

## Participatory Intervention



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The front line for international interventions that exercise any degree of political authority in transition has proved to be at the level of local administration. Here, the Western-style paradigm of state building, which is preoccupied with forming a national executive, legislature, and judiciary, confronts resilient traditional structures, socially legitimate powerholders, abusive warlords out to win, or coping mechanisms communities rely on under conflict conditions. Options for the establishment or reconstruction of governing institutions seem stark: either reinforce the status quo and build on it, further empowering the already strong; or replace altogether what exists with a new administrative order. But there may be a middle road.

In the past, in Somalia and Cambodia, and later in Kosovo and East Timor, interveners invariably followed the line of least resistance, rendering themselves irrelevant in terms of the impact they had where the overwhelming majority of the population lives. The result was a social and political reality that developed by itself, regardless of the size of the international presence or the scope of the mission's mandate. By contrast, the dimensions of the social engineering project to invent and to introduce an entirely new governance system are vast. Planners have never assessed the number of elements and the breadth of such an assignment, nor have implementers ever adequately prepared for the task, let alone effectively accomplished it. Appreciating the scale of the venture might have led to the conclusion that it was impossible, certainly in the relatively short time frame of most interventions.

Instead, what may be feasible is a longer-term transition in which space is provided for local voices to be expressed and for communities to get directly involved in the evolution of their own cultural or political foundations, as part of a gradual integration into the national state apparatus. This means giving time for an indigenous paradigm to co-exist with, or to gradually transform during the creation of, modern institutions. Integral to the process is the design of mechanisms for genuine popular participation in administrative bodies at the local level, which can also guarantee representation upward throughout the government-building enterprise from the very beginning to ensure its social viability.

### **Asocial Interventions**

Two particular factors drew the international community into the temporary exercise of political authority, whether minimally in the form of assistance to an interim government, as now in Afghanistan; or in a more intrusive escalation in partnership with the departing occupier, as in Namibia; control of divided factions, as in Cambodia; and ultimately governorship of territory and population, most completely in East Timor.

First, in the midst of complex emergencies, a wide range of intergovernmental agencies and nongovernmental organizations independently addressed security, humanitarian, developmental, human rights, judicial, policing, and economic concerns. To achieve unity of effort for greater effectiveness, civilian unity of command was formalized in multifunctional operations with multiple components or pillars. The aim was to improve harmonization across the various sectors, both horizontally and vertically within missions.

Second, it became clear that military forces alone, or massive humanitarian assistance, could stem some of the worst symptoms of violence but could not resolve the sources of conflict.<sup>1</sup> Doing so required direct involvement in the local political process, and because the national government was fragile, fragmented or altogether collapsed, international interventions began to assume increasing degrees of political authority over the territory and population. Transitional administrations finally exercised total executive, legislative, and judicial powers as interim governments.

Excluded from the equation, extraordinarily, were the people of the country.<sup>2</sup> The subculture of UN missions—their leadership, and much of their staff, was rooted in a diplomatic habit, relating institution to institution or at most talking to a minority elite. Civilian bureaucrats were not as accustomed as some militaries to interacting with the local population in their operations. That asocial form of alienation was tenable in limited types of intervention, but it was disastrous when assisting or acting as a governing authority attempting to build capacity for a self-sustaining state.<sup>3</sup>

The institutional mind-set had also plagued early adventures, as in Somalia, when UN officials wasted months under famine conditions seeking consent to international deployments from a sovereign government that no longer existed. The question of consent was subsequently overwhelmed by the formula of declaring particular crisis zones a “threat to international peace and security” and then intervening under the broad terms of Chapter VII of the UN Charter. In the wake of radically intrusive transitional administrations, perhaps the issue of consent

should be revisited in a considerably broader sense, socially through the direct participation of local communities in international operations of whatever variety, thus fostering a degree of downward accountability and legitimacy that has so far been absent.

