

**Peace Security and Development Network**

**Working Paper I**  
***The Fragile States discourse unveiled***  
*Utrecht, 28 May 2009*

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## Introduction

The state plays once again a central role on the development and security agenda. This has not always been the case. Several authors indicate how “neoliberal economic policies contributed to the weakening of the state during the 1980s and 1990s, when bilateral development agencies and international financial institutions (IFIs) pushed aggressively to limit the state in favor of the private sector” (Call, in Call and Wyeth, 2008:12; Woodward, 2007). The state recently re-appeared on the agenda of donor organizations, though not necessarily in a positive way. The shortcomings and deficiencies of governance structures in fragile states are seen as threat to national and international security (Boege, et al., 2008).

There are, however, conflicting perspectives on appropriate and effective approaches among and within donor organizations to engage themselves in countries suffering from political instability<sup>1</sup>. Quite a few donor countries find themselves struggling with aid dilemmas related to the security-development nexus. Security and restoration of law and order are often perceived as among the most pressing priorities to be addressed in order to allow for progress in other policy areas. Yet, it is also acknowledged that focusing on immediate security does not necessarily contribute to long-term security and stability. Therefore, there is a need to focus on economic and political governance to uphold the benefits of tackling immediate security problems. The OECD/DAC incorporates these two dimensions and defines states as fragile when they: “lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations (OECD, 2007). Fragile states, in other words, need to be assisted in terms of their poverty reduction, development, and security of their population.

States are not necessarily weak in all respects. Similarly, not all least developed countries are fragile and, moreover, poverty is, in itself, not sufficient cause of fragility (Duffield 2007). Stewart (2008) puts failure in three different categories, and emphasizes authority and legitimacy in addition to development and security. He distinguishes three manifestations of state failure: (a) “authority failure, where states lack the authority to protect their citizens from various kinds of violence” (b) “service failure, where states fail to ensure access to basic services for all citizens”; and (c) “legitimacy failure, where there are no accountability mechanisms linking the states and its population” (Stewart, 2008: in Engberg-Pedersen, Andersen and Stepputat, 2008:25).

This working paper is one of the first in a series of papers on fragile states, produced jointly by the five Working Groups which are part of the Knowledge Network Peace, Security and Development in Fragile States<sup>2</sup>. The purpose of this working paper is to identify the common denominator in different definitions, to review the discourse on fragile states, to identify knowledge gaps, and to derive questions which will be relevant to the specific work of individual working groups.

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<sup>1</sup> Preceding conflict; in-between conflict; in-and-out of conflict; and post-conflict. Richards (2005) indicates that the distinction between situation of war and peace is less rigid, then generally assumed.

<sup>2</sup> This knowledge Network has been established as part of the Schokland Agreements: [www.millenniumakkoord.nl](http://www.millenniumakkoord.nl)

The guiding questions for this paper are:

1. How and when did the Fragile State Discourse emerge on the agenda of international donor organizations?
2. Conceptual Framework: What are features of fragile states? What are important elements within the current Fragile State Debate?
3. Which assumptions, dilemmas and practices are hindering an effective approach towards so-called fragile states?
4. Is there a need for reconceptualization of fragile states?
5. What are the issues that emerge and which bear relevance for future work?

This paper is divided in four sections. The first section will provide a brief historical sketch with regard to the debate on fragile states. In this section, we will explain how fragile states quickly moved upwards on the agenda of donor organizations.

The second section provides the conceptual framework. It starts with an overview and comparison of definitions as used by various donor organizations. It then continues to provide an overview of issues and elements which are part of the Fragile State Debate<sup>3</sup>.

In the third section, we focus on counter-debates which have appeared in policy oriented or academic publications. The 'counter' debate on fragile states in the academic literature is highly critical of the donor approach towards fragile states. Much of the criticism towards fragile state policy is related to the assumptions underlying fragile state policy; to constraints with regard to the implementation<sup>4</sup>, effectiveness and legitimacy of fragile state policy.

Since the definitions and assumptions underlying the debate suffer from various weaknesses, we will also discuss the need for reconceptualization in section four.

Finally, the last section will conclude with an identification of issues which prove to be relevant for further research. Although it is doubtful whether one common theoretical framework can be identified for all working groups, this paper forms the start of a discussion about normative notions and realities, choices and dilemmas in the debate on fragile states.

## **1. Background**

International attention for the fragile states is a relatively new phenomenon. A number of events left clear traces on the role of state(s) and non-state actors, on stability and fragility. Clearly, colonization had a major impact on borders, on the state apparatus, the legal system, the

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<sup>3</sup> More exhaustive overviews, and in-depth case studies, have been elaborated by others (e.g. Cammack, McLeod, Menocal and Christiansen, 2006; Call and Wyeth, 2008; Van Overbeek 2009).

<sup>4</sup> The modus operandi, the modalities of aid, and capacity of donor agencies are sometimes at odds with the conditions and particular circumstances of fragile situations.

institutional set-up and the functioning of the civil service. Colonizers shaped and sometimes deliberately cultivated internal divisions. Other events which left marks on the states which are now characterized as 'fragile' states are: (a) the Cold War politics and the end of the Cold War; (b) the dire economic situation and debt crisis which swept through much of the third world in the seventies and early eighties; the Structural Adjustment Programs with the conditionalities to low income and Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (starting in the 1970s and through the 1980s and 1990s); and (c) the attacks on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon of 11 September 2001 (hereafter referred to as 9/11). Although there is not a clear chronological order, we will briefly touch upon each of these developments.

#### *The Cold War and the end of the Cold War*

The Cold War left many countries with internal divisions and conflict as the result of years of Cold War politics. The US (and its allies) and the Soviet Union (and its allies) provided economic, technical and military support to states, non-state actors and guerilla movements, e.g. in Angola, Vietnam, Korea, Afghanistan, Egypt, Cuba and Latin America. While some regimes aligned with one of the superpowers, other regimes preferred to join the Non-Aligned Movement. Many of the states which are currently referred to as 'fragile states', suffered not only from divisive politics during the Cold War, but also from oppressive government regimes in the years following the end of the Cold War (post 1989). Although some dimensions of state fragility are indeed remnants of these periods, present-day situations of fragility are the outcome of more than Cold War politics alone.

#### *The Debt Crisis and SAPs*

The seventies and eighties were marked by severe economic crisis in much of the developing world<sup>5</sup>. It was therefore not surprising that, from the seventies onwards, lending to low income countries was more and more linked to conditionalities, both by donor organizations and the International Financial Institutes (IFIs), in particular the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs), first introduced in Chile after the 1973 Coup, became common practice in the 1980s and continued throughout the 1990s (Glassman & Carmody, 2001; Enriquez, 2006). The SAPs were a set of conditionalities imposed by the World Bank and IMF, intended to ensure macro-economic stability, to control inflation, and to improve the trading position of the countries which were heavily affected by the debt crisis of the early eighties.

These policies were revised in the early nineties, after various studies had indicated the limited effectiveness of these approaches, not the least because the weakening of existing political institutions and the public service reforms contributed to fragility (Engberg-Pedersen, Andersen and Steputat, 2008:15; Woodward, 2007) and provided "an enabling environment for non-state actors to flourish" (Cammack et al, 2006:21).

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<sup>5</sup> The oil crisis (1973 and 1979); cumulating debts from US\$ 130 billion in 1973 to US\$ 612 billion in 1982; a collapse of commodity prices, and severe balance of payment disequilibria were some of the manifestations of this economic setback. Other features were the collapse of the Bretton Woods institutions.

### 9/11

From the late nineties and early 2000 onwards, fragility and weak political and administrative capacity were believed to hinder not only poverty reduction<sup>6</sup>, but were also believed to threaten human and global security. The attacks of 9/11 put the development-security nexus suddenly in capital letters on the international agenda. Fragile States were believed to pose a threat to the international community as a result of their support to global terrorist networks, criminal (narcotic) networks and regional instability.

Not only did this change in thinking drastically change the commitment towards fragile states, donor organizations also realized that the policies for fragile states needed to be adjusted to the features of that particular context. As a whole, the donor community realized that it needed to 'do things differently'. It implied a fundamental rethinking on aid modalities<sup>7</sup> to encourage administrative capacity and to encourage political commitment to poverty reduction and human security. While the changes were not only targeted at fragile states, it did mark a change in the development assistance for, and relations with, fragile states. State fragility is, to some extent, the outcome of events in the global political, economic and security context. The debate on fragility is, however, also shaped by debates which have taken place within the development sector, such as the debate on poverty reduction, on aid effectiveness; the debate on failed states and the debate on good governance. Moreover, it is shaped by actors, in particular international donor organizations, Inter-Governmental Organizations, international Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), International Financial Institutes, such as the World Bank; and, in some countries more than others, the security and defense sector.

## 2. Concepts and Debates

Before defining 'fragile states', it is useful to have a summary understanding of the various interpretations of 'the state'. Notions such as the monopoly and legitimacy of the legitimate use of force, of a defined territory, a government, the capacity to enter into relations with other states, a permanent population, independence, or the ability to function as states, are contested, and some even tautological<sup>8</sup>.

