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REBUILDING GOVERNANCE IN FAILED STATES AND POST-CONFLICT SOCIETIES: CORE CONCEPTS AND CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

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SUMMARY

This overview article looks at the emergence of failed and post-conflict states on the international relations and assistance agenda, and at the importance of governance in establishing peace, pursuing state reconstruction and preventing conflict. It introduces the topic of the special issue, how effective governance can be re-established following societal conflict or war. After a brief review of the terminology of failed states, post-conflict and governance, the article discusses governance reconstruction in terms of three dimensions: reconstituting legitimacy, re-establishing security and rebuilding effectiveness. The article summarises key points made by the contributors to the special issue, who look at donor governance reconstruction agendas, security-sector governance and subnational governance. Several common themes emerge and are elaborated upon: similarities between development and post-conflict assistance; linkages among governance's legitimacy, effectiveness and security dimensions; rebuilding versus creating governance systems; local versus national governance reconstruction; formal versus informal governance. The article concludes with a call for further work to elaborate frameworks that can incorporate the particulars of individual countries in addressing legitimacy, security and effectiveness. Copyright © 2005 John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.

INTRODUCTION

Emerging with increased intensity since the 1990s, peace-building and reconstruction of post-conflict and war-torn societies have become central to today's international relations and assistance agendas. Practically all bilateral and multilateral international development agencies have established units to address post-conflict transitions and socioeconomic rehabilitation, as complements to their long-standing humanitarian and emergency response programmes. A well recognised contributor to the outbreak of conflict and war is state failure, which has garnered more attention in the wake of the 'war on terrorism' as holding implications not simply for those citizens who live in failing and failed states, but for the rest of the world as well. Failing and failed states can offer havens for terrorists to conduct operations that endanger the lives of citizens residing far from those countries. Failed states have been referred to as a 'sleeping giant' threat that requires concerted attention (CGD, 2004). Thus, the rationales for international intervention have expanded beyond humanitarian and development objectives to encompass national and global security (see Rice, 2003; Koppell and Sharma, 2003).

The role of state failure as cause and consequence of conflict and civil war has highlighted the importance of governance in establishing peace, pursuing state reconstruction and avoiding conflict in the first place. While practitioners and scholars have generated substantial knowledge and experience-based lessons for building governance in countries with functioning governments and relative stability, the state of knowledge and practice regarding the establishment and/or reconstitution of effective governance in post-conflict and war-torn societies is still in its infancy. The challenges endemic to all efforts at institutional design and institution-building are particularly salient in failed and failing states, where there is an imperative to construct new institutions or reconstruct weakened or collapsed ones and a sense of urgency to do so quickly.

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This special issue seeks to contribute to filling this knowledge and practice gap. It addresses the broad question of how effective governance can be re-established in the wake of serious societal conflict or war. Each article explores an aspect of this question: facilitative or constraining environmental factors, the implications of conflicting reconstruction policy and programme agendas, the roles of the various actors involved and potentially promising strategies and approaches. Comprehensive treatment of these issues would require extensive research and investigation, far beyond the contributions in this journal issue. The collection offers incremental additions to the continuing exploration and debate.

This overview article introduces the symposium articles, highlighting their attention to several key factors and efforts to rebuild governance and discusses findings with respect to institution-building strategies and programmes in post-conflict/war-torn societies. The article concludes by identifying some common themes, policy implications and thoughts on a future research agenda.

CLARIFYING CONCEPTS

Before turning to the contents of this volume, a few words about key concepts are in order. The categories used to characterise the analytic and operational terrain of interest describe broadly recognisable phenomena to both scholars and practitioners. However, the terminology applied to failed states, conflict and post-conflict and governance is often imprecise. In general, a failed state is characterised by: (a) breakdown of law and order where state institutions lose their monopoly on the legitimate use of force and are unable to protect their citizens, or those institutions are used to oppress and terrorise citizens; (b) weak or disintegrated capacity to respond to citizens' needs and desires, provide basic public services, assure citizens' welfare or support normal economic activity; (c) at the international level, lack of a credible entity that represents the state beyond its borders (see Thurer, 1999; Milliken and Krause, 2002; Rotberg, 2002).[1]

Clearly, a key issue is the degree to which a given state exhibits these characteristics. The label, failed state, has been employed to describe extreme cases of collapse, such as Somalia or Liberia, where civil and social authority have disintegrated and a Hobbesian anarchic clash of all against all prevails. Many more countries, though, confront less drastic situations and vary in the extent to which they have failed or risk failing to provide for the welfare of their citizens, supply basic security or facilitate equitable economic growth.[2] At this less extreme, opposite end of the spectrum, state failure becomes nearly indistinguishable from the status of many, if not most, poor countries, which suffer from institutional weaknesses and capacity gaps. Various analyses posit more discriminating terminology, allowing for finer-grained categorisation. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), for example, has sought to clarify distinctions among failed, failing, fragile and recovering states through development of a performance-based typology.[3]