Indeed, following the doctrinal evolution of interventions since the end of the Cold War—spanning “second-generation” uses of force in peace operations during the early years to the comprehensive exercise of political authority until now<sup>4</sup>—the next step is to identify the means for better popular participation in international efforts to establish governing structures. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan has acknowledged the necessity of “participatory governance” if a domestic peace is ever to be sustainable.<sup>5</sup> However, other than reflecting the familiar ingredients of the Western state, the idea of participation among the democratization and peacebuilding cognoscenti is still at the stage of labels or headlines, and the notion lacks clear definition, any kind of effective strategy, or as much appreciation of the local mind-set as of the model to be imported.<sup>6</sup> Similarly, the bulk of General Assembly debates about popular participation have focused on specific disadvantaged groups, such as women and minorities, and addressed how they can be better empowered and included in government. This narrow, albeit important, perspective cannot accommodate the much broader task of holistically integrating a population during and after the formation of public administration.

### **Social Participation**

In order to actually address the sources of civil conflict, it can never be enough to focus on armed factions competing for control of a capital or to fill the appearance of a central vacuum when an occupier has withdrawn. There has to be an intimate understanding of why the population is engaged in strife and what fuels it. What drives villagers to take part in war? What can make them stop? Appreciating such perceptions at the grassroots level is a key piece of information around which to design a meaningful approach to conflict resolution. The answer may be rooted in nothing less than an entire worldview through which the conflict is filtered. Historical facts surrounding why war broke out may pale in comparison to a religious belief system or set of values that functions as the motor for continued violence.

The blunt approach of international interventions has been to rely on “free and fair” electoral exercises as a single event, and to promote global standards of political rights and North Atlantic concepts of democracy that do not resonate with local communities and that are not

translated into their paradigm. Individuals may turn out to vote en masse, but their understanding of the ballot may be defined according to a parallel cosmos. A democratically elected powerholder may be recognized internationally though not locally, since the voting process was unrelated to beliefs regarding sources of political legitimacy.<sup>7</sup> The problem is more acute when voting for distant national representatives than for more familiar local leaders. The result can be a recycled conflict between what the people and the rest of the world understand as the rightful powerholder.

Similarly, an international mission may appoint or empower a young university graduate on the basis of modern skills and merit as a new administrative official. But that person may not have local acknowledgment if the community continues to adhere to an aged chief approved by ancestral spirits, a warlord that has protected the village, or another type of leader with whom people identify. State building in this manner results in a superficial layer on top of the reality of social life and can lead again to conflict between the two perspectives.<sup>8</sup>

Despite the long-term presence of some kind of state apparatus, in the form of either colonial rule or an independent though authoritarian regime, local communities have often functioned according to their own fundamentally stateless structures, regardless of the paramountcy of the machine controlled by the capital city.<sup>9</sup> Considerably older than the national identity, such social structures have proved profoundly resilient and easily resist quick interventions to build new “democratic” institutions to replace the ones that have previously collapsed. Relying, therefore, on an election as the sum total of popular participation in building a state simply replicates the utter disconnect between the people and the government, laying the foundation for institutions to fail again.

To avoid that scenario and to bridge the local-national gap, communities have to be integrated into the process of institution building, where they live and at higher levels, in order to foster a sense of identification with the greater whole and a feeling of ownership of the alternative structure.<sup>10</sup> In this manner, through improved trust in their now more responsive administrative bodies, the idea of “citizenship” can begin to have a logical meaning. This sort of realignment is assuredly an arduous and lengthy undertaking, and yet it must start at the very beginning of an intervention. A transitional period generally, and its earliest phases particularly, provides a unique opportunity to minimize the factional politicization of public administration before a new government can replace civil service officials with the party faithful. In fact, the broadest approach to popular participation may be most feasible

before a transfer of power has occurred and an electoral victor begins reshaping the instruments of control.

One of the overall dangers of such an effort, though, is a breakdown of indigenous social structures and a population thereafter having to rely on the successful functioning of state mechanisms. Should the government or its administration become fragile or collapse for whatever reason in the future, a worse set of anarchical conditions may result, in which people have lost any checks and balances that may have been inherent in their social order. Conflict under such circumstances can become “cannibalistic,” the term Somalis used to describe the uninhibited dissolution of their country in the early 1990s.

