of government' policies to ensure that diplomacy, development and defence (3Ds) are 'joined-up' (OECD, 2007b).

Most of these efforts are focusing on the need for more and better *coordination* between already existing bureaucratic organizations. Coordination is, however, not the same as integration (Sending, 2004). Coordination implies that two or more separate units need to work closely together because their operations are interdependent: it does not establish the shared structure of authority, responsibility, action, implementation etc. that seems needed to bring about a truly integrated response. This highlights the fact that the main challenges and obstacles to reform are essentially political, not organizational. The most ambitious attempt so far at reforming the old Cold War architecture illustrates this well. The UN Peacebuilding Commission was envisaged as bridging the gap between security and development. In the end it was established only as an advisory body. Neither the Security Council nor ECOSOC wished to transfer decision-making power to the new Commission, even though everyone agreed that, in principle, what was needed was a truly integrated body.

It is within this strangely politicized, yet consensual understanding of the links between security and development that Western states, multilateral institutions and international NGOs are working to ensure that all states are strong enough to live up to the challenges they face. This agenda is known as state-building and is discussed next.

State-building

In recent years, state-building has emerged as the main solution to the many ills associated with state fragility (Fukuyama, 2004; Dobbins, 2007). The OECD/DAC principles thus depict state-building as 'the central objective' for international engagement in fragile states (2007a: 2). What is meant by state-building, and how this elusive concept might be translated into concrete interventions, is considerably less clear. Neither policy circles nor academia have produced an authoritative definition of state-building.[4] In the present context, however, the term is used primarily with reference to *external interventions aimed at constructing or reconstructing governance arrangements that can provide citizens with economic and physical security* (Chesterman, 2004: 5). To provide a sketchy overview of this multi-faceted field, the sections below focus on two questions that in different ways illustrate some of the deeper-lying dimensions running through the current debate:

- What type of state should be built?
- What role can 'outsiders' play in building states?

[4] See the chapter by Jung for a more elaborate discussion of state-building.

The Nature of the State to be built

The notion that a modern state has to fulfil certain functions is implicit in the conceptualization of state fragility. Drawing on Western state theory, these functions are typically seen as related to security, welfare and representation. The purpose of state-building is to ensure that a fragile state (once again, or perhaps for the first time ever) can fulfil all the functions it is supposed to fulfil. This is by far the dominant understanding in the current debate, but consensus is still not very great. Underneath runs a diverse stream of opposing views on, first, whether some state functions are more basic than others; secondly, whether the state should provide the public goods itself, or merely enable their provision; and thirdly, what 'representation' means? At the core of these questions lie disagreements about the nature of the state to be built: should it be a minimalistic 'night-watch' state, whose primary concern is to maintain security; or should it rather be a welfare state that provides for its citizens from cradle to grave? The discussion of basic state functions is thus essentially a discussion about the proper role and size of the state vis-à-vis other authorities and groups in society. This underscores the intrinsically political nature of any state-building intervention. However, the debate is often formulated in apolitical and quite technical terms. Donors are concerned with finding (and mixing and sequencing) the right instruments to ensure that the state can fulfil its basic functions, but the political realities of opposing values, interests and perceptions tends to be overlooked. Instead of addressing politics, emphasis is placed on improving state capacity.

The discussion of the nature of the state that is to be built re-emerges in the question of how processes of state-building and democratization relate to one another. It is widely acknowledged that democratization can be a turbulent and potentially bloody process. Democracy is not established overnight, and the mere holding of elections does not in itself make a fragile state stronger. Nevertheless, ensuring that the state is considered legitimate by the people and that its rulers are accountable to those they rule is generally understood to be an essential element in overcoming state fragility. In keeping with the liberal underpinnings of the entire agenda, state-building is thus often equated with democratization: holding elections, strengthening civil society, promoting public participation in decision-making etc. etc. Increasingly, however, academics are questioning this approach and arguing that democracy-building and state-building are not 'mutually reinforcing endeavours or even two sides of the same coin' (Carothers, 2002: 9). They suggest that state-building is about strengthening the central political authority, while democratization is about curbing and limiting that authority. Democracy may be a good thing

in itself, but it can only work where there is a functioning state to democratize. Institutionalization must therefore come before liberalization (Paris, 2006). This recommendation is sometimes referred to as 'sequencing': a first-things-first approach, in contrast to the holistic and comprehensive peace-building approach that was formulated in the 1990s.

This discussion refers back to the question of whether some state functions are more basic than others. Should the state focus on controlling the territory and upholding law and order before it can attend to the other needs of its people? And should international assistance accordingly be focusing on, for example, security sector reform rather than education and health? Or will the state – no matter how 'effective' its security apparatus is – remain fragile as long as it fails to provide social services and other public goods to its people? By framing the questions in these ways, another and perhaps more fundamental dilemma emerge: Why should outsiders have a say in such vital questions? Why are these not purely internal matters?

The Role of Outsiders
The policy rhetoric is clear on the role of outsiders in state-building: their task is solely to support indigenous processes of reform and reconstruction, not to impose foreign decisions, structures or institutions. However, policy realities are widely acknowledged to differ from this ideal. This is most evident in post-conflict situations, where international engagement tends to be considerably more intrusive than in 'ordinary' fragile states. This has spurred a major debate on how outsiders may or may not contribute to building effective and legitimate states. Is the idea of national ownership and home-grown solutions out of touch with the realities on the ground in situations in which formal institutions of governance have collapsed? Or is it rather the notion that foreigners can somehow build legitimate structures that is out of touch with reality?

Within the development community, it is widely acknowledged that imposed solutions are unsustainable. Unless there is local ownership in the community, the results will not be maintained when the foreign assistance is withdrawn. In state-building policies, this is translated into a need for working with (nurturing and supporting) national reformers in building effective, legitimate and resilient state institutions (OECD, 2007a: 1). However, a growing body of literature is arguing that international engagement must be more robust. A certain degree of international control and imposition is necessary in order to bring about a

well-functioning state in which the ruling elites are accountable to the people (Krasner, 2004; Rotberg, 2003). In direct opposition to this view, critical scholars claim that if state-building processes are driven from the outside, they will produce artificial states that are accountable to international institutions instead of domestic societies (Chandler, 2006). A third and final argument claims that the impact of outsiders is minimal: local power structures tend not to be significantly altered by international attempts at state-building (Sørensen, 2008; Barnett and Zuercher, 2006).

The debate is obviously ongoing, partly because there are no clear answers to the questions it raises regarding how resilient links between state and society emerge, partly because the notion of outsiders building states for others evokes disturbing images of 'civilizing missions'. The necessity to place a territory under some form of international administration has been accepted in specific cases (East Timor, Kosovo), but the idea that it might become a permanent or recurrent feature of international life is instinctively felt to be dangerous, since it undermines the principle of sovereign equality on which the current international order is built (Mortimer, 2004: 12). Restrictions on sovereignty are thus justified by referring to the situation as an emergency, a period of exceptionality while 'normality' is being restored. But when the period of exceptionality lasts for years, perhaps decades, it is increasingly difficult to regard the arrangement as an 'emergency'. Then the question of 'who guards the guardians?' becomes increasingly pressing.

The fragile states debate, which takes as its starting point the inadequacy of domestic institutions, thus ends up pointing to the inadequacy of international institutions. In doing so, it raises the question of whether a strengthening of the sovereign state model is the most appropriate solution to the problems encountered in the periphery of the global economy. And if not, what are the alternatives? Is there a need to reintroduce formal trusteeships or perhaps establish other forms of global governance that can ensure accountability between those with real decision-making power and those whose lives are affected by these decisions?

Conclusion

The main thrust of this chapter has been that the fragile states debate is about politics. It is about values, principles and interests, some of which are fundamental to the way we perceive the present world order. This instils the debate with a strong tension between idealism and realism. This is most evident in the notion

that security is indivisible and that 'a world where some live in comfort and plenty while half of the human race lives on less than $2 a day, is neither just nor stable' (White House, 2002: 21). Such enlightened self-interest builds on the assumption that there is a high degree of overlap between 'our' national security and 'their' human security. Not least following 9/11, this notion has been subjected to criticism. Observers from both sides of the political spectrum are arguing that the current concern with fragile states indicates a return to a state-centric approach to security, an approach that emphasizes the need for a stable regime that is in control of what goes on within and across its borders. Some see this as a deplorable regression to the practice of propping up 'friendly' yet repressive regimes, while others see it as a much needed revision of overly ambitious liberal foreign-policy aims. Either way, this division constitutes one of the main fault lines in the fragile states debate: what policy implications are to be drawn from the widely held belief that security is 'indivisible'?

