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ENHANCING RESILIENCE IN FRAGILE STATES

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MOBILISING EUROPEAN RESEARCH
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ABSTRACT

The socio-political, geographical, and economic problems that underlie state fragility are structural in nature and unlikely to be solved using conventional policies. Countries of low resilience are typically plagued by two problems - political identity fragmentation and weak national institutions - that together preclude the formation of any robust national governing system, severely undermining the legitimacy of the state, and leading to political orders that are highly unstable and hard to reform. Fostering economic growth and political stability in such challenging conditions requires taking advantage of local capacities and institutions. To this end, the international community should re-direct its development assistance and emphasise three goals: promoting greater social cohesion and inclusiveness at both the national and local level; integrating states with their societies by helping them to adopt local models and to take better advantage of their informal institutions; and ensuring a more equitable distribution of economic, political, cultural, and public resources across regions, genders, and ethnic, religious, and clan groups.

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1 What Causes a Country to Have Low Resilience?

The illegitimacy and poor governance that debilitate countries of low resilience can be traced to many factors - such as colonialism - that have combined to detach states from their environments, governments from their societies, and élites from their citizens. While a highly resilient state uses local identities, local capacities, and local institutions to promote its development, a fragile state's formal governing structures undermine all of these indigenous assets. As a consequence, a weak state cannot make use of its people's histories and customs to construct effective formal institutions with wide legitimacy; nor can it draw on the social capital embedded in cohesive groups in order to facilitate economic, political, and social intercourse;¹ nor is it able to employ the traditional governing capacities of its citizens to run the affairs of state. The socio-political, geographical, and economic problems that typically lie at the root of these dysfunctions are usually systemic in nature, and complicate all efforts to reform their governments and economies.

Countries suffering from these ailments are particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks such as the on-going global financial crisis. Section 1 explores the phenomenon of resilience by asking what produces it and what the consequences of its absence are. Section 2 tackles the practical question of what steps can be taken to promote resilience, and offers three broad recommendations: unifying disparate peoples at the national and sub-state level, integrating state and society, and reducing inequities between groups. (Both sections draw upon the analysis presented in Seth Kaplan, *Fixing Fragile States: A New Paradigm for Development*.²)

1.1 A Toxic Colonial Legacy

In most cases, the roots of state fragility can be traced back to a colonial past. Western colonisers drew the borders of most African states almost arbitrarily, ignoring local socio-political, geographical, and economic conditions, discarding hundreds of years of institutional memory, and creating populations made up of disparate - and often incompatible - identity groups. Furthermore, Africa's colonial masters typically made no effort to develop formal state institutions that were strong enough to nurture a cohesive political community where one did not exist. Seeking from the beginning "conquest on the cheap" and "unwilling, given the high cost of administration and the low probability of reward, to develop extensive administrative networks", the European imperialists never exercised effective control over vast areas of their African possessions. Infrastructure was neglected wherever it did not lead directly to a financial return. Railways, for example, were built to ferry raw materials from the interior to ports, but rarely to connect inland territories.³ In many colonies, such as the Belgian Congo, few people were educated above primary school level, and all but the lowest echelons of the national civil service were closed to locals.

The pattern established when the colonial powers arrived and built their administrations on top of, and disconnected from, local societies was essentially continued in most

¹ "Social capital" is defined here to mean "the norms and networks that enable people to act collectively". See Michael Woolcock and Deepa Narayan, "Social Capital: Implications for Development Theory, Research, and Policy", *World Bank Research Observer* 15, no. 2 (August 2000): p. 225.

² Seth Kaplan, *Fixing Fragile States: A New Paradigm for Development*, (Westport CT: Praeger Security International, 2008).

³ See Chapter 3 of Jeffrey Herbst, *State and Power in Africa Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 58–96. The quotations are from pp. 64 and 67.

countries after independence. Governments remain largely divorced from, and autonomous of, the very societies that they are supposed to serve.⁴

“The state... [is] in most of Africa an essentially artificial one, ‘suspended above’ a society which would never have produced it and did not demand it. This ‘mismatch’ between state and society is the essence of the problem.”⁵

In such environments, an enormous gap separates a small cadre that manipulates or controls the state - and therefore favours its perpetuation - and the general population, who are indifferent, ambivalent, or hostile towards their own government.

These narrow ruling élites buttress their hegemony with external - not internal - sources of revenue, such as foreign aid, loans, and income from the breakneck exploitation of natural resources such as oil and diamonds. What has been said about Somalia can be said about much of the rest of Africa, the “political disconnection” that existed at independence between state and society has been “exacerbated by the economic disconnection that arose from the growing availability of external financial support. As the state became increasingly dependent on these foreign resources for its survival, it also grew increasingly autonomous of its own society and local resources, and so lost interest in that resource base as anything other than a source of plunder”.⁶ The “weakness of the [policies of] international financial institutions is particularly problematic where the state has failed to strike deep roots”.⁷ A DFID research programme similarly pointed to “the complicity of rich, highly developed countries in the governance problems of poor countries, and the need for external actors to take much more care about the impact of their actions on internal incentives and relationships in poor countries”.⁸

1.2 Fractured Societies, Weak Governments

Fragile states are thus plagued by two structural problems - political identity fragmentation and weak national institutions - which together preclude the formation of any robust national governing system, severely undermining the legitimacy of the state, and leading to political orders that are highly unstable and hard to reform. Although they suffer from “real shortages of food, literacy, education, wealth, income, health, and productivity...there is a greater shortage: a shortage of political community and of effective, authoritative, legitimate government”, as the American political scientist Samuel Huntington wrote some forty years ago.⁹

Political fragmentation and weak governing bodies feed upon each other, undermining all attempts to build a legitimate and effective state. As William Easterly, a well-respected development economist, explains:

“Ethnic diversity has a more adverse effect on economic policy and growth when institutions are poor. To put it another way, poor institutions have an even more

⁴ Carolyn Logan, *Overcoming the State-Society Disconnect in the Former Somalia: Putting Somali Political and Economic Resources at the Root of Reconstruction*, (Nairobi: United States Agency for International Development, Regional Economic Development Services Office for East and Southern Africa, September 2000), p. 7.

⁵ Virginia Luling, “Come Back Somalia? Questioning a Collapsed State”, *Third World Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (1997): pp. 288–289.

⁶ Logan, *Overcoming the State-Society Disconnect in the Former Somalia*, p. 8.

⁷ James Mayall, “The Legacy of Colonialism”, in: *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance*, ed. Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff, and Ramesh Thakur (New York: United Nations University Press, 2005), p. 47.

⁸ Institute of Development Studies (IDS), *Signposts to More Effective States: Responding to Governance Challenges in Developing Countries*, (Brighton UK: IDS, 2005), p. 45.

⁹ Samuel Huntington, *Political Order in Changing Societies*, (New Haven CT: Yale University Press, 1968), p. 2.

adverse effect on growth and policy when ethnic diversity is high. Conversely, in countries with sufficiently good institutions, ethnic diversity does not lower growth or worsen economic policies.”¹⁰

Ethnic divisions - and, for that matter, religious and clan divisions, as well as geographic and socio-economic forms of political fragmentation - prevent the formation of:

“one of the most important requirements for making states work...the creation of apolitical bureaucratic structures (civil service, judiciary, police, army) supported by an ideology that legitimates the role of neutral state authority in maintaining social order through prescribed procedures and the rule of law.”¹¹

The tribalism inherent in the political cultures of fragile states engulfs their already weak governing bodies, tribalising them and preventing the emergence of national institutions which are able to win the respect and support of the population as a whole. Similarly, the weakness of the state makes each identity group fall back upon its traditional network of affiliations and loyalties, which provide the only reliable form of security and material support.