### Participatory Experiments

Development agencies, including the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), have employed various bottom-up approaches in the whole range of assistance activities.<sup>11</sup> There have been comparable attempts to specifically strengthen civil society and to improve capacity building for “governance” according to multiple definitions. The word has been used narrowly to mean efficient and effective public management or more broadly to encompass the mechanisms, processes, and institutions through which citizens and groups articulate their interests.<sup>12</sup> However, there have been relatively few occasions when the international community has aimed to increase popular participation in the actual establishment of local administration.<sup>13</sup>

Furthermore, development agencies have treated “participation” in a universal sense. There are different types of participation that have to be matched to the type of society existing in any particular area. For instance, the approach to a stratified, hierarchical society—like a Timorese kingdom—should vary from one designed for a segmentary group without centralized leadership—as among historically nomadic clans in Somalia. These approaches will also vary according to the degree of social change intended and the scale of time required to alter existing structures. Deciding on the amount of social engineering to be conducted will directly affect the balance of power of local stakeholders, given the inevitable empowering or disenfranchising effect of any such project.

In Afghanistan, the traditional *shura* (council) was often employed as an interface for delivering humanitarian assistance and implementing aid projects. Rather than being an internationally sponsored body, the

shura was an indigenous means of local decisionmaking that could provide ownership of outside assistance. It could be composed of elders, religious authorities, or other influential personalities who are well-respected community members, have good negotiation skills, and are knowledgeable. Sometimes existing traditional village or tribal shuras were used, while in other cases ad hoc shuras were instituted. All individuals relevant to the task to be accomplished had to participate in meetings in order to reach nominal consensus, though not all voices were equal. The process met with varying degrees of success and was open to claims that shuras were manipulated to the benefit of local leaders and/or that it amounted to social engineering at the hands of foreigners. The speed with which shuras learned “aidspeak” was a good indicator of whether the shura was homegrown or functioning as part of an external agenda.

Applying the shura as a model, the UN Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT) and UNDP established community forums that elect consultative boards to guide and to provide advice on community affairs. Although these neighborhood bodies are a form of self-government in the absence of formal governing structures, they have yet to form the basis of a state administration.<sup>14</sup>

Since the eighteenth century, the shura concept has also been adapted at the national level in the form of the *loya jirga* (grand council). The 2002 *loya jirga* convened by the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan and the Afghan Interim Authority was “a hybrid-model of traditional selection, popular representation, and central government prerogative.” To guarantee broad, balanced representation, a free-and-fair universal suffrage election was neither feasible nor desirable.<sup>15</sup> However, many Afghan groups felt the *loya jirga* had been preorchestrated and was not an endogenous political process.<sup>16</sup>

As part of a “regionalization” strategy attempted by the two UN Operations in Somalia, regional and district councils of elders were formed to outmaneuver factional fighting in Mogadishu. However, in the clan system, elders played more of an advisory than leadership role, and so Somalis never regarded the councils as anything more, contradicting international intentions to create alternative political centers of gravity. Eventually, the competition for control of the capital consumed any efforts outside the city and below the “national” level.<sup>17</sup>

In Rwanda in 1997, the World Bank initiated the Community Reintegration and Development Project (CRDP), which tested a decentralized and participatory approach to community development. The premise of “decentralization” was to transfer decisionmaking and expenditure authority to lower levels of government. The project established community

development committees (CDCs) at the *commune* (later “district”) level, based on elections from the *cellules* and the *secteurs*. “Participation” meant a partnership between the commune administrations and the local population around sectoral planning and project implementation. The CDC concept and structure laid the groundwork for the first-ever elections of district administrators (formerly the commune *burgomasters* appointed by the president since independence). Furthermore, the CDCs have now become a formal part of local government.<sup>18</sup>

