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## **Editor's picks**

### **EU Military Cooperation and National Defense; Peace-building and State-building from the Perspective of the Historical Development of International Society; Islamist Violent Extremism; War Economy, Governance and Security in Syria's Opposition-Controlled Areas; and The Conundrum of DDR Coordination**

Since the U.K.'s vote to leave the EU in June 2016, a plethora of new initiatives to bolster EU military cooperation have emerged. In "EU Military Cooperation and National Defense," Mr. Daniel Keohane suggests the EU military cooperation should be understood more in the context of its utility for national defense policies across Europe, and less through its relationship with NATO or its role in European integration. In particular, the positions of France, Germany, Italy, and Poland will be crucial for the future success of EU military efforts. If the EU helps its governments better spend their defense budgets and deepen their military cooperation, NATO will benefit too, as 21 countries will remain members of both the union and the Alliance. However, that will require EU governments to capitalize on the convergences and manage the divergences of their disparate national defense policies.

In "Peace-building and State-building from the Perspective of the Historical Development of International Society," Dr. Hideaki Shinoda examines the relationship between post-conflict peace-building and state-building. In so doing, he illustrates the process of the expansion and transformation of "world international society." By comparing the process of the formation of sovereign states in modern Europe and state-building activities in post-conflict societies in the contemporary world, he seeks to identify dilemmas of peace-building through state-building. First, Professor Shinoda describes the dilemma at the level of overall international order concerning world international society and regional discrepancies of peace-building through state-building. Second, he highlights the dilemma at the level of state-building policies concerning the concentration of power and the limitation of concentrated power. Third, he illustrates the dilemma concerning liberal peace-building and local ownership. Then, he argues that post-conflict state-building needs to be understood in the context of the long-term state-building process.

Islamist violent extremist (IVE) groups are frequently involved in civil conflicts. In “Islamist Violent Extremism: A New Form of Conflict or Business as Usual?” Drs. Andrew Glazzard, Sasha Jespersen, Thomas Maguire, and Ms. Emily Winterbotham assert that some groups owe their origins to conflict, and tens of thousands of Islamists have chosen to participate in conflicts taking place in foreign countries in the past 35 years. Increasingly, IVE groups appear to have the capacity to influence the conflicts they are involved in, and are, in turn, influenced by their experiences. As a result, for those working on conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction, the involvement of IVE groups raises questions of whether traditional responses remain adequate. Drawing on three country case studies – Nigeria, Kenya, and Iraq/Syria, the authors examine the similarities and differences between IVE groups and other conflict actors, and what this means for development, state building and peace building responses.

Dr. Vesna Bojicic-Dzelilovic and Dr. Rim Turkmani in “War Economy, Governance, and Security in Syria’s Opposition-Controlled Areas,” explore the links between the war economy and civilian security by using evidence from the three opposition-held areas in Syria. The study of Eastern Ghouta, Daraa and Atareb shows how different types of behavior by non-state armed groups engaged in criminal war economy, shaped by the broader war economy conditions, impact the ability of the local populations to address their security predicaments. Their findings will challenge the assumption prevalent in the scholarship on the war economy that civilian security is unequivocally undermined by insurgents’ criminal war economy dealings. They show that in some local contexts a diverse range of economic choices and actors provide the local population with more opportunities to develop coping strategies by engaging in different parts of the war economy.

Dr. Guy Lamb and Mr. Theo Stainer analyze the nature of coordination between the various stakeholders during the design and implementation of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process in “The Conundrum of DDR Coordination: The Case of South Sudan.” The authors make detailed reference to the contemporary DDR program in South Sudan as this African country is a relevant example of significant international and local efforts to facilitate DDR coordination in a fragile and complex political and operational environment. The analyses showed that in South Sudan, coordination appeared to have been negatively affected by hierarchical, convoluted and inflexible organizational structures and arrangements. In addition, further contributing factors included: inadequate communication; uncertainty over roles and responsibilities; and unequal access to financial resources. Moreover, it was apparent that these arrangements and dynamics fostered inter-organizational tensions and eroded trust between stakeholders. This ultimately resulted in fragmented and sub-standard DDR outcomes.

Rémy Mauduit, Editor  
*Air & Space Power Journal–Africa and Francophonie*  
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# EU Military Cooperation and National Defense

DANIEL KEOHANE\*

Since the U.K.'s vote to leave the EU in June 2016, a plethora of new initiatives to bolster EU military cooperation have emerged. There is some political opportunism at play here. For one, the other 27 EU governments are keen to display some unity. They also want to show that the EU remains relevant for their citizens, especially for their security. But there is also an increasing awareness among EU governments that they sometimes need to fend for themselves. EU governments want NATO—meaning the United States—to continue to deter Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. However, the migrant crisis to the south of Europe has resulted in the EU sending military ships into Mediterranean waters to tackle people smuggling, while the EU has also stemmed piracy on the waters off Somalia, and is helping Sahel countries like Mali counter terrorism.

## EU Military Cooperation Another Framework for National Governments

The EU, like NATO, is encouraging greater European military cooperation, not only to help avoid excessive fragmentation or duplication of European collaborative efforts, but also to coordinate and support disparate national policies. However, European military cooperation is mainly driven by the merging of national defense policies in various different ways rather than by the efforts of European (or transatlantic) institutions. This represents a potential for greater convergence or divergence of national policies that will determine the future success or failure of European military cooperation.

European governments are increasingly picking and choosing which forms of military cooperation they wish to pursue, depending on the capability project or operation at hand. Sometimes they act through the EU and/or NATO, but

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Daniel Keohane, "EU Military Cooperation and National Defense," Policy Brief: 2018|No. 004, Security and Defense Policy. The German Fund of the United States, 2018.

almost all European governments are using other formats as well, whether regional, bilateral, or ad hoc coalitions of the willing. The combination of more complex security crises and reduced resources has meant that European governments are more focused on their core national interests than before, and both are more targeted and flexible on how they wish to cooperate.

As shown during the 2016 EU referendum debate in the U.K., there is a lot of confusion over what EU defense policy is and what it is not. Catchall phrases such as “European army” are easily misunderstood, and do not reflect the reality of what EU defense policy is about. Part of the reason for this confusion is that EU defense policy is not a defense policy, let alone a plan to create an army under the centralized control of the EU institutions in Brussels. The EU is also not a military alliance in the way that NATO defends territory from attack by external states. Instead, the military component of EU security policies is commonly referred to as “EU defense policy.”

The EU’s military efforts are mainly focused on international security beyond the EU’s borders, and are carried out through the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) framework, which is housed within the EU’s foreign policy structures—alongside efforts to help EU governments spend their defense monies more effectively. It is more accurate to refer to EU “military policy” or “military cooperation” than EU “defense policy.”

NATO is the collective defense bedrock for most EU governments, and this will not change in the face of Russian aggression in Eastern Europe. However, the Atlantic Alliance cannot be everywhere, and Europeans increasingly have to cope with some security challenges by themselves, without help from the United States. Acting through the EU, therefore, is a useful strategic option for EU member states.

In addition, it is important to remember that national governments are in charge of EU military policies, and that those policies are voluntary. National armed forces will remain national, and EU governments decide their own defense budgets, whether or not they wish to cooperate with others and how; and whether or not they wish to participate in EU operations. The European Commission is trying to play a stronger supporting role to those intergovernmental EU policies, having developed a European Defense Fund that will offer financial incentives for cooperation projects, and agreeing that some of its vast civil scientific research projects should have military applications to supplement feeble national defense research and technology spending.

It is the intergovernmental initiatives that matter most politically, for example the use of a mechanism in the EU treaties that would allow a smaller group of countries to cooperate more closely on military matters. This mechanism, known as Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO), formally launched in

mid-December 2017. In principle, the PESCO clause makes a lot of sense. Those member states that meet a set of capability-based entry criteria can choose to cooperate more closely after securing a majority vote. Military capabilities and ambitions vary widely among the member states; therefore, the EU could rely on a smaller group of the most willing and best-prepared countries to run its more demanding military missions.

The nub of the PESCO debate revolved around quality versus quantity, with France preferring the former and Germany the latter. A focus on military quality would mean that some member states would face exclusion. Politically this would be a counter-intuitive move, when 27 EU governments are trying to maintain their unity and solidarity following the British decision to leave the EU. Indeed 25 out of the remaining 27 EU governments are participating in PESCO (Malta has not yet joined, and Denmark does not participate in EU military cooperation). However, emphasizing quantity, involving almost all EU governments in PESCO, shows that the entry criteria are so easy as to offer no obvious new military value beyond what member states are already providing. In addition, it has become a cliché to observe that Europeans greatly need to up their military game. PESCO, originally conceived in the early 2000s, was a mechanism to create a military vanguard for the EU (led by France and the U.K.). However, since almost all EU governments will now participate, the PESCO grouping is no longer a vanguard.

### **France and Germany: Alliance or Army?**

In a major speech on Europe's future in September 2017, French President Macron outlined a number of proposals for EU military cooperation.<sup>1</sup> His main military objective is enabling Europeans to act autonomously when needed, complementing NATO's territorial defense role with a European capacity to intervene abroad, particularly to the South of Europe (known as the European Intervention Initiative). Macron had three headline proposals: establishing "a common intervention force, a common defense budget, and a common doctrine for action."<sup>2</sup> Macron's proposals for a common military force and defense budget are likely to generate more headlines than his idea of a shared military doctrine. This is because they sound like the European army idea so beloved by some federalist politicians (and so loathed by some Euro-skeptics).

In fact, his proposals are more akin in spirit to building a *de facto* military alliance from the bottom-up, which would include many forms of inter-governmental military cooperation, than establishing a top-down federal EU army directed by the institutions in Brussels. Macron wants to supplement the instinctive Atlanti-

cism of most EU governments on military matters by strengthening their European intuition.

Moreover, the new French defense white book, published since Macron's Sorbonne speech, suggests that not all aspects of this intervention initiative have to be implemented by the EU.<sup>3</sup> The Eurocorps, a multinational force based at Strasbourg, for example, is available to the EU and/or NATO, but it is not an EU force. While much of the current focus in Germany is on developing EU processes for military cooperation, France is more interested in effective policies over particular frameworks—whether through the EU, NATO, or ad hoc arrangements. However, developing an effective shared military doctrine could prove much more difficult than establishing a joint force or common budget. For one, an effective military doctrine should help armed forces to plan, train, and operate together, drawing on an assessment of threats and capabilities. Ideally, military doctrines orient armed forces for successfully coping with future contingencies—no small task.

For another, developing a national doctrine involves a host of actors, from ministries and armed forces. Combining the disparate perspectives of EU governments is even more challenging. Because of their very different strategic cultures, the danger is that EU governments would produce a dysfunctional doctrine in practice. For instance, the glaring gap between French and German attitudes to military interventions abroad is well known. Also, in contrast to many German politicians, no French president would call for a “European army” (with its federalist overtones). France prefers a strong *Europe de la défense*, meaning a full-blown intergovernmental EU military alliance—led by France.

The central strategic importance of NATO for Germany is strongly emphasized in the 2016 German security white paper, which says, “only together with the United States can Europe effectively defend itself against the threats of the 21st century and guarantee a credible form of deterrence. NATO remains the anchor and main framework of action for German security and defense policy.”<sup>4</sup> That German white paper also says that EU members should aim to create a “European Security and Defense Union” in the long term.<sup>5</sup> However, it is not entirely clear what the implications of such an eventual European defense union would be in practice. For example, would it mean greater military integration under the control of national governments or ultimately via the Brussels-based EU institutions?

In sum, there are some major differences in strategic culture between Berlin and Paris. For one, France, which is a nuclear-armed permanent member of the UN Security Council, has a special sense of responsibility for global security, and is prepared to initiate international military interventions if necessary. Germany,

in contrast, will only react in coalition with others, and remains much more reluctant than France to deploy robust military force abroad. Even though militarily Germany is doing more—spending more and cooperating more compared to before—the domestic political constraints on German defense policy remain considerable.<sup>6</sup>

Moreover, Berlin and Paris do not necessarily agree on the precise meaning of concepts they have both signed up to in EU documents—such as “strategic autonomy”—or even the end goal of EU defense policy. Germany’s calls for a “European Defense Union” or “European army” in the long term give the impression that EU defense is primarily a political integration project for some in Berlin. The French are more interested in a stronger intergovernmental EU defense policy today than a symbolic integration project for the future, since Paris perceives acting militarily through the EU as an important option for those times when the United States does not want to intervene in crises in and around Europe. Because of their different strategic cultures, therefore, France and Germany may struggle to develop a more active EU defense policy more than their proposals would suggest.

### Italy and Poland: Comparing Frontline States

It is interesting to compare Polish and Italian national defense policies because they are both frontline states for EU–NATO security, and they represent the two main operational priorities in European military cooperation: defending NATO territory in Eastern Europe, and intervening to stabilize conflict-racked countries south of the EU.

Italy has received 75 percent of migrants and refugees coming across the Mediterranean into the EU this year—over 110,000 people, according to the International Organization for Migration.<sup>7</sup> As Elisabeth Braw of the Atlantic Council has noted, this has placed considerable strain on the Italian coast guard and navy, which rescued around 25,000 migrants between January and June of this year.<sup>8</sup>

Poland worries greatly about the military threat from Russia, following Moscow’s 2014 annexation of Crimea and subsequent war-fighting in eastern Ukraine. A year ago, Russia deployed Iskander-M ballistic missiles (nuclear-capable rockets with a range up to 500 kilometers) to Kaliningrad, its Baltic exclave situated between Poland and Lithuania.<sup>9</sup> Part of the joint Russia–Belarusian “Zapad” military exercise in September 2017 took place in Kaliningrad, as well as in Poland’s neighbor Belarus. Understandably, the Polish and Italian defense policies must prioritize either defensive capabilities or an interventionist stance, partly

because, with relatively limited resources, they must prioritize. By comparison, NATO estimates that the U.K. will budget \$55 billion, France \$44 billion, and Germany \$43 billion for defense this year. In contrast, Italy will budget \$22.5 billion and Poland \$10 billion.<sup>10</sup>

The 2015 Italian white paper on defense, therefore, is very clear on what Italy's strategic and operational priorities should be.<sup>11</sup> In particular, the "Euro-Mediterranean" region is highlighted as the primary geo-strategic focus for Italy. This region, in broad terms, covers the EU, the Balkans, the Maghreb, the Middle East, and the Black Sea. However, it is clear that Italy, which had previously sent troops as far afield as NATO's mission in Afghanistan, will now primarily worry about its immediate neighborhood. This is probably not surprising; given the turbulence that has affected some of these regions in recent years, especially North Africa and the Middle East. Turmoil in Libya, for example, has greatly contributed to the large numbers of migrants being smuggled across the Mediterranean to Italy. Interestingly, Italy not only intends to contribute to international coalitions (whether NATO, the UN, or the EU) in this Euro-Mediterranean space. It is also prepared to lead high intensity, full-spectrum crisis management missions across this region. In other words, even if the geostrategic priorities of Italian defense policy are more narrowly defined than those of other large European powers, its external operational ambitions remain relatively robust. Even though Italian defense spending is equivalent to only 1.1 percent of its GDP, just over half of NATO's much-trumpeted headline goal, Italy is one of Europe's biggest contributors to international operations. The Istituto Affari Internazionali in Rome says that Italy sent over 6,000 armed forces personnel to international missions and operations during 2016.<sup>12</sup> This is almost double Germany's number, which deployed roughly 3,300 during 2016, according to the German defense ombudsman.<sup>13</sup> The bulk of those Italian soldiers operated across Africa and the Middle East, reflecting the priorities set out in the 2015 Italian defense white paper.

Poland's geo-strategic and operational approach contrasts quite markedly from Italy's approach. For one, Poland is primarily geographically focused on Eastern Europe, particularly the military threat from Russia. Furthermore, its operational priority is to improve both its national defensive efforts and those of NATO, rather than contributing to robust external missions. Poland, for example, did not participate in NATO's air bombing campaign in Libya in 2011. The Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014, following the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, strongly reinforced a perception in Poland that Warsaw must invest more in its national defense, including through NATO. The 2017 Polish Defense Concept, a strategic review published in May, pointedly states, "the number one priority was the necessity of adequately preparing Poland to defend its own territory."<sup>14</sup> The

first threat and challenge listed in the concept paper is the “aggressive policy of the Russian Federation,” followed by an “unstable neighborhood on NATO’s Eastern Flank.”

As a percentage of GDP, Poland spends almost twice as much as Italy on defense. Moreover, Polish President Andrzej Duda signed a law in October 2017 committing Poland to spend an impressive 2.5 percent of GDP on defense by 2030.<sup>15</sup> The same law also includes a plan to increase Poland’s armed forces from the current 100,000 personnel to 200,000. Some 50,000 of those will belong to a new voluntary “Territorial Defense Force.” Referring to the new defense law, former Polish Defense Minister Antoni Macierewicz rather ambitiously stated: “The Polish army will within ten years gain the capability of stopping every opponent.” Both Poland and Italy say that they have robust military intentions, whether to defend national territory or to contribute to international interventions. Even so, both want help from their allies, whether for countering Russian missiles and in coping with cross-Mediterranean migrants.

Traditionally, Italy has been strongly committed both to NATO solidarity and to European integration. Working through the EU, however, is becoming increasingly important for Rome, for carrying out external operations. For example, at a summit in Brussels in October 2017 Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni asked other EU governments to help more with stemming migrants, including sending a mission to police Niger’s border with Libya, on top of current EU efforts such as naval operations in the Mediterranean. In addition, Italy is prepared to make proposals on EU military cooperation. Rome, for instance, proposed during summer 2016 that Europeans create a multinational military force that would be available to the EU, NATO, and the UN. Italy sees no real or potential contradiction between its firm commitment to NATO and its wholehearted support for deeper EU military cooperation.

The Polish government has long called for stronger NATO defenses, and was greatly reassured by U.S. President Trump’s endorsement of NATO’s mutual defense commitment in Warsaw in July 2017. However, Polish enthusiasm for military cooperation through NATO in recent years has not always translated into strong support for complementary efforts through the EU. After some hesitation in Warsaw, Poland only indicated in November 2017 that it would participate in the EU’s PESCO initiative.<sup>16</sup> The 2017 Polish defense concept puts this in clear terms: “All EU actions in the security domain should complement and enrich NATO operations in a non-competitive manner.” Moreover, in the paper, that observation is preceded by a statement on the central importance of NATO for Poland, “which is key to our policy of collective defense.”

## Conclusion

The new initiatives on EU military cooperation may generate enough political momentum to keep EU defense high on national agendas. Plus, the remaining 27 EU governments can no longer blame the U.K. for any lack of progress. There have been worries in London and Washington that some EU initiatives might undermine NATO. But if the EU helps its governments better spend their defense budgets and deepen their military cooperation, NATO will benefit too, as 21 countries will remain members of both the union and the Alliance. However, that will require EU governments to capitalize on the convergences and manage the divergences of their disparate national defense policies.

In addition, to ensure that EU plans do add value will require much more buy-in from national defense ministries. There is a structural quirk at the core of the current EU decision-making system. National foreign ministries currently lead EU military cooperation efforts, not national defense ministries. This reduces the incentives for defense ministries to embrace EU plans, which include sound but challenging ideas like coordinating national defense planning cycles. A formal EU defense council with equivalent status to the foreign ministers' council would encourage peer group pressure among defense ministers, and more generally help to educate national defense ministries in the workings of the EU. Furthermore, it is understandable that some European politicians have used U.S. President Trump's heretofore-wavering rhetorical backing for NATO to garner support for deepening EU military cooperation, which is welcome if it results in Europeans taking more responsibility for their own security. However, taking more responsibility is not the same thing as "strategic autonomy," and few European governments seem serious about reducing their military dependence on the United States.

