

PRACTICE NOTE

Towards More People-Centric Peace Operations: From 'Extension of State Authority' to 'Strengthening Inclusive State-Society Relations'

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Periods of conflict erode trust between national and local authorities and the people they govern, a trust that needs to be re-established. As peace operations are undertaken by inter-governmental bodies that tend to be inherently state-centric, however, peace operations need to go beyond merely supporting the extension of state-authority and strengthen inclusive state-society relations by supporting and facilitating inclusive processes that can address social cohesion, inequalities and marginalization. In order to support the emergence of resilient societies, these operations must help states and their societies to develop inclusive processes that enable participatory and responsive state institutions that are closely connected to the social institutions in the communities they serve. Furthermore, peace operations are often perceived as being partial to the party in government, while the government of the day often discourages peace operations from engaging with civil society. In the first part of this paper we explain why strengthening inclusive state-society relations is an important issue to address when peace operations are mandated to foster peace processes that can resist relapse. The second half of the paper shifts the attention to *how* peace operations can enhance and support state-society relations. In addition to monitoring the effect peace operations have on state institutions, operations should monitor how people experience the role and impact of peace operations. This can be assessed in a number of ways, including by involving representative advisory groups from civil society and local communities in assessments, analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation, so as to ensure continuous direct input and feedback from the society on the work of the peace operation.

Introduction

In 2014 the UN Secretary-General appointed a high level independent panel to comprehensively review peace operations. When the

panel published their report in June 2015, they argued that four essential shifts were needed for peace operations to become more effective. First, politics must drive the design

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and implementation of peace operations. Second, the full spectrum of UN peace operations must be used more flexibly to respond to changing needs on the ground. Third, a stronger, more inclusive peace and security partnership is needed for the future. Fourth, the UN Secretariat must become more field-focussed and UN peace operations must be more people-centred (UN 2015: viii). On the shift to more people-oriented peace operations, the panel argued for 'a renewed resolve on the part of UN peace operations personnel to engage with, serve and protect the people they have been mandated to assist' (UN 2015: viii).

Peace operations can be deployed before, during or after new political settlements emerge, in order to ensure a degree of stability during uncertain political transitions. These are periods of flux, turbulence and change that can easily spin out of control and result in a (re)lapse into violent conflict. Peace operations thus operate in a highly challenging context. However, as the high level independent panel on peace operations has recognised, these are also periods of opportunity where principled and sensitive support can contribute to the resilience of peace processes by strengthening the relationship between the state and society. If the peace process fails to address the inequalities, exclusions and centre-periphery tensions that caused the conflict in the first place, the likelihood of a relapse into conflict is high. It is thus in the interest of all the parties that want to see peace and stability, and the restoration of a strong and resilient state, to support the strengthening of state-society relations.

Complexity theory has shed light on how complex systems self-organize (Cilliers 1998). Self-organization in the peacebuilding context refers to the various processes and mechanisms that a society uses to manage its own peace consolidation process. If a society is fragile, it means that the social institutions that govern its politics, security, justice and economy lack resilience.

Resilience refers here to the ability of these social institutions to absorb and adapt to the internal and external shocks and setbacks they are likely to face. A fragile society also signifies that there is a risk that that society may not be able to manage its own tensions, pressures, disputes, crises and shocks without relapsing into violent conflict. This risk is gradually reduced as the institutions develop the resilience necessary to cope with the various threats to which they are exposed. If the resilience of a society's self-organizing capacity determines the extent to which it can withstand pressures and shocks that risk a (re)lapse into violent conflict, then peacebuilding should be about safeguarding, stimulating, facilitating and creating the space for societies to develop resilient capacities for self-organization (de Coning 2013).