Still, the project did lead to some resentment among other local leaders. The Rwandan government subsequently created politico-administrative committees (CPAs). The CPAs complemented the work of the CDCs, and members were elected at the same time. But the separation of CPA members from the CRDP project cycle led to several misgivings and delays in implementation until the relationship between the two was improved.<sup>19</sup>

Perhaps the most extensive experiment of its kind, and indeed a valuable one from which to learn lessons, was the Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project (CEP) established by the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank in East Timor. Although it had a more development-focused precursor in Indonesia, in the context of the UN’s transitional administration of East Timor, the CEP aimed to establish the actual local administration of the country.<sup>20</sup> The dramatic scope of the project illustrates well the dilemmas associated with the creation of local governance structures and the need for a deep knowledge of social dynamics.

The UN structure extended formally to the level of the thirteen districts, with a minimal presence in the subdistricts, where 80 percent of the population lives. The CEP concept envisioned elections initially at the lowest strata of society, in the hamlets, for equal numbers of men and women to form village councils. Next, the village councils would elect equal numbers of men and women to form subdistrict councils. Grants would be provided directly to the subdistrict councils, which would then spend the funds based on proposals it received from the villages. This, it was hoped, would result in a degree of self-determination in reconstruction and reverse centuries of reporting upward to authority, thereby introducing accountability downward to a constituency. Ideally, in time, these structures, with the funding that they would have, would be consolidated and officially constitute a nascent form of self-administration.

An interesting question arises as to whether or not this model could be extended further upward, with subdistrict councils electing district councils, which in turn would elect a national council. Although politically

impossible under the circumstances in East Timor, the speed with which CEP elections were held indicated a rapid means of involving the population directly in some manner at the beginning of an intervention, thus avoiding reliance on appointed bodies that are less representative.

When negotiations began between the two banks, the UN, and the Timorese resistance regarding the establishment of the CEP, it became apparent that one part of the resistance had already started conducting elections independently for chiefs of villages and subdistricts and for councils of elders for both levels, composed of representatives of youth, women, and other civil society groups. By this time, the process had been completed at the village level in half the country, and so the issue was raised about the relationship between the CEP councils and these other structures. The two were reconciled in a rudimentary kind of separation of powers. Logically, therefore, to respect this division, neither the village chief as an executive nor any member of the council of elders corresponding to a quasi-judicial entity, could stand for election in the CEP process. For lack of anthropological knowledge, the implication of this particular issue was not anticipated.

In traditional Timorese society, only certain leaders—in most cases the village chief—can acceptably function as a political authority. His source of legitimacy is his heredity as part of a family ordained by ancestral approval. If the wrong person exercises political power, upsetting the cosmic order and the continuation of fertility, then villagers will fear ancestral sanctions that endanger the survival of the community, such as harvests failing or children falling ill. Furthermore, the separation of political powers does not make sense, since the village chief exercises his authority in a distinct hierarchy that functions in strict opposition to ritual power as part of the overall sociocosmic order.<sup>21</sup>

Therefore, because village chiefs were excluded from the CEP councils, they were not perceived by the community to have any political authority, which in turn meant that they could not form the basis of local administration. Instead, people elected to the councils precisely those individuals who were not older and senior or able to exercise political authority, but who were young, literate, and capable of interacting with foreigners. The village chief continued to rule as the acknowledged political head.<sup>22</sup>

Also, a principle carried over to East Timor from the World Bank's Indonesian experience was to focus on the subdistrict level, as it was seen as a weaker layer of society in comparison to the power of the districts and villages. Financing that level had been an attempt to subvert the influence of the other two, above and below it, thus creating the

opportunity for a new center of gravity, with space for alternative voices, to develop and to facilitate genuine community empowerment. With similar reasoning, it was also believed that by funding the CEP councils, despite the separation of powers agreed on, the other structures would atrophy without comparable resources. Precisely the opposite happened both vertically and horizontally, because the CEP councils could not compete with the social power of the village chief whom they had excluded.<sup>23</sup>