Similarly, conflict and post-conflict (i.e. peace) are relative terms as well, subject to gradations and qualifiers. Post-conflict rarely means that violence and strife have ceased at a given moment in all corners of a country's territory. In practice, most post-conflict reconstruction efforts take place in situations where conflict has subsided to a greater or lesser degree, but is ongoing or recurring in some parts of the country. As Doyle and Sambanis observe, 'no peace is perfect. Public violence . . . never gets completely eliminated. . . . We should thus consider peace to be a spectrum ranging from insecure to secure' (1999, p. 1). The peace-building literature has evolved a more nuanced perspective on conflict, moving away from a linear conception, similar to the recognition of the artificiality of the relief-to-development continuum (see de Zeeuw, 2001). Greater understanding of conflict dynamics has led in turn to intervention designs that recognise this complexity. For example, Leatherman *et al.* (1999, p. 8) argue that conflict interventions need 'a rehabilitative dimension oriented to the past, a resolutive dimension oriented to the present, and a preventive dimension oriented to both the present and future'.

[1]For an informative review of the literature that focuses on the dynamics of state failure, see Carment (2003). See also the State Failure Task Force at <http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/>.
[2]For example, the World Bank uses the term, low income countries under stress (LICUS), to describe this situation.
[3]See <www.iris.umd.edu/PPC_IDEAS/Revolutionizing_Aid/typology.asp>.

Finally, the concept of governance needs some clarification. Governance has been subject to multiple definitions and interpretations. Some definitions concentrate on technical government functions and how they are administered. For example, the World Bank (2000) views governance as economic policy-making and implementation, service delivery and accountable use of public resources and of regulatory power. Other definitions address how government connects with other sectors and with citizens. For example, USAID considers governance to 'pertain to the ability of government to develop an efficient, effective, and accountable public management process that is open to citizen participation and that strengthens rather than weakens a democratic system of government'.[4] DFID describes it as 'how institutions, rules and systems of the state—executive, legislature, judiciary, and military—operate at central and local level and how the state relates to individual citizens, civil society and the private sector' (2001, p. 11). UNDP (1997) sees governance as 'the exercise of economic, political and administrative authority to manage a country's affairs at all levels'. The latter definitions explicitly connect the political dimensions of governance to the more technocratic elements of macro-economic management and public administration operational capacity, and are reflected in how governance is addressed in failed states. These integrative definitions characterise how the contributors to this special issue treat governance.

REBUILDING GOVERNANCE

This rapid review of the concepts of failed states, conflict and peace and governance reveals that the analytic and operational terrain for rebuilding governance in failed, post-conflict states is multi-faceted and complex. The literature, both academic and applied, on governance is huge, and that dealing with failed states and post-conflict is rapidly growing.[5] Developing frameworks, strategies and approaches is an ongoing enterprise, and one fraught with difficulties though progress has been made (see Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2002; Orr, 2004). To oversimplify somewhat, the design and implementation of governance reforms in post-conflict states target three areas: (1) reconstituting legitimacy, (2) re-establishing security and (3) rebuilding effectiveness.

Reconstituting legitimacy

Legitimacy refers to acceptance of a governing regime as correct, appropriate and/or right. Without a minimum degree of legitimacy, states have difficulty functioning; and loss of legitimacy in the eyes of some segment of the population is an important contributor to state failure. Reconstituting legitimacy in post-conflict states involves expanding participation and inclusiveness, reducing inequities, creating accountability, combating corruption and introducing contestability (elections). Delivering services, which links to the effectiveness dimension is also important for establishing legitimacy; it demonstrates government willingness and capacity to respond to citizens' needs and demands. Further, this category includes constitutional reform, re-establishment of the rule of law and institutional design (e.g. checks and balances, allocation of functions and authorities across branches and levels of government), as well as civil society development.