Another major fault line is related to the perception of the security-development nexus. As outlined above, the nexus has not led to a complete fusion of security and development. The two fields remain clearly identifiable as distinct policy domains, and tensions between them are clearly evident in the fragile states debate. A core point of contestation revolves around which domain matters the most. The consensus over seeing the two as interrelated is thus often replaced by disagreement on whether – in the final analysis – development is a prerequisite for sustainable peace, or whether it is the other way around? What is more important, freedom from fear or freedom from want?

In a sense, this need for focusing and prioritizing is the core challenge. It indicates that all good things need not necessarily go together. It thus points to real dilemmas and to the tough choices that have to be made between different values, each held dear by the international community.

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II. Fragile States: Definitions, Measurements and Processes

Finn Stepputat and Lars Engberg-Pedersen

> "...fragility is created by someone (or some set of forces), and serves particular interests." (Krause and Jütersonke 2007: 9)

Introduction

The fragile state agenda has been generated by events such as widespread internal war, cases of the collapse of central state authority, fear of what might happen in territories beyond government control, and donor governments' frustrations with their working relations with certain states. We may interpret the agenda as being driven by the hope of developing way of preventing state collapse and helping build responsible states, as well as by attempts to understand and pack all this into well-defined and well-described cases which donor states and international administrations can deal with in regularized ways. In other words, the notion of the fragile state is emerging as a focus of attempts to forge stable and manageable relations with states that do not conform to established images and expectations of states. These attempts are mainly donor-driven, and few state incumbents are likely to present themselves as representing a 'fragile' or 'failed' state. But maybe this will change as policy fields and budget-lines crystallize around the notion of fragile states.[1]

This chapter provides an overview of some of the basic features of this emerging policy field, mainly the discussions of how, and to what extent, it is possible to define, describe and measure fragile states, and to distinguish between different types and processes of state fragility. Rather than providing a particular typology, the paper will discuss important analytical distinctions from the point of view of donor involvement in other states, as well as the problems involved in applying Weberian analytical categories as norms for state-building.

Definitions

A range of concepts have emerged to describe states that do not live up to common understandings of how states should work, ranging from collapsed, failed and failing

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[1] See the chapter on the international context for further analysis of the background and promises of the fragile state debate.

states, to fragile, crisis, rogue and poorly performing states, difficult partnerships, and low-income countries under stress. These concepts have often been used indiscriminately. While the terms 'collapsed' and 'failed states' are usually reserved for cases where central state institutions and authority have ceased to function, 'fragile states' is increasingly being recognized – in the donor community at least – as a common descriptor of states that represent persistent challenges for the donor community by not living up to Weberian expectations and by foreshadowing the risk of collapse in the future.

A certain consensus seems to be emerging around the definition of fragile states as 'those where the state power is unable and/or unwilling to deliver core functions to the majority of its people: security, protection of property, basic public services and essential infrastructure', this being the definition used in the OECD/DAC. While this definition is rather static, others are more dynamic, such as that adopted by the Japanese government: 'states with limited capacity to cope with instability risks', a definition which focuses on the vulnerabilities that result from the weakness of basic institutions of the state. Alternatively there is the minimalistic, future-oriented definition of fragile states as 'states that are prone to failure in the future' (Francois and Sud 2006), which, however, does not say anything about the dimensions of the impending failure.

An overview of the working definitions used by different governmental and intergovernmental agencies and ministries (Cammack et al. 2006) shows that definitions tend to emphasize either:

a) the *functionality* of states, i.e. the will and capacity to perform the functions necessary for the security and well-being of their populations. Working definitions often imply a range or a hierarchy of positive functions of, for example, security; adjudication of conflict, rule of law, the enforcement of contracts and the protection of property; political participation; and social service delivery, infrastructure and regulation of the economy (Rotberg 2003);

b) the *effects* of state fragility in terms of poverty, insecurity, armed conflict, refugees, organized crime, terrorism etc. spilling over into neighbouring states and the wider global community, in other words emphasizing potential threats relating to states that lack control over their territories and populations;

c) the *relationship* between donors and the governments in question, thus focusing on the problems of achieving agreements over (reform) policies and programmes of cooperation; this may, however, tell us more about the

donor state than the recipient state, which may have good relations with other donors.

Despite some convergence and overlap, large variations exist in how different donor governments and international agencies define state fragility and which countries they include in their lists. Differences in working definitions exist even between different departments of the same government, with security agencies typically emphasizing the threat aspect, while agencies of development cooperation focus on relations or functions, and diplomats tend to avoid the concept altogether.

The definition of fragility with regard to armed conflict in contrast to more general governance issues constitutes one of the major distinguishing features. If current or recent armed conflict is not taken as the defining trait, the number of countries to include in the category of fragile states is potentially very large, comprising most of Africa and most non-OECD countries. This shows that one of the problems of the notion and definition of fragile states is that it includes and glosses over a huge variety of specific states and state trajectories. Classic examples to prove the point include the highly efficient genocidal state of Rwanda and Colombia, which has been steeped in decades of lethal conflict while displaying impressive macroeconomic management and growth. Thus, states vary hugely in their performance in terms of different state functions, and few states score high on more than a few dimensions of state fragility.

Whereas almost all definitions implicitly assume endogenous (rather than exogenous) causes of fragility, some disagreement exists regarding the balance in the definition between the performance or functionality of the state as such, and broader social conditions and effects in terms of poverty, for example, and what precisely is the causality between governance, poverty and conflict. In general, 'we ought to be wary of the risk of elevating fragile statehood to an all-embracing generic category for development deficits, placing the blame on acts of commission or omission by the state. Do the governance debates ongoing since the 1990s and the discussions on violent conflicts fit into this paradigm? Are we talking about all the problems of unconsolidated states, that is, almost all regions and countries outside the OECD bloc?" (Klingebiel 2007: 321).

Measuring Fragility?
The debate over fragile states draws upon and involves a number of analytical frameworks, instruments and indexes that claim to measure different dimensions and

indicators of state fragility and failure.[2] While some have been developed specifically for this purpose (see below for four influential examples), others have primarily been conceived with the aim of predicting and preventing armed conflict (early warning instruments)[3] or measuring the (potential) impact of different forms of policies and development interventions on peace and conflict dynamics (Peace and Conflict Impact Assessment tools).

Low Income Countries under Stress: The World Bank's list of LICUS countries is based on the vast range of indicators of the Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment, which focuses on issues of governance, policy and institutions. LICUS countries represent serious challenges in terms of poor capacity for service delivery, accountability and control of corruption; they face the risks of political instability and conflict;[4] and the Bank has estimated that the cost of entering the LICUS category is US$ 80 billion, which mainly falling on neighbouring states (Carment et al. 2006). The index has been well validated through widespread use, but the aspects of politics and violent conflict are not sufficiently taken into account. Furthermore, critics have argued that the set of indicators is informed by a particular policy and ideology (Rosser 2006), by a focus on 'good governance' which is a-historical and not supported by evidence if it is viewed as a strategy for state-building (Kahn 2006).

Political Instability Task Force:[5] Established in 1994 as 'the State Failure Task Force' by the US Government under CIA auspices, this index seeks to develop models capable of predicting state failure, in particular in relation to democratic transitions. The highest risk of instability is found in 'hybrid regimes' – partial democracies, 'anocracies' or 'illiberal democracies' – with high factionalism, i.e. when open political competition for offices is dominated by highly polarized ethnic, local or other identities and weak party systems. But even though the 'post-dictive' accuracy of this model is high, instability is far from being an inevitable outcome of factionalism, and the inductively developed models fall short of theoretical explanations of failure.

Failed States Index: Managed by the US-based Fund for Peace[6] and based on their Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST), this index aims at identifying, measur-

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[2] See Cammack et al. 2006 for an overview of the most commonly used frameworks.