1.3 Shortages of Trust and Social Capital

This political fragmentation directly impinges on the ability of these countries to foster the positive institutional environment necessary to encourage productive economic, political, and social behaviour. In the absence of robust government, states must depend on the resilience of their societies to police the behaviour of their members, to lower the cost of various transactions between members, and to encourage the security of property. While many cohesive groups of people with long common histories have developed sophisticated political, economic, and societal systems that maintain stability and foster economic progress, divided populations have no such mechanisms. Fragmented societies, when combined with the weak governmental structures of fragile states, thus tend to gravitate toward “a suffocating miasma of vicious circles” whereby, as social scientist Robert Putnam notes, “defection, distrust, shirking, exploitation, isolation, disorder, and stagnation intensify one another”.¹² Once such dysfunctional, unproductive patterns of behaviour come to pre-dominate in a society, they will persist because, as Nobel Prize winner Douglass North explains, the high degree of path-dependency of a given institutional framework provides “disincentives to productive activity...[by creating] organisations and interest groups with a stake in the existing constraints”.¹³ which “is an important factor in explaining persistent low growth rates in developing countries”.¹⁴

Such societies suffer from severe shortages of trust - a pre-requisite for any economic and political development because it “lubricates co-operation. The greater levels of trust within a community, the greater the likelihood of co-operation. And co-operation itself breeds trust.... In communities where people can be confident that trusting will be requited, not exploited, exchange is more likely to ensue”.¹⁵ Democratic systems cannot function without trust; where there is little trust, there is, for instance, little incentive to

¹⁰ William Easterly, *Can Institutions Resolve Ethnic Conflict?*, Policy Research Working Paper Series 2482 (Washington DC: World Bank, February 2000), p. 12.

¹¹ Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff & Ramesh Thakur, “Introduction: Making States Work”, in: *Making States Work*, ed. Chesterman, Ignatieff & Thakur, pp. 2–3.

¹² Robert Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 177.

¹³ Douglass North, *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, (Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 99.

¹⁴ Johannes Jütting, *Institutions and Development: A Critical Review*, Working Paper no. 210, OECD Development Centre (Paris: OECD, July 2003), p. 30.

¹⁵ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, pp. 171–172.

accept the results of elections. Likewise, prosperous economies depend upon a certain level of trust.

“Virtually every commercial transaction has within itself an element of trust, certainly any transaction conducted over a period of time. It can be plausibly argued that much of the economic backwardness in the world can be explained by the lack of mutual confidence.”¹⁶

Trust is also “an essential component of social capital”.¹⁷ Putnam concludes that “for political stability, for government effectiveness, and even for economic progress, social capital may be even more important than physical or human capital”.¹⁸ And, as Mina Balamoune-Lutz argued during an ERD workshop in Florence in April 2009, greater social cohesion leads to greater growth prospects and aid effectiveness.¹⁹

The combination of severe political fragmentation and feeble state institutions can play out at both the macro and the micro levels in fragile states. The tribalisation of institutions and zero-sum competition for resources at the state level may also occur at the local level if the population is similarly divided. The consequent depletion of the communal social capital typically embedded in cohesive groups can undermine both local and national economies, with business being almost made impossible to transact in the absence of enforceable contracts and defensible property rights (see Feature Box 1).

Feature Box 1: Social Fragmentation and Business

Although they generally receive scant attention from the development community, it is only business that can drive the self-sustaining wealth-generating process which underpins progress, provides work to the armies of unemployed in the underdeveloped world,²⁰ efficiently transfers work skills to large numbers of people, increases productivity throughout an economy, lowers the price of the goods consumed by poor people, and provides the revenue necessary to fund educational, health, and other public programmes and to wean governments off of foreign aid.

The reasons why fragile states suffer from severe shortages of business investment are misunderstood. Although poor governance and rampant corruption are significant deterrents to investment, the dearth of social capital and the unpredictability of institutions are the main reasons that private citizens and companies are so reluctant to invest their capital in fragile states.

State structures in divided countries delegitimise informal institutions without replacing them with effective formal bodies, while, at the same time, destroying built-up social capital by forcing people with no common history to work together. As a consequence, the cost of exchange spirals upward while the price of assets plunges, crippling economies and sharply reducing the capacity of societies to foster development. Conducting legitimate business activities - or, for that matter, conducting any form of productive social, political, or economic exchange - is far riskier in fragile states than in cohesive environments, and this dramatically influences societal dynamics and the incentives that guide behaviour. According

¹⁶ Kenneth J. Arrow, “Gifts and Exchanges”, *Philosophy and Public Affairs* 1 (Summer 1972): p. 357.

¹⁷ Putnam, *Making Democracy Work*, p. 170.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 182–183.

¹⁹ Mina Balamoune-Lutz, *Institutions, Trade, and Social Cohesion in Fragile States*, paper submitted to the European Report on Development, 2 April 2009.

²⁰ “The private sector accounts for 90 percent of jobs in developing countries, and poor people rate self-employment and jobs as the two most promising ways to improve their situation.” Warrick Smith, “Unleashing Entrepreneurship”, in: *Transforming the Development Landscape*, ed. Brainard, p. 31.

to Paul Collier,

“ethnically fractionalised societies were liable to have worse economic performance than more homogenous societies...[because they] can reduce income, namely, by reducing trust, and so raising transactions costs.”²¹

Entrepreneurs in this environment must offer large pay-offs to a corrupt regime or act illegally outside state structures and the formal legal framework. The business people who flourish are not those with the best education or the best ideas, but those connected by blood or marriage to the ruling clique or those who are skilled at manipulating and bribing the officials in charge of handing out licences and contracts. Corruption and illegality thrive even where they were not a problem in local cultures originally. Paperwork and procedures expand to create new opportunities for bureaucratic wealth production, starving the legal private sector, and fueling the growth of a shadowy black market. Investors stay away; roads, airports, telephone lines, and other infrastructure do not get built, or, if built, are not maintained; business people and those with advanced degrees flee to richer, safer places to live and work; and the country makes no progress towards eliminating poverty, developing sound institutions, and modernising.

1.4 Inappropriate State Structures

The very nature of the formal state in many fragile states frequently exacerbates their problems. Overly Westernised legal, governance, and education systems preclude local communities from taking advantage of their own resources, capacities, and social networks, and create unnecessary conflict between formal and informal institutions. Highly centralised governing structures in countries in which formal state bodies remain ineffective, and alternative sources of income remain few, force groups to compete for scarce state resources, accentuating the fragmentation of political identity in the process. Society in such environments becomes obsessed by this conflict, not with generating wealth or increasing national prestige.

Such problems are especially acute in sprawling countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC - see Feature Box 2), the Sudan, Nigeria, and Angola, where the political geography makes state management highly problematic. Distance markedly decreases both the capacity of officials to govern and the ability of a population to hold its leaders accountable. Sparse road and communications networks combine with weak economic and cultural ties to generate centrifugal forces that continuously threaten to pull countries apart. Leaders have little incentive to serve distant areas populated by disparate groups whom the leaders regard more as competitors for government control than as compatriots. Government spending in fragile states is usually lavished on the capital city for the simple reason that only the people living there can pose a tangible threat to the ruling élite. Kinshasa, for example, has always received much better public services than any other part of the DRC.