Democracy is widely held to be the governance system with the strongest form of legitimacy around the world (see UNDP, 2002). Yet in numerous countries the path to democratisation has proven tortuous; traditional and informal sources of power and authority vie for legitimacy, sometimes constituting an alternate 'state' within a state (e.g. regional warlords in Afghanistan), or sometimes seeking legitimisation through assumption of the external trappings of democracy (e.g. various former Soviet Union states in Central Asia). Experience in state reconstruction has shown that external intervention to create stable democratic societies out of the ashes of intra-state conflagration is extraordinarily difficult (see Bermeo, 2003).[6]

Points of debate on reconstituting legitimacy in failed and post-conflict states are many. Fundamentally, some question whether democracy is amenable to intentional design by outsiders, no matter how well-meaning (Blaug,

[4]From <www.usaid.gov/our_work/democracy_and_governance/technical_areas/dg_office/gov.html>.
[5]It is beyond the scope of this introduction to delve in-depth into this literature. Useful websites that provide a multitude of sources include <www.grc-exchange.org/g_themes/index.html> and <www1.worldbank.org/publicsector/indicators.htm>.
[6]The democracy 'triumphalism' of the 1990s has given way to more sober reflections on the ease or inevitability of democratic transition (see Carothers, 2002).

2002; Bastian and Luckham, 2003). Others question the expectations that countries emerging from conflict will be able to take on the enormous number and complexity of tasks inherent in launching a democratic transition (Ottaway, 2002). There is some skepticism that a relatively standardised model of post-conflict democratic transition can be successfully grafted onto societies with histories and traditions that may be inhospitable to such transfers (e.g. Call and Cook, 2003).

Re-establishing security

Clearly, a high priority activity in post-conflict and war-torn societies is coping with the lack of security. For dealing with ex-combatants, this involves the classic trio of disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration. DDR connects to rebuilding effectiveness in that without capacity to restart the economy and generate employment opportunities, reintegration will suffer, raising the possibility of banditry and re-emergence of conflict. Re-establishing security also means peacekeeping operations, often coupled with humanitarian and emergency relief, since many post-war countries have large numbers of internally displaced persons, wrecked infrastructure and disrupted economic activity. Security is a necessary precursor to stabilisation and progress towards a return to something approaching 'normal' economic and political activity.

On the governance side, the status, capacity and actions of security forces are critical (see UNDP, 2002: Chapter 4). Re-establishing security requires dealing with the police, military and paramilitary units and private militias through a mix of rebuilding, professionalising, reforming and dissolving. In the medium and long-term, this governance area links closely to reconstituting legitimacy. For most post-conflict societies, civilian oversight of security forces is weak or non-existent. In addition, civil rights, judicial systems and the operation of the courts need attention. Unaccountable, corrupt and/or subversive security forces are major barriers to state legitimacy, impede the restoration of basic services and often contribute to reigniting conflict (see Koppell and Sharma, 2003).

Rebuilding effectiveness

Conflict and wars destroy basic infrastructure, disrupt the delivery of core services (e.g. health, education, electricity, water, sanitation) and impede the day-to-day routines associated with making a living. In the worst-case scenarios, they lead to widespread suffering, massive population dislocation, humanitarian crises and epidemics, which overwhelm the already inadequate effectiveness of failed-state governments. The inability of failed and post-conflict states to provide fundamental public goods and services has impacts on both the immediate prospects for tending to citizens' basic needs and restarting economic activity, and long-term prospects for assuring welfare, reducing poverty, and facilitating socio-economic growth. Restoring (or in some cases creating) service delivery capacity and initiating economic recovery are central to governance reconstruction agendas (see, e.g. UNDP, 2000).

Rebuilding effectiveness has to do, first and foremost, with the functions and capacity of the public sector. Good governance in this area means, for example, adequate and functioning municipal infrastructure, widely available health care and schooling, provision of roads and transportation networks and attention to social safety nets. Since in most countries, effective basic services depend on more than government, the functions and capacity of the private sector and civil society are also critical.

Beyond service provision, effective economic governance is included here. Good practices involve sound macroeconomic and fiscal policymaking, efficient budget management, promotion of equitably distributed wealth-creating investment opportunities, and an adequate regulatory framework (see World Bank, 2000). Failing and failed states generally exhibit the opposite: policies that favour powerful elites, few budget controls and rampant corruption, cronyism and patronage arrangements that limit opportunity and siphon off public assets for private gain, and usually a combination of punitive use of existing regulations and exemptions to benefit the favoured few.

Service-delivery and economic-development effectiveness relates to legitimacy in that citizens tend to withdraw support from governments that cannot or will not provide basic services and some level of economic opportunity. Particularly when coupled with ethnic tension, weak states' inability/unwillingness to do so can be an important contributing factor to state failure and the eruption of renewed conflict. This area of governance also connects to

security in that if the youth are in school, job opportunities are available and families have hope that their well-being will improve, citizens (including demobilised combatants) are less likely to engage in crime or be recruited into insurgency.

