

Fragile states and the new international disorder *

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The concept of the fragile state is a new theme in post-9/11 international relations, one which became a “structuring notion for the OECD and the World Bank’s aid policies in 2005”.¹ The concept was born from the merger of two fields of research and operations: the fight against poverty and social inequalities, and international security. Though originally intended to address different problems, these two approaches nonetheless aim for a common target: strengthening those states which cannot or will not fulfill the essential roles of protecting citizens and providing the most basic services².

Since the appearance of Burnside and Dollar’s research in 1997 and 1998³, which was largely used and endorsed by the World Bank’s report, “Assessing Aid”⁴ the doxy of official development assistance (ODA) recommends granting aid primarily to those states characterised as having “good governance”. Recipient countries must have policies and institutions capable of guaranteeing the effective use of aid. Guided by the principles of effectiveness and selectiveness, donors, most of which are multilateral institutions, have had a tendency to withdraw from countries whose economic and social policies are judged inadequate.

The selectiveness of intervention programmes no longer comes from the massive conditionality associated with structural adjustment programs, as was the case in the 1980s and 1990s, but rather from performance and ranking indicators such as those in the World Bank’s Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA). In order to benefit from ODA, a state must first be in compliance with a certain number of governance indicators. Then, if it wants to win over donors (with the possible exceptions of China and India, both “young lenders,” whose geo-strategic or commercial preoccupations are much more obvious), it must demonstrate ownership of the poverty reduction objectives promoted by the international community for combatting poverty, such as the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), which have been universally accepted since the New York Summit of 2000⁵.

The limited amount of aid destined for states seen as “non-performing” according to these two criteria has given rise to a cruel paradox, the so-called “aid-orphans”. It is precisely those countries

* The views expressed by the authors are exclusively theirs and do not necessarily reflect those of the OECD or UNDP.

¹ Daviron, B., Giordano, T., “Etats fragiles: genèse d’un consensus international”, in Châtaigner, J.M., Magro H., (eds.), *Etats et Sociétés Fragiles: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement*, Paris, Karthala, 2007.

² England’s Department for International Development (DFID) defines fragile states as those whose “governments cannot or will not deliver what citizens need to live decent, secure lives. They cannot or will not tackle poverty” (DFID, “Why We Need to Work More Effectively in Fragile States”, London, 2005). The American Aid Agency, USAID, bases its definition on the internal legitimacy and effectiveness of the state in its governing roles, USAID, “Fragile States Strategy”, 2005.

³ Burnside, C., Dollar, D., “Aid Policies and Growth,” Policy Research Working Paper, N°1777, World Bank, Washington, 1997; Burnside, C. Dollar, D. “Aid, the Incentive Regime and Poverty Reduction,” Policy Research Working Paper, N°1937, World Bank, Washington, 1998.

⁴ World Bank, “Assessing Aid”, Washington, 1998.

⁵ Egil, F. “Les éléphants de papier: réflexions impies pour le Vème anniversaire des objectifs de développement du millénaire,” *Politique africaine*, n°99, Paris, October 2005.

which have suffered the greatest cuts in financing that are in the most dire need of support⁶. They are therefore even less capable of achieving their development goals, and in particular of reaching the MDGs by 2015. On the other hand, other states which were better at effectively promoting or “selling” their development policies to donors⁷ have enjoyed a financing surplus and popularity which are not always proportional to their actual performance or their behavior within their regional context. In this respect, one cannot overlook the total indifference of the donor community in the face of the direct involvement of Rwanda and Uganda in the illegal looting of natural resources in the Democratic Republic of Congo, and the face-off between their armies in Kisangani.

At the same time, the international system has radically changed since the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the bipolar world order. Vast “no law zones”, in which national security forces have no control, have emerged, along with new non-state mafia networks (specialised for example in the new triangular commerce connecting the flow of arms surpluses out of ex-Soviet block countries, the illegal exploitation of the weakest countries’ resources and financial transfers into tax havens), an increasing numbers of “new wars”,⁸ and the implementation of an often contradictory and unpredictable American foreign policy. These phenomena have led to legitimising of “conflict-prone countries or those seen as potential threats being placed under trusteeship”⁹. Claiming to ensure security, United Nations peace-keeping operations (OMP) and the interventions of multinational forces authorised by the Security Council no longer seek only to maintain peace (peace-keeping) or to ensure peace sustainability (peace-building), but also to rebuild the institutional capacities of intervention countries (state-building). The recent creation in 2005 of the UN’s Peace Building Commission is proof of this evolution.

Much criticism has been directed towards the very concept of the fragile state, a concept which in some respects seems unclear and ambiguous¹⁰, and can even be used as a tool of manipulation.¹¹ Nevertheless, the fact remains that delineating the fragile state category provides a new perspective on the social reality of development¹². It provides a justification for international intervention and a framework to guide international assistance in those states lacking regulatory structures and which appear to present a threat to global security. For this reason, it seems appropriate to point out certain contradictions in the international community’s use of this concept, particularly when it comes to allocating and managing ODA.

This paper will highlight the gap between the actual realities of fragile states, their leaders and populations, and the type of support provided by donors. It will then advocate taking a more integrated and sustainable approach to reform within these states, based on better knowledge of political processes and real concern for rebuilding social capital.

⁶ Restricted transfers affect eight countries in particular: Burundi, the Central African Republic, Niger, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau, Togo, Tajikistan and Chad. The example of Zimbabwe illustrates the volatility of aid: in 1992, aid constituted 12% of the country’s GNP, yet it decreased to only 2% in 2003. (OCDE/DCD, “Monitoring Resources Flows to Fragile States”, 2006).