The state has been defined in legal terms, as "an entity having exclusive jurisdiction with regard to its territory and personal jurisdiction over its nationals" (Akinrinade, 2009:14) in terms of its

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<sup>6</sup> Poverty reduction, access to basic services, and the provision of these services by the state was again on the agenda with the adoption of the Millennium Development Goals.

<sup>7</sup> Basket funding mechanisms, sector-wide approaches and general budget support were some of the new modalities. Another important instrument is the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper which, formally, requires broad participation in these papers and aim to create ownership (country-commitment). The drafting of these PRSPs was made conditional for receiving loans or technical assistance by some of the large multilateral financial institutes.

<sup>8</sup> Painter (2006) provides an excellent overview of the debate, referring to problematic elements in the debate on the state and the state's legitimacy.

(legitimate) use of force in a given territory (Max Weber, 1958 and 1968), as a “political organization whose rule is territorially ordered and which is able to mobilize the means of violence to sustain that rule” (Giddens, 1985), as ideological construct (Abrams, 1988); as a “structural effect of practices that appear to give structure” (Mitchell, 1991), as “imagined collective actor in whose name individuals are interpellated (implicitly or explicitly) as citizens or subjects, aliens or foreigners” (Painter, 2006) or as a social relationship (Poulantzas, 1978)<sup>9</sup>. Papagianni highlights four particular roles: states as bureaucracies and administrations; as institutions embedded in legal orders; as embodiments of normative orders; and as institutional arrangements enshrining power balances. The process of state building, she argues, ideally aims at a combination of these four roles (Papagianni, in Call and Wyeth, 2008:51). Both the Weberian definition of the state and the definition by Giddens would be problematic in countries where particular territories are under the effective control by warlords or militia. The state, from the perspective of most donor organizations, has jurisdiction over (at least part of) its territory and its nationals, has some capacity to enter into relationship with the international community (not necessarily the willingness, as is the case with North-Korea and Myanmar), and performs its role as administration vis-à-vis its citizens and inhabitants. In reality, the fragile state does not necessarily have the monopoly of the use of force, nor the power to sustain their rule. It does not necessarily represent all citizens or inhabitants, and it may be only an imagined collective actor in the international sphere. Most importantly, the state is not one homogeneous entity; but represents a multitude of roles, positions, interests and relationships. Representatives of the state (e.g. policemen or senior civil servants), may simultaneously function in other positions and networks.

Questions on how ‘the state’ should play the four roles mentioned above, are addressed to a great extent in the good governance debate. Good governance was, and still is, perceived as a key issue in the performance of the state, its economic development, and socio-economic stability. Indicators to measure ‘governance’ show considerable resemblance with the indicators to measure ‘fragility’. The World Bank report ‘*Governance Matters VII*’, for example, uses six aggregate governance indicators, including ‘Voice and Accountability’, ‘Political Instability and Absence of Violence/Terrorism’, ‘Government Effectiveness’, ‘Regulatory Quality’, ‘Rule of Law’, and ‘Control of Corruption’ (World Bank, 2003: 2)<sup>10</sup>.

## **Definitions of fragile states**

Similar to the notion of ‘the state’, there is a lack of common agreement on what ‘state fragility’ entails and how to measure it. Depending from which background a donor defines state fragility; different indicators are formulated to measure state fragility, which has clear implications for which countries fit the label and which policies should be prioritized to diminish the level of fragility. Thus, while the definitions of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) reflect a high priority on economic factors, the definition of the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) has a much stronger focus on security factors. This has clear repercussions for which countries will be deemed fragile and the programs and policies which will be pursued.

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<sup>9</sup> Weber, Giddens, Abrams, Mitchell and Poulantzas all cited and discussed in Painter, 2006.

<sup>10</sup> From a methodological perspective, the model is challenging. It draws from 35 separate data sources constructed by 32 different organizations. The results (based on governance perceptions) are quantified and pulled together through statistic modeling. See also: Kaufmann, Kraay & Mastruzzi (2006)

While the IMF is focusing more specifically on economic development dimensions, highlighting stagnant GDP per capita over the past twenty-five years for the group of fragile states and the negative spill-over effects on neighboring countries, USAID has a much stronger focus on enhancing stability (addressing the source of the conflict/stress), improving security, encouraging reform (mainly political) and state capacity building (See BOX 1: Definitions of fragile states by international organizations)

Core components of fragility (i.e. the strong focus on the state, lack of legitimacy and capacity of the state, insecurity and inability to deliver public services) are recurring items in the vast majority of definitions. Nonetheless, particular aspects are emphasized by some of the donor organizations much more than by others, such as the performance of the state and broader social and economic conditions, demographic pressures, social tensions, fractionalization and widespread poverty, and causality between governance, poverty and conflict (Hollander, 2009:16). Cammack offers some interesting points to the debate. She does not criticize the concept of state fragility, but rather its operationalization. First of all, she argues that countries which rank high in one index may be absent from another. Even when similar indicators are ranked, such as demographic pressure, variations in countries remain. Furthermore, Cammack argues, that “these analytical frameworks are quite general and difficult to use in designing specific interventions” (Cammack et al, 2006:27). Although diversity in the conceptualization of fragility may indeed be perceived to be undesirable from an intervention perspective, and makes comparative analysis and theory development challenging, it does allow for pluriformity, context-specific, flexible, home-grown and adaptive approaches.

Many actors are increasingly applying the Development Assistance Committee’s (DAC) definition of fragile state: *States are fragile where state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations* (OECD/DAC, 2007:2). Engberg-Pedersen, Anderson and Stepputat (2008:22) convincingly argue that this definition suffers from a number of weaknesses. First, it directs attention too much on the state, thereby ignoring the fact that fragility may exist outside the state. Secondly, the reference to a lack of political will is not only harmful to diplomatic relations and cooperation; it is also analytically difficult to apply. Thirdly, the definition disregards the point that international phenomena may affect fragile situations. According to Engberg-Pedersen, Anderson and Stepputat (2008:24-25), these criticisms have led some to prefer the notion of fragile *situations*.

The OECD is aware of these challenges and encourages donor organizations to develop a shared view of the strategic approach required. OECD DAC Development Ministers and Heads of Agencies endorsed a Policy Commitment and set of Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations at the 2007 OECD DAC High Level Meeting. Originally drafted at the January 2005 Senior Level Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States, these Principles reflect a growing consensus that fragile states require responses that are different from better performing countries (OECD, 2009).

According to the OECD strategic approaches to fragile states should be context-specific, sequenced and adjusted to the specific ‘dimensions’ or ‘facets’ of fragility which are experienced by states, in terms of:

- States vulnerability to violent conflict or humanitarian crisis;
- Weak states with low administrative capacity and control across (part of) its territory;
- Divided states with tensions and divisions along national, ethnic or religious lines;
- Post-war states, which experienced violent conflict;
- Semi-authoritarian states, which impose order through coercion and the use of force;
- Collapsed states, whose national institutions do not function at all  
(based on Call, 2008; quoted in OECD, 2008:19)

In its 2008 publication, the authors of the 2008 OECD report *Concepts and Dilemmas of State Building in Fragile Situations: from fragility to resilience* suggest to elaborate on their earlier definition. They argue:

*“Fragility, then, resides at the opposite pole of resilience, which implies the ability to cope with change while maintaining the bargain of the social contract. If the process of reconciling citizens’ and states’ expectations is the bedrock of resilience, then fragility for the most part occurs in the absence or insufficiency of political processes for managing changes in the state-society contract. A focus on the political processes through which state and citizen expectations are negotiated and reconciled provides an essential lens, both for defining the core features of fragility and for understanding the potential problems that may arise from international support for the state-building process” (OECD, 2008:18).*

## **Fragile States Debates**

The discussion above shows that the Fragile State Debate is still an emerging debate. For the purpose of this working paper, we will focus on some of the most important issues within this debate, in particular (a) the causality of fragility (poverty-fragility nexus and the security-development nexus); (b) the role of the state and state capacity; (c) harmonization; (d) ownership and legitimacy; and (e) capacity building.

### **A. The causality of fragility**

Within the fragile state debate there is considerable attention for questions regarding factors contributing to fragility. While some argue that a weak state and ‘poor governance’ contribute to fragility, others argue that these are manifestations of fragility. There is much discussion about the role of political legitimacy, authority or administrative capacity in contributing to situations of fragility. The indicators of several measuring instruments clearly show that fragility cannot be measured by political indicators alone.

The Failed States Index<sup>11</sup>, for example, measures state failure by including factors such as economic inequalities and performance, social tensions (ethnic division, elitist fractionalization, demographic pressures, group grievance and paranoia, humanitarian crisis) and regional location (stability of the region, refugee flows, cross border conflict). Although these indicators do show that fragility

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<sup>11</sup> Although the Failed States Index applies to failed states, and not to fragile states, it can be used as overview of features which play a role in fragile states as well.

cannot be measured with political factors alone, the indicators in itself do not say anything about causality.

