

What should be done about fragile states politics essay



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The polarization of the economic development of developing countries is growing. One group may be the states successfully demonstrating growth. Another group may which are not. While some countries, such as China, India and Brazil, are showing rapid economic growth, there is any ' fragile state' which is predicted to achieve any one of the Millennium Development Goals (Denny, 2011). The majority of fragile states are African countries, especially from Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asian countries (Carment and Samy, 2012: 6). In those state, it is not only suffering economic record but also is conceived that they are subjected to extensive violence (Putzel and John, 2012: iii). At the same time, fragile state can be said to be a hotbed of terrorism or other crime organisations, therefore conflict (François and Sud, 2006: 141). In addition to security and development concern on fragile states, it is indicated that prevention is much more cost-effective than responding states after going to conflict (DFID, 2005: 9). Then question goes into what should be done about fragile states? More research needs to be done in order to investigate the more clear answer to deal with fragile states.

The main purpose of this paper is to analyse and assert what international donor community should take to fragile states in order to emerge from the situation of fragility by illustrating how fragile states was conceived and current state-building discourse. In this paper I will argue that there is a need for state-building, in the case of tackling with fragile states, which is more focused on supports in governance dimension. I do so by discerning the behavioural change in the approach to fragile states towards more on holistic approach as a primary discipline of international donor communities. I also claim the aim of state-building requires establishing a legitimate state

to citizens in a country through the activities of functioning core role of states and a necessity of assisting governance capacity for more fruitful effect of state-building. In order to prove those assertions, this paper is constructed in the following manner. After defining the key term 'fragile state' and summarizing the ideas behind fragile states and commonalities of them, in the first section I will examine the historical evolution of the way in engaging fragile states, especially one towards holistic approaches -state-building-. In the second part, I will analyse the main function of state-building and examine why it should be done with a relation to legitimacy. Following this, I will conduct the case study in Nepal as typical example of fragile states and comment some direction of its policy on general state-building. Finally, I will offer concluding remarks.

Before going to the key analysis, I will briefly describe the formative process of the term 'fragile state' and will define the scope of them in this paper for the sake of practical convenience. Duffield (2007: 160) notes that fragile state discourse implies an alternative approach of the West to previously called weak or failed states, in the 90's, in a manner of developmental way. Behind this, there are the event of 9/11 and the global 'war on terror' in Iraq and Afghanistan which accelerated focusing on fragile state as 'policy priorities' (Ikpe, 2007: 87). At the present, especially among the aid or programme donor actors, fragile states have been considered as their common challenges to engage in more than ever (Stepputat and Engberg-Pedersen, 2008: 22).

Although it is common to refer to the term 'fragile state', interpretation frequently depends on users of it which varies from simply conflict countries <https://assignbuster.com/what-should-be-done-about-fragile-states-politics-essay/>

to states performing weak governance or spreading corruptions (Warrener and Loehr, 2005: 2). This can be seen at the definition of some donor bodies. The Overseas Economic Co-operation for Development (OECD) explains a fragile state, in their 2008 report, that is a state which has no ability to live up to and correspond to citizen's expectations in a timely manner thorough the political procedures and those states lack the political will, legitimacy and capacity (OECD, 2008: 16). Similarly, the UK's Department for International Development (DFID) (2005: 7) defines fragile states as ' those where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority if its people, including the poor'. While former two organisations emphasise the will and capacity of government, the World Bank identifies fragile states in terms of their performance of institutional capacity and poor governance (World Bank, 2005: 1). Despite no uniform definition among donor society, Menocal, Othieno and Evans (2008: 1-2, see also Osaghae, 2007: 692-693) point out ' a lack of state capacity, political will, and leadership to perform state functions' and ' weak governance system and institutions' as common features within the perception of major donor organisations.

Furthermore, concerning a list of fragile, there is also little difference in a number of fragile states for each donor due to different lenses of criteria they adopt. For instance, the Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIA), which is an index with 16 criteria, is employed by the DFID and the World Bank build the Low Income Countries under Stress (LICUS) on the basis of the CPIA (Ikpe, 2007: 87). The OECD, in addition to the LICUS, uses another indicator of Difficult Partnership Countries (DPC) to make out a list of

fragile states (Ikpe, 2007: 88). Despite a number of indexes for defining fragile state including the Failed State Index which was invented by the US-based non-governmental organisation, Fund for Peace, those have key commonalities in terms of the fact that countries on the list are low income and their public policies and institutions are below the standard (Ikpe, 2007: 88, Feeny and McGillivray, 2009: 619).

