



Université Pierre-Mendès-France
Sciences sociales & humaines



Linköping University

RESEARCH CONFERENCES

ESF-UPMF-LiU Conference

Post-Crisis States Transformation: Rethinking the Foundations of the State

Scandic Linköping Väst, Linköping • Sweden
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Conference Highlights

Please provide a brief summary of the conference and its highlights in non-specialist terms (especially for highly technical subjects) for communication and publicity purposes. (ca. 400-500 words)

One of the main objectives of the conference was to question the state : its existing models, forms and practices; and in the cases of states in crisis -conflict, failing states or political transition-, the tools and criteria for understanding this process, including the practices and functions of non-state actors. In the end, the conference is interested in the question whether there is still a need and a demand for the state, in what sense and what might be alternatives to it.

The origin of the conference theme lies in the observation that, while the State is at the foundation of the current international system, the Western model of the Nation-State poses many problems in post-crisis contexts. Under the assistance or influence of the international community, this model, which has its roots in the socio-historic context of Europe, is widely applied in post crisis countries (post colonial, post-conflict and post-Soviet). The way these post-crisis States function, do not resemble their blueprint. Mainstream models of State-building assume that State legitimacy can be established and State collapse avoided through international intervention combined with military presence, huge amounts of aid and democratic elections. Realities on the ground lead us to question their effectiveness, at least in the way measures have been implemented. Rather than the methods of State reform or State-building, the focus of this conference is the question of the model of the State and its transformation. Far from basing itself on the Weberian concept of the State, the conference takes the expectations and needs of the population as a foundation for State transformation.

While international and national actors are involved in the building of the State, local and regional actors are also involved in forming governance structures. They have received much less attention. The authorities taking over when States fail, and ultimately collapse, include the actors of war, such as military faction leaders; but they also include remnants of the former state administration, revitalized traditional authorities, religious courts, local businessmen, etc., who continue or begin to exercise authority as "functional equivalents" (security, social services etc.) of the former State, at times aspiring to replace it. Civil conflict can therefore be understood as centrifugal dynamics that benefit private actors (political, military, religious, social leaders) on the basis of sub-national communities. At regional or international level, the presence of cross-border identities (be it of ethnic, religious, language, or other nature) may represent a further competition for the State and may increase interference in State affairs (through military interference, diaspora support).

The link between legitimacy and stability established decades ago by Max Weber still sounds very contemporary when considering post-conflict contexts: there is no possibility of recourse to coercion to impose a political system in the long term. A key question during the conference therefore is how to assist in the (trans)formation of States so that they can function in the interests of populations at local, national and international level.

I hereby authorize ESF – and the conference partners to use the information contained in the above section on 'Conference Highlights' in their communication on the scheme.

Scientific Report

Executive Summary

(2 pages max)

Post-Crisis State Transformation: Rethinking the Foundations of the State

The conference focused on the question of the Weberian model of the state and its transformation. It posed the question of the possible establishment of State legitimacy and the capacity to avoid State collapse through mechanisms like international intervention, military presence, foreign aid and democratic elections, and how these interact with local dynamics. While international and national actors are involved in the building of the state, local and regional actors are also involved in forming governance structures. They have received much less attention. The authorities taking over when states fail, and ultimately collapse, include the actors of war, such as military faction leaders; but they also include remnants of the former state administration, revitalized traditional authorities, religious courts, local businessmen, etc., who continue or begin to exercise authority as "functional equivalents" of the former state, at times aspiring to replace it. What is the legitimacy of those actors and how does it relate to the national level? In addition to the question of political legitimacy of non-institutional actors, the conference further focused on the issue of identity formation in relation to the state and the limits of state sovereignty. The conference concluded with a session on research methodology and a discussion about the continued demand for the state and its possible alternatives.

The scope of the conference was structured around 8 sessions:

1-Configuration of actors and post-crisis State transformation

A major issue for understanding the dynamics of political integration and disintegration is to what role internal and external actors, each with their own set of values, history and motivations, could and should play. Beyond the question of the balance between internal and external actors in the process of State formation, the competition between different models for the State is another issues in response to the question "Who is shaping the State?" Any configuration of actors will bring particular profiles and constraints to the process of State transformation.