Torres & Anderson mention the diversity of fragile situations, in which the causes and symptoms of weak states vary. "The features of weakness combine in different ways and can changeover time" (Torres & Anderson, 2004:6). Also Ghani et al (2005) emphasize that confronted with fragile states, the aid system has attempted to address the symptoms rather than the causes of that failure, which eventually undermines the creation of a sovereign state capable of performing the core state functions in several systemic ways (Ghani et al, 2005:10). Within the debate one can witness a real bewilderment between assumed symptoms and causes of state fragility. Many definitions, as mentioned above, illustrate a plethora of symptoms and mostly suggest, in a mechanistic manner, that the one factor (weak capacity of state institutions) will lead to the other (e.g. human insecurity). These assumed correlations between 'causes' and/or 'symptoms' do not necessarily indicate true causality<sup>12</sup>

Several scholars and practitioners have increasingly come to realize that the 'fragile state' has been used as a 'catchall' term (see e.g. Rombouts, 2006). Anten (2008) denotes that various efforts have been made to develop a more sophisticated taxonomy of fragile states in order to create more homogeneous sub-categories which would help analysis and policy development. She gives the examples of DFID, World Bank and one used by Diamond (2006). A simple classification used by DFID takes two dimensions of governance (government capacity and political will) as defining characteristics and distinguishes three types of fragile states: 'weak-weak', 'weak but willing', and 'strong but unresponsive' (DFID, 2007).

Another classification, used by the World Bank among others, tries to add trends in governance and in the overall context of the countries concerned, and distinguishes (World Bank, 2005).

- Deterioration: capacity and/or willingness to perform core state functions in decline, economic and social indicators falling (e.g. Zimbabwe, Papua New Guinea)
- Arrested development, prolonged crisis or impasse: lack of willingness, failure to use authority for development (e.g. Guinea-Conakry, Fiji)
- Post-conflict transition: peace accord opens window of opportunity to work with government on reform, capacity low, willingness may be high or low (e.g. Liberia, Afghanistan, Sudan)
- Early recovery or reform: willingness and efforts to improve performance but uneven results, may be post-conflict or not (e.g. Sierra Leone).

A third classification, which Anten mentions ranks conflict-affected fragile states according to conflict phase, distinguishing states at risk of conflict (e.g. Nigeria), states in the midst of war (e.g. DRC Congo) and post-conflict states emerging (or trying to emerge) from external or civil war (e.g. Kosovo) (Diamond, 2006). Nevertheless, Anten emphasizes the fact that "in all classifications the assignment of countries to sub-classes remains a hazardous job since this will necessarily involve an amount of subjective assessment of the country context" (Anten, 2008:3). Others like Pureza

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<sup>12</sup> Scholars who have tried to ascribe such forms of causality to failed or fragile states like Collier, have been heavily criticized due to a bias in country selection and methodological weaknesses, see e.g. Easterly (2004)

(2006) argue that terminologies on failed or fragile states are utterly useless and that only the more country specific approaches can offer solace to more effective donor strategies in fragile states.

*Security-development nexus*

Within the Fragile State Debate, the development-security nexus is frequently mentioned. Although some donors do motivate their presence in fragile states by the argument that these countries are most off-track to reach MDGs, the fragile and failed state discourse is generally based on the assumption that fragile states pose a threat to national and international security<sup>13</sup>. Essentially fragile states are “a meshing of two interconnected ideas where long-term development is regarded as hinging upon security, and lasting security depends upon sustainable development” (Hurwitz & Peake, 2004:1). Frances Stewart argues that “conflict has heavy development costs, so that promoting security is instrumental for development” and that “inclusive patterns of development are an important element in avoiding conflict, so that development is instrumental to the achievement of security” (Stewart, 2004:278). Correspondingly, Robert Picciotto talks of a “two-way causality” between the two, and argues that “the future of aid lies at the intersection of security and development” (Picciotto, 2004: 543). Fragile states are considered to contribute to risks at global level through the concentration of chronic poverty and the effects this has on the achievement of western strategic interests; through facilitation of international terrorism<sup>14</sup>; through the operation of transborder shadow economies; and through large flows of refugees and asylum seekers affecting the social cohesion in the ‘recipient’ countries (Duffield, 2007:162). An effective and coordinated fragile state policy may therefore prevent fragile states from state collapse, prevent civil wars and reduce breeding ground for terrorism. The development-security nexus is not new and was already recognized in the 1960s with efforts of western countries to contain the spread of communism. The concern for the link between poverty and security has, since then, not disappeared; its relevance is visible in the literature on ‘social exclusion’ and the security risks related to such exclusion or marginalization; but also in the ‘hearts and minds’ campaigns of military in Iraq and Afghanistan (Duffield, presentation Utrecht 2009).<sup>15</sup> It is fast becoming an article of faith that security and development are bound together and that policymaking should reflect this fact (Waddell, 2006).

The dominant, often implicit metaphor framing policy discussions about the security-development nexus in post-conflict settings is the vicious circle or ‘conflict trap’ (Collier, 2003; Menkhaus, 2004; Waddell, 2006). The logic behind this metaphor is compelling. Endemic insecurity blocks progress in economic rehabilitation and recovery. The lack of economic recovery and employment opportunities in turn impedes demobilization and reinforces criminality and armed conflict

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<sup>13</sup> The assumption that fragile states are a direct threat to national and international security are, as indicated by Woodward (2007), revealed in the US 2002 national security doctrine and in the UN Report of the High-Level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change (2004).

<sup>14</sup> Based on large data sets from the Failed State Index and data on foreign terrorist organizations, Hehir convincingly challenges two of the central propositions in this debate: “State failure in itself does not attract or breed terrorists and the attractiveness of a state as a locus for terrorists is contingent on a specific coincidence of variables” (Hehir, 2007:308). “There is no causal link or pronounced correlation between failed states and the proliferation of terrorism or between democratization and the negation of terrorism” (Hehir, 2007: 328).

<sup>15</sup> The hearts and minds campaigns are aiming primarily to increase security for military staff, and to increase the access to important information which can contribute to their security. The campaigns use ‘development-oriented projects’ as means to achieve this.

(Menkhaus, 2004:149). According to Menkhaus the policy implications of this line of argument are stark. It not only propels development work far beyond conventional sectors, it also suggests that most conventional post-conflict assistance appears entirely under-equipped to take on the massive, complex task of breaking the political and economic vicious circles reinforcing the conflict trap (ibid.:150).

Several authors challenge the underlying assumption of the security-development nexus. Chandler, for example argues that “assumptions about the links between development and security are based on very little empirical evidence of causation; even the assumption that there is a positive correlation between security and development has been questioned by leading experts in the field” (Chandler, 2007:366). However, regardless of the fact whether this causality is real, it is believed to be real by policy and decision makers and has therefore real consequences for both the Fragile State Debate and the implementation of donor strategies.

Picciotto ironically highlights that it is the defense rather than development agenda that will prevail: “In the real world, policy coherence for defense always trumps policy coherence for development, so the case for switching expenditures from defense to development budgets will have to be made on strict security grounds” (Picciotto, 2004: 545). Beall et al. (2006) suggest that if security for the North becomes a central guiding principle for development in the South, this will be damaging for both the project of global poverty reduction and global security. “For all the discussion of a two-way relationship between security and prosperity and the notion that the merging of development and security agendas is mutually beneficial, the trend seems to be that security at home is becoming the overriding priority of both agendas” (2006:53). The denial of the political nature of many violent struggles within fragile states, as demonstrated by Mamdani (2007) and Furedi (2005), leads to the assumption, central to the development-security nexus, that one can somehow develop its way out of terrorism and Northern insecurity without really engaging with the political agendas and grievances of those who perpetrate it.

### **B. The role of the State**

The state, however defined, and ‘willing’ or ‘unwilling’ in donor’s discourse, is still perceived as one of the key-entry points for donor organizations in fragile states. In the fragile states debate the pendulum of our time has swung back to the state. The OECD argues that state building needs to be seen in “the broader context of state formation, which we understand to be the dynamic, historically informed, often contingent process by which states emerge in relation to societies” (OECD, 2008:13). Instead of seeing ‘state-building’ as an exercise of mere ‘institutional development’ of state-institutions, establishment of a legal framework, and the establishment of the rule of law; ‘state-building’ requires efforts which work at the interface of relationships between state and non-state actors, at the political processes of accountability, which create trust and increase the state’s legitimacy.

The OECD acknowledges that, in reality, state-building is a complex and non-linear process in which a multitude of social institutions play a role and often participate in the delivery of public goods. The provision of basic services, security and law enforcement by non-state authorities at multiple levels and in different geographic areas is sometimes seen as a better alternative, in

particular when a strong focus on the state is likely to exacerbate existing tensions or where the state or local government are virtually absent (Engbert-Pedersen, Andersen, Stepputat, 2008:37). The potential risk of this approach is that support to non-state actors who perform functions normally ascribed to the state, can potentially undermine the position of the state. These social institutions can in some cases even be competing with state institutions.

Although such challenges have been recognized, it remains unclear how donor programs can be structured in order to work more effectively at this 'interface of relationships' between state and non-state actors. These context-specific dilemmas touch directly upon questions regarding capacity building, public authority, legitimacy and ownership, which are discussed below.