⁷ Much criticism has been made of the link seen between democracy and economic performance. See in particular those dealing with the methodology adopted by Burnside and Dollar: Easterly, W., Levine, R., Roodman, D., “New Data, New doubts: A Comment on Burnside and Dollar’s ‘Aid, Policies, and Growth’”, NBER Working Papers, n° 9846, 2000.

⁸ Kaldor, M., “New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era”, Standford, Standford University Press, 1999.

⁹ Daviron, B., Giordano, T. “‘Etats fragiles’ : genèse d’un consensus international,” op.cit, p.26-27.

¹⁰ For the complete list of these critiques, see Châtaigner, J.M., Gaulme, F. “Agir en faveur des acteurs et des sociétés fragiles: pour une vision renouvelée des enjeux de l’aide au développement dans la prévention et la gestion des conflits,” Working Paper, n°4, Agence Française de Développement, www.afd.fr, 2005.

¹¹ Porteous, T., “Etats fragiles ou faillis: une notion à dépasser,” in Châtaigner, J.M., Magro H. (eds.), *Etats et Sociétés Fragile: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement*, Paris, Karthala, 2007.

¹² Rist, G. “Le développement: histoire d’une croyance occidentale”, Paris, Presses de Sciences-Po, 2002.

The gap between expectations, sociological reality and support provided

Between 1989 and 1999, Roland Paris analysed 11 UN peace-keeping operations and noticed that one of the missions' main objectives was the promotion of democracy¹³. This objective, rooted in the precepts of liberal peace developed by Kant in the 18th century, was used by President Woodrow Wilson after World War I and is a key policy goal of the international community's interventions in fragile states. Although the American Development Agency (USAID) sees fragility as an obstacle to the stability of the state and of its international environment, the shift from stability and democracy appears surprising nonetheless.

Members of the international community have not always believed so firmly that democratic universalism is a vector of development and peace, but today they are among the most vocal proponents of this conviction. The pessimistic visions developed in France by Jean-François Revel come to mind: he believed that by the end of the 1970s, democracy, due to its fragile nature, was inevitably destined to give way to totalitarianism. Many transitologists such as Anthony Downs¹⁴ or Seymour Martin Lipset¹⁵ have long since defended the idea that democracy is unable to flourish in economically "underdeveloped" contexts. However, proponents of this reductive approach have often fallen into hardline culturalism, for which Huntington has become the figurehead¹⁶. Convinced that true democracies could not exist "outside strictly defined areas"¹⁷ (Europe and North America), this author pointed out in 1991 that it should come as no surprise that 39 of the 46 democratic countries in the post-Cold War world all shared a Christian culture¹⁸.

At the end of the bipolar world order, the "end of history" theory once again became a topic du jour. In light of the collapse of the dictatorships on the Iberian peninsula, in Greece, Latin America and then in the Soviet Union, Francis Fukuyama concluded that the expansion and growth of democracy and liberalism would no longer be hampered and that it would give rise to sustainable peace¹⁹. This almost prophetic view was skillfully used in neoconservatives' political agendas. In reality, however, it only favours American geopolitical interests by giving the United States leeway to put any "rogue states" opposed to the "new imperial order" back on the right track. During Clinton's second term in office, Madeleine Albright even imagined creating a club for democratic countries organised around the American leadership model - a project which encountered stern French resistance, as was well documented by Hubert Védrine. In this view, "democratisation" should provide the state with a popular legitimacy, which in turn favours the state's stability²⁰. A push for the democratisation of political regimes in intervention countries becomes, therefore, a prerequisite for doing away with their fragility.

This is a good place to highlight the numerous contradictions found in intervention discourses and policies.

¹³ Paris, R., "At War's End. Building Peace After Civil Conflict", Cambridge University Press, 2004.

¹⁴ Downs, A., "An Economic Theory of Democracy", New York, Harper and Row, 1957.

¹⁵ Seymour, M.L., "Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy", *American Political Science Review* 53 (2), 1959.

¹⁶ But this is not a recent thesis. Weber believed that the state and capitalism could not exist outside of Western Europe. See Max Weber's "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism", Paris, 1967.

¹⁷ Kennan, G.F., "The Cloud of Danger", Boston, Little Brown, 1977.

¹⁸ Huntington, S., "The Third Wave: Democratization in the Twentieth Century", Norma, University of Oklahoma Press, 1991.

¹⁹ Fukuyama, F., "The End of History and the Last Man", Free Press, 1992.

²⁰ Huntington, S., "Political Order in Changing Societies", New Haven, Yale University Press, 1968.

Are the pursuits of democracy and stability compatible?

It seems risky to directly link democracy to regime stability and the sustainability of international peace.

The belief that politically democratic regimes enjoy more stability stems from the standard paradigm of legitimacy, which sees legitimisation processes as vertical relationships between those who govern and those who are governed. Hence, it finds legitimacy in the beliefs and values of the governed. Given that these values take shape in the long-term, the internalisation of that which is “legitimate” is therefore seen as being sustainable and relatively resistant to potential changes in social and institutional (...) conditions²¹. But this view neglects the inherent fragility of democratic regime²², which were defined by Adam Przeworski as regimes of “organised uncertainty”²³. In fact, the very meaning of democracy implies accepting the uncertainty of results, as much by the leaders as by the governed. But, if one no longer agrees to the rules of the game, the democratic regime becomes destabilised. There are many historical examples of this. The recent death of General Augusto Pinochet brings to mind the 1973 coup d’état in a country whose democratisation processes were nonetheless thought