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NATION BUILDING IN FRAGILE STATES

Abstract:

Fragile states will remain the main challenge for the international community to eradicate poverty and to contribute to just and inclusive societies as aimed for in the SDG's (OECD State of Fragility 2015). In the fragile states agenda the focus is on the state building agenda: building institutions and systems to strengthen the state, to make sure that the delivery of security, justice and basic social services is guaranteed.

Without questioning the relevance and urgency of this institutional strengthening, there is a need to complement this strategy with a nation-building strategy that focuses on building social cohesion and a sense of belonging in fragmented and conflict ridden countries: what makes people to identify with their nation-state as their community they belong to. People in fragile states identify with and relied on their ethnic, religious, linguistic community and it is important to understand how people can identify with their nation-state as basis for their acceptance of and loyalty to this nation state when it relates to taxation, justice and economic development.

Including nation-building into the fragile states discourse and policies is based on the model of fragility that identifies three drivers of fragility: lack of authority, lack of capacity, lack of legitimacy. Whereas state-building focuses on solving the lack of authority and capacity, nation building addresses the lack of legitimacy and supports the process of legitimacy-building that is necessary for stability.

Nation-building does not fit the traditional log-frame model for development interventions. Inputoutput-outcome sequence is difficult to define at the beginning of the process and the role of international actors is less prominent compared to the state building and institution building agenda.

In order to break the often vicious cycle of conflict in fragile states, we need to invest in nation-building as complementary to state building. Nation-building is not a magic wand for the solution of conflicts, but it should be part of a comprehensive agenda for the international community.

The research to be presented in the presentation is connecting policy, practice and science and it is interdisciplinary, drawing on cultural anthropology, political sciences, religious studies, sociology and social psychology.

Keywords:

fragility, nation-building, state-building, social cohesion, sense of belonging.

JEL Classification: D74, F35, F59

Fragility as lasting challenge.

Solving the problem of fragility is the most important challenge for diplomats, military commanders and development cooperation specialists. It is the place of the most urgent and destabilizing problems for all those concerned about the future of our interconnected global world. And the perspectives are not promising. OECD expects that as part of the number of people living in extreme poverty the share of people living in fragile states will increase from 43 to 62 %¹. British ODI in its Horizon 2025 expects fragility to become the most important challenge for the international community².

In the yearly list of fragile states, published by OECD some 23 countries are constantly on that list since it was first published in 2007. And new countries like Syria, Mali and Lybia have the dubious honor to are new members of the club. Countries like Sierra Leone and Liberia seem to do well and on the path to stability, but South Sudan and Burundi are relapsing into conflict and fragility in spite of promising development a couple of years ago.

There is no doubt about the commitment of the international community to this problem of fragility. Thousands of military have given their lives in the interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and elsewhere. Hundreds of billions have been spent on aid to these countries to provide basic social services to the people, to get infrastructure restored and to get the engine of the economy working. Diplomats have traveled from conference to negotiating table to bring together warring factions, forge compromises and create stable governments. The records of all these interventions have been limited.

The focus on state and institution building.

The strategies for solving the problem of fragile states have been dominated by state-building and institution building. Analyzing the problem of fragility as the problem of weak states and weak institutions, the cure seems to be clear: building a strong state and strong institutions will bring the solution. Comprehensive programs to develop strong governmental institutions (ministries, police, justice were designed as well as training programs for civil servants, policemen and –women and judges. Apart from these efforts in the civil part, there were huge investments in the military by providing modern weaponry and training. Political economists like Paul Collier³ and James Robinson and Darren Acermoglu⁴ underpinned this strategy by research projects tracking the recent history of conflict and post-conflict and the long history of the building of nation-states. The repeated message of these research-projects was that

² http://www.odi.org/sites/odi.org.uk/files/odi-assets/publications-opinion-files/7723.pdf

¹ OECD (2015), States of Fragility 2015

³ Paul Collier, The Bottom Billion, Why the poorest countries are failing and what can be done about it, New York, 2008

⁴ Darren Acermoglu and James Robinson, Why Nations fail: the origins of power, prosperity and poverty, New York, 2012.

stability is the result of institutions. Institutions are independent of personal relations and personal preferences and they are guided by meritocratic principles. The European nation-states and the US have become flourishing because of their institutional strength. That is the lesson, according to these analyses, we have to take as the basis of our strategies to address the chronical problems of fragility. Based on that dominant discourse the fragile states policies are focusing on state, c.q. institution-building.