It would be helpful, therefore, for EU officials to better define "strategic autonomy"—a concept contained in the EU's 2016 Global Strategy—as it is easy to characterize it as a threat to NATO, which it is not.<sup>17</sup> In principle, EU military operations are deployed to enforce international law beyond the EU's borders and in practice when the United States has been unwilling or unable to do so. The EU institutions are trying to create a system to help member states cooperate more closely on military matters: essentially spending sparse defense euros more efficiently and operating together externally if needed—but that is all.

### Notes

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14. Polish Ministry of Defense, "The Defence Concept of the Republic of Poland," May 2017.
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# Peace-building and State-building from the Perspective of the Historical Development of International Society

HIDEAKI SHINODA, PHD\*

This article examines the relationship between post-conflict peace-building and state-building in the context of the process of the expansion and transformation of “world international society.”<sup>1</sup> It compares the process of the formation of sovereign states in modern Europe and state-building activities in post-conflict societies in the contemporary world. The article aims at answering the question, what are the fundamental dilemmas of peace-building through state-building, as seen from the perspective of world international society? The question deserved to be answered, as there are numerous theoretical and policy-oriented issues concerning such dilemmas. Then, the article presents three dilemmas relevant to this question.<sup>2</sup> First, there is the dilemma at the level of overall international order concerning world international society and regional discrepancies of peace-building through state-building. Second, there is the dilemma at the level of state-building policies concerning the concentration of power and the limitation of concentrated power. Third, there is the dilemma concerning liberal peace-building and local ownership.

The article argues that post-conflict state-building needs to be understood in the context of the long-term state-building process. There are usually many fragile elements, including armed conflicts, in such a process. In the process, we will be able to see a long-term process of state-building, which covers conflict-prone states in Africa, the Middle East, and Asia. Developing countries, de-colonized in the process of the formation of ‘world international society,’ constitute the conflict zone of the contemporary world, stretching from Africa to South East Asia. The fragility of these states can be explained in terms of the rapid universalization within international society of sovereign nation states in the 20th century after

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the geographical expansion of European international society in the 19th century. Armed conflicts, seen from a historical perspective, are not occasional appearances of 'holes' in a once-complete international society, but rather the constant appearances of hidden structural tasks in our 'world international society.'

There are similarities and differences between state formation in modern times and state-building in the contemporary world. Nation states, including modern European states and latecomers, such as the United States and Japan, overcame the social structure of internal armed conflicts by joining international society, where they exposed themselves to competition with other states. Until the 19th century, competition among nation states was not just a sad reality; it was part of nation-state-building itself. In contrast, state-building activities in post-conflict societies in the contemporary world are promoted by international assistance. No competition among nation states is assumed in our universalized international society, where there is no more geographical room for external expansion of state power. While we need strong states to sustain peace, we do not need stronger states to threaten peace. State-building is an attempt to create a strong state, which must also be sufficiently constrained by international norms. The way in which we identify the problem of state-building in post-conflict societies is a reflection of the problem of international order in our contemporary world.

The article also touches upon the debate concerning liberal peace-building and local ownership. It has been widely discussed that the orthodox doctrine of peace-building activities is more or less based upon liberal values. This could imply that peace-building is a set of Western-centric intervention activities to a great extent. This observation indicates that this Western-centric nature of peace-building may clash with another key principle of peace-building, namely, respect for local ownership. In turn, this poses a fundamental dilemma regarding the attitudes of peace-building.

The article provides an overall description of state-building as an issue of contemporary peace-building activities in the first section. Then, the second section illustrates the dilemma of state-building in the context of world international society. The third section discusses the dilemma concerning the concentration of state power for peace-building. The fourth section highlights the dilemma between liberal peace-building theory and the principle of local ownership.

### **State-building in Contemporary International Society**

It is commonly understood that state-building constitutes a pillar of peace-building activities focused on resolving armed conflicts throughout the world. The expansion of international peace-building activities since the end of the Cold War

has promoted the role played by the United Nations (UN), regional organizations and other international organizations in rebuilding state functions. The widely shared analysis is that, in many cases, the root causes of conflicts involve the fragility of governance, which has necessitated state-building activities, even led by international actors. Accordingly, the principles that guide state-building are regarded as key in contemporary peace-building activities, such as the rule of law.<sup>3</sup>

Since the large missions in East Timor and Kosovo, as established in 1999, UN peacekeeping operations have involved state-building activities on an extensive scale. The United States advanced the trend by unilaterally introducing large state-building activities in Afghanistan and Iraq in the context of the War on Terror after 2001. This was ironic, given that George W. Bush had criticized the Clinton administration's engagement with 'nation building' in the 1990s over Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. But the fact is that US policies in the age of the War on Terror have paradoxically strengthened the myth of 'democratic peace' theory as a conceptual tool to justify wars by democracies against non-democracies in order to facilitate regime changes, leading to a domino effect of democratization.<sup>4</sup>

Technical terms for peace-related operations, such as disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) and the protection of civilians, were coined around the turn of the 21st century to reinforce efforts for state-building. Civilian experts on state-building emerged to take active roles in the fields of peace operations, development aid, human rights, etc. They assisted, advised, and often almost supervised host governments. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), together with Department of Field Support (DFS), in the 2008 handbook of principles and guidelines known as the 'Capstone Doctrine,' argued that the UN respects the principle of impartiality, instead of neutrality, by complying with international law and peace agreements.<sup>5</sup>

Recent trends have seen a growing collaboration between the UN, and regional and sub-regional organizations, as well as other international actors, in the field of peace operations. In the era of 'partnership peacekeeping,' the European Union (EU), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), African Union (AU), Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD), and many others are among the major implementers of peace operations involving complex means of sequential and functional cooperation. The understanding is that, in order to confront global issues such as terrorist attacks, stakeholders in the international community are increasing the scale of multilayered involvement by multiple institutions, as well as the range of multidimensional policy options.<sup>6</sup> Roland Paris discussed "liberal peace-building" theory by pro-

moting academic discussion on how to understand it.<sup>7</sup> According to Paris, many international peace operations in the 1990s led by the UN as the promoter of liberal values failed due to hasty approaches to democratization and introducing market economies.<sup>8</sup> Donors sought to find successful project examples and create formal institutions, while being mindful of the gap between the needs of the respective local society and the needs of international society.<sup>9</sup> The dilemma here is that liberal peace-building theory tends to be misplaced state-building efforts by local societies.<sup>10</sup> A critic of liberal peace-building theory, Oliver Richmond, shares the view that peace-building practices by international organizations and donor states are more or less based upon the value system of liberal democracy.<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, he criticizes such an attitude towards peace-building by saying that local stakeholders are forced to become dependent upon foreign interventions.<sup>12</sup> Other critics, such as David Roberts, express the view that liberal peace-building is peace-building by external actors, which destroys traditional local conflict resolution mechanisms.<sup>13</sup> Worse still is that liberal peace-building led by external actors often strengthens the mechanism of resource distribution, which is maneuvered by power holders exploiting fragile governmental systems. This inevitably deteriorates the existing unjust social structure.<sup>14</sup> Hence, the current form of state-building in post-conflict or other types of fragile states is mainly being implemented by the Western donor community, which is concerned about the prospect of their own agendas, including security issues in the age of the War on Terror.<sup>15</sup> The mainstream international community is also strengthening the normative power of the international legal regime, such as international humanitarian and human rights laws. It should also be noted that the more the mainstream international community strengthens its universalistic attitude, the more the gap between the mainstream and the periphery widens.

### **The Purpose of State-building in Conflict-prone Areas: The Dilemma of World International Society**

In the last 25 years or so since the end of the Cold War, there have been some crucial changes in trends regarding armed conflicts in the world. There was a sharp rise in the number of armed conflicts at a global level at the beginning of the 1990s. The number gradually decreased, although a significant reversal began several years ago, such that the number of armed conflicts has now surpassed its historic record after the end of the Cold War.<sup>16</sup> Armed conflicts tend to take place in geographically specific areas where fragile states are situated. First of all, most of them occur as internal conflicts in states that became independent in the latter half of the 20th century on the tide of decolonization. Namely, the conflicts have

been mainly happening in Africa, the Middle East, and South Asia. Their social foundations to sustain sound governmental functions have been rather weak and in fact have been fragile since their independence. There are some more specific trends. Southern Africa and South East Asia were significantly volatile during and shortly after the Cold War. But these areas are now comparatively stable. On the other hand, the center of the world's conflict zone is now the Middle East, especially since the Arab Spring. Africa, especially North Africa and the Sahel, remains volatile, even though African states are performing comparatively better now than previously. It goes without saying that these conflict-prone areas are found in the world's least developed areas. They are more or less fragile, corrupt in governance, low in terms of the human development index, complex in the composition of identity groups, dependent upon natural resources, and high in population growth with the clear indication of a "youth bulge."<sup>17</sup> Thus, it seems natural that the international community should mobilize not only security and political measures, but also social and economic assistance to these fragile areas, where the need for comprehensive strategies of state-building is hardly surprising.

In the post-Cold War era, there has been a widely shared understanding of the background of armed conflicts. Fragility arises out of the bad governance of decolonized states without sound social and economic infrastructure.<sup>18</sup> The international community needs to identify this symptom as a serious structural problem, as a majority of states may apparently or potentially be fragile. If the spread of fragility is not prevented, the entire international community would have to experience a collapse in the existing international order. It is natural for the mainstream international community to respond to crises in fragile states, as it needs to establish international order by introducing comprehensive strategies of state-building in order to sustain social order in sovereign states.<sup>19</sup> Those who are responsible for governance in each state are the key stakeholders in the context of international order. Once they become corrupt or exploit their positions through state mechanisms, the fragility of such a state is inevitable and international order is at stake. Analysts such as Paul Collier and Frances Stewart have discussed the social and economic aspects of the causal factors behind armed conflicts, which create opportunities or greater inequalities for the greedy to exploit among the unprivileged.<sup>20</sup> However, in the end, such structural changes can only happen when political initiatives are introduced with competent government functions—namely, they all require state-building types of peace-building, even provided by international actors. State-building is conducted in the form of international assistance by major donor countries or international organizations in recipient fragile states. It responds to national peace-building agendas, as well as the maintenance of international order at the same time. It is somewhat paradoxical that, for

the sake of independence, some independent states ask for external intervention for the purpose of state-building/peace-building. This represents a dilemma between the maintenance of universal order in international society based upon the independence of each sovereign state and the reality of fragility among a great number of developing countries, which eventually require external assistance. Peace-building through state-building comprises activities that are intended to solve the problems arising out of such a dilemma faced by world international society.

### **State-building in the Process of the Formation of Modern Nation States: The Dilemma of the Concentration of Power**

The perspective of the historical development of international society clearly illustrates the relationship between conflict-prone areas and intervening actors involved in state-building activities. Intervening actors often exploit the growing normative power of international legal regimes, such as the UN Charter and international humanitarian law, to justify their engagement in state-building activities. Regardless of the concrete wording of UN Security Council Resolutions, both the UN and other organizations, such as NATO or the AU, in addition to ad hoc coalitions of the willing, are taking bolder and broader approaches when conducting state-building activities, as if they represent the entire international community. The belief that there are universal values, rules, and institutions is the existential foundation of international society itself.<sup>21</sup> It is significantly linked to the worldview that those responsible for international order are responsible for defending international societies against its challengers. World international society is not just geographically worldwide: since it is a community of values, rules, and institutions, it is also intended to be universal in ideas. The enhancement of the validity of international values, rules, and institutions is the effort to strengthen the foundation of universal international order.<sup>22</sup>

Hedley Bull asserts that international society is a society of states, which has its origin in Europe.<sup>23</sup> In the early period, international society was a 'Christian international society' of those European states sharing Christian values. Secularization of political societies took place in Europe around the 17th century, when 'European international society' emerged as a society of states in Europe, which shared the same regional institutions, such as the balance of power. Meanwhile, the 19th century saw the worldwide spread of European states' imperial ambitions to the extent that the entire planet was dominated by a single international society of sovereign states. The heavy blows suffered in the course of the two World Wars in the first half of the 20th century led to the disruption of European imperial

powers, with numerous new independent states created in the process. As 'European international society' came to an end, a new international society called 'world international society' was introduced with the universal application of the principle of self-determination. The zone of decolonized newly independent states is where most contemporary armed conflicts are taking place. In this zone, people are struggling to establish their own sovereign state by overcoming conflicts, poverty, bad governance and other serious problems through state-building efforts. Many of them were supported by the superpowers during the Cold War. Now, they receive international assistance in order to sustain their national existence.

When we think of the relationship between armed conflicts and state-building, we often assume that once-perfect international society is now revealing its flaws as it is confronted by some ad hoc problems. The fact is, however, that international society has never been perfect or complete. Fragility did not result from a series of dysfunctional events, but rather evolved out of the fundamental structural nature of 'world international society.' It is more appropriate to say that 'world international society' managed to come into existence despite continuous fundamental structural fragility. 'World international society' was as fundamentally fragile in the beginning as it is now. State-building efforts in our contemporary world represent a series of activities seeking to establish 'world international society' in substance after its formal existence was widely acknowledged. Without such state-building efforts to strengthen the constitutive components of 'world international society,' it could disastrously collapse, thereby destroying international order. The number of constitutive units in 'European international society' continuously decreased since its beginning in the 17th century. At the time of the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, there were hundreds of political communities in Europe. Following a series of consecutive wars and territorial settlements over a number of centuries, only a handful of great powers in Europe remained. At the beginning of the 20th century, only about six states were fully recognized as sovereign states in Europe, while other smaller states were called 'semi-sovereign' or 'half-sovereign' states.<sup>24</sup>

Why did the number of sovereign states continue to decrease prior to the collapse of the European empires after the two World Wars of the 20th century? Great powers survived the extreme level of competition between various political communities by advancing industrialization and militarization through a capitalist market economy. Those states that were unable to compete against the most advanced states were left behind and absorbed by stronger powers. The logic of state-building, based upon competition, was intrinsically enshrined in 'European international society,' while the consequence was totally in opposition to the situation of 'world international society.' Only then did the international society

of sovereign states experience a dramatic decrease in the number of sovereign states, along with the worldwide expansion of international society itself. The nature of 'European international society' makes a critical contrast with 'world international society' where there is no longer any geographical expansion, while the dramatic increase in the number of sovereign states is a constant phenomenon. Political and industrial revolutions since the 17th century brought about structural changes in political communities and international society in Europe. The birth of nation states was, in particular, an epoch-making event. The revolutionary doctrine of the existence of a nation being identical with a state with a collective will was a product of the political culture introduced during the French Revolution.

War was the most significant dimension of the emergence of modern nation states. Revolutions in England, North America, and France were all wars seen from the perspective of international society, that is, internal armed conflicts linked with international conflicts. The Glorious Revolution of England was only possible with the military intervention of the Netherlands. The American Revolution was the War of Independence with interventions from countries such as France. The French Revolution was defended during the continental Napoleonic Wars. Germany, Italy, Russia, China, and Japan are among those countries that created nation states through revolutionary wars. For instance, the Meiji Revolution was achieved through the Boshin War. The reforms for state-building introduced by the Meiji government led to the waves of internal armed conflicts especially for the first 10 years. The consequences of wars determined the structures of nation states. Wars stimulated state-building and created nation states, while war and preparation for war determined the concentration of administrative powers and financial resources. As Anthony Giddens observes, "states transformed themselves in order to conduct war, or did so as a result of war."<sup>25</sup> According to Hedley Bull, war was an institution of 'European international society' in the 18th and 19th centuries.<sup>26</sup> When the configuration of power relations changed, war brought about a new form of the balance of power. When critical incidents took place, war brought about sanctions to challengers of international order. In the 19th century, only a handful of great powers were said to be truly sovereign states, while other smaller states were only given the status of 'half-sovereign states.' 'European international society' was a society of oligarchic order.<sup>27</sup> Unless states were great powers, which were capable of pursuing such enforcement measures as war in order to maintain international order, states were simply objectives within the context of the balance of power calculation, while their existence as independent states could be compromised at any time.

In accordance with the institutionalization of a nation state mechanism, financial, and administrative capacities of central governments also developed.

Michael Mann highlights the historic moment in the 19th century when non-military expenditures surpassed those of the military, in line with the evolution of government functions of nation state mechanisms. The more the population participated in political and military activities of their state, the more the administrative power of government advanced; the more internal administrative functions developed, the more external war capacities expanded. This was a rapid process in the formation of the nation state in Europe in the 19th century.<sup>28</sup> European absolutist states accumulated resources to heighten their military capacities to wage wars. The process facilitated innovation in military technologies, which advanced the great powers' dominance in the region and their imperial expansions outside the region. The intensive military capacity of the central governments of nation states ushered in nationwide administrative mechanisms. These governments' capacity to collect tax was one significant condition of the expansion of governmental functions, including conscripted military. This higher capacity of central government to administer the population in detail was the condition for the birth of nation state, defined by Max Weber as a "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force." A large standing army is essentially linked to the establishment of a nation state. The belief in the identification of a nation and a state justifies the taxation and conscription of the population needed to create a large standing army. Actual wars against external threats strengthened the spiritual foundation of a nation state to justify further strengthening of state capacity to administer the entire nation. Social security for a large number of government officials, including conscripted soldiers, was a byproduct of the birth of nation states. The rise of communism in the 19th century was more or less accommodated by the accumulation of expanded administrative functions of nation states, especially after the two world 'total wars' in the first half of the 20th century.<sup>29</sup> Universal suffrage was introduced in accordance with the development of nation states. Bismarck introduced such a measure to strengthen the logic of a nation state to build a strong military. The First World War necessitated countries such as Britain to introduce universal suffrage. Wars involving nation states led the way to mass political participation and welfare state systems.<sup>30</sup>

The modern nation state contributed to an incredible advancement in control over communication and information. This means that the modern state now enjoys considerable power in administering citizens' lives through advanced police power.<sup>31</sup> The geographical expansion of colonial powers was the result of the development of logistical technologies. These technologies were rapidly advanced by the military conduct of modern nation states.<sup>32</sup> According to Giddens, the nation and its large military are twins of citizenship, which was dramatically advanced by the total wars in the 20th century.<sup>33</sup> According to Giddens, the system of sover-

eign nation states requires both domestic stability and external wars at the same time. This theoretical model of the nation state is valid, even in the case of contemporary peace-building activities in post-war societies. ‘DDR’ and ‘SSR,’ for instance, are measures to create a nation state as the “monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force.” Capacity development for good governance is intended to help establish an effective central government, given that a strong state mechanism is believed to be a way to overcome a social structure involving internal armed conflicts. Despite the assumption about the effectiveness of the concentration of power, the issue about the war-conducting capacity of the modern nation state is not typically emphasized in the context of state-building as peace-building. If the model were a typical modern European-style nation state, war-conducting capacity would be key to state-building. There is no historical sample of nation-state-building without preparation for war-conducting capacity.<sup>34</sup> The more state-building succeeds in building centralized administrative power, the more the state becomes capable of conducting effective military operations. Successful state-building with a concentration of strong military power greatly incentivizes political leaders to pursue external activism. Historically rare are the simultaneous achievements of both the creation of a strong centralized military to prevent internal wars and constraints over the external use of the military.

War was the strongest factor that facilitated the process of state-building; without war, it could not have been possible to establish the modern nation state system. If so, however, what are the implications of ongoing wars in our contemporary world, which the mainstream international community is trying to mediate? If war is the mother of modern nation states, how should contemporary world international society look at war as the evil to be simply abolished? It is also true that even if some aspects of war might have been the mothers of modern nation states, not every single element of war can be a mother of a modern nation state. But given that the creation of contemporary world international society is a work in progress, the manner we cope with the dilemma between strengthening the state and limiting the state, namely, the dilemma between avoiding war and building upon the effects of war is one of the fundamental questions that policy-makers for peace-building/state-building ought to take into consideration.

