

Editorial

This issue of ConflictINFOCUS adds a seldom referred to dimension that is now increasingly gaining focus i.e. how civilians are effected by and are effecting conflict. The Forum in this issue highlights the preventive aspects of conflict prevention from a grassroots perspective. The section on EU and Conflict Prevention refers to the EU-Syria Agreement in light of Europe's steps towards conflict prevention approaches.

Europe has been increasing its role as a security actor in the Mediterranean region. Roberto Aliboni in his article "The Non-Proliferation Clause in a Preventive Perspective" comments on the developments in the EU Conflict Prevention Policy in the Mediterranean region with reference to co-operation in fighting terrorism and the non-proliferation clause on Weapons of Mass Destruction. As a step forward in fostering cooperation under the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), inclusion of this clause can give space to targeting other co-operational interests in the region.

The literature on conflict prevention has been witnessing a major growth in the societal aspects of conflicts, and the focus has been increasing on the role of civil society in transforming conflict situations and in preventing conflicts. This issue of ConflictINFOCUS highlights the role of civil society as an actor and as a subject in conflict. Civil society has the power, energy and motives to introduce change, to control conflicts, and to initiate effective mechanisms in deterring future conflict. Bruce Stanley in his article "The Role of Civil Society in Conflict Prevention" discusses the time, mechanisms, and results of organized civic involvement in transforming, managing and preventing conflicts. These aspects are discussed in a preventive conflict-oriented understanding of civil society's role.

Civil society represents people's voices, but where there is no presence of civil society, what and how does the civil population survive, what means of livelihood do they develop in situations of instability and violent conflicts. Do these livelihood and survival strategies reshape political agendas of conflictual groups? Does this lead to these groups deriving membership and support from the grassroots in their bid to survive? These interrelations are explained and discussed with reference to the Iraqi case in Christopher Parker's article "Livelihood, the Aggregation Problem, and the Persistence of War: Re-framing the Iraq Insurgency."

Discussing the economic aspect of the Middle East conflict in relation to economic reform, Ibrahim Saif points out in his article "Economic Development as a Remedy Factor to Conflict Resolution in the Middle East" the relation between poverty, unemployment, and violence. He also draws on factors of economic pressures in Arab countries, externally-lead reforms, and the internal and external obstacles to fostering economic development. ■

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THE NON-PROLIFERATION CLAUSE IN A PREVENTIVE PERSPECTIVE

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On October 19, 2004 the EU and Syria succeeded in finalizing the negotiation of their Association Agreement. The news is important not only because the EU-Syria Agreement completes the network of bilateral relations planned by the Barcelona Declaration within the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), but also because it contains clauses establishing co-operation on fighting terrorism and on non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction (WMD). These clauses are completely new to this kind of Mediterranean Agreements. While the completion of the Agreements' network will allow for more effective management of EMP economic relations, the two fresh clauses are intended to enhance political and security relations in two very sensitive fields.

In this note we take into consideration the WMD non-proliferation clause, looking at it as a further development in EU conflict prevention policy in the Mediterranean region and commenting on its perspectives.

The clause of WMD non-proliferation, stems from the broader EU policy in this field. Presently, the key EU policy statement regarding WMD non-proliferation is the "EU Strategy Against Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction", endorsed by the European Council on 12-13 December 2003. This strategy, in turn, ties up to the broader European Security Strategy, endorsed in the same Council's session, which identifies WMD non-proliferation as one of the most relevant challenges affecting the Union's security⁽¹⁾. On the other hand, the strategy is the most updated and coherent policy framework relating to non-proliferation endorsed by the EU so far. Behind it there is a long development, from the establishment of Euratom at the very beginning of the European integration history up to the June 2003 Thessaloniki Declaration on non-proliferation of WMD.

In broad terms, non-proliferation is a regime intended to implement peace building in international relations. As such, it is a most significant instrument of conflict prevention as well⁽²⁾. The EU Strategy against WMD proliferation must be regarded as one such instruments of peace building within the broader EU policy framework to prevent conflict⁽³⁾. While most of EU instruments of conflict prevention belong to the economic and developmental realm, non-proliferation policies are of a more security oriented and political character. For this reason, a Special Personal Representative of the EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy manages these policies within the Council.

The agenda of the EU non-proliferation strategy is

established in its third chapter and its implementation is monitored every six months by a report generated by the special representative for WMD non-proliferation. According to the strategy's agenda, the EU takes action in order to (a) strengthening the international system of non-proliferation; (b) pursuing universalisation of multilateral agreements; (c) reinforcing strict implementation and compliance with these agreements; (d) co-operating closely with key partners; (e) assisting third countries in their non-proliferation endeavors.

Among the policies intended to achieve the just mentioned finalities of the agenda, the EU strategy points out the "mainstreaming of non-proliferation policies into the EU's wider relations with third countries ... inter alia by introducing the non-proliferation clause in agreements with third countries". Thus far, this policy has been applied in a EU-Tajikistan agreement and, as we know, to EU-Syria relations. The same clause is being presently negotiated with Pakistan, the Mercosur and within the framework of the ACP agreement's review. The mainstreaming will go on as soon as other EU agreements will be worked out or renewed.

The mainstreaming of the non-proliferation clause is instrumental to achieving the universalisation of the non-proliferation regime and compliance with it, as required by the Strategy. Beside its universal and global dimension, the EU policy is, however, concerned from a regional dimension as well. This regional dimension means that special attention is devoted to neighbouring countries and areas because of the more immediate impact they may have on EU security - a concept pointed out very clearly in the broader European Security Strategy ("Even in an era of globalization, geography is still important. It is in the European interest that countries on our borders are well-governed."⁽⁴⁾). In this sense, EU non-proliferation policies are particularly concerned with Russia and Ukraine. (These countries

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(1) A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, Brussels, 12 December 2003; the document is available in the web site of the EU Secretary General/High Representative for the CFSP.

(2) For these concepts see ICG, EU Crisis Response Capability. Institutions and Processes for Conflict Prevention and Management, ICG Issues Report No. 2, Brussels, 2001; SWP-CPN, Conflict Prevention and Peace-Building: A Practical Guide, Berlin, December 2000.

(3) The European Council now included in the "Göteborg Programme on the Prevention of Violent Conflict", adopted this broader policy in June 2001.

(4) A Secure Europe in a Better World. European Security Strategy, cit

are assisted technically and financially to convert their nuclear capabilities from military to civil uses). Further than the European East and its other adjoining areas, namely, the Mediterranean and the Near East, are also particularly concerned with EU policies. In fact, an early commitment against non-proliferation was included in the Barcelona Declaration. This commitment has been neglected so far. The commitment is now coming back, beginning with the inclusion of the non-proliferation clause in the EU-Syria agreement.

The inclusion of the clause in the EU-Syria Agreement is but a first step, as the EU policy - as just said - is directed at mainstreaming the clause in all agreements with third countries. Thus also in all agreements with the Mediterranean partners in the EMP. It is likely that the inclusion of the clause in outstanding EMP Association Agreements will be negotiated within the framework of the new European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The latter is not going to supplant the EMP, still, in being juxtaposed to the latter, it will require a re-negotiation of existing bilateral understandings.

