UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

Essay Cover Sheet

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Programme:	Interdisciplinary Summer Programme
Course Code and Title:	ISP1 International politics in a global age I (A11, B11, C11)
Course Director:	Sarah J Ormrod
Essay Number and Title: (taken from Course Materials)	4. What are the greatest challenges facing international state-building?
Word count: (2,000-3,000 words required)	

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What are the greatest challenges facing international state-building?

Some 30-40 states are currently considered fragile, with one-and-a-half billion inhabitants living in areas affected by conflict or large-scale criminal or state violence. It is reported prominently from multiple sources (OECD, 2011, p. 15), (The World Bank, 2011, p. 1) that not a single low-income fragile or conflict-affected country has yet been able to reach a single United Nations Millennium Development Goal (United Nations, 2015, S. xi). "While much of the world has made rapid progress in reducing poverty in the past 60 years, areas characterized by repeated cycles of political and criminal violence are being left far behind" (The World Bank, 2011, p. 1).

The need to consider carefully how foreign aid, NGOs and international organisations can consolidate their efforts in improving this situation by means of state-building is, therefore, more relevant than ever. This essay attempts to provide a perspective on the challenges in these endeavours, first outlining what goals should be achieved, then considering the spectrum of daunting challenges that lie in wait and, in conclusion, evaluating which challenges are of greatest importance and most difficult to address.

Definitions of Robust and Fragile State-Systems

As in the analysis of any question of import it is essential first to be clear on what aims are to be achieved and define what end-state it *is* that should be reached. In this case we must begin to define where the state-building itself should lead.

It is implicit that to reduce state fragility the "built state" will comply with recognised norms of security, law and order and include significant capacity in the area of public administration, legitimised as Edwards describes as "[...] the 'nation-state' as espoused by Max Weber [...] a human community that claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of force within a given territory monopoly on the legitimate use of force" (Edwards, 2010, p. 969). Moreover, the existence of basic social services, infrastructure as well as a growing endogenous industrial capacity – quite possibly, or even preferably with exogenous investment – to secure the sustainability of any successes which may be achieved in the process. The reestablishment or even initiation for the first time of higher degrees of equality (access to education, human rights and gender-equality) are "a presumed contribution to more sustainable peace and stability. " (Grävingholt, Leininger, von Haldenwang , & German Development Institute, 2012, p. 7).

Conversely, it is helpful to more precisely define what we understand as a failed or fragile state. An empirical approach to the evaluation of fragile states (in fact all recognised states are evaluated and can be compared with each other) is the Fragile States Index http://fundforpeace.org/fsi which is updated annually by The Fund For Peace (Fund for Peace, 2017). The index evaluates the following twelve factors:

- Three cohesion indicators
    - Security apparatus
    - Factionalized elites
    - Group grievances
- Three economic indicators
    - Economic decline and poverty
    - Uneven development
    - Human flight and brain drain
- Political indicators
    - State legitimacy
    - Public services
    - Human rights and rule of law
- Two social indicators
    - Demographic pressures
    - Refugees and internally displaced persons (IDPs), which may be influx or outflow
- A cross-cutting indicator: external intervention (political, security and economic)

These factors are combined (although feasible for specialized application of the metrics, no weighting of the indicators is applied) to allow comparison of state fragility between states but also to visualize the year-on-year progress (positive or negative) of state-building measures.

It is worth noting that even potentially mature and stable states are continually in a state of mutation. Preconceptions about what constitutes an "ideal state" decry " [...] the challenges of developing an effective state system through time, especially one that is well articulated with 'society' ". Clements notes further that " 'good enough' states in terms of capacity, effectiveness and legitimacy often do not receive external approval, because they do not conform to the Western model in all or most respects" (Clements , 2009, p. 2). As such, it is of paramount importance to concentrate on the *absolutely essential* goals when identifying the greatest challenges facing international state-building. The construction of a democratic system or membership of stable multi-national organisations (EU, NATO) etc. for instance, may be a *sufficient*, but not necessarily *required* goals for national stability.