### **The Validity of State-building as the Means to Overcome the Structure of Internal Armed Conflicts: The Dilemma of Liberal Peace-building and Local Ownership**

These observations illustrate some of the relevant points concerning the manner in which internal wars ended throughout history. Put another way, there

is no example in the history of modern European nation state formation whereby domestic social order was constructed through a peace agreement. Successful nation states, such as Britain, France, and Germany in addition to such non-European countries as the United States and Japan experienced severe internal wars at the time of state-formation. Their revolutionary wars ended with victory for one of the conflict parties over the other(s). Their manner of state-building was a form of peace-building by the victor. In the contemporary world, there is a natural assumption that third party mediation is the most desirable form of conflict resolution. Furthermore, ceasefire is seen as worth pursuing, while peace through an agreement is also a pre-given goal to achieve. However, we do not know whether a peace agreement can really promise longer peace than a military victory.<sup>35</sup> The mainstream international community demands that contemporary armed conflicts be mediated in a manner not experienced by their own home countries.

If contemporary peace-building activities focus upon the limitation of governmental powers through negotiated peace, war might miss the chance to strengthen the state in accordance with the historical precedents of European nation states. The history of state-building betrays liberal peace-building practices. Should we consider the possibility of the moment to 'give war a chance?'<sup>36</sup> If so, when should we? A peace agreement through mediation is understood to be desirable from the perspective of humanitarian concerns in order to prevent further loss of human life. This does not mean, however, that mediated peace is always a form of consolidated peace. Sri Lanka terminated the prolonged war in 2009 following victory on the part of the government. It is questionable whether the pattern set by Sri Lanka jeopardizes peace-building through effective state-building, even when compared to cases such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, where an artificial peace agreement mediated by external powers was the foundation of state-building. The process of the creation of a modern state seeks to concentrate state power in the hands of the central government as a measure to overcome the structure of internal armed conflicts. Peace agreements are introduced to implant liberal values to constrain state powers. Both are compatible when Western-style constitutional states are our models, but is it really universally applicable? Should it be so? The tendency among the mainstream international community to rely on liberal peace-building theory is because of the dilemma of state-building. The policies of peace-building, such as DDR and SSR, only make sense if strong military capacity is constrained by the liberal regime of the rule of law. It is rational that international organizations, such as the UN and EU, never abandon liberal values as the framework for peace-building, given that state-building ceases to be a form of peace-building without such a framework. State-building is only peace-building when the government is strengthened, but constrained by the so-

cial belief in the rule of law. Despite the criticism against Western-centric approaches to peace-building, the mainstream international community will never be able to leave behind liberal peace-building theory.

Here is another dilemma: peace-building practitioners respect local ownership and the homegrown internal development of state-building.<sup>37</sup> However, in the process of trying to ensure the effectiveness of peace-building, both internally and externally, they find it impossible to implant a culture that embodies the liberal rule of law without mobilizing the necessary financial, material, and human resources for liberal peace-building from outside. Implantations from outside and homegrown development from inside are always difficult to achieve simultaneously, but this represents the fundamental dilemma regarding peace-building and the fundamental challenge in establishing world international society. State-building through contemporary peace-building activities is different from the historical examples of nation-state-building in modern 'European international society.' External intervention is abhorred, but never abandoned, while liberal peace-building theory is never an official doctrine to be promulgated outright, nor ignored in peace-building practices. In the age of world international society, there is no physically external sphere where new nation states can find room for expansion. They strengthen their state capacity without having any opportunity to exert their strengthened state capacity. They advocate local ownership based on homegrown social values, even when receiving overwhelming foreign assistance to implement Western-style liberal values. This paradoxical situation represents the fundamental challenge to be considered by policymakers of contemporary world international society.

## Conclusion

This article has tried to compare contemporary forms of state-building, as peace-building activities in post conflict or fragile states, with historical examples of nation-state-building in modern European international society. In turn, the article has argued that the emergence of world international society has created a dilemma between the universality of sovereign states and regional discrepancies in reality. It has also discussed whether the sovereign state as the "monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force" creates dilemmas regarding the possibility of using force against external actors. Liberal institutionalism should impose the necessary constraints upon central governments. But liberal peace-building theory is not a desirable guideline, as it goes against the principle of respecting the local ownership. Still, world international society cannot afford to abandon liberal values in order to control sovereign states.

Contemporary world international society is not in a position to abandon the sovereign state as the most fundamental constitutive unit of international order. State-building is a panacea with which to overcome the structure of internal armed conflicts, even though it creates dilemmas in respect of universal international order, the concentration of state power and liberal peace-building theory. There is no easy exit from these dilemmas. In contemporary world international society, we conduct state-building by constraining state capacity, and implement liberal peace-building, while abhorring such a form of peace-building practice. What is required is a well-balanced understanding and implementation of such critical dilemmas.

### Notes

1. This article distinguishes between peace-building and state-building. The former points to activities needed to create the social foundations for a durable peace, while the latter is concerned with activities to create functional state institutions. See OECD, "Concepts and dilemmas of state building in fragile situations: from fragility to resilience," *Journal on Development* 9, no. 3 (2008): 13–14. State-building is usually distinguished from nation-building, as the latter concerns the creation of group identity of the people as one single community. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, revised version (London: Verso, 1991). However, state-building could go hand in hand with nation-building. State-building and nation-building are not mutually exclusive. Therefore, this essay could use the term 'nation-state-building.' As for the definition of international society, with reference to the difference between 'European international society' and 'world international society' see Hedley Bull, *The Anarchical Society: A Study of Order in World Politics* (London: Macmillan, 1977). A group of states constitute international society when they share certain common values, rules and institutions. When the common set of values, rules and institutions is particularly Europe-specific, we may identify 'European international society.' 'World international society' appeared in the latter half of the 20th century, when the set of values, rules, and institutions became universally extensive.

2. A number of literatures on conflict resolution and peace operations share the view that durable peace can be founded upon well-governed states. While many concrete issues arise as a result, more theoretical discussions on the view ought to be addressed to refine the fundamental framework.

3. Hideaki Shinoda, *Peacebuilding and the Rule of Law: Theoretical and Functional Analyses of International Peace Operations* (Tokyo: Sobunsha, 2003) (in Japanese).

4. Francis Fukuyama, ed. *Nation-building beyond Afghanistan and Iraq* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2006).

5. UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (New York: United Nations Secretariat, 18 January 2008), 18, [http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/capstone\\_eng.pdf](http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/capstone_eng.pdf).

6. United Nations General Assembly Security Council, Document A/70/95-S/2015/446, "Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and Peace," 17 June 2015.

7. Roland Paris, "International peacebuilding and the 'Mission Civilisatrice,'" *Review of International Studies* 28, no. 4 (2002): 642–645.

8. Ibid.

9. Ibid.

10. Roland Paris and Timothy Sisk, eds., *The Dilemmas of Statebuilding: Confronting the Contradictions of Postwar Peace Operations* (London and New York: Routledge, 2009).

11. Oliver P. Richmond, "The Rule of law in liberal peacebuilding," in *Peacebuilding and Rule of Law in Africa: Just Peace?* ed. Chandra Lekha Sriram, Olga Martin-Ortega, and Johanna Herman (New York: Routledge, 2011).

12. Ibid.

13. David Roberts, *Liberal Peacebuilding and Global Governance: Beyond the Metropolis* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

14. Ibid.

15. While European and North-American countries traditionally led peacebuilding-related assistances, which are influential within the United Nations too, it is also true that non-Western countries have also made significant contributions in peacebuilding-related affairs. Japan, the Republic of Korea, India, and China are among those non-Western countries active in assistances in post-conflict areas, but Japan and RoK tend to resonate with the manner Western countries conduct assistances. The members of OECD DAC (Development Assistance Committee) where aid policies are coordinated consists of 30 members mainly from Europe, North America, and Oceania. Japan and RoK are the only exceptional, but harmonious, members from Asia.

16. As for the data set for armed conflicts, see UCDP website: <http://www.pcr.uu.se/data/>. See also "UCDP/PRIO Armed Conflict Dataset v.4-2012, 1946-2011."

17. UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD), *The State of Commodity Dependence* (New York: United Nations, 2012); Lionel Beehner, "The Effects of 'Youth Bulge' on Civil Conflicts," *Council on Foreign Relations*, 13 April 2007, <http://www.cfr.org/society-and-culture/effects-youth-bulge-civil-conflicts/p13093>; See Transparency International' Corruption Perceptions Index: <https://www.transparency.org/research/cpi/overview>, UNDP, International Human Development Indicators: <http://hdr.undp.org/en/data/profiles/>; and see, for instance, Central Intelligence Agency, "The World Factbook" and "Ethnic Group," <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/fields/2075.html>.

18. United Nations, document A/52/871-S/1998/318, "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa: Report of the Secretary-General," 16 April 1998, 3–5.

19. OECD, "The DAC Guidelines: Helping Prevent Violent Conflict, incorporating Conflict, Peace and Development Co-operation on the Threshold of the 21st Century," report (Paris: OECD, 2001), 87–89.

20. Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and grievance in civil war," *Oxford Economic Papers* 56, no. 4 (2004): 563–595, <https://doi.org/10.1093/oep/gpf064>; Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007); Frances Stewart, ed., *Horizontal Inequalities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

21. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*.

22. Hideaki Shinoda, "Human rights, democracy and peace in international constitutionalism of university international society," *International Relations (TUFSS)* 4, no. 1 (2015): 21–42; Hideaki

- Shinoda, "Local ownership as a strategic guideline for peacebuilding," in *Local Ownership in International Peacebuilding: Key Theoretical and Practical Issues*, ed. Sung Yong Lee and Alpaslan Özerdem (London: Routledge, 2015), 19–38.
23. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*.
  24. Charles Tilly, "Reflections on the History of European State-Making," in *The Formation of National States in Europe*, ed. Charles Tilly (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975).
  25. Anthony Giddens, *The Nation-state and Violence: Volume Two of a Contemporary Critique of Historical Materialism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1985), 112.
  26. Bull, *The Anarchical Society*, ch. 8.
  27. Hideaki Shinoda, *Re-examining Sovereignty: From Classical Theory to the Global Age* (London: Macmillan, 2000).
  28. Giddens, *The Nation-state and Violence*, 113.
  29. Michael Mann, *States, War and Capitalism: Studies in Political Sociology* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1988), 158.
  30. Giddens, *The Nation-state and Violence*, 234.
  31. *Ibid.*, 172–192.
  32. *Ibid.*, 222–232.
  33. *Ibid.*, 233–235.
  34. Youssef Cohen, Brian R. Brown, and A.F.K. Organski, "The paradoxical nature of state making: the violent creation of order," *American Political Science Review* 75, no. 4 (1981): 901–910.
  35. Roy Licklider, "The consequences of negotiated settlements in civil wars, 1945-1993," *American Political Science Review* 89, no. 3 (1995): 681–690.
  36. Edward N. Luttwak, "Give war a chance," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (1999): 36–44.
  37. Shinoda, "Human rights, democracy and peace; Shinoda, "Local ownership as a strategic guideline for peacebuilding."

# Islamist Violent Extremism

## A New Form of Conflict or Business as Usual?

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Responses to conflict, particularly by development actors, have become increasingly sophisticated since the post-Cold War interventionist phase of the 1990s. A substantial toolkit has been developed with the UK Department for International Development (DfID), often at the forefront of these advances. Over this period however, conflict has evolved significantly, with non-state actors growing in importance. The most recent evolution is the emergence of Islamist violent extremist (IVE) groups. In contrast to other conflict actors, their nature and aims appear to be qualitatively different. This raises the question of whether the tools that have been developed in recent decades to prevent and resolve conflict are still relevant or if new tools need to be developed. This article assesses the aims and objectives, ‘factors’ for involvement, social/cultural identity pull factors, organizational structure and demographics, tactics and methods of IVE groups in three case studies—Kenya, Nigeria and Iraq/Syria. These groups are compared to non-Islamist groups in the same country to consider just how different they are, and what this means for development actors that are responding to conflict.

‘Islamist Violent Extremism’ is a broad label that includes a wide range of disparate groups and movements, ranging from Shia revolutionaries to popular militias to cell-based terrorist groups such as Al Qaida. The motives, targets, demands, structures and arenas of operations vary significantly amongst different

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groups and may also change over time.<sup>1</sup> The article draws on debates in conflict studies, terrorism studies and development studies in order to understand these factors. By focusing on three diverse case studies, this article engages with the diversity of IVE.

In Kenya, this article engages with the operations and supporters of Harakat al-Shabaab al-Mujahidin (Al Shabaab) and affiliated or sympathetic groups like Al Hijra, comparing them to two contemporary non-Islamist groups (the armed wing of the Mombasa Republic Council (MRC) and the Mungiki) as well as a historical group (the Mau Mau movement). The Nigeria case study compares Boko Haram with the Movement for the Emancipation of the Niger Delta (MEND). Boko Haram and MEND are both violent movements that originated in socially and economically marginalized regions of Nigeria, with a similar approach despite apparent ideological differences. The Iraq/Syria case study focuses on three Sunni Islamist groups: Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL), Jabhat Al Nusra (JaN), and Ahrar al-Sham (AaS) and compares them with each other and with Shia militant groups such as the Badr Organisation in Iraq.

By comparing IVE groups with non-Islamist groups in these three case studies, key similarities and differences have emerged in the areas of consideration that have implications for how development actors respond to conflict involving IVE groups. These areas are outlined below, followed by a discussion of what this means for development actors.

## Aims and Objectives

In contrast to conflict studies, much terrorism research argues, or assumes, a sharp distinction between nationalist groups and ideological groups: ideological terrorists seek to transform global society rather than establish a separate homeland. Islamist extremists may desire a new Caliphate but do not seem to be motivated by any particular nationalist or ethnic identity.<sup>2</sup>

Salafi-jihadism is framed in religious terms. However, Ranstorp and Gerges argue that this should be seen as a modern movement emerging in the 1990s when Ayman Al-Zawahiri and Usama bin Ladin articulated the doctrine of the ‘far enemy’—the United States as hidden hand behind Arab autocracy and the oppression of Muslims.<sup>3</sup> Al Qaida’s worldview is reduced to a ‘single narrative’ presenting a long history of conflicts involving Muslims across the world as evidence of the West’s war against Islam stemming from its implacable fear and hatred. The overarching aim of Al Qaida (and now ISIL) and others is therefore presented as the continuation of a 1,400 year struggle or a “clash of civilisations,” a perception which differs from other conflicts.<sup>4</sup> Contemporary violent Islamists

have extended the semantic scope of jihad beyond ‘just war theory’ in order to legitimize terrorist violence, revolutionary violence, and insurgency, while promoting jihad as Islam’s ‘sixth pillar’ or ‘forgotten obligation,’ and hence an individual rather than collective duty for Muslims.<sup>5</sup>

ISIL’s principal aim, the expansion of the Caliphate, is therefore presented as a state for ‘true’ Muslims and a bulwark against the enemy reflecting the eschatological as well as the geopolitical significance of the Levant.<sup>6</sup> Its mission statement—‘remaining and expanding’—appears to encapsulate this aim, while the character of the state is implicit in al-Baghdadi’s division of humanity into “the camp of the Muslims and the mujahidin” and “the camp of the Jews, the Crusaders, their allies.”<sup>7</sup>

The stated aims of Boko Haram were also initially entrenched in religious ideology. Boko Haram was founded as a rejection of the social vices of the Nigerian state, as “the best thing for a devout Muslim to do was to ‘migrate’ from the morally bankrupt society to a secluded place and establish an ideal Islamic society devoid of political corruption and moral deprivation.”<sup>8</sup> Since 2011, Al Shabaab’s operations in Kenya’s North–East and coast regions have been aimed at forming part of a broader jihadist project of ‘liberating’ surrounding Muslim lands from non-Muslim ‘occupation’ and avenging historical injustices.<sup>9</sup> In contrast, religious ideology has not featured nearly as prominently in the planning or rhetoric of the leaders of the MRC, Mau Mau or Mungiki in Kenya, or MEND in Nigeria.

Some argue that religion is by its nature irrational, and therefore religiously motivated violence must also be irrational.<sup>10</sup> Stern argues that religiously inspired violent groups consistently begin with utopian aspirations, even if that is not often where they end.<sup>11</sup> While the goal of “purifying the world of injustice, cruelty, and all that is anti-human” is not in itself irrational, Stern argues it may be motivated or accompanied by a “spiritual calling,” which is irrational.<sup>12</sup>

Comparing MEND and Boko Haram in Nigeria is a good illustration of this argument. Although not religious, MEND had a firm ideology with well defined and localized aims based on a common desire for equality and social justice. MEND’s violent strategy was consistent with its aims, resulting in the loss of a quarter of Nigeria’s daily oil exports.<sup>13</sup> Its political strategy was equally consistent, as it began to articulate its demands to the Nigerian government for resource control, constitutional rights, and measures to mitigate social marginalization, political repression, and environmental degradation. The demands of MEND were supported by international advocacy on the damage caused by the oil industry, so their demands were seen by many as justified and their tactics as rational—even if there was strong disapproval of the latter. In contrast, because Boko Haram

frames its program in religious and cultural terms, it tends to be perceived as irrational, uncompromising, or even psychopathic.<sup>14</sup>

Wiktorowicz and Kaltenthaler challenge these claims emphasizing that this ignores the importance of beliefs and ideology in individual utility calculations, “where individuals believe that the spiritual payoffs outweigh the negative consequences of strategies in the here and now, high-cost/risk activism is intelligible as a rational choice.”<sup>15</sup> Moving on from this, rather than seeing Islamists as grievance-stricken reactionaries, recent research has re-conceptualized Islamist extremists as strategic thinkers engaged in cost-benefit calculations. Ultra-violence and religious and cultural framing of activities do not necessarily mean irrationality. Indeed, in some respects Boko Haram’s violence has been successful, enabling it to conquer territory with excessive security-force responses aiding recruitment.

Religiously focused pronouncements may therefore be committed objectives, or simply rational framing devices for recruitment. Some literature draws a differentiation between jihadists and Islamist revolutionaries and terrorists such as those fighting in Afghanistan and Bosnia, which followed a defensive, territorial program that was predicated on the belief that Muslims were under attack or occupation.<sup>16</sup> Piazza helpfully disaggregates Islamist terrorists into ‘strategic groups’ such as Hamas, which despite claiming to be motivated by religious aims, have similar aims to nationalist-separatist groups and ‘abstract/universal’ groups such as utopian Al Qaida and its affiliates.<sup>17</sup> A recent example is AaS; although cosmic in ideology, the group is adopting a ‘Syrian nationalist’ program as evidenced by its signing of a ‘covenant of honor’ in late 2014 where it disavowed any global-jihadist pretensions. AaS’ leaders now condemn ISIL and Al Qaida for embracing fighters from a diversity of traditions, but the group remains part of the broader jihadist movement.<sup>18</sup> Even Al Qaida affiliates, with the exception of Al Qaida in the Arabian Peninsula (AQAP), and now ISIS, do not in reality share the same global aims.

In other respects however, participants in these conflicts, whether Islamist or not, appear to be broadly similar—they are concerned with defending their constituencies, controlling populations, acquiring resources, recruiting troops and projecting their power militarily and through propaganda. Looking closely at ISIS, the group’s real aims—to obtain and project power—are more mundane than its ‘cosmic ideology’ might suggest. JaN also aspires to govern territory in order to create a safe haven for attacking the West.<sup>19</sup> In contrast to ISIL, it does not aspire to govern a full Caliphate but a more modest emirate.<sup>20</sup> Moreover, at a leadership level, the aims of the Shia militias in Syria and Iraq are, at least partly, geopolitical. Both the Sadrist movement and the Islamic Supreme Council of

Iraq have aggressively asserted Shia identity, while many have been responsible for persecuting Sunni Muslim civilians.