In this round of new talks, the EU will ask the partners to add a clause on WMD non-proliferation and one on fighting terrorism to existing agreements. No doubt, the addition of the non-proliferation clause may give way to more problems than that on countering terrorism. Dr. Andrew Cottey from the Cork University has listed the questions arising from the perspective of mainstreaming the non-proliferation clause in a paper presented at a seminar organised by the Irish Institute of European Affairs⁽⁵⁾. Among such questions, the following look most important:

- Third countries may resist the clause or seek amendments or additions; would the EU apply differentiation or would it apply a uniform clause?
- Would the EU be able to ascertain whether the partner is abiding by the clause?
- What would EU response be in case the clause is not applied or its application proves unsatisfactory?
- How much assistance would the clause require from the EU, and would the latter be able to bring to bear the necessary resources?

The problem of differentiation vs. uniformity is already there. In fact, the EU is planning some degree of differentiation. However, the Syrian demands for modifying the clause, as arranged by the EU⁽⁶⁾, went beyond what the EU would be prepared to accept. They reflected Syrian dilemmas of security vis-à-vis Israel's nuclear capabilities and the perceived need to keep some sort of deterrence in the form of chemical and biological capabilities. The same perception is very popular with other front-line Arab countries in the Near East.

A number of EU member states insisted for Syria to accept the clause as it is. Syria accepted, perhaps because

of the extreme pressure this country is presently subjected to as a consequence of the occupation of Iraq by the US-led Coalition since 2003 and the American sanctions activated in the Spring of 2004. However, it is not clear what is going to happen when the EU will ask other EMP countries, like Israel or Egypt to include the clause on their Association Agreements. It is obvious that the EU has to maintain a substantive uniformity in applying the policy in the Mediterranean, unless incurring in a glamorous double standard case and killing the very goals it wants to achieve.

The other questions put forward by Dr. Cottey reflect other EU weaknesses or problems in applying the policy. While the EU is becoming aware that more resources are needed to implement its multidimensional non-proliferation strategy, whether the EU will be able to monitor and control the outcomes of the policy is not clear yet. In any case, the question of controlling non-proliferation policies' outcomes should be regarded in a context of co-operative security. In other words, the question is whether there will be joint willingness and action to control rather than whether the EU will be able to do it alone.

In conclusion, the EU is trying to enlarge the spectrum of its conflict prevention capabilities. While its preventative policies predicated on economic instruments and geared to enhance development and increase economic growth or welfare in the middle-long term look generally acceptable to its partners, policies involving political and security questions may be less so. The attempt of the EU is, however, legitimate and positive. It looks at reinforcing conflict prevention in general, in its neighbourhood, and in the Mediterranean in particular. It deserves attention and support. ■

(5) Andrew Cottey, *The EU and Non-Proliferation: From Rhetoric to Reality?* paper presented at the seminar on "Combating Weapons of Mass Destruction and the Role of the European Union", organised by the Institute of European Affairs in Dublin, 16 September 2004, accessed on 12 November 2004.

(6) The text of the clause is available in the HR/SG web site.

LIVELIHOOD, THE AGGREGATION PROBLEM, AND THE PERSISTENCE OF WAR: RE-FRAMING THE IRAQ INSURGENCY

BY CHRISTOPHER PARKER*

Introduction

The persistence of war⁽¹⁾ constitutes the most blatant manifestation of America's policy failure in Iraq. The reconstitution of the Iraqi state remains the international community's most serious policy challenge. Some eighteen months in to the war, it seems clear that the consequences of Iraq's forced revolution have proven quite different than those intended by the "brains" behind the project. Freedom, democracy, social modernization, and market liberalism have not become the buzzwords of a new Iraq. Instead, the invasion --and the subsequent collapse of an already enfeebled Iraqi state-- has generated an entirely different set of (equally fundamental) issues for political sociologists and policy-makers to consider. My concern here is to reframe the central issues of war and state reconstitution in Iraq, and to generate alternative and hopefully more productive ways of thinking about the interplay between them.

Re-framing the Problematique

The phenomena of war and state (re)constitution are, of course, deeply intertwined.⁽²⁾ The ways in which we understand the first problem has profound implications on how we approach the second. Yet --largely due to the ubiquitous political conceit of attributing violence to "foreign terrorists" and "Ba'hist elements," and the journalistic convenience of explaining the conflict with reference to ethnic and confessional difference-- important questions about the social dynamics underlying violent conflict in Iraq remain largely unasked.

This essay redirects inquiry in two significant ways. First, I argue that we need to better understand grassroots responses to the war in Iraq, and the ways in which these responses in turn feed back to (re)shape the conflict arena. As Korf asserts: "In contrast to a widespread perception, civilian life does not cease in war-affected areas. Wars do not create a vacuum --rather the civil population has to find a way of surviving in the context of a dramatic increase in risk and uncertainty, political instability, violence and economic decline."⁽³⁾ This insight draws attention to "livelihood strategies" --a concept sketched in greater detail below-- as a variable that intervenes at the grassroots, micro level of social interaction to shape the contours and outcomes of conflict.⁽⁴⁾

The second "big issue" addressed here regards our awareness of what these grassroots dynamics mean for our understanding of agency within the macro level project of state reconstitution. All too frequently, change is assumed to disseminate from "above" to "below." Mainstream liberal transitions models in particular tend to operate from the assumption that adjustments/change

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- (1) For the purposes of this paper, I define war as prolonged high- or medium-intensity violent conflict characterized by a significant number of casualties distributed over a geographical area broad enough to include a varied set of actors distinguished by, inter alia, economic interest, institutional loyalties, and/or communal ideologies. Drawing on Douma (2003) Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004) usefully define a war economy as processes related to generating "the sources of income and the generation of economic means at the disposal of warring parties, which can be transformed into either the assets necessary for the conduct of war or into the supplies to maintain a support base" (see Douma, P. *The Political Economy of Internal Conflict: A Comparative Analysis of Angola, Columbia, Sierra Leone and Sri Lanka* [The Hague: Netherlands Institute of International Affairs, November 2003]). See also Picard's (2000) for elaboration on the "militia economy" (Picard, Elizabeth. "The Political Economy of Civil War in Lebanon" in Steven Heydeman (ed.) *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East* (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), pp. 292-324).
- (2) See, for eg., Tilly, Charles. "Reflections on the History of European State Making" in Tilly (ed.) *The Formation of National States in Western Europe* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975); Tilly, Charles. "War Making and State Making as Organized Crime" in Evans, Rueschmeyer, and Skocpol (eds.) *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Heydeman, Steven (ed.). *War, Institutions, and Social Change in the Middle East* (London and Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
- (3) Korf, Benedict "War, Livelihoods and Vulnerability in Sri Lanka" *Development and Change* 35(2): 275-295 (2004), p. 276.
- (4) Here I am drawing on a recent body of innovative work that might collectively be referred to as "the conflict and livelihood" literature. See, inter alia, Koen Vlassenroot and Timothy Raeymaekers (eds.) *Conflict and Social Transformation in Eastern DR Congo* [Ghent: Academia Press, 2004]; Collinson, Sarah (ed.) *Power, Livelihoods, and Conflict: Case Studies in Political Economy Analysis for Humanitarian Action*; *Humanitarian Policy Group Report 13* (London: Overseas Development Institute, February 2003); Longley, K. *Livelihoods, Conflict and Humanitarian Response: A Synthesis of Current Practice*, Working Paper 182 (London: Overseas Development Institute, 2002); Murray, Charles. *Livelihoods Research: Some Conceptual and Methodological Issues* (Manchester: University of Manchester Chronic Poverty Research Center; 2001); Chambers, R. "Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: A Key Strategy for the People, Environment and Development" in Conroy and Litvinoff (eds.) *The Greening of Aid* (London: Earthscan, 1988); and Chambers, R. and G. Conway. *Sustainable Rural Livelihoods: Practical Concepts for the 21st Century* (Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex, 1992). As will be seen below, the problematique sketched here departs from the concerns that typify the "livelihood and conflict" literature to address problems of institutional articulation and state reconstitution.

at the macro (state, interstate, political economy) level have a direct and linear bearing on the choices of rational, economizing individual actors. The theory presumes uniformity in the diffusion of change agents across time and space. It also assumes a singular rationality; i.e., that the meaning or logic of macro level change will (or should) be understood in more or less the same way by all actors within a system. Yet in the real world, change engenders differentiated responses in both state and society. An understanding of the complex and dialectical ways in which these various responses interact across time, space, and scale is crucial to any project of developing a multi-layered understanding of conflict as part of a broader process of change.