Debates regarding rebuilding effectiveness in post-conflict states concern starting points, sequencing and comprehensiveness; all these issues are interconnected. Where to start in helping new and weak post-conflict governments to get service delivery going, as well as which tasks should follow one another or be taken on simultaneously are rarely clear choices. Often, donors and humanitarian NGOs take the lead in providing essential services, and responding to the immediate needs of the population trumps moving towards actions that will build government capacity to assume lead responsibility (Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff, 2002). Yet, quick-fix approaches that ignore existing local capacity and/or put off attention to institution-building are accused of creating dependency, reducing the chances for sustainability and squandering opportunities for nascent governments to establish their legitimacy through providing services to citizens. Another starting-point/sequencing issue is the choice between rebuilding/creating central-level institutions or focussing on those at subnational/local levels (see, e.g. Romeo, 2002).

Regarding comprehensiveness, the debate centres around the ambitiousness and appropriateness of donor models and plans for reconstructing effectiveness in weak and post-conflict states. In essence, the question here is, what constitutes 'good enough' governance?[7] In many cases, the governance reform agenda advocated by the international donor community constitutes an overwhelming smorgasbord of changes deemed necessary to assure governance effectiveness (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith, 2005).

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE

The articles in this issue cover a broad range of geographical areas (Central and East Asia, the Middle East and Africa) and countries (Afghanistan, Cambodia, Iraq and Sierra Leone), actors (donors, security actors and local governments and councils) and topics (governance, democratisation, decentralisation and service delivery). Much attention has been given in research and practice to national reconciliation processes and the construction of a functional and representative national government. A distinctive feature of this collection is its emphasis on the role of subnational governance in post-conflict reconstruction, a theme of several of the contributions.

Donor agendas

Dennis Rondinelli and John Montgomery review 50 years of reconstruction interventions and offer eight general guidelines, recognising the impediments to acting on them. The lessons underscore the importance of: (1) ensuring security as the foundation for rebuilding governance and restarting economic growth; (2) transparency in donor goals, which can reduce political gamesmanship and increase potential for programmatic coherence; (3) strong operational coordination mechanisms; (4) rapid state capacity-building for effective performance (both for immediate service delivery and security and for longer-term public goods and services that support socio-economic growth); (5) introducing shared and country-led decision-making.

Three additional lessons have to do with sequencing and time-frames for reconstruction. First, exclusive or premature concentration on democracy and elections can lead to destabilisation and renewal of conflict. Second, restarting economic growth requires putting in place the basics of a market economy, but this needs to be done carefully, not as an ideological imperative. Finally, governance reconstruction over the long-term needs to assure attention to equity, social divisions and poverty reduction so as to minimise the odds of societal divisiveness and a return to conflict. Rondinelli and Montgomery recommend the creation of an integrated policy and programmatic response capability on the part of donor countries.[8]

[7]Grindle (2004) addresses this question in the context of poor countries and poverty reduction, not specific to post-conflict, but much of the discussion is equally relevant to the extreme case.

[8]Some countries have created or are moving to develop such a capability. For example, in the UK in 2003, the Prime Minister's Strategy Unit created a 'Countries at Risk of Instability Team' to develop a coordinated failed states response strategy for the government. The US government recently established within the State Department the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization to facilitate cross-agency early warning, response planning and joint intervention.

Security sector governance

The role of security forces figures prominently in the cases in the special issue (and other cases) both as a contributor to state failure and escalation to armed conflict, and a critical actor in state reconstruction. One of the defining features of a viable state is a monopoly on coercion and the exercise of force; the state is the repository of legitimate coercive power. Nicole Ball notes that post-conflict intervention often has focussed on strengthening the operational capacity and effectiveness of security forces, largely ignoring or downplaying issues of civilian oversight and accountability. From a governance perspective, minimising or postponing these questions until later places the success of post-conflict reconstruction at risk.

Ball flags the difficulties involved in undertaking reform in the context of the enormous pressures in failed states to move quickly on numerous fronts with limited resources in situations where institutional capacity is destroyed, decayed, or needs to be built from scratch. Security-sector reform, although often treated as a problem of technical effectiveness, is highly political, frequently in ways that may not be immediately obvious. For example, powerful actors may ostensibly pursue reforms as stipulated in peace accords or agreed to with peacekeepers and donors, all the while jockeying behind the scene to gain personal advantage.