This experience poses a typical dilemma. It could be argued, for instance, that in order for the CEP councils to have better fulfilled the intentions behind them, the village chief should have been included—as one among many other issues affecting the project. Through him they would have commanded authority in accordance with local perceptions. Doing so, however, would have simply reinforced existing power structures, which internationally would have been regarded as inequitable and gender biased, and in conflict with individualistic values of human rights and democracy. Alternatively, a decision could have been made to challenge the existence of the village chief and dismantle traditional structures, replacing them altogether with administrative institutions of the central state. That would have been a radical social engineering campaign that could have been conducted brutally or, if done humanely, might simply have failed. A more sophisticated approach was necessary.

In East Timor, the decentralizing goals of the CEP confronted the hierarchical institutional culture of the UN transitional administration. More anthropological knowledge would not have avoided an acrimonious negotiation regarding the establishment of the project, which had been opposed by officials preoccupied with power at the center. Resenting their loss of control as part of the logic of a program aimed at community empowerment, UN negotiators turned down twice the only project that had been funded at the time. The ensuing conflict overwhelmed matters of substance regarding the CEP's design and would later squander the opportunity for popular participation provided by the transitional period. Only coordinated visits by the secretary-general and World Bank president James D. Wolfensohn forced a signature on the first-ever collaborative effort. In the absence of international consensus prior to the project's implementation, the territorial struggle among intervenors themselves undermined the CEP more than any other single factor, including the interests of Timorese stakeholders.<sup>24</sup> Still the experience with this model is worth considering in future government-building interventions.

### **Genuine Participation**

There is never a vacuum of power on the ground. Even when there is the complete absence of an identifiable state government or any semblance of governing institutions—as was the case when Indonesian forces withdrew from East Timor or when Somalia disintegrated—traditional structures evolve, social organization is redefined, and people continue to survive, filling the space; if it ever existed in the first place.

Past experiments demonstrate that for future participatory projects, the first step is to assess and to appreciate the dynamics of perception. Popular perspectives will equally affect any form of intervention, however minimal or extensive, in conflict, postconflict, and nonconflict environments and at any level, local or national. What is the system of ideas and values that constitute the local worldview and that influence how people are acting, how they interpret the conflict, and how they will perceive an outside intervention? For instance, is the power of a warlord based on the possession of arms, or is he legitimated by a social structure? Attempted disarmament is a military response in the first case; but the second requires the complicated undertaking of a social transformation. What kind of incentive can there be for people to question existing power structures, to seek alternatives, and to assume ownership of the forces of change?

Answering such questions will require a role for anthropologists and regional experts in international interventions, though to be accepted they have to adapt and adjust their methodologies to keep pace with an operational context. So far, anthropologists have identified the problem of national and institutional cultural differences among peacekeepers and between them and the local population.<sup>25</sup> However, work has not yet focused specifically on how to approach the complex policy puzzle of increased participation in state building. In practical terms, area expertise needs to be incorporated into training for local-level intervenors, development of the plan and the concept of participation to be attempted, and determination of a strategy for implementation and adaptation on the ground. Predeployment anthropological assessments should be combined with ongoing deep intelligence analysis of internal domestic politics as part of the initial negotiated acceptance of mission intentions and throughout all activities to be undertaken.

In this sense, specialized knowledge is one tool to help tackle the dilemma about the scope of social engineering, by identifying objectives according to what is possible or what degree of international commitment will be feasible. For instance, one national faction may be consolidating its power through local structures, and challenging local

leaders may not be possible without an intervention that decides to comprehensively confront that faction and create the political environment for other parties to have a place in a peace process. Avoiding the issue may amount to an implicit acceptance of the will of the strong and the reality of a balance of power, or it may lead to the explicit conclusion that an intervention need be something only minimal, given the dimensions of the circumstances. Consequently, the right knowledge can dictate planning by adjusting approaches to avoid predictable failures and by defining the best means both for establishing local administration and for conducting the overall national state-building enterprise, including the structuring of government, the formation of judicial institutions for the rule of law, and the reform of the security sector.<sup>26</sup>