Perhaps one of the most straightforward ways in which to frame this problematique is in terms of an “aggregation problem:” i.e., the way in which “unintended, unexpected, unpredictable, and yet seemingly inevitable collective outcomes result from a set of more or less purposeful individual actions.”⁽⁵⁾ Specifically, I suggest that the project of forced revolution in Iraq has intersected with, and broken down, legacies of social organization and state policy to create a situation in which grassroots strategies designed to “optimize” individual and household livelihood end up reproducing the collectively “suboptimal” phenomenon of war.⁽⁶⁾ The persistence of war is thus seen, at least in part, as resulting from dilemmas that arise in the coordination of collective action across space, time, and organizational scale. The “aggregation problem” also suggests attention to the institutional dilemmas that have accumulated as a result of state collapse and prolonged violent conflict.⁽⁷⁾ It is at this intermediate institutional level that the struggles over state reconstitution in Iraq will play themselves out.

Framing War “from Below:” Livelihood as an Intervening Variable

Over the past couple of years, a still small (but almost certainly growing) group of scholars have taken “sustainable rural livelihoods analysis” --an approach developed by the UK Department for International Development to more comprehensively appraise the context and impact of local, grassroots development assistance-- and applied it to develop a political economy perspective on grassroots collective action in conflict situations.⁽⁸⁾ The emphasis is on the ways in which conflict effects change in the “livelihood assets” of local actors and communities, and the ways in which these assets become contingent upon and embedded within broader processes of political economy. While it is beyond the scope of this essay to present the livelihoods approach in any detail, a brief sketch should suggest its utility to the problematique at hand.

Sustainable livelihood analysis --the approach from which this “conflict and livelihood” literature proceeds-- sets out to appraise the structural environment in which

actors make decisions by looking at “where people are, what they have, and what their needs and interests are.”⁽⁹⁾ It directs research to the realm of everyday experience and intersubjective understanding to the level at which people most immediately make sense of the world, declare intentions, and act purposively. Empirically, attention is directed towards identifying the particular bundle of assets available to individuals, households, and local communities as they navigate politically and economically contingent environments, and --more specifically-- to the strategies invoked as these assets are employed towards articulating sustainable and meaningful livelihood outcomes. As the strategic environment changes, so too does the composition and potential value of a given bundle of assets, which potentially induces a struggle to realign assets and actively engage in the definition of the context in which they might be used to best effect.⁽¹⁰⁾ Needless to say, in conditions where inputs traditionally associated with the state or regime are rapidly withdrawn and replaced with new inputs (including) competing definitions of the social and moral framework of action, the situation is inherently volatile.

As it has been applied to the study of conflict, livelihoods analysis has been integrated with a dynamic political economy approach concerned with processes that create, sustain, and transform power relationships (i.e., distributions of assets and their utility in a changing

(5) Lichbach, Mark I. “Contending Theories of Contentious Politics and the Structure-Action Problem of Social Order” *Annual Review of Political Science* (1998) 1:401-424; p. 405.

(6) This formulation of the problematique as an aggregation problem of collective action draws on a couple of paragraphs I contributed to the introduction of a volume edited by my colleagues Koen Vlassenroot and Tim Raeymaekers (2004). Their work introduced me to the utility of livelihood as a variable in conflict analysis. I “re-appropriate” this formulation (of the aggregation problem), and develop the idea further for the purposes of this essay with their knowledge. My choice of the terms “rational” and “irrational” here should be treated with care. Is war irrational? Not inherently. What I refer to here is the dilemma as faced by Iraqis themselves: while most-in spite of genuine grievances that have accumulated against the occupation--would say that ending the state of war is a top priority, many individuals are nevertheless caught up in patterns of action that contribute to the reproduction of conflict. Similarly, “satisficing” might be more appropriate than “rational”--with its strong economic overtones--to characterize the micro level logic I elaborate on here.

(7) This implies attention to the ways in which individual and household coping strategies become embedded within-and/or aggregate so as to reproduce--the very dynamics that underpin the violent conflict itself.

(8) See endnote 3.

(9) Chambers 1988, cited in Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers (2004), p. 14.

(10) As Collinson (2003:11) notes, prolonged violent conflict causes “people to adapt their behavior and their livelihoods in order to survive or to minimize risk, or to capitalize on the opportunities that conflict presents.”

strategic environment) across time and space. It thus also seeks to understand the linkages between the “life world” of micro-level actors and “system world” of states and the global economy. The political economy approach calls attention to new complexes of social power and accumulation that emerge at the shifting intersections of social, economic, and geographical processes of scale. Under conditions of state collapse (or withdrawal/rapid loss of capacity), power relations may coalesce around a new nexus of forces, which become increasingly territorialized. The need to stabilize this new “territorial fix” in turn generates a process whereby patterns of wealth accumulation become socially embedded in local configurations of action and meaning: configurations, which may themselves have been reshaped by the conflict environment. The coalition that emerges as dominant within this new fix often appropriates state “functions” of economic regulation and redistribution.⁽¹¹⁾ Indeed, conflict can be seen to center in part around a struggle over the remains of the state and the international legitimacy and openings that can only be fully attained with reference to the formal role of the state in international affairs.

The emergent “political complex”⁽¹²⁾ or “militia economy”⁽¹³⁾ establishes a framework of hegemony over livelihood strategies and integrates them into a broader political economy of conflict. The state is thus bypassed as an intermediary between local patterns of economic production and exchange and broader patterns of regional and global political economy. Reference to the concept of “livelihood” calls attention not only to the economic logic underlying the conflict, but also to the need of individuals to “embed” strategies of economic survival and accumulation within broader social and institutional frameworks. Indeed, the coping strategies of both households and dominant local actors become embedded within the conflict environment and frequently—with tragic irony—contribute to the reproduction of that environment. By actively orienting livelihood strategies toward these emergent patterns of hegemony, individuals actively participate in reproducing the conflict arena “from below.” In many respects, Iraq’s forced revolution has introduced a violent struggle for hegemony over individual and collective livelihood strategies as these might reflect --and be reflected in-- any post-Saddam statist order. This struggle for hegemony is most apparent in efforts to recruit Iraqis into the security forces and the corresponding effort by insurgents to kill those recruits.

The livelihood and conflict literature to date has primarily concerned itself with the political and structural implications of humanitarian and development interventions in conflict environments. Particular attention has been given to the role humanitarian interventions play in shaping and perhaps even sustaining the kinds of emergent “political complexes” characterized above, and by extending their role in prolonging conflicts within which these complexes are embedded.

