PA-X
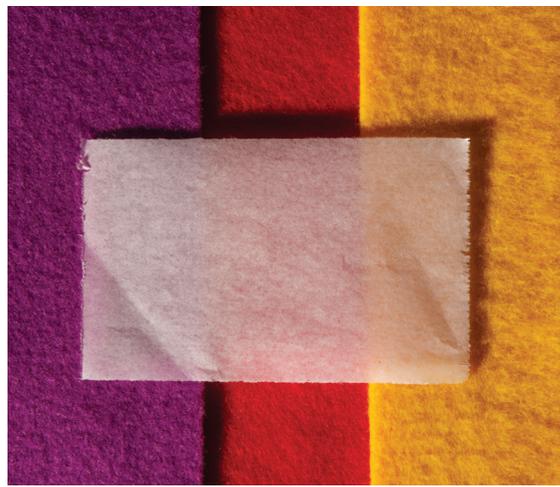
Building States while Building Peace? Statebuilding and Security Sector Reform in Peace Agreements

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Introduction

This research report addresses the relationship between peacebuilding and statebuilding, focusing on peace agreement provision since 1990.

In particular, it addresses the claim that (re)building states is the best way to build peace which dominated the peacebuilding debate in the first two decades after the end of the Cold War. Empirical assessments on how the peacebuilding-statebuilding-nexus plays out in the empirical reality of peace processes are rare. Due to the difficulty and complexity of finding appropriate empirical measurements, statebuilding post-conflict is most commonly assessed using a qualitative, case-study-based methodology.

Given how difficult statebuilding is to measure and quantify, the written text of peace agreements offers a potential novel avenue for approaching such measurement. Peace agreements contain written negotiated and, in most instances agreed, stipulations on what should be done in terms of an agenda for post-conflict change. The new PA-X Peace Agreement Database gathers all available peace agreements since 1990, including over 1500 documents in over 140 peace processes, coded along 220 categories, some of them weighted in terms of how goal-oriented the provision is. This data provides interesting insights into the reality of statebuilding agendas established through peace processes, particularly when using some of the coded categories as proxies for statebuilding efforts. This is even more interesting since peace agreements are negotiated to address the political realities that have driven the conflict. Therefore, they provide a 'living' representation of actual statebuilding agendas, possibly more than any other data capable of providing a basis for quantitative evaluation could.

This report uses ten variables coded in PA-X as proxies for the intended strength of statebuilding in peace agreements. These are references to political institutions, constitution's affirmation, constitutional reform, elections, electoral commission, political parties reform, civil society, public administration, police reform, and armed forces reform. All ten variables are weighted in PA-X, which means that it is possible to distinguish general commitments without any implementation component from concrete, but weak commitments, and strong, thoroughly defined commitments.

Analysing these ten variables provides an interesting and telling picture of what statebuilding is understood to involve, and how strong the commitments to it are, in single agreements, in peace processes, which usually consist of several separate agreements, and across peace process trajectories over time. Detailed methodical remarks are to be found in the footnotes. Three main findings emerge and can be analysed.

Statebuilding gets stronger after 1990, but declines after a peak in the first half of the 2000s

As graph 1 demonstrates, statebuilding agendas have been a substantial part of peace agreements since the early 1990s. However, commitments to statebuilding peak in the early 2000s, and then flatten out in the latter half of the 2000s, yet on a considerably higher level than before. These developments are very much driven by important peace processes that also set the standards for subsequent mediation practices and academic reflections: the 1990s are dominated by agreements from the Bosnia and Herzegovina peace process. The peak around 2005 is caused by a number of comprehensive peace processes consisting of a high number of interrelated agreements with strong statebuilding components that are happening at the same time: the CPA process between Sudan and what later would become South Sudan, the CPA process in Nepal, and the peace processes in the Philippines/Mindanao and in Somalia.

Graph 1: strength of statebuilding stipulations in peace agreements across time[1]