The second step is to actually turn collated information into a detailed concept for genuine participation and to design the mechanisms necessary to support social transformations that are both effective and legitimate. The contours of what is to be done can only be determined according to the specifics of the case. Nevertheless, four options for participatory intervention can be identified that vary in the degree of social engineering to be undertaken. Listed in descending order of intrusiveness at the local level, they are not neat categories; there may be overlap between them or one may become another in the course of an intervention or subsequently. Still, these rough distinctions each lead to substantially different operational plans and decisions that flow from the amount of change intervenors anticipate on the ground. In every case, the process must begin at the start of an intervention, in the greatest window of opportunity for action—before new individuals are empowered who either exclude altogether the local level or are rejected by the population.

*1. Reinvention.* Local structures may be fully intact but fundamentally abusive, either because they are historically oppressive by nature or because they have been brutalized by conditions of conflict. They may have become factionalized and serve as the core engine for continued conflict. Fighting warlords may be legitimized by social structures in their respective home communities. Competing sets of local structures in the same place may constitute a source of violence. Alternatively, despite persisting social identities, indigenous political structures may have broken down either from the effects of war or from mass displacement or because they were reconstituted by a state-formation enterprise that has now collapsed.

With the objectives of protecting human rights or underwriting a peace process, intervenors may attempt to introduce across the country

an entirely new and standardized administration at the local level. Existing structures would have to be challenged, outmaneuvered, or co-opted as new institutions are established. The effort would require a considerable program of socialization for each community to identify with the proposed outcome. Significant preplanning, international political consensus, and human and financial resources will be needed to have any impact, as will a high degree of harmonization with all other aspects of a mission if the effort is not to unravel. As difficult as something of this magnitude sounds, not much less could fulfill the prevailing rhetoric about “democratization.”

2. *Transformation.* Indigenous social and political structures may have proved resilient and continue as the operating paradigm for much if not the majority of the population at the local level. They will have survived colonial occupations and perhaps decades under a newly independent state, but they may have never been integrated as part of the central governing apparatus. While competing factions, occupying powers, or a previously functioning government may have manipulated the existing structures and selectively replaced local leaders, the logic and concept of political legitimacy has remained intact.

As part of a new state-building enterprise, planners may decide that the short time frame of an intervention is insufficient to conduct a total social engineering project, or that the specifics of a transitional peace process require the support and legitimization of acknowledged leaders to ensure short-term results on the ground. However, the disconnection between the indigenous paradigm and the idea of the modern state may be too great to be sustainable. An ungovernable local level may lead to central authoritarianism in response, undermining objectives of democratization and possibly abusing human rights, in turn triggering potentially violent opposition and threatening eventual fragmentation. Alternatively, the local structures themselves may have been somewhat perverted from too much manipulation, and it might not be feasible to restore the integrity of the previous system. There may also be power struggles in individual villages as old rivalries emerge in the wake of a withdrawing occupier and competing claims for legitimate leadership.

Therefore, to avoid building state failure and repeating another cycle of conflict, the long-term objective would be to establish a modern state at all levels through a process of gradual transformation of existing structures into a formal, local administration. This strategy must form an inherent part of the transitional plan, which will need to provide for selective correction of any seemingly abusive practices or violations of human rights. Key to this model will be creating space for

the continuation of local ideas in some form while the community is gradually integrated into the state-building effort from bottom to top.

3. *Integration.* Indigenous structures may be fully functioning and constitute the reality of the social and political life of the population. They may already have transformed to some degree over time—in response to conflict, under colonial occupation, or due to a previous national state-formation experience—and resulted in a hybrid form of self-governing institutions. They may actually be stronger than a nominal and weak central government and more capable of delivering basic services to communities. They may even be the only functioning structures in the event of a total collapse in the capital city or before a new authority has been established after the withdrawal of an occupier. Also, the local structures themselves may be wholly appropriate as part of a future administration.