### **C. The challenges of harmonization**

The fragmented nature of donor responses to fragile situations in the international community has spurred a growing acknowledgement of the need to increase the coordination, coherence and consistency of the international engagement in developing countries. New aid approaches, introduced by donors, are the creation of declarations and guidelines which encompass the rationale of such aspects as coordination, harmonization and alignment. Although closely related, alignment and harmonization describe different facets of the aid relationship that can usefully be distinguished. However, the debate has often misappropriated the concepts of harmonization, coherence and alignment. These concepts have also been used interchangeably, which has, at times, resulted in confusion and wrong assumptions regarding coherence and harmonization. While it may sometimes be assumed, improved coordination is not the same as the assimilation of donor strategies. Slaymaker and Christiansen (2005) give a clarification on the matter:

*"Alignment concerns the relationship between donors and recipient governments or authorities. Within this, two dimensions of alignment relate to systems and priorities. This is a useful distinction which makes apparent the potential for donors and implementing agencies to align with national authorities' priorities but not use their systems, or visa versa, align their practice with national systems but to hold different priorities. Harmonization, on the other hand, refers to the relationships among donors and includes a spectrum of practices from information sharing to rationalization of procedures and common arrangements such as silent partnership or pooled funding. A linked concept is that of policy coherence, which is particularly relevant in the context of difficult environments where there are often a wider range of actors. Coherence is concerned with consistency of policy and practice within donor governments."*

The OECD/DAC principles for good engagement in fragile states (see BOX 3) were explicitly formulated to complement the Paris Declaration and provide guidance on how to engage effectively in situations where alignment behind government policies is not an immediate option. This underlines again that first, aid effectiveness remains a core concern for donors and secondly, that donors are struggling to identify concrete modalities and mechanisms for engaging in a long-term, coordinated and coherent fashion in fragile states and situations. One of the approaches that reflect the desire for enhanced coordination and coherence is the 'whole of government approach' (see BOX 6).

Yet, while the OECD's principles for 'Good International Engagement in Fragile States', and the 'Accra Agenda for Action,' especially the objectives resulting the RT7 discussions (see BOX 5), aim to increase the policy coherence and coordination in the area of fragile states, it has been noted that integrated strategies for fragile states exist more in theory than in practice. Rombouts (2006) forcefully states that most donors don't even have a coherent set of principles within their own development agencies. The OECD principles are a good attempt at organizing donors to strive for the same positive effects of engaging in fragile states. Nevertheless, these principles not only focus on donor behavior rather than on concrete development approaches or instruments<sup>16</sup> (Rombouts, 2006:25), they are also very broad and leave much space for interpretation. However, while some donors look for practical examples, organize international synthesizing workshops, and seek frameworks on how to best engage in fragile states, there is no such tool box; nor will there be one (Cahill, 2007).

#### *Obstacles to harmonization*

One reason for the lack of coherent donor approaches in fragile states can be found in the political realm of the western countries. According to Patrick & Brown coherence and harmonization will remain problematic because individual governments often avoid frank debate over their goals while most governments regard fragile states as both a development and security challenge, donor capitals differ in the weight they give these two considerations (Patrick & Brown, 2007:130). So while these priority areas may be entwined, their attendance is inconsistent and risks triage. It may also be asked how far donor harmonization extends when there is not even an agreed list of fragile states. According to Cahill, et al. (2007) internal strategy and policy changes in donor countries seem to be slow and difficult. Donors are political actors that will ensure they are not harming themselves and there is often a clash between technical and political ideologies (Cahill, et al., 2007). Moreover, at operational level, it is particularly difficult to link the various perspectives due to institutional constraints, to discrepancy of mandates, variance in time horizons and missions' frameworks, and to the suspicion with which some parts of the development and security community regard each other (Faria & Ferreira, 2007). Therefore, little progress has been made towards proper integration and complementarity of military and development objectives and methods within the fragile state agenda.

Other critics argue that the goal of greater policy coherence through coordination is based on a discouraged, minimalistic conclusion that external actors cannot agree on a unified post-war strategy, which is what is actually needed, and one must settle instead for operational coordination (Woodward, 2007: 147). Chandler denotes that rather than justifying a policy in terms of policy goals, the desire for 'coherence' symbolizes the lack of belief that any policy or project can be defended on the basis of policy outcomes" (Chandler, 2007:370, see also Pureza et al 2006). He argues that the call for 'coherence' reflects symbolic strategic importance, as opposed to practical strategic importance (Chandler, 2007:370).

#### *Assumptions on harmonization*

Despite all these instrumental and political difficulties, donor countries seem to agree on the merits of improved coordination. But although a nearly universal consensus exists for more and better

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<sup>16</sup> Principle 3 and 9 are the most directive principles in this regard (see BOX 3)

coordination, surprisingly little attention has been paid to the *purpose* of closer coordination. Against this monolithic consensus, Kahler highlights that few have defended the value of competition among donors from the perspective of developing country governments (Kahler, 2007:23). Obviously, competing programs and divergent demands by donors can overtax or overwhelm fragile governments like momentarily in Afghanistan. Similarly, when donors work hand in hand with the state in a multitude of programs to improve governance, enhance state effectiveness, or aim at state reconstruction and legal reforms, this may just as much be a vast burden on the state's capacity, further weakening the very capacity donors aim to support.

The point that needs to be stressed here is that suddenly every solution to state-building problems and dilemmas is better coordination and donor harmonization. Despite the question whether this is valid or not, it's holding back governments to think beyond their own practices and internal agendas. Woodward indicates that the call for improved donor coherence presumes that what is to be done is known, or can easily be known if coordination among donors and other international actors were present (Woodward, 2007). The fragile state dilemma and the proper responses are continuously being changed and debated. Donors make use of several definitions as well as reactions to fragile states. Nonetheless, it is worthwhile discussing at what level, and through what means, harmonization is desirable. Faust et al, argue that a certain level of diversity or even competition concerning approaches and strategies has its advantages, also for the recipient states (Faust et al, 2008).

#### **D. Ownership and legitimacy**

When taking the policy documents as point of departure, then state-building is not a blue-print exercise anymore. It has become responsive to earlier criticism that one cannot apply one-fits-all strategy to collapsed states; divided states, weak states, semi-authoritarian states or post-conflict states.

Alignment, ownership and legitimacy are now recognized to be essential for effective aid and reforms. This is clearly reflected in the OECD's principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and the Accra Agenda for Action (See BOX 3 and 5). The OECD Principles recommend international donors to align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts. They state: "Where alignment behind government-led strategies is not possible due to particularly weak governance or violent conflict, international actors should consult with a range of national stakeholders in the partner country, and seek opportunities for partial alignment at the sectoral or regional level" (OECD, 2007, principle 7).

One of the ways to create ownership is through the use of Transitional Result Matrices. The United Nations Development Group/Executive Committee for Humanitarian Affairs (UNDG/ECHA) has established a concept called 'Transitional Results Matrices' (TRM) which they use for their engagement in fragile states. A TRM is a planning, coordination and management tool that national stakeholders and donors can use to better prioritize actions necessary to achieve a successful transition in fragile states. The core principles for developing these TRMs are that they have to be simple, selective and realistic in priorities (and especially short term priorities seem to play an important role), integrated and nationally owned. Ownership, as a key element of current aid

modalities, has however been an ambiguous and controversial concept. The idea that communities in fragile states can take ownership of their development, collaborate harmoniously with donors and manage their resources in a transparent and accountable manner pose enormous challenges in fragile states. The UNDG/ECHA recognize this tension (see box 7).

#### *Legitimacy of the state*

In addition to issues of ownership and alignment, there is an additional, equally important, issue: the legitimacy of the state. The OECD distinguishes four forms of legitimacy:

1. "embedded or residual legitimacy, deriving from prior state formation or other historical dynamics;
2. performance legitimacy, which derives from effective and equitable service delivery;
3. process legitimacy," and
4. "legitimacy derived from international recognition and reinforcement" (OECD, 2008:17).

Legitimacy of the state can however not be seen in isolation from the state's authority and the legitimate use of force. Many 'fragile states' are however, characterized by a lack of authority. Lund (2008) emphasizes that public authority can also rest with non-state institutions which sometimes support the state, but oppose the state at other times. He refers to this as 'twilight institutions'.<sup>17</sup> Jung further indicates that there are various and shifting sources of legitimacy resulting in a variety of expectations from stakeholders. These expectations cannot always be reconciled (Jung, 2008:). The post-colonial state, according to Jung, "is characterized by competing and conflicting organizing principles and social practices," (Jung, 2008:38) such as the organizing principles of the modern state; the practices of political entrepreneurship, and the expectations from traditional society regarding redistribution of resources through a patronage network. Political elites and leaders draw their legitimacy and authority not only from the first principle (that of the modern state) but also from the social practices in 'twilight institutions' (Lund, 2006), the hinterland or the 'mediated state' (Menkhaus, 2007) which are conflicting with these principles.<sup>18</sup> State-building may thus, intentionally or unintentionally, weaken other sources of authority and legitimacy and undermine the process of state-building.<sup>19</sup> Legitimacy and authority are, in other words, constantly shaped, contested and dispersed among a large variety of societal actors. Papagianni<sup>20</sup> lists a variety of factors, which should be taken into account in peace building and state building programs:

1. "First, in order to gain legitimacy in the eyes of the public, a state needs to perform its key functions, such as delivering basic public services and maintaining public order."

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<sup>17</sup> We will further elaborate on this in the last paragraph on the reconceptualization of the fragile state.

<sup>18</sup> We will elaborate on the concepts of twilight institutions and mediated states in the section below on 'reconceptualizing the 'fragile' state.

