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## **Global Governance meets Local Politics**

*On Western State-building and the Resilience of Hybrid Political Orders*\*\*

### **Introduction**

Something has changed in the relationship between the industrialized states of the North/West and the ‘subalterns’ of the international system (Ayoob 1998). This change has not been monumental but is the result of a step-by-step process that has occurred over the last two decades. The essence of this change, we argue, is that the provision of governance in these countries has slowly been globalized. We proceed from the assumption that global governance, despite its supranational ambitions, is still very much dependent on the implementation and enforcement capacities of the modern state (Lambach 2006). How, then, can global governance be realized when states lack these capacities? Recent trends in the international treatment of poor countries, and post-conflict societies in particular, provide a window on attempts to import globalized governance structures into spaces whose inhabitants are deemed unable to provide for such governance on their own. Our argument, however, is that most of these attempts have failed because they neglect the dynamics and resilience of local politics. Against this background, speaking of global governance is nothing more than self-deception. Instead, external actors enter or even create local arenas in which their state-building attempts are partly contested and partly absorbed and transformed by local actors.

Our paper is structured as follows: First, we sketch the rise of the state-building concept, which emerged, first of all, from the ‘global governance’ discourse and was adapted later on by development actors. Our second chapter differentiates variants of state-building and critically reflects on the claim of promoting ‘local ownership’. Our theoretical considerations lead us to the assumption that even though global actors have huge advantages in terms of resources, they still frequently find themselves in weaker positions, outmaneuvered by local counterparts. And indeed, as empirical evidence in chapter three shows, externally-led state-building projects mostly resulted in failure, significant exceptions notwithstanding. Preliminary evidence from selected cases that we present in chapter four unveils a hitherto neglected dimension: the role of identities and of legitimacy which is grounded in existing social orders. In other words: When Global Governance meets local politics, the resilience of hybrid political orders becomes evident.

### **1. State-building as Part of the Global Governance and Development Discourses**

The global governance approach was developed in the mid-1990s and attempted to adapt IR research to fundamental changes in a ‘turbulent’ world, namely the rapid process of globalization,

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the de-bordering of the world of states and the emergence of a multi-centric world. James N. Rosenau laid out the theoretical foundations of this new concept – and in particular developed the idea of a ‘bifurcation’ in world politics whereby the sphere of non-state actors gained relative influence while acting according to its own goals, instruments, modes of cooperation and patterns of legitimacy (Rosenau 1992: 20). Based on these assumptions, Rosenau (1995: 13) defined global governance as ‘systems of rule at all levels of human activity – from the family to the international organization – in which the pursuit of goals through the exercise of control has transnational repercussions’.

Within a short period of time, core ideas of global governance were taken up by policy-related research and were translated into the normative and prescriptive frameworks shaping the United Nations system (Commission on Global Governance 1995). As a consequence, debates on changing notions of sovereignty emerged.

Failures and dilemmas of humanitarian intervention intensified this debate. At the UN level, norm development with regard to globalized security governance culminated in ‘The Responsibility to Protect’ (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty/ICISS 2001). This report juxtaposed the view that state sovereignty was not only a right to prevent interference from outside with one that considered it also to be an obligation of the state towards its citizens. As a consequence, the authors claimed that the ‘responsibility to protect’ might shift from the national to the global level if gross human rights violations occurred and were not stopped. One of the implications of this concept is that spaces in which the state is either not willing or able (or both) to secure the safety of its citizens, should and can be globally governed. The idea of state-building is particularly strong in the ‘responsibility to rebuild’ – one of the innovations of the ICISS report.

While post-conflict countries and fragile states easily became familiar topics of the security-related global governance discourse, they had only started to enter development discourses in the late 1990s. In effect, multilateral and bilateral donors first ‘pathologized’ these spaces (Hughes/Pupavac 2005) as ‘ungovernable’ by their citizens and governments alone and then forcefully inserted themselves top-down into their governance structure. The state-building paradigm, sure enough, is not the first model developed for altering politico-economic structures in the developing world. At the start of the current wave of globalization, in the first half of the 1980s, structural adjustment had been the dominant orthodoxy, claiming that a minimal state would unleash forces of the market which were supposed to contribute to growth and economic development. However, its major recipe, structural adjustment, failed miserably. Neoliberal ideas were thus replaced by the ‘good governance’ paradigm at the end of the 1990s. Instead of being an obstacle to growth, an efficient and accountable state, based on the rule of law, was increasingly seen as a major facilitator of development (World Bank 1997).