Feature Box 2: Inappropriate Institutions and the DRC²²

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) - possibly the world’s greatest governance challenge - shows how inappropriate institutions can undermine stability, governance, and development. The country’s toxic combination of tempting mineral wealth, feeble government, vast size, and weak cohesion poisons every aspect of its body politic.

Efforts to build a robust regime have been complicated by the country’s challenging

²¹ Paul Collier, “The Political Economy of Ethnicity”, (paper prepared for Annual World Bank Conference on Development Economics, Washington, DC, 20-21 April 1998), pp. 17–18.

²² This analysis borrows from Seth Kaplan, “The Wrong Prescription for the Congo”, *Orbis* 51, no. 2 (Spring 2007): pp. 299–311.

political geography. The population is divided into a number of high-density pockets hundreds of miles apart (the country is as large as Western Europe). With few road and rail links, a threadbare communications network, and meager institutional ties, the DRC's cities, regions, and ethnic groups have long been locked in a zero-sum competition for control of the state.

Plentiful mineral deposits - including uranium, diamonds, and copper - exacerbate these divisions, fueling round after round of violent conflict and funding pervasive corruption. Local militia and foreign armies smuggle vast amounts out of the country while doing everything within their power to prevent a weak state from establishing its authority.

The international community's standard remedy for conflict-prone countries - elections, economic reform, and peacekeeping troops - cannot, by itself, overcome the staggering challenges that this country faces. But the systemic roots of the DRC's governance problems may be treatable by a trio of institutional innovations.

First, multinational natural resource companies could play a greater role in protecting major mineral sites and providing services to citizens. Given the right contractual framework, major international corporations - which have a stronger management than any other entity in the country - could police deposits, pave roads, build schools and hospitals, and fund teachers and doctors. Restricting the bidding process (for rights to mine deposits) to large, internationally reputable firms, and then monitoring their performance with a newly created watchdog committee, would alleviate any concerns that these companies would abuse their power.

Second, instead of attempting to build the DRC along the lines of the Western model of top-down governance, the country could institute a looser, more horizontal governing structure, in which power and responsibility flowed from large municipalities upward and outward. Shaping governing structures around the country's twenty-one major cities and their surrounding rural areas would make individual units far more effective, especially if outside assistance focused on improving their management, service delivery, transparency, and accountability.

Third, international donors could improve government performance if they focused less on national elections for leaders who have little influence on local programmes (the international community spent over \$500 million on national elections in 2006 and more on enhancing the accountability of local officials. Helping local populations construct effective "accountability loops" - that is, a system of ballots, increased transparency, and watchdog committees to monitor local officials - could substantially improve government performance.

1.5 Informal Institutions and Self-government

The state in countries of low resilience is so weak because its societal roots are extremely shallow. Imported state structures and laws have little relevance for populations whose own institutions, norms, and systems of governance are deeply embedded in centuries of common history and intricate social relationships. A state that ignores indigenous capacities for institution-building undermines the ability of its citizens to manage their own affairs - and re-inforces a dependency on outsiders.

Most people in developing countries still transact business, determine ownership, adjudicate disputes, and generally regulate their affairs by using informal mechanisms (this was true, too, of many of today's rich states during their formative periods). As the United Kingdom's Institute of Development Studies (IDS) has noted, "the astonishing economic growth of countries in East Asia" was achieved "despite a lack of formal institutions generally thought essential to good governance. Research in China shows how informal relations effectively substituted for more formal property rights in the early stages of market-led growth".²³ Informal institutions "are relatively more important in poor countries" because people there "are often ill-served by the limited institu-

²³ Institute of Development Studies, *Signposts to More Effective States: Responding to Governance Challenges in Developing Countries*, (Brighton UK: IDS, 2005), p. 44.

tions available", as an Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) working paper on institutions and development concluded.²⁴ "The challenge for outsiders is to capture the multiplicity and diversity of political institutions, cultures and logics - in other words of 'modalities of governance' - through which state resilience and state-building processes may be supported", comments Béatrice Pouligny's in her ERD paper on state-society relations. Yet, "the majority of international programmes focus on the forms and structures of institutions, but evade their substantive content - their ethos. ... They will be interested in the formal design of institutions more than the social context within which these institutions operate and the norms that support them; in their absence, institutions may appear as mere shells or 'empty boxes'".²⁵

One of the reasons fragile states have such difficulty in constructing effective systems of governance is that their foreign-imposed formal institutions are weak, and conflict and compete with - and lose to - the informal institutions that drive much behaviour. "Informal institutions structure incentives in ways that are incompatible with the formal rules: to follow one rule, actors must violate another."²⁶ As North explains,

"putting in place the formal institutions that have undergirded the spectacular growth of the developed world does not produce the desired results. That is because the formal rules must be complemented by informal norms of behaviour (and enforcement characteristics) to get the desired results."²⁷

Formal governing bodies and regulations, constructed according to blueprints imported from abroad remain disconnected from homegrown informal institutional frameworks and command only superficial allegiance and compliance. Real life goes on outside them. State laws go unheeded because no one acknowledges them as legitimate. Corrupt governments, biased courts, and weak property rights are natural by-products of such conditions.

One of the most blatant examples of contempt for local institutions is the disregard for indigenous languages and cultures displayed by some members of the international development community and by the élites that control many fragile states. A language is the repository of its speakers' socio-cultural heritage and is, or should be, "the most crucial factor in the propagation and development of culture, science and technology". Similarly, a culture embeds its members' "core abilities and creativity within their environments". Any attempt to develop a society requires engaging its grassroots "by building on indigenous usages and knowledge bases",²⁸ but fragile states are fatally dependent on foreign resources, foreign political models, and foreign languages.

1.6 Pint-Sized Economies

In some cases, the colonisers carved vast, unwieldy states out of the African continent, creating territories whose sheer scale and diversity of peoples presented formidable obstacles to state-building. In other cases, the colonialists reduced a region to a mosaic of small countries whose very size impeded their ability to generate stable economies.

²⁴ Johannes Jütting, *Institutions and Development: A Critical Review*, Working Paper no. 210 (Paris: OECD Development Centre, 2003), p. 11.

²⁵ Béatrice Pouligny, *State-Society Relations and Intangible Dimensions of State Resilience and State Building: A Bottom-Up Perspective*, background paper draft submitted to the European Report on Development, 10 April 2009, p. 3.

²⁶ Gretchen Helmke & Steven Levitsky, "Informal Institutions and Comparative Politics: A Research Agenda", *Perspectives on Politics* 2, no. 4 (December 2004): p. 729.

²⁷ Douglass C. North, foreword in Jean-Philippe Platteau, *Institutions, Social Norms, and Economic Development*, (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), p. xi-xii.

²⁸ Kwesi Kwaa Prah, *African Wars and Ethnic Conflicts: Rebuilding Failed States*, Background Paper for Human Development Report 2004 (New York: UNDP, 2004), p. 16.

Large or small territorially, almost all of the inventions of the colonial map-makers have ended up with such poor business climates that private investment is meager.