The aims of a group can also change with time. The aims of Al Shabaab's leaders and its affiliates, while not entirely clear or explicit, appear to be influenced by a regional Salafi-jihadist agenda and part of a broader jihadist project. Indeed, Kenya's 2011 incursion into Somalia, and battlefield successes by the African Union Mission to Somalia (AMISOM) forces, appear to have played a large part in hastening a shift within Al Shabaab's leadership from a predominantly Somali nationalist to a more internationalist jihadist orientation, which has had significant implications in terms of the tactics and operations used by the group.<sup>21</sup> AaS has also been shaped by the violence of the Syrian battlefield so that it has withdrawn from its initial belief in a 'cosmic' global-jihadist solution. In contrast to ISIL, its battlefield jurisprudence has progressively moderated. That it has done so while maintaining its religious authenticity, albeit in a more pluralist form than other groups, shows that religion can be a dynamic force in conflict.

The aims even within a group at a given time may not be consistent. While the leaders may have one set of goals, different motivating factors often drive their followers. Ideology is important for leaders especially; some are ideological entrepreneurs who seek to mobilize followers behind a cause. Ideology can be a factor for followers, but people in conflict situations join violent groups for a wide range of reasons—social, psychological and practical, as well as political. For example, in Nigeria it is unclear how many actively support ideals such as an Islamic Caliphate propagated by the leaders when at the root of the conflict and public support for Boko Haram, just as it was with MEND, is a response to deprivation and lack of access to state services.

### **'Factors' for Involvement**

Although religion is important, it is often used as a rational framing device for recruitment. Indeed, many followers are driven by grievance and may not even understand the religious ideology propagated by the leadership. Grievances—individual and group, personal and vicarious—are important drivers of Islamist violence. The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) includes discrimination, political marginalization, a sense of "anger at the perceived victimization of fellow Muslims around the globe, repression of human rights, and foreign occupation" as pertinent grievances.<sup>22</sup>

While it is widely supported that there is a strong relationship between perceived grievances and violent extremism, debate continues over the nature of the relationship, particularly whether grievances are the root cause of violence or are

simply a mechanism to justify that violence.<sup>23</sup> For Gupta, grievances are a necessary factor in violent extremism, but they need to be instrumentalized by charismatic individuals, labeled as ‘political entrepreneurs,’ and linked to social and psychological factors.<sup>24</sup> Gurr’s Relative Deprivation Theory, however, predicts that when there is frustration about the relative position of individuals in terms of what they have and their perceptions of what they ought to have, the likelihood of violence increases.<sup>25</sup>

Research in conflict studies increasingly points to grievances stemming from failures of governance as a primary driver of violence.<sup>26</sup> State instability is frequently identified as “the most consistent predictor of country-level terrorist attacks.”<sup>27</sup> When the state fails to provide human security, there are many examples where religion fills the void.<sup>28</sup> In situations of conflict and insecurity, populations are willing to engage with any entity that provides stability and security, at least in the short term. As a result, many failed or failing states have become hubs for extremist activity.

In Nigeria, while MEND’s narrative was explicitly based on grievances and Boko Haram has subordinated grievances to religious and cultural opposition to the state, both groups have responded to and seek to correct social, political and economic grievances in marginalized regions far removed from the centers of power. In fact, Boko Haram’s evolution into an ultra-violent ideology is also the product of governance failure, as the group was radicalized by a combination of Nigeria’s excessive militarized responses and the failure to respond to the marginalization of the northeast.<sup>29</sup>

Grynkewich finds that Islamist and non-Islamist groups alike are strengthened by state failures to provide basic services including security and justice.<sup>30</sup> ISIL has exploited areas with weak governance, an active war economy, and ongoing conflict, seeking to improve the situation and take control.<sup>31</sup> While this has benefits for the population, the ultimate aim is to support ISIL dominance in the region. ISIL has shown competence in providing security and governance in the areas it controls. Its leaders have skillfully navigated Sunni culture in Iraq and increasingly in Syria, providing security through a combination of repression, effective bureaucracy, and uncompromising law enforcement.<sup>32</sup> Yet ISIL’s competence goes beyond its capacity to provide security: utilities, hospitals, food distribution and other services are reported to have improved rapidly in areas under its control. While JaN does not match ISIL’s ambitions to control all aspects of military and civil activity and JaN-administered areas in Syria do not have the ‘police state’ atmosphere of ISIL-controlled areas, JaN does aspire to control the courts and judiciary.<sup>33</sup>

When violent extremist groups operate locally, particularly in conflict situations, socio-economic discrimination and marginalizations appear to play a major role in recruitment. For instance, Islamist violent extremism in Kenya—including locally recruited Al Shabaab fighters, and Al Muhajiroun—is linked to the economic situation of Muslims in Kenya, particularly in the Coast and North–East provinces that are majority Muslim. Socio-economic grievances, land-use rights, a lack of opportunities for youth, and ethnic or religious hostility towards a politically and economically dominant group in addition to repressive and discriminatory state policies and actions rather than ideology, may be more influential with many Kenyan followers of Al Shabaab and affiliates.<sup>34</sup> Similarly, the most deprived regions of Nigeria, such as Borno and Kano States, have become Boko Haram's strongholds.<sup>35</sup> Although the leadership of Boko Haram has been drawn from Islamic clerics and students, professionals and students of tertiary institutions, many recruits join for money or a lack of other opportunities. In Iraq, Shia militias are effectively in competition with the Iraqi army, and appear to be winning—militias offer better weapons and more generous pay, though they are also in competition with each other.<sup>36</sup>

While the expanding reach of violence by militant Islamic organizations are often viewed through the prism of international concerns about terrorism, the root causes are more often historical grievances, the state's failure to address deeply-rooted marginalization and insecurity, and its use of repressive machinery to respond to insurgencies.<sup>37</sup> What is significant is that Islamist extremism is not especially different from other religiously motivated or structured extremism. Economic and governance crises are fundamental causes of violence and conflict in general; Muslim-majority countries tend to be particularly vulnerable because their states are often failing (or have failed), are corrupt and/or repressively governed, and are afflicted by falling living standards.<sup>38</sup> For example, beyond religious ideology, there are other drivers of Al Shabaab and affiliates' recruitment practices at individual, communal, and structural levels that are consistent with those that have encouraged participation in the MRC, Mungiki and Mau Mau.

### Social/Cultural Identity Pull Factors

The grievances outlined above are often framed in social or cultural terms and become a component of identity politics. For example, community grievances in Kenya are politicized due to the fractured nature of Kenyan politics along ethnic and religious lines, corruption and other systemic facilitators.<sup>39</sup> These grievances and perceived victimization can therefore be manipulated by leaders, which is what proponents of the terrorism school more strongly believe. Leaders of Is-

lamist violent extremist groups can instrumentalize the perceived victimization of fellow Muslims as a justification for extremist violence, although the use of a narrative of oppression to justify violence and recruit and motivate supporters is near-universal among violent extremist groups.<sup>40</sup>

A component of this is ideology. When it comes to Islamist violent extremism specifically, how important ideology is, has also become contested and politicized. Islamist violent extremists have been inspired by an ideology developed in the 1980s for a specific purpose—defending Muslims from oppression and occupation—and which, under the pressure of repeated participation in conflicts, its adherents have adapted and made more extreme. Some terrorism studies assume that ideology is a simple motivating factor with some scholars going as far as asserting (controversially) that Islam, or at least Islamism, is inherently violent.<sup>41</sup> Some political science scholars offer ideology as a causal explanation for the onset of Islamist extremist violence and its persistence—how else can we explain why some groups resort to violence while others do not?<sup>42</sup>

However, ideology does not explain everything and there is much work that casts doubt on the importance of ideology in both terrorism and conflict. Conflict studies is particularly revealing here, with Kaldor notoriously arguing that conflicts “may take the guise of traditional nationalism, tribalism or religious fundamentalism,” but are actually the result of the disintegration of states and structures under the pressures of globalization.<sup>43</sup> Though Kaldor’s ‘new wars’ thesis has been criticized as misrepresenting ‘small wars’ as ‘new wars,’ and assuming that her main case (the 1992–95 Bosnian War) is representative, her conclusions are nonetheless recognizable in some current conflicts, including in Iraq and Syria as she suggests that new wars are most likely to arise when centralized, authoritarian states lose legitimacy or begin to collapse. In this reading, religion is important, not in terms of its contribution to ideology, but as a marker of social and political identity in the resulting struggles for resources or survival. Participants may frame conflicts in religious (and ethnic and national) terms but they are actually manifestations of some other historical force or process—which participants themselves may not even understand.

At the meso-level, which primarily affects smaller communities and identity groups, social and cultural factors are the most prevalent, described by USAID as ‘pull’ factors that encourage involvement in violent extremism.<sup>44</sup> Those with the strongest ‘pull’ are linked to identity, whether this is religious, ethnic or group identity. Individual and group identity has been found to be most strongly expressed in religious or ethnic terms. Much literature outlines how important identity is for individuals to become involved in violent movements, particularly because radicalization is a social process.<sup>45</sup> Humans are capable of extraordinary

feats, creative and destructive, if motivated by feelings of kinship, real or imagined—“people don’t simply die and kill for a cause. They die and kill for each other.”<sup>46</sup>

Community also extends to the ‘imagined communities’ of large identity groups such as nations or the umma (the global community of Muslims) that the violent group claims to represent.<sup>47</sup> Several scholars examine this ‘imagined community’ in the context of Islamist violent extremism, and agree that what emerged from the 1990s was an idea of transnational Muslim identity that at least on the surface displaced alternative notions of identity centered on specific ethnic, cultural or geographical factors.<sup>48</sup> In the 1980s and 1990s, this transnational identity was mobilized for defensive purposes, but it was not long before Al Qaida and other groups transformed it into a doctrine of global terrorism and revolution. Psychological research has found that appeals to identity are essential for encouraging, legitimizing and supporting involvement in violent extremist groups. ISIL gave new impetus to this apocalyptic strain within jihadism, naming its English language magazine *Dabiq*, after the site of one of the most important battles in the prophecies. This ‘cosmic ideology’ has enhanced ISIL’s ability to recruit in Syria and Iraq, in the wider MENA region and in Western Europe through a sophisticated propaganda machine. In Kenya, a small number of radical Kenyan clerics propagating such messages have been the primary recruiting channel since the mid-2000s for mobilizing Kenyans to travel and fight in Somalia. What remains unclear, however, is whether followers are attracted more by this ideological rhetoric or are attracted on identity grounds to the duty to defend fellow Muslims.<sup>49</sup>

Religious identity is too vague to meaningfully separate from other equally significant identity markers such as ethno/nationalist identity.<sup>50</sup> Both religious ideologues and politically-motivated ethnic elites are able to capitalize on and engender shared identity by promoting transnational networks to support insurgents in the homeland.<sup>51</sup> It is also important to note that while the focus is currently on Salafi-jihadists, Shias in Syria and Iraq employ a similar narrative to recruit people relying on religious but also on sectarian divides between the Sunni and Shia communities. The Shia militia movement received a major boost with Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani’s June 2014 fatwa encouraging Shia to fight a ‘righteous jihad’ against ISIL.<sup>52</sup> Following this, many Shia militias formed into the Hashd Shaabi—people’s militias—to combat ISIL, revealing the extent to which sectarian politics have become entrenched in the conflict. Stansfield states, “not only does Daesh [ISIL] fight as Sunnis rather than Iraqis, but the Hashd is equally sectarian, fighting ISIL as Shias rather than Iraqis.”<sup>53</sup> In conflict, the tactics of the Shia militias supports ISIL’s narrative that the Iraqi government represents an existential threat to Sunnis. The militias themselves have been extensively

accused of abuses and atrocities, most recently against Sunnis believed to have collaborated with ISIL.<sup>54</sup> In parallel, their success in placing officials in positions of responsibility supports ISIL's argument that the government and its security forces are not Iraqi but Shia.<sup>55</sup>

### Organizational structure and demographics

Aggregating diverse movements, groups and activities under the single heading of terrorism is, according to Neumann, the 'cardinal sin' of terrorism studies.<sup>56</sup> However, even contributions such as Neumann's own, which recognize the diversity of what we categorize as terrorism or violent extremism, are apt to conflate its Islamist manifestations into a single phenomenon. For instance, Berman conflates Hamas, Hizbollah and Al Qaida as Islamist terrorism without acknowledging that one is Shia and the others are Sunni; two function as active political parties and one as popular social movements; one is backed by Iran, the other two by Syria; one is a nationalist group focused solely on Israel/Palestine while the others have global ambitions and reach.<sup>57</sup> With the religious inspiration discussed above, this section considers the importance of organizational structure and demographics.

There is little research that specifically addresses the question of the range and diversity of Islamist violent extremist groups. However, there are studies of specific groups, such as Hansen on Al Shabaab and Comolli on Boko Haram, and many on Al Qaida (Wright and Burke are journalistic accounts but among the most solid).<sup>58</sup> These provide fine-grained accounts of how each group developed in its own specific historical and socio-political milieu, and taken together provide a corrective to simplistic, totalizing explanations, which present Islamist violent extremism as monolithic or homogenous. Scholars focusing on specific groups make particular reference to the risks of aggregation. Holbrook is cautious of over-simplification of the wide range and developing nature of ideological and theoretical perspectives amongst 'jihadist' movements.<sup>59</sup> He suggests that the reductive term 'single narrative' simplistically combines a diverse and dynamic set of phenomena into a single analytical construct. This can also lead to errors in counter-terrorism by failing to appreciate that radical Islamism is a highly contested arena, and overlooking the decision to renounce violence on the part of influential ideologues in Egypt, Western governments missed opportunities to delegitimize Al Qaida in the eyes of its global support base.<sup>60</sup>

The Syrian civil war and the rise of ISIL have refocused attention on foreign fighters, which is perceived to be a largely recent phenomenon and associated especially with Islamist violent extremism.<sup>61</sup> This can be attributed to both the emergence of an ideology of transnational participation in Islamist thinking in

Saudi Arabia in the 1980s, and the growing number of conflicts in failed, post-colonial states with Muslim majorities or significant minorities. The effect of Islamist foreign fighters on the post-2003 insurgency in Iraq is of particular note. The leader of what became Al Qaida in Iraq (AQI), which ultimately mutated into ISIL, was Ahmad Fadeel al-Nazal al-Khalayleh, better known as al-Zarqawi, a Jordanian who had operated his own militant training camp in Afghanistan before 9/11. After the 2003 invasion al-Zarqawi found refuge in Iraq and, with his group of mostly non-Iraqi militants, sought to change the environment to suit them and recruited additional foreign fighters.<sup>62</sup> Al-Zarqawi's strategy was to attack Shia populations and monuments to promote sectarian warfare, and to use suicide bombing strategically, not just tactically, in order to move the conflict from classic insurgency to 'global jihad.' Instead of the usual pattern of fighters being forced out of the territories they had fought for (as in Afghanistan or Bosnia), a sectarian jihad would create the conditions of security for the mujahideen (Al-Zarqawi's ultimate objective) and insecurity for everyone else.

However, while the scale of the phenomenon may be unprecedented, it is not in itself new. Malet shows that foreign fighters have existed since at least the mid-nineteenth century, if not longer, and they are by no means confined to Islamists.<sup>63</sup> Indeed, while foreign fighters in Syria and Iraq may now have passed the 20,000 believed to have joined the conflict in Afghanistan during the 1980s, approximately 32,000 foreigners fought in the Spanish Civil War (1936–39).<sup>64</sup> This however is neither new nor unique to Muslim diaspora communities. For example, the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) in Sri Lanka was sustained by financial support from Tamil diaspora channeled through the radical World Tamil Movement.<sup>65</sup>

Meanwhile, not all Islamist violent extremist groups attract foreign fighters. While over a thousand are believed to have fought with Al Shabaab in Somalia since the mid-2000s (in declining numbers since 2012), mainly from the Somali diaspora, far fewer are thought to have fought within Kenya.<sup>66</sup> Most significantly, in its embrace of decentralized guerrilla warfare and cellular terrorism in Kenya (unlike its more bureaucratic military operations in Somalia), Al Shabaab have come to more closely resemble Mau Mau and Mungiki's loose structures and roving independent bands. This reflects the different security and conflict dynamics present in Somalia relative to those in operation in Kenya—and the adaptation required of Al Shabaab to these diverse conditions.<sup>67</sup> Despite its origin as an offshoot of ISIL, JaN's majority Syrian makeup "contributes to a crucial level of social grounding," while its "strict and highly selective foreign fighter recruitment policies have ensured an ongoing supply of high-caliber muhajireen [emigrants]."<sup>68</sup>

## Tactics and Methods

There are assertions that ideological terrorists do not seem to be constrained by rational strategic limitations in comparison with nationalists, and search for the most destructive weapons available to cause high amount of atrocities.<sup>69</sup> The lethality of religiously inspired terrorism and Islamist extremism in particular has attracted significant attention. Terrorism studies highlighted that one of the novelties of ‘new terrorism’ includes its aim to commit mass-casualty attacks and contained much debate after 9/11 over whether Islamist extremists were prepared or preparing to carry out mass-casualty attacks using chemical/radiological/biological weapons. Evidence recovered from Al Qaida laboratories in Afghanistan suggested that they were actively researching unconventional weapons, and there have been periodic cases (including in the UK) of Al Qaida-affiliated groups planning to use chemical or radiological substances. There are assertions that this marks Islamist extremists out from other groups, although proponents of ‘new terrorism’ theories such as Hoffman also acknowledge the use of chemical weapons by groups such as Aum Shirinkyo in Japan.<sup>70</sup>

From this perspective religious extremist groups have different value systems, mechanisms of legitimization and justification, concepts of morality, and world-views, and are ‘consequently unconstrained by the political, moral or practical constraints that may affect other terrorists’—this includes the need for popular support.<sup>71</sup> The phenomenon of suicide attacks has attracted particular attention from academics, especially post-9/11, and the sharp statistical rise as a result of attacks in post-2003 Iraq. Berman argues that suicide bombing is often a marker of religious violence not because of theology but the complexity of the target: religiously inspired terrorists may be the only ones with the commitment required to survive in countries such as Israel where targets have been significantly hardened.<sup>72</sup> As a result, he concludes that the “threat from modern religious terrorist organizations is unprecedented” and that Islamist groups are far more lethal than secular ones.<sup>73</sup> For example, in Nigeria, in comparison to Boko Haram, MEND’s choice of targets has been more clearly instrumental: despite occasional bomb attacks in major cities, MEND primarily restricted its attacks to the oil industry and the government’s supporting infrastructure in the Delta. It has generally avoided targeting civilians (although has mounted occasional attacks on hotels, cargo ships, and fishing vessels). It has not embraced the tactic of suicide bombing.

This analysis has significant flaws not least the fact that it overlooks the adoption of suicide bombing by Marxist-Leninist groups, notably the LTTE in Sri Lanka (which perpetrated more suicide bombings than any other group prior to 2003) but also the PKK in Turkey. In fact, others argue that terrorism is actually

becoming less lethal, as the number of fatalities per 100,000 people from the 1970s to 2005 broadly decreased, though this misses the upsurge in fatalities in Iraq in 2006–07 and the later upsurges in Afghanistan, Yemen, Somalia, and Nigeria.<sup>74</sup> Tucker’s ‘lethality index’ for international terrorism demonstrates that lethality has rested at a higher plateau since the late 1970s rather than surged ahead, adding that the “claim that there is a tendency toward mass-casualty attacks rests, then, on a very few cases compared to the total number of international terrorist attacks.”<sup>75</sup> Taking this longer view shows that the vast majority of terrorist attacks worldwide still kill few people (being mostly directed against property), and that by 2007 the most lethal terrorist groups were the Maoist Shining Path (Peru) and the Marxist-Leninist LTTE (Sri Lanka). In fact, the history of Islamist militancy since 9/11 demonstrates a relative lack of novel techniques including in comparison to other violent groups. With the exception of the planning and scale of financing required for Al Shabaab’s 2013 Westgate mall attack, most attacks by Al Shabaab and affiliates in Kenya have been similar to those conducted by non-Islamist actors in their use of small arms, grenades and small IEDs.