Strength of Statebuilding in Peace Agreements
### (indicator-based, per year)
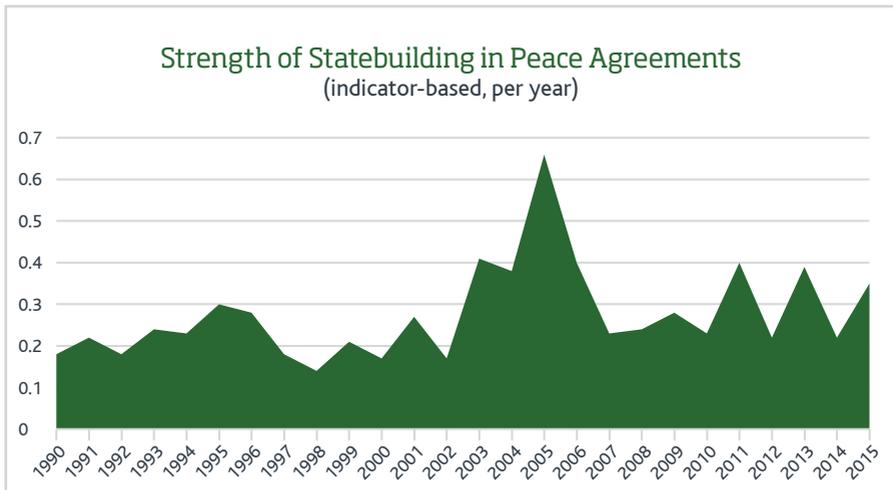
[1] This graph is based on a yearly average on a statebuilding index per agreement. This index ranges from 0 (none of the ten proxy variables present) to maximum 3 (all ten proxy variables present in maximum strength). An index of 0.5 for a particular year, therefore, means that the average peace agreement in the given year has a total strength of all ten indicators of 0.5 means that the average value of a single provision in a single agreement in the given year is at 0.5 (on a scale from 0 to 3), which is a considerably strong value due to the high number of agreements (e.g. ceasefires, implementation agreements) that do not include any stipulations concerning statebuilding.

These numbers chime with the literature on statebuilding and state fragility and the international statebuilding debate, which peaks in these years as well (Pospisil and Kühn, 2016). For example, the OECD INCAF Fragile States Principles were endorsed in 2007, following a substantial academic and policy debate on state fragility. The now famous 'Fragile States Index' by the Fund for Peace was published for the first time in 2006. This shows the close interlinkage between statebuilding practice and the statebuilding/fragility debate in policy and academia.

Statebuilding in Peace Agreements equals political institution building plus reforming the 'hard' security sector

What are the main approaches of statebuilding as negotiated in peace processes? Graph 2 shows that, across time, the statebuilding emphasis is put on two pillars. The first pillar involves strengthening of core security functions: the reform of the armed forces and the police, what is commonly referred to as security sector reform (SSR). The second pillar involves establishing or revising core institutions understood to be at the heart of any functional democratic polity: an implemented constitutional framework, political institutions, and elections. In contrast, the 'software' of a democratically constituted policy remains surprisingly weakly addressed: civil society and, especially, political parties are much less addressed in peace agreement provision.

Graph 2: Strength of statebuilding-related variables in peace processes[2]
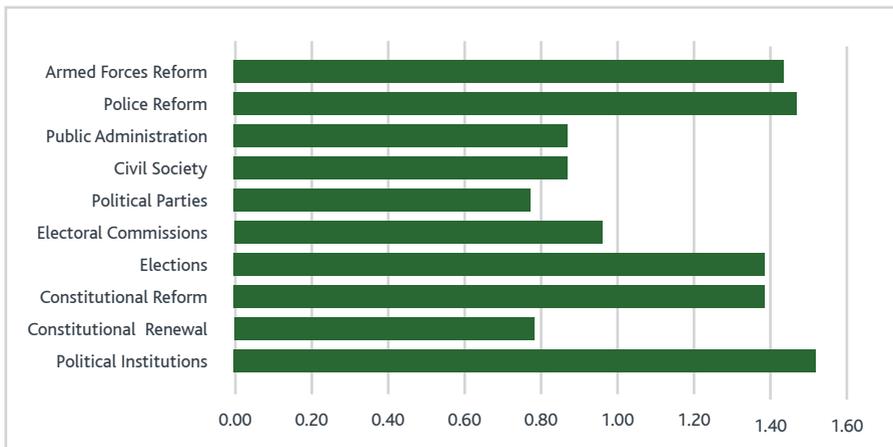
[2] While the statebuilding index refers to the same values as in graph 1, the unit of analysis in graph 2 is not the peace agreement, but the peace process, for which the highest value for each variable out of all peace agreements related to this process is taken. This explains the higher numbers.

The degree to which statebuilding is dominated by political institution-building and security-sector reform (SSR) is further demonstrated by graphs 3, 4 and 5. The trajectories of institution building and SSR closely mirror the ups and downs of statebuilding as a whole (cf. graph 1). Political party reform and civil society support (graph 4) also mirror the general statebuilding trend, yet on a comparably lower scale.

Interestingly, provision aimed at supporting civil society remains constant throughout, but on a lower level than political institution building, especially in the heyday of institution-building during the mid-2000s. However, overall the composition of statebuilding in peace agreements does not change significantly over time.