The sudden popularity of ‘good governance’ resulted in a redirection of aid, away from unstable and failing states that donors were increasingly reluctant to engage with. Accordingly, fragile states received less development aid than other low income countries (LICs) (UK Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit 2005: 27), effectively becoming ‘forgotten states’ (Levin/Dollar 2005). The consistently bad performance of a substantial number of ‘difficult partners’ or ‘Low Income Countries under Stress’ (LICUS) in the late 1990s, however, facilitated a re-assessment of the political conditionality of aid: How could good governance be promoted in countries where the state was not functioning or had just been destroyed by internal war? Catalyzed by the events of 9/11 which highlighted the security risks of ignoring failed states, the donor community thus started to question its hitherto held assumptions with regard to fragile states (OECD/DAC 2001, 2002, World Bank 2002). As a consequence, the centrality of ‘good governance’ in development strategies has slowly been eclipsed by the (re-)emergence of the ‘state-building’ concept (Debiel/Lambach 2008). This line of thinking was reinforced by the fact that the international community in the early years

of the new millennium increasingly faced the necessity of (re-)building the state as an integral part of any post-war reconstruction strategy (Etzioni 2004, Ignatieff 2003, Talentino 2002, Paris/Sisk 2007).

## 2. State-building: Global Governance in a Contested Arena

State-building approaches at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century face harsh realities. States have been weakened and state failure often goes hand in hand with violent conflict. As Herbert Wulf recently stated, ‘globalization leads to de-nationalization and promotes the relocation of authority, from the nation-state to supra-national actors. Although wars might be manifest at the local level, the political economy of armed conflicts has effects on whole regions and conflicts are fuelled from beyond national borders. Market liberalization, deregulation and neo-conservative economic agendas have contributed to a free flow of goods and services, including the financing of wars’ (2007: 17).

State-building, of course, is anything but new. The concept was first developed in the 1950s and 1960s. It held that states in the newly decolonized countries would follow similar paths of development as their European predecessors. When this failed to materialize, state-building eventually ended in the intellectual dustbin along with the rest of modernization theory. The new approach in particular differs with regard to the role that the strategies attribute to external actors. Whereas early concepts teleologically assumed that state-building was a ‘natural’ process that would simply run its course once the colonizing powers had withdrawn, the new understanding of state-building virtually demands external intervention. Despite emphasizing ‘local ownership’, the current concepts are driven by top-down concepts of social engineering, mainly focused on the national level (Heathershaw/Lambach 2008).

Sure enough, there is not just one, but instead several different approaches to state-building. The first concepts of state-building to appear in its new guise had a predominantly *technocratic* character and emerged at the interface of the security and the development discourses. The recommendations put forward are not derived from historical experience or empirical research. Instead, they are mainly generated from conceptual papers that develop their terminology and major assumptions from typologies and taxonomies, try to evaluate most recent practices within these schemes and aim to translate lessons learned to future cases. Such state-building approaches borrow from the literature on capacity-building. Technocratic approaches follow a clearly delimited agenda of reforms, often placing the provision of security at the center of any state-building strategy. Typical tasks include the provision of infrastructure, the training of civil servants as well as the initiation of organizational reforms (Schneckener 2006). Accordingly, this approach promises quick results but downplays the roles that informal actors and institutions, culture and identity play. It also grossly underestimates the political dimensions of seemingly apolitical reforms.

A second strand has tried to reconcile the state-building with the good governance approach by tailoring the good governance concept to better fit the specific needs of ‘difficult partners’ – the term the OECD/DAC (2002) uses for fragile states. Therefore, the practical recommendations are broader than those of more technocratic approaches and typically include some of the following measures (Klemp/Poeschke 2005: 20-21): respect for and promotion of human rights; rule of law; accountability, transparency and control of the public sector; participation of civil society; gender equity and mainstreaming; social coherence and civic integration of marginalized groups; poverty reduction, macro-economic stability and sustainable growth; efficient provision of social services; prevention of violent conflict.

