

Post Conflict Reconstruction and State Building

The fundamental problem is that “State Building” takes time – but the international community, and indeed the affected population, want quick results. The two are simply incompatible. The way in which the international community usually addresses this is to place more emphasis on what it is doing and less on building functioning institutions. By the time it is clear that the institutions are not functioning donor interest has frequently moved on. There are three particular problems.

Security

The first is that security, and indeed the rule of law, are essential pre-requisites for economic development. It is often argued that economic development itself creates security, and it obviously assists in this. But in terms of cause and effect it is clear that economic **development** cannot take place in an environment that is still insecure. Economic **activity** can, and does, take place but this is frequently criminally driven and acts against the true interests of development. In the early post conflict stages it is however unlikely that the state will be able to provide its own security and external actors are therefore required. In many cases these will be the same forces e.g. NATO that were involved in the conflict. It can be argued that they are not particularly well suited to the “policing” role and that alternative methods of providing a secure environment are required. One area which is currently being studied, and indeed experimented with, is the use of Private Security Companies.

Development Instruments

Another problem with economic development in post conflict situations is that the instrument usually used is that of Development Agencies. These are not necessarily appropriate. In most cases they are suited to long-term projects and capacity building which may well be essential, but

which does not produce the necessary quick results. And they often require levels of accountability which are simply not available in a post conflict environment. What is actually required is a combination of short-term and long-term instruments which are designed to be mutually reinforcing. Insufficient thought has been given to the short-term instruments and there have been cases where the advantages of their impact have been mitigated by longer-term problems. New delivery instruments and ways of thinking are required here.

Reality Checks

There is of course a fundamental dichotomy between the desire to assist "state building" and the desire to retain control of the process. This is most frequently seen in the area of elections which are considered a generally good thing, provided the "right" people are elected. This is simply unrealistic. There also needs to be a much sharper focus on what can actually be achieved and what is really required as opposed to the "nice to have". Immediate revenue generation is essential for any state to function. Health sector reform can wait for later times.

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