Graph 3: Political Institution Building in Peace Processes[1]

Statebuilding in Peace Agreements:
Political Institution Building
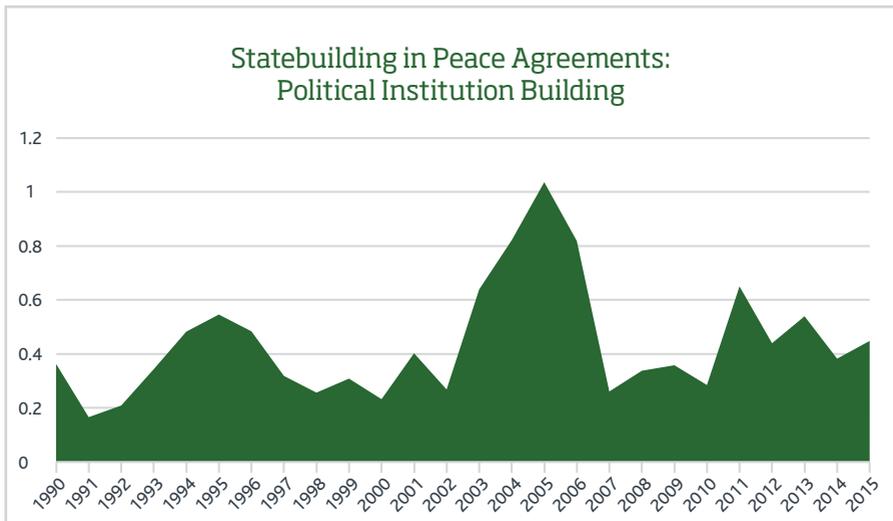
[1] For methodology, see n2 above.

Graph 4: Political Party reform and civil society support in peace agreements[2]

Statebuilding in Peace Agreements:
Political Parties and Civil Society

■ Political Parties ■ Civil Society
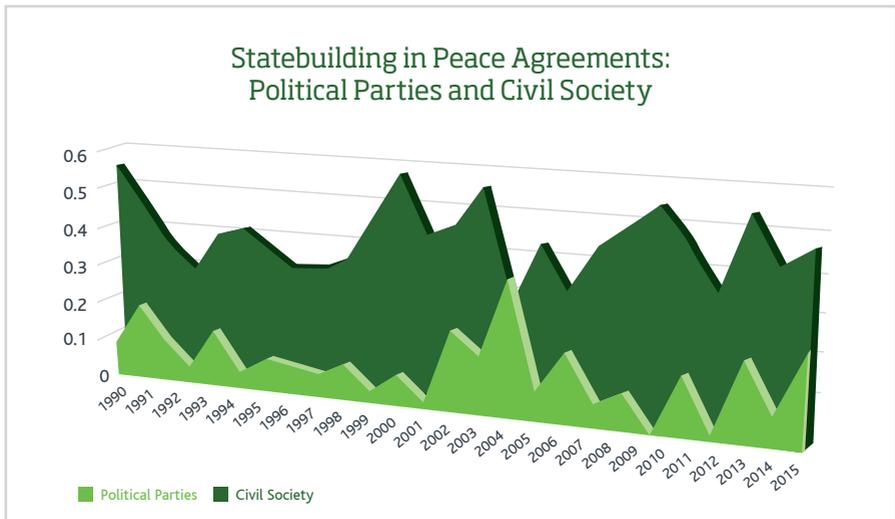
[2] For methodology, see n2 above.

Security-sector reform (see graph 5) in peace agreements is a significant part of the statebuilding agenda, throughout all peace processes since 1990. Interestingly, and somewhat counterintuitively, commitments to police reform are more constant and more strongly framed than provisions relating to reform of the armed forces. This can be suggested to be due to a variety of factors, including disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration (DDR) processes in which members of non-state armed groups become integrated into the police as part of an attempt to 'demilitarise and normalise' the security sector. These DDR provisions often require to be nested in substantial reform of the whole police structure, given that non-military police is often virtually non-existent in countries prior to a peace process.

Graph 5: Security Sector Reform in peace agreements[3]
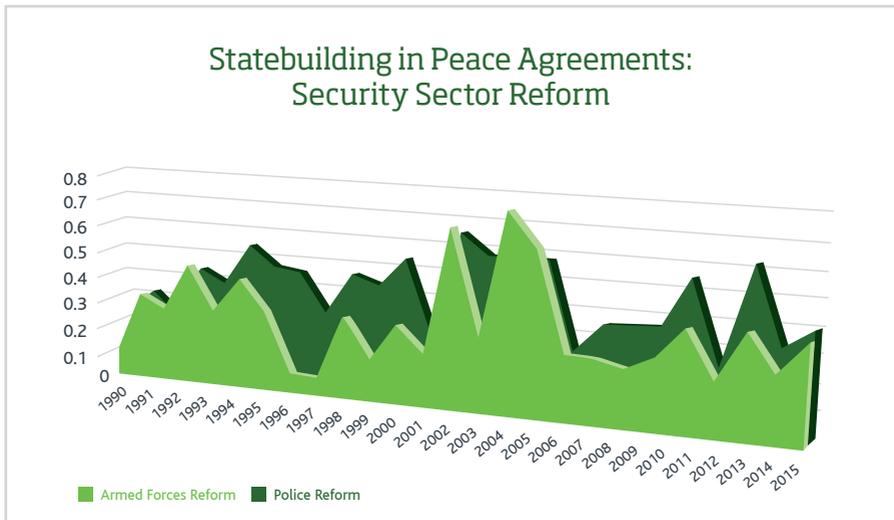
[3] For methodology see n2 above. Armed forces reform and police reform do not include references to pure combatant reintegration. There needs to be a clearly identifiable reform element attached to any stipulation dealing with armed forces or police.