West Africa, the fifteen countries stretching from Senegal to Nigeria that are members of ECOWAS, highlights these problems well. The region's aggregate GDP is less than half that of Norway's.²⁹ Although infrastructure costs are among the highest in the world - electricity averages 4.5 times and international telephone calls 4 times the charges in OECD countries³⁰ - West Africa's systems are woefully inadequate and unreliable. The regulatory burden forces all but the largest businesses underground. In Niger, for example, it takes eleven bureaucratic steps and costs four times the average income just to register a business.³¹ Much of the sparse road network is in poor condition³² and frequent checkpoints - one every fourteen kilometers on the road between Lagos and Abidjan³³ - shrink markets. The onerous business climate makes aid the only growth industry: over 70 percent of gross capital formation consists of donor money, five times the level of foreign investment.³⁴

These conditions discourage most ventures outside the extraction of raw materials such as oil, rubber, and gold. As a result, roughly 90 percent of the region's exports come from a handful of commodities, often produced in protected enclaves that limit exposure to embezzlement and violence.³⁵ Few companies are tempted to invest in any add-on business activity that would increase the value of goods produced locally. This flawed environment hinders corporations from contributing to local economies: few managers are trained, hardly any companies learn how to supply internationally competitive products, and governments are not challenged to upgrade standards. The presence of such anti-growth conditions prevents the increase in productivity necessary for sustainable growth, as Augustin Kwasi Fosu's ERD paper documents.³⁶

Small economies are also particularly vulnerable to exogenous shocks, be they from dramatic changes in the trade environment or from natural disasters, as indicated by Patrick Guillaumont during his ERD presentation in Barcelona. The poor business climate and relative distance from the major markets of most African states limit their chances for export diversification, further increasing their vulnerability.³⁷

²⁹ UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*, pp. 278–281.

³⁰ World Bank, *Memorandum*, p. 2.

³¹ World Bank International Finance Corporation and Oxford University Press, *Doing Business in 2005*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2005), p. 120.

³² United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA), *Economic Report on Africa 2004: Unlocking Africa's Trade Potential*, (Addis Ababa Ethiopia: Economic Commission for Africa, 2004), p. 163.

³³ Commission for Africa, *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa* (London: Commission for Africa, 2005), Box 8.3, p. 258.

³⁴ These figures exclude Nigeria, however, where offshore oil resources have attracted more investment than aid. World Bank, *World Development Indicators*, (Washington DC: World Bank, 2004), pp. 334–337; UNDP, *Human Development Report 2003*, pp. 291–294.

³⁵ UNECA, *Assessing Regional Integration for Africa*, (Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Economic Commission for Africa, 2004), pp. 251–252.

³⁶ Augustin Kwasi Fosu, *The African Economic Growth Record and the Roles of Policy Syndromes and Governance*, background paper submitted to the European Report on Development, April 2009.

³⁷ Patrick Guillaumont & Sylviane Guillaumont Jeanneney, *State Fragility and Economic Vulnerability: What is Measured and Why?*, background paper provisional draft submitted to the European Report on Development, May 2009.

1.7 Inequities Precluding Broad-Based Development

The identity divisions that typically plague fragile states frequently produce widespread economic, political, and cultural inequities that in turn, exacerbate societal discord. Such inequities can be a major source of conflict - as witnessed in Kenya after the elections in late 2007 - and can actually make economic growth politically destabilising if it is seen to be favouring one group over others.

Multi-dimensional horizontal inequities (HIs) between ethnic, religious, and clan groups can be especially devastating - and enduring. Differences that accumulate over time, such as disparities in land holdings and savings, are particularly hard to change. Asymmetries in social capital (rich people tend to have more contacts with other rich people, especially if most of them are from the same narrow identity group) strongly influence the return on investments in education and business. Advantages in one area - such as human capital, savings, or social contacts - naturally increase the return on investments in another. Overt, or implicit, discrimination or favouritism can affect access to employment, schools, and money. And all these inequalities re-inforce each other: Economic inequities produce political inequities, which, in turn, skew the distribution of government resources and frustrate efforts to counter discrimination.³⁸

The nature of these inequities, the cohesiveness of conflicting groups, and the way in which the government handles the imbalances all affect the resilience of the state.

“While socioeconomic HIs generate generally fertile ground for conflict to emerge and cultural status inequalities act to bind groups together, political HIs provide incentives for leaders to mobilize people for rebellion. In conditions of severe HIs, abrupt changes in political HIs, or cultural events in which important cultural or religious symbols are attacked, often constitute powerful triggers to conflict. ... Other factors are, of course, also important ... One is the nature of the state and its reactions, another is the role of local institutions in pacifying or dynamizing conflict once it has started, a third factor is the presence of natural resources.”

Unfortunately,

“for the most part, especially among the international community, little attention is paid to the issue of HIs, and the policies advocated can sometimes accentuate them. This is true both of economic policies, such as structural adjustment, and political policies, such as multiparty democracy.”³⁹

1.8 Conclusion: Inappropriate Institutions and Low Resilience

Many of these problems suggest that fragile states have little resilience, in large part because their institutions are inappropriate to their needs and are not seen as legitimate by the majority of their peoples. There is little or no national consensus on the overall nature, purpose, and conduct of the state. These problems reflect and are compounded by immense economic, political, and cultural inequities, little social capital, a dearth of competent officials, meager economies, and the divisive effect of disparate identities.

Unfortunately, Western governments, international aid agencies, and development banks frequently urge post-colonial countries to adopt programmes that re-inforce

³⁸ This analysis is borrowed from Frances Stewart & Arnim Langer, “Horizontal Inequalities: Explaining Persistence and Change”, in: *Horizontal Inequities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*, ed. Frances Stewart (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 55 and pp. 59-61.

³⁹ Frances Stewart, Graham K. Brown & Arnim Langer, “Major Findings and Conclusions on the Relationship between Horizontal Inequities and Conflict”, in: *Horizontal Inequities and Conflict*, ed. Stewart, pp. 299-300.

overly centralised and locally discredited governing structures. Such models depend on precisely the kind of impersonal trust and bureaucratic management skills that fragile states often lack - while devaluing the social capital and informal self-governance arrangements that many local communities depend upon to function. The standard development paradigm gives "little thought ... to the possibility that existing state structures might also be the *cause* of instability" in many post-colonial countries.⁴⁰

Too many donors and agencies embrace an insufficiently flexible approach to development, one that mainly disregards the enormous and numerous differences between countries, and ignores the fact that people want to choose not only their leaders but also their institutions. Instead of seeking to impose a Western-style blueprint which is unsuitable for local conditions, international action should be, first and foremost, about encouraging the creation of governing schemes that help relatively cohesive groups of people make better use of their existing institutions and capacities for self-administration. States work effectively when they are a logical reflection of their underlying socio-political, historical, geographical, human resource, and economic environments, and when they are deeply integrated with the societies they purport to represent and can harness both the informal institutions and the loyalties of their citizens. Raising the resilience of countries requires enmeshing governments firmly in the societies that they are meant to represent.

2 Promoting Institutional Resilience—Helping States Move Out of Fragility

A country's resilience is crucially tied to its own citizens' ability to co-operate - both among themselves and in partnership with the state. A community's capacity to withstand exogenous shocks and foster progress is, therefore, highly dependent on its social cohesion and its set of shared institutions - especially its set of shared informal institutions in the early stages of development when strong, formal governing institutions are typically absent.