Approaches to State Building

There are several commonly recognised approaches to state-building, four of which will be briefly outlined here, with reference to the relevant literature.

OECD Frameworks

The OECD has derived over the years, a framework that constitutes a basis for state-building founded on the following three principles:

- State-building needs to be understood in the context of state-society relations; the evolution of a state's relationship with society is at the heart of state-building.
- State-building is a deeply political process, and understanding the context – especially what is perceived as legitimate in a specific context – is crucial if international support is to be useful.
- State-building is first and foremost an endogenous process; there are therefore limits as to what the international community can and should do (OECD, 2011, p. 15)

The survey paper from Grävingholt et al (Grävingholt, Leininger, von Haldenwang , & German Development Institute, 2012, p. 36) supposes these principles to be "conventional wisdom" in the field of international state-building, whilst questioning their validity in the light of empirical evidence and preferring to extend the OECD principles (incidentally employing other, earlier OECD research) thus (A) interventions must be extremely well-adapted to the respective political and social context, (B) interventions must address the broader state-society relations rather than focusing on the state alone, (C) interventions must deal with the state in its security, legitimacy and capacity dimensions, (D) interventions must cover all sectors of donor activity in a coordinated way and finally (E) interventions must reflect the recognition that state-building is first and foremost an endogenous process with clear limits as to what external support can achieve. (Grävingholt, Leininger, von Haldenwang , & German Development Institute, 2012, p. 37)

Overall the validity of these 5 principles is – taking account of the 40 analysed studies – corroborated, but with a handful of conflictive issues and innovative approaches, which Grävingholt et al identified.

The Weberian system

No survey of state-building would be complete without mention of the work of Max Weber. The Weberian system highlights the importance of legitimacy of authority, and distinguishes three key types of legitimation:

- Rational grounds – resting on a belief in the 'legality' of patterns of normative rules and the right of those elevated to authority under such rules to issue commands (legal authority).
- Traditional grounds – resting on an established belief in the sanctity of immemorial traditions and the legitimacy of the status of those exercising authority under them (traditional authority)
- Charismatic grounds – resting on devotion to the specific and exceptional sanctity, heroism or exemplary character of an individual person, and of the normative patterns or order revealed or ordained by him (charismatic authority) (Clements , 2009, pp. 2-3)

Discussion in this field continues to be dominated by Weber's theories on legitimacy, whilst he also " [...] firmly linked the question of legitimacy to specific modes of production, particular types of decision-making and law-making processes and wider theories of social change. " (Clements , 2009, pp. 2-3).

The Case of Bougainville

The altogether positive case of the island of Bougainville in the South Pacific demonstrates, however, an alternative to the Weberian system – a conflict resolution employing by contrast – legal pluralism, a weak justice system, custom as a priority, police cooperating together with tribal chiefs without an acceptance of their legitimacy.

The conventional Western perceptions are, according to Boege, too narrowly focused on state-induced order: "State-building on Bougainville does not copy the Weberian model of the state […] but pursues positive mutual accommodation with introduced Western institutions and indigenous local institutions." (Boege, 2009, pp. 36-37). The solutions being grounded in the authentic local societies was ultimately the key to this success story.

Consociationalism

Another widely applied – yet by academics often criticised – practice in state-building is consociational institutional design. Consociationalism aims to achieve the twin goals of peace and democracy in divided post-conflict societies and, according to Wolff, holds "[...] significant promise for building democratic states after conflict in divided societies" (Wolff, 2011, p. 3). Certainly there are four aspects which contribute primarily to consociational institutional design, these being: "a grand coalition government (between parties from different segments of society), segmental autonomy (in the cultural sector), proportionality (in the voting system and in public sector employment), and minority veto" (Wolff, 2011, p. 8). .

Challenges

From the commonly applied approaches to state building and orienting ourselves on the targets of a successfully built state we can derive a spectrum of challenges which are faced in a state-building scenario.