From Micro to Macro:

The Inevitability of the Statist Referent

While it is probably far from the minds of the vast majority of grassroots actors involved in the conflict, the state is --as a “compulsory unit” of political and socioeconomic organization on the world stage-- an inevitable referent in the conflict. Even under conditions of state institutional collapse, the “idea” or “effect” of the state has meaning, even if only by virtue of its existence as a negative space on the map. The very presence of borders with neighboring states, for example, creates opportunities to politically manipulate economic differentials across space and influences the shape of the conflict arena. Many of the “new wars” might not respect borders, but combatants do take advantage of them. By the same token, the existence of a project of state reconstitution (or a “transition process” in places like the DR Congo) implies inputs that influence actor calculations and power dynamics within the conflict arena. Accordingly, even as state institutions decay to the point of seeming irrelevance (perhaps in some cases a misleading assumption), there is still a sense in which the dynamic of interaction between local and global actor reproduce the “effect of the state”⁽¹⁴⁾ even if only as an arena of war.

Perhaps influenced by the neo-conservative contempt for the state as well as the current fetish for “governance” over “government,” American and British policy-makers seem to have forgotten the state altogether. This is not to mention that the last blow to the Iraqi state was not the war itself, but Paul Bremer’s decision to simply dissolve what remained. The job of liberal “governance” was—at least in part—delegated to well-connected segments of corporate America. Not only did this add to the “free-for-all” climate of Iraq’s reconstruction, it costs tens if not hundreds of thousands of Iraqi’s their livelihood.

A resulting irony of the Iraq misadventure is that after characterizing “failed states” as a grave threat to international security in the 21st century, this is precisely what the invasion seems to have accomplished. The state as an institution and as a point of reference for an ensemble of informal power relationships (e.g., redistributive networks and tribally grounded alliances) controlled from the center (what Charles Tripp has

(11) Picard (2000); Reno, William. “Sovereign Predators and Non-State Groups Protectors?” Paper presented at the Conference on Curbing Human Rights Violations by Armed Groups, Vancouver, Canada, 13-15 November 2003.

(12) Duffield, Mark. *Global Governance and the New Wars: The Merging of Development and Security* (London: Zed Books, 2001); Vlassenroot and Raeymaekers. “The Politics of Rebellion and Intervention in Ituri: The Emergence of a New Political Complex?” *African Affairs* vol. 103 (2004), pp. 385-412.

(13) See Picard (2000)

(14) On “the effect of the state,” see Mitchell, Timothy. “The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics” *American Political Science Review* vol. 85, no. 1 (March 1991); pp. 77-96.

(15) Tripp, Charles. Presentation at the annual meeting of the British Society for Middle Eastern Studies (BRISMES), July 2003.

referred to as “the shadow state”⁽¹⁵⁾) simply disintegrated with the progression of American and British troops. Nevertheless, a territorial understanding of Iraq as the “compulsory unit of political organization” remains. As of 29 June 2004, the American authorities have installed a government, but Iraq remains without a state. Indeed, the Iraqi government has largely delegated the effort of securing the monopoly on coercive violence to external actors. In sum, Iraq now shares with a few other regions of the world the distinction of being a society negotiating war and experimenting with state building under the peculiar conditions of 21st century globalization.

The project of forced revolution seemed in some ways premised on the idea that “governance” rather than “government” would be crucial to the building of a new Iraq. The neo-con planners of the war and their Blairist cohorts reduced the project of Iraqi reconstruction to the establishment of “appropriate” macro level “governance” structures, and ignored attention to those manifestations of state institutional capacity that are closest to people and that potentially make a difference in people’s lives. Although much maligned in both academic and policy-oriented analysis over the past two decades, the state remains the only meaningful framework --the central institutional complex-- of any meaningful democratic and developmentalist order. If the state is not effective as an instrument of redistribution and change, then there is little reason for collective action to orient itself in the direction of the state (e.g., in the form of traditional political parties, lobby groups, and civil society formations).⁽¹⁶⁾

In Iraq today, the state as such is not a primary actor in the war. Indeed, one may even say that it has very little real institutional existence, but exists only as an effect of strategic interaction within the conflict arena, and by virtue of the above mentioned obligatory character of states in the world system. Nevertheless, the state in a somewhat more abstract sense --as an effect and as a strategic arena-- remains a crucial variable.

The state serves as a strategic referent of the conflict arena by virtue of its potentialities as much as by virtue of its actual capacities. Indeed, where the state has very limited capacity, actors might not see the immediate advantage of trying to capture the formal institutions of the state, but they nevertheless fear the consequences if rivals were to do so. Even the residual existence of the Iraqi state serves as a strategic resource by virtue of its ability to act as a pole of orientation and communication with external agents, institutions, and stakeholders. The state is dead; long live the state.

Between Micro and Macro: The Dialectics of Forced Revolution

The political economy perspective on livelihood discussed above tends toward seeing violence as “integrative.” In other words, violence leverages the integration of

grassroots coping strategies into broader processes of political economy, it leads to the overlap and even convergence of licit and illicit markets, etc. Framed with reference to the problem of Iraqi state reconstitution, however, the violence is “disintegrative.” The relationship between war and state making in the 21st century is inevitably very different than that identified by Tilly and colleagues for Europe in earlier centuries. By this I mean not only the obvious point that contemporary insurgent wars reflect the disintegration of a domestic statist order, but that the interaction between local and global patterns of meaning and interest in the contemporary world system may inherently produce dilemmas that problematize state reconstitution. Force has been used to crush emerging structural challenges to the agents of a new statist order, but this very violence undermines the types of institutionalization that are crucial to state stability in the long term.

Policy-makers in Washington and London seem to have presumed that liberal state reconstitution in Iraq was a rationally self-evident outcome of the fall of Saddam’s regime. Markets and civil society would emerge, as it were, from the ashes of a despotic regime like Pallas Athena from the head of Zeus. References to WMD aside, that war might be mobilized as a “change agent” in the service of a new “liberal imperialism” is one point on which Tony Blair and the American neo-cons were in clear agreement. The whole project was grounded in an ideologically optimistic understanding of change dynamics.

War is not simply a transformative event, it is a transformative process. It creates as it destroys; and it

(16) “Democracy” would be introduced as a mechanism more to publicly maintain a balance of power between the major political groups in the country than as an arena within which to shape distributive outcomes and direct state power; without meaningful institutional capacities embedded within the Iraqi state, it potentially serves as little more than a fig-leaf and exit strategy. Indeed, as Larry Diamond (“What Went Wrong in Iraq” *Foreign Affairs* vol. 83, no. 5 [September/October 2004], pp. 34–56) rightly notes, elections in the absence of security might create an incentive by some to increase levels of violence. A potentially more meaningful outcome is that it gives various Iraqi actors a meaningful exit strategy from violent conflict and thus creates some space and time for institutions to develop.