People in Africa have enormous political, socio-economic, and cultural resources built up over centuries that can serve as the foundation for political, economic, and social development. However, if they are to build upon these foundations, Africans need international assistance to help them overcome the toxic combination of political fragmentation and weak state institutions. But Africans need the right kinds of foreign support. Money alone will not necessarily be helpful - indeed, by itself, money can be counter-productive. What Africa requires is international assistance that is concerned, first and foremost, with *facilitating local processes to enable them to foster the cohesive societies and widely accepted institutions necessary for societal governing systems to work effectively*. What these people and these countries need are state models and structures that reflect local conditions and can take advantage of local resources for self-governance. Foreign assistance needs to complement and re-inforce local capacities and institutions, and needs to be disciplined enough to avoid the common fault of undermining or warping locally-driven arrangements.

Such an approach would look beyond the current narrow focus on economic restructuring, aid targets, and democracy assistance, and would focus, instead, on better understanding of local socio-cultural contexts and on better employing existing capacities in order to increase the resilience of fragile states and their peoples. This broader strategy would emphasise institutional changes that foster decentralisation, integrate traditional norms into state institutions, promote social cohesion, and encourage multiple forms of accountability. At the macro level, a stronger emphasis on regionalism - es-

⁴⁰ Ian Spears, "Reflections on Somaliland and Africa's Territorial Order", *Review of African Political Economy* 30 (95) (March 2003): p. 94.

pecially in West Africa, where the states tend to be small - would boost efforts to increase resilience at the state and sub-state levels.

This approach would also take advantage of the European Union's unique comparative advantages in development assistance. A more comprehensive strategy would exploit the EU's strengths in areas such as diplomacy, technical assistance, and integrated planning. It would allow the EU to mine its experience in state-building in the sometimes fragile southern and eastern European countries and in creating a robust regional organisation. Paradoxically, Nineteenth- and Twentieth-century European colonialism sowed the seeds of state fragility throughout Africa, but it has also bequeathed to twenty-first century Europeans a keener understanding of African traditions, resources, and capacities than that possessed by most members of the international community. This sharper appreciation of the African social and political context may be an invaluable asset in EU efforts to help spur African development.

Three broad recommendations flow directly from the analysis in Section 1.

Recommendation 1: Promote greater social cohesion and inclusiveness at both the national and the local level; promote the use of formal institutions that encourage these.

As Section 1 indicated, social cohesion is a major predictor of state resilience and the healthy development of a country's economic and political systems. In the light of this, international actors should place much greater emphasis on measures that both unify disparate peoples in fragile states at the national level (the focus of this recommendation) and that take advantage of pockets of cohesion at the sub-state level (the focus of Recommendation 2).

Development programmes should help African states to build robust institutions around a common identity and to integrate traditional forms of governance into modern government structures. The more successful African states - such as Botswana, Mali, and Somaliland (see Feature Box 3) - have been able to make use of a coherent political geography and to appeal to the shared history of their people to create a sense of common identity and purpose.⁴¹ In Botswana, for instance, social cohesiveness has helped ensure that the élite has carefully stewarded the country's valuable diamond assets for the benefit of the whole population, avoiding the resource curse that has befallen almost all other similarly endowed African countries. Many other African states, however, lack these geographical and historical advantages. Some have sought to compensate for their absence and to overcome the problems posed by ethnic and religious diversity by looking for another kind of unifying force - be it Swahili in Tanzania, a unique Islamic heritage in Senegal, or a charismatic leader such as Félix Houphouët-Boigny in Côte d'Ivoire. But the unity based upon such forces can prove fleeting unless it is accompanied by steps to institutionalise a sense of common identity and develop enduring formal structures. Thus, for instance, despite Houphouët-Boigny's popularity in his day, Côte d'Ivoire descended into civil war in the years after his demise.

⁴¹ South Africa's unique history means it does not necessarily fit the patterns shared by other successful countries in Africa. Despite one of the most complex ethnic and linguistic mixes on the continent, its population grew accustomed to a common identity and a common set of new formal institutions over a long time horizon. The state's uniquely robust administrative, security, and judiciary apparatus has helped the country become the most politically and economically advanced in Sub-Saharan Africa.

Feature Box 3: Somalia and Somaliland⁴²

Somalia and its secessionist territory of Somaliland offer one of the best contrasts between state-building using imported institutional pillars and state-building using indigenous ones.

The international community has tried no fewer than fifteen times since the dissolution of the Somali state in 1991 to rebuild it in a top-down fashion - and fifteen times it has failed. Isolated from the political realities within the country, aid agencies, embassies, and multilateral organisations have repeatedly misread the country's political dynamics and forced upon it "unimaginative, non-strategic, template-driven policy responses with little relevance to the Somali context and little input from Somali voices". As a result, "Somalis seeking to extricate their country from this deadly and protracted crisis have to do so in spite of, not because of, involvement by the international community".⁴³

In contrast, Somaliland, an area in the northwest of Somalia that declared independence in 1991, has built its state institutions adopting a bottom-up approach that takes advantage of long-standing and widely-accepted clan structures. Today, it is the most democratic state in the region and has established enough stability and prosperity to attract migrants from around the Horn of Africa. Somaliland owes its success in part to the fact that it has had little outside help, and has therefore been forced to depend upon its own resources, capacities, and institutions. (Some advocates of Somaliland independence actually fear that greater foreign aid would have a negative impact.) Several other parts of Somalia, such as Puntland, have also established their own local administrations around clan structures. Notwithstanding this, the international community refuses to recognise Somaliland and persists in its Sisyphean efforts to forge a centralised Somali state.

What the political scientist Ken Menkhaus has said about Somalia applies to many other failed and fragile states:

"These extensive and intensive [informal] mechanisms [of self-government] ... are virtually invisible to external observers, whose sole preoccupation is often with the one structure that actually provides the least amount of rule of law to Somalis—the central state. ... For external actors, the conventional wisdom is that a responsive and effective state is an essential pre-requisite for development, a proposition enshrined in virtually every World Bank and UN strategy on development. For many Somalis, the state is an instrument of accumulation and domination, enriching and empowering those who control it and exploiting and harassing the rest of the population. These different perceptions of the state often result in external and national actors talking past one another."⁴⁴

A more effective and enduring way of building unity among disparate peoples is to focus on ways of institutionalising co-operation across groups. Somaliland, Nigeria, and Indonesia have wisely instituted measures to promote unity by ensuring that political parties are large, inclusive, national in scope, and broad-based (that is, they bring together various interests and identity groups). The kind of consociational government introduced in Burundi offers a variety of opportunities to build coalitions and to reduce tensions by lessening or eliminating real or perceived imbalances in the representation of groups in cabinets, civil services, legislatures, and the military forces. (Had the political arrangements proposed after the election turmoil in Kenya in 2007–08 been fully implemented, Kenya might have seen a significant reduction in its intergroup tensions.) Similarly, apportioning the profits from natural resources in a fair and transparent man-

⁴² This analysis borrows from Seth Kaplan, "The Remarkable Story of Somaliland", *Journal of Democracy* 19, no. 3 (July 2008): pp. 143–157.

⁴³ The sentence beginning "Somalis seeking to extricate . . ." is in italics in the original paper. Ken Menkhaus, *Somalia: A Country in Peril, a Policy Nightmare*, Enough Strategy Paper (Washington DC: Enough Project, 2008), p. 9.