2-Trajectories of post-crisis State formation

The Nation-State has historical roots and its creation, as an institution, responded to a certain set of problems. A hypothesis could be that the form of a State takes depends on the main problems it has to solve and the main constraints its historical context provides.

3-Elections, democratisation and their effects on State consolidation

The supply of democracy does not in itself consolidate a regime. An equilibrium between popular demand and institutional supply is the sine qua non for the consolidation of any regime.

4-Connecting Nation and State in diversified societies

The Nation-State model is ill-adapted to countries where national identity is not consolidated. There are two sets of explanations: local conditions (demography, geography, political culture and social structure) and lack of institutional strengthening.

5-Criteria for working States

Instead of the question "how to make States work? ", we should ask "what is a working State?". International law definition in terms of internal effectiveness doesn't correspond to the reality on the ground: states exist outside the definition. When internationally recognised, are they considered as "working" ?

6-Central powers in search of renewed legitimacy

Increasingly international organisations recognise that the legal State does not equal the legitimate central power. The distinction between legality and legitimacy brings up multiple issues: the recognition of different forms of power and the different types of legitimacy.

Post-conflict States show that legitimate power institutions and actors are often non-State ones. This legitimacy at local level stands in sharp contrast to the difficult emergence of legitimacy at the level of State institutions and national leaders.

7-Empirical approaches to State performance

Based on examples of existing analytical models, analysing State performance proves to be a political necessity.

Two aspects of the analytical models were debated: their scope (what aspects of the State do they measure ?) and the process of evaluating State performance needs to be integrated in the analysis.

8-Is State formation still an agenda? What alternatives to Nation-State?

How to interpret current phenomena that challenge State as the right place for the collective identification, the policy expression of the citizens or the regulation of economic processes? One observes situations where non-State actors fulfil the role of the State. In many countries, whether they have a highly developed State system or whether the State is hardly developed, traditional mechanisms continue to exist that fulfil partly the role of the State. What is the future of these systems in the process of State (trans)formation? What has been the experience of their institutionalisation at State level?

More attention should be paid to the rise of systems of adaptation and governance in response to the prolonged absence of a central government, driven by the evolving role of coalitions, business groups, traditional authorities, and civic groups in promoting more "organic" forms of public order and rule of law. One has also to take into consideration other actors both supporting and challenging State building processes: these actors are the diaspora and NGO's and make together national and State levels less relevant.

Moreover, one observes new forms and new places for the expression of citizenships and for shaping the policy scene :

- the rise of the city as the increasingly relevant level for collective identification and the building of citizenship, as a place for optimal balance of powers and counter-powers.
- Internet as a new vector for the expression of opinions and interests and for the building of collective identities.

Scientific Content of the Conference

(1 page min.)

- *Summary of the conference sessions focusing on the scientific highlights*
- *Assessment of the results and their potential impact on future research or applications*

The origin of the conference topic lies in the growing consensus that the use of the Western model of the Nation State, which is at the foundation of the current international system, poses many problems. While it originates from the specific socio-historic context of Europe, the model is widely applied in post crisis countries (post colonial, post-conflict and post-Soviet) under the assistance or influence of the international community. Mainstream models of state-building assume that state legitimacy can be established and state collapse avoided through international intervention combined with military presence, huge amounts of aid and democratic elections. Realities on the ground lead us to question their effectiveness, at least in the way measures have been implemented. Rather than the methods of state reform or state-building, the focus of this conference is on the question of the Western nation-state as a model and of its local adaptations and transformations. Far from basing itself on the Weberian concept of the State, the conference takes the expectations and needs of the population as a foundation for State transformation.

How to formulate a positive describing the functioning of these States rather than their negative definition in terms of « failed », « fragile » or « rogue ». The definition of what they are not, results from a comparison with one particular model of the state, the Weberian State or the Nation-State. The rule of law, the monopoly of violence, strong institutions, a nationally shared identity and a strong tax base are absent in many States. If one takes a bottom-up approach, one observes that politics continue and power continues to be exercised through State and non-State institutions. An example of the latter is if land management is carried out by customary leaders, a degree of private security is obtained from vigilante groups or armed political movements and some areas come up with their own currencies. The conference has been specifically interested in case-studies of post-crisis States and their relation to other non-state political actors. They might be international actors like NGO's and intergovernmental organisations; they might be corporate actors; they might be local actors like customary leaders and finally they might be armed actors.