<sup>19</sup> Although according to Menkhaus (2007) this does not necessarily contradict with building legitimacy and authority. See also the paragraph on reconceptualizing the fragile state.

<sup>20</sup> Papagianni defines legitimacy as "the normative belief of a political community that a rule or institution ought to be obeyed" (Papagianni, in Call and Wyeth, 2008:49).

2. "Second, for a state to be perceived as legitimate, it is crucial that a political process exists that creates space for debate and dialogue among powerful elites and includes all major political forces."
3. "Third, the participation of the public in the state building processes may also contribute to the legitimacy of the state but needs to be carried out with great care. Elites often pose obstacles to participation by controlling access, disregarding the outcomes of the participatory process, and manipulating the information available to the public."
4. Fourth, the domestic legitimacy of states and institutions is influenced *but not* determined by international standards and external actors" (Papagianni in Call and Wyeth, 2008:50).

#### *Legitimacy and effectiveness of outside intervention*

Both the effectiveness and legitimacy of outside intervention in state building have been questioned by several scholars (Ignatieff, 2003; Chandler, 2006; Pureza, 2006; Brinkerhoff, 2007; Duffield 2007; Menkhaus, 2007; Woodward, 2007; Debiel & Lambach, 2008). Several of them observe that the essence of ownership and political will has to do with people, but the tendency is to aggregate these concepts to higher levels, e.g. national ownership and country commitment, which is also reflected in many capacity building efforts. This has led to the reification of whole countries and governments into unitary actors, while failing to see that many forms of governance are not led by formal state actors.

Brinkerhoff points out that demand-driven influences on ownership and political will are often underdeveloped, given that citizens may not have opportunities to engage with public officials, which subsequently poses enormous challenges to contemporary capacity building efforts. He argues that "Where previous governments have discriminated against or abused particular groups, those citizens are likely to have actively sought to avoid contact with state actors" (Brinkerhoff, 2007:23).

### **E. Capacity building**

'Capacity building' is a shared strategy among donors that has engendered commonalities in their interpretive and discourse tendencies in fragile state agendas, at least at first sight. However, the more one explores the capacity-building narrative in the Fragile State Debate the more difficult it is to isolate exactly what is meant by claims that states are being 'capacity-built' or target by 'specific programs to become more capable and legitimate.' It seems that many different approaches to capacity building are being used concurrently. This doesn't only occur within the same country, between different donor organizations, but often also within the same organization (Lusthaus, et al, 1999:5). David Chandler indicates that the previously mentioned policy 'coherence' in the Fragile State Debate is essentially the new buzzword for external capacity-building. "[T]his coherence is gained from closely tying international aid to new institutional frameworks of regulation and monitoring" (Chandler, 2005b:16).

The OECD principles reflect the desire to work with national reformers, to focus primarily on state building, and to encourage the state to establish dialogue between state and society, and sustainable development. Also the approach currently being taken in several second generation Poverty Reduction Strategy Programs is to engage both the government and Civil Society

Organizations (CSOs) as partners in the pursuit of common goals (see box 8). The consensus is that civil society should bring about the pressure on state institutions to make them more accountable to their public. CSOs are understood to ease the flow of knowledge and strategies in new areas. They are also viewed as builders of social capital. Although many donors do acknowledge the role of local NGOs and CSOs and speak of the ambition to focus on the citizen-state relationship it remains to be seen whether their current programs and instruments are able to do so. Sen argues that what is missing in much of the discourse on capacity building in fragile states is how to utilize citizens in the rebuilding of democratic government, rather than focusing on fixing failed states according to an external agenda (Sen, 2008:3).

Capacity building or 'technical assistance', as a part of capacity building, has an apolitical connotation. Or like Booth, so strikingly stated "[L]ike 'governance', capacity building is the kind of polite and non-threatening epithet that makes for easy conversation in any gathering of African and international leaders" (Booth,2005:2). This connotation can work in the advantage of donor programming or organizations applying for funds and subsidies to get involved with capacity building or capacity development. However, despite this apolitical association capacity assistance requires a great deal of awareness and sensitivity to political issues, because choices about capacity development inevitably influence the structure of power in society. Also Brinkerhoff denotes that the selection of capacity development strategies and targets can be highly political, which may be at odds with technical considerations of where and how interventions should be pursued (Brinkerhoff, 2008:4). If capacity development is about human development and change, then it will also be about power and interest (Lavergne and Saxby, 2001). Knowing whom to work with (for example, women, traditional leaders<sup>21</sup>, or indigenous NGOs) is as important as knowing how to work with them<sup>22</sup>. The challenges mentioned here indicate that the process of sensitive and effective intervention at the state-society interface is extremely challenging, and requires further attention.

According to Chandler there's now a tendency to see state-building as a 'scientific', technical or administrative process which does not require a process of popular consensus-building to give the target population a stake in policymaking (Chandler, 2005a:308). There seems to be a silent assumption in the current Fragile State Debate that the problems of politics can be resolved outside the realm of the political, in the realms of law, social policy and administration by means of building the capacities of institutions, paying less attention to how societal pressures and demands are constitutive of stable and legitimate institutional mechanisms. Also Lake argues that "the current model implicitly rests on a formal-legal conception of legitimacy in which law or institutions confer authority on individuals, who then employ that authority to create a social order" (Lake, 2008:3). The biased focus of Western donors on ruling parties makes this even more problematic since it's precisely the prior or current regime has lost its legitimacy, that there is no accepted legal or institutional framework that can confer authority on a nascent government. A reconceptualization of the state and legitimate institutional mechanisms seems therefore not only useful, but also necessary. This will be discussed in section four.

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<sup>21</sup> Smillie highlights that sometimes the capacities of the people with doubtful reputations have been strengthened, as in the case of freelance militia in Somalia or Hutu militia in the Goma camps (Smillie,2001:7).

<sup>22</sup> Both types of knowledge constitute interlinked, but singular insufficient, (research) objectives.

### 3. Critical Voices

Though the sections above already indicated a numbers of serious flaws and limitations of the Fragile State Debate both conceptually and in terms of implementation, below we try to outline the criticisms systematically. We cluster these criticisms under a number of headings and then refer to some of the major authors that have forwarded those criticisms. Most of these criticisms appear in the academic discourse on fragile states. There is also a policy discourse that looks into the specifics of the operationalization of donor agenda's, based on policy discourse analysis and case studies on the implementation of those policies. In many cases those studies have reported weaknesses, shortcomings and deficiencies. Above references to ownership, alignment, harmonization and capacity building have dealt with a number of important implementation issues. In this chapter we focus mainly on the academic criticisms and also here we do not claim to be complete or comprehensive, but nevertheless hope to cover some major issues.

#### *Etatism and Euro-centric or Weberian models of state*

Perhaps understandably, the Fragile State Debate focuses on statehood and the apparatus of the state, in terms of both the definition of the problem and its solution. However, while doing so, its discourse is employing a state-centric conception strongly linked to post-Westphalian modernity. The state is however neither similar nor equally important in many 'non-western' societies, where overarching forms of authority and legitimacy rest with other institutions. The Weberian concept of the state does often not apply to those post-colonial regimes or developing countries where the fragile state notion is used in practice. Above reference was made to 'twilight institutions' and 'mediated state approaches' to describe these situations. In fact, even many societies that represent themselves under the guise of a modern, Weberian state and seemingly show its formal trappings, do in reality operate on the basis of clientelistic or neo-patrimonial principles and hence are appropriately called 'façade states'. Furthermore, this idea of a universal model of state is even hardly suitable for western countries or democracies themselves. Writing on the issue of local government in developing countries Alderfer (1964) already distinguished the British pattern, the French pattern, the Russian pattern and the Traditional pattern as well as hybrid forms (see: Frerks and Otto 1996). We also may add the constitutional model of the United States that has been widely followed in Latin American constitutions. Hence, a first major criticism of the Fragile State Debate is the reliance on the state per se and its equation to a Weberian model in settings where this does not apply.

#### *Multidimensionality*

The Fragile State notion fails to cover unequivocally the multi-dimensionality encountered in the various definitions of state fragility. Though there is agreement that state fragility can only be covered by looking at several dimensions simultaneously, there are salient variations and differences of emphasis in the definitions of state fragility provided by donors and academic writers (see above and Hollander 2009). Notwithstanding a certain level of consensus on what comprise two or three core elements of state fragility, at the same time fundamental differences occur on the additional dimensions and specifics. These differences seem to grow, if one enters into larger debates on the nature of the state, the society and the context. The underlying implicit epistemological understandings that become visible then, hint at even more fundamental

differences of view than with regard to the different dimensions per se. Moreover, in reality the different dimensions or aspects of state fragility may not coincide or converge. In concrete cases, some aspects may prevail, while others are absent, and those that exist may vary in intensity or move in contradictory directions, as was observed earlier in this paper. For example, Hagmann and Hoehne (2007) note that states that are deemed fragile, may in fact have a security apparatus that is capable of considerable political oppression. Secondly, where the fragile state debate brings about the connotation that the absence of the state has anarchy and chaos as a result, non-state actors are often capable of providing considerable basic governance and security at a local level. Due to the existing statist view, these realities remain largely unobserved. The very moniker "fragile state" evokes an image of a weak, and thereby pliable, structure. However, the term fragile belies what may actually be a robust system working, even though working through illicit or volatile means (Duffield, 2002).