In this regard, there does appear to be a difference in the scope and style of Salafi-jihadist violence inspired by Al Qaida. In Nigeria in 2011, Boko Haram mounted its first suicide-bomb attacks targeting the National Police Headquarters and UN Headquarters in Abuja, presumably in emulation of Al Qaida, with which Boko Haram was then in alliance. The shift has also been evident in the targets of attacks: Muslim communities were originally forewarned if attacks were planned in their areas, but after Yusuf’s death, attacks became more indiscriminate. In 2011 and 2012, around twenty suicide attacks were launched against religious (both Christian and Muslim), military, and other government targets.<sup>76</sup> Its change in strategy reflected a more militant ideology, reflected by its declarations of allegiance first to Al Qaida in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), and then to ISIL. In Iraq and Syria particularly, Al Qaida-linked groups have succeeded in their aim of radicalizing these conflicts. They have made these conflicts more lethal by importing suicide attacks as a deliberate strategy. They have made them more intractable, by provoking sectarian violence on an appalling scale. ISIL’s inducement of fear is useful not just in a political context (i.e. as terrorism) but also as a military strategy. It is notorious for its gross human rights abuses and performative violence, while broadcasting media of its brutal executions has helped it project military power and undertake audacious operations.

By examining three case studies of IVE, it becomes clear that there are important differences between IVE groups and other conflict actors linked to ideology. However, these differences do not always transpire the way we would expect. Ideology is important for the leaders of IVE groups especially—some are ideo-

logical entrepreneurs who seek to mobilize followers behind a cause. Ideology can be a factor for followers, but people in conflict situations join violent groups for a wide range of reasons—social, psychological and practical, as well as political. In many cases therefore, ideology can have a fragmenting effect, as the drivers differ between leaders and followers. Although Salafi-jihadists are in many ways different—and more threatening—than other violent groups, they express their worldview through a narrative that is strikingly similar to that proposed by many other militant movements (religious and secular).

### Implications for Development Actors

The similarities and differences for development responses expand the debate that began in the 1990s on how development and conflict interact. Good-hand created a framework to map the contribution that development practitioners could make to conflict resolution and post-conflict reconstruction. The earliest approach was conceptualized “working around war,” as development practitioners sought to continue their activities while avoiding direct involvement.<sup>77</sup> “Working around war” assumed conflict to be an “impediment or negative externality that is to be avoided.”<sup>78</sup> From this perspective, development automatically contributed to peace, so that nothing additional would be required.<sup>79</sup>

A later approach was “working in war,” with development agencies acknowledging a potential relationship between development and conflict and seeking to minimize their impact, but without addressing the conflict directly: “Agencies working in areas of active violence have attempted to mitigate war-related risks and also to minimize the potential for programs to fuel or prolong violence.”<sup>80</sup> The most recent and most proactive approach is “working on war,” where development practitioners are directly engaged in peacebuilding activities.<sup>81</sup> Conflict prevention and resolution becomes the primary goal of development, which means that “policies and programs must be justified in these terms,” including direct peacebuilding and statebuilding initiatives.<sup>82</sup>

The response of development actors to violent extremism thus far has fallen within the “working in” category, tackling the drivers of radicalization and recruitment. CVE programming, for instance, assumes that “addressing both the manifestations of violent extremism and the conditions conducive to violent extremism is a developmental challenge. It will require strengthening the fundamental building blocks of equitable development, human rights, governance and the rule of law.”<sup>83</sup> The result has been a burgeoning industry of CVE programming.<sup>84</sup> While there is no adequate measure for the effectiveness of these programs, they aim to prevent involvement in violent extremist groups.<sup>85</sup> This is particularly important

in countries such as Kenya, where violent extremism has not yet escalated into all-out war. In this context, CVE programming can limit escalation by undermining support for violent extremist groups. However, it aims to reduce vulnerability to radicalization and recruitment among those who are not yet involved; CVE therefore tends not to address communities viewed as being “at risk,” rather than the violent groups themselves.

Existing tools to engage with conflict can also be applied to IVE groups. Particularly in countries or regions where governments have tended to rely on strong, securitized responses, such as Nigeria and Kenya, security sector reform (SSR) can promote a less violent response, and hence reduce the risk of violence increasing or recurring. As the Nigeria case demonstrates, if a government’s default response is to crush dissent or target whole communities in unrefined sweeps, there is potential to spark spin-off movements that may be more violent, unpredictable and strategic than their predecessors. Violent responses by the government can also increase support for violent extremist groups.

While this is unlikely to extend to reform of the armed forces, at least in the response of development agencies, O’Neill and Cockayne advocate programs that draw on demobilization, disarmament and reintegration (DDR) principles to disengage violent extremists and reintegrate them into mainstream society.<sup>86</sup> Similarly, Jones, Lynch, Marchand, Denov, and Koehler examine the potential of disengaging, deradicalizing and reintegrating fighters involved in violent extremism.<sup>87</sup> These approaches adapt interventions designed to deal with other forms of violence, and engage with the institutions and individuals affected by violent conflict. Developed in response to the decades of civil war in the 1990s and 2000s, they have been applied to a range of conflicts, including ethnic divisions. Because they do not engage directly with violent extremist groups, they do not need to specifically focus or respond to the impact of ideology, or the other factors that may make Islamist violent extremists different from other violent extremist groups.

Directly working on violent extremism is much more difficult, particularly within a peacebuilding and statebuilding framework. A key aim of statebuilding is the promotion of inclusive political settlements, where competing elites are brought into decision-making on governance and economics. However, with some Islamist violent groups, a negotiated political settlement is not an aspiration. For instance, Al Shabaab’s aims in Kenya are to further destabilize state authority in Somalia’s southern hinterland and move these areas into the orbit of an Islamist territory based to some extent on a historical ‘Greater Somalia’ project, Somali irredentism, and local pan-Muslim sentiment. Efforts to achieve a Greater Somalia have been a source of conflict with Somalia since Kenya’s independence. With the more recent overlay of Islamist extremist rhetoric and practice and Al Sha-

baab's base being outside Kenya, achieving a political settlement with these goals at play appears highly unlikely. In the long term, political settlements linked to Kenya's recent constitutional devolution of power to the counties may redress some grievances regarding autonomy and central state overreach if implemented in a manner that empowers local communities, thereby drawing some of the venom not only from Islamist violent groups, but also others, such as the Mombasa Republican Council (MRC).

The political settlement aspect of statebuilding is therefore exceptionally challenging in this context and any intervention is unlikely to reconcile global Salafi-jihadist groups and their franchises. A complicating factor is the diversity among violent Islamist groups in conflict situations and their tendency to fragment. In the Boko Haram case there have been disagreements over core beliefs, strategy, and tactics, which have resulted in splinter groups such as Ansaru. Al Shabaab in Somalia has also been host to major internal disagreements regarding similar issues since 2011. However, the lack of cohesion within IVE groups may also provide an opportunity for negotiation. For example, Gerges recommended that attempts should be made to negotiate with jihadists who do not subscribe to the Al Qaida doctrine.<sup>88</sup> This strategy can reduce the power of the most problematic Islamist groups by undermining their legitimacy and fragmenting the extremists' support base.

The fact that Salafi-jihadists are irreconcilable does not mean that promoting inclusive settlements to conflicts where they are active is fruitless. In fact, our analysis suggests that such efforts should be prioritized. First, these uncompromising groups partly derive their legitimacy from socio-political grievances, as in Iraq where the post-2003 settlement has failed to include meaningfully the Sunni Arab minority, and in Syria where a minoritarian government has lost the support of large parts of the Sunni Arab majority. Addressing some of the manifold problems of governance in both countries would not bring ISIL and JaN to the negotiating table but would diminish their support among the disenfranchised Sunni Arabs. Second, as we have shown, Islamist violent extremism is far from being a monolithic and stable movement, and within the broad scope of the term are groups that are potentially interested in political settlements. Therefore breakaway groups need attention because they may perceive that they have more to gain from settlement rather than conflict, especially in the case of protracted civil conflicts in a situation of stalemate.

Another avenue for development actors to support statebuilding is in the development of core state functions. This approach assumes that increasing the capacity of the state to provide core functions such as security, rule of law, and macroeconomic policies will increase trust, facilitate the provision of public ser-

vices including, crucially, law and order, and strengthen state legitimacy. This approach may have an impact on some members of violent Islamist groups that are driven to join because of grievances. Addressing historical grievances, and a state's failings to address deeply-rooted marginalization and insecurity in these places, could reduce the ability of violent Islamist groups to mobilize and retain support. More pertinently, weak states are more vulnerable to civil war and insurgency and also struggle to contain violent extremist threats.<sup>89</sup> The collapse of state capacity in Iraq as a result of the 2003 invasion and occupation is a particularly stark example: the sudden transformation from police state to state of anarchy created the space for a wide range of violent extremist groups to flourish, from Shia militants to Al Qaida. Building or rebuilding state capacity is, we have concluded, an essential pre-requisite for managing Islamist violent extremist problems. Emphasis should be put on restoring governance in opposition-controlled areas, especially those that are threatened by further Islamist extremist expansion.

A related strategy is the provision of public goods and services expected by the population to strengthen state legitimacy and reduce violent opposition. While those engaged in violent extremism due to grievances are likely to be somewhat appeased, it will have limited effect on the upper levels of Islamist violent groups. However, improved provision of public goods and services could have a considerable impact on the ability of leaders to recruit from or gain the passive acceptance of the wider population. Part of ISIL's success is a combination of its presence in areas with weak governance, an active war economy, and endemic violence. By bringing some form of order and control, even if violent, ISIL presents itself as the only legitimate authority, with a monopoly on the use of force. Turkmani also highlights how this reputation for governance, based on the provision of security and basic services, has played a key role in recruiting supporters and ensuring assent.<sup>90</sup>

If the state is incapable or unwilling to make good on these shortfalls, then there may be scope for others to step in. For example, Turkmani recommends that international organizations promote economic measures, such as job-creation schemes and fuel distribution in reachable areas of Syria.<sup>91</sup> Interventions to promote economic security in conflict-afflicted areas have the potential to reduce or at least contain support for the most problematic violent Islamists.

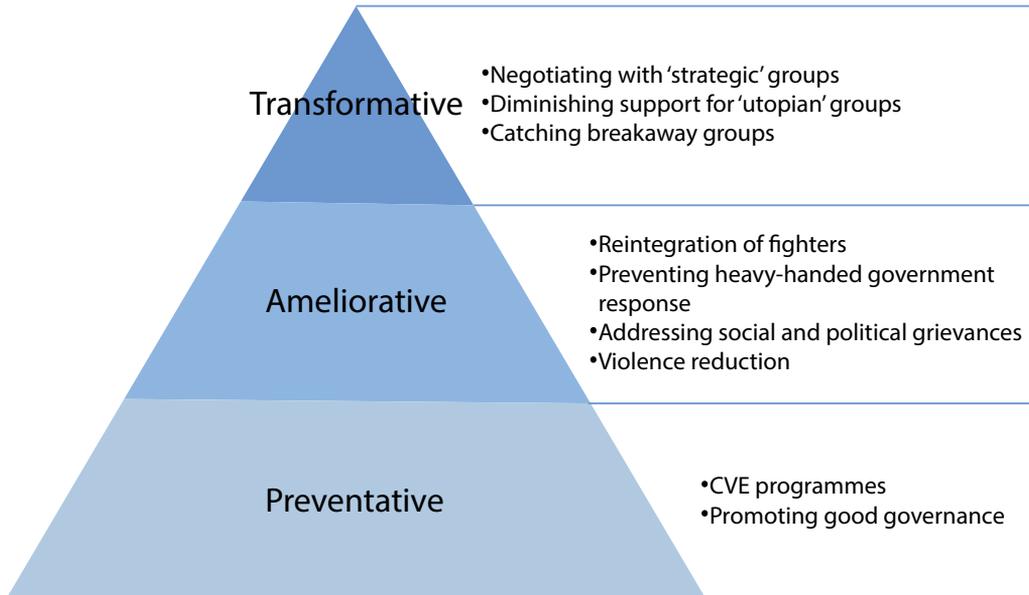
The overarching aim of peacebuilding is to address the causes and consequences of conflict. Achieving this requires a focus on the grievances, fault-lines, and opportunity-seeking that underlay the conflict. Zaum, Gippert, and Heaven consider religion and religious extremism to be expressions of social, economic or political grievances and opportunity-seeking.<sup>92</sup> This aligns with Kunovich and Hodson's findings in Croatia that religion is merely a social marker for economic,

demographic and political forces.<sup>93</sup> However, other studies dispute these findings and suggest instead that religion has the capacity to both stimulate and mobilize collective action and that restrictions on religion itself can make significant contributions to explaining religiously motivated violence. In this analysis, religion itself can be the source of grievance.<sup>94</sup>

However, focusing on religion as a source of grievance leading to conflict and extremism could mean missing the underlying causes and drivers of the conflict. Since there is no simple link between religious ideas and violent action—our analysis suggests that extremist violence results from a complex combination of situational factors, social enablers, political triggers, and individual characteristics—the problem is seeking to understand how a situation of stable coexistence breaks down to the extent that religion (or rather religious difference) can become a threat to security, which requires an examination of the root causes and an effort to address some of the most pertinent ones. In Iraq, for example, the exclusion of Sunni Arabs from the post-2003 political settlement generated grievances, which although religiously expressed, are political at source.

While all of the groups examined here show a range of drivers and motivations, each group has been influenced by grievances to some extent, particularly at the lower levels. Addressing grievances will not necessarily resolve the conflict. If a group sees the state as the problem or has global and utopian aspirations, leaders and the most committed followers are unlikely to abandon their extremist programs. However, addressing grievances may contain groups and, in time, reduce their support.

This analysis of how development actors can engage with IVE points to a hierarchy of interventions (see Figure 1). The bottom layer indicates that the most significant contribution development can make is preventative, seeking to limit involvement in violent extremism by promoting good governance, human rights, development and rule of law. This overlaps with the second layer, which seeks to address both the grievances that have driven people into violent extremism, as well as the impact of violent extremism, from the violence it causes to heavy-handed government responses. The top of the hierarchy is the most difficult and relies on careful timing. As discussed above, negotiating with strategic groups, diminishing support for utopian groups, and catching breakaway groups has the greatest potential for transformation.



**Figure 1:** Hierarchy of Interventions.

As this hierarchy brings together a range of strategies that are currently applied towards conflict actors, it suggests that there is no difference in how development actors should respond to IVE groups. While there are many similarities, the differences between IVE groups and other conflict actors require a contextualized approach that engages with the specific ways that groups operate, considering their aims and objectives, tactics/use of violence, and recruitment/motivation strategies.

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# War Economy, Governance, and Security in Syria's Opposition-Controlled Areas

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Scholars argue that, a thriving war economy is one of the factors that is contributing to the persistence of armed conflict in Syria.<sup>1</sup> It is said that since the start of the war in 2011, the proliferation of lucrative criminal activities, through looting, bribery, extortion, kidnapping, human trafficking, the illegal trade in oil, weapons, drugs and antiquities, illegal migration, and document forgery has created vested interests. This observation particularly applies to the myriad of insurgent armed groups, for whom the extraction of resources from the war economy is alleged to have reinforced incentives to continue fighting.<sup>2</sup>

Such claims echo a prominent argument in scholarship on contemporary warfare that emphasizes the criminalization of the war economy and portrays its armed protagonists as violent entrepreneurs who pursue military combat alongside self-enrichment.<sup>3</sup> A common view holds that the pursuit of economic agendas by armed groups harms wider community interests and aggravates human suffering in zones of conflict. In that sense, Syria's combat landscape provides an abundance of evidence that ordinary Syrians in opposition-controlled areas struggle to provide for their basic needs, while combatants pursue their illicit business in the war economy, epitomized most visibly in armed groups' engagement in the smuggling of antiquities.<sup>4</sup> While such accounts of the conduct of non-state armed groups in Syria are broadly accurate, the actual local war economy dynamics in terms of the combinations of actors, activities and their interactions around extraction and distribution of resources, display significant variation. The war economy in Syria is diffused due to the extreme territorial, political and economic

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fragmentation associated with the diversity of protagonists involved in the conflict, and the variable opportunities provided for resource extraction.<sup>5</sup> Consequently, various arrangements among different actors—enemies or competitors—are forged to extract resources from the war economy, affecting the security of the local population in multiple and ambiguous ways.<sup>6</sup>

The main motivation behind this paper is to take a fresh look at the debates on the war economy and its impact on civilian security. Civilian security is understood to mean protection from exploitation by armed groups and an opportunity for self-security through the application of different coping strategies.<sup>7</sup> The main argument we put forward is a two-fold one. Firstly, we contend that a criminality perspective, which posits the public as the victim of the war economy, provides an oversimplified explanation of the impact of non-state armed actors' economic agendas on civilian security. Secondly, we highlight that the economic activities of insurgent groups take place within a broader military, security and economic context that determines the availability of resources and the types of actors involved as well as the activities and interactions that influence how people respond to war-induced uncertainty. The broader context needs to be considered when analyzing the link between the war economy and civilian security.

This study of the three opposition-held areas in Syria shows that the pursuit of the illicit activities by non-state armed groups is compatible with different behavior towards other local actors around resource extraction and distribution. Overall, where the war economy was more diverse and there was more interaction among the opposition armed groups and other local actors, the population had more opportunities to engage in different parts of the war economy, and to develop strategies to cope with the harmful impact of the exploitative practices of armed groups.

## Methodology

Empirically, we investigated three opposition-held areas in Syria: Eastern Ghouta, the Daraa countryside, and Atareb in the Aleppo countryside. During the research period (February-June 2015), no single opposition armed group exercised control of the territories or made attempts to organize the provision of public goods and services. Opposition armed groups consisted mostly of locally-recruited personnel with limited to no presence of extremist, transnationally recruiting groups such as Jabhat Al Nusra (JAN)<sup>8</sup> and the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL). All three are mainly agricultural areas with local industry and trade primarily related to agriculture. The crucial differences among the three areas are due to their respective geostrategic positions.<sup>9</sup> At the time of research,

Eastern Ghouta was under siege and surrounded by government forces. Daraa has a well-controlled border with Jordan, allowing the passage of humanitarian aid while also restricting the movement of arms and fighters. Atareb lies along the Turkish border, in a region where fewer restrictions are imposed on the entry of goods and people into Syria.<sup>10</sup> This provides a variation in the conditions in which the war economy operates allowing for the observation of different patterns of interaction among its protagonist as well as the analysis of variations in the responses of the local populations to cope with the impact of the economic activities of armed groups.

The fieldwork for this paper involved face-to-face and Skype interviews with citizens in the three localities. Stakeholders consulted included civil society members, the members of local administrative councils, members of armed groups, media representatives, and businessmen.<sup>11</sup> Interview data was complemented by extensive desk research of reports, media contents, and scholarly articles. We also interviewed donor agencies, UN agencies, and international non-governmental organizations. Triangulation of the research findings included several consultations with international and Syrian experts and activists, and two focus group discussions with representatives from civil society and media organizations. The paper first provides a brief review of debates on the contemporary war economy and war-time governance. The empirical section then uses the three case studies to analyze three aspects of the war economy: the criminal economy involving insurgent groups; interactions among a range of local actors around the extraction and distribution of resources in the war economy; and the responses of the local population. The concluding section summarizes the findings and reflects on how this context-specific knowledge contributes to the study of the impact of war economies on civilian security in war zones.