The following terms have been proposed as additional descriptions of State functioning: Hybrid political order (Volker Boege, Anne Brown), Sovereignty gap (in Michael Bratton), Hollow State (Helen Delfeld), Mediated State (Ken Menkhous), Permanent Crisis State (Dario), State force of Transformation, Differentiated State (Ingrid Bolivar), Assisted State, Interactive State, De facto States, Party State, Quasi States (Jackson).

Transversal issues that the conference covered was the continued demand for the state and the interconnections and links between non-state actors and government as well as international actors.

1 – A key issue emerged from the debates: the demand for the state

In rethinking the foundations of the state, the debate led to analysing state-society relations and the exercise of power. Several speakers demonstrated from their observations on the ground that there is a continued demand for the state. Some opinions that participants expressed were: “We shouldn’t move away too fast from the concept of the state” (James Putzel), “The territorial dimension is still important” and “the use of force is necessary” (Alain Dieckhoff), as well as « What organisation will have an as great impact over what everyone has experienced? » or “We have no better thing than national territory to produce” (James Putzel)

Needs for the state are expressed in the following terms:

- economical development
- security : national and international (with its inherent contradictions)
- sovereignty : requirement from the international system and the dominant states
- interface in international relations (political representation; passport...)
- form of expression of self determination

The demand for the state is heterogeneous, though:

“The demand for the state is ambiguous. What state do Afghans want?” Antonio Giustozzi warned against the use of rigid categories like state and non state, proposing a synthesis between these categories. In the case of Afghanistan, a hybrid state. The term “hybrid” has proved very useful to better understand the political processes in post-crisis situations. Anne Brown argued that It is broad enough to encompass a variety of non-state forms of order and governance on the customary side (from neo-patrimonial to acephalous) and it focuses on the combination of elements that stem from genuinely different societal sources that follow different logics. It also affirms that these spheres do not exist in isolation from each other, but permeate each other and, consequently, give rise to different and genuine political orders that are characterized by the closely interwoven texture of their separate sources of origin.

At the same time, there are tensions between the different actors. So if a certain attraction for the state was noteworthy, there is not one model but several possible adaptations, re-appropriations, interpretations of the initial model. Several concepts were associated to the state:

The “differentiated state” : “historical account’s, structural view on territorial and strata integration processes and ethnographical data that we collect in the regions. We insist on the importance of articulating both structural views on conditions to state formation and ethnographic and discursive accounts on local state formation for identifying the challenges to the state formation process in Colombia and for showing how differentiated State is” (Ingrid Bolivar).

The « hollow state », according to Helen Delfeld, has strong external relationship and weak internal relationship, “the discursive expectations of stateness, but is supported more by external constituencies than internal ones “. Gemma van der Haar insisted that the “hollow state [is] not a vacuum”

The “distorted state” is not strong, not weak. Saddam’s Iraq (Joshua Hippler).

The “resilient stagnation” prevents from dynamics of development (James Putzel)

Mediated state and political hybridity (Louise Wiuff Moe). Hybrid models were mentioned from different points of view: the hybridity between democracy and autocracy; between the modern forms of power and local and traditional forms of authority.

2. A second issue that emerged: the interaction between levels of governance, between the local, national and the international

The debates provided insight into non-state actors that operate in geographically limited areas and provide diverse goods and services, such as security, solidarity networks as well as a sense of meaning and belonging, which, according to the Western conception, are functions usually held by the state. This convenors would like to further build on these findings, looking specifically into the connection between local non-state, State and international actors.

In the post-conflict search for political order, there are inherent tensions between different political projects, this means between the interests of the different actors involved in this process, who are international, national and local players.

The issue of political legitimacy is central in understanding the obstacles of above mentioned project.