Strong statebuilding efforts in peace agreements are most likely linked to power sharing

When looking at the peace process level, the power-sharing components in peace processes with strong statebuilding are much stronger than in those peace processes with weak statebuilding (see graph 6). This effectively means that states in peace processes are much more likely to be strengthened when there is clearer arrangement of how power is to be shared.

The motivation behind implementing statehood - to organise and institutionalise the sharing of power - is somewhat Hobbesian in nature, rather than reflecting a commitment to 'good governance' as espoused by development policy actors: states in peace agreements are reconstructed not primarily around good governance design, but rather involve institutionalising compromises between contenders for power who are at the heart of the conflict - politically, militarily, and, to a lesser extent, economically and territorially.

Graph 6: Statebuilding and power-sharing in peace processes[4]
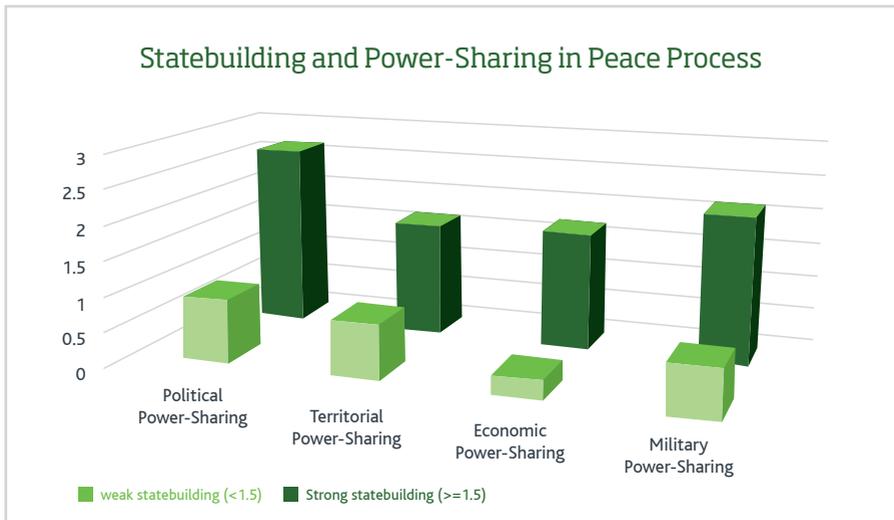
[4] For the methodological information about how the statebuilding and the power-sharing indexes are calculated cf. n6 below. 'Weak statebuilding' refers to all peace processes where the statebuilding index is below 1.5, 'strong statebuilding' to all peace processes where the statebuilding index is equal or above 1.5.

Concluding Remarks

Against the background of these observations, the interrelation of statebuilding and peacebuilding as implemented in peace processes via peace agreement commitments allows for three concluding statements:

▶ First, there is a strong correlation (note - not a causation) between power-sharing and political institution building. While this may seem obvious, it explains why so many peace / statebuilding processes do not follow the trajectory towards functional, democratic statehood, but rather result in 'formalised political unsettlement' (Bell and Pospisil, 2017). Political institutions cannot implement democratic governance in a traditional sense, since they are designed to mitigate the existing political unsettlement by institutionalising compromises over how power is held and exercised, effectively translating the conflict into the new political structures.

▶ Second, despite long-standing critique in the literature of this fact, the democratic 'software' of the state, such as political parties and civil society, is still not robustly addressed in peace processes. The available data is not sufficient to concluding that this failure to address the broader infrastructure of political participation is a root cause of statebuilding failure. However, the ongoing weakness of provision intended to support the development of political parties and civil society in the realm of democratic governance support is striking.

▶ Third, knowledge production and policy practice in statebuilding are closely interwoven - academic knowledge production and policy shifts tend to bear a close relationship. The timeline of peace agreement statebuilding provision suggests, however, that this may not be a relationship whereby policy responds to evidence, but rather shows an inverted relationship: policy problems and policy practice are reflected and theorised by academia in the aftermath of failed implementation. Both academic research and policy need to be careful not to reproduce a tautological relationship, and to this end new forms of data such as that of PA-X, can be useful to confirming or disrupting existing academic and policy views.

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