Before stipulating the range of research objects, it should be noted that there are some critics from scholars against fixing what the fragile state should be. It is, of course, each country has unique background of the situation. In addition, Osaghae (2007: 697) claims that definition itself, after all, is still typologies at best thus it is not enough to grasp the question of what matters. Moreover, donors are often overlooking the core challenges of resolving issues by just focusing on defining fragile states rather thinking the reason why fragile states could not emerge from the list (Putzel, 2010: 2). Although the aim of this section is to subtend definition of fragile states rather than generalizing them, it is also important, as Lund (2010: 14) comments, to consider the situation that states are ever-changing their fragility. Therefore, in this paper, I will try to evaluate the point, that whether or not the state plays a role as a governance actor with a capability and will to legitimately serve its citizens, as a decisive factor to regard as a fragile state and, in the case of referring the term ' fragile state', it will imply states which are commonly categorised as fragile states by the World Bank and the OECD as of the year of 2012 and DFID as of 2005 (see World Bank, 2012, OECD, 2012: 65, DFID, 2005: 27-28).

Although I described a little bit about fragile state discourse, it would be worth analysing how international community concerned and is dealing with fragile states currently in order to answer the question of what can be done about fragile states. From the considerations on the way of international communities' engagement in fragile states, two things can be said that; a discourse on fragile states has evolved deeply towards state-building rather than a mere former discussion on security or development issues; and, therefore, state-building is the current approach to fragile states as the OECD reaffirmed in their 2007 reports.

Having a look at a historical context of fragile states and efforts by major donor actors, it may highlight the recent trend in state building approach to fragile states. As Menocal (2011: 1718-1719) mentions, there are three backgrounds of increasing recognition of a need for state-building; first is emergence of newly independent states which has been in unstable condition after the end of cold war; secondly, the correlation of a state's institutional capability with efficacy of developmental aid which was learnt from the past of unsuccessful developmental conduct and change policy on fragile states in the 90's; and, finally as I have noted previous section, the prevailing belief in a relationship between insecurity and fragile states which may influence on the global scale in the form of conflict, violence and terrorism after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Those can be also possible to describe two contextual dimension of fragile state; development and security aspect.

In terms of the developmental side, at the first half of Menocal's chronology, there has been already established the programme of stepping into a state's <https://assignbuster.com/what-should-be-done-about-fragile-states-politics-essay/>

policy by donor actors to improve quality of life from the 70's when the serious financial crisis hit many those developing countries (Cahill, 2007: 17-18). From the 80's to 90's, the more severe imposition on the state's policy with conditionalities, represented by well-known Structural Adjustment Programmes by the World Bank and the IMF, has been conducted to stabilise economic situation aiming at dissolving debts in developing countries (Overbeek et al. 2009, 4). In the same period, as a striking change among the donor communities, Overbeek et al (2009: 4-5) state that the aid policy was revised from the focus on prioritising macro-economic stability to the attention on ineffectiveness of political institutions in the early-90's. Especially, thanks to his presidency of then president of the Bank, James Wolfensohn who was appointed from 1995 to 2005, the World Bank steered for the themes of good governance and corruptions with recognition that those are essential to facilitate poverty reduction (Bello and Guttal, 2006: 69-70). During the period between 1996 and 2000, the World Bank has launched more than 600 governance-oriented programmes in over 90 countries, although, governance issue was previously not regarded as the scope of mandate of, rather delicate to engage for the World Bank (Santiso, 2001: 3-4).

Although developmental discussion had been heralded around the World Bank, the 9/11 terrorist attack deeply influenced on the debate on development aid at that time. Even though this was in the 1998 report of US government that they officially acknowledged fragile (failed) states as central strategic matter of the national security (Paris, 2011: 62), after the 9/11, the US put fragile states on the primary agenda for its security and

foreign policy and, indeed, they launched a military intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq which they concerned as threat to international peace and security (Nuruzzaman, 2009: 272-273). The implication of terrorist attack and subsequent military interventions may not be only casting the question of whether or not fragile states are really a security problem to be remedied; military intervention into those counties can be legitimatised. There is a critical view that this also made donor policies, especially the US, more focus on security efforts and put development on the sideline (Bryan and Varat, 2008: 7).