The missing piece in the puzzle.

The problem with this focus on institution building is not with what it does, but with what it forgets to do. There is no reason to deny the central role of institutions for creating stability. Neither to replace the institution building strategy by something else. I'm contending that we need to complement the state and institution building strategy with a nation-building strategy in order to get a better balanced and therefore more effective strategy. The importance of nation-building is acknowledged as an important pillar for strong and stable states⁵, but it not part of a comprehensive intervention strategy in fragile states.

The current fragile states strategies seem to take for granted that all inhabitants of the fragile state are identifying themselves with that state: all people living in South Sudan, in Afghanistan, in DRC see themselves as South-Sudanese, Afghans and Congolese. There is the assumption that there is a relation between the members of the different (ethnic, religious, cultural, linguistic) communities in seeing each-other as inhabitants of the state and sharing a common interest in the development of the state. Dominant fragile state strategies define that the state has to perform better in its relation to the inhabitants and that it has to become stronger in order to exert its authority. Fragile state strategies assume that there is a contract between inhabitants and the nation-state and improving the implementation of that contract is the key issue.

The basic problem of the fragile states policy is in that assumption. In fragile state the sense of belonging is with the identity-group (ethnic, religious, linguistic). That should not be surprising: survival in times of crisis and conflict was depending on these identity-groups. People were able to survive thanks to their identity groups where solidarity support and shelter was available, even in the worst crises. The government was at best absent, at worst one of the perpetrators. Identification, and therefore loyalty is with the identity group and it is unrealistic to expect members of the group to identify with the nation-state after a peace agreement or an external intervention.

In Afghanistan the ethnic divide between the southern Pashtun and the Northern Alliance of Uzbeks, Tadjieks was not vanished after the toppling of the Taliban. The Dinka and Nuer in South Sudan are not primarily South Sudanese, even though the

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⁵ Fukuyama, Francis, Political Order and Political Decay, From the Industrial Revolution tot he Globalization of Democracy,London 2015, p 30.

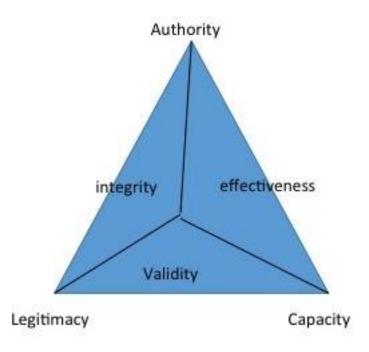
joint effort to secede from Sudan may have given the impression that there was unity and togetherness. These divisions are no surprises. The bitter civil war in Afghanistan between 1989 (the withdrawal of USSR troops) and 1996 (the Taliban) was a clear sign that the country was divided by deep internal conflicts. The history of the civil war in Sudan told the same story of internal rivalry within the SPLM/SPLA. To assume that after ousting the Taliban or after having achieved independence (South Sudan) the divides would have been vanished, was naïve. To think that building a strong government could make sure that these divides would not re-emerge was wishful thinking.

Do effective governments breed legitimate governments?

The political theory behind the fragile states strategy is that effective government breeds legitimate government: when the governments provides the security and basic services people are so desperately in need of, people will see the government as legitimate. By responding to the apparent needs of the people (lack of security, education, health care, infrastructure, energy) governments would be able to restore the social contract and become a legitimate state for their inhabitants and for the international community.

There is a theoretical and practical problem with this theory. The theoretical problem is based on the analysis of fragility. In fragility the state has three main problems that are the root-causes of the fragility.