### **Unpacking the War Economy and Interactions among its Protagonists**

Contemporary war economy is conventionally understood as including all economic activities during war, irrespective of their legal status.<sup>12</sup> Yet, scholarship is dominated by accounts of the war economy as consisting of manifestly criminal and illegal economic practices, with the latter comprising illegal trade in otherwise legal goods.<sup>13</sup> This body of work considers war as ‘business by other means’ and as a ‘privatized form of self-enrichment’ in which commercial transacting among formally opposed groups is a salient practice that financially benefits criminal networks, including non-state armed groups.<sup>14</sup> From this perspective, the exploitation of the local population through predatory practices, including

through the manipulation and taxation of humanitarian aid, is part of the resource extraction strategy of non-state armed groups. The criminal war economy controlled by insurgents, posits civilians as helpless victims whose sole protection from its harmful effects are the various forms of the “coping economy” that enables the survival of the local population.<sup>15</sup>

The above perspectives have come under criticism from several directions. Gutierrez-Sanin’s deconstruction of the ‘criminal rebels’ thesis demonstrated that there is nothing static about the identity of actors, their interests and motives for engaging in the war economy, and behavior towards other actors.<sup>16</sup> Rather, Gutierrez-Sanin makes a point that in contemporary conflicts, political, military, and profit-seeking agendas of non-state armed actors mix in complex ways resulting in a variable and fluid constellation of actors, alliances, and activities, which affect the civilian population in manifold ways.<sup>17</sup> Cockayne argues that although the extractive strategies of armed groups are inherently coercive, the extent to which the population is directly extorted varies, and so does the vulnerability of the population to the harmful effects of the economic agendas of armed groups.<sup>18</sup> The suggestion that the various forms of survival economy provide the only option for self-protection of the local population exposed to non-state armed groups’ predation is premised on a view of the formal/legal economy seen through a prism of destruction and disruption that reduces sources of livelihoods and productive capacities. Such a view, however, sidelines the different opportunities that emerge through the adaptation of the local economy to war conditions, both for violent extraction as well as for the development of coping mechanisms.<sup>19</sup>

Recent literature on wartime has challenged another dominant aspect of the criminality perspective on war economy. Some criminality studies associate the war economy with disorder and lawlessness that disproportionately affects the civilian populations, but research shows that although they are violent actors, rebels are often interested in governance and sometimes use the proceeds from the criminal war economy to provide common goods.<sup>20</sup> The likelihood of channeling the criminal war economy proceeds towards the wider community interests increases if those groups are recruited locally.<sup>21</sup> Other factors that may affect such outcomes are not directly addressed, primarily, because the war-orders perspective developed through the study of long-lasting insurgencies in resource rich countries. Thus, while it provides insights into the behavior of non-state armed groups, it concomitantly downplays the presence of other actors who jostle to assert authority over local territories, but it fails to emphasize how these actors affect the behavior of insurgent groups, in general, and around the extraction and distribution of resources, in particular.<sup>22</sup> Literature on wartime also does not explicitly address war-related local economic transformation. This is an important gap as

there are different adaptation patterns in countries influenced by their unique economic profiles. Economic profile, such as a manufacturing or agricultural-based economy or, for that matter, drug production and trafficking-based economic activity, influences the kinds of activities and actors involved as well as the modalities of their interactions, with vast differences in the impact on the quality of the lives of people in war zones.<sup>23</sup> Ultimately, as argued by Justino et al., how non-state armed groups negotiate, cooperate, coerce or intimidate other local actors to pursue their economic agendas, and the consequences such activities will have on the coping strategies of local populations will depend, to an important extent, on the broader economic landscape, and not just its criminal part.<sup>24</sup> In the following section, these ideas will be explored, using evidence from the three opposition controlled areas in Syria.

### **Variegated Pathways of War Economy, Governance, and Security in Syria: Empirical Evidence**

The main aim of this section is to describe the war economy involving insurgent groups in rebel-held areas of Syria, as well as to examine interactions among a range of local armed and civilian actors around the extraction and distribution of resources, and the responses of local populations to protect themselves from the harmful effects of the armed groups' practices. The three localities illustrate the different profiles of war economy that have emerged in the presence of locally-recruited armed groups, who make no explicit claim to govern those territories.

#### ***Eastern Ghouta – A Predatory Insurgency?***

Eastern Ghouta lies in the agricultural belt of Syria, to the southeast of the capital, Damascus. In October 2013, after the insurgent armed groups took control of the area, the government forces imposed a siege. At the time the research was conducted, it was the largest besieged area in Syria and subject to intense shelling. Entry to Eastern Ghouta was only possible through two checkpoints: one manned by insurgent groups at the Eastern Ghouta side and the other controlled by government forces. Underground tunnels were also created to surpass these checkpoints and to supplement the flow of licit and illicit goods. The control over these main routes for the circulation of goods and people, provided a strategic asset to the armed groups on both sides of the conflict. Those routes became profitable channels used by the opposition groups, regime forces and assorted merchants to extract war economy resources.<sup>25</sup> Eastern Ghouta's agriculture based pre-war economy suffered extensive physical destruction, including to infrastructure.<sup>26</sup> A lack of fuel, electricity, water, fertilizers, and fodder, severely disrupted

agricultural activity, and the associated processing industry, and limited the possibilities for legal economic activities during the siege.<sup>27</sup> Eastern Ghouta inhabitants have suffered acute food shortages and widespread malnutrition.<sup>28</sup> At least 397 civilians have died of starvation since the start of the siege.<sup>29</sup> Before the siege, the area received over 100,000 internally-displaced people (IDPs), which has further strained the resource-base and coping strategies of the local population.<sup>30</sup>

### *The criminal war economy and its protagonists*

At the time of research, the Islam Army, created in 2013 through a merger of some fifty opposition groups, was the main non-state armed actor operating within the besieged area.<sup>31</sup> Given the siege, the main economic activity comprised of smuggling basic commodities, including food and fuel, through the checkpoints and tunnels. Transporting people across the blockade was particularly difficult and risky, but provided high profits, up to one million Syrian pounds (SYP) per hour, and equivalent of around \$5,900.<sup>32</sup> The first of the tunnels, beneath the Damascus-Aleppo Highway, was excavated in August 2014 to allow for the entry of humanitarian aid. This tunnel quickly became a supply route for the armed groups and a de facto commercial enterprise. The daily income for rebel groups could be as high as SYP 15–20 million (\$88,000–\$118,000).<sup>33</sup> More tunnels were dug over time; including one housing a fuel pipeline as fuel smuggling became one of the most profitable businesses in the Syrian war. The Islam Army's control over the supplies of food and fuel meant that prices were determined within an illicit network comprising of rebel and government forces and various merchants with the additional risk-costs of participating in the war economy being passed on to civilians. To pass through the tunnels and the checkpoint, a percentage of the sales value of the goods was charged.<sup>34</sup> Basic goods were sold by armed groups at highly inflated prices. Prices were as high as 55 times their cost in Damascus, 15 km away from Eastern Ghouta. The price inflation was largely a result of the multiple rounds of informal payments that occurred before goods could reach the local population in Eastern Ghouta.<sup>35</sup> While vital to ease the strains of war on the local population, this lucrative trade provided revenues to the Islam Army and to their collaborators on the other side of the border, as well as for the various entrepreneurs linked to both parties, who controlled the market in the besieged area.<sup>36</sup> As to the impact on the local population, the overall effect was extreme food insecurity due to the limited supply and high prices of goods and the heightened vulnerability of the local population to the extraction strategies of the armed groups.<sup>37</sup>

### ***The local actors' interactions***

The struggle for control over the commercial routes across the line of siege initially provoked frequent clashes among insurgent groups and even led to assassinations.<sup>38</sup> To undercut its rivals, the Jund Al Asefa armed group colluded with government forces, and in February 2015 blew up the tunnel controlled by the Islam Army.<sup>39</sup> Subsequently, the Islam Army cajoled smaller groups to merge and could end the violent competition over the tunnel. With the rival Fajer Al Um-mah brigade, the Islam Army set up an office to manage the tunnel.<sup>40</sup> These arrangements resulted in the Islam Army being able to exercise tighter control over the supply of food, medicine, and fuel reaching the besieged area. The relationship between the Islam Army and the local civilian structures through the Local Administrative Councils (LACs) were strained in Eastern Ghouta and, at times, confrontational. LACs grew out of the popular mobilization of the Syrian uprising and serve as rudimentary civilian governance structures across the opposition-controlled areas with different capacities in different areas.<sup>41</sup> Most LACs evolved over time and developed organizationally, albeit unevenly, to include specialized offices (for example, medical, education, and agriculture offices) to respond to the needs of the local population. Although formally elected by the local population, many LACs are associated with different armed groups.<sup>42</sup> Several LACs were active in Eastern Ghouta at the time of research, of which the one in the city of Duma was the most developed.<sup>43</sup>

Given the siege conditions, the LACs in Eastern Ghouta were poorly resourced and lacked the capacity to respond to the service delivery needs of the local population, including for the provision of basic goods and law and order. Accessing funding available through INGOs, which would enable LACs to be more effective, was undermined by the impact of the resource extraction practices of armed groups. For example, LACs were unable to project costs accurately to apply for funding from the INGOs interested in supporting agriculture. Even in cases where the funding was obtained, price fluctuations could easily take the project costs over-budget and undermine effective delivery.<sup>44</sup> The LACs seemed unable to influence the armed actors' activities to curtail costs. The relationships between the Islam Army, the LACs and the local population were strained both because of the Islam Army's collusion with the government forces to exploit the siege conditions as well as due to instances of direct coercion. For example, Islam Army commanders allegedly run private prisons where a local citizen and a LAC member are among a group of prisoners.<sup>45</sup> Additionally, as part of their military strategy, the Islam Army colluded with Syrian government forces to prevent civilians from leaving Eastern Ghouta.<sup>46</sup> Instances of direct violence against the local

population through, for example, the seizure of land and farms for extortion by armed groups added to the antagonism.

### ***Local population coping strategies***

Operating the tunnels allowed the insurgents to control economic life in the besieged area and consequently gave them greater influence over the security of its inhabitants, particularly compared to under-resourced LACs.<sup>47</sup> The conditions along the supply routes, through the checkpoint and the tunnels, dictated the intensity of shortages of various goods and their prices. For example, the destruction of the tunnel in February 2015 resulted in acute shortages of food and basic commodities. The impact was compounded by violence between the Islam Army and its competitors over the control of the main economic activities resulting in both reduced food and physical security for the population. The siege not only created the opportunity for armed groups to exert control over and extract rent from the provision of basic goods, but also severely restricted economic opportunities for people in Eastern Ghouta. Consequently, the coping strategies that civilians could develop were severely circumscribed. Movement restrictions and shortages of fuel and fertilizers, along with continuous shelling, prevented the resumption of viable agriculture. This forced many farmers to resort to asset divestment and the selling of valuable possessions, including livestock, at a fraction of their value. However, some people adapted and employed innovative forms of economic activity to meet the local demand for goods and services. This included, for example, new forms of commerce through renting privately-owned electricity generators and the use of organic waste as an alternative fuel source.

### ***Daraa – Tamed Predation?***

The governorate of Daraa, in the south-west of Syria, is under opposition control. Daraa Province is demarcated by an international border with Jordan and an internal border with the government territory. At the time of research, the main road between Daraa and Damascus was exposed to intense fighting between government and opposition forces, and dotted by multiple checkpoints, which hampered the provision of basic supplies and posed protection risks to civilians.<sup>48</sup> Although infrastructure and productive capacity suffered substantial damage from shelling, significant sections of the electricity grid were operational and providing over 50 per cent of health facilities and schools with an adequate electricity supply.<sup>49</sup> While agriculture and the agriculture-related processing industry, which underpinned the pre-war economy, were severely disrupted, there remained pockets of viable agriculture in the northernmost areas.<sup>50</sup> In mid-2013, the controls on

the border with Jordan increased, restricting the passage of people and goods.<sup>51</sup> Increased border controls stemmed the flow of refugees from Syria into Jordan leading Daraa to receive some 320,773 IDPs further compounding the food insecurity in the area.<sup>52</sup> By January 2014, around 20 per cent of Daraa's population was reported to be in acute need of food assistance.<sup>53</sup>

### ***The criminal war economy and its protagonists***

No single opposition armed group controlled the Daraa governorate during the period of research. The Free Syrian Army (FSA) and moderate Islamist brigades, which recruit mostly locally, had the strongest presence. JAN operated in some pockets in the territory. The armed groups used diverse resource extraction strategies in exploiting opportunities provided by a porous informal border manned by Syrian government forces and a tightly-controlled one run by the Jordanian government. Smuggling, including high-profit margin commodities such as arms, fuel, and antiquities, was rife across the border with the government forces.<sup>54</sup> Smuggling across the border with Jordan fell sharply after an increase in border control efforts, but was not curtailed. The illicit economy of smuggling operated in concert with the informal taxation of trade and people passing through numerous checkpoints along the border with the government forces. The government forces facilitating this trade imposed informal levies on the passing traffic of people and goods travelling in both directions.<sup>55</sup> The fees were high and beyond what most bona fide executives could afford. For example, freezer trucks were charged around SYP 150,000 (US\$880) to pass and a truck loaded with vegetables around SYP 15–20,000 (US\$88–120) depending on the weight of the cargo. Sometimes the truck and the cargo would be confiscated and the driver forced to pay the bribe to get it back.<sup>56</sup>

Another stream of illicit revenue extraction included the manipulation of humanitarian aid by networks of armed actors and the smugglers enjoying their protection. Jordan provided a steady supply of aid under the UN auspices. A more limited supply of humanitarian aid was also transported across the borders with the government force. Some of the humanitarian aid found its way to the local stall markets.<sup>57</sup> Some market stalls operated as enterprises run by shadow businessmen who enjoyed free movement across the border with the government forces under their protection as well as the protection by the FSA. Smuggled arms were also available for purchase at the market stalls.

Other forms of illicit activities in Daraa are oil smuggling, especially through the desert<sup>58</sup> and Swedia<sup>59</sup> and various forms of informal taxation of goods as well as different types of criminal trade due to its specific geostrategic, economic and demographic conditions. These included a highly lucrative trade in forged docu-

ments as an estimated 50 per cent of Daraa inhabitants did not possess the required documents to travel to Jordan.<sup>60</sup> Due to the abundance of archeological sites in Daraa, smuggling antiquities, including of items unearthed by the armed groups' own excavation squads, developed into an industry. This extremely profitable trade relied on collaboration with partners on the other side of Daraa's borders, and with the links to transnational organized criminal networks.<sup>61</sup>

### *The local actors' interactions*

Although small, JAN's presence was important in shaping the profit opportunities for the opposition armed groups. In May 2015, JAN, in collaboration with the FSA, temporarily seized the main crossing on the Jordanian border at Nasib leading the border to be sealed.<sup>62</sup> JAN troops spearheaded a looting of the crossing facilities and were joined by a large number of civilians.<sup>63</sup> The Jordanian government subsequently opened a new crossing, close to As-Sweida, managed through a tri-partite arrangement involving opposition armed groups, regime forces, and Jordanians.<sup>64</sup> Under the new arrangements, goods and trucks, after crossing the Jordanian side of the border, had to be escorted by armed opposition for a fee to the nearest regime checkpoint where the trucks paid customs duty to the government. Only a small group of local businesspersons could afford the multiple rounds of taxation; for many businessmen trade became prohibitive, negatively affecting the local economy.<sup>65</sup> Compared to the volumes of trade and the commercial importance of the Nasib crossing, the inferior infrastructure of the new crossing, coupled with lengthy and unpredictable procedures, affected the supply of goods entering Daraa. Acute food shortages in Daraa followed the closure of Nasib. The commercial sale of humanitarian aid through the networks of traders linked to the armed groups intensified, causing further strain on coping strategies.

A different type of arrangement, which ultimately benefited local population and the economy, was negotiated between the opposition and government forces around the supply of electricity. Opposition armed groups controlled a majority of the hydroelectric dams in Daraa Province.<sup>66</sup> After government forces failed to capture the hydroelectric dams, an agreement was reached to exchange water for electricity.<sup>67</sup> The electricity supply, however, remained vulnerable to the changing military objectives of the armed groups. For example, in February and December 2014, opposition forces attacked Khurbat Ghazala traction current converter plant that supplied Daraa with electricity leading to shortages.<sup>68</sup>

The opposition-armed groups' relations with the LACs differed. Whereas some communication between the FSA and the LACs was maintained, there was no interaction between the Islam Army and the LACs. The LAC struggled, even with the FSA, to implement projects. For example, the LACs failed to get support

from the FSA to implement a campaign to stop the digging of water wells which was causing water shortages, with a knock on economic effect by impairing vegetable growth and electricity generation.<sup>69</sup> Islamist groups, on the other hand, occasionally interfered with civil society projects supported by the LACs to improve the living conditions of the local population. This included them obstructing a project funded by the World Health Organization to set up a field hospital as they wanted control over the implementation of the project.<sup>70</sup> Financial and military calculations driving the armed groups' conduct also interfered with the LACs' attempts to set up police and courts in Daraa. Armed groups set up their own judicial body, whose priority was to deal with disputes between the armed groups, including over the Nasib crossing. By taking over justice dispensation in Daraa, the armed groups controlled the smooth running of the commercial routes, at the expense of the provision of law and order for the public.

Adding to the complicated relationship between the armed groups and the local population was the interference of the armed groups in the delivery of humanitarian aid. Because some civilian bodies distributing aid in Daraa are linked to different armed groups, and because of poor monitoring of aid, those groups were able to influence the distribution of humanitarian aid according to political loyalties and along kinship lines.<sup>71</sup> This enabled privileged access to goods to some sections of the local population and disadvantaged others.<sup>72</sup>

### ***Local population coping strategies***

Commercial collaboration across the enemy lines, the heavy taxation of traded commodities and the manipulation of humanitarian aid, in combination, determined the availability and prices of goods and food in Daraa. In August 2015, one kilogram of rice cost SYP 338 in Daraa, compared with SYP 158 in Damascus.<sup>73</sup> Although various goods passed through the checkpoints along the government-controlled border, bread, a strategic commodity in the Syrian war, was not allowed through, even for a hefty bribe.<sup>74</sup>

Besides the proliferation of criminal and illegal activities in Daraa, various forms of legal economy survived and new forms of economic activity developed. Notably, some agricultural production was sustained, particularly growing vegetables. Farmers could sell part of their crop to the government territories, but were charged fees by the government forces.<sup>75</sup> Relying on remittances, humanitarian aid and the ingenuity of some farmers in producing fodder for their livestock, more intensive farming was also possible in some areas. Olive oil extraction was one type of legal economy that benefited from new investment, including from international sources. A profitable trade in solar devices developed in response to the demand created by the damage to electricity networks. The international hu-

manitarian presence spurred cars sales and rental businesses. Collaboration between the regime forces and FSA facilitated remittances and cash transfers, and new money exchange offices opened. Some were co-owned by the FSA as the boundaries between legal and illegal activities of war economy and their actors increasingly blurred.<sup>76</sup>

Opportunities for the local population to mitigate the harmful impact of war on their livelihoods involved a mixture of illegal and legal activities. Some people joined in smuggling; others seized on opportunities and adaptations to engage in formal economic activities; and some sections of the local population had to sell anything from livestock to houses, and personal possessions to survive.

### ***Atareb – Extreme Criminality with Some ‘Positive Externalities?’***

Atareb is in the countryside of Aleppo, situated adjacent to the governorate of Idleb. Besides the international border with Turkey, Idleb has three informal internal borders: with the Syrian regime, with the area controlled by the Kurdish Democratic Union Party (PYD), and with the territory, which in February–June 2015 was controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and Levant (ISIL). Intense fighting between these parties caused significant physical destruction across the governorate, with some areas particularly hard-hit. The electricity grid, whose core was in Aleppo, suffered extensive damage.<sup>77</sup> Atareb was seized by opposition forces early in the conflict. Due to its proximity with the Turkish border and the relatively low rate of military attacks for the governorate, the area attracted an IDP population equivalent to a third of the domicile population.<sup>78</sup> The relative safety from military attacks meant that the largely agricultural area received a jolt from businesses relocating from other parts of Syria. These dynamics changed the economic profile of the area and created multiple economic opportunities in the war economy, particularly its legal part.