(17) American firepower is not the only factor undermining the consolidation of a militia economy in Iraq. The massive presence of private “security contractors” providing military “services” in Iraq, further undermines the ability of warring groups to appropriate resources and leverage participation in the construction of a post-war statist order. These private companies have been subcontracted by the Americans to protect many of the economic installations and regulatory agents that would putatively serve as instruments for localized militia accumulation. Not surprisingly, security contractors and the Iraqis who have been employed by them have become prime targets of the insurgency. The privatization of public (dis)order in Iraq puts issues of “security” -- and more specifically the definition and instrumentalization of “security”-- beyond the realm of publicly contestable institutions and shared norms.

introduces new inputs (aid, weapons, private contractors,⁽¹⁷⁾ and armies) into the given social arena (in this case, the territorial arena defined by reference to a now all but nonexistent Iraqi state). War does not simply present us with a dichotomy between chaos and order manifested at, and through, the level of the national state. Rather, it dialectically produces new poles of power, hegemony, and accumulation embedded at scales below that of the national state, but nevertheless potentially integrated over time into broader processes of political economy. War produces new logics of production, exchange, and accumulation (it shapes markets). All of this in turn influences the patterns of alliance and interaction that shape articulations of power and modalities of wealth accumulation.

Nevertheless, the tendency to view actors and mobilizational contexts on the Iraqi stage as fixed and given remains strong, and obscures much about the underlying dynamics of conflict and state constitution in Iraq. The collapse of the Iraqi state and the introduction of new material, ideological, mobilizational inputs associated with war, occupation, and relief efforts have not simply acted upon stable social configurations that were “liberated” by (or alternatively, passive victims of) the invasion. Rather, these inputs have inevitably led to profound changes in modalities of power and authority within Iraq, and established new balances of power both within and between existing groups.⁽¹⁸⁾ Two extreme examples illustrate the point: at one end, the war led to the mobilization of previously subaltern groups around the charismatic figure of Muqtada al-Sadr; and at the other end, Iyad Alawi, a formerly marginal exile figure now (at least in theory) directs the firepower of the world’s most powerful military machine.

One significant feature of the Iraqi context, at present, is that the massive presence of US and British troops in Iraq undermine the development of a “militia economy” in Iraq. The US led occupation has not managed to consolidate a legitimate (nor, for that matter, an illegitimate) monopoly of coercive violence in Iraq. However, they have been able to prevent, for the most part, militias from consolidating control over territory and gradually acquiring qualities of “stateness” expressed in practices of economic governance and social mediation within territories under militia control. The destruction of the Mehdi Army and the ongoing siege of Faluja are cases in point. But force alone is not enough to meaningfully bind livelihoods increasingly embedded in war to an all but non-existent national state.

The aggregation problem referred to above suggests a “low ceiling” that blocks institutionalization at or beyond intermediate levels of collective action. As attempts to project grassroots livelihood strategies --using violence or “diplomacy”-- into broader institutional frameworks is blocked by US military intervention and/or conflict with other social groups, the formations within which

these strategies are embedded will either breakdown and generate ever more anarchic violence, or they will re-articulate and reassert themselves vis-à-vis the project of state reconstitution “from above.” Conflict begets conflict.

The failure of both occupation authorities and the new Iraqi government, to develop institutionalized channels for the integration of these formations, into the new order raises the bar of “success” in Iraq to total victory over the insurgency. As Karen Ballentine has astutely noted with regard to insurgencies in other parts of the world, “Casting insurgents as mere criminals may lead to a profound mischaracterization of what is really at stake, [and] may foreclose opportunities for positive diplomatic engagement.”⁽¹⁹⁾ The criminalization of insurgencies --and thus implicitly of the legitimacy of the livelihood strategies that they in part reflect (even if these may indeed be connected to “illicit” markets and patterns of economic action-- may also only serve to heighten an existential tension between grassroots actors and the dominant agents of an emerging statist order, thereby intensifying ideological aspects of the conflict.

Conclusion

The project of forced revolution in Iraq, perhaps more than any other contemporary conflict, invites us to think about the interplay between war --in this case introduced as a radical instrument of political and economic “reform”-- and the contingent dynamics of political change at the beginning of the 21st century. This essay may be read as a rather rough first draft of some ideas that might eventually contribute to such an effort. In it, I have sought to draw attention to the utility of micro level variables (“livelihood”) in the analysis of violent conflict, and to sketch both the emergent effects and dilemmas that arise in the interplay of social, economic, and political processes that are embedded at distinct levels of analysis.

On the one hand, the resulting perspective might prove useful to understanding dynamics at work in other conflict arena where persisting wars are very clearly intertwined with the demands of state reconstitution: e.g., Afghanistan, Somalia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, etc. On the other, the basic ideas may also apply more generally to less draconian projects of reform “from above,” particularly where reform is implemented contexts of weak state capacity. This approach differs

(18) This is probably all the more true in states with suspect institutional capacity, and that, therefore, are unevenly integrated into and have uneven agency within society and the economy. Ironically, it is precisely in these states where reform is most typically and forcefully imposed from above. In Iraq, they are trying to do it in advance of the existence of a viable state.

(19) Ballentine, Karen. “Beyond Greed and Grievance: Reconsidering the Economic Dynamics of Armed Conflict” in Ballentine and Jake Sherman (eds.) *The Political Economy of Armed Conflict: Beyond Greed and Grievance* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2003); p. 280.

from mainstream institutional analyses dealing with the “breakdown” of or “resistance to” reform by emphasizing the emergent and dialectical character of both actor configurations and the articulation of power in the arena of reform.

As war drags on in Iraq and institutional capacities of the state remain suspect and underdeveloped, increasing attention will need to be paid to the ways in which individually rational strategies for coping during the conflict interact to produce the irrational socioeconomic and political outcome of war. Indeed, the total collapse of the previous statist order has introduced a climate

of uncertainty and suspicion that can only encourage a resort to particularist loyalties in the search to procure individual security and livelihood. This need not neatly follow the cleavages consolidated and manipulated under the Saddamist regime. The insurgency seems only very loosely based around the ethnic and confessional cleavages that so many observers worried about prior to the Anglo-American invasion. Indeed --as is the case with al-Sadr’s Mehdi Army-- war can be seen to generate new identities and lines of conflict. The reemerging Iraqi state will have to move beyond a paradigm of repression in dealing with the resulting predicaments, or violence will likely remain endemic. ■



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THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN CONFLICT PREVENTION

BY BRUCE STANLEY*

Introduction

The evolving relationship between conflict prevention and civil society actors is now a hot topic in international diplomatic circles. From national ministers to the Security Council, diplomats are re-considering the role of non-state actors in the prevention of conflict. The year 2004 has been a particularly significant year to consider these questions, since non-state actors have been crucial players in, among other complex political emergencies, Darfur, Israel/Palestine, Iraq, Congo and Columbia. International non-governmental organizations (INGOs), the UN and the European Centre for Conflict Prevention, for example, have also been considering this issue, under encouragement from Kofi Annan, the UN Secretary General.⁽¹⁾

This paper is an attempt to clarify some of the possible roles, techniques and timing through which civil society actors may contribute to conflict prevention in a changing world order. The essay begins by laying out some of the key issues to be considered, then addresses three questions: when might civil society make a contribution; how might they contribute and with what impact?

The Problem

We are living in an era when both the fundamental dynamics of the global order are shifting, and the nature of conflict is evolving. The combination of these two trends has meant that: traditional state-centric techniques for dealing with conflict appear to be less effective; new actors are participating in conflict management and resolution; and a whole new set of trans-boundary issues are on the agenda that weren't there twenty years ago. States and their diplomatic representatives are realizing they can't deal with conflict alone, if they ever could. The ground is shifting, and it is time to make sense of what such changes mean for how the global community approaches protracted social conflicts.