Figure 1 Fragility model (ACL-model)



The first is the lack of authority: there is no effective control over the territory. The second is lack of capacity: there are no institutions, there is no organizational capacity and no financial means to provide what is necessary. The third is a lack of legitimacy: the government is not acknowledged as the representative of the population. Based on that the so called ACL model of fragility was developed⁶. The model also explained how restoring authority, capacity and legitimacy will bring about effectiveness (the result of a government with authority and capacity) validity (the result of a government with capacity and legitimacy) and integrity (the result of authority combined with legitimacy). Legitimacy, as the model shows, is a basic problem, whereas effectiveness is the result of the combined restoration of authority and capacity. There is, according to this ACL model, no theoretical basis to assume that effectiveness will bring about legitimacy.

Theoretically there is another problem with the effectiveness breeds legitimacy assumption: the nature of the relationship between government and citizens. Effectiveness supposes a relationship of provider and consumer/client: citizens are the clients of the government and enjoy the products and services provided by the government. In the effectiveness discourse, citizens are objects of the government. In the legitimacy discourse the citizen is the subject: the citizens provide legitimacy to the government by accepting the government as the authority to govern. Legitimacy by citizens precedes the government as effective provider of services to the citizens.

Practice shows that the 'effectiveness breeds legitimacy' strategy is not very convincing and cannot be working. In Afghanistan 12 years of building institutions and a strong government and after providing hundreds of billions of dollar in aid and capacity building have not been able to provide the legitimacy to the government. The same story goes for Sudan where the donors after the Naivasha agreement of 2005 applied the same strategy to no avail as appeared when internal conflict in 2013 briskly ended the prospects for this new nation-state.

The 'effectiveness breeds legitimacy' claim is also practically almost impossible due to the limited resources of governments in fragile states. The claim could work if the government would be able, supported by international donors, to provide the effectiveness to the majority of the country. Reality shows that fragile states lack the capacities and the resources and the infrastructure (human and physical) to get the distribution of effective government realized. Years of war have caused a brain-drain of educated people and leaders of communities. It has ruined the physical infrastructure of roads, means of communication and offices that is needed for effective government. International support, even though massively provided like in Afghanistan, is not able to solve the capacity problems. Most of the international

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⁶ Carment, David and Yiagadeesen Samy and Stewart Prest, State fragility and the implications for aid allocation: an empirical analysis; in: Coflict Management and Peace Sciences vol 25 (2008) p 354.

⁶ The so-called ACL model has three main factors (authority, capacity and legitimacy) and three consequences when two the three main factors go along: effectiveness, validy and integrity. For these three consequences see http://www4.carleton.ca/cifp/app/serve.php/1144.pdf page 37 (accessed 25-01-2016)

support is financial or technical (consultancy and advisory services) in nature and therefore is on the input side of the problem, whereas the biggest challenge is the implementation, i.e. in the output side.

Building legitimacy.

The international community in its strategies focuses on both the authority and capacity angle of the ACL-triangle assuming that the legitimacy angle will be solves as a consequence of solving the authority and the capacity angle. However, legitimacy is a too important and fundamental problem of fragile states to be left unaddressed in the basic strategy. Addressing the authority and capacity needs of fragile states resulting in effective governments needs the complementary efforts of addressing he legitimacy needs of these countries.

Legitimacy is dependent on the support and explicit consent of people⁷. In legitimacy people presents itself at political subject. That is the decisive difference with the 'effectiveness breeds legitimacy' discourse. In the latter the people is the object and client of politics. Since the French revolution which did away with the divine legitimacy of the king (emperor, duke) and formulated the people as the basis of sovereignty, the people, before becoming the object of politics, constitutes politics as subject.