[3] It may be argued that the capacity to cope with disasters and other external shocks is one indicator of state capacity.

[4] Between 1992 and 2006, 21 of 26 conflict-ridden countries were also on the LICUS list (Di John 2008).

[5] See http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/pitfdata.htm

[6] See http://fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsiarticle.php

ing and monitoring countries that are vulnerable to conflict. The Fund undertakes a trend analysis combining twelve social, economic and political indicators (including inequality, tax-collection capacity, corruption, population displacement, demographic pressures, economic development etc.) with the capacity of core institutions (including police, military, justice and the civil service), histories of violence, and idiosyncratic factors and surprises. The resulting scores place countries in categories of 'alert', 'warning', 'monitoring' and 'sustainable', and establish 'rates of decline'. According to the Fund, governments, private business, the military and others use the assessment tool for planning and monitoring conflict-preventing assistance, investments and stabilization operations.

Country Indicators for Foreign Policy: Originating in a standard geopolitical database, CIFP, supported by the Canadian Government, has been developing indicators for state fragility since 1997.[7] A first generation of assessment focused very much on violent conflict as the main dimension of state failure, but a new generation is being developed that looks into issues of authority, legitimacy and capacity as the most important dimensions of stateness and hence of state fragility (Carment et al. 2007). Their first results from modelling confirm that states are very uneven across different dimensions and seldom show signs of fragility across the board. The aim of the indicator system is to provide statistical and analytical support for both strategic tasks (when, where and how to channel resources) and operational tasks (monitoring, benchmarking, evaluation etc.).

Such instruments have been criticized for a variety of reasons. Even though they do not claim to measure exactly the same dimensions of state fragility and failure, a comparison between different instruments expose a troubling lack of convergence. Countries that rank high in one index may be absent from another, and even in regard to the same dimensions – such as demographic pressure – there are huge differences. Comparing the LICUS lists (26) and the Fragile States Index (28) for 2006, only thirteen countries appear on both listings.[8]

 Furthermore, the instruments tend to be fairly general, and even though they manage to provide a picture of a state's fragility, they provide retrospective snap-

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[7] See http://www.carleton.ca/cifp/. The rating system operates with more than a hundred indicators relating to demography, economy, governance, politics, human development, militarization, culture/heterogeneity and international linkages for 196 countries.

[8] These were Afghanistan, Burundi, Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Haiti, Democratic Republic of Congo, Liberia, Myanmar, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Somalia, Sudan and Central African Republic.

shots only and are not very precise when it comes to deciding on key intervention points and designing specific interventions (Cammack et al. 2006; Krause and Jütersonke 2007). To the extent that they develop series of annual observations, they can become valuable aids in monitoring developments and providing inputs for further analysis. The combination of general statistical observation and analysis with contextual analysis and participatory workshops has been incorporated in several of the instruments, such as the CIFP and the Dutch Clingendael Institute's Stability Assessment Framework.

The instruments for measuring different dimensions of risk and weakness of states still need development and refinement, and the question is to what extent these instruments are decisive in processes of decision-making, rather than a host of other political considerations. To a certain extent, the instruments reflect underlying differences in the interests and agendas of the donors and institutions that are involved in their development. Thus, the specific purpose, the actual users and their interests must all be taken into account when deciding whether and how to use which instruments (e.g. choosing countries for aid and cooperation, designing development or peace-keeping interventions, or as an analytical tool for non-experts in the field).

Under all circumstances, the analytical tools involved must provide an assessment of the types of situations and processes that characterize specific state trajectories.

'Fragile Situations' and Processes

Various attempts at identifying and distinguishing different situations in terms of the conditions and possibilities for donor intervention exist in the literature. Since 2005 the World Bank has used 'four main business models for engagement: (a) prolonged political crisis; (b) fast turnaround (post-conflict or political transition); (c) gradual improvers, and (d) deteriorating governance' (World Bank 2005: 13; World Bank 2006, 2007). These are concerned with capacity, policies and conflict, and they emphasize, in particular, the various phases of change, from deterioration and impasse to turnaround and amelioration. While covering the dominant issues in current discussions, these 'business models' are organized around the change processes in fragile situations. In response to each of them, the Bank suggests a number of good practices which may be relevant in specific countries. In times of deterioration and crisis, these comprise support to non-state actors, focus at the local level and service delivery, and other practices, while policies and reforms are the primary concern when circumstances gradually improve.

In a similar manner, BMZ, the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development, sets up a matrix of 1) the level of governance and 2) the trends in the development orientation of governments (BMZ 2007). Given different levels of governance and capacity, the development orientation of a government may improve or deteriorate, and subsequently different types of response are suggested. In addition, questions of conflict and "a peace mission environment" are raised as further dimensions of the analysis. However, BMZ proposes a strong focus on the development orientation or what is elsewhere termed the political will of governments characterized by weak statehood. Compared to the World Bank approach, BMZ also adopts a slightly more interventionist stance, given that interventions may include attempts to strengthen the forces of reform and should meet the international responsibility to protect.

Turning to the academic literature, a large variety of more or less explicit typologies of fragile or failed states have been presented, which also incorporate fragile situations. One proposal, which emphasizes the lack of will and/or capacity in the same way as the donor literature does, uses a bottom-up approach to identify seven categories of countries or situations presenting distinctive challenges to the donor community (Patrick 2007): (i) endemically weak states (e.g. Zambia), (ii) resource-rich poor performers (e.g. Nigeria and Angola), (iii) deteriorating situations (e.g. Zimbabwe), (iv) prolonged political crisis (e.g. Nepal before 2006), (v) post-conflict situations (e.g. Mozambique as a case of negotiated settlement and Uganda with one victorious side), (vi) brittle dictatorships (e.g. North Korea and Myanmar), and (vii) reform-minded governments struggling with unfavourable legacies (e.g. Georgia). While much closer to the realities of many countries that are suffering from fragility, it is difficult to recognize the specific criteria underlying this typology, and it may be difficult to fit other countries into these categories.

With a strong focus on economic and structural factors, Paul Collier (2007), former director of the research department at the World Bank, discusses four traps that keep countries and people in poverty: (i) the conflict trap, (ii) the natural resource trap, stemming from the tendency for a wealth of resources to undermine productive and other economic activities, (iii) the trap of being landlocked with poor neighbours, and (iv) the trap of bad governance in a small country. According to his assessment, 58 countries and almost a billion people are suffering from these traps. The four categories are not mutually exclusive, and they are not insurmountable despite the rhetoric. They are, however, much more concerned with structures inhibiting change than with conjunctures characterizing a country's development. Leaders come and

go and capacities may be boosted, but certain obstacles – or so the argument goes – are not easily dismantled. In the context of support for fragile situations, however, one may question whether the policy and capacity issues are not more important to donors than the structural obstacles.

The problem with these and other typologies is first and foremost that they seek to limit the diversity and complexity of fragile situations to a few categories. They do so either based on the selection of a couple of possibly important dimensions or by idealizing particular observed trends or characteristics. The elaboration of typologies is mainly defensible if there is a reasonably close connection between the resulting categories and the realities they are supposed to depict. This is not the case in relation to fragile situations. First, despite ending up in one of the above categories, two countries marked by fragility are bound to differ in significant respects requiring different kinds of support. Secondly, it is not hard to find important dimensions, structures and characteristics related to fragility that are not covered by the various typologies (see e.g. Maxwell et al. 2008). Thirdly, we know too little about the complexities that determine the dynamics of fragile situations to be able to categorize them. Countries ending up in one category are therefore likely to evolve differently, some possibly deteriorating further, others gradually improving. Interventions based on a categorization of countries may accordingly push some of them further into fragility. When seeking to support countries in fragile situations directly, there is no shortcut circumventing a detailed analysis of the historical evolution and specific characteristics of individual situations.

Forgetting Weber?

The debate on fragile states has (re)emphasized the importance of public institutions in providing peace and prosperity. To some extent it has succeeded in showing that state fragility is about social and political processes and interests, rather than accidental situations of a humanitarian nature. But the agenda is still flawed in terms of providing analytical tools for understanding the forms and directions of current statehood and the relationships between state legitimacy, citizens and non-citizens.