### ***The criminal war economy and its protagonists***

The two opposition-armed groups, composed largely of local fighters, had a strong presence in Atareb in February–June 2015. While a multitude of armed groups, including JAN and other Al Qaida affiliates, operated in Atareb's surroundings, Ma'rouf Hazem and Shuhada Atareb of the Free Syrian Army (FSA) were the dominant forces. Armed groups, supported by Turkey, enjoyed access to cross-border trade and controlled the main border crossings.<sup>79</sup> The ability of armed groups to engage in illicit trade was enabled by this arrangement with trade in crude oil originating from the ISIL and, to a lesser degree, Kurdish-controlled territories throughout Idleb and the Aleppo countryside, the main component of

the criminal war economy.<sup>80</sup> While the trade in oil incurred informal taxation at many checkpoints dotted throughout the province, it was taxed at two locations in Atareb. One was a checkpoint on the road to Turkey, and the other was a checkpoint on the road to Aleppo, operated by Ma'rouf Hazem and Shuhada Atareb members accordingly. Other goods, particularly those destined for the government-controlled areas, incurred heavy taxes and various armed groups active in the area frequently stole truckloads of goods. The presence of many armed groups in this region and a lax border regime with Turkey contributed to the proliferation of extreme forms of criminal activity.<sup>81</sup> Kidnapping, trafficking in people, arms and drugs, trade in forged documents, and smuggling of antiquities thrived, and created a 'regional conflict complex' as suggested by the criminalization perspective on war economy.<sup>82</sup> The presence of armed groups and organized criminal networks presented a risk to the physical safety of ordinary citizens, who otherwise faced few restrictions to free movement.<sup>83</sup> In terms of economic opportunities for the local population, mobility is important, and is undermined by the risks of kidnapping and robbery. Armed groups in Atareb were less involved in skimming humanitarian aid as it was distributed mostly by the LAC. In Idleb, however, the FSA occasionally engaged in an indirect form of extortion of the local population by cutting the supply lines and taking food for their own troops.<sup>84</sup>

### *The local actors' interactions*

A thriving criminal war economy in Idleb and the Aleppo countryside was underpinned by mutually beneficial arrangements among the non-state armed groups. This included arrangements made with ISIL, which at the time had virtual monopoly on oil smuggling in Syria. Although trucks entering ISIL territories were taxed by the opposition forces, ISIL could leverage its access to crude oil to obtain other concessions, including avoiding armed confrontation. However, such agreements were subject to changing military calculations. For example, when factions of the Free Syrian Army clashed with ISIL, as in the northern countryside of Aleppo in Spring 2015, the oil delivery route was disrupted leading to a hike in oil prices.<sup>85</sup>

There were also examples of collaboration and conflict between the armed groups and government forces. For example, while there was intense fighting for the control of the road infrastructure in Idleb countryside, opposition groups in Atareb collaborated with government forces in Aleppo to help ease shortages caused by damage to the electricity infrastructure. This agreement followed the military struggle, won by the FSA, for the control of the electricity distribution plants.<sup>86</sup> The agreement, which enabled a more stable supply of electricity to Atareb was jeopardized occasionally because of each party's military priorities.<sup>87</sup>

The relations between the opposition-armed groups in Atareb and the LAC were established gradually and developed into a regularized form of cooperation. The foundation of their relations was laid in a joint effort to repel ISIL's attempts to capture Atareb in early 2014. In the aftermath, the FSA local brigades and the Atareb LAC agreed to move the two checkpoints controlling the access to Atareb outside of the town perimeter. The checkpoints managed by the Ma'rouf Hazem and Shuhada Atareb brigades accrued substantial profits. The local court regulated the levies charged on goods; revenues were recorded and subsequently shared between the FSA and the LAC.<sup>88</sup> This collaboration created a system of compliance between the armed groups and the civilian authority present in Atareb. The proceeds from those informally-regulated and, in some ways, illegal transactions (given the ambiguous legal origins of some of the goods passing through the checkpoints), provided revenue for the two armed brigades and also for the LAC.<sup>89</sup>

Although the arrangements between the armed groups and the local civilian structures benefited the local population, the relationship between the armed groups and the local population remained uneasy. There was a perception that the FSA, in the words of one activist, "[...] only provided support to their soldiers, they were not interested in anyone else."<sup>90</sup> The Ma'rouf Hazem brigade apparently kept close watch on the movement of goods and the origins of aid supplies making people suspicious of their collaboration with the LACs.<sup>91</sup>

### ***Local population coping strategies***

The booming criminal economy in Atareb created a fluid and rapidly changing environment in which the local population adapted its coping strategies. The arrangements between the opposition armed forces and ISIL provided access to fuel, which compared to many other opposition-controlled areas in Syria, helped ease the strain on everyday life. However, households and businesses depending on such arrangements for the regular supply of fuel were vulnerable to the fluctuating dynamics of the military and business interests of those groups. Electricity supply, which depended on running diesel-fueled generators, was interrupted whenever military objectives disrupted the business arrangement over oil. Access to crude oil made oil refining a novel source of livelihoods for many ordinary people; oil refining turned into a cottage industry and whatever was not locally consumed, was sold across the border with Turkey.<sup>92</sup>

Versatile new businesses also developed in Atareb's surrounding area, including in construction, retail trade, and manufacturing. The latter, for example, included the equipment needed for the oil smuggling business.<sup>93</sup> Spurred by armed groups' criminal economic activities, repairing trucks used for oil transport also provided new forms of business. Manufacturing generators, mainly run by people

who relocated their business to Atareb, also thrived due to the insufficient supply of electricity.

This stronger legal economy enabled the LAC in Atareb to raise its own revenue, however modest, by charging fees for electricity, water, and sanitation services akin to a properly functioning public authority.<sup>94</sup> The LAC organized the purchase of flour and vegetables to control local food prices, which helped ease the strain of food shortages on the local population. The LAC also set up rudimentary security institutions such as a civil defense council and a police force, increasing the sense of order and security for the local population.<sup>95</sup> The local economy was also propped up by the presence of international organizations able to operate in the broader area of Atareb due to the proximity of the open border with Turkey. Not all sections of the local population were able to benefit from either the criminal economy or the legal economy; many people still relied on subsistence farming and the sale of household possessions to survive.

## Conclusions

In this paper, we have explored how the engagement of non-state armed groups in the criminal war economy affects the coping strategies that the local population develops to protect itself from their harmful impact, highlighting the interactions among various actors and activities in the broader war economy. We have done so based on the proposition that a criminality perspective in the mainstream scholarship on war economy fails to account for the adaptation in the broader economy and a variety of local processes and interactions that may affect the response of local populations.

The criminal economy that has developed against the pre-war economic profile in three localities (Eastern Ghouta, Daraa and Atareb) varies in its profile and scale, ranging from that comprised mainly of the manipulation of the supply of basic goods to full-blown criminality. The interactions among its protagonists were influenced by their military/profit calculations and contingent on the resources available in the broader economy, which itself had been transformed by conflict, and its variable geography. The involvement of armed groups in criminal and illegal economic activity entailed different forms and extents of coercion, varying from predation in the Eastern Ghouta siege, to less exposure to such practices in Daraa and Atareb. Local population coping strategies varied as a result. In contrast to Eastern Ghouta, where siege conditions pushed people to rely disproportionately on asset divestment with only limited alternatives for income generation, in Daraa and Atareb, more diverse opportunities existed in both the legal and illegal economies.

Syria presents an exceptionally fluid and diverse conflict context in which to study the link between war economy and everyday security. With coalitions in a perpetual state of flux, it is not always possible to identify the actors clearly. The insurgency is relatively recent and heavily reliant on external patrons, which affects incentives to engage in local governance. The pre-existing social ties of armed groups, that is, their embeddedness in social relations, are good predictors for the type of arrangements that advance common interests, and hence civilian security. This kind of predisposition for engaging with the civilian structures was demonstrated in the Atareb case. Our analysis shows that whether and how such arrangements that are beneficial to civilian security materialize, is contingent on broader economic and political conditions that affect war economy micro-dynamics.

We do not underestimate the scale and severity of individual insecurity in each of the three cases we have studied, even in those seemingly positive instances where the war economy offered more diverse coping strategies (notably in Atareb). Nor do we overemphasize the significance and potential for sustaining some of the benefits from engagement in different areas of the war economy over the long-term. Equally, we do not overlook long-term economic, political and social repercussions of criminal war economy and the challenge they present to post-war reconstruction. Rather, our analysis points to a need for a more fine-grained examination of these dynamics, one that captures and explicates the different interactions that produce an entangled illegal, and legal economy, their actors, and the wider public and private interests in conflict zones, which can affect civilian security in manifold ways. Every armed conflict and its locality has its salient war economy dynamics and actors, which are a product of endogenous and exogenous factors that shape the behavior of the war economy participants. This diversity within and across countries is, by and large, obscured when looking at the war economy through a criminality lens, as has been the case in extant accounts of Syria's war economy. Our analysis above attempts to overcome some of the conceptual and policy implications of maintaining a criminality-focused perspective and enables the tailoring of more context-specific responses.

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# The Conundrum of DDR Coordination

## The Case of South Sudan

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The coordination of activities within peace support operations is a process that takes place between a variety of entities at multiple levels and often occurs in the context of complex and fluctuating environments. Such coordination represents efforts to achieve complementary outcomes, as well as reduces the potential for duplication, waste, institutional rivalries and conflicts. Over the past three decades, the intricacy of such coordination within peace support operations has intensified with the inclusion of additional actors, such as regional organizations, private sector companies, and various types of civil society organizations.<sup>1</sup>

Consequently, effective coordination has often been difficult to achieve in contemporary post-conflict environments, and it has become an issue of concern for both scholars and practitioners alike.<sup>2</sup> The importance of coordination in terms of multi-agency operations is not confined to peacebuilding, but has also been identified by scholars that have studied disaster management, for example. In this sector, scholars have suggested that coordination problems have arisen due to the disordered nature of the operational environment; the diversity of organizations; a lack of resources; and the aversion of some organizations to collaborate with others.<sup>3</sup>

The disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants are frequently key components of peace support operations. In basic terms, DDR is the process through which armaments (particularly firearms) are recovered from combatants, who are in the process of exiting their respective military organizations and becoming civilians. Support by international organizations, government and civil society organizations is usually provided for this transition.

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The coordination of the DDR components and the synchronization of DDR with other aspects of the peace support operation has been particularly complex and challenging. The reason being is that the three constitutive elements of DDR have typically been directed by entities with juxtaposing organizational cultures, implementation approaches and often differing strategic institutional objectives. That is, the armed forces or peacekeepers are generally allocated the responsibility of arranging the disarmament and demobilization, while reintegration has usually been mandated to civilian-led development agencies and non-governmental organizations. In this regard, military organizations are, due to their hierarchical and martial nature, often reluctant to collaborate actively with non-military organizations.<sup>4</sup> Furthermore, the nature of the reintegration programming has become considerably diversified over time drawing in a wider range of local and international non-governmental entities, which has exacerbated the complexity of DDR coordination.

The coordination aspects of DDR have not been a major focus of scholarly literature. Where discussed, the analyses have tended to be descriptive and lacking in theory relating to inter-organizational cooperation. Such theory has been derived from numerous studies of the endeavors of a wide variety of organizations to solve complex societal problems jointly in different sectors including job creation, education reform, housing delivery, substance abuse, and environmental degradation.<sup>5</sup> It has particular relevance for the study of DDR coordination because DDR is also a multi-faceted issue that affects both government and civil society.

Given this state of affairs, this article will draw on theories of inter-organizational collaboration and alliances to analyze the nature of DDR coordination, and will make detailed reference to the contemporary DDR program in South Sudan as an illustrative case study. South Sudan is a highly relevant example of a combination of international and local attempts to facilitate DDR coordination in a fragile and complex political and operational environment. It analyses the nature and extent of coordination between the various DDR stakeholders during the design and implementation of the DDR undertaking in South Sudan and offers explanations as to why certain challenges were encountered. The data used in this article draws entirely from peer-reviewed and policy-oriented publications that have focused on DDR.

## **The Complexity of Peacebuilding and DDR Coordination**

Major peacebuilding interventions have grown in complexity since the 1990s. Such interventions are now generally required to fulfill an expanded set of

objectives, perform a wider range of tasks, and engage with a more diverse set of stakeholders. With such a variety of entities working towards a common general objective, many of which have different organizational cultures, constituencies and competencies and incongruities, conflicts are almost inevitable. Differences at the individual level further exacerbate this problem since peacebuilding missions bring together people from highly varied cultural and ethnic backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> These dynamics could in turn disrupt, delay or even derail the entire peacebuilding process.

Hence, a key imperative within multi-agency peacebuilding is that of coordination as a means to promote communication, cooperation, mission coherence and conflict management. This is based on the normative assumption that coordination will eliminate duplication, lessen competition over resources, and minimize transaction costs, which will ultimately enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the entire peacebuilding mission.<sup>7</sup>

Published research on DDR and security sector reform (SSR) programs has indicated that the successful outcomes of DDR and SSR programs have often been dependent on the efficacy of coordination and communication between the key DDR/SSR stakeholders. In Sierra Leone, for example, Williamson noted that interventions that targeted former child soldiers were particularly effective due to efficient coordination and collaboration between the various civil society organizations that worked in the sector, which was combined with the astute collaborative leadership provided by UNICEF.<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Onana and Taylor stressed that DDR and other SSR initiatives in the Democratic Republic of the Congo had been delayed and their effectiveness diluted due to coordination difficulties.<sup>9</sup>

Coordination was a fundamental component of the Multi-Country Demobilization and Reintegration Program (MDRP), which was in place from 2002 to 2009 in Central Africa.<sup>10</sup> The MDRP, which was established by the World Bank and the United Nations (UN), has been one of the most complex and ambitious demobilization and reintegration programs to date. This program, which had a budget of approximately US\$500 million, sought to concurrently facilitate the financing and program implementation for the demobilization and reintegration of some 350,000 ex-combatants in Angola, Burundi, the Central African Republic, the DRC, the Republic of Congo, Rwanda and Uganda.<sup>11</sup> According to the MDRP, a lack of coordination in this context would most likely have “led to duplication, inefficiencies, and gaps in programming, and could have affected the goals of bringing stability to the region.”<sup>12</sup> Specific coordination mechanisms, such as the Technical Coordination Group (TCG), were created to foster and maintain coordination and build trust. However, the TCG coordination activities

were not optimized due to insufficient strategic thinking and inadequate implementation of TCG decisions at the national level.<sup>13</sup>

In 2006 the UN published its Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS) as a means to promote greater coordination and harmonization of its DDR programming. This was a response to the fact that in the past DDR programs had often been pursued in a fragmented manner due to inadequate coordination and planning and had been hampered by institutional rivalries.<sup>14</sup> In effect the IDDRS were not strict standards but were rather generic (detailed) guidelines for the design and implementation of DDR interventions under the auspices of the UN. The IDDRS subsequently became the official template for UN directed DDR interventions in South Sudan. The IDDRS, however, have been critiqued by some scholars as being inadequate, especially in the context of complex operational environments.<sup>15</sup>

### **Theorizing Peacebuilding and DDR Coordination: Strategic Alliances**

There has been very little scholarly consideration in the peacebuilding, SSR, and DDR literature as to why effective coordination has been accomplished in some contexts but not in others. Studies that provide some commentary on coordination (or the lack thereof) have generally suggested that SSR and DDR have been ineffective due to a lack of cooperative behavior between stakeholders; political tensions; insufficient communication and accountability between parties; and a lack of sufficient resources and incentive to cooperate. In Afghanistan, for example, factionalism within the government and rivalries between donors has undermined the realization of comprehensive SSR.<sup>16</sup> In the case of East Timor, Hood attributed inadequate cooperative leadership as a major contributing factor to the unimpressive outcomes of the SSR interventions in this country.<sup>17</sup> However, these assessments about SSR/DDR coordination are largely speculative and not based on theory or generated as the result of rigorous research and analysis. Therefore, in order to gain some theoretical insights in the areas of DDR it is necessary to explore pertinent theory from other academic disciplines, especially organizational theory. In short, organizational theory has been developed as a means to understand how organizations, which are viewed as social entities, function and relate to other organizations.

Conceptually, multifaceted DDR processes can be likened to inter-organizational alliances, which are mutually beneficial partnerships that are established between various entities. Within organizational theory, substantial research on strategic business alliances and why such alliances succeed and fail in particular, has some relevance for examining coordination in the context of multifaceted DDR opera-

tions. In this regard, published research findings suggest that strategic business alliances frequently fail due to inter-organizational rivalries and the complexity associated with managing such alliances.

In particular, strategic alliances often collapse as a result of opportunistic behavior in which participants in the alliance prioritize their own interests over those of the alliance, as well as the irreconcilability of organizational culture and values between members of the alliance.<sup>18</sup> Hence, prominent scholars in this area have emphasized the following key ingredients for sustainable and fruitful alliances: trust; the effective management of tensions between all parties; knowledge management and sharing; the availability of relevant resources; and accountability.<sup>19</sup> Studies have also shown that establishment of coordination routines within the alliance and establishment of less hierarchical and formal structures and processes with the various partners are vital factors for the efficacy of alliances.<sup>20</sup>

Building and maintaining trust between alliance partners, as well as the management of inter-organizational tensions, are two key elements of strategic alliance theory that will be explored within the context of DDR in South Sudan. In this regard trust is comprised of two crucial elements, namely goodwill towards alliance partners, and confidence in the competency of the other parties in the strategic arrangement.<sup>21</sup> Tensions between parties, which are inherent to strategic alliances, will fundamentally destabilize the alliance if not appropriately managed.<sup>22</sup> This is especially the case concerning the manner in which decisions are made and relationships are managed. Tensions in this regard are typically more acute in multi-cultural environments.<sup>23</sup>

The complexity of such alliances has also been affected by external factors, particularly the nature of the economic and political environments within which the alliances have been created.<sup>24</sup> Such contexts can either hamper or enable the effectiveness and sustainability of strategic alliances. For example, in Canada significant progress on inter-organizational collaboration to improve environmental protection was greatly facilitated by a common agreement across government and society on the need to prioritize the protection of the environment, combined with a political culture that emphasized consultation and consensus-building.<sup>25</sup>

Historically external factors to DDR processes have been key determinants for the effectiveness of DDR interventions, particularly firm commitments of all parties to the conflict to adhere to some form of peacebuilding undertaking, and an economic environment that can adequately accommodate the reintegration of ex-combatants. For instance, two major DDR efforts in Angola in the 1990s essentially collapsed due to lack of commitment to the peace processes by one of the conflicting parties (UNITA), and inadequate responses by the United Nations to violations of the peace agreements by all parties.<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, fragile economies

and a lack of income generating opportunities for ex-combatants, particularly in Africa, have led to the underperformance of DDR programs.<sup>27</sup>

Hence, based on theories of strategic alliances, and observations by DDR scholars, this article seeks to evaluate the hypothesis that the coordination of multi-stakeholder DDR processes is undermined in contexts where there are heightened tensions and deficiency of trust between parties. The recent DDR program in South Sudan will serve as an illustrative case study.

