



The Resilient State: A Critical Reflection on Statebuilding Research and Policy

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Research Problem



‘Resilience’ in statebuilding:

Where does it come from, and why? How does it link up with other concepts? What does it tell us about international thinking on statebuilding and fragility?

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Resilience in Statebuilding



- Resilience in SB evolves around 2008 as counterpart to fragility
- Deriving from ‘complex (eco-)social systems’ research, resilience is transformed into a positive vision for change
- ERD 2009: resilience is suggested as ‘European approach’ to overcome fragility in Africa; OECD 2008-2011: resilience as the ‘positive vision’ opposing fragility
- Parallel development in Humanitarian Aid and infrastructure development, here with stronger applicability
- ‘Action Plan for Resilience in Crisis Prone Countries’: presented by the European Commission on 19th June 2013





A Tectonic Shift?

- FSPs 2007: ‘**Align** with local priorities’ – ideally alignment with ‘government-led strategies’
- OECD 2011: ‘... resilient states ... are capable of absorbing shocks and transforming and channelling radical change or challenges while **maintaining political stability and preventing violence.**’
- EC Staff Document 2015: ‘Promoting resilience in situations of conflict and fragility means **factoring in** the state’s incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions.’



'Era of Disillusionment'



- Emergence of resilience **contrasts liberal approaches** in state- and peacebuilding and proclaims to address its shortcomings
- Product of an '**era of disillusionment**' (Bell) in the spheres of conflict transformation and democracy promotion
- Vague concept that helps **translating the 'local turn'** (Mac Ginty/Richmond) to the policy level



Four Generations of Statebuilding



	1st generation: Conflict Resolution	2nd generation: Failed States	3rd generation: Fragile States	4th generation: Fragility/Resilience
Approach	Violent conflict causes state failure	Types of state failure	Types of state fragility	Diverse situations of fragility
Causes	Root causes of conflict / trigger factors cause conflict to turn violent	Unilinear explanations (institutional failure)	Multilinear causes (governance, institutional capacity, participation...)	Complexity / Hybridity
Main Lines of Intervention	Stabilisation operations / conflict prevention & transformation	Institution building, capacity building (state, civil society)	Statebuilding on various levels (channelling etc.).	Strengthening resilience of state-society relations, resilience / inclusivity of political settlement
Exemplary Document	DAC Guidelines Conflict, Peace, Development (1997)	Aktionsplan Zivile Krisenprävention (Germany, 2004)	Fragile States Strategy (USAID, 2005)	DAC Policy Guidance Supporting Statebuilding in Situations of Conflict and Fragility (2011)



Resilience and the Politics of Statebuilding



- **Institutionalist ‘liberal’ approaches** – still popular in policy, debunked in research
- **Post-normative approaches:** resilience, along with others political settlements, hybrid political orders (also post-interventionist, Chandler)
- Reincarnation of **normative conceptions:** *Inclusive* Political Settlements, resilience in g7+ ‘fragility spectrum’



Post-normative Statebuilding?



- Normative vs. post-normative concepts (inclusive political settlements, g7+ vs. OECD/EC resilience)
- Outcomes and consequences are undecided, general insights from policy research would suggest a merger
- Resilience provides for return of sovereignty
- ‘neo-sovereignty’ as a product of failed governmentality in post-colonial statehood



Resilience as Neo-Sovereignty?



- Definition of g7+:
'Resilience refers to the ability of social institutions to absorb and adapt to the internal and external shocks and **setbacks** they are likely to face. Fragility thus implies that the **consolidation of nationhood**, and the safety, security and well being of the citizens are at risk of a relapse into crisis or violent conflict. This risk is gradually reduced as the institutions develop the necessary ability to cope with the type of threats they are exposed to.'
- Normative challenge turns 'resilience' to an empty signifier: post-normative space enables neo-sovereignty





Conclusions

- Interesting times in statebuilding – formal institutionalist approach (‘liberal statebuilding’) is in downswing (if not gone)
- Resilience represents international shift to post-normative pragmatism
- Re-emergence of normative approaches: inclusiveness and legitimacy in ‘political settlements’ versus neo-sovereign notions of ‘resilience’
- Challenging endeavor for research and policy: need to work with normativity, but how?