Attempts to reorganise institutions, even through democratic elections, are often hindered by resistance from the population due to a lack of recognition and trust. An explanation for such distrust can be found in the fact that post-conflict states are reorganised on the basis of Western blueprints that disrupt local dynamics, for example, dynamics of identification. People on the ground may not perceive themselves as belonging to the state (at least not in the first place). Instead, they identify themselves primarily as members of some sub- or transnational, non-state societal entity (kin group, tribe, village). For them it is this entity that provides the nexus of order, security and social safety, and not the state. This has extraordinary consequences for their (dis)loyalty to the state. People are loyal to 'their' group (whatever that may be); legitimacy and authority rests with the leaders of that group, and not with the state authorities. 'The state' is perceived as an alien external force, 'far away' not only physically (in the capital city), but also mentally. This of course significantly reduces the capacity of state institutions to fulfil core state functions effectively.

In reaction to this lack of legitimacy, increasing attention is being given to local political actors as the locus of legitimacy. Customary leadership in this regard can be seen as a valuable resource in creating legitimate national politics. A closer look is needed at what "local" represents. There is a tendency to view local as traditional but we have to dissociate these categories. Traditional mechanisms can have been broken and mixed with modern mechanisms. They are not fully modern because they have some remnants. Local actors also exist of commercial organizations that evolve from wartime armed groups, new ethnic "self-protection" associations and other organizations that do not occupy formal positions in the administration of the state. They nevertheless take over functions that the Western conception usually associates with the State and can therefore be seen as political actors.

The first issue that needs to be understood, is in which ways these local actors are connected to national and international actors in the combined governance of a given territory. Their interaction opens up space for new forms of governance based on hybrid models and on pluralism of social norms. The second issue concerns the relationship between shared governance and identity. What circumstances can we identify that allow for an articulation between the different levels of identity? Are they positive correlated to inclusion in decision-making?

What interaction between the legitimacy of local, national and international actors? We borrow van Binsbergen's definition of legitimation as essentially a quality of being found to be in accordance with a set of rules and meanings held collectively by a particular set of people. Which set? One such set consists of (the functionaries serving at) international bodies, another of senior state personnel at the level of the modern national state. The third set according to van Binsbergen is the perspective of traditional logic, which sees the state as illegitimate since it is devoid of meaning in a cosmological sense. A counter example indicating that traditional leadership is not necessarily opposed to State logic comes from South Africa. Here, chiefs seek to legitimize themselves by integrating the State and associating themselves with State symbols (picture of the president, South African flag), which is an indication of the penetration of the State in the imagery of the citizens in areas where customary rule is relevant. This example demonstrates that the relationship between State- and chiefs' legitimacy depends on the degree of internalisation of the State among its citizens. We would therefore like to propose to term the third logic "local". "Traditional", being one source of legitimation. We understand "local" as that which is relevant for the people and carries meaning in their every day life in geographically limited areas. What this is, needs to be empirically defined. Moreover, beyond common references we should also be sensitive to contradictory values at local level and compatible and complementary values that exceed geographically limitations of groups (networks, religious brotherhoods, councils of traditional leaders)

Discussions during the conference "Post-crisis state transformation: Rethinking the foundations of the state" have dealt extensively with the risks of excluding local actors from the dialogue about creating the post-conflict political order and its supposed outcome. This, in short leads to the creation of a state devoid of meaning at the local level.

What we would like to focus further research on are the following questions:

1. How to practice the principle of 'active subsidiarity', by which we mean that each territory and each level of governance attempts to bring specific responses to issues that must be collectively dealt with. How to create a system that allows political participation through dialogue?
2. What are some of the risks associated with simply integrating local actors into the State, rather than creating plural political orders? For example, how does their integration in the State transform their role, affect their legitimacy and dynamics of accountability? What opportunities does this represent for instrumentation and manipulation by state actors and the other way round?
3. How to deal with some of the contradictions that are associated with the transposing of norms and practices that are shared and legitimate in geographically limited areas to a national level? Local values and political projects might reinforce ethnic differences, gender inequality and present other forms of exclusion. They thus contradict constitutions

and international regimes like the universal declaration of human rights. Even though these might make little sense in local areas, they do in the international arena. The national level becomes the locus of this contradiction. How does the State choose its interlocutors, how does it assess their legitimacy if they are not chosen? Allowing local voices to be heard at the national level creates tension in the relation between the national and the international level. It forces international actors to acknowledge contradictions that have existed for long but have been denied as long as, at least formally, national actors complied with them. The question in post-conflict situations is, how to make some of these categories (clan, Hutu/Tutsi) matter and not matter at the same time (like race or gender)?