Political scientists and policy makers, involved in the fragile states policy making, may argue that there is no legitimacy gap because of the electoral process that provides the necessary legitimacy. They will argue that this legitimacy issue is exactly the reason why international actors are urging to hold elections as soon as possible after a peace agreement of regime change. They understand that legitimacy has to be established and they show to the turn out of voters at elections. First elections after a peace agreement or regime change show overwhelming figures for the participation rate: the high turn out of voters (Afghanistan 2004: 83%, Iraq 2005: 79%, DRC 2006: 70%) seems to show that the results are representing the political will of the people and therefore the elected government has legitimacy. Subsequent elections, with a much lower turn out and huge problems of electoral fraud, have shown that the roots of legitimacy are shallow and fragile⁸. Paul Collier has pointed to the problematic role of elections in post-conflict situations. They tend to fixate the positions of conflicting parties into the political arena, continuing the conflict and civil war into the political realm. It leads to new winners and losers and provides the basis for new processes of greed (winners) and grievance (losers). Instead of solving the military conflict, they are just continuing the conflict on another level. In so far as the electoral process is legitimizing one could call it the legitimation of the continuation of the struggle in the political arena.

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⁷ A.J. Simmons, Justification and Legitimacy, Ethics,vol 109 (4) 739-771.

http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=107; http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=39 http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?CountryCode=AF

The experience of the past fragile states interventions have shown that rapid elections after is not providing the legitimacy that a government needs. More is needed to build a solid base to create stability and a viable government with commitment of people to the difficult path out of fragility.

Nation-Building as necessary for legitimacy.

The intimate connection between legitimacy and nation-building is in the process of identification⁹ what makes people identify with the nation-state, accepting explicitly its leading role in society building. I'm taking nation-building from a constructivist perspective: nations and national identities are social constructs that develop and change over time in response to internal and external developments¹⁰. There is not an eternal identity to be excavated and preserved over the history. That offers the opportunity to work on identification and to make building on national identity a doable effort. Here again the notion of 'building' is important. Contrary to the primordial concept of national identity ¹¹that posits that there is a deep historic identity as the decisive basis of national identities, the constructivist approach sees nation-building as a never ending process of constructing and changing and adapting the identity of a nation. There will be historic elements in that identity, but these historic elements are parts of a much larger process of remembering, forgetting and inventing.

For legitimacy of governments in fragile states it is necessary that people identify themselves as nationals: I am an Afghan woman/man, I am a South Sudanese, I am a Central African. It will be difficult to create legitimacy, if this sense of belonging is lacking. This is not just an acceptance of rights and duties, connected to citizenship, it is also an emotional and spiritual identification. People in fragile states identify primarily with their ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural groups. There they have found shelter and support in times of war and crisis. For stability to take hold in fragile states, the identification with the nation-state and the development of a national sense of belonging is indispensable. It is doing the ground work and building the fundaments of the house of the nation-state.

In most of the fragile states the notion of the nation-state is artificial. Boundaries are drawn by colonial powers without much of sensitivity for cultural, linguistic and religious cleavages. Boundaries are artificial from an internal perspective: what is my connection to other groups that live in this nation-states) and from an external perspective: I am cut off from my members of my group at the other side of the border. That makes nation-building as building a sense of belonging even more challenging, but also more compelling. It is the condition for the state that wants to play a pivotal role in the development of the country.

⁹ Brubaker, Rogers and Frederick Cooper, Beyond Identity, in: Theory and Society, volume 20(2000) issue 1, p 1-47.

¹⁰ Anderson, Benedict. Imagined Communities, p 6. Verso 2006

¹¹ Smith, Anthony D. National Identity, University of Nevada Press, 1991 defends a much more primordial position of national identities (compared to Benedict Anderson's constructivist notion of 'Imagined communities', see footnote 12)

It is important to be aware of the distinctiveness of nation-building from state building and from peace-building. Peace-building, i.e. ending hostilities, forging a peace agreement between warring factions i

Some authors seem to assume that nation-building is no doable.¹² They believe that nation-building is an unplanned historical-evolutionary process and con only be identified in hindsight is not confirmed by history: the process of building a national identity has been a deliberately designed process in Europe to create a society with a shared language, with shared values and memories and heroes and sacred places. Nations are build and national identities are constructed, they do not emerge nor are they excavated artefacts. He is right in contending that it is mainly an internal process and that it is not a log-frame process with (external) inputs producing designed outputs and outcomes. But that is not enough to put it aside as not part of the challenge of fragility.