#### *Teleological and linear notions of state development*

The Fragile State debate reveals the dogmatic assumption that all states will in the long run converge to a Western model of the state, which is considered to be 'accomplished' as opposed to the 'undeveloped' state in the global South. This is a highly questionable, a-historical and de-contextualized position both with regard to the continuing developments and changes in western state systems themselves, and concerning the dynamics going on in the developing world. The state is thus being reified and standardized, ignoring existing variations and the violent and unforeseeable processes that shape and have shaped state formation, both in Europe and elsewhere (Tilly, 1990 and 2003). This problematic position is combined by an equally problematic idea that the development of states can be steered or influenced, often in a linear, pre-determined manner. Such pretenses have culminated in recommendations on how to 'fix' fragile states and the conviction that states can indeed be built by intervention; something interventions in Afghanistan, Iraq and Somalia have proven wrong. This underlines the need to be aware of the dangers of normative and teleological models and to keep investing in detached empirical analysis focusing on how things works in empirical reality rather than adopting a policy-induced focus that may leave a multitude of relevant issues out of sight.

#### *Conceptual limitations vis-à-vis realities*

To understand the effectiveness of a state, it is necessary to realize that a state is not merely the inevitable result of historical evolution, but that the state is an evolving quality that cannot be meaningfully assessed independent of context, particularly in terms of international factors and the dynamics of society-state relations (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:4-5). Although a construct such as "fragile state" does not necessarily substitute for context specific analyses, the fragile states agenda does reiterate the importance of context and the political economy. Most policy documents denote the need for a political economy analysis, in order to understand and address problems of political will, interdependencies *and* to assess the feasibility of particular policy.

In cases where the recipient government is unwilling to implement policies that donors consider necessary for development, donors may utilize Political Economy Analyses and Drivers of Change (DOC) analyses not only to understand the context, but mostly to push for the desired change. Thus, donors have been analyzing the political economy with the perspective of strengthening civil society for reform, promoting ownership of reform programs, and creating the conditions through

which government and 'coalitions of the willing' can push for reform. However, both Wimpelmann (2006) and Cammack (2006) argue that in doing so the fragile state agenda uses political economy analysis in a too narrow and instrumental way, which greatly curtails the utility of such exercise. Wimpelmann's Christian Michelsen Institute (CMI) report even states that: "as long as the fragile state agenda commits itself to a fixed reform model, it cannot incorporate the dynamic relationship between political and economic change" (Wimpelmann, 2006:10). Even when donors seem to base their strategies in fragile states more and more on the political and economic context, they should resist the inclination to have their political-economy analysis be influenced too much by fixed reform guidelines, as seems to be the case right now to the detriment of a real and deeper understanding and effective implementation (see also the previous part on capacity building). Too large a focus in the analysis on reform paradoxically may thwart it during implementation.

Finally, we like to refer to some broader critiques some of which have been expressed in related debates such as on peace-building, interventionism, 3-D approaches etc. They are linked to individual authors or groups of authors who do not only criticize parts of the interventionist approaches in fragile states or shortcomings in implementation, but rather question the whole project entirely on principal grounds.

*Ignatieff: Empire Lite and ad-hocism*

One of these counter-discourses comes from Micheal Ignatieff. He sketches the *Empire Lite*, where current interventionism can be characterized as a 'humanitarian empire' in countries fragmented by war. Ignatieff describes the Empire Lite as "imperialism in a hurry, to spend money, to get results, to turn the place back to locals and go out" (Ignatieff, 2003:19 quoted by Duffield, 2007:8). These empires are nothing more than playgrounds of donor governments, UN agencies, military actors and NGOs who cooperate in 'novel institutional arrangements' to get quick results. The humanitarian sector has, however, its own dynamic and time frame. It is inherent in humanitarian assistance to focus on emergency situations, while regular assistance claims to look at longer-term development.<sup>23</sup> Ignatieff states however that present-day interventionism is neither interested in such partnerships nor in empowerment which requires long-term presence of donor agencies. Duffield comments in this connection: "For Ignatieff, if there is a problem with this new interventionism, it is that it does not practice the partnership and empowerment that it preaches and is dogged by short-termism and promises betrayed" (Duffield, 2007:8).

*Duffield: Containment and Unending War*

Based on earlier work over the last decade (2002, 2005, 2007, 2008) Duffield provides a fundamental critique on and alternative analysis of the current interventionism, centered on the containment of what he has subsequently called the borderlands and more recently the non-insured. These are seen or imagined as threats to the insured, western, developed life and need to be kept outside (or to be integrated once they are already settled within consumer society). As a consequence Duffield does not take the peace-building and development efforts by the western world in fragile states at face value, but sees them as a form of "containment at the heart of an expansive international security architecture that both separates and reproduces the life-chance divide between the developed and underdeveloped worlds (2008:145). Containment refers to the "various

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<sup>23</sup> Even when the most common time frame for projects is still within five years.

interventions and technologies that seek to restrict or manage the circulation of incomplete and hence potentially threatening life or return it from whence it came" (2008:146). Fragile states are in this connection examined by Duffield as a relation of international governance rather than a concrete thing (2007:159). Building on the "interventionary logic of the responsibility to protect, the fragile state takes up the post-interventionary challenge of the responsibility to reconstruct (2007:160).

In this context, development initiatives focus on the self-reliance and stasis of undeveloped life in situations of fragility. Nowadays, a wide range of demobilization, reintegration and reconstruction activities are part of integrated missions that are implemented by the UN system and a variety of aid and security actors, including NGOs, after a peace accord has been brokered or imposed. Duffield argues:

*"Sovereignty over life within the world's crisis zones is now internationalized, negotiable and contingent. Post-interventionary society is synonymous with contingent sovereignty and the competition between national and international actors over who controls a population conceived of as self-reproducing. In response to the crisis of containment, and especially as a means of capturing and securing non-insured life, the underdeveloped state has once again moved to the center of development policy" (2008:160).*

In Duffield's view sovereignty has moved from 'territorial sovereignty' to 'contingent sovereignty'. It is not the modern state which decides on the core economic welfare functions but it is the 'human security state', where international actors and agencies play a key-role (2007:28). Duffield claims that "the emergence of human security suggests that the NGO movement is no longer outside the state; it has reinvented itself as intrinsic to its reconstruction and power projection" (2007:29). Similarly, the international community has become 'integral part of the government' in fragile and aid-dependent states. One of his main concerns is that in preaching the liberal democracy (good governance and democratization) agenda, the international community fails to abide by the same norms. He states "It is concerned with pre-emption, and, if necessary, it acts beyond morality and the law" (2007:30). Especially the declaration of war on the regime of Saddam Hussein by the Bush administration, is compelling evidence of this statement. In addition Duffield mentions Afghanistan, Mozambique and Sudan.

A second critical author on statebuilding in fragile state contexts is Chandler (2006b). He describes the promotion of good governance and state building by external actors as a neo-Wilsonian attempt that is however insufficiently thought through and analyzed on its limitations and shortcomings. The new focus on failed states and human security have divided the world in places with good and bad governance and has legitimized largely de-politicized external interventions regulated by international bodies, while pushing aside the crucial role of government and domestic politics in such war-to-peace processes. Therefore such interventionist regimes cannot effect the political and societal transformations conditions needed for building a local democracy. Chandler argues that such a democracy-exporting approach under international tutelage is in fact contradictory and unable to reach meaningful and durable results. Internationally it creates an unequal and hierarchical order between the different states.

Following the criticism of Duffield (2008), but also of Chandler (2006b) and Woodward (2007) a critical view from Pureza (2006) contends that there is an urgent need to deconstruct current definitions of fragile and failed state and to clarify the ideological, political and economic dimensions that lie behind the concept. He claims that this is essential to making a contribution to peace building. Peace building literature and aid programs, as he argues, make a mistake in saying that state institutions have collapsed and that the problem of state-building is to build capacity. During war both governments and other alternative administrations continue to perform many functions. His argument is supported by evidence that the failed state might entirely be a product of the neo-liberal doctrine that has dominated the development process over the past three decades. He argues that states have failed due to the 'miniaturization' of their role as part of neo-liberal policies, and cites structural adjustment policies as a root cause.

## **4. Reconceptualizing the 'fragile' state**

Considering the debates which were highlighted in the previous paragraphs, the question arises whether there is a need to reconceptualize the 'fragile' state. Previous debates have shown that there are deficiencies in the operationalization of the fragile states as it is proposed by donors. Furthermore, the academic debate has shown that some of the basic assumptions which underlie the concept of fragile states can be challenged. One of the assumptions of the fragile state debate is that there is a clear distinction between the state and civil society. However, "[a]n identity as 'citizens' and the 'idea of the state' does not meet with much cultural resonance within these societies, as people are relatively disconnected from the state, neither expecting much from state institutions nor willing to fulfill obligations towards the state" (Boege, et al. 2008:6; see also, Lund, 2007; Chabal & Daloz, 1999; Mamdani, 1996). In fact, reality is much more complicated, and according to Lund (2007:1) there are 'twilight institutions', defined as in-between institutions or organizations that engage in state-like performances. "[T]hey are not the state but they exercise public authority." This makes it difficult to make clear distinctions between what is 'state' and what is not. These institutions also challenge the state but they do so in the same language of authority and legitimacy, and at the same time they use the state's procedural and symbolic forms of legitimacy to obtain legitimacy themselves. Lund also notes that with multiple institutions exercising public authority, both state and non-state, "parties in dispute may go 'forum shopping', taking their claim (...) to the institution which they deem most likely to produce satisfactory outcome" (Ibid. 4). Similarly, Baker and Scheye (2007:512) find that in Africa customary courts are the dominant form of regulation and dispute resolution, covering up to 90% of the population. Also for countries in other regions, such as in Afghanistan, Yemen, Solomon Islands, Timor-Leste and Nepal they have similar estimates. Thus, "while government institutions are important, the state qualities of governance, that is, being able to define and enforce collectively binding decisions on members of society, are not exclusively nested in these institutions" (Lund, 2007: 13).