In particular, the paradigm through which states approach conflict and its handling is proving to be inappropriate to current conditions. Four fundamental assumptions must be re-examined. First, state representatives tend to approach conflict as a short-term problem to be dealt with within their current term of office. Thinking medium to long-term is difficult for state actors, who want immediate results. This contrasts sharply with the current arguments in the conflict resolution literature that conflict transformation must be conceptualised as a long-term process.⁽²⁾

Secondly, states tend to view conflict handling as conflict management rather than as conflict transformation: negative peace rather than positive peace to use Galtung's terms. States look for cease-fires, compromise agreements,

declaration of principles, step-by-step, or roadmaps to manage overt violence rather than acting long-term to modulate attitudes, behaviour or transform the structures of conflict.

Thirdly, the metageography, which frames state action, is composed of *eternal, essentialised regulatory boundaries*.⁽³⁾ In a world of transboundary migration, transnational terrorism, cross-boundary arms smuggling, world networks and global corporations, such a conceptualisation is naive at best. A state-centric, mosaic, essentialist perspective on the Middle East, for example, has led to poor policies, and difficulty in handling regional conflict.

Finally, states see themselves as the only actors that count; it is their actions as agents of change that are consequential, significant, empowered. Non-state actors are "off the map." Yet in the arena of conflict handling, as in political economy and development, a wide range of non-state actors both above and below the state have some power, not all states have equal power, and multiple actors may be crucially significant in particular circumstances. This widening consideration of various change agents has now progressed to the point where we must consider religious organizations, activist grass-roots groups, research and academic institutions, businesses and corporations, NGOs, media organizations, professional conflict resolution institutions, and even private citizens.⁽⁴⁾

All four of these positions are challenged by the growing role of civil society in conflict transformation. Civil society actors often see conflict from a long-term perspective, working for transformation rather than management. They are more likely to be concerned with cross-boundary networks rather than regulatory solidarities, and they are seeking increased efficacy and impact for their interventions. Such challenges to traditional state-centric assumptions underlie the need for a reassessment of conflict prevention roles.⁽⁵⁾

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- (1) See the materials on this issue at www.conflict-prevention.net
- (2) Elise Boulding goes so far as to suggest a "200-year window" for understanding conflict and our attempts at transformation. E. Boulding. 1990. *Building a Global Civic Culture: Education for an Interdependent World*. Syracuse: Syracuse University Press.
- (3) M. Lewis and K. Wigen. 1997. *The Myth of Continents: A Critique of Metageography*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- (4) See L. Diamond and J. McDonald. 1996. *Multi-track Diplomacy: A Systems Approach to Peace* (4th ed.) West Hartford, CT. Kumarian Press.
- (5) Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development, UK. 1999. "Conflict Prevention, conflict resolution and post-conflict peacebuilding--from rhetoric to reality" *International Alert*, 1999.

When?

One approach to the question of civil society's role is to identify stages of conflict, and then to assess when they might make significant contributions. If we utilize a seven-part conceptualisation we get:

1. A pre-conflict, latent phase
2. Rising tension and manifest conflict
3. The outbreak of violence and confrontation
4. Escalation into full-scale violence or "war-fighting"
5. Ripening, the search for possible compromise and de-escalation of violence
6. Agreement and embedding of the new arrangements
7. The long process of rapprochement and reconciliation.⁽⁶⁾

Civil society actors are increasingly involved during or across all these stages. In the traditional analysis of conflict prevention, non-state actors were assumed to play a role, if at all, only during the first two phases: working to stop conflict before it escalated to violence, leaving the rest to the "primary actors," states. Today, however, both praxis and theory suggest that "field diplomacy" on the part of such actors, even in the heart of violent conflict, may contribute to conflict management and to peacebuilding.⁽⁷⁾ States are unhappy with this expansion of both scope and domain, and academics have warned of the problems that may result.⁽⁸⁾

The current thinking is that civil society actors might use their particular skills (flexibility; ability to listen to the grass-roots; targeted interventions; advocacy; links to the international community) to their best advantage if they focus on: working to handle conflict before it breaks out; trying to keep conflicts from expanding and widening; protecting the fledgling bloom of an agreement from backsliding, attack or irrelevance/inappropriateness; stressing the fundamentals while state actors are beginning to turn away; making sure the old issues of conflict are sufficiently finished; and building long-term capacity for handling new conflicts when they arise. These are not arenas in which states have comparative advantage, and so contributions by non-state actors could be welcome.

How?

Another way to think about the contribution of non-state actors is to examine the various categories or types of work needed for conflict transformation.⁽⁹⁾ Such activities can certainly occur during early conflict prevention, but may also be appropriate in preventing new conflicts from emerging during post-conflict peace building or even during war fighting:⁽¹⁰⁾

- Mutual understanding work is about building understanding of the "other's" humanity and willingness to compromise. These activities seek to foster dialogue, empathy, to break down the

demonization of the other, to help realize that there is a partner for peace. Non-state actors, particularly media and grass-roots dialogue, can make a contribution here.⁽¹¹⁾

- Political options work is about supporting Track 1½ or Track II opportunities to develop alternative options over stuck positions and to feed these crafted alternatives back into formal state-centric decision-making and negotiations.⁽¹²⁾
- Peace education work is concerned with embedding fundamental ideas and concepts from peacebuilding and conflict transformation within various stakeholders (children, youth, security personnel, decision-makers, religious leaders, journalists, etc.) via workshops, curricula, training, conferences, etc.
- Conflict resolution capacity building is focused on facilitating the social capital, networks, human resources, institutions and funding required embedding local capacity for handling conflicts within the community.
- Support for marginalized groups affirms that conflict prevention is about empowerment, reducing the asymmetries of power in society and giving the marginalized voice within the community. Such work involves advocacy, institution building, education; all of which are highly politicised and not usually very popular with the state.
- Fundamentals of development focus on the deep structural issues of economic and social inequality that often breed conflict. Interventions here are about long-term economic growth, increasing opportunities for work and movement, worker rights, housing and access to community resources.
- Anti-intimidation work is concerned with the denial of incitement and the attempt to reduce or modify the use of violence. Activities, including monitoring the media,

(6) K. Rupesinghe. 1998. *Civil Wars, Civil Peace: An Introduction to Conflict Resolution*. London. Pluto Press.

(7) L. Reyhler and T. Paffenholz, eds. 2001. *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*. London. Lynne Rienner.

(8) See various articles available concerning NGO Peacebuilding available via the Conflict Research Consortium, University of Colorado. www.colorado.edu/conflict/peace/treatment/ngopb.htm

(9) Adapted from S. Fisher, et. al. 2000. *Working With Conflict: Skills and Strategies for Action*. London. Zed Books. pg. 65.

(10) See Chapter 5, "Working in War Zones" in H. Miall, O. Ramsbotham, T. Woodhouse. 1999. *Contemporary Conflict Resolution*. Cambridge. Polity Press.

(11) G. Wolfsfeld. 2004. *Media and the Path to Peace*. Cambridge. Cambridge University Press.

(12) C. Chataway. "Track II Diplomacy: From a Track I Perspective". *Negotiation Journal*, July 1998.

or encouraging non-violent alternatives, seek to shift conflict behaviours that feed the conflict.