Ball offers five guidelines that encapsulate emerging lessons from security-sector reform experience. These include: (1) develop local ownership; (2) avoid naiveté about the politics of reform; (3) link target-setting to local capacity; (4) increase understanding of the local institutional and cultural context; and (5) plan reforms within a comprehensive, sector-wide framework that addresses regional as well as national issues.

Subnational governance issues

Sarah Lister and Andrew Wilder examine the workings of local governance in Afghanistan. Their research focusses on the competition and interpenetration between formal and informal governance systems. They contrast the limited reach and power of the *de jure* state, based in Kabul and supported by the international community, with that of the *de facto* state, where at the subnational level, regional warlords and local commanders fulfil governance functions. Based on field visits and interview data, they document the various mechanisms by which these subnational-level actors exercise power and authority. Besides the obvious power that emanates from private armies and weaponry, local commanders exert influence and control over government appointments, including security positions. Civil servants owe their jobs and allegiance to warlords rather than the formal bureaucracies that they nominally serve. This practice has limited the influence of the centre on subnational levels of administration, constrained hiring based on technical qualifications and undermined the perceived legitimacy of the *de jure* government.

Administrative capacity and resource gaps at the centre, typical of those in many post-conflict states in the process of rebuilding, exacerbate problems of both legitimacy and effectiveness. Low salaries, paid late, encourage civil servants to engage in corrupt practices, and/or seek resources from warlords. Inadequate operating budgets hamper service delivery agencies of the formal state in meeting citizens' needs, which leads citizens to turn to the warlords for help, further discrediting the state in their eyes. The authors note that donor investments in the technical effectiveness of public administration will not yield their intended governance outcomes without an overarching political strategy that confronts the realities of the subnational *de facto* state as an integral element in rebuilding *de jure* governance in Afghanistan.

Paul Jackson, writing about Sierra Leone, analyses decentralisation reform as a key element in re-establishing governance after 12 years of civil war and destruction. The new Local Government Act of 2004 provides for locally elected councils, local revenue and expenditure authority and autonomous local decision-making. The Act integrates new formal democratic local governance with the traditional chiefdom system, allocating to traditional chiefs some local decision-making and law enforcement roles, but limiting their control over local resources (land and mining rights).

While the new Act is intended to increase local representation and accountability, it risks compromise due to the actions of elites, and to the shortage of qualified staff and resources at the local level. Chiefs have mobilised to minimise the threats to their power posed by the Act; they influenced the choice of candidates for council elections and continue to maintain control over who may have access to chiefdom land, decide who is or is not a local

resident, collect the head tax and preside over traditional courts. They are also intimately involved in the diamond trade, both licit and illicit. Similar to the Afghanistan case, the effort to introduce decentralised governance to Sierra Leone reveals the complex interconnections between formal and informal, modern and traditional and *de facto* and *de jure* governance.

Derick Brinkerhoff and James Mayfield examine post-war reconstruction in Iraq to reform local government, increase decentralisation and create democratic local institutions. USAID's Local Governance Project (LGP) combined establishment of local councils at various subnational levels, capacity-building for local service delivery, support to civil society organisations, policy analysis for decentralisation and democracy training and outreach. The authors use the conceptual lens of social capital to explore the impact of LGP's activities, arguing that viable governance in Iraq will, among other changes, require building vertical social capital, which connects citizens to government, and creating bridging social capital, that is, links across different social, religious, and ethnic groups.

Their findings indicate that LGP contributed to social capital formation through increased communication in a variety of ways: workshops to introduce new concepts about government-citizen interaction, facilitation of networks across social and ethnic boundaries, formation of municipal councils and support to professional associations and other civil society organisations. Councils and civil society organisations also have increased possibilities for empowerment. Council members have interacted with local government officials to present citizen needs and demands, and have in some municipalities served an oversight function. Councils have served a leadership incubator function as well.

At present many of the conditions necessary to support governance changes are nonexistent. The deteriorated security situation is a major barrier, but another constraint is the enduring strength of old reservoirs of social and political power that push for centralisation, top-down decision-making and rent-seeking. Iraq is beset with post-conflict entrepreneurs and spoilers, and the emergence of a new socio-political equilibrium appears likely to be preceded by an extended period of instability and conflict.

Peter Blunt and Mark Turner consider decentralisation reform in post-conflict Cambodia, and explore the reasons behind the relative lack of autonomous subnational decision-making among commune councils, despite donor support. Since the mid 1990s, donor reconstruction programmes have sought to increase popular participation and promote increased decentralisation with limited success. The authors demonstrate that Cambodia's cultural context is at odds with the attitudes and values that support decentralisation. Further, existing administrative systems and decision-making are highly centralised, and actors at the centre are reluctant to delegate to the provincial level or below.