Therefore, it may not make sense to conduct a social engineering project in the short term, displacing what is effectively functioning while also attempting to construct a national executive, legislature, and judiciary with all that that entails. Equally, it may not make sense to transform the existing structures in the long term because of their acceptability or usefulness as the foundation for state-building efforts. Alternatively, intervenors may lack the political will, sufficient time, or adequate resources to make many changes at the local level; or they may be characteristically preoccupied with institutions in the capital, either by habit or as an exit strategy, withdrawing as soon as some semblance of a new authority can be recognized. There may also be an operational imperative to use what exists to produce some quick results, or partisan empowerment of local leaders may be the consequence of the support they offer a military intervention.

In all of these instances, the local level as configured, acting entirely independently as it has, may be integrated as a whole in the state-building effort, and it is not expected to change particularly over time. The model is one in which the central government and the local paradigm are connected, but one will not eventually replace the other. Instead, their relationship may be articulated in a constitution, perhaps with a separation of powers at different levels of administration. Additionally, there may be local representation at the national level and an official government presence at the local level. Serious offenses would be the responsibility of the judiciary, but communities may resolve other forms of conflict according to their own rules. While there may be selective correction at the local level because of human rights standards, government policies, or legislative acts, the structures themselves nevertheless continue largely intact.

If operational convenience is the rationale for whole-scale integration, then local structures cannot be unacceptably abusive or a factional source of conflict, otherwise this approach will fail after international withdrawal. Integration has to be a carefully harmonized process, made possible in the design of a mission's campaign plan and implemented accordingly. If the gap between local institutions and national government-building efforts is not reconciled during a transitional period, then a new pattern of disconnection will prevent integration from occurring. Instead, wide-scale disenfranchisement, opposition, authoritarianism, fragmentation, and conflict may be the sequential outcome.

*4. Reinforcement.* Local social and political structures may be far too resilient to contemplate their alteration and may already have been integrated in some previously decentralized governmental arrangement. Their role in national life may have been officially recognized and overwhelmingly accepted. While they have not constituted a source of conflict, they may nevertheless have been weakened somewhat by a violent environment, politically misused by central authorities, or debilitated by a lack of basic resources. Some local leaders may have been killed or may have fled as refugees, but the concept of local governance understood by the community has not been perverted in any way. The structures mostly in place are largely acceptable according to international standards of human rights and democratization. Alternatively, the international intervention is a minimal one with little capability beyond assistance.

The basic objective in this situation is to restore to their full capacities the existing bodies and to repatriate, restore, or help identify and support local leaders. Improving the relationship between these structures and a fragile central government being rebuilt, an authoritarian regime democratizing, or a new authority to which an occupier is transferring power may be the kind of limited activity performed during a transitional period. Any selective correction of the local institutions would be largely as the result of an overall strengthening of a national rule of law.

The profound danger of this option is that superficially it may be attractive to international donors who lack the political will or resources to do more, or to military forces that have been supported in their isolation of a faction or regime and therefore are unwilling to open up political space for alternative voices during the reconstruction phase. Due to imperatives of political convenience during a peace process, a mission following the line of least resistance will merely accommodate existing realities. In such a context, if local structures are factionalized and abusive or serve as an integral element in the dynamics of conflict,

to reinforce them will lead to the irrelevance of the intervention, if not to an exacerbation and deepening of socially driven violence.

At the international level, there has to be agreement on the selection of one of these options and an organized unity of effort in the field. Political competition among international agencies, no less than among local leaders or national elites, will profoundly affect the rearrangement of power that increased popular participation will imply. The choice of category will also be affected by the level of education and the breadth and depth of the skills base in the country; the amount of poverty and imbalance of wealth distribution; the relative sizes of urban versus rural populations; and the degree of identification of local groups with the elite. Unless a much more sophisticated approach to participation along these lines can be developed, exclusion of people from any aspect of state building will continue to cause costly interventions to founder. This means, in the midst of a world of national governments, having to forge a much more direct relationship between international and local communities, paradoxically to underwrite the state. 🌐

## Notes

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