The shared assumption is that, in the long run, all states will converge towards a model of Western liberal democracy, which provides both the guidelines for state-building and the benchmarks for existing statehood (Hagmann and Hoehne 2007). The fragile and failed states agenda is permeated by Weberian ideals of what

a state should look like in terms of monopoly of force, legitimate authority and clear-cut distinctions between state/society, public/private and civil/military. As suggested in Jung's chapter on the sociological definition of the state, we should avoid using this analytical approach in a normative way. If we focus on the analysis of 'empirical statehood' and actually existing arrangements of authority and security, rather than seeing contemporary states as they are wished to be, we may acquire a more realistic idea of the challenges and possibilities of state-building in the current world order.

In many cases, including otherwise 'strong states' in, for instance, Latin America or Asia, the state does not fully control its population and territory.[9] Rather, protection and other state functions are, for practical purposes, provided by non-state forms of authority. In such 'frontiers' or 'margins' of the state, be they urban or rural, its authority depends on mediation and alliances with non-state actors, a process which has been conceptualized as 'the mediated state' (Menkhaus 2007). These non-state actors and institutions, which sometimes act on behalf of the state and sometimes oppose it, have been described as 'twilight institutions' that blur the state/non-state distinction (Lund 2006). The question is whether the contours of future forms of the state that are sustainable under current conditions of globalization and the world order are to be found in this mish-mash of overlapping and interdependent authorities.

As many critics of the fragile states debate have argued, peace and state-building are too often assumed to be parallel and mutually enforcing processes, whereas it is actually more likely that state-building will involve serious levels of political violence. The credibility of the state depends on the control of force if it is to gain legitimate authority, but this represents huge problems with the current levels of economy in many states. Taking the Afghan security sector as an example of the very real dilemmas of state-building, the plan to develop national security forces – thus releasing NATO from its costly engagement – is hardly sustainable. In 2004-5 alone, the expenses for the security sector ran at 500% of state revenues or 25% of the GNP as compared to a global average of 4% (Sedra 2007). In this sense, a major potential merit of the fragile states agenda is to give the future of the state serious analytical attention and to pose important new questions regarding the representation and recognition of non-state actors in the international system.

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[9] We may here suggest a distinction between states in which effective sovereignty 'fades' beyond the capital and major towns, and states that lack effective sovereignty over a particular region or population.

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III. State Formation and State-Building: Is there a lesson to learn from Sociology?

Dietrich Jung, March 2008

The state of contemporary statehood is of burgeoning interest among scholars and practitioners in international politics. In the context of wider debates over globalization the future role of states has been subject to controversial discussions, and it is particularly the postcolonial state which has occupied this controversy under labels such as 'fragile', 'weak', 'quasi', or even 'failed' states. Yet how should we judge whether a state is weak or whether a state-building process has failed? What is the standard that we should apply in these debates about contemporary state formation? Are we being confronted with an extraordinary process of the decay of states?

This chapter aims to answer these questions from a sociological perspective. It will claim that our normative standards about the strengths and weaknesses of contemporary statehood have travelled from the analytical text books of historical sociology into the organizational blueprints of policy-makers. The sociological concepts themselves are based on abstractions from some particular experiences of state formation in Europe and the very late culmination in the democratic nation state based on the rule of law. Given this Eurocentric bias in historical sociology, it has been asserted that its conceptual tools are ill-equipped for analysing post-colonial states. Contrary to this wide-spread assumption, I will defend the analytical applicability of these concepts as ideal types. The conceptual apparatus of historical sociology can still serve as our core tool-kit for the analysis of contemporary state formation, yet turning it rather uncritically into a normative blueprint for interventions in current state-building processes is flawed. While strategies of intervention in contemporary state-building can be informed by the generalizations of sociology, successful state-building depends first and foremost on in-depth knowledge of the rather unique and path-dependent nature of each attempt to build a modern state.

In order to underpin this argument, I will first discuss the legacy of historical sociology and then briefly present the conceptual apparatus with which it has developed our knowledge about the state. I will then move to an explanation of the different meanings of statehood based on the analytical distinctions of the state as an institution, an image and a social practice. Finally, this chapter will discuss the conditions for contemporary processes of state formation and state-building, before concluding with some tentative policy suggestions based on the conceptual insights of historical sociology.

The Legacy of Historical Sociology

The understanding of the state in international politics has its roots in Max Weber's classical definition of modern statehood. With reference to the violent history of European state-building, Weber defined the central feature of modern statehood as 'the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory' (Weber, 1991: 78). In Weber's words, the war-prone formation of state monopolies of physical force was a long-lasting process of 'political expropriation' in which all political communities other than the state had gradually been deprived of the means of coercion (Weber, 1991: 83). However, the establishment of state monopolies of physical force should not be conceptualized merely in terms of power relations through which power-holders carry out their will despite any resistance from the subordinated. In order to establish consolidated states, the factual monopoly of the use of physical force has to be considered legitimate by both rulers and ruled. Stable systems of political authority do not rest on a monopoly of coercion alone: this state monopoly also has to be anchored in the cultural order of society. A political order needs legitimacy.

Long-lasting political institutions require a stable set of rules, which, in normative and cognitive ways, regulate the social conduct of rulers and ruled. In referring to the inner justification of systems of domination, Weber precisely distinguished political authority from mere power relations by resort to the notion of legitimacy. His concept of legitimacy is intended to give an answer to the question of when and why people obey (Weber, 1991: 78). According to Weber, modern statehood rests on legal or rational authority, i.e. belief 'in the legality of enacted rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rule to issue commands'. He sharply distinguished this modern authority based on formal legal procedures from pre-modern or traditional forms of authority, which rest on personal ties and the 'established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of those exercising authority under them' (Weber 1968a: 215).

In the 1930s, Norbert Elias critically took up Weber's core definition and conceptualized European state formation as a 'civilizing process.' In doing so, he applied a double perspective:

> The civilizing process, seen from the aspects of standards of conduct and drive control, is the same trend which, when seen from the point of view of human relationships, appears as the process of advancing integration, increased differentiation of social functions and interdependence, and

the formation of ever-larger units of integration on whose fortunes and movements the individual depends, whether he knows it or not. (Elias 1994: 332)

In his theory of the civilizing process, Elias put together the macro-sociological aspects of state formation and the micro-sociological consequences of this process, that is, the ways in which the evolution of the modern state has shaped social practices. Combining Weber with Freud, he defined the immanent link between the macro- and micro-levels as the conversion of outer constraints into self-restraints, and concluded that the formation of modern states has been reflected in increasingly differentiated patterns of self-control on the part of the individual (Elias, 1994: 443-56). The pacifying institutional setting of modern statehood was accomplished by a particular normative restriction of the public behaviour of individuals. In this sense, state structures and social practices are inseparably knitted together, and the maintenance of public order relies on both functioning state institutions and forms of social action that are able to transform legal authority into daily practices.

In historical terms, however, this civilizing process has not been 'civilized' at all. On the contrary, Elias traced the origin of both the internal pacification of society and the autonomy of the modern individual back to an unrestricted and violent process of elimination in which any individual or small group struggled among many others for resources that had not yet become monopolized (Elias, 1994: 351). In mainly abstracting from the history of France, Elias differentiated between two distinct phases in the emergence of the modern state monopoly of physical force:

1) In the first phase, a factual monopoly of physical force is established. An increasing number of people lose direct access to the means of force, which progressively become centralized in the hands of a few and thus placed outside open competition.
2) In the second phase, this relatively private control over the monopoly of physical force tends to become public, i.e. it moves from the hands of state-makers into a political setting of legal institutions and appointed rulers under the control of the public (Elias, 1994: 345-55).

While the first phase of the monopoly process is associated with absolutist and authoritarian forms of rule, the second phase deposes coercive state-makers and establishes structures of legal political authority. The two phases conceptualize the transition from traditional to rational authority in the emergence of the modern

state. Consequently, state formation comprises not only the establishment of the monopoly of physical force, but also the transition of the normative and institutional order on which this monopoly rests from personal rule towards democratic governance.