In this context, commune councils function more as the executors of higher-level decisions than as autonomous local bodies. Councillors operate as traditional elders rather than as representatives of local constituencies. Councils' major local functions include needs identification for development planning (led by higher-level agencies) and some informal dispute resolution; they have little or no financial autonomy. While the limited decentralisation pursued has contributed to the maintenance of peace and stability, its contribution to effective, devolved governance has been negligible despite the intent of the donors.

CROSS-CUTTING THEMES

The articles in this special issue touch upon several common themes. These include: similarities between development and post-conflict assistance; linkages among governance's legitimacy, effectiveness and security dimensions; rebuilding versus creating governance systems; local versus national governance reconstruction; and formal versus informal governance.

Similarities between development and post-conflict assistance

The country cases reveal that post-conflict governance reconstruction faces many of the same issues that face development assistance more generally, albeit under more trying and difficult circumstances. Similar challenges include: building on what exists and tapping in-country expertise and commitment; accurately assessing the social, political and institutional landscape; adjusting donor strategies and timetables to fit local circumstances;

recognising the impact of external assistance on local incentives; and so on.[9] Many of the recommendations for post-conflict governance reconstruction that Rondinelli and Montgomery present could equally be applied to non-conflict situations as well. Similarly, the Iraq LGP lessons regarding building constituencies, social capital formation and flexible interventions and timetables hold implications for governance promotion in other contexts (Brinkerhoff and Mayfield).

These similarities suggest that post-conflict governance reconstruction could benefit from taking more advantage of development tools and approaches, such as participatory appraisals, political mapping, sustainability planning, strategic policy management and community empowerment. In practice, these tools and approaches are sometimes ignored, due to factors such as, among others, a lack of knowledge on the part of some actors (e.g. the military) and the accelerated dynamics of post-conflict situations where the pressure for results and the potential for rapid reversals of fortune and vicious circles are high.[10] To be sure, there are times when the exigencies of immediate response to post-conflict emergency needs take precedence, but often international actors remain in the 'driver's seat' pushing preplanned reconstruction packages far beyond what is optimal for supporting the mitigation of conflict and a transition to country-led governance and local ownership. Just as with development assistance in non-conflict settings, what donors and their international partners do, with whom, and how, matters importantly in post-conflict societies.

Linkages among governance's legitimacy, effectiveness and security dimensions

All the contributions to the special issue highlight, in one way or another, the connections among these governance dimensions. For example, Ball's article brings out clearly the dangers of treating security sector reform as simply a question of professionalism and effectiveness. Without attention to oversight bodies, accountability and human rights—all elements of the legitimacy dimension of governance—security forces can contribute to reigniting conflict and instability. Conversely, the Iraq case reveals that without effective security, efforts to restore basic services and build legitimate governance are seriously hampered (Brinkerhoff and Mayfield). Legitimacy of the new government in Afghanistan is threatened by its inability to positively affect citizens in the provinces through service provision, leading them to turn to warlords to meet their needs (Lister and Wilder). Jackson's analysis reveals how the design of decentralisation in Sierra Leone has sought to increase effectiveness by relying on a traditional institution (the chiefdom), which puts legitimacy of the new governance system at risk, since chiefs carry some significant negative 'baggage' in the view of important segments of the populations. Blunt and Turner document a similar dynamic in Cambodia, where the context challenges the legitimacy of bottom-up, participatory processes; such behaviours find little cultural grounding beyond a surface acceptance within the narrow confines of donor-assisted initiatives. In several of the cases, the legitimacy and effectiveness linkages in governance reforms, and the tensions and trade-offs between them, emerge clearly in focussing on formal versus informal governance, discussed below.

In terms of post-conflict governance reconstruction efforts, a number of factors have contributed to a lack of sufficient attention to the linkages among these three dimensions. A primary one is that the institutional missions of the major actors in post-conflict intervention emphasise one of the dimensions to the relative exclusion of the others. The military tends to take responsibility for the security sector; legitimacy is the key focus of diplomatic actors (e.g. the US State Department, the UN Security Council); and effectiveness falls to the development agencies (e.g. UNDP, USAID, DFID) and their partners (NGOs, private firms). In post-war Iraq, for example, the separation of responsibility for reconstruction tasks was reinforced by a strong 'stay in your lane' message from the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA): operational actors were expected to concern themselves solely with their areas of responsibility, not the bigger picture, which CPA leadership saw as its unique prerogative.