The mandates of peace operations often contain boilerplate language that calls for the restoration and extension of state authority. This kind of language is included, not because it is informed by a thorough conflict analysis of the specific context, but because extending the authority of the state over its entire territory is considered to be a valid project since it will enable the state to gain a legitimate monopoly on violence. This legitimate monopoly will contribute to stability and order, and will enable the state to ensure rule of law and provide basic services. The belief in the transformative agency of extending state authority is also linked to the analysis that conflict and relapse into violent conflict is linked with a government deficit. As a result, the focus of peacebuilding has been primarily on helping to build strong institutions (World Bank 2011). However, a careful reading of the 2011 World Development Report (World Bank: 41) will reveal that the institutions that ensure governance cannot be understood in isolation from the societies within which those institutions function, whom they are meant to serve, and from whom they derive credibility and legitimacy. The Report defines institutions as (ibid.):

... as the formal and informal 'rules of the game', which include formal rules, written laws, organizations, informal norms of behaviour, and shared beliefs – as well as the organizational forms that exist to implement and enforce these norms.

It is obvious from this definition that external agents cannot 'build' local institutions, and that institution building is not something that can take place in the space of a few short years. External actors can impose formal 'rules of the game', but only local societies can generate the informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs that are essential for institutions to be locally owned and embedded. Societies need time to develop, absorb, test, adapt and integrate their own formal and informal norms and shared beliefs, and to build trust in their own institutions which are developed in the process.

For institutions to be self-sustainable, they must be generated by local social processes, and these processes take time to produce, test, refine and develop. Each context is different, and an important factor is the degree of collapse or disruption of the complex social system that existed prior to violent conflict. If a completely new social system needs to emerge, the process is likely to take several generations. It is rare for societies to completely collapse, however. In most cases, some aspects of the culture, norms and social identity survive (McAnany & Yoffee 2010). In these cases, it would make sense for peacebuilding to capitalise on existing social resilience and to use that as a springboard for accelerated peacebuilding. Unfortunately, this rarely occurs. Most contemporary peacebuilding programmes assume that local social norms and practices are part of the problem, and work actively to de-legitimize local institutions and advocate their replacement with new central government-controlled liberal peace-model institutions. In this paper we suggest instead that peacebuilding should be the catalyst that

facilitates the re-emergence of the informal norms of behaviour and shared beliefs that are essential for institutions to be locally owned and embedded.

In reality, however, the core neo-liberal features of peacebuilding interventions (multi-party democracy, individual human rights, and the free-market economic system) are externally designed and implemented before the locals are consulted. The implementation of these interventions are driven ultimately by external considerations of pace and time – and the external actors maintain control over the core outcome of the peace process. Even if they allow some degree of hybridity for the sake of local ownership, they still maintain enough influence to intervene if the process does not produce the liberal peace outcomes they expect. Pressure is brought to bear on elites and others when they stray too far off the path, and as the externals often represent a significant resource for patronage, this pressure is usually sufficient to maintain control.

The globalization of this dominant discourse of state building as peacebuilding, is a product of Western, neo-liberal norms that have institutionalized state-centric approaches to peace operations by the international community (Richmond 2004: 92). These kinds of linear assumptions about the inherent virtue of the state underestimate the degree to which, in these contexts, the conflict has been caused in part because the state has been repurposed to serve the interests of only certain segments of the population. Blindly supporting the extension of state authority in these circumstances thus tends to generate unintended consequences when the agents of the state do not act in the interests of the communities where they are deployed, but rather in their own interests, or in the interests of a dominant segment of the society. Mandates to extend or restore state authority should thus be qualified with provisions to ensure that the state institutions which will be supported by the peace operation are inclusive, participatory

and principled in their relationships with the communities they serve. This is why the Advisory Group of Experts responsible for the 2015 review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture argue in their report for 'inclusive national ownership' (UN 2015d: 21).

The literature on the 'local turn' in peacebuilding has highlighted the importance of local voices, presented a powerful critique of the discourses of peacebuilding among the dominant powers at the UN Headquarters in New York and also presented a powerful critique of the potential challenges of focusing on the local and the challenges of identifying the 'local' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013). However, there is still a lack of literature that aims to connect the critique of local peacebuilding with practices in the field (Hughes et al. 2015). We want to further this scholarship by looking at the developments on the ground, in UN peacekeeping missions today. This practice note shifts the focus to the field and looks at the interaction between peacekeepers, peacebuilders and local populations on the ground. The note argues for a shift towards a people-centric peace operations doctrine, and reflects on why the mandates of peace operations should move away from the narrowly tasked missions to 'restore and extend state authority' to instead task missions to 'strengthen state-society relations'.