From the perspective of 'state-builders', however, this transition of forms of authority was never intended. On the contrary, sociology conceptualized the formation of the modern democratic state as the non-intended outcome of the intended actions of European state-builders. In his article 'War Making and State Making as Organized Crime', Charles Tilly compared the early European state-builders with 'criminal' racketeers. Their interest was not in building states, but in acquiring material resources through coercive action. Accordingly, Elias' first phase of the monopoly mechanism could be understood as a system of protection and extraction, leading to the accumulation and monopolization of the means of physical force in the hand of state-makers. The second phase Tilly described as a long-lasting process of negotiation between state-makers and the emerging capitalist bourgeoisie in which 'the pursuit of war and military capacity, after having created national states as a sort of by-product, led to a civilianisation of government and domestic politics' (Tilly 1990: 206).

In terms of global state formation, this long-lasting negotiation process can be traced in the legalization of state-society relations, which was accompanied by a gradual increase in the state's capacities. The modern state and democratic social practices developed through the expansion and growing density of written formal law, framing the specific social space within which civil society could emerge. In this context, Jürgen Habermas identified four particular steps of juridification:

1) The establishment and consolidation of the monopolies of physical force and of taxation in the absolutist state.
2) The break with the personal monopoly of power in the absolutist state in constitutional monarchies by legally anchoring state power in political institutions and civil law.
3) The bourgeois revolutions initiated the nationalization of the state monopolies, eventually bringing about the democratic nation state, with its separation of juridical, legislative and executive powers.
4) The formation of the welfare state tamed the autonomous dynamics that spring from the accumulative logic of the economic system and incorporated a variety of social functions into the domain of modern statehood (Habermas 1986: 356-63).

The Modern State as Institution, Image and Social Practice

Political scientists summarized this legacy of historical sociology and European state formation in an ideal type of the modern state. In institutional terms, statehood is defined as a centralized form of representative government based on electoral procedures and a set of administrative, policing and military organizations. The modern state claims the legitimate monopoly of physical force which state agencies exert over a certain territory and a relatively cohesive population that forms a community of citizens with political, social and economic rights (cf. Sørensen 2004: 14).

In the academic field, this ideal type of state is primarily an analytical instrument to measure empirical statehood: it does not directly portray the 'real world' but represents an instrument of academic research. The definition, therefore, disregards both the historical length and the social and developmental steps which eventually resulted in this form of modern social contract between state-builders and society. Yet this image of the state has travelled from the social sciences into the conceptual world of political actors and societies at large. It has acquired a normative quality, telling us what a state ought to be. It is a globally relevant ideal of political order according to which we imagine the modern state as a transcendental and neutral power, a democratically controlled arbitrator standing above social conflicts. With this image of the state in mind, we judge political action in accordance with distinctions such as legal/illegal, formal/informal or public/private in order to measure and judge social action. Yet already Max Weber was well aware that the three dimensions of the state as an institution, an image and a social practice do not necessarily match:

> When we inquire as to what corresponds to the idea of the 'state' in empirical reality, we find an infinity of diffuse and discrete human actions, both active and passive, factually and legally regulated relationships, partly unique and partly recurrent in character, all bound together by an idea, namely, the belief in the actual or normative validity of rules and of the authority-relationships of some human beings towards others. This belief is in part consciously, in part dimly felt, and in part passively accepted by persons who, should they think about the 'idea' in a really clearly defined manner, would not first need a 'general theory of the state' which aims to articulate the idea. (Weber 1904: 99)

In reality the modern state is both an abstract and coercive macro-structure and a network of interdependent social actions in everyday life. Modern statehood consists of two dimensions: historically developed and relatively stable institutional structures, and culturally defined social processes. The institutional structure gives societies politi-

cally isomorphic forms. In this sense, the sociological definition of the national state developed into a formal blueprint for the political organization of societies. Modern statehood is a central feature of world culture, and its ideal image has been formalized in most state constitutions (cf. Meyer *et al.* 1997). Yet the second perspective, the state as social practice, characterizes the actual social content of statehood as forms of permanent interaction and ephemeral social groupings. On this level, we can observe a complex and often amorphous tangle of social actions of which we make sense in reference to the ideal image of the state. Apparently, the rules of statehood as an organizational pattern and the logic of social practices do not necessarily correspond. In particular, the post-colonial state is characterized by competing and conflicting organizing principles and social practices. This contradictory interface between the state as institution, image and social practice becomes particularly transparent when we zoom in on individual political leaders.

Francois Médar, for instance, analysed African statesmen as 'political entrepreneurs', a reference to both the symbolic and material sides of legitimate rule (Médar 1992). In accumulating economic, political and social resources, the political 'big men' act through a system of personalized power in the name of the abstract institution of the state. In this way, these statesmen represent both the patriarchal chief of an extended network of personal ties (traditional authority) and the head of a formally institutionalized system of rule (legal authority). The contradictions in their position are apparent in three strategies of social action that are necessary for their political survival. In order to extract resources from international and transnational donors, they have to pretend that they are acting according to the standards of modern statehood, that is, following the rules of good governance which emanate from the normative image of the state. As political entrepreneurs, however, they apply strategies of personal enrichment in accumulating external and internal resources within their networks of personal ties. Finally, they must meet the normative expectations of 'traditional' African societies for a redistribution of their resources within a system of clients. Caught in this pattern of often contradictory organizational and social constraints, the 'big man entrepreneur' must act according to a hybrid normative setting, containing elements of both the universal image of the state and the particularistic values of local social practices.

In labelling African states as weak, fragile or even failed, we are applying the sociological definition of the state in a normative way. Social practices which are based on traditional reciprocity turn into corruption and nepotism, and the informal distribution of social resources appears as an illegal strategy. In particular, states

with strongly donor-dependent economies have to please the expectations of two different audiences. The big man entrepreneur must take into consideration both the formal norms of the supply side and the social norms of his local constituencies. The dynamics of contemporary state-formation have to be sought in these structural contradictions, which provide a framework in which current state-builders act. What does this mean for the field of applied policies?

State Formation, State-Building and International Intervention

In a recent article, Francis Fukuyama argued for "Stateness' First" (Fukuyama 2005). He discerned in contemporary interventionist policies a contradiction between state-building and the promotion of democracy, between, on the one hand, the monopolization of physical force in the hands of the state and, on the other hand, the building of public and legal institutions which can constrain the state's power monopoly. Indeed, applying the categories of historical sociology, contemporary state formation is characterized by a confusion of the (chrono-)logic of the two phases of the monopoly mechanism. In cases such as Afghanistan and Iraq, institutional features of the second phase – constitutions, elections, representative bodies – were implemented before achievement of the first phase, the establishment of a legitimate state monopoly of physical force. Oriented toward the normative image of the modern state, current state-building processes tend to invert the social logic of European state formation, in which the coercive formation of state monopolies preceded both the juridification of political authority and the enhancement of state capacities.

Contrary to European state formation, post-colonial state-builders achieved a form of 'negative sovereignty', a formal legal entitlement which actually hides the lack of empirical statehood, that is, the social content related to the definition of the modern state (Jackson 1990). The decolonization process established statehood only as a form of external representation, as a formal territorial and legal framework of international politics guaranteed by the world state system and by international law. Behind the façade of modern state institutions, however, social practices of a quite different nature have continued. The synchronization of the state as an institution and as daily social practices, as in Elias' model of the civilizing process, is still under way. From this perspective, 'fragile states' are not a new phenomenon at all. On the contrary, measured by the standard of the ideal image of modern statehood, most post-colonial states have been defective states from the beginning. In many of them a legitimate monopoly of physical force has not yet been achieved, and the so-called new wars of our times are therefore less an expression of state decay than an indica-

tion that the 'classical' European path to modern statehood has been derailed (cf. Jung 2005).

If at all, the term 'state decay' applies to some states of the former socialist world. There, relatively firm monopolies of physical force had been established, yet in some cases the second phase of Elias' monopoly mechanism ended in the at least temporary dissolution of the first. In these cases, the simultaneous introduction of grand schemes of political and economic liberalization eroded the core institutions of the state rather than brought about the blessings commonly associated with the democratic state. Contemporary state formation does not seem to be following the state-building logics which historical sociology abstracted from the European experience. The sociological perspective can tell us what went wrong, but does it also show us how to do it right?