Another factor that encourages the separation of the three dimensions of governance has been the templates that divide post-conflict reconstruction into linear stages. In the past, these have discouraged the kind of synoptic and

[9]See, for example, Barakat and Chard (2002) for more on this point.
[10]A staff member of the LGP in Iraq commented that, 'a day in the life of LGP is like a month in a standard development project' (personal communication).

comprehensive thinking that many have advocated as necessary for effective programming and intervention (see Ball, Rondinelli and Montgomery). Each of the country case articles reinforces this message as well.[11]

The 're' vs building and constructing

The question of what is being rebuilt in the governance system versus what new systems and institutions are created is an important consideration. Previously existing governance structures have been shown to be contributors to state fragility or failure in cases where they promote social, ethnic and/or economic exclusion and inequities; ignore human rights; abuse the rule of law; engage in corrupt practices, etc. Several authors point out the problems with the reconstruction notion. Jackson notes that the implicit model of decentralised local government that is prevalent in Sierra Leone is one of restoration of the pre-1972 system. He cautions that the imagery of 'rebuilding' governance connotes a return to a system that previously functioned effectively. In fact the local state-society relations of the country's past were a part of the reason for state failure and the war.

All of the country cases indicate that post-conflict governance reform, whether reconstruction or building something new, is a complex and long-term endeavour whose requirements are frequently at odds with attention spans and resource commitments of the international community. The Cambodia case reveals that the Khmer Rouge so effectively destroyed the previous social and institutional fabric that there was little left to reconstruct; rather, the task has been to build a new governance system (Blunt and Turner). The Afghanistan and Iraq cases address some of the challenges in building new governance institutions. Lister and Wilder discuss how difficult it has been to establish a foundation for a new, formal governance system, based on democratic principles, when the reach and impact of the nascent state are so limited and the donor resources committed to DDR and support to institution-building have been less than pledged.

Brinkerhoff and Mayfield recount the struggle to set up representative local bodies and to build subnational capacity for responsive service delivery in Iraq under conditions of ongoing and escalating conflict. Local councils and decentralisation risk rejection as illegitimate foreign imports despite some promising beginnings. Unrealistic post-war planning underestimated the effort and time required to stabilise Iraq and put the country on a path to better governance, not to mention the serious miscalculation of the receptiveness of the Iraqis to the American presence. What the US-led coalition initially conceived of as a relatively rapid reconstruction scenario has shifted to painstaking and long-term peace and institution building.

Local versus national

Four of the articles in the special issue focus on subnational governance, and the relationship between local and national. Three of the cases concern governance systems where high levels of centralised control and political/ethnic domination prevailed (Iraq, Sierra Leone and Cambodia). The fourth case, post-conflict Afghanistan, illustrates the opposite situation, a national government too weak to function effectively outside the capital city. The inability to integrate regions and minorities into larger polities is a key source of state fragility, failure and conflict across the globe. The failure to resolve this problem has repercussions for each dimension of governance. Exclusion of regions and/or minorities negatively affects the extent to which the national government is perceived as legitimate and it exacerbates sociopolitical tensions, leading in some cases to civil war and the breakdown of security; the Sierra Leone case is a clear example (Jackson). Policy regimes in fragile and weak states generally do poorly at equitable and inclusive resource allocation and redistribution, negatively impacting service delivery, economic opportunity, welfare, and ultimately legitimacy as well. Distributive mechanisms tend to operate based on patronage and clientelism, promoting economic inefficiency and heightening social and ethnic tensions. These can be exploited by those in power, both at the national level, as in Saddam Hussein's Iraq (Brinkerhoff and Mayfield), or at the local level, as in Afghanistan (Lister and Wilder).

[11]Perhaps the most well elaborated framework for taking a comprehensive approach, including attention to governance, is that developed by the joint CSIS/AUSA Project on Post-Conflict Reconstruction (Center for Strategic and International Studies/Association of the US Army). See the appendix in Orr (2004).

Where the local-national governance problem has been excessive concentration of power at the centre and a dominant elite, governance reform has included a focus on local governance and decentralisation (Blunt and Turner, Jackson, Brinkerhoff and Mayfield). The basic argument is that decentralised local governance can mitigate conflict for the following reasons. First, it can increase support for peace by transferring some degree of local autonomy, especially in settings of ethnic and inter-communal conflict. Second, it can place limits on the power of the centre by shifting resources and control to other levels of government. Third, by creating multiple governance arenas, it can diminish 'winner-take-all' dynamics that can lead to the re-emergence of conflict. Fourth, strengthening local governance allows low-intensity disagreements regarding service delivery, and demonstrates that these conflicts can be managed. Fifth, local governance sets up a learning laboratory for people to acquire political and conflict resolution skills that can be used in other settings.