Such a strategy, some commentators argue, overburdens external and internal agents not only due to its breadth, but also due to the lack of priorities (Ottaway 2002, Paris 2004). Therefore, those critics propose a third and rather provocative approach to state-building. With regard to Afghanistan Ottaway and Lieven (2002) argue in favor of an ‘ordered anarchy’ beyond the central state, referring to experiences in Somalia during the 1990s where violence had declined and transnational trade increased after the withdrawal of international troops. They conclude that external actors should concentrate on some very basic functions such as providing a minimum degree of security and protecting major trade routes. Aid should be channeled directly to the regions based on institutionalized relations with warlords, with the central government acting in the role of a mediator.

If external actors interfere into domestic affairs via peacebuilding operations, they are keen to introduce what they call ‘(local) ownership’ (Narten 2008). The meaning of this term usually remains rather vague, as Chesterman states, ‘ranging from a sense of attachment to a programme or operation, to (rarely) actual controlling authority’ (2007: 4). Concerning international state-building exercises, this talk of ‘ownership’ obfuscates more than it illuminates. Instead, state-building can be better understood as a contested project in a ‘glocal arena’. This approach is based on Schlichte and Veit’s notion of ‘coupled arenas’ (2007) which defines an arena as a localized field of power (using Bourdieu’s notion of ‘fields’) where agents from different levels meet.<sup>1</sup> Schlichte and Veit argue that arenas are ‘coupled’, i.e. that they are connected and influenced by each other. Resources and persons move between arenas, information and decisions are transmitted. In the case of post-conflict peacebuilding, Schlichte and Veit differentiate three arenas which are important for external actors: the metropolitan headquarters, the national capital/base camp and the ‘bush office’.

The headquarters is where policy is formulated. It is then transmitted to agents in the partner country’s capital who ‘translate’ policies to adapt them to the country’s situation and forward them to field agents in the bush offices who are then tasked with their implementation. These three arenas are highly interdependent: The headquarters distributes the resources but needs steady reports of progress to legitimize itself to its constituency. The bush office has access to crucial local information but needs resources before it is able to do anything. This kind of coupling impedes state-building and leads to unintended outcomes, Schlichte and Veit argue from an organization research perspective:

‘In short, requirements from the center clash with what is possible locally. Planners do not take into account what is lacking locally, either because they simply do not know better or due to budget constraints. The personnel in the metropolitan headquarters or in the base camp do not possess knowledge of local power structures and as a result perceive the space of the intervention as being void of any power structures’ (Schlichte/Veit 2007: 26).

Local actors can exert influence on external ones at the base camp and the bush office level. Sometimes, they offer themselves as ‘hybrid’ (traditional-state-private) providers of public goods. In other cases, locals act as intermediaries between external actors and the locality, partly pursuing their own, hidden agendas (Schlichte/Veit 2007: 21). Hence, relationships between external and local actors will inevitably be characterized by a certain level of uncertainty and mistrust (also see Veit 2008).

We argue that state-building in a globalized world takes place in a contested arena where local, national and international perceptions and interests meet. These interests might converge in some cases, but for the most part we expect them to be rather incompatible. The rationale of external actors is grounded in ideas which are generated by the self-referential logics of bureaucracies and

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<sup>1</sup> However, we want to stress that we do not share Schlichte and Veit’s understanding of ‘global governance’ as just another synonym for the ‘liberal peace’ (Paris 2004).

policy-oriented think tanks rather than by a closer study of local realities. At the same time, international engagement impacts as an intervening variable on opportunities and choices of local elites. These elites often develop remarkable skill and finesse in capitalizing on selected parts of the ‘state-building agenda’ to further their own ‘projects’.