As I described above, the policy on fragile state tended to be argued as individual matter such as poverty, development and security, however, one of the major donor actors which lead and tried to address debate is the OECD-DAC. As Overbeek et al (2009: 5) mention from discussion on developmental and security matters in fragile state since the 70's that donor communities recognised a need for new approaches which require consider different situation of each state and they had to rethink the aid modalities for fragile state in order to facilitate not only institutional capacity but also poverty elimination, economic and security issues. Moreover, as Menocal (2011: 1716) note, given the common features of fragile states, the root cause of them profoundly stems from ' political phenomenon' and it can be easily deteriorated by war or disputes. State-building endogenously serves for establishing legitimate states for their populations through facilitating capacity and institutions and the OECD also began to recognise it (Nussbaum, Zorbas and Koros, 2012: 565). Then in January of 2005 at Senior Level Forum hosted by the OECD in cooperate with many major donor actors

including the World Bank, EC and UNDP in London, drafted the 2007 report (OECD, no date) which clearly stipulates that ‘state-building’ is a central objectives to commit to fragile states (OECD, 2007: 2).

Given the discussion of the way of approach, the way of donor community seems to be converged in the holistic approach by bringing security and development issues together as state-building (Batley and Mcloughlin, 2010: 131). Therefore, in the following section, I will consider more specific topic of state-building as a measure to facilitate fragile states.

In the OECD’s 2007 report, 10 principles for international actors engaging into fragile states are provided. First of all, the report calls a sufficient understanding of characteristic context of each recipient country and stresses out a need for state-building associated with enhancing the capacity of the recipient government in order to progress weak governance system (OECD, 2007: 2). Although debate on what should be needed to encourage fragile state very roughly seems to be a driving force as it is claimed a need for state-building, questions still remain how it would conduct. In fact, in the report, there is no particular description of state-building activities.

Therefore, it is hard to imagine what involves state-building. Zoe Scott (2007: 4) presumes state-building ‘a sub-set of development’ which comprises a variety of activities, for example, ‘tax and civil service reforms, infrastructural development, democratisation, and conflict management etc.’ However, in this report, I would continue to stick to governance dimension of state-building as this paper initially seizes the challenges of governance and institutional capacity in fragile states.

So why is governance or the government important? While those are emphasised as shared characteristics of problems of fragile states in this paper, it would be needed to appreciate how they relate to fragile state. On this point, Collier (2007: 102) notes that sound governance would increase the effectiveness of aid by, for example, avoiding aid not to reach poor populations. He asserts many undeveloped countries including fragile state are falling into four what he calls 'traps' which is a situation that aid could not be effectively worked; the conflict trap; the natural resource Trap; the trap of being landlocked; and the trap of bad governance (2007: 104-108). At the forth trap, he claims 'bad governance and policies' are impediment to efficient aid and the condition would endure due to a lack of capable human resources and government (Collier, 2007: 67-68). The OECD (2008: 8, 30) also affirms that capacity of governance and the government relates to all state-building areas and should be the core of state-building as well.

The OECD report simply states importance of state-building in the context of fragile states, however, the question is that what a state should be, in other words, what is the role of state? It would be helpful to take up Ghani's definition of states' role. Ghani, Lockhart and Carnahan (2005: 6-9) claim that the state owes 10 fundamental functions; (1) owing legitimate monopoly on the means of violence; (2) administrative control; (3) management of public finances; (4) investment in human capital; (5) delineation of citizenship rights and duties; (6) provision of infrastructure services; (7) formation of the market; (8) management of the state's assets; (9) managing international relations; and (10) establishing rule of law. They assert that those functions foster relationship between states and populations and the

legitimise the state itself and finally ended up establishing capable state, however, if some of them would not be worked, the state will be likely to lose legitimacy and to lead up to violence (Ghani, Lockhart and Carnahan, 2005: 9). The OECD also states that state-building means establishing a legitimate state (OECD, 2008: 2).

Debate on legitimacy of the state may go beyond the scope of this paper, however, as Paris (2011: 64-65) notes, there is increasing assumption, among scholars, that regards 'state fragility as a failure of state legitimacy'. In an illegitimate state, the lack of people's acceptance of the state often leads to intensification of conflict and oppression which would result in further situation of fragility and illegitimacy and would make a vicious circle of fragile state (Brinkerhoff, Wetterberg and Dunn, 2012: 275). So as Overbeek et al (2009: 11) suggest, it is indispensable for state building to not only strengthen institutions of the state but also to put emphasis on facilitating relation between a state and other actors in order to legitimise the government. Therefore roles of states in Ghani's study on legitimacy can be considered to be done as main matters in state-building.