⁴⁴ Menkhaus, "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping," *International Security* 31, no. 3 (Winter 2006-07): p. 87.

ner, ensuring that social spending is impartially distributed (something the international community rarely considers even when the funds come from international donors), and reducing economic inequities between rival groups would dispel some of the potential for friction in divided polities (see Recommendation 3).

Such policies should be complemented by efforts to de-centralise government where the national polity is weak and divided, but where regions, cities, and rural areas possess (or are more likely to be able to create) the cohesiveness required to foster robust government and the conditions required to catalyze private investment (see the next section). However, where necessary, measures will have to be taken to ensure that de-centralisation does not reproduce, at the local level, the same exclusionary policies seen at the national level.

Celebrating each identity group's distinctiveness while attempting to build a "nation of nations" is more likely to succeed than trying to build a state on the "negation of social identities", in other words, a "nation against identities".⁴⁵ Fostering strong "we" feelings through various educational, sports, and cultural programmes can foster complementary or multiple cultural identities that strengthen national bonds, thereby diminishing intergroup frictions in the process. South Africa, for example, has creatively used sports since the end of the apartheid era to unite its divided population. Greater access to television can help nurture a sense of unity by promoting a common national popular culture while highlighting differences with other states. Conscription or other forms of national service can strengthen the sense of a common identity and destiny that citizens have. Programmes designed to reconcile long-festered intergroup wounds, such as South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission and reconciliation programmes in Burundi,⁴⁶ have proved valuable in many countries.⁴⁷

In states with weak cohesiveness, fragile institutions, and a history of intergroup animosity, dramatic change - including abrupt moves to fully competitive elections - can be highly explosive, leading to instability that threatens entire state-building agendas. The example of Iraq springs readily to mind, but it is by no means the only instance of an overhasty and ill-considered reform strategy. Many internationally mandated reform efforts, especially those that emphasise economic reform with little regard for the political consequences, have inadvertently undermined social cohesion and security.

Reforms should be introduced gradually and incrementally, in a way that does not threaten a society's fragile social bonds. The aim should be to create an iterative and self-sustaining process of change that seeps through a system, affecting both society and the state at many levels and transforming their relationship over time. Such an approach would root the state more firmly in society and hold élites more accountable to their populations with a broader variety of tools than just votes (see the next section). Democracy is far more likely to take hold where it is introduced steadily and advances on many fronts; hasty efforts to introduce elections on tight schedules, even when generously funded by the international community (as in the DRC in 2008), are more likely to tear a fragile society apart than to dramatically improve governance, especially in the short-term.

⁴⁵ Michel Cahen, "Success in Mozambique?", in: *Making States Work: State Failure and the Crisis of Governance*, ed. Simon Chesterman, Michael Ignatieff & Ramesh Thakur, (Tokyo: United Nations University Press, 2005), pp. 230–231.

⁴⁶ The reconciliation programme "consists of a series of interactive workshops where facilitators help Burundian leaders develop the skills needed to guide Burundi's recovery and transition to democracy". See http://www.wilsoncenter.org/index.cfm?topic_id=1417&fuseaction=topics.item&news_id=44130.

⁴⁷ Béatrice Pouligny's ERD paper touches upon a number of these issues. See Pouligny, *State-Society Relations and Intangible Dimensions of State Resilience and State Building: A Bottom-Up Perspective*, background paper draft submitted to the European Report on Development, 10 April 2009.

Recommendation 2: Invest more in integrating states with their societies by helping them adopt local models, take better advantage of their informal institutions, de-centralise more authority and responsibility to their cities and regions, and improve their taxing capacity.

States need to look inward for their resources and institutional models, and adopt political and economic structures and processes that reflect the history, complexity, and particularity of their peoples and environment. Far too many post-colonial regimes have looked outward for their governance models and resources, and have become dependent on foreign aid in the process, which has effectively guaranteed that their domestic roots will always be too shallow to support them.

This does not mean that conventional, Western political models have no relevance to non-Western societies, but it does mean that these models need to be adapted to accommodate local political, economic, and societal customs and conditions. The goal should not be centralised states with Western-style laws and a democracy defined solely in terms of regular elections, but should, instead, be the promotion of capable, inclusive, participatory, responsive, and accountable governments, no matter what form that they take. Somaliland and Botswana, for example, have sought to root their political systems within a traditional paradigm that takes advantage of widely-accepted norms of governance.

Far more emphasis must be placed on seeking locally appropriate solutions for problems of governance, land and resource management, and knowledge transfer if development is ever going to become locally propelled and thus sustainable. Certainly, no society that has successfully developed has depended as heavily on foreign resources, foreign political models, foreign languages, and foreign laws as fragile states typically do today.

Shifting the emphasis in this fashion will require donors to display much more humility in how they approach the problems of fragile states and to invest far more heavily in understanding local societies and diagnosing the political challenges that they face. Building local capacity to research the “human geography” of states and analyse socio-cultural contexts is crucial - as has already been recognised by some donors. The Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation, for example, ran a program in which it underwrote local organizations carrying out socially-relevant research in nine countries across the developing world; and a recently launched Hewlett Foundation initiative is providing long-term support to twenty-four think tanks in eleven African countries.

In many instances, the most effective means of making use of local capacities and institutions and of improving governance will be to focus on building up local governments and tying them as closely as possible to their communities.⁴⁸ This approach will be particularly effective where local communities can take advantage of traditional identities and institutions, such as in rural areas and small towns (where chiefs and village elders retain strong legitimacy), and where one identity group dominates an area (as the clans do in many parts of Somalia). Such cohesive groups are better able to capitalise on their common interests and affinities than the divided populations at the national level are. Decentralising government (and its authority, financial resources, and systems of accountability) in this way will be especially helpful in large, sprawling countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the Sudan, which are much more likely to be able to harness existing societal bonds and to capitalise on pockets of relative cohesion if they give individual regions, large urban areas, or even districts of cities (even those with multiple groups) much greater authority to manage their own affairs. In contrast, the top-down approach typically advocated by the international community ignores local

⁴⁸ Note that “total budgetary resources allocated to local governments [in Africa] were typically miniscule, while only 2 percent of public employees did not work for the central government, a quarter of the levels prevailing in Asia and half of those in Latin America”. Van de Walle, *African Economies*, p. 125.

populations' indigenous capacity for institution building - and re-inforces a dependency on outsiders.

Central governments (or, in some case, regional organisations - see Feature Box 4) have important roles to play in ensuring a stable currency, promoting an extensive market for goods, constructing intercity transportation links, and setting basic banking, legal, health, and education standards. But it falls to local or district governments to provide the state services that most affect families and small companies on a day-to-day basis. Lower-level governments provide, for example, most education, health, and road construction services, and may even play a major role in judicial, police, real estate, and corporate regulation and oversight.

Feature Box 4: West African Regionalism⁴⁹

West Africa, the fifteen countries stretching from Senegal to Nigeria, is the best candidate for a regional approach to state-building in Africa. The area is wracked by some of the worst problems facing the developing world: pervasive ethnic and religious conflict; corrupt officials and impotent institutions; a dearth of skilled workers made worse by a powerful brain drain; poor investment climates; AIDS. Twelve West African countries have experienced armed conflict in recent years. Seventy-five percent of the area's people live under governments that cannot deliver many of the most basic services - including, in more than a few cases, security.

The difficulties facing each state are multiplied by the fact that its neighbours share analogous problems. Moreover, conflicts spill easily across borders, as do refugees, arms, and instability.