Not only do we see the state-building arena as one of conflict rather than of cooperation, we also posit that local actors tend to have the upper hand. To be sure, in most cases external actors are militarily stronger and control more resources. However, the long chain of responsibility that international agents are subject to prevents them from truly adapting to local conditions. In contrast, local elites typically have networks of support, clandestine or otherwise, which gives them access to the local population. Those among the external actors who know the most about local conditions (the bush offices) cannot ‘compete’ as they are not the ones formulating policies.

### **3. The State-building Project in Practice: Many Failures, Few Exceptions**

Our theoretically informed skepticism towards the Western state-building project can be confirmed using evidence from several key contributions to the academic debate on state-building and post-conflict countries. In a survey of 121 processes of post-conflict peace-building from 1945 to 1999, Doyle and Sambanis (2006) found that barely half of them managed to achieve an end to war and violence. More ambitious goals, such as a minimum level of political openness, were even more elusive. Notably, the activities of external peacekeeping forces had no significant effect on the odds of success, although durable peace was slightly more likely in those countries featuring a UN-mandated intervention force. Paris (2004) offers a slightly different perspective. After comparing eleven UN peace-building missions from 1989 to 1999, he concludes that only two had been successfully concluded (Namibia and Croatia), two had failed (Angola and Rwanda) and that the remaining seven missions presented mixed pictures.

In our perspective, the reason for the inability of peace-building missions to achieve most of their goals was due to their overambitiousness. Even one of the major proponents of state-building, Francis Fukuyama (2004), harbors serious doubts about the scope of changes that external actors are able to effect in post-conflict countries. He points out that political order is grounded in social and cultural attitudes towards authority, power and legitimacy. Hence, external state-builders might well be able to ‘export’ particular organizational modes to post-conflict countries via administrative reform, constitution-building or the introduction of parliaments but, more often than not, these institutions are disconnected from the society they are supposed to administer.

Beyond the most obvious failures (such as Somalia) even those cases where external actors have invested considerable time and resources cannot be considered ‘success stories’ by any means. Afghanistan is one of the most egregious failures in this regard. Almost nine years after the peace conference in Bonn, the Afghan state is still unable to exert control over significant parts of its territory, state officials are absent from most provinces and the state’s fiscal and judicial systems are completely ineffective. Afghanistan almost present a textbook example of Schlichte and Veit’s coupled arenas. There, external actors – most of whom arrived without any prior knowledge of local conditions – were exploited by local power holders as the cozy relationship that many warlords continue to enjoy with the external forces clearly demonstrates. Other cases show less dismal results, although they also offer no grounds for undue optimism. East Timor is often considered a success story of international institution-building. However, as the political crisis of 2006-08 which culminated in an assassination attempt on President Ramos Horta illustrates, the country is far from stable (Matsuno 2008). In a striking similarity to Afghanistan, the political system is dominated by a few key figures that profit from their good ties to the international community. Other cases where the international community, and in particular the UN, have installed transitional administrations

show ambivalent results. Cambodia, which was the first case where a UN mission explicitly took over governance functions, suffered from a renewed outbreak of violence in the run-up to the UN-supervised election in 1993. After the end of the civil war in the late 1990s, the Cambodian regime has become more and more authoritarian. Of the UN's ambitious institution-building project, few traces remain..

Finally, there is a group of countries where state-building has achieved a modicum of success. In countries like Liberia or Sierra Leone, conflicts ended due to the victory of one of its sides, thus ensuring that the political post-conflict landscape was relatively free of spoilers. These countries also enjoyed a substantial presence of international troops and a strong commitment by the international community who invested large sums into these comparatively small countries. Thus, the economy blossomed and also government revenue from taxes as a percentage of GDP increased substantially. However, much of this bounce can be attributed to a general economic recovery and the transfer of economic activity from the shadow economy to the formal economy. Even when taking all the other reform measures into account, it is clear that the success stories are only taking baby steps towards measurable state-building.

Obviously, goals that go beyond the end of violence and post-war economic growth have only rarely been achieved. Large-scale transformations such as democratization, economic reform and the modernization of society have been most successful in geographically small countries and when there have been cooperative political elites that are committed to peace and reform. These two factors certainly seem to have a much bigger influence than the strategies and resources of external actors.