Looking at current state-building in Afghanistan, Iraq or the territories of the former Yugoslavia, I suggest not. In these territories, a multiplicity of actors are involved in taking over a broad range of tasks, from combating and disarming militias to the building of political, social and economic institutions. Although oriented towards the image of the state, these 'new protectorates' only dimly remind us of forms of legal political authority which we can call a state. Rather, we are confronted with a kind of 'controlled anarchy' (Schlichte 2003), with fragmented political arrangements in which various international, transnational, regional, national and local interests and competences overlap. For all these actors, the image of the state serves as a central normative reference while they follow their own goals on the ground. Whether these complex social arrangements will ever lead to viable states nobody knows.

The lesson we can learn from historical sociology is to understand state formation as an ongoing and open-ended process. State formation is characterized by both successful state-building and state decay, and in European history too, more states may have disappeared than became established according to our modern image of the democratic state. Both phases of the monopoly mechanism are extremely fragile and war-prone periods of institution-building and social transformation. What decides success or failure is contextual and cannot be derived from the abstract concepts of sociology. In Afghanistan, for instance, the Taliban were the first political force ever to come close to establishing a factual state monopoly of force over Afghan territory. From the perspective of historical sociology, that is, they successfully built up the core institutions of modern statehood. Their fall was not due to contradictions in the inner logics of state-building, but a result of the historical political context in which

they acted. Due to political interests and normative demands on the international level, state-building in Afghanistan had to start again from scratch, involving a new coalition of old and new actors. Given this general contingency of the historical context, contemporary state-builders are facing the same general uncertainty as their European predecessors, namely that even their intended actions will have unintended outcomes. This applies also to policies of international interventions whose political rationale and public justification cannot be found in sociological reasoning or long-term state-building strategies guided by scholarship. The decision-makers in both state agencies and non-governmental organizations are not driven by sociological grand schemes, but by their own organizational interests and the dominant issues of every-day politics.

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IV. Fragile Situations and International Support

Lars Engberg-Pedersen, March 2008[1]

Introduction

The aim of providing support to fragile situations can be variously described as 'achieving turnaround' (Rosser 2006; World Bank 2002), 'creating resilience' (DAC 2008) or 'making a durable exit from poverty and insecurity' (DAC 2007). The ambitions are high, and some would argue that they go far beyond what external actors can achieve (Jenkins and Plowden 2006; Sørensen 2008). The resilience of fragility, despite international engagement, does suggest that external actors should limit their ambitions, as new principles and policies for support to fragile situations are not magic bullets circumventing the serious obstacles that work against turnaround.

However, it could be argued that carefully devised flexible and context-dependent approaches to fragile situations can strengthen positive changes and weaken negative ones. While there is strong agreement that turnaround cannot be imposed from outside but depends on the forces within a society, there is no agreement that "for the large majority of weak states, local demand for reform is lacking" (Sørensen 2008: 23). In most societies, various actors work in different ways to improve the living conditions of the majority. Opportunities for peaceful development, poverty reduction and gradual progress are not excluded *per se* in societies characterized by fragility.

The purpose of the present chapter is to move closer to an understanding of how the international community may best support states that are characterized by fragility. This is done by taking note of three significant features. First, the fragilities that characterize different states are diverse, and attempts to address them should take this into account. Secondly, different domains of intervention are significant in relation to different kinds of fragility, each having their specificities, which should be acknowledged by external actors. Thirdly, the various actors in the international community have different opportunities and constraints when addressing the fragilities of states.

The chapter starts by presenting some conclusions from analyses of processes leading to turnaround[2] in fragile states. The aim is to offer historical evidence of what seems

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[1] I would like to thank Louise Andersen for important comments on this chapter.

[2] Turnaround is understood as change towards '(1) sustained high levels of real economic growth; (2) sustained significant reductions in poverty; and (3) a durable cessation to severe violent conflict' (Rosser 2006: 2). The emphasis on sustainability and durability in this definition implies that turnaround can only be identified with hindsight.

to have worked in particular countries. Subsequently, the three features mentioned above are discussed in order to establish an understanding of how international support to fragile states can be organized in a useful way. Finally, five important issues in relation to providing international support to fragile situations are presented.

Achieving Turnaround

Based on studies of seven current or formerly fragile states (Burundi, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Mozambique, Uganda and Vietnam), Andrew Rosser (2006) argues that, where violent conflicts take place, there are two broad elements in a turnaround: a durable cessation of conflict, and sustainable economic and social development.

The cessation of conflict in the countries studied has much to do with changes in geopolitical conditions. The end of the Cold War impacted on the conflict in Cambodia (and probably also on that in Nicaragua); the fall of the apartheid regime similarly influenced the civil war in Mozambique; and growing public opposition in Western countries made their involvement in the Vietnam war untenable. The other major reason for a cessation of conflict is the victory of one of the parties to the conflict. Uganda is partly an example of this, given the ability of the National Resistance Movement to impose its rule over the majority of the country.

However, cessation of conflict only becomes durable if the losing side is either eliminated as a military and political factor or is given a stake in the post-conflict political order. The latter was the case in Mozambique and Cambodia, where the losing parties retained their political importance. In Mozambique, donors exercised a positive influence by ensuring that the Renamo opposition acquired a stake in the post-conflict political order. The inability of the leadership in Uganda either to defeat or to accommodate the Lord's Resistance Army in the northern parts of the country is clearly a limitation to the success of turnarounds and may actually jeopardize current progress (Robinson 2006).

Apart from by ceasing to pursue geopolitical agendas, Rosser argues that aid has limited scope for positive influence regarding the first element of a turnaround. The cessation of conflict is in most cases beyond the realistic sway of donors that are not superpowers. However, through a variety of interventions, including military ones, international actors often seek to make an end to conflict. This, it has been argued, may actually prolong fragility because the purifying effects of conflicts are being

denied. The parties to a conflict are likely to regain their strength and maintain their contradictory positions in cases of externally imposed ceasefires and negotiations (Luttwak 1999). While this argument is incompatible with "the responsibility to protect", it does highlight the substantial difficulties related to externally driven peace-building.

When it comes to making peace durable, by virtue of their much needed funds in periods of post-conflict transition, donors can exercise useful political influence in order to ensure that a *modus vivendi* is created for all political parties. However, this requires substantial insight into the political economy of the country, as well as the ability to facilitate compromises.

The second element of turnaround – sustainable economic and social development – appears to be conditioned, first, by the emergence of political conditions conducive to more or less ambitious programmes of market-oriented economic reform, and secondly, by an inclusive management of reform initiatives in order to protect and compensate possible losers. While all those countries that have achieved turnaround introduced economic reforms, these were very different and far from being as complete and comprehensive as external observers had hoped. However, they achieved certain results, thus enabling governments to take further reform initiatives. At the same time, in the successful cases, political leaders took pains to protect politically important social groups (e.g. retrenched civil servants) or business elites (e.g. where these were suffering from liberalization measures). Accordingly, reforms were bearable to all significant political actors, and in no case did political leaders pursue wholesale change entailing significant shifts in the balance of power.

Donors have exercised some important influences regarding the second step. By providing much needed funds, they have contributed to the emergence of political conditions conducive to market-oriented economic reform, not least in Mozambique, Uganda and Laos. They have also supported mitigating measures in relation to losers from reforms in Uganda and tolerated politically necessary deviations from ideal policies in Laos and Indonesia. However, it is also the experience of the seven countries included in the study that the political economy of a country may exclude the introduction of reform initiatives and that donors can do little about this.

All in all, this study concludes that donors can contribute to turnaround by staying engaged despite set-backs (donor withdrawal in Burundi in the 1990s and in Laos,

Vietnam and Cambodia in the 1970s has, in each case, it is argued, postponed turnaround significantly); by ensuring that all politically important actors acquire at stake in the post-conflict political order; by tolerating a gradual approach to the implementation of reforms; and by recognizing the importance of appeasing groups that stand to lose from reform. This is fairly conventional wisdom: the problem is for donors to avoid being derailed by other political concerns.

Fragilities, Intervention Domains and International Actors

It follows from the above that a thorough understanding of the political economy of fragile situations is a precondition for helpful interventions by international actors. While this is generally accepted wisdom in development assistance, it is particularly important in relation to fragile situations, where existential questions of people's survival may be at stake (Krause and Jütersonke 2007). Accordingly, analysis of each and every fragile situation and its specificities is required in relation to concrete interventions. The following discussion of fragilities, intervention domains and international actors serves as an initial step in acquiring an overview of the subject matter: it does not render the analysis of individual situations superfluous.