Instead of trying to fix a plethora of dysfunctional governments one by one, international efforts would be better concentrated on building up a regional organisation which - with outside backing in its early years, and managed by a team of accomplished executives familiar with local conditions - could provide practical help and incentives to raise governance standards, merge economies, and integrate transportation systems. By superseding national institutions in a few crucial domains, the new organ would also help circumvent some of the region's most deep-rooted problems: political illegitimacy spawned by discredited policies, toxic intergroup relations, and legions of corrupt bureaucrats.

This regional organisation would then focus on programmes designed to improve the investment environment across West Africa. Convergence standards could be developed to regulate the starting and closing of companies, enforcing contracts, registering property, public procurement, the hiring and firing of workers, and on obtaining credit. Strong regional powers to combat corruption, promote competition, and facilitate trade would help to reform the poor investment climates that dysfunctional national institutions have produced. Investing in region-wide transport links would enlarge markets and increase growth rates.

West African states lack the institutional and management depth to construct a robust regional organisation on their own, but they could do so in partnership with the European Union. The EU could organise a five- to ten-year plan of grants designed to systematically enhance regional capabilities. Annual funding could increase by, say, \$20 million per year as the regional organisation expands its work, subject to Member States meeting certain obligations and the organisation passing regular performance audits; local funding from tariffs and other fees would also rise progressively. A long-term commitment that levelled off at \$100 million annually - a distinctively modest sum compared to the billions of aid currently being spent on the region would go a long way towards creating the momentum necessary to accelerate regional designs. An EU commitment to supplement the region's security capabilities and to work with - and sometimes lean on - individual Member States to fulfill their commitments to the organisation would complement this financial support.

⁴⁹ This analysis borrows from Seth Kaplan, *West African Integration: A New Development Paradigm?* *The Washington Quarterly* 29, no. 4 (Autumn 2006): pp. 81-97.

Local governments are by no means perfect. They are often “afflicted by parochialism, factionalism, the danger of élite capture, inequity, and injustice” and require “resources, support, and constructive initiatives from agencies (governmental and nongovernmental) at higher levels”. Even so, down-sizing government functions to villages, towns, and the districts of each city can harness the power of face-to-face interaction and encourage more transparent and accountable forms of government. “The face-to-face relationships at the local level allow greater scope for establishing trust, accommodation, and a sense of mutuality than do the more anonymous relationships that exist at higher levels.”⁵⁰

Given that fragile states are fractured along identity, cultural, and linguistic lines, and that their different regions are weakly connected because of poor infrastructure, disadvantageous political geographies, and feeble administrative systems, locally-driven models of development⁵¹ are more likely to succeed than state-based models, especially if gains within local arenas are extended over time both horizontally to other localities and vertically to higher-level government bodies.⁵² A locally-based model would emphasise the construction of a series of competent city-based provincial bureaucracies built around relatively cohesive populations and based upon locally-accepted institutions, instead of trying to build a robust national government, especially in large countries such as the DRC. It would also ensure that local communities were not held hostage to the dysfunctions of a national government. Focusing aid on these “pockets of opportunity” would be more effective in the short-term - and would encourage other areas to improve through competition for funds in the medium-term.

States need to be deeply enmeshed within the societies which they are meant to represent if they are to be effective tools of governance and development. As a report from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development concluded, it is of:

“great importance to formulate policies that help to better link formal and informal institutions. Given the fact that it might be very difficult, impossible, or not desirable to change the indigenous social structure, there is an urgent need to know more on under which conditions the different levels of institutions ... can be better linked.”⁵³

Governments such as Mali, for instance, could bolster their legitimacy and effectiveness if they were to recognise traditional land tenure arrangements (thus enhancing the security and usefulness of property rights) and document and formalise some aspects of customary law.⁵⁴ Recognising the need for institutional diversity - even multiplicity (whereby a state recognises, and integrates, where possible, different historical traditions) - and for countries to be both practical and flexible in building governments around the capacity and institutions that already exist on the ground, would transform the way in which donors approach state-building.

⁵⁰ James Manor, “Introduction: Synthesizing Case Study Findings”, in: *Aid That Works: Successful Development in Fragile States*, ed. James Manor, (Washington, DC: World Bank, 2007), pp. 13–14.

⁵¹ Not coincidentally, pre-colonial government in Africa, faced with enormous difficulties in broadcasting power, creating infrastructure, constructing loyalties, and controlling large amounts of land, typically consisted of a central authority and a series of concentric circles radiating out from the core, with central authority diminishing the further out one went, a system far removed from the imported European territorial-based system. See Jeffrey Herbst, *State and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control*, (Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press, 2000), pp. 35–57.

⁵² Manor, “Introduction”, p. 15.

⁵³ Johannes Jütting, *Institutions and Development: A Critical Review*, Working Paper no. 210, OECD Development Centre (Paris, France: OECD, July 2003), p. 36.

⁵⁴ Robert Pringle, *Democratization in Mali: Putting History to Work*, Peaceworks no. 58 (Washington DC: United States Institute of Peace, October, 2006), pp. 60–61.

The establishment of various forms of iterative accountability loops and de-centralised democratic bodies such as oversight committees, deliberative forms of public participation, and traditional forms of consultation can institutionalise processes that bind the state more closely to society, thereby making it more legitimate, more accountable, more reflective of people's needs, and more effective in the delivery of public services.

"Participatory mechanisms can provide access for poorer groups to policy-making processes. This puts the focus on the iterative relationship, over time, of state and society, rather than on 'strengthening' civil society *vis-à-vis* the state ... the detailed design of institutions and programmes needs to be locally agreed, and adapted to a particular context."⁵⁵

Taxes have an especially important role to play in integrating the state with society and ensuring the former is dependent on the latter. As has been the case with state-building in Europe, bargaining over taxes can be a tool with which various interest groups within a society negotiate among themselves and with the holders of state power over policy, constructing, in the process, a fiscal social contract and a new set of relations based upon accountability, mutual rights, and obligations. The more that the élites who control the levers of government are dependent on their citizens for financing, the more likely they are to build up the organisational and political capacities of the state and tailor policy to meet the needs of taxpayers and citizens.⁵⁶ In contrast, the more that élites are able to harvest natural resource rents or foreign aid, the more likely they are to disregard the needs of society.⁵⁷

Aid needs to be tailored to re-inforce the role of taxation in connecting the state with society, rather than disconnecting one from the other.⁵⁸ Such an approach calls for much more attention to be paid to enhancing the state's ability to levy taxes and to encouraging public debate on where revenue comes from and how it is spent, in contrast to the international community's current focus on setting aid targets and defining spending priorities. Money should be given on a matching basis and only in proportion to what governments themselves can generate, in order to ensure their dependency on local resources. Local governments should play a much greater role in raising revenue than they do now (central governments rarely share the responsibilities in Africa today), not least because it will integrate them more closely with local communities.

⁵⁵ IDS, *Signposts to More Effective States*, p. 6.

⁵⁶ Institute of Development Studies (IDS), *Signposts to More Effective States: Responding to Governance Challenges in Developing Countries*, (Brighton UK: IDS, 2005), pp. 46–47.