#### **4. Learning from Domestic State-building: The Neglected Relevance of Legitimate Social Orders**

Instead of focusing on external interventions, research on state-building might be better off analyzing domestic processes. In crisis countries, social and political structures are characterized by 'hybrid political orders' which 'blend traditional and modern norms and practices' (Clements et al. 2007: 48). Though these arrangements are far from stable, societies often display remarkable resilience, encouraging creative indigenous responses to local problems and strengthening their own capacities for survival. Social order can only be sustained as long as it is regarded as legitimate (Clements 2009). Legitimacy, in turn, can be created through participative negotiation, a 'strong hand' or the belief that the current situation is a (divine) 'given'. Power-holders need this kind of legitimacy in order to imbue their power with authority. Their legitimacy is based on informal rules which are dependent on dominant power structures as relevant actors such as traditional elders or warlords are embedded into societal contexts. This embedding limits their scope of action and, at the same time, produces expectations within their constituencies.

So far, little empirical work has been conducted on the emergence of socio-political order in fragile states and its re-emergence after violent conflict or even state collapse. At the same time, preliminary results of case study research indicate that identities as well as legitimization of authority play a crucial role for the emergence and resilience of social orders. In a recently concluded research project by the Center for Development Research (ZEF), University of Bonn, and the Institute for Development and Peace (INEF), University of Duisburg-Essen, fieldwork was conducted in two Afghan provinces (Paktia, Kunduz) and in two regions in Somaliland (Sanaag, Awdal) to study the diversity of socio-political order and how its (re-)emergence is linked to state-building processes. While Somaliland experienced a relatively successful bottom-up process of state building, the top-down undertaking in Afghanistan is stagnant or has even switched to a reverse mode. Both cases show convincingly that the technocratic as well as the good governance-based

approaches towards state-building neglect local realities and that theory-building should go beyond Charles Tilly's (1975) findings for Europe.<sup>2</sup>

At first glance, however, the two regions studied in Afghanistan seem to support Tilly's (1985) argument of 'war-making' as part of 'state making' (for the following, see Schetter/Glassner/Karokhail 2006, 2007). In these areas, warlordism presents itself as a transitional phenomenon in the process of evolving statehood while tribal societies are keen to strictly delimit themselves from the state. Kunduz, located in the north-east of Afghanistan, is a textbook example for this kind of constellation: Because of its complex migration patterns, there are no generally accepted rules of the game between social groups. Under these circumstances, warlords and local 'big men' have gained influence who derive their legitimacy not from traditional sources but from their occupation of official state positions. Local commanders enjoy good relations with state agents and the international community. The state, indeed, is of crucial importance for local elites, as its offices represent symbolic capital which provides legitimacy and leverage and allows them to pursue their own agenda.

In Paktia, located in the South-East of Afghanistan, on the contrary, tribal structures saved the region from warlordism. The province is governed by horizontal networks that are deeply embedded in society and are remarkably able to control violence and regulate conflict. A crucial factor is the existence of a powerful Shared Mental Model (Denzau/North 1993): the *pashtunwali*. The state is 'outside' of this system. Since local power-holders are not dependent on official positions, the state is not regarded as a crucial resource and rather seen as an intruder that has to be kept at a distance.

Case study research in Somaliland, a *de facto* state entity in the north-west of Somalia, shows that state-building actually takes place beyond the development paths sketched out by Tilly (see for the following Terlinden 2008 and Ibrahim/Terlinden 2008). In both Awdal and Sanaag regions, state institutions formed endogenously and with a strong involvement of traditional structures. While local actors in Afghanistan approached the state with a 'parasite mentality' or viewed it as an intruder, local actors in Somaliland tried to strike a balance between clan and state institutions. Where state institutions displayed some degree of functioning, they increasingly became the central arena of governance, with the rules of the game becoming more and more formalized. In these regions, elders restricted their role to complementary efforts for conflict resolution and the control of violence, and only interfered into day-to-day politics if vital clan interests were affected. At the same time, the growing autonomy of local administrations increasingly leads to a de-coupling of state from clan institutions, even though they once emerged from them. However, state officials still tend to use patronage and the strategic cooptation of selected clan representatives as means to mobilize loyalty.