- Cultural traditions work takes up the concerns for identity, respect, voice, and existence that underlie fears for the future of minorities and majorities alike and thus feed conflicts. Empowering art and cinema representations, encouraging sharing of cultural forms, building museums reflecting refugee experiences, and listening to identity concerns are at the heart of such activities.
- Justice and rights work is about building key values into societies such as the rule of law, respect for pluralism, a rights-based approach to conflict transformation, and a basic-needs understanding to negotiations. Support for human rights documentation, an end to corruption in the courts, truth and reconciliation commissions are all examples of such activity.

The state, with its attention on managing the violent manifestations of conflict among or directed at states, has little time or energy for the types of work outlined above, which is why many conflicts fail to be transformed by state-level activity, but only repressed or postponed. Civil society actors, on the other hand, have much to contribute across these categories, which can mesh with the work of diplomats and politicians.

Result?

Johan Galtung argued that if we truly wish to transform conflict, we must have an impact on all three aspects proposed in his conflict triangle: conflict attitudes, conflict behaviours, and conflict structural issues.⁽¹³⁾

Non-state actors appear to have a particularly useful role to play in contributing to the modification, amelioration, or shift in the beliefs and attitudes held by individuals caught up in conflict. They present alternatives to the entrenched attitudes that feed a conflict and keep it going; they stand against conventional wisdom about “the other;” they keep open ties of communication; they uphold basic principles like the rule of law, pluralism, transparency and accountability; and they try to protect the next generation from developing such feelings. Civil society actors, because they target either the “public” (the street) or the influentials in society rather than the decision makers, help to prepare the ground for future policies or alternatives that emerge from governments.⁽¹⁴⁾ They may also spur elites to listen to new ideas from below. They cannot change attitudes overnight for the whole community, but they make their contribution often in small jumps, with individual participants in dialogue workshops, or via joint projects that cross boundaries. Thus their contribution to attitudinal change is evolutionary and supportive, not revolutionary. By keeping alive an alternative vision to the status quo, they feed the flame of conflict transformation.

Non-state actors can also elevate an alternative standard for behaviour in the midst of conflict. By supporting “local heroes” who defy conventional wisdom; teaching youth alternative tactics for change; challenging the media to reduce incitement; and acting as the gadfly on the rump of government; such actors can push for alternatives and for reflection on the actions that feed hatred. They thus hold up a mirror, and suggest options. Ultimately, it is the state that can use its powers of persuasion and control to modify conflictual behaviours, but non-state actors set the standard, and challenge the legitimacy of both policy and destructive behaviours.

Finally, such agents of change direct our attention to the structural issues of conflict usually obscured by state agents in their rush to settlement. Civil society challenges the community to reconsider, to look beyond the superficial for the fundamentals, to hold to standards, to think about the long-term. They are particularly useful in encouraging political options; publicizing short-sightedness; encouraging clear thinking; advocating for the disempowered; working for economic and social development; and developing a culture of peace. In this way they remind us to deal with the deep issues of peacebuilding that states would rather avoid.

Conclusion

Non-state actors are coming to realize that they must work with state actors for the prevention and amelioration of conflict. States are slowly accepting the tension and challenge that working with such actors brings. Neither can handle nor transform conflict on their own, yet both find cooperation difficult. Civil society faces significant challenges to enlarging their capacity for a positive contribution; and often they may actually contribute to conflict, out of ignorance, intention, arrogance, or poor preparation. But we are beginning to find our way forward, and stumbling toward some understandings.

To answer Kofi Annan’s challenge, civil society actors bring to the table energy, alternatives, sensitivity and principles that the state can or does not bring. They mobilize resources and involvement that the state cannot; they challenge the conventional wisdom and staid options proposed by states; they listen to and touch stakeholders rarely included by state agents; and they stand for principles and values that the state often forgets. This is a valuable and central role to conflict prevention. It is not a peripheral or sufficient role, but an equal and necessary one. ■

(13) J. Galtung. 1996. *Peace by Peaceful Means: Peace and Conflict, Development and Civilization*. London: Sage.

(14) J.P. Lederach. “Levels of Leadership” in L. Reyhler and T. Paffenholz, eds. 2001. *Peacebuilding: A Field Guide*. London. Lynne Rienner.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AS A REMEDY TO CONFLICT PREVENTION IN THE MIDDLE EAST

BY IBRAHIM SAIF*

The debate on economic development poverty and democracy is continuous. There maybe a distinction between scholars regarding what comes first in terms of the implementation of the reform measures. However, there is almost a consensus that the three issues are highly inter-linked and greatly influence each other. The outcome of the interplay of the economic development-poverty-democracy triangle is mirrored in the nature of the state and society. If development is positively correlated with democracy and negatively with poverty, then, it is less likely that societies where democracy prevails will resort to violent means to pursue their agenda. The main reason for this is that reform measures, in a democratic society, are a product of intensive debate between various societal groups and not exclusive to a certain interest group.

If we assume, that poverty and social inequality are the roots of domestic violence, then once the domestic arena shrivel, it is more likely that violence will spread across the borders and a vicious circle of violence could be instigated. Several studies and research projects have concluded that there is a strong relation between poverty and violence. Though violence could be prompted for other reasons, such as, ethnic and religious fanaticism. However, when poverty is the root, we are more likely to find violence at a mass scale, while in other cases we are more likely to find an organized group that uses violence to achieve political goals. Here we must distinguish between the two forms of violence. The first one that is caused by extreme poverty and the second is rooted in ideological differences. In both cases, we can argue that democracy help in reducing the potential to resort to violence. The question is how can we unleash a process of democracy when the people are striving in their abject poverty?

The Middle East (ME) countries suffer from poverty like many other regions around the world. However, the story in the ME is rather different. Not only do internal factors matter, external factors are just as important. The question regarding how can we make this planet a safer and more hospitable place, is central to the region. We may need to ask safer for whom? Priorities have never been selected correctly in the ME. Instead of focusing on health, education and human capital, the focus in the ME was more on regime survival and consolidating security. In order for this formula to function properly, democracy was thrown out of the window, or at best received lip services from the officials, and there was no desire to create strong civic institutions. Here, the link between resource misallocation, weak institutions and poverty is crystal clear.

Essential to understanding the dynamics of the Arab World is an appreciation of the interplay between the external and internal factors. It has almost become axiomatic among scholars to make the case that the Middle East region is one of the most penetrated ones in the world. As a corollary, this part of the world is, by and large, shaped and reshaped by the external factors. For example, the several reform initiatives in the region or the Arab-Israeli conflict and finally the American occupation of Iraq. Against this backdrop, one should not be surprised to observe the intensity of the public debate provoked by the Americans and Europeans regarding reform in the hope that this will help stabilizing the region.

All external initiatives are designed to bring about a kind of political and economic reform in the region. Explicit in such initiatives is the idea of economic liberalization. This refers to measures that are taken in order to facilitate the role of the market in the economy, which hopes to increase private sector involvement in the development process, while the role of the government will be receding.

The belief that free trade will improve welfare through productivity enhancement is derived from the neo-classical liberal rational, that openness is associated with a more competitive environment, which leads to higher productivity and better utilization of resources. Arguments in favor of more liberal trade have gained more strength after the collapse of the former Soviet Union and the failures of protectionist policies to achieve their desired goals. Neo-liberals make the case that there has been a growing awareness that integration, rather than breaking out with the globalized capitalists would help countries achieve growth.

While economic liberalization has done wonders for the most advanced countries, still it has major socio-political repercussions particularly in underdeveloped countries. Liberalization will have serious ramifications concerning the coherence, effectiveness and unity of the state itself, the consequences of which are not fully understood.