As this paper demonstrated, state-building could be a key to well-functional state or measure to emerge from fragile state condition. This final section will conduct case study in Nepal by using Ghani's index for legitimate states and try to analyse what should be done into fragile states from thought on Nepal after confirming that status of Nepal can be said as a fragile state. €€€

Nepal fits into initial definition of fragile states, which is in all the fragile state list of major donor organisations. It marks 3. 28 on the CIPA score situated in

the almost same level of Sierra Leone (3.31) (World Bank, 2012) and ranked worst 27th place in the failed state index (Fund for Peace, 2012).

Furthermore it can be observed as a fragile state from the classification by Collier's four traps. It could be possible to say that Nepal is stuck in at least three out of four traps. Firstly, regarding relation to conflict trap, Nepal has experienced repeated conflicts between the government, which changed many times, and Maoist group since the beginning of 90's until when the Maoist government was established in 2008 (BBC, 2013). Secondly, Nepal is landlocked country by India and China. Especially India is influential to Nepal as a neighbour country as India is located between the sea and Nepal so that it permanently subject to relationship between them (Jayaraman and Shrestha, 1976: 1114). Finally, in addition to frequent instability of the government, it is pointed out the weak governance system resulted by corruption, awkward centralisation of power of elites and incapable institutions (Lawoti, 2012: IX). Therefore Nepal is a state which has typical characteristics of fragile states.

Although as this paper described Ghani's 10 roles of states, Nepal unfortunately may not fully accomplish the primary roles of state as a whole. It can be possible to divide into, at least, three areas to be emphasised in the state-building in Nepal and, perhaps in fragile states overall. First point is ensuring security including state and individual security (see point (1) and (6)). Nepal has been obsessed by successive conflicts for many years and tension between Maoists and anti-group still continues. Moreover, not only political opposition but also inter-ethnic friction because of the nature that more than 100 ethnic group exist in Nepal (Miklian, 2009: 3). As considered

relation with neighbour countries with India, state-building must be involved with ensuring all level of security from national to human or individual security.

Secondly, it should be needed to enhance the economical and human development (see. (3), (4) and (8)). Ghani et al (2006: 113) asserts without economic development, it will be hard to realise the human development and vice versa. Therefore there is a critical to progress investment in both hard and soft issues from infrastructure to human capacity. Especially in terms of human capacity, Nepal still holds low standard of education and health, which are considered as one of obstacles to development, and marks increasing gap of them (UNDP, 2009: 47-48).

The final focus is governance (see. (1), (2), (5), (7), (9) and (10)). In Nepal, there is a lot to be done for betterment of governance. In terms of the public administration, for example, corruption is often common matter. Nepal is not exception. It varies a number of forms from bribery to embezzlement and frequently happens although it is difficult to prove (Dix, 2011: 15). Corruption was seen in the judicially court as well (World Bank, no date). Dix (2011: 31) suggests that the cause of corruption in Nepal heavily linked to a lack of politician's leadership, rule of law, social and economic situation and he calls a system which can be checked by local citizens. Finally, as the DFID (2011: 3) strongly states and sum up the point, in paper on its policy plan in the next five year from 2011, that under the condition that governance functions, the government would answer the needs of populations so that people can be secured. Therefore, although it should be needed to think the

importance of all factors inseparable each other, the governance should be the top priority of the state-building.

In conclusion, in this paper I analysed what needs to be done in fragile states from the discourse on the way in dealing with fragile state. When it comes to encounter the fragile states, international donor community will be required to engage in state-building in the states and this is what they are doing as their core policy. Analysis shows, the state legitimacy, which is prerequisite for being not fragile states, can be enhanced through state-building.

Furthermore, there is a careful need to be focused on importance of enhancing governance capacity in fragile state because of tendency that it would be a reason for those countries to stagnate chronically and not to emerge from fragile situation. Therefore, ideally, support of governance should be done with a combination of security and development-focused activities. Lastly, as I slightly comments on the future debate, considering and respecting typical situation of each state should be needed to further discuss more concrete issues.