What is the Role for Peace Operations in State-Society Relations?

Peace operations are institutions that carry out a series of functions and tasks assigned to them by intergovernmental bodies. These actions are meant to foster resilient and inclusive peace processes and prevent the recurrence of violent conflict. Peace operations carry the authority, legitimacy and credibility of the bodies that have authorized them, and they are usually deployed with the consent of the host government and with the agreement of the main parties of the conflict. Peace operations typically have a unique combination of political and

peacebuilding capacities and sometimes also security tools, matched with material and financial resources to mobilize and apply these resources. This combination of international or regional authority and operational capacities afford them considerable leverage at the national and local levels in the countries where they are deployed. However, some host states question whether these capacities should be used to address issues of state-society relations, such as inequality, marginalization and lack of social cohesion. These states argue that when peace operations enter this domain, they interfere in the internal affairs of sovereign states.

Such critics are correct when they argue that peace operations should not prescribe solutions or offer specific models of how state-society relations should be structured, and that the sovereignty and self-determination of states are protected in the UN Charter and international law. However, international law also provides certain parameters for appropriate state behaviour, including that states should be respectful of the rights of their people and that their administrations should be non-discriminatory, participatory and inclusive in their approach – regardless of the specific models of governance that they choose. The rights of the state and of the people are thus not mutually exclusive. The adoption of Goal 16 (which would promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels) of the new Sustainable Development Goals signals a new global consensus on the inter-linkages between development, peace and justice. The implementation and monitoring of Goal 16 will create new opportunities for global dialogue and coherence on peacebuilding goals and how these goals could be pursued. When states are characterized by inequality, the marginalization of some communities and a lack of social cohesion, those that feel excluded usually voice dissatisfaction and work towards greater recognition and

inclusion, 'but sometimes hidden from view . . . to avoid suffering sanctions from local or international opponents' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2015: 770). If not addressed, such tensions tend to eventually become violent. Outbreaks of violent conflict have disastrous consequences for all involved, including the society, the state and the national economy, and it has spill-over effects on neighbours near and far. For these reasons, violent conflict affects international peace and security and triggers international and regional responses, among them, peace operations.

When the political and security situation in a given country has deteriorated to the extent that a peace operation needs to be deployed, it signifies that the state has failed to self-govern its affairs within the basic parameters expected of a sovereign state. By deploying a peace operation the international community and/or regional body that has the authority to deploy such a mission, acts to redress the failures of the state. It is in the interest and authority of those mandating the peace operation to ensure that they take the steps necessary to address the causes of the crisis so that violent conflict does not recur. In this context, the strengthening of inclusive state-society relations is both a pre-requisite to avoid conflict recurrence, and in the interest of international peace and security.

However, this does not imply that peace operations can or should be prescriptive of the mechanisms and models that govern state-society relations. These need to emerge from the internal politics of the country concerned and need to be informed by the history, cultures and precedents of state-society relations of the societies and communities that make up the state (de Coning 2013).

The role of the peace operation is to support this process by encouraging and facilitating state-society interaction with a view to the overall strengthening of state-society relations. The extension and restoration of state authority would be a natural outcome of such a process where the state achieves

legitimacy and credibility in proportion to the degree that societies and communities perceive themselves to be represented in and by their state institutions, and to the degree that they perceive these state institutions to be acting in their interests, e.g. increase their security and improve their access to justice and basic services.

To succeed, peace operations thus have to develop the internal tools and capacities to engage with the state and society within these parameters. This needs to include strong principled leadership, supported by the capacity to monitor the missions' actions and their effects to ensure that the peace operation does not become prescriptive. The principled boundaries that should govern the conduct of peace operations when strengthening state-society relations can be summarized as 'process-not-content'. In other words the peace operations should facilitate processes that enable and encourage state-society relations, but stop short of actions that can result in influencing the content or outcome of these processes.