⁵⁷ "States which can raise a substantial proportion of their revenues from the international community are less accountable to their citizens and under less pressure to maintain popular legitimacy. They are therefore less likely to have the incentives to cultivate and invest in effective public institutions." Todd Moss, Gunilla Pettersson & Nicolas van de Walle, *An Aid-Institutions Paradox? A Review Essay on Aid Dependency and State Building in Sub-Saharan Africa*, Working Paper no. 74 (Washington DC: Center for Global Development, January 2006), p. 1.

⁵⁸ "Several studies [found] that tax revenues and level of foreign aid have had a significant negative correlation." Nicolas van de Walle, *African Economies and the Politics of Permanent Crisis, 1979–1999*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 73.

Recommendation 3: Ensure a more equitable distribution of economic, political, cultural, and public resources across regions, genders, and ethnic, religious, and clan groups.⁵⁹

The presence of severe horizontal inequities (HIs) within a state is usually a reliable indicator that the state lacks resilience to cope with rapidly changing or difficult circumstances. Such countries are strongly pre-disposed to violent conflict because significant segments of their populations view the state as illegitimate. The acute economic, political, and cultural exclusion that exists in many fragile states undermines efforts to improve the well-being of millions of the world's poorest citizens.

In many cases, it is hard to judge the extent of such inequities because little attempt has been made to measure and monitor them. The great majority of international aid and loan programmes do not even attempt to take HIs into account when disbursing money or when monitoring government effectiveness. In some cases - Nigeria, for instance - states cannot even collect data on HIs because of the political sensitivity of anything related to ethnicity and religion.

Far greater effort and resources should be devoted by aid agencies not only to measuring HIs and other indicators of social cohesion (or its absence) but also to better understanding and diagnosing of the socio-political and institutional fault lines that plague fragile states (as touched upon in Recommendation 2).⁶⁰ Commissioning more extensive social science and policy research - especially research conducted by individuals and organisations based in the countries targeted - would be relatively inexpensive and would pay rich dividends in terms of developing both international and local policies that are carefully tailored to address the inevitably complex problems found in fragile states.⁶¹

Unfortunately, "in practice international aid often re-inforces existing inequalities". Aid programmes, for instance, often exhibit strong bias towards certain regions or sectors. Similarly, structural adjustment policies "often reinforce rather than offset existing HIs". (NGOs, in contrast, usually ameliorate severe HIs when they provide basic services to deprived areas.) Donors should not only guard against such unintended effects but also work harder to ensure that public services - including the rule of law and security - are equitably provided to all citizens and areas of a state, especially where governments have been unwilling or unable to allocate services fairly. Sector-specific programmes (such as the EU's Export Earnings Stabilisation System, Stabex) could be designed to specifically support the poorest groups (Stabex, for example, could support the cultivation of certain crops grown mainly in a country's most deprived areas). The socio-political causes of low resilience are also likely to be addressed more carefully if development professionals are made more sensitive to the importance of social cohesion and HIs by placing these two issues on donor agendas, by ensuring their inclusion in government and international financial institution strategy papers, and by encouraging their being measured more carefully.⁶²

⁵⁹ Parts of this section draws on the analysis presented in Frances Stewart, Graham K. Brown & Arnim Langer, "Policies towards Horizontal Inequities", in: *Horizontal Inequities and Conflict: Understanding Group Violence in Multiethnic Societies*, ed. Frances Stewart, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), pp. 301–325.

⁶⁰ As suggested by Luca Alinovi during the roundtable discussion at the ERD conference in Barcelona, 8 May 2009.

⁶¹ The Hewlett Foundation and the International Development Research Centre (IRDC) recently launched an initiative that does precisely this in eleven African countries, expecting that long-term budget support and technical training will greatly enhance their capacity to conduct quality research, expand societal and institutional linkages, and influence policy. See <http://www.hewlett.org/news/partners-pledge-us-30-million-to-strengthen-african-think-tanks-to-inform-development-policy>.

⁶² Stewart, Brown & Langer, "Policies towards Horizontal Inequities", pp. 315–316.

Within the political and economic spheres, HIs can be tackled both directly and indirectly. One direct measure is to institutionalise (be it formally or informally) power-sharing arrangements that create balanced group representation in the executive (by, for example, sharing top jobs, as happens in Lebanon and Nigeria), legislature, judiciary, the military, police, and government bureaucracy. Another direct step is to introduce affirmative action policies in order to ensure appropriate levels of group representation in higher education, employment in all sectors, public infrastructure contracts, the provision of financial services (all of which are used in South Africa), credit allocation, housing, land ownership (used in Namibia), and the provision of health services (used in northern Ghana).⁶³ Indirect measures could range from the introduction of proportional representation (which is more likely to ensure intergroup balance than first-past-the-post systems), to the adoption of general policies that benefit the more deprived groups within a population, such as progressive taxation, anti-poverty programmes, increases in primary school spending, and regional development plans. De-centralising government - as Ethiopia and Nigeria have attempted - can also help to distribute power and resources more equitably (see the previous recommendation).

Although direct measures may deliver the most tangible benefits in the short-term, they are also more likely to strengthen the salience of group identities, thereby accentuating social divisions, rather than encouraging integration. For this reason, direct measures should be temporary, rather than permanent, informal (where feasible), rather than formal, and accompanied by longer-term indirect measures. Indirect steps such as integrating groups by making them attend the same schools, by creating economic and political incentives to co-operate, and by nurturing a stronger national identity (as discussed in Recommendation 1) can reduce divisive group identities over time.

Dealing with inequities in cultural status is more a matter of recognition than of redistribution. States should ensure equal opportunity in terms of the observance of religious rites and celebrations, and respecting differences in laws and traditions regarding marriage and inheritance is also essential. Undoubtedly, countries divided by marked religious differences - such as the states riven by a Muslim-Christian divide - need to be flexible. No less important than religious and cultural equality is respect for linguistic difference. Every cultural group should have the right to use its own language, with major languages receiving special recognition at the national level. Ghana, one of the more cohesive countries in Africa, has actively promoted the use of fifteen major Ghanaian languages. While the continuing use of European tongues perpetuates inequities, the use of indigenous languages not only reduces such differences, but also facilitates efforts to spread literacy and knowledge. Plural legal systems - that recognise and integrate different historical traditions - may be necessary in some cases (and may prove more effective, in many areas, in keeping the peace and in protecting property rights - as discussed in the last section).

Many European countries - such as Switzerland and Belgium - have successfully shared power between identity groups for centuries. In Africa, countries such as Ethiopia and Nigeria have also instituted various forms of power-sharing, albeit with mixed success. Many countries, however, have done little or nothing to address group disparities among their populations, making them especially combustible. Political and economic disparities in Kenya, for instance, were a prime cause of its 2007–08 post-election riots.

In general, policies that address political HIs have the greatest chance of reducing conflict, yet may not necessarily impact upon the most disadvantaged. Policies that tackle socio-economic differences without dealing with political exclusion have had a limited effect, especially because socio-economic disparities are often deeply-entrenched given the inter-connections between social capital, financial assets, education, and professional opportunity. The examples of Northern Ireland and Malaysia, however, show how a strong political commitment to policies that attack socio-economic inequalities on

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

many fronts simultaneously can gradually have an impact, markedly reducing inequities over time while reducing the incidence of ethnic and religious conflict. Malaysia introduced a variety of anti-poverty programmes, quotas for public schools, credit policies, and capital re-structuring plans to favour its disadvantaged Malay population. Northern Ireland made a concerted effort to correct Catholic discrimination through housing, education, healthcare, and employment policies.