



EUROPEAN REPORT ON DEVELOPMENT

MOVING AWAY FROM FRAGILITY

Florence, Italy, 16th -17th April 2009

WORKSHOP: "TRANSFORMING POLITICAL STRUCTURES: SECURITY, INSTITUTIONS, AND REGIONAL INTEGRATION MECHANISMS"

This workshop was the second of a series of events organised by the European University Institute (EUI) and the European Commission to prepare the European Report on Development 2009 (ERD 2009). It was attended by around 50 researchers and experts.

MAIN ISSUES

Giorgia Giovannetti presented the draft 'story line' of the ERD, emphasising the context of crisis, the need for a pragmatic taxonomy of fragile situations and the importance of analysing the dynamics of 'fragility'. She also recalled the rationale of the initiative and the importance of networking in Europe and beyond, including with African researchers.

The EU, as the largest donor in developing countries, must take into account the different channels, both direct and indirect, through which the impacts of its decisions are transmitted. Françoise Moreau from the European Commission referred in that regard to the ongoing policy work on fragility being carried out at the EU level, in particular the broader governance approach, the ongoing work on security and development, the EU response to situations of fragility (2007 Communication), as well as the work in collaboration with the African Development Bank, World Bank and IMF on budget support in fragile states.

SECURITY-DEVELOPMENT NEXUS

Pascal Vennesson and Christian Büger discussed the vicious circle of protracted fragility, under development and insecurity. They discussed notably the dilemma between integrating fully security and development, or demarcating clear boundaries for dialogue between these two fields. Participants highlighted that each notion was linked to a specific policy debate and that the security dimension of development assistance was limited to specific aspects like Security Sector Reform (SSR) and justice reform.

Michael Barnett argued that external peace-builders run the risk of entering into bargains with local elites that do not take into consideration the real needs of the population. He advised the international community to abolish the paternalistic assumption of "knowing better what to do" and to involve closely local actors on what works. Democracy would not necessarily be crucial in this process, but social cohesion emerged as a key issue.

Overall, a common agreement emerged from the debate on the importance of security as an essential precondition for development, as human development entails human security. Sustainability emerged as an essential requirement for any peace-building process, hence the need to tackle problems at their roots and to explore properly the reasons of widespread insecurity.



STATE-BUILDING

Necla Tschirgi and Beatrice Pouligny both underlined the need to regard 'state-building' as a primarily political process in which external actors need to be aware of the past and existing situation on the ground and not use their own templates to set objectives and programmes. Pouligny pointed to the "intangible dimensions of state-building", such as investigating deeper the local sources of resilience and understanding how they are interlinked with local perceptions and expectations. The international debate on state-building was criticised as being too normative and not based enough on empirical evidence. Appropriate mechanisms for learning, liaising with local actors, and being able to adapt to changing situations were recommended.

Francois Bourguignon underlined that a good starting point for an effective state-building process in Africa is to recognise that external actors are not entitled to build from scratch something new, but rather to assist and support the mainly endogenous process of formation of an effective state, with the involvement of existing institutions. At the round table, he mentioned that the International Financial Institutions (IFIs) can also play an important role in promoting state-building and development in fragile countries, although they should rely much more on ad hoc solutions, since these countries do not conform to the rules and models used in the usual standardised approaches.

Tanja A Borzel raised the issue of how state-building and region-building are approached today, in particular the high level of standardisation and the conditionalities which can often be ineffective. Maurizio Carbone stressed the need for more, better coordinated and less volatile aid for fragile states. Some participants questioned the real influence of external aid on the "inside-out" process of stabilisation and state-building. What really matters is how the local government is able to manage the country's resources in an efficient way. Meanwhile, it was agreed that more efforts towards coordination between donors are necessary.

Augustin K Fosu discussed the influence of "policy syndromes", such as state control, adverse redistribution or state breakdown on growth and development in Africa. While concluding that good institutions could help to reduce these ailments, he underlined that the key question was to establish effective incentives and sanctions for African leaders to allow for real reforms. Looking at recent research on the influence of trade openness, political institutions and social cohesion on growth in fragile states, Mina Baliaoune-Lutz concluded that both openness to trade and improvements in the quality of institutions could have harmful effects on fragile states in the short term, while social cohesion had to be regarded positively only once a certain threshold was reached.

REGIONAL INTEGRATION

Seth Kaplan argued that an effective approach in Africa, where state robustness and social cohesion are both problematic, would be to focus on the promotion of regional integration as an incentive for effective state formation, as well as on civil society and bottom-up approaches. He underlined the massive under-investment in regional public goods and recommended that more should be invested in regionalism. Faustin M Luanga referred to the existing Regional Economic Communities (RECs), pointing to the overlapping memberships of most African states as a key challenge and emphasising the need for leadership to make the RECs a real tool for growth and development. He described the EU approach to Economic Partnership Agreements (EPA) as the right way forward, although the devil often lies in the details.

Emmanuel Fanta presented some findings on the capacity of regional integration mechanisms for peace and security in Africa, pointing out some important achievements, such as the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD). He also highlighted some persistent deficiencies, such as the poor linkage between early warning and response instruments. Participants called for more realism as regards the current capacities and competences of RECs in Africa.

Sven Grimm underlined the fact that recent moves in EU policies provide improved incentives for regional integration, governance reforms and institutional strengthening through budget support.

The round table discussion on the relevance of the EU as a model for regional integration in Africa led to the conclusion that huge differences exist and so such comparisons must be approached with caution (for example, Africa does not share a common history of wealth and prosperity).

For further information on the ERD 2009,
please go to the ERD website:
<http://erd.eui.eu>

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