National elites often talk about legitimacy, but this tends to be about performance legitimacy – which often amounts to institutional mimicry, as opposed to real service delivery – not popular legitimacy which is rooted in responding to the needs of the general population. To achieve durable results, UN peacekeeping missions should not only pay attention to state institutions, but also to social institutions, while being equally aware of the potentially challenging features of traditional forms of authority that can represent persistent structures of inequality (Poulligny 2010). Peacekeepers and peacebuilders also need to be aware that the quest for more 'resilient' states can also mask a neoliberal agenda which shifts the responsibility from the peacebuilders to those on the receiving end, as part of a neoliberal governmentality that places emphasis on individual responsibility (Joseph 2013: 38). In the next section we will look closely at how peace operations can aim to close the gap between

performance and popular legitimacy, and thus enhance the overall effectiveness of the missions and support the development of responsive and inclusive states.

Issues to Consider when Peace Operations Support the Strengthening of State-Society Relations

Missions should involve representatives of the societies they are working within when undertaking assessments, analysis, planning, programming and evaluations. The nature of the involvement will depend on the context, but the principle of giving a society maximum agency to influence the work of the mission should be a general principle that guides state-society relations. The UN high-level independent panel on peace operations recommended that peace operations go beyond merely consulting communities, and actively include them in their work (UN 2015: 66). Missions should identify people who are generally perceived to be credible voices in their communities, such as traditional, civil society, religious and academic leaders, and involve them in the mission's engagement with its host society. For instance, the mission can establish advisory groups that can consider each aspect of the mission's work and the effect it is likely to have on the community. Such groups can provide input into and/or feedback on the mission's conflict analysis, planning, programming and contribute to the mission's self-evaluation of its programmes and initiatives. Solutions may not follow peacebuilders' liberal prescripts, and feedback can enable the mission to stop and re-direct those actions that have harmful effects, and to identify those initiatives that have positive effects, so that they can be further adapted and applied elsewhere. Involving the community not only ensures that the mission's work is relevant to the society it serves, but can also help the peace operation to become a learning organization that adapts to its environment.

In many societies in which missions work, state and society is not necessarily separate in the way that such a separation emerged in the western state formation experience. A local traditional or civil society leader may also be a leader of an armed group, a local politician and a local businessman. If the objective is to improve the popular legitimacy, accountability and representativeness of the state vis-à-vis its population, then an alternative way to think about state-society relations could be to think of elites vs. non-elites, or to think about those that have more power and those that have less power and who feel marginalized or excluded in decision-making processes. The main issue is ultimately about who has the power and access to make decisions at the local, regional and national level, and how the mission can facilitate and encourage processes that contribute to decision-making being more inclusive and considerate of all parts of the society.

Local representatives are usually a mixed group that can include traditional leaders, civil society representatives, local militia or self-defense groups, ex-combatants, religious leaders, youth leaders, businessmen, or self-help groups such as a local women's cooperative. They are likely to range from those who have official social positions, such as traditional and religious leaders, to those who represent mainly their own interests, such as businessmen or criminal elements, but who may nevertheless have a following and influence in their societies.

The UN should be sensitive about which actors it chooses to engage with and how it engages with them, as these choices will have implications on the political economy of the societies they engage with (Aoi et al. 2007). When the mission chooses to engage with certain individuals or groups, that implies some form of recognition and it is likely to give those selected more power and leverage in the local community, and in their engagement with the state. It may also have the opposite effect on those with whom the UN chooses not to engage. It may also have

negative consequences: for instance, the leader of an armed group may resent the prominence given to a traditional or civil society representative, and may try to undermine their standing in the community or threaten their physical safety.

In addition to which individuals the UN chooses to engage with, another important consideration is how the UN chooses to engage with societies (da Costa and Karlsrud 2012; Schia and Karlsrud 2013; Hughes et al. 2015). If the aim is to ensure that the mission is locally relevant and sensitive to the needs and context of local communities, then the mission should take care not to structure the engagement in such a way that they influence the outcome. In other words, the mission should emphasize process over content, and take steps to avoid that the processes of engagement unintentionally influence the outcome. For instance, if community leaders are asked to comment on an analysis, or to provide input based on a prepared list of potential needs, then the outcome is likely to be different than if they were asked what their needs and priorities are, or if they are asked to do their own conflict analysis.