Related to this, Menkhaus (2006) makes the observation that fragile states themselves find alternatives for the provision of (relative) stability in the hinterlands based on non-state authority structures. Rested on the most widely used concept of a fragile state, a state that is unable and/or

unwilling, Menkhaus identifies four possible states. The first is unwilling and unable and thus basically absent; the second is willing and able and with that basically the ideal type sovereign state; the third is able but unwilling and could be characterized as a predatory state; and the final option is that a state is willing but unable. This last option can then, in case of a renewed interest to extend the rule of law to its peripheries, such as for instance threats to the position of the government, discovery of natural resources, public or international pressure, etc., lead to the 'mediated state'. In this case, a state authority lacking other options "has no choice but to work through local intermediaries... [and t]he state's relationship with local governance structures is negotiated, not purchased or coerced" (Ibid. 7). According to Menkhaus, the mediated state approach "is one which combines what is already working locally with what is essential nationally" (Ibid. 12).

An essential point that Menkhaus (2007:75) makes, and a precondition for the rise of his 'mediated state', is that communities cut off from state authority are not passive and "consistently seek to devise arrangements to provide for themselves the core functions that the missing state is supposed to assume, especially basic security." Also Chesterman, et al (2004) highlight that the frequently assumed vacuum of power is rarely present in fragile states. "The mechanisms through which political power is exercised may be less formalized or consistent, but basic questions of how best to ensure the physical and economic security of oneself and one's dependants do not simply disappear when the institutions of the state break down. Non-state actors in such situations may exercise varying degrees of political power over local populations at time providing basic social services." (Chesterman, et al, 2004:1) Similar observations are made by Boege et al. (2008) who also emphasize the point made earlier that state institutions are not the only institutions that fulfill the functions that in the Western model are reserved for the state. Their observations are that there is a multitude of institutions that both influence one another. On the one hand traditional structures and uses often still have huge influences in daily life and also 'infiltrated' and transformed state institutions. As opposed to the ideal-type Weberian state, "...[state] institutions are captured by social forces that make use of them in the interest of traditional, mostly kinship-based, entities" (Boege, et al. 2009: 15). On the other hand, local non-state orders are also affected by the intrusion of the state. Indeed, everything, including customary uses, has been affected by colonialism, evangelism, imperialism, globalization, etc. Customary ways and institutions are thus not to be equated with the ways of the past. This complex nature of governance is further complicated by the emergence and/or growing importance of institutions, movements and formations as a consequence of poor state performance, and their activities can contribute to the further weakening of state structures. As also mentioned by the other authors discussed here, the lack of public delivery by the state causes people to turn to these other social entities for support. According to Boege et al. (2009:17) this then leads to "a situation of a contradictory and dialectic co-existence of forms of sociopolitical organization that have their roots in both non-state indigenous societal structures and introduced state structures", which they call 'hybrid political orders.'

*"In hybrid political orders, diverse and competing authority structures, sets of rules, logics of order, and claims to power co-exist, overlap, interact, and intertwine, combining elements of introduced Western models of governance and elements stemming from local indigenous traditions of governance and politics, with further influences exerted by the forces of globalization and associated societal fragmentation (in various forms: ethnic, tribal, religious).*

*In this environment, the 'state' has no privileged monopolistic position as the only agency providing security, welfare, and representation; it has to share authority, legitimacy, and capacity with other institutions" (Boege et al., 2009:17).*

Albeit with different argumentations, Lund, Menkaus and Boege et al. thus all observe that in what are commonly termed fragile states, there exists a variety of authority structures which take up state roles in the provision of public goods. Where the notion of fragile states has led to interventions aimed at strengthening state institutions, institutions that according to some never even have become a reality in the first place (Chabal & Daloz, 1999:12-16), this perspective would demand a shift from the state-focus to an assessment of existing and working authority structure, and finding ways to build on them. There are a variety of non-state authorities, like chiefs, religious figures, customary kings, big men, and healers, who have to be reckoned with and engaged with in any attempt at peace building and supporting the creation of sustainable political order. Experience shows that ignoring or fighting this hybrid reality leads to considerable difficulty in generating effective and legitimate outcomes (Boege et al, 2009:17). Similarly, Lund (2006: 6-7) argues that we should "invest our energy in an ... enquiry of the hodgepodge of twilight institutions that govern lives in local contexts..." According to Menkhaus (2006:14-15) this does not mean that the support of non-state actors contradicts with simultaneous efforts to build formal state capacity. The decisive factor for a peaceful future in fragile environments "is that 'traditional' non-state and 'modern' state actors are integrated and that they govern co-operatively" (Wulf, 2007: 8).

It should be emphasized that the notions of the 'mediated state' and 'hybrid political orders' are not alternative definitions for the 'fragile state'. Rather, as opposed to the state-centric and normative fragile state concept, they are more an analytical instrument to describe the reality on the ground. Instead of promoting state building along a Western (Weberian) model and its corollary of strengthening of state institutions, which is the consequence of the fragile states label, these notions look at what works locally and how it works. By doing so, it is argued one can formulate an innovative policy, with a much more positive outlook on states that appear weak or fragile:

*"The best outcome of such a novel approach to state formation, based on positive mutual accommodation, would be that new forms of governance emerge combining state institutions, customary institutions, and new elements of citizenship and civil society in networks of governance that are not introduced from the outside, but embedded in the societal structures on the ground" (Boege, et al., 2009:20).*

While this appears like an optimistic perspective on future state building interventions, the involvement of locally existing authority structures in interventions in fragile states is of course not a panacea. For such strategies to work, the sources of local authority must be relatively legitimate, in the eyes of both local communities and of those intervening, and must be committed to peace and stability. Another problem is that customary laws do not always adhere to human rights standards and rarely to gender equality, although perhaps many state governments in fragile contexts do neither, which logically is a problem for donors. Some way must be found to create at least some level of accountability. Problems also arise when customary, sharia and national legal codes and jurisdictions overlap. Also, customary and traditional authorities are not always very inclusive in their decision-making processes and may leave out women and younger generations.

## 5. Conclusion

In the debate and the counter debate on fragile state, we have identified two distinct models, even though each of these two models show many variations and are still in flux. In general, the first model is that of the fragile state, as it is proposed by the major donors with a strong emphasis on the Weberian model of the state and a top-down inclination. The other is derived from the academic counter debate, and is defined with different terms, such as the hybrid political order, twilight institutions or the mediated state. These models, referred to us here with 'hybrid political order', all stress the existence of 'traditional'/'informal' structures of governance that exist outside of the realm of the state. They focus more on what already works within fragile states, and take this as a point of entry.

As we have stipulated above, the fragile state model suffers from a number of deficiencies. First of all, there is much discussion on the causality of fragility. A weak state and 'poor governance' are perceived to contribute to fragility, but there is much debate about whether states are fragile because of government institutions that lack legitimacy, will or capacity, or if these institutions are centrally weak because of economic underdevelopment, geographical circumstances, and ethnic and social tensions. Central in this discussion is the Security Development nexus. According to Menkhaus the policy implications of this line of argument are stark. It not only propels development work far beyond conventional sectors, it also suggests that most conventional post-conflict assistance appears entirely under-equipped to take on the massive, complex task of breaking the political and economic vicious circles reinforcing the conflict trap. This has clear repercussions on one of the hallmarks of the fragile state approach, namely harmonization. According to Patrick & Brown coherence and harmonization will remain problematic because individual governments often avoid frank debate over their goals while most governments regard fragile states as both a development and security challenge, donor capitals differ in the weight they give these two considerations. Furthermore, the concept of harmonization has a clear and partly contradicting impact on another hallmark of the fragile state approach, which is local ownership. Paris & Sisk (2007) make mention of the contradiction of state-building missions which seek to promote national autonomy and self-government, but by means of international intervention. As mentioned above a discrepancy can be found within the OECD principles and Accra Agenda: when donors speak with one voice, their power may result in a donor-driven rather than locally initiated change. This *contradictio in terminis* makes it even harder to push for ownership. Another problem within the fragile state approach is the state centeredness and dilemmas with capacity building. Sen argues that what is missing in much of the discourse on capacity building in fragile states is how to utilize citizens in the rebuilding of democratic government, rather than focusing on fixing fragile states according to an external donor agenda (Sen, 2008:3). Within the Fragile State Debate it has been acknowledged, however, that in reality state-building is a complex and non-linear process in which a multitude of social institutions play a role and often participate in the delivery of public goods. State building may, intentionally or unintentionally, weaken other sources of authority and legitimacy and undermine the process of state building.