The opposite local-national governance problem is where the national government is incapable of exerting authority throughout the national territory, and subnational entities are sufficiently powerful to resist and operate autonomously. The reform challenge in these situations is not simply to devolve central power so as to increase local autonomy, but to achieve a balanced decentralisation that avoids fragmentation of the state as a coherent entity. As Lister and Wilder describe, in Afghanistan reconstruction efforts intended to create the building blocks of a formal, Weberian state are having difficulty finding a firm footing in the shifting sands of provincial governance space dominated by warlords. Brinkerhoff and Mayfield's analysis of social capital formation in Iraq as an outcome of local governance reform takes another cut at the fragmentation problem in post-conflict societies. Their discussion looks at how the creation of nascent vertical and bridging social capital at the local level could begin to address the alienation of Iraqi citizens from the state and each other.

Formal versus informal governance

Another issue has to do with the connection between new governance structures and traditional ones. Sometimes this relates to a disconnect between *de jure* and *de facto* governance, as Lister and Wilder discuss in Afghanistan. Their analysis reveals the fuzzy boundaries between Afghanistan's *de facto* and *de jure* states, and the patterns of interpenetration that make reform efforts to strengthen formal governance so complex. Certain key actors hold power and authority in both states, and have been awarded formal positions due to their *de facto* power.

In other cases, reforms rely on traditional authority structures, which risk impeding or subverting the democratic intent of those reforms. For example in Sierra Leone, Jackson notes that the Local Government Act provides roles for traditional paramount chiefs that allocate to them significant leeway to operate in ways that may undermine the desired outcomes of decentralisation, and could potentially contribute to renewed conflict. Brinkerhoff and Mayfield note that reliance on traditional leaders for help in the early days of creating local councils in Iraq led to suspicions that councils served the interests of elites and powerful families; this practice was later discontinued. Turner and Blunt describe how the hierarchical social relations characteristic of Cambodian culture were reproduced within local councils, yielding the opposite of the participatory and responsive decision-making that was intended.

Imbuing formal governance reforms with sufficient legitimacy and assuring that they can be effective in the face of entrenched and competing informal systems is an uphill struggle. Success may be enhanced by better understanding of informal governance and the broader cultural context—a message conveyed by Jackson about Sierra Leone, Blunt and Turner about Cambodia and Lister and Wilder about Afghanistan. It can be a fine balance between seeking legitimacy through associating reforms with informal institutions and traditions, and introducing governance changes that challenge indigenous social and political relations, which in most failed states have been contributing factors to conflict and state collapse.

CONCLUSIONS

Understanding, and intervening in, the dynamics of states where all is not well, where the social and institutional fabric has been shredded and violence has erupted, call for a careful combination of the general (and generalisable) and the situation-specific. Much has been learned about the universe of targets and tasks

required to put post-conflict states on the path to restored or new governance and socio-economic development. Yet identifying what targets to reach for does not answer questions about how to reach them, or about who should do what and with whom. To borrow from Tolstoy's famous characterisation of marriage, each failed (unhappy) state is failed (unhappy) in its own way. In moving to models, strategies and doctrine, it is important to base them solidly in an understanding of the particular dynamics of the country and to leave sufficient policy and operational space for flexibility and learning.

Nation-building templates, particularly when they reflect particular ideological biases, risk oversimplification and conflation and tend to discount the impact of situational and historical factors (Brinkerhoff and Mayfield, Rondinelli and Montgomery). In today's world where failed states figure prominently on the international agenda, we would do well to recall Robert Dahl's observation made over 30 years ago: those seeking to 'transform the government of another country . . . face formidable and complex problems, not the least of which is our lack of knowledge about the long causal chain running from outside help to internal conditions to changes of regime' (1971, p. 210).

This caveat notwithstanding, analysts and practitioners have made important strides towards filling the knowledge and practice gap, particularly in the post 9/11 period. The articles in this volume exemplify and contribute to the positive learning that has taken place and is ongoing. Frameworks, models and templates are necessary for understanding and action, and the authors in this collection offer some useful food for thought in refining the governance reconstruction toolkit, particularly with respect to targets of analysis and ideas for sequencing. Building or rebuilding governance systems ultimately is the responsibility of citizens and leaders in post-conflict societies; external interventions by members of the international community cannot, by themselves, 'fix' a country's governance structure, though they can support reconstruction and reform. The greatest challenge for further developing a governance reconstruction toolkit is to develop processes and tools for bringing together local and external actors in ways that productively contribute to enhancing legitimacy, security and effectiveness.

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