Establishing security for the citizens of the fragile country, but equally providing a secure environment for external organisations helping to facilitate the state-building measures is a primary concern. This is eminently important, but not everything, as Wolff terms it: "Security first but by no means 'security only'" (Wolff, 2011, p. 5). This demands initially, and quite obviously, ending the war.

Another chronologically early challenge is in securing funds. Grävingholt et al have identified five key learnings in securing foreign aid at the various stages of state-building:

- Prioritisation and sequencing
- Donor coordination, interdepartmental cooperation and aid modalities
- Political settlements
- Incentives and coercion
- Political and social context-sensitivity of interventions

There needs to be (and there is often a lack of) an agreed upon "convincing theory of change", the benefits of the aid may not outweigh the sometimes considerable costs, the need for an awareness of " [...]the political foundations upon which state-building occurs" have been identified in successful projects as providing "strong evidence concerning the importance of this factor for the success of state-building support". Although a massive debate on conditions for incentives is raging, the research provides little evidence of "donor attempts to set incentives or put pressure on relevant actors" and finally "many studies do not even pay lip service to domestic ownership, let alone evaluate interventions" from the perspective of their political and social environment (Grävingholt, Leininger, von Haldenwang , & German Development Institute, 2012, p. iv)

Having garnered support for a cause it is necessary to ensure that it reaches those who need it, which in Afghanistan is barely the case: "Afghanistan receives a low proportion of aid per capita [...] had spent only 23% of what it had been granted for the development budget since 2001 [...] for every $100 spent only $20 actually

reaches Afghan recipients [...] and provide few jobs for Afghan workers" (Bennett , Alexander, Saltmarshe, Phillipson, & Marsden, 2009, p. xiii)

An overdependence on external aid is however unsustainable, "The fact that the Afghan state relies almost entirely on external capital and the provision of military support undermines its domestic legitimacy" (Bennett , Alexander, Saltmarshe, Phillipson, & Marsden, 2009, p. 7).

The promotion of civil society has been identified as a key challenge, with some notable successes: "In cities like Tetovo (Macedonia), Beirut and Tripoli, ethno-political conflicts divide shared [...] peacebuilding in such contexts must take into account the geopolitics of identity and life experience – aiming to have communities live side-by-side without violence, encouraging community-based processes to recreate shared space (e.g., through culture or sports)" (Milliken, 2013, p. 4).

Bourgainville

Environmental and economic challenges were at the centre of the large-scale conflict in Bourgainville. For the central government, the Panguna mining project was the greatest source of income and formed the foundation of the Papua New Guinea economy (cp. Boege, 2009, p. 29). Through the mining industry the communities lost their land, which also led to fractures in social structures. Large streams of workers from the outside also threatened the indigenous cultures.

The profits and costs were perceived by the Bourgainville residents to be extremely divided, the money going to managers and workers from outside and the local communities being left with environmental problems. (cp. Boege, 2009, p. 30). "Violent conflict started when young members of the local clans brought the mine to a standstill by acts of sabotage in late 1988" (Boege, 2009, p. 30) and, as the Papua New Guinea government disregarded the concerns and the demands of the local communities, this triggered the ten-year most violent conflict in the South Pacific since the Second World War. Fighting was not only between the government and the people but also between the people themselves "traditional conflicts between groups and clans were also fought under the umbrella of the 'great' war of secession" (Boege, 2009, p. 31). The war not only had an environmental and economic impact but also the general and social structures. "civilians, who were subject to massive atrocities, massacres, torture [...] and other gross human rights violations [...] also suffered from the collapse of basic services such as health and education and the breakdown of infrastructure" (Boege, 2009, p. 31).