Fragilities

As discussed in the chapter on types and processes of fragility, there are various definitions of and approaches to the concept. In the present context, **fragility is understood as institutional instability, particularly in relation to governance institutions.** The reasons for and consequences of fragility can be found at many different levels and in the social and political as well as economic spheres. What seems to be particularly important with respect to international support to fragile situations is the level and changes over time in four themes: (i) policy agreement between recipient governments and donors; (ii) peace and security; (iii) governance; and (iv) economic and social development.

The Fragile States Group under DAC emphasizes the lack of capacity and/or political will of governments and state structures to deliver safety and security, good governance and poverty reduction to their citizens as the defining characteristic of fragile states.[3] The notion of political will is problematic because it depends entirely on who is making the assessment. Instead of employing this normative

[3] See http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3343,en_2649_33693550_38692341_1_1_1_1,00.html

approach, one may focus on **policy agreement**[4] between recipient governments and donors, thereby avoiding problems being located exclusively with the recipient government or particular policies being elevated as the *right* policies. Policy agreement is evidently an elastic concept spanning from shared political visions to tactical cooperation. Certain structural adjustment programmes seem to have suffered from the latter, so official policy agreement provides no guarantee of national support or ownership of external interventions. However, policy disagreement at the policy level is bound to complicate international support to fragile situations, and a high level of disagreement is in itself a cause of tension and fragility in a globalised context. Accordingly, policy agreement stands out as one important theme.

The issue of policy agreement could be extended to include the level of shared ownership and understanding of government policies across different social groups in a country. A high level of mutual understanding and agreement between different social groups and the government creates a different situation for external support than when there is disagreement and the government lacks legitimacy.

Peace and security, and particularly their opposites, cover a concern that has been very instrumental in developing the focus on fragility. There are two important aspects to this concern (Cammack et al. 2006): First, much work has been undertaken to build local peace, cover basic needs and strengthen human security through contributions to disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR), the settlement of internally displaced persons (IDPs), humanitarian aid, etc. Secondly, fragility has been addressed from the point of view of international insecurity and terrorism. Donor countries perceive fragility as a breeding ground for regional and international instability and see development and humanitarian assistance to fragile situations as a way to circumvent such threats.

A third theme has to do with **governance,** which, generally, has acquired a central position in development assistance over the last two decades and, specifically, has become a key focus in discussions of fragility. A very strong argument has been developed that a lack of state capacity and governance is a basic element of fragility. A recent paper concludes 'that fragility arises primarily from weaknesses in the dynamic political process which bring citizens' expectations of the state and state expectations

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[4] The World Bank uses a similar terminology when talking about 'problems of lack of consensus between donor and governments on development strategy' (World Bank 2005: 13).

of citizens into equilibrium with the state's capacity to deliver services' (Jones et al. 2008) State legitimacy and capacity are accordingly perceived as equally important elements of fragility as peace and stability.

One important observation in the literature is that spoilers exist in situations of fragility and profit from the state of affairs (Krause and Jütersonke 2007). Spoilers are likely to undermine efforts to build peace, strengthen governance and create broad-based development. They – and the conditions that produce them (Greenhill and Major 2007) – are important to understand when addressing fragility, whether in a peace-building context or through governance initiatives.

A final theme here concerns **social and economic development.** The donor agency literature on fragility is fairly silent on how issues such as inequality, high levels of multi-faceted poverty, and social and financial crises may bring about fragile situations. Economic and social phenomena are not linked to fragility in the aid discourse. In the academic literature, on the other hand, humanitarian emergencies are linked to income disparities (Nafziger 2006), 'civil war, plague, ignorance' are linked to the abundance of valuable natural resources or being landlocked (Collier 2007), and financial collapse and poverty are linked to free capital flows and the volatility of international financial markets (Wade 2003; Pettis 2001). When analysing fragile situations, therefore, it appears necessary to include levels of social and economic development and, in particular, downward trends and sudden crises.

A salient feature of the debate on fragile situations is the concern with **dynamic change.** One point here is that fragile situations are often quite volatile, requiring rapid, flexible and adjusted responses. Furthermore, there is a fundamental difference between engaging in situations that are characterized by deteriorating peace and security and supporting post-conflict state-building. Thus, the nature of a fragile situation changes over time, with important implications for how international actors should respond. An understanding of the four themes mentioned above accordingly needs to integrate the processes that fragile situations go through.

Moreover, there is a significant difference between processes of, say, deterioration with **high** and **low points of departure** respectively. Societies with the former experience, with a relatively effective state bureaucracy (e.g. Zimbabwe), distinguish themselves considerably from societies where national state-building has experienced substantial difficulties (e.g. Afghanistan). Accordingly, when amelioration or deterioration take place, it is important to know the starting point for these processes.

A thorough historical understanding is essential for addressing individual fragile situations, but it could be argued that analyses of the last twenty years are particularly important. The end of the Cold War marked the end of the upholding of strong regimes in poor countries by the two superpowers, meaning that external military and economic support to potentially unstable societies was cut (Krause and Jütersonke 2007).[5] Moreover, a democratic wave swept Africa by the early 1990s, rendering the use of coercive force against the opposition more difficult. At the same time, having tried to dismantle state institutions through structural adjustment programmes, development donors became more and more concerned with 'good governance'. Finally, and linked to the above developments, it has been argued that globalization has intensified since the end of the Cold War and increasingly challenged the three roles of the state in providing security, welfare and representation (Clapham 2002). These changes all implied a rapid weakening of existing political institutions and the introduction – not least by external actors – of new institutions, which in itself is a cause of fragility.

Putting the four themes and their levels and dynamic change since 1990 together makes it possible to understand the diversity of fragile situations. Compared to the important insights in the various documents that have been drawn up by donor agencies on the topic of fragility, the present approach adds two significant points. First, fragility is not understood exclusively as a state problem: it can be generated by processes outside the state and accordingly does not necessarily require state-building action. Such action may also be useful in relation to problems of social and economic development, but the cause of fragility should not automatically be located in the state. Secondly, fragility may have much to do with the interaction between a country and international actors. It is typically not only a national phenomenon, but may be explained to some extent by global processes and constellations. So far, the attention of donor agencies has been directed mainly towards the regional and international *consequences* of fragile situations: little has been said about the creation of fragility in an international context. It nonetheless seems necessary to consider this when organizing international support for fragile situations.

Domains of intervention
As noted elsewhere (see the chapter by Dietrich Jung), state formation is a unique experience for each society, but in Europe it has often centred on security, welfare

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[5] However, it also marked the end of the practice of superpowers financing insurgency movements like the US support for the Contras in Nicaragua. Thus, the Cold War had not only stabilizing consequences for poor countries.

and representation (Krause and Jütersonke 2007: 6). However, views regarding what constitutes the essential functions of a state vary greatly. The WDR for 1997 (World Bank 1997) suggested five 'fundamental tasks' (establishing a foundation of law; maintaining a non-distortionary policy environment, including macroeconomic stability; investing in basic social services and infrastructure; protecting the vulnerable; and protecting the environment), which largely reflect the historical development of the World Bank. Some commentators have proposed a list of ten core functions that a state must exercise in the modern world,[6] and DAC identifies the following "priority functions": ensuring security and justice; mobilizing revenue; and establishing an enabling environment for basic service delivery, strong economic performance and employment generation (DAC 2007).

A recent report to DFID argues that state-building should recognize a hierarchy of activities (Fritz and Menocal 2007). At the constitutive level, a functioning and legitimate government has to be established. Subsequent core functions include public administration, security and the rule of law. Finally, more output-oriented functions can be added, such as social services and economic management. The problem with this approach is that it completely disregards the linkages between the macro- and micro-level processes of state formation (see Jung's chapter). State-building cannot be perceived in isolation from the social practices in a society. When this is acknowledged, it becomes impossible to create a universal hierarchy of state functions and subsequent intervention domains.