Nation-building and the challenge of diversity.

Fragile states are not homogeneous states. The heterogeneity of the state with diverse identity groups is often one of the propelling factors for conflict. This diversity has to be taken into the process of nation-building an an ongoing determining factor. The outcome of nation-building will not be homogeneity. The process of nationbuilding in Western Europe, with homogeneity as the outcome, is not the template of nation-building in fragile states. Two reasons obstruct homogeneity as outcome of nation-building in today's reality. The first is that violence and coercion that were part of the process of nation-building in Europe in order to realize a homogeneous national identity, is no longer acceptable: diversity and rights of indigenous people are too deeply enshrined in international treaties. The second is that the process of migration in the era of globalization will continuously challenge any attempt to create homogeneous societies. The challenge we face is to build a national sense of belonging in a society where group-identities (ethnicity, religion, culture, language) will continue to exist. The processes in Europe (Catalonia, Scotland, Belgium) are proof of the continuous reality of identity even in developed nations. The challenge is whether we can develop a national identity as a overarching layer and prevent a zero-sum game between belonging to specific identity groups and belonging to the nation-state. Is it possible to be a Dinka and a South Sudanese, a Uzbek and an Afghan? Multiple identity, a well-known concept in psychology, is also applicable in the socio-political reality of societies that needs to build social cohesion.

¹² Fukuyama Francis, Nation building and the failure of Institutional Memory in: Francis Fukuyama (ed), Nation building beyond Afghanistan and Iraq, John Hopkins University Press, 2006, p 3.

The house of National identity.

Continuing om the construction-metaphor I developed a model for the nation-building process. In previous research three main elements of a national identity are identified, each comprising of several components¹³

Table 2 Elements and components of a national identity

Elements of national identity	Components
Civic identity	Citizenship
	Territory
	Will and consent
	Political ideology
	Political institutions and laws
Cultural identity	Religion
	Language
	Tradition
Ethnicity	Ancestry
	Race

As these are traditionally seen as the building blocks of a national identity, it is important for future research to open the perspective on new building blocks in a globalizing world. The globalizing world and the interconnected economies are influencing national identities and the positioning of countries in the international communities. Identities are always social boundaries and therefore are responses to changes in the outside environment.

In the model I developed the basis for national identity is the civic identity. In spite of all cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity we cannot build a solid house of national identity without making our civic identity as the basis: as citizens we share equally rights and duties, responsibilities and entitlements. On this solid floor of a civic identity we can build different spaces for our different identities as individuals and as communities.

Over and above these differences is what I see as the national identity: the shared identity that overarches our differences and make us the imagined community.

¹³ Shulman, Stephen. Challenging the civic/ethnic and East-West dichotomies in the study of Nationalism; in: Comparative Political Studies vol. 35 (2002) .

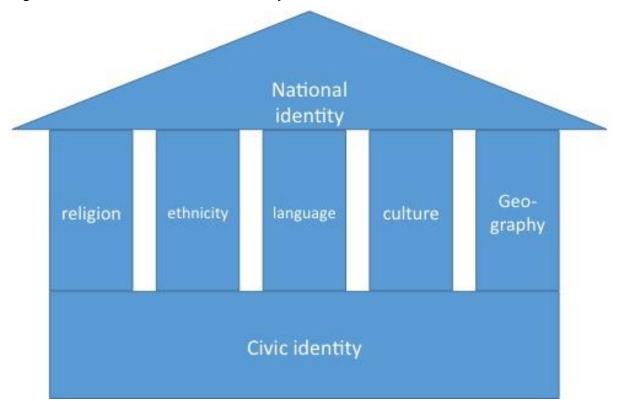


Figure 3: The house of national identity

Nation building as inclusive process.