### DDR in South Sudan: Overview

The DDR program in Sudan and South Sudan was initiated through the Comprehensive Peace Agreement (CPA) in 2005. An Interim DDR Program (IDDRP) was established with DDR commissions being established in the Republic of Sudan and South Sudan, which was to fulfil the objectives outlined in the 2007 National DDR Strategic Plan.<sup>28</sup> The primary purpose of this DDR undertaking was “to consolidate the peace process and to create an enabling environment to undertake the activities related to human security, reconstruction and development.”<sup>29</sup> However, while the IDDRP developed an overall strategy for the DDR program, it did not stipulate the specific implementation details or undertake any significant DDR operations, other than a small project for elderly and disabled combatants, and children associated with armed forces and minority groups.<sup>30</sup>

The full-scale DDR program for the entire territory of Sudan, the Multi-Year DDR Program (MYDDRP), was launched in June 2009, and was subsequently split along national lines following South Sudan’s independence in 2011. Phase I of the MYDDRP in South Sudan was concluded in December 2012. Phase II did not gain significant momentum and was severely weakened with the eruption of civil war in December 2013.

A key principle of the CPA in relation to the DDR program was that of national ownership, namely that “the capabilities of the national institutions shall be built to effectively lead the overall DDR process”; and that “international partners shall only play a supportive role to these [national] institutions.”<sup>31</sup> This is to provide technical, financial and material support and help with capacity building and program implementation.<sup>32</sup>

The UN Security Council Resolution 1590 in 2005 mandated the UN Mission in Sudan (UNMIS) to provide support and assistance to the newly formed Government of National Unity (GoU) and Government of South Sudan (GoSS) in the areas of planning, developing and implementing the entire DDR program.<sup>33</sup> It was agreed between the leadership of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) and UNMIS that disarmament and demobilization support was

to be led by UNMIS, and that UNDP would take the lead on reintegration support. In 2011 the UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS) was established and assumed UNMIS' responsibilities in South Sudan. In addition it was agreed by the UN and the government in South Sudan that DDR technical and financial support would also be provided by a number of international donors and implementation partners (IPs), such as the International Organization of Migration (IOM), the Food and Agriculture Organization, Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit, and the Bangladesh Rehabilitation Assistance Committee.<sup>34</sup>

The South Sudan DDR Commission (SSDDRC), which was comprised of government officials with imbedded technical supported provided by the Bonn International Center for Conversion, was mandated to provide the overall leadership for the South Sudan DDR program.<sup>35</sup> The intention was that international organizations, including UN agencies, would then partner with national actors, such as the Sudan Peoples' Liberation Army (SPLA), to design and implement the DDR program under the direction of the SSDDRC. In this regard, the SSDDRC was to organize regular coordination meetings and workshops for government stakeholders, non-governmental organizations and donors. In these meetings, the various stakeholders were supposed to develop strategies, determine objectives, share information, determine roles and responsibilities, and mobilize resources. The Reintegration Technical Coordination Committee (RTCC), comprised of key organizations was established.<sup>36</sup>

The IDDRS were envisaged to provide the UN entities, and other DDR stakeholders, with a consolidated implementation framework that would facilitate a more integrated and coordinated approach to planning, management and implementation. In accordance with the IDDRS, an Integrated UN DDR Unit (IUNDDRU) was established in South Sudan, which sought to synchronize the activities of the numerous UN entities with other actors and the relevant national institutions. The UNMIS head of DDR in South Sudan became the IUNDDRU chief, with the head of UNDP South Sudan becoming the deputy head of the Unit.

However, as will be shown below, the operationalization of such an integrated DDR approach was not a simple paint-by-numbers process. Tensions, conflict, inadequate communication, and incongruences in terms of organizational culture and priorities characterized the relationships between the key organizations and entities responsible for DDR. This was to undermine the effectiveness of the DDR coordination infrastructure, which was further encumbered by external factors, such as an unstable security environment.

## DDR Coordination Infrastructure and Organizational Dynamics

As indicated above, structures and processes were established with the objective to direct and manage collaborative DDR planning and activities between the various organizations in South Sudan in a coherent and systematic manner. This was in line with the key theoretical literature on strategic alliances, which asserts that control is an essential component of alliance viability. In essence, control involves the creation of systems and mechanisms of regulation that facilitate the predictability and consistency of decision-making and actions within the alliance that are geared towards specific objectives.<sup>37</sup> The theoretical literature further suggests that the establishment and maintenance of context-appropriate control mechanisms results in trust-building between participant organizations in the alliance. Nonetheless, overly formal, hierarchical and opaque control mechanisms that are pursued in the absence of social controls that promote regular interaction, mutual respect, cultural sensitivity, and the development of shared values at all levels, may undermine trust between organizations.<sup>38</sup>

Prior to South Sudan's independence in 2011, decision-making and the management of the DDR process was highly centralized and based in Khartoum (Republic of Sudan). The overall management structure provided very little autonomy to the key local stakeholders in South Sudan and there was a general "lack of transparency, inadequate consultation and the absence of regular [coordination] meetings."<sup>39</sup> The effect of this was that SSDDRC was generally relegated to a bystander role in terms of leadership, oversight and coordination of this phase of the DDR process. Moreover, prior to 2011, there was acute political tension and a lack of trust between government officials responsible for DDR in Khartoum and those in Juba, and inadequate local DDR expertise within the DDR commission in South Sudan.<sup>40</sup>

Relations between the SSDDRC and the IUNDDRU were described as being "strained," with low levels of goodwill and trust between parties. This was exacerbated by a high turnover rate of IUNDDRU staff, with many appearing to have lacked the necessary DDR experience and knowledge.<sup>41</sup> Consequently, given these dynamics, bilateral interaction was favored between the SSDDRC and individual international stakeholders. This jeopardized the ability of the entire DDR program to have a coherent and synchronized strategy in which the timing and implementation of the various DDR activities would be effectively coordinated between all the relevant participant organizations.<sup>42</sup>

The UN's multifaceted integrated mission approach was largely untested prior to its implementation in the Sudanese territories. This approach was envisaged to coordinate all the key activities of the UN intervention and to facilitate

harmonization of activities with other relevant international entities. However, in reality, this approach resulted in “a proliferation of mission functions, [...] managerial challenges, [...] coordination fatigue,” and thwarted the UN mission from focusing on “priority tasks.”<sup>43</sup> Additionally, high-level coordination and oversight was weak. For example, prior to South Sudan’s referendum in 2011, only one meeting of the DDR Oversight Committee that focused on South Sudan was held in Khartoum.<sup>44</sup> As indicated in the literature on organizational theory, such tenuous circumstances make trust and confidence building within the alliance difficult to achieve.

This state of affairs further undermined the ability of the UN bodies that were responsible for DDR to adhere adequately to the IDDRS, which in turn compromised the ability of the IUNDDRU to coordinate DDR activities effectively.<sup>45</sup> This was particularly noticeable in relation to demobilization in which UNMIS encountered significant delays in establishing its demobilization resources and programs, and had to contend with unwieldy managerial and administrative systems and structures.<sup>46</sup>

There were palpable tensions and a trust deficit between UNDP and UNMIS during the IDDRP and into the early stages of the MYDDRP in 2009. This was primarily in relation to how DDR should be implemented. For example, an evaluation report undertaken for UNDP stated that the working relationship between UNDP and UNMIS had been negatively affected by “a lack of adherence” to the IUNDDR procedures.<sup>47</sup> An independent assessment conducted in November 2009 found that communication between the various agencies involved in the DDR process could have been more effective.<sup>48</sup> As a result, during much of the DDR process these two UN bodies maintained separate systems for recruitment, procurement, financial management, human resource management and communications and maintained separate offices in different locations in Juba.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, the development of constructive working relations was undermined by structural factors. That is, UN regulations at the time prohibited UN staff from one UN agency being directly managed by staff from another UN entity.<sup>50</sup>

A joint review by UNDP and UNMIS took cognizance of the management challenges and coordination problems that had plagued the implementation of the DDR program in the early stages. The review reportedly resulted in changes to the coordination and management mechanisms in which the UN engaged with the SSDDRC. This eventually led to: a more decentralized decision-making and implementation structure; more influence for the SSDDRC in the process; and attempted to address the inter-agency challenges concerning the IUNDDRU. It was reported that there was a “notable success” in terms of fostering unity of purpose and trust.<sup>51</sup> However, internal tensions within the IUNDDRU contin-

ued to persist, which ultimately led to the withdrawal of UNDP from the process and ultimately the IUNDDRU's dissolution in 2010. In the following sections, which will specifically assess each of the three DDR components, relations between the various entities responsible for DDR will be considered in more detail.

### ***Disarmament***

The National DDR Strategic Plan stipulated that the process of disarmament was the responsibility of the country's two main armed formations—the Sudan Armed Forces (SAF) and the SPLA—which would be supported by the two respective national DDR commissions.<sup>52</sup> UNMIS was mandated to assist the SAF, the SPLA and other relevant stakeholders with the establishment of voluntary disarmament and weapons destruction processes. However, no official systems and mechanisms were created to facilitate coordination and communication, as well as manage institutional tensions between the various organizations directly involved in DDR.<sup>53</sup> This state of affairs, as specified by strategic alliance theory, increases the risk of self-serving and myopic behavior by one or more parties to the alliance. Hence, taking such theory into account, it was not unexpected that the SPLA, informed by distinctive martial and authoritarian values, opted for a process of unilateral forced disarmament and pacification in 2005 and 2006. This included the highly coercive seizure of weapons from militias and the civilian population.<sup>54</sup> This subsequently resulted in violent clashes and skirmishes in Jonglei state between the SPLA and those militias targeted for disarmament. It was estimated that at least 1,600 individuals died as a result of this disarmament intervention, with 3,000 firearms being confiscated.<sup>55</sup>

The SPLA's approach to disarmament presented the UN mission in Sudan with a fundamental dilemma in terms of its continued involvement in the DDR process. That is, the forceful nature of the Jonglei intervention was at odds with the UN's mandate to support voluntary civilian disarmament and protect human rights. At the time the UN was seeking to develop good working relations with the SPLA and did not want to see the fragile peace agreement derailed, and *hence* the UN did not publicly criticize the SPLA.<sup>56</sup> The UN mission subsequently established partnerships with community-based organizations and initiated limited non-aggressive small-scale disarmament programs without the involvement of the SPLA, which resulted in the surrender of close to 1,400 firearms.<sup>57</sup>

In 2008 a disarmament decree was issued by the President of southern Sudan which authorized the SPLA to disarm civilians throughout the territory over a six month period. There was no involvement of UNMIS in this process. A voluntary disarmament approach was initially envisaged that entailed allocating traditional leaders the responsibility for weapons collection, but such an approach

yielded poor results. Consequently, the SPLA resorted to more belligerent collection methods with human rights violations and destruction of property being reported. In addition, the operation did not result in large quantities of firearms being confiscated.<sup>58</sup> Ad hoc forceful disarmament measures have been pursued by the SPLA over the past 10 years, but nonetheless, civilian firearm possession in South Sudan remains widespread and has been mainly driven by high levels of insecurity and the needs of rural households and communities to protect livestock from armed raiders.<sup>59</sup>

As indicated above, theory on strategic alliances indicates that a complementarity of institutional cultures is required for alliance prosperity, and therefore it is conceivable that the disarmament interventions could have been more effective if common ground had been found between the various DDR actors concerning the disarmament method. The decision by the SPLA to use force during disarmament operations effectively side-lined UNMIS and other international organizations from providing substantial resources and technical support. This approach also undermined the coordination of activities and multi-dimensional long-term planning that could have resulted in the implementation of measures to address the unstable security environment that was driving the civilian demand for firearms.

### ***Demobilisation***

The SSDDRC planned to demobilize 90,000 combatants during the CPA-linked DDR process.<sup>60</sup> In phase I of the program, some 34,000 of these individuals could come from special needs groups comprised of children, women who worked in a non-military role, disabled people and the elderly associated with armed forces and groups. The remainder of the ex-combatants to be demobilized were supposed to originate from the SPLA, and the demobilization of this population group was envisaged to take place in phase II.<sup>61</sup>

A Joint Monitoring Team, composed of SPLA members, the SSDDRC and the IUNDDR, as well as UN military observers, was appointed to oversee and verify the demobilization process. The participants were to be transported to the demobilization sites by the SPLA and/or UNMIS before being discharged as civilians.<sup>62</sup> The UN mission, operating with the support from the SSDDRC and other implementing partners, funded and organized the establishment and maintenance of the demobilization sites.

The SPLA, however, was exceedingly reluctant to demobilize large segments of its armed forces due to the view that the CPA was more of a ceasefire than a sustainable peace agreement, combined with anxieties of possible attacks and invasion by the Sudanese military and militias. In addition, the DDR process was not aligned to a process of defense transformation within the SPLA that had at-

tracted considerable donor funds.<sup>63</sup> Added to this, the SPLA members received a monthly salary (in an economy with very limited employment opportunities). Hence there were serious concerns both within the SPLA leadership and the government in South Sudan that the significant downsizing of the SPLA would undermine SPLA morale and negatively affect its dominant political influence within South Sudan, as well as its privileged access to resources.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, the downsizing of the personnel size of the SPLA may have led to the destabilization of what was already a relatively ethnically-fractioned military organization.<sup>65</sup>

Given this state of affairs, the personnel size of the SPLA actually increased by more than 30% between 2009 and 2013, from approximately 250,000 to around 330,000 personnel.<sup>66</sup> Additionally, the SPLA had been required to include various militia groups following the signing of the CPA, and therefore there were concerns that if demobilized, these groups may engage in subverting acts.<sup>67</sup> Such circumstances likely contributed to the SPLA remaining aloof from the DDR coordination efforts, which led to friction between the SPLA, the UN agencies and the DDR Commission. This in turn exacerbated tensions and undermined goodwill between the various UN entities and the SSDDRC. These developments correspond with the key aspects of strategic alliance theory, namely, that alliances are likely to be fragile where there is a lack of a consensus regarding the objectives of the alliance and a complementarity of institutional cultures between partner organizations.

The Joint Monitoring Teams were responsible for verifying whether discharge certificates submitted by ex-combatants matched the names on the master demobilization lists provided by the SPLA and SSDDRC. The master lists were supposed to have been prepared and submitted to UNMIS a month prior to actual launch of the demobilization process.<sup>68</sup> However, these master lists were not provided timeously, mostly due to the dynamics within the SPLA (mentioned above), which meant that the necessary verifications could not be adequately conducted. This resulted in numerous ineligible candidates acquiring demobilization benefits.<sup>69</sup> The demobilization process was terminated in April 2011, with 12,525 combatants having been demobilized by the end of the process, a figure well below the initial 34,000-target. Those that had been demobilized then became the target group for reintegration support.

According to theory on inter-organizational collaboration, trust between organizations is an essential ingredient for the sustainability of alliances and the effectiveness of outcomes. Trust is eroded in circumstances where there is insufficient veracity and commitment to the alliance by the participant organizations. That is, organizations participating in the alliance are not transparent in terms of their actual intended involvement within the alliance; and do not consistently

adhere to agreed timeframes and quality controls.<sup>70</sup> Hence, a larger number of eligible individuals could have been demobilized if all the collaborating entities had adhered to the agreed deadlines and deliverables with respect to the DDR process.

### ***Reintegration***

The reintegration process was largely driven by the UNDP in collaboration with UN mission in South Sudan and the SSDDRC, with funds being provided the governments of the UK, Canada, Italy, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway and Japan. The UNDP administered the donor funds, while the UN mission and the various implementing partners undertook the bulk of the reintegration workload.<sup>71</sup> The reintegration component of South Sudan's CPA-linked DDR program received US\$ 50,678,958 from donors, with donors largely managing their financial support through bilateral relations with the SPLA, the SSDDRC or the UN mission.<sup>72</sup>

Participants in the reintegration component were given the choice of selecting one of the following reintegration support options, namely: agriculture and livestock; small business development; vocational training; and adult education.<sup>73</sup> Initially 34,000 individuals were targeted for reintegration support, but by the end of 2012, when the CPA-mandated DDR program was terminated, less than half that number, that is 12,525 persons, had benefited from reintegration programs.<sup>74</sup> Plans to undertake phase II of the DDR process did not gain significant momentum as a result of logistical issues, inadequate funding and "political wrangling over ownership," further compounded by the outbreak of civil war in December 2013.<sup>75</sup>

There is relative consensus in the theoretical literature on strategic alliances, that power imbalances and unequal access to resources by participating organizations, if not adequately managed, have the potential to undermine trust within alliances.<sup>76</sup> Hence, it was foreseeable that given the inequitable relations between collaborating organizations in the reintegration phase, conflicts would emerge. There were frequent reports of rivalries and tensions between UN entities; between the UN and the SSDDRC; and between donors and the SSDDRC.<sup>77</sup> Such tensions existed between stakeholders located in Juba, as well as between those based at the UN headquarters in New York. This often resulted in a breakdown in communication and trust and ineffective coordination of the reintegration process. In 2010, William Deng Deng, the Chairman of the SSDDRC, commenting on the DDR process in South Sudan reportedly bemoaned that: "There has been no [reintegration] boss. Who is the boss? Is it the UNDP? Is it the donors? Is it the government of South Sudan? It must be the government of South Sudan because this is a government project."<sup>78</sup>

A major source of tension between the SSDDRC and the UN was over the management and transparency of funds during the reintegration process. As described by Lamb: “the UN also kept a tight rein on the financial resources allocated for DDR in South Sudan, which provided UN agencies with considerable leverage in determining the type, content and manner of support provided as well as the organizations and agencies that would be contracted to implement the processes and activities.”<sup>79</sup> This meant that the SSDDRC was unable to be the central driving force of the reintegration program as was initially intended. Trust between the SSDDRC and the UNDP deteriorated further in 2010 when the UNDP failed to account for how US\$ 450,000 was spent on 44 missing laptops.<sup>80</sup>

In 2011 the SSDDRC fundamentally changed its approach to the DDR program (particularly reintegration), and with it came improved coordination between it and the UN agencies.<sup>81</sup> The granting of independence to South Sudan meant that the DDR program focusing on South Sudan would be completely detached from the larger DDR undertaking that had also included the Republic of Sudan. In addition, the SSDDRC became more actively involved in the DDR activities and in coordinating with the UN and the various implementing partners.<sup>82</sup>

Moreover, from 2011 the UNDP introduced major changes to the management structure of the program, which reportedly resulted in 1) regular meetings being held between the SSDDRC, the UNDP and implementing partners, 2) improved transparency and consultation, and 3) greater decision-making authority being entrusted to the SSDDRC. In addition, The National DDR Coordination Council and Oversight Committee, consisting of the Commission, UNDP, UNMISS donors and other UN agencies, became more active in overseeing program implementation and held more effective monthly meetings.<sup>83</sup> However, the lack of sufficient commitment from the SPLA to the DDR process and the outbreak of civil war in South Sudan in 2013 meant that these inter-organizational management reforms ultimately did not have a significant long-term meaningful impact on the DDR process.

## Conclusion

Effective coordination of DDR interventions and programs within complex, multi-actor institutional settings and fragile political environments is difficult to achieve and preserve. By focusing on South Sudan and drawing on theories of inter-organizational collaboration and alliances it was shown that inter-organizational coordination of DDR appeared to have been negatively affected by overly hierarchical, convoluted and inflexible organizational processes and arrangements, not only between organizations, but within organizations as well. In addition, further

contributing factors included inadequate communication; power imbalances; deficiencies in DDR expertise; unequal access to financial resources; and a lack of adequate commitment to the alliance by some of the participating organizations.

In the case of South Sudan, it was apparent that these arrangements and dynamics contributed to inter-organizational tensions and eroded trust between stakeholders. This ultimately resulted in fragmented and sub-standard DDR outcomes. Furthermore, as the South Sudan case conspicuously reveals, effective coordination of DDR can only be achieved if all the key stakeholders are genuinely committed and open to coordinating with others. For instance, the nearly entire absence of the SPLA from the structures and activities geared towards DDR synchronization and implementation had major adverse effects on the outcomes of this peacebuilding endeavor.

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