Based on the argument in this chapter, that fragility should not be conceived only in relation to the state, the following non-prioritized and partly overlapping points constitute an overview of possible intervention domains:

- Peace-building and peace-keeping
- State- and capacity-building in relation to security provision, rule of law, and civil administration
- Policy development, economic management and market regulation
- Social service delivery
- Conflict mitigation, citizenship building, democratization

[6] Legitimate monopoly on the means of violence; administrative control; management of public finances; investment in human capital; delineation of citizenship rights and duties; provision of infrastructure services; formation of the market; management of the state's assets (including the environment, natural resources and cultural assets); international relations (including entering into international contracts and public borrowing); and the rule of law (Ghani et al. 2005).

This list basically serves the purpose of indicating the variety of possible support. Target groups could be state institutions as well as non-state institutions and groups, and support for certain domains may be needed more than for others given the specific context. The list may, moreover, help to identify the relative strengths of individual international actors in relation to support to fragile situations.

International actors and aid architecture

There are two important dimensions in trying to understand the role and scope for support of international actors in relation to fragile situations. The first has to do with how these actors are perceived by the parties that are directly affected by the fragility.

> Usually armed with a cookie-cutter programmatic blueprint based on the most recent prior post-conflict scenario, the international community often runs the risk of not realizing that peace building is ultimately about the reallocation of power among local actors. A 'quick-fix' mentality, over-reliance on the NGO model to attract funding, and the generally competitive nature of interactions among UN agencies and the donor community all tend to lead to a rather authoritarian wielding of political and economic power on the part of the interveners. In the eyes of the local population, international actors are thus often perceived as a party to the conflict, rather than an objective intermediary, and those local actors who depend on the international community for support can find their own legitimacy and credibility undermined. (Krause and Jütersonke 2007: 8)

The dimension of perception is important because it has a strong bearing on what an international actor can do in a specific situation, despite the fact that the perception may be utterly unfounded and the actor may have exclusively altruistic ambitions. The issue is further complicated by the differences in perceptions of the various parties. An international actor should, accordingly, assess thoroughly in what way its support will be perceived by the actors and the population living in fragility. This point is related to the DAC principle of doing no harm, as '[i]international intervention can inadvertently create societal divisions' (DAC 2007: 1).

The second dimension has to do with the relative strengths of international actors in the five intervention domains listed above. Certain international organizations have been established for a specific purpose or have developed competencies in a particular domain (e.g. FAO and WTO). Others are concerned with broad development issues

and may possess capacities in several domains (e.g. UNDP and the World Bank). Bilateral aid agencies have rarely specialized in individual domains, but they may possess specific knowledge due to their particular history. It is, accordingly, not possible *a priori* to argue that certain actors (be they multilateral or bilateral, regional or global, private or public) necessarily possess relative strengths in specific domains. Such an assessment must be based on analyses of the relevant actors.

When considering engaging in a specific fragile situation, it is obviously useful for a bilateral donor agency to have a profound understanding of its own past experience in comparable situations, including those intervention domains in which it has been particularly successful. If other domains than these are in significant need of support in a given fragile situation, it becomes important to analyse the strengths of other international actors to whom the agency may channel its resources.

The international aid architecture – meaning the constellation of bilateral, multilateral and private actors engaged in development assistance – has not been analysed in great detail in relation to support for societies characterized by fragility. Thus, it is difficult to tell whether the architecture is usefully organized from the point of view of addressing fragility. In general, however, the aid architecture is criticized for being fragmented, incoherent and driven by multiple objectives that are sometimes only partially related to poverty reduction (Evans 2006). For societies that are characterized by institutional instability, fragmented and incoherent interventions are hardly supporting.

After falling contributions from the mid-1990s onwards, aid to fragile states has been rising since 1999. Within this overall trend, two sub-trends stand out. In countries that are characterized by crisis, donors withdraw during conflicts and return, first with emergency relief, and later with development programmes in the post-conflict period. In poorly performing countries, donors provide low levels of support for extended periods of time (World Bank 2007: 6-7). As regards content, four points characterize the architecture: (i) increased attention to coherence across agencies and intervention domains; (ii) increased commitment to peace-building and state-building; (iii) increases in international peace-keeping expenditures; and (iv) a strengthened role for regional institutions (ibid.: 8-9). The last point could constitute the basis for cautious optimism, as regional institutions could significantly reduce the impact of a fragmented aid architecture if donors agree to make use of them. So far, regional institutions have had a role to play primarily in relation to conflict-prevention and peace-building.

Issues in International Support to Fragile Situations

On the basis of the above discussion, it is possible to identify five important issues with significant consequences for the nature and extent of international support to fragile situations.

1. Lack of national government or policy disagreement
2. Deteriorating or low levels of peace and security in a society
3. Low levels of governance
4. Economic crisis
5. International actors having few relative strengths in relation to a specific fragile situation or being perceived as biased by important parties to the situation

Lack of national government or policy disagreement

From the perspective of international support, a key issue has to do with the existence of a national government with which international actors can negotiate and collaborate. If no government exists or if there is significant policy disagreement between the government and the international community, the usual variety of aid instruments is severely circumscribed. In such situations, it appears logical for donors to look for alternative institutions to provide services that are normally organized by the state; for actions punishing spoilers who are benefiting from the fragility; for actors who may support development-oriented initiatives and state-building; and for means of strengthening poor people in ways that enable them to confront the signs and consequences of fragility. Such endeavours are far from the usual state-focused aid modalities of bi- and multilateral donor agencies, and they therefore require not only a solid knowledge of the society in question, but also a significant willingness to take risks.

Deteriorating or low levels of peace and security in a society

A second major issue has to do with the level and dynamics of conflict and violence in a society. In cases of severe conflict and deteriorating security, the usefulness of normal aid modalities is again limited. Sector-wide approaches and support for the delivery of social services are likely to be difficult undertakings. Depending on the specificities of the situation, however, it may, be possible to support the state- and capacity-building of state institutions, but in extreme situations of atrocities being committed against the population, military intervention and humanitarian assistance bypassing the state could be a moral imperative. A thorough understanding of the given situation is needed, both to identify useful interventions and to establish whether conflict prevention and peace-building are of primary importance, or whether

the unfolding of antagonisms and conflicts may dismantle development barriers with little harm to the population. Conflict is an inherent aspect of development and should not be fought down automatically.

Low levels of governance

If a national government is in existence and a reasonable level of policy agreement characterizes its relationship with international actors, most of the usual aid modalities can be taken into account by international donor agencies when fragility is linked primarily to issues of poor capacity, corruption and limited representativeness, accountability and transparency. These issues may stimulate the outbreak of conflicts and prevent the creation of conditions that are conducive for growth and poverty reduction. In such situations, it is useful to direct some attention towards preventive measures that seek to undermine the position of spoilers and to compensate actors and groups that are suffering from poor governance. However, the nature of low levels of governance may differ substantially from one country to another. Societies that are experiencing 'the natural resource curse' suffer from different governance problems than societies with altogether few natural and economic resources (Collier 2007). Donors should accordingly respond differently, sometimes, perhaps, by emphasizing support for the demand for governance, and sometimes by focusing on the supply side.

Economic crisis

Severe economic crisis may be the result of rapid changes in global economic and financial markets, of tensions producing the return of large numbers of migrants, of 'electoral failures' creating a political impasse, etc. Economic crisis can be a significant element of fragility because it may cause important and rapid drops in the living standards of large parts of a population. Together with high levels of perceived inequality, this carries the potential for further social, political and economic deterioration, including when the initial trigger for the crisis has vanished. Economic crisis may be one of the elements of fragility that international donors can address most easily. Mitigating measures of various kinds are most useful in such situations, and they are likely to be much less politically controversial compared to interventions in conflicts and governance issues. There may also be scope for some policy advice with respect to economic management, although the IMF has been strongly criticized for its policy suggestions to countries hit by the Asian financial crisis in 1997.

The capacity and image of international actors

Another significant issue to consider when an international actor contemplates becoming more strongly involved in a fragile situation has to do with its capacities

and the way it is perceived by the major parties to the situation. If an international actor has little relevant capacity or is perceived to be significantly biased – no matter whether rightly or wrongly – it is a strong argument that the actor should renounce its intention of intervening. Fragile situations are typically so volatile that the DAC principle of doing no harm should prevent the actor from engaging in direct support itself. One possibility here might be to make resources available for a multi-donor trust fund to support activities in the fragile situation.

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