The missions play an important role in engaging with and giving voice to those who represent the 'society' part of the state-society dialogue, underscoring the importance of the 'process'. However, missions should be sensitive to influencing the outcome or content. Because the UN is perceived to be powerful and a potential source of material and ideological support, community representatives tell the mission what they think will result in their community receiving goods from the UN. Similarly, these community representatives are likely to tell the representatives of the state what they believe will result in them receiving services from the state, or what they think may help them avoid negative interventions from the state. Hence, it is important to manage the engagement in such a way that the representatives of local communities feel empowered to voice their

own needs and perceptions, as opposed to telling those with power over them what they think the powerful wants to hear.

Local culture is important, but can also be a limiting factor used to perpetuate systems of domination: 'local actors and contexts can be partisan, discriminatory, exclusive and violent (as can international actors)' (Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013: 770). Modern and traditional communities all have their own forms of exclusion and marginalization, and peacekeepers must always make an effort to do a thorough conflict analysis that includes a mapping and assessment of state-society relations and that pays special attention to the less dominant actors in the societies with which they engage. While all tools and approaches should be context-specific, there are some good practices that can be drawn upon.

In those cases where the state is absent, the missions are likely to face additional challenges. In such circumstances the mission may at least temporarily have to play a larger role in providing security, services and facilitating dialogue and input into national and local political processes. Marginalized groups would need particular attention and protection. Communication is crucial within the mission, as well as to understand and accurately respond to how the mission's activities are perceived by all the different elements of the society with whom the UN engages. Missions may be acceptable to most of the parties to a conflict or to different communities, but can have conflictual mandates giving them a role to broker the peace while simultaneously extending state authority. The mission should take care to ensure that blindly implementing its extending state authority role does not make it a party to the conflict.

Formal and informal mechanisms can be used to facilitate the engagement, including story-telling, song and identifying prominent leaders that can voice local citizen's views, religious leaders, NGOs, and civil society. Traditional and new media are

Box 1: Engaging with civil society in northern Mali (MINUSMA)

Mali offers an interesting example of the opportunities and challenges that a mission supporting state-society relations might face. Supporting the state in the absence of a peace agreement and when the state is a party to the conflict is challenging. In addition, the state supports proxy militias that are reconquering areas in the north, highlighting the need for security sector reform and the training of regular and paramilitary groups. How do you include local actors in security sector reform and make security agents responsive and accountable to the local population?

MINUSMA is in the process of developing local Stabilization and Recovery Plans. In Gao, the stabilization and recovery plan is jointly consulted and owned by the regional authorities, MINUSMA, civil society, UN agencies and bilateral and NGO partners, and has five main goals: 1) improve the security situation; 2) strengthen the rule of law; 3) support socio-economic development; 4) strengthen social cohesion and 5) strengthen the delivery of social services (UN 2015b, our translation).

Unlike some previous stabilization plans developed in UN missions, this plan has been developed in a bottom-up manner, and included local populations and civil society. The All Source Information Fusion Unit (ASIFU) – the first explicit intelligence unit in a UN peacekeeping mission – has been closely involved in the process of developing a fine-grained

conflict analysis and finding ways to measure impact on the five main goals identified in the plan. The mission supports a coordination element with the governor's office at the local level.

The security environment is more than challenging and the mission is at the limit of what can be considered peacekeeping, considering that as of August 2015 the mission had endured more than 40 fatalities and 140 have been wounded from IEDs, mortar attacks and other attacks by rebel and terrorist groups on its bases, troops and contractor convoys (UN 2015c). This accentuates the need for more reflection and guidance on how to operate in high-risk theatres.

The civil society in northern Mali is composed of many different actors and counterparts and each can simultaneously be: 1) member of armed groups; 2) own e.g. a transport company involved in smuggling; 3) representative of a civil society organization; and 4) have a link to terrorist groups (interview with UN official, April 2015). It goes without saying that this makes any engagement very challenging, and it highlights the need to make a special effort to identify those representatives that are the most acceptable and credible from the perspective of the local population.

The need for proper analysis is also highlighted by the fact that in recent years there has been much talk about terrorists, but the conflict drivers are still marginalization and lack of development.

useful tools, and technology can be leveraged to create instant feedback loops to cut past the brokers and usual suspects, and which create direct contact between the general population and local and central authorities. New technology can also be used to create more real time monitoring

and evaluation tools, improving programming and the responsiveness of the mission and the government to real and perceived security threats and other challenges (Schia et al. 2014; Karlsrud 2015).