Despite these commonalities, the performance of state institutions in Awdal and Sanaag differs substantially. In Awdal, the locally dominant Gadabursi clan developed a particular Shared Mental Model that positioned it as a broker between rivaling interests among the Issaq, the majority clan of Somaliland. On the other hand, in Sanaag the heterogeneity of clan structures and divisive experiences of war has prevented the emergence of a Shared Mental Model. A lot of decision-making has been delegated to the very local level and a direct exchange between clan and state structures was long missing. It took a series of peace conferences extending until 1997 to improve relations between local sub-clans, and even after that the relationship with the central government has remained tenuous. Moreover, for several sub-clans of Sanaag, the autonomous state of Puntland (to the east of Somaliland, bordering on Sanaag) became an alternative political option after 1998.

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<sup>2</sup> The project was conducted by Tobias Debiel, Conrad Schetter, Ulf Terlinden and Rainer Glassner with financial support from the Deutsche Stiftung Friedensforschung (German Foundation for Peace Research). The following four paragraphs draw heavily on Debiel/Glassner/Schetter/Terlinden 2009.

However, in spite of these obstacles, Sanaag has still managed to transform its structures of violence through the cooptation of the former ‘big man’ into the state apparatus and the demobilization or integration of militias into the state army.

Hence, Shared Mental Models represent bridging social capital that is vital both to ending violent conflict and to a sustainable recovery after the shooting stops (Colletta/Cullen 2000). The cases of Afghanistan and Somaliland also show that it is of particular importance in how far norms and institutions have been affected by the conflict. As de Jasay puts it: ‘The whole social order has self-enforcing properties that, like muscles, develop with use or atrophy with disuse’ (1997: 36).

## 5. A Skeptical Outlook on Global Governance

The global governance approach has spurred international actors into a perpetual engagement with the local arenas of crisis countries, usually emphasizing the strengthening of state institutions and the reform of core state functions, particularly the security sector. In order to ‘ground’ the top-down approach of state-building in local conditions, the term ‘ownership’ has gained prominence even though it has little to offer analytically. As we showed, local state-building takes place in hybrid arenas where multiple actors interact, each pursuing their own agenda. External actors implementing state-building strategies become a part of these hybrid modes of governance. By intervening in the interaction between formal and informal institutions at the national and local level, they provide new sources of income, power and legitimacy. Since local actors have more expertise in these arenas and can count on the diminishing interest of external actors, they are usually able to maintain control. And indeed, most external state-building projects since the beginning 1990s have failed to achieve their ambitious goals.

Is there a way out? We have argued that bottom-up state-building provides an interesting and necessary framework of reference. Preliminary results from case studies demonstrate that the emergence and resilience of social orders is largely dependent on identities, Shared Mental Models and legitimacy grounded in hybrid political institutions (Clements 2009). Could development policies, instead of refining concepts like institution- and capacity-building, harmonization and local ownership, seriously engage with these local dynamics?

Within the ‘glocal arenas’, Northern and Southern actors are characterized by heterogeneous perceptions, discourses and modes of legitimization. External actors face severe dilemmas: The specificity of each country makes it almost impossible to coherently follow political guidelines and general sets of principles, norms, rules and practices established at the headquarters level. Furthermore, development and security bureaucracies are legitimized to a small degree by the real impact that their work has on local situations that are far away and difficult to monitor and evaluate. Rather, their organizational self-interest lies in underlining and redefining their role as problem-solvers within the discourses of the Western public and to provide the respective language and concepts.

Under these circumstances, even a revised global governance approach might persistently contribute to a widespread self-deception regarding the effectiveness of globalized governance modes – neglecting that local politics has become the decisive factor in crisis states that have been weakened not least because of the effects of globalization. It might thus be advisable to say goodbye to top-down and normatively overloaded notions of Global Governance and instead invest more energy in developing more refined models of Glocal Governance. These would have to be much more contingent and take into account the varying dynamics and differing logics of the arenas where the competing norms and claims of global, regional, national and local governance are being negotiated and sometimes even violently dealt with.

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