Forward Look

(1 page min.)

- *Assessment of the results*
- *Contribution to the future direction of the field – identification of issues in the 5-10 years & timeframe*
- *Identification of emerging topics*

The issues we selected as emerging for the future research directions are the following:

1 – As a demand for the state was largely expressed, there seems to be a need to analyse:

- Where does it come from? what actors? Who asks for the state or for more state?
- In what kind of contexts? Is it possible to establish a connexion between a given context and the degree of demand for the state?
- What form or model of the state it raises?
- How to measure the demand for State, for democracy ?

A directly related question would be who lives well without the state? In order to understand fully this demand for the state and its dynamics, what actors (groups, networks, institutions) don't have any expectations from the state and for whom the state is not an objective (as in power strategy for example).

2 – Political hybridity: inclusiveness and legitimacy

The statement

In post conflict state building contexts, the international community, working with national elites, has pursued security and development through a state-building program focusing on competitive elections, the transfer of state institutions and a legal system. The international drive to 'build states', however, has repeatedly failed to engage with what political community means for people in the societies in question. Dominant conceptualisations of the state have encouraged state institutional structures to be approached as virtually divorced from society; different politico-cultural constructions of the person, community, place and hence governance have been placed on a rigid trajectory from 'traditional' to 'modern'.

The project

Political hybridity is thought of as an innovative political proposition, particularly relevant for post-crisis, post-conflict and states in transition.

International programmes of state building consist of implementing modern forms of the state in societies that had few contacts with it and / or didn't adopt it. Customary forms of social order have been cast as 'backward' and the potential relevance of customary governance and meaning systems to the emergence of national political community has been largely overlooked.

The emergence of the inclusive political processes vital for the emergence of a legitimate government. Establishing constructive interface between customary and liberal institutional governance, however, is highly challenging. What accommodation between local and liberal institutional governance?

3 – In addition to the continued demand for state, a question that is increasing in importance is the functionality of the state in a global world where the main goods are non material (money, knowledge). The link between state and territory is weakening, there are states without real territories and borders like city-states, and territories without borders like the networks of metropolises. The de-territorialisation of some key functions of state enables to envisage alternatives to Nation-States like for example strong cities that could become new places of identity and the exercise of democracy.

- Is there a need for a foresight-type initiative?

The three above fascinating reasearch topics may require firesight-type initiatives like seminar or round-table gathering some speakers from the Linköping conference and other well-known experts on the topics.

Atmosphere and Infrastructure

▪ *The reaction of the participants to the location and the organization, including networking, and any other relevant comments*

Although the location of the hotel next to a gas station did in nothing resemble the picturesque location of the monastery in Vadstena, the hotel interior was comfortable and well adapted to host conferences. Its staff was friendly and the food delicious. Thanks to the care and precision of our conference officer, the conference dinner was a highlight during the conference. The walk to the restaurant was presented as a scout event. Small groups of participants went into the woods with their maps. This created a lively sphere and a good opportunity for informal discussions. The hotel bar provided another lieu for informal exchange.

One of the very positive aspects of the conference was that cleavages between age and experience or title were of little importance in the informal as well as in the formal discussions. Overall the sphere among participants was informal, very lively and has resulted in several future initiatives and cooperation. Of the junior participants two have found an employment as a result of meetings at the conference.

A question that was often raised during the conference was about the role of the University of Linköping in the conference. Since the choice for the city of Linköping is determined by this partnership, the organising committee regrets that the university of Linköping was by no means present during the conference. In not doing so, many participants wondered why the organisation insisted on traveling all the way to Linköping, a location which is difficult to reach and added many travel hours for participants coming already from far (Australia, Senegal, Ivory Coast, the US etc.). Moreover, the hotel location had no intrinsic attractiveness to justify the extra travel.