But what is the kind of growth that we are trying to achieve that could make our world safer. The first lesson we learned in economics was that the ultimate goal of the development process is to improve the welfare and the quality of life. As we advanced in our learning, we came to realize that for growth to be “real” it must be felt

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by the people that the process meant to serve. Growth and development, in that sense, should help creating an environment of stability within which individuals can be productive and act rationally to maximize their utility.

Having discussed the dominant paradigm in development, which is advocated adamantly by the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. There are initial conditions that must prevail for this to achieve its desired goals. Assumptions are regarding state capacity, institutions and a genuine desire by the ME regimes to conceive a reform process under which they have to concede and delegate part of their power. For this to work, there will be a transitional phase, which should be carefully managed in order to avoid the possible adverse ramifications of the reform process. The transitional phase referred to, concerns the dichotomy of winners and losers. Unemployment might increase and as a consequence of poverty which might threaten social stability. Creating compensatory mechanism and social safety net work that function based on transparency and good governance could help alleviate the adverse ramifications we referred to above.

In most of the ME countries there are two striking facts. The first one is the lack of democratic institutions and forums. The second is the deteriorating economic conditions despite the abundant resources in the region. The region has been witnessing extensive rhetoric regarding growth with human face; the regrettable fact is that, little has been achieved and felt by average man in the street. Average real income in the region is currently below its leveling the eighties in terms of purchasing power. The region suffers from the highest level of unemployment in the world, which averaged in 2003 at about 25% according to the World Bank. Worryingly, unemployment is focused among youth and age size between 25-30 years. If we link unemployment and poverty, then we know for sure, that within the next 15 years, the world has to deal with 100 million new comers into the labor market.⁽¹⁾

Not only those people are poor, they are also socially and politically marginalized and neglected. They belong to scattered groups and have no political clout. There is no forum for such groups to collectively pursue their “normal” agenda. Hence, it came as no surprise that those who belong to groups will try to convey their message by their own way. This reflects a kind of social in-equality and the marginalized people have nothing to lose. They simply feel that they are out of the loop and there is no hope or something promising in the horizon. In a survey across the Arab World conducted by United Nations Development Program two years ago, the majority of those unemployed contemplate, either migrating if possible, or to changing the status quo. Changing the status quo when you have no political say can only be achieved, I believe, through unconventional method that may take violent modes.⁽²⁾

In order to defuse such explosive situations, there is a need to achieve what we branded a “real” growth or what others refer to as development for the people. There will be a transition period that should include these groups in the process of decision-making, and to link them with the rest of the society and economy. In this direction, we argue that violence is an outcome of the socio-political and economic structure, than an end in itself. Dealing with its causes is the first step to reduce violence.

There is undoubtedly strong association between poverty and the spread of extremism. Alleviating poverty, improving the quality of life and education and increasing political participation will help dissipate the wave of fundamentalists. The question then is: what could be done about it?

Agenda for Action

There are two sets of action that could be taken. One is internal, concerning what each government could do to address the issue of poverty and its link to all forms of conflict creation. We need first to agree on the size and the magnitude of the problem. This should be followed by a set of the necessary policies to deal with the most imminent issues. This should be conducted by encouraging all stakeholders to take part in the process of poverty fighting to create a more stable and sustainable environment for inclusiveness. The latest cannot be achieved, without strengthening the institutional domestic capacity within both the private and the public sector. This means that the role of effective parliaments and civil society should be strengthened. The media can play an important role in pinpointing the weaknesses of the system, and can also create a forum to exchange views and express concerns. In addition, there is a need to support these strategies through critical social independent research.

Second, concerning the international community, especially donors, there must be public awareness programs to create a new image and to approach directly the communities that “donors” are trying to help. This should be the first step in improving the image of the “donors” in eyes of the beneficiary and making it less likely to be viewed as a neo colonial power. For example, on many occasions the Euro-Med Partnership has been perceived by the average man in the ME as an attempt to increase the European penetration to the ME markets without anything in return, while the US initiative to promote trade was received with great skepticism. The

(1) These figures are based on a comprehensive study prepared by the World Bank in 2003. This and other three reports covering issues on Trade and Investment, Women and Good Governance are available on www.worldbank.org

(2) For more details see the Arab Human Development Report 2002 and 2003. Published by the United Nations Development Program New York- USA.

second is in easing some of the humanitarian misery and helping stabilize regimes that are striving to achieve some tangible result for their citizens.

Hurdles to Action

On the issue of political freedom, it is undeniable, in my view, that there is a strong association between lack of political freedom and the persistence of corruption and lack of good governance and hence bad economic performance. We, in the region, have been pre-occupied by the Arab-Israeli conflict and huge amounts of resources have been devoted to this seemingly endless cause without any positive outcomes emerging. In many cases long-overdue economic and political adjustments were delayed, using this cause as an excuse.

Jean-Louis Sarbib, the World Bank vice president of the ME region in a recent study, compared the volume of allocated resources to arms and defense in the region to the rest of the world. He asserted that while the ME region allocates about 8 percent of its national GDP to maintain its military might, this ratio falls to less than 3 percent in many other regions of the world. Not only have these resources been “misallocated” but the forgone income and opportunities associated with this misallocation are unbearable and have affected the pattern of growth.⁽³⁾

The question remains, how can economies grow out of their troubles? Observers have been good at identifying the problems. They did not, however, outline policies and actions needed to tackle them. Maybe they assumed, quite realistically, that this is the responsibility of each

national government in the region but they could have made a start.

Although the identification of the problems is a crucial first step, we cannot keep talking about the Middle East and North Africa as one single region, in which there are some common problems that must be addressed with the same degree of urgency. Priorities are different in each country. Each country has its own fears and ambitions, and talking about problems and challenges in a broad sense is not the way to surmount these obstacles once and for all.

In conclusion, it is evident that for reform measures to lead to the desired goals, democracy should go hand in hand with economic opening. If reform measures can lead to the creation of the new “social contract” and a winner-losers dichotomy, it becomes important to solidify the support of the reform measures by making it more participatory and inclusive within democratic institutions. Special attention should be paid to the adverse social implications of the reform process. Otherwise those who have been marginalized in the past will remain so and the roots of violence will live with us for generations to come. Unless we deal with the cause and not the symptoms of the problem facing us, the melody of rhetoric on development will continue to play though without tangible outcome. ■

(3) These figures were presented in an opening speech during the Mediterranean Development Forum (MDF) (2003) that was held in Amman - Jordan.

About ConflictINFOCUS:

Conflict In Focus is a bi-monthly online bulletin designed to provide busy readers in the EMP policy community and interested general public with a concise and regular update on the current state-of-affairs of the most significant situations of conflict or potential conflict in the Middle East. Conflict in Focus is compiled by RCCP/IAI, drawing on multiple sources including the resources of our software (CCP).

Conflict in Focus alerts readers to situations where, in the near future, there is a particular risk of new or significantly escalated conflict. In specific, the newsletter is divided into three sections.

The first section includes accounts of and comments on EU developments and policies during the previous two months in the field of conflict prevention.

The second section aims at providing experts and researchers from the Partnership with a forum for common work and collaboration. Toward this end, the newsletter will host, in each issue, two short articles, one by a European scholar and the other by a Middle Eastern scholar on conflict prevention in the Middle East, with the final aim of provoking a debate on such sensitive subject.

We welcome your feedback at info@rccp-jid.org