The engagement with civil society and local populations also accentuates the need for

Box 2: Community liaison assistants and community alert networks

In the DRC, there are now about 200 Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs), and CLAs are also being hired in South Sudan, Cote d'Ivoire and Mali. These are local persons employed and trained by the UN who work to facilitate interaction and confidence building between MONUSCO and local communities, and who set up communication networks and provide early warning on protection risks and give advice on the needs of the local population. The CLAs have been recognized as a critical asset to UN peacekeeping missions and have proven very effective in identifying threats and needs. After a widely perceived successful introduction in the DRC, UN peacekeeping operations are now adding CLAs to the missions in CAR, Mali, South Sudan and Darfur.

MONUSCO has also set up a system of Community Alert Networks, where means of communication have been provided to community focal points to enable a direct link between local communities and MONUSCO. The CLAs and the CANs report to Early Warning Centers, which are hubs situated at the company level of the military contingents to enhance situation awareness and strengthen capabilities to protect civilians. CLAs and CANs are examples of innovative developments aimed at improving the ability of UN peacekeeping missions to capture, understand and integrate local perceptions into its daily decision-making, and enhance its ability to protect civilians. However, it should also be noted that the CLAs and local community focal points may be exposed to considerable personal risks, a point that needs to be carefully considered when mainstreaming these new capacities and tools in UN peacekeeping missions.

new types of personnel and capacity in UN missions. In terms of background and education, e.g. anthropologists can make a difference, and Community Liaison Assistants (CLAs) and Community Alert Networks (CANs) are also be useful new innovations. Local feedback is essential, and can be used not only to develop more inclusive activities, but also to actively measure the impact of the mission. National professional officers (NPOs) are an extremely valuable resource for knowledge, analysis and possible solutions, and can be used as brokers between the mission and local communities, as and when appropriate in the local context (da Costa and Karlsrud 2012; da Costa and Karlsrud 2013).

Civil society often expresses a need for capacity development, which means that this cannot be something that peace operations accomplish alone, however, missions can facilitate and open doors. Peace operations

are not set up to do capacity development, but increasingly do so in practice. So far, missions have mostly used quick impact projects (QIPs) to fund smaller projects which support the involvement of civil society. However, this kind of engagement also points to the role of peacekeepers as early peacebuilders and to the need for more programmatic funds. Mission-wide strategies can release funding from a variety of sources, including for instance, the UN Peacebuilding Fund. To ensure sustainable and long-term engagement, missions should make sure to work closely with other UN and development partners with joint visions for the long term, even though the mandate is only for a limited substantive area and for a short duration.

To highlight the important work missions do, and to ensure more attention, missions could use the Secretary-General reporting mechanism to engage the Security Council in a longer-term peacebuilding agenda, and

highlight its role as an essential part of the exit strategy and transition plan of the mission.

Challenges Associated with the Extension of State Authority Mandates

Conflicts, and the displacements they cause, often modulate urbanization and secularization processes. In this context, the extension of state authority may often include the creation of skin-deep modern institutions (Pritchett et al. 2010) that theoretically are supposed to improve security and the rule of law, but which instead often supplant one form of authority for another. The establishment of new institutions can be a guise for new forms of neo-patrimonial rule and extraversion that preys upon the local population (Bayart 2002). New institutions are not inserted on a blank slate, and therefore the various forms of pre-existing authority and politics in the local context need to be taken into account.

As seen in the example from Mali, there are potential unintended consequences that may arise from the friction between the sovereignty-oriented and political aspect of the mandate. To avoid these consequences, missions should develop contingency plans to mitigate dilemmas that might arise. The drive to include the extension of state authority among the core tasks of UN peacekeeping missions does in part stem from a conclusion that state fragility is a main cause of conflict (Curtis 2013). Missions should avoid a 'knee-jerk' inclusion of state building with the goal of peacebuilding, and acknowledge that support to the extension of state authority can also often be a conflict driver (Leonardsson and Rudd 2015). It will be important to consider and emphasize the potential friction, but also the benefits that supporting state-society relations can engender early on in the life-span of the mission, as consent of the host state can wither as it tries to assert its power vis-a-vis the mission (Piccolino and Karlsrud 2011).