Iraq

The relationship between the Bush administration and the contacts in the Iraqi exiled community was an attempt at choosing Chalabi and other opposing politicians as the new leadership in Iraq. The various American governmental institutions of White House, Pentagon and State Department were not in agreement with each other on which of the elites should be Iraqi leader (cp. Manning, 2006, p. 728). By 2003 it was clear to the US, that a simple transition of power would not work. A new strategy was formed in creating local, provincial and national representative governing structures such as the national Iraqi Governing Council. The exiles and Chalabi were deemed unfit to represent the diverse Iraqi society and were dispatched. The replacements were local bodies of government which were chosen according to a formula of being representative of society, but "While this satisfied the CPA that a recipe had been found for representing Iraqi diversity, the councils often lacked legitimacy, resources, and formal authority" (Manning, 2006, p. 729).

Some degree of uniformity and legitimacy was formed by governing seats being allowed to be held by women and tribal and religious leaders. This being not only at a local but also a national level. By subjecting their own concepts and ideologies of which political actors best fit the governing roles, foreign authorities reduced the jurisdiction of the people within the political system (cp. Manning, 2006, p. 733). The roles of choosing the government and political actors by running for office were monopolized by foreign governments as described by Manning: "international state-builders bolstered their own authority to anoint and depose elites" (Manning, 2006, p. 731).

Afghanistan

The Country Programme Evaluation report on Afghanistan provides some very real analysis on state-building in the wake of the decades long conflicts in that most complicated country. Some of the most apparent difficulties – other than the sheer length and continuity of the conflicts there – are addressed in the report: " [...] originating in a

foreign military intervention, the state-building effort in post-Taliban Afghanistan became perceived by many Afghans as tied to the power of foreign troops and capital [...] and lent credence to the propaganda of the insurgency." (Bennett , Alexander, Saltmarshe, Phillipson, & Marsden, 2009, p. 15).

The hope of a functioning economy is put chillingly into perspective: "Afghanistan is now the largest producer in the world of illicit opium; it dominates the Afghan economy comprising almost half of GDP", as are the measures for political restructuring: "In effect, though, they produced a change of regime through a military strategy that handed power to faction leaders" (Bennett , Alexander, Saltmarshe, Phillipson, & Marsden, 2009, p. 7).

Conclusions

What are, then, the ***greatest*** challenges to state-building?

There is no equivocation about the fact that, first and foremost, security for all actors involved has to be restored. The challenges are immense, not the least of which is reaching a correct evaluation of the situation, the combatants who are involved, the historical and current motives for their actions and the existence of additional external pressures or forces which need to be addressed. Hand in hand with security goes the reform of the judicial system and policing. The daunting goal being to establish a self-policing society.

When a semblance of security has been reached, the task of setting up a workable, new political order (perhaps with a new or modified constitution) should be advanced. Once again self-government is the goal, which may – according to the theories of consociational institutional design, include (grand) coalitions, cultural autonomy and equality/proportionality, but with a mechanism for veto for minorities.

For any level of sustainability to be achieved, a kick-start to the economy is required, with the mid-term aim being to link this with the rebuild of essential infrastructure, not least of which has to be the provision of clean water (a by-product of which is improved health and elimination of any epidemics such as cholera).

National reconciliation has to be – sooner or later – redressed by revisiting and getting to grips with past abuses and atrocities. This may involve the International Criminal Court, local courts or, as in South Africa, a truth and reconciliation commission, whilst in Rwanda, the Gacaca community court system was successfully introduced, ensuring accountability. Any culture of impunity must be eliminated.

Overall, institutional legitimacy is still the key to stability. When state institutions do not adequately protect citizens, guard against corruption, or provide access to justice; when markets do not provide job opportunities; or when communities have lost social cohesion—the likelihood of violent conflict increases. At the earliest stages, countries often need to restore public confidence in basic collective action even before rudimentary institutions can be transformed. (The World Bank, 2011, pp. xi - xii)

As a counter-check it is still worth periodically monitoring success using the Fragile States Index and considering the UN MDGs which, as we discovered in the introduction to this essay, are worthy challenges currently not being met by any low-income fragile or conflict-affected country.

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