Based on this concept of multiple identity and on a constructivist approach, nation-building should be part of the agenda in fragile states. As a process, distinct from state-building, it should be organised separately. The dialogue on culture, history, heroes, national narratives and spiritual sources should have a different space, different from the space of political bargaining, power-sharing and resource allocation. Laying the fundaments for the a sense of belonging to the nation should not be under the pressure of power-play and electoral cycles even though there is no Chinese wall between the two. In order to make the process different from the political processes it is important to make it inclusive for many identity groups: ethnic linguistic, religious, cultural should be invited. The Afghan tradition of Loya Jirga ¹⁴(large gatherings of representatives of all ethnic groups) and the Southern African tradition of Lekgotla (large meetings to of deliberation) shows that there are existing models for such forms of inclusiveness, different from the political representation in parliaments. Without being exhaustive the agenda of such a forum could be:

- The national languages and the role of dialects in communication and education
- National holidays, national memorial places

¹⁴ Wardak, Ali, Jirga, a traditional mechanism of conflict resolution in Afghanistan. http://www.institute-for-afghan-studies.roashan.com/AFGHAN%20CONFLICT/LOYA%20JIRGA/Jirgabywardak.pdf

- Dual citizenship and the issue of (forced) migrants: how to maintain a relationship with nationals outside the territory
- The design of a curriculum on national history in the education system
- The religious identity of the nation-state: religious symbols, religious practices and national celebrations
- The space for religion and traditional practices in law (shariah, indigenous decision-making and representation)
- The identification of traditions that deserve to be included in a national heritage list.

A process of nation-building needs a critical process of verification: not all claims of identity groups are valid and traditions claimed as specific for one group, are often shared with others. Researchers, commissioned by the forum, should play an important role in this process.

Nation-building is a national led process. No one else than the people belonging to the nation-state are the ones to decide about their identity. However, identity is never developed in isolation and globalization and migration make physical, mental and social boundaries porous. The problem of fragility has forced many inhabitants of fragile states to leave the country. They remain connected to their country of origin and fee part of it, whether or not they continue to be formally citizens of their country of origin.

Identity is always a social process and develops itself in relation to others. It is in essence a process of defining social boundaries¹⁵. That counts for individuals, for groups and for nations. National identity develops itself in a constant dialogue with others, with neighbours, with the international community. In defining the national belonging these international relations are to be taken into account. The international community should play a facilitating role by providing the financial resources for the process and, if necessary, by offering facilitation of this dialogue. Investing in the process of nation-building is definitely no waste of money, even if the log-frame model of inputs and outputs is not applicable.

The results of the process of nation-building must be translated into the educational system in a curriculum of citizenship education that is a structural component of the educational system. In the state-building approach efforts on civic education are limited to pre-electoral voters education. A much more comprehensive citizenship education is required to build the social cohesion and sense of belonging that is the ultimate goal of nation building. Equally, a broad media campaign is necessary in traditional media (ration, television) and in new media (internet social media, peer to peer networks).

¹⁵ Wimmer, Andreas The making and unmaking of ethnic boundaries; in: American Journal of Sociology, volume 113 (2008), issue 4, pp 970-1022.

Conclusion

The international community has understood the necessity to invest in the nation-state in order to solve the problem of fragility and to end the human suffering in these conflict ridden states and to end the threat these fragile states put to the international community. But investing in the nation-state requires not only to focus on the state building side of the challenge by building institutions, structures and systems. Better institutions and better systems have to be complemented by deliberate efforts in strengthening the national sense of belonging and social cohesion. Nation-building, even if it is not led but only supported by international actors, should be part of a comprehensive strategy to create stability in the countries that are the most challenging for the international community for the next decade. To solve the problems of fragility we need strong nation-states: strong states with well functioning institutions, structures and system and strong nations with a social cohesion and a shared sense of belonging overarching diversity.

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