Cooperation and coordination between the mission, the UN system, international financial institutions and bilateral donors remains challenging. Peace operations have

the political leverage to engage, and enabling processes for consultation can leverage not only topics around security and peace, but also about socio-economic development and other development issues. This necessitates close cooperation with the rest of the UN system and other development actors.

Although missions have shown much imagination in creating new practices to facilitate engagement and support of state-society relations, there is still a lack of methodology. Missions do not necessarily have the comparative advantage to perform conflict analysis and understand local dynamics, and there is a need to strengthen the work with the UN Country Team and local actors. Currently, there is a lack of guidance from headquarters on this topic, and the HQ has little capacity to give advice to staff in the field. Field missions should be strengthened with new categories of personnel.

Conclusions and Recommendations

One of the insights from complexity theory for peacebuilding is that interventions have to be essentially about stimulating and facilitating the capacity of societies to self-organise (de Coning 2013). The increased focus on the 'local' is for the most part, good news. However, we should heed the warning of the possible consequences of misappropriation and instead import the 'local' into liberal peacebuilding activities to ensure that it does not result in a hollowing out of the term (Mac Ginty 2015). The art of peacebuilding thus lies in pursuing the appropriate balance between international support and home-grown, context-specific solutions.

There is, however, still resistance among member states about whether peace operations should be performing these tasks; these concerns are grounded in the potential risk of undermining the authority of the host government. However, peace operations will continue to keep the government as its principal partner. As the UN high level independent panel on peace operations pointed out, if sustainable and durable peace remains the main goal of peace operations, then

enhancing inclusive state-society relations must be front and centre among the tasks they are supposed to carry out (UN 2015a: 66).

Placing people at the centre of peace operations also carries the potential to mitigate some of the impact of the robust and state-centric mandates that peace operations are furnished with, by helping other, more vulnerable and less privileged actors to find a seat at the table, and supporting the development of more responsive, accountable and legitimate institutions.

The ultimate aim should be to foster a resilient society, and by extension, resilient state-society relations. This can be assessed in a number of ways, including by involving representative advisory groups from civil society and local communities in assessments, analysis, planning, implementation and evaluation, so as to ensure continuous direct input and feedback from the society on the work of the peace operation.

Member states and the Security Council

- Recognize that engaging with local populations is crucial for the success of the mission and highlight this in the mandates given to UN peacekeeping missions;
- When addressing the issue of state authority in the mandate drafting process, the Security Council should include the phrase 'support the restoration of state authority and strengthening of inclusive state-society relations';
- Where the government supports the New Deal process, the mission has a strong platform to help the government in reaching out to the population and strengthening state-society relations;

Host states

- Accept that the strengthening of state-society relations is a pre-requisite for a strong and resilient state, and that peace operations can be a positive agent of change in this process;

- Make a compact with peace operations to measure progress through perception surveys, consultations with civil society and political parties;

Peace operations

- Adopt a more people-centric approach to peace operations; for instance: measure the progress and success of the mission not only against its effect on state institutions, but also on how the mission affects the everyday life of the people i.e. do they feel safer, do they feel included, do they identify with the state, etc.
- When working towards supporting the strengthening of state-society relations, be guided by a principled 'process-not-content' approach;
- Meaningfully involve representatives of the society and local communities in the work of the mission, for instance, by establishing advisory groups that provide input to and feedback on assessments, analysis, planning, implementation, programming and evaluations;
- Anchor any state-society relations strategy at the highest levels and make sure that engagement with local populations, civil society and political parties are core parts of the mandate, and part of the core tasks of the SRSG, Political Affairs, Civil Affairs and other sections;
- Develop and adopt new approaches, processes and technologies for information gathering and contextual analysis. M&E and communication also require new skills. Capacities can be brought on board through new staff categories, but also through partnerships with national and local partners, research institutes, government provided personnel, etc.;
- The logistical capacity and presence of the mission should be better leveraged in cooperation with the government and other development partners.

Competing Interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

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