While the fragile state model as it is proposed by donors is a normative concept, measuring a state functioning against a OECD-type of state, the hybrid political order takes a different perspective by

analyzing what is there and what works on the ground. Nevertheless, donors find it difficult to work with alternative institutions of power. First of all, it undermines the state monopoly on legitimate violence and service delivery and thus potentially undermines state building efforts. Secondly, there may be issues with corruption, abuse of power and manipulation of local elites, and non-compliance with international human rights standards with the local institutions involved in these hybrid political orders. Thirdly, it creates central dilemmas in donors engagement with fragile situations. Who should donors align with in a hybrid model; with whom lies accountability; how can it be prevented that local initiatives are not contradicting; and how can they be incorporated into larger (inter)national frameworks for development (e.g. aid effectiveness debate)?

Given the limitations of the two concepts the question arises whether one concept should be chosen over the other, or whether these two models can co-exist and become mutually reinforcing/inclusive? What would then be the practical implications for development work?

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## Annex I

### **BOX 1: Definitions of Fragile States by international organizations**

**International Monetary Fund (IMF):** *Fragile states have characteristics that substantially impair their economic and social performance. These include weak governance, limited administrative capacity, chronic humanitarian crises, persistent social tensions, and often, violence or the legacy of armed conflict and civil war. In these countries the poor quality of policies, institutions and governance substantially impairs economic performance, the delivery of basic social services and the efficacy of donor assistance. Such states are least likely to achieve the MDGs. They also have considerable negative spillover effects on economic growth in neighboring countries (IMF, 2008:7).*

**Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD):** *States are fragile where state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations (OECD/DAC, 2007:2).*

**World Bank:** *Describes fragile states as Low-Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS). LICUS often have poor governance and are embroiled in extended internal conflicts or are struggling through tenuous post-conflict or are struggling through tenuous post conflict transitions. They face similar hurdles of widespread lack of security, fractured relations among societal groups, significant corruption, breakdown in the rule of law, absence of mechanisms for generating legitimate power and authority, a huge backlog of investment needs, and limited government resources for development. (World Bank, 2006:XXIII)*

**United States Agency for International Development (USAID):** *USAID used the term fragile states to refer generally to a broad range of failing, failed and recovering states. USAID is using the term 'vulnerable states' to refer to those states unable or unwilling to adequately assure the provision of security and basic services to significant portions of their populations and where the legitimacy of the government is in question. This includes states that are failing or recovering from crisis. USAID is using the term 'crisis states' to refer to those states where the central government does not exert effective control over its own territory or is unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of its territory, where legitimacy of the government is weak or nonexistent, and where violent conflict is a reality or a great risk. (USAID, 2005:1)*

**United Kingdom's Department for International Development (DFID):** *Fragile states are those countries where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people. The most important functions of the state are territorial control, safety and security, capacity to manage public resources, delivery of basic services, ability to protect and support the ways in which the poorest people sustain themselves. (DFID, 2005:7)*

**European Union (EU):** *Fragility refers to weak or failing structures and to situations where the social contract is broken due to the state's incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions, meet its obligations and responsibilities regarding service delivery, management of resources, rule of law, equitable access to power, security and safety of the populace and protection and promotion of citizens rights and freedoms. Public institutions, political processes and social mechanisms that lack effectiveness, inclusiveness or legitimacy drive fragility: conditions are not met for achieving a minimum of institutional and financial*

*development, launching long-term strategies and gradually raising governance standards. In this context, fragility is rooted in high levels of poverty or in inequitable distribution of wealth. (EU 2007:2)*

#### **BOX 2: The importance of the Social Contract**

The OECD emphasizes that fragility is closely related to the 'social contract' between state and society.

*"The social contract/.../ emerges from the interaction between a) expectations that a given society has of a given state; b) state capacity to provide services, including security, and to secure revenue from its population and territory to provide these services (in part a function of economic resources; and c) elite will to direct state resources and capacity to fulfill social expectations. It is crucially mediated by d) the existence of political processes through which the bargain between state and society is struck, reinforced and institutionalized. Finally, e) legitimacy plays a complex additional role in shaping expectations and facilitating political process. Taken together, the interaction among these factors forms a dynamic agreement between state and society on their mutual roles and responsibilities – a social contract". (OECD, 2008:17)*

#### **BOX 3: OECD's 'principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States'**

The basics:

- 1. The context as the starting point.*
- 2. Do no harm.*

The role of state-building and peace building:

- 3. Focus on state-building as the central objective.*
- 4. Prioritize prevention.*
- 5. Recognize the links between political, security and development objectives.*
- 6. Promote non-discrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies.*

The practicalities:

- 7. Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts.*
- 8. Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors.*
- 9. Act fast ... but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance.*
- 10. Avoid pockets of exclusion.*

#### **BOX 4: Coordination mechanisms among donors**

The OECD/DAC has formulated the need for coordination and harmonization as follows: "Agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors. This can happen even in the absence of strong government leadership. Where possible, it is important to work together on: upstream analysis; joint assessments; shared strategies; and coordination of political engagement.

Practical initiatives can take the form of joint donor offices, an agreed division of labor among donors, delegated co-operation arrangements, multi-donor trust funds and common reporting and financial requirements. Wherever possible, international actors should work jointly with national reformers in government and civil society to develop a shared analysis of challenges and priorities. In the case of countries in transition from conflict or international disengagement, the use of simple integrated planning tools, such as the transitional results matrix, can help set and monitor realistic priorities" (OECD/DAC 2007, principle. 8).

**BOX 5: Round Table 7: Aid effectiveness in fragile states and conflict situations**

Round Table 7 (RT7) was organized to review progress in implementing the Paris Declaration within the particularly challenging contexts of situations of fragility and conflict.

The discussions in Accra benefited from a preparatory meeting held in Kinshasa in July 2008 which resulted in the adoption of a *Kinshasa Statement* which sets out for the first time a consensus between donors and partner countries on priority actions in situations of conflict and fragility.

The meeting agreed to prioritize the following actions:

**Monitoring the Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations.**

This agreement is important as it commits donors and partners, for the first time, to track progress on issues such as, security and development, policy coherence between diplomatic, security and development actors and resource allocations to situations of fragility.

**Addressing peace building and state-building priorities.**

In Accra it was agreed that in order to make progress work is needed on the preconditions for achieving the MDGs by addressing state building and peace building needs. The AAA (Accra Agenda for Action) sets out the need to define state-building and peace building objectives, at country level and internationally. The Round Table launched an international dialogue to make this a reality. For donor countries, a set of common goals on state building will also be instrumental to ensure that different policy communities (diplomatic, defense, development) within their governments jointly support peace building and state building.

**Improving the Delivery of International Assistance for the reduction of Fragility and Conflict**

The Round Table discussed several key constraints that need to be overcome in order to improve the international response in situations of fragility and in particular during the period immediately following conflict. Engagement is often too slow and donors lack the capacity to respond rapidly. There is also little clarity on how to transition from humanitarian to development-related approaches (World Bank, 2008).

**BOX 6: The 'Whole of government approach'**

A common ground in the fragile state strategies of several bilateral aid agencies around the globe is the 'whole of government approach'. Fragile states are seen to pose such a challenge that not one donor department should be working in the state but a whole range of departments. In April 2005 several countries (among them are: Canada, France, Germany, The Netherlands, The United Kingdom, The United States) endorsed a 'whole of government' approach to fragile states. To this end several donors have drafted government or agency-wide fragile state strategies, created units to integrate interdepartmental prevention or reconstruction efforts, and experimented with new funding arrangements to promote interdepartmental collaboration. The whole of government approach, or 3D approach, includes the fields of development, defense and diplomacy.

**BOX 7: Transitional Result Matrix**

The Transitional Result Matrix of the UNDG/ECHA, states the following: "*Especially in the fluid and politically charged context that characterizes these transitions, national ownership cannot be understood to mean consensus, nor does it refer exclusively to national government actors. Rather, ownership runs along a spectrum of participation, dialogue, sharing information, contribution, and sufficient agreement between key state and non-state stakeholders on a shared vision, both to mobilize all available actors in support of peace and to ensure that the transitional process will not be derailed by unexpected opposition*" (UNDG, 2008:7)

**BOX 8: Alignment**

The OECD Principles for good international engagement in fragile states and situations recommend international donors to: "Align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts. Where governments demonstrate political will to foster development, but lack capacity, international actors should seek to align assistance behind government strategies. Where capacity is limited, the use of alternative aid instruments —such as international compacts or multi-donor trust funds—can facilitate shared priorities and responsibility for execution between national and international institutions. Where alignment behind government-led strategies is not possible due to particularly weak governance or violent conflict, international actors should consult with a range of national stakeholders in the partner country, and seek opportunities for partial alignment at the sectoral or regional level. Where possible, international actors *should seek to avoid activities which undermine national institution-building* [italic added], such as developing parallel systems without thought to transition mechanisms and long term capacity development. It is important to identify functioning systems within existing local institutions, and work to strengthen these" (source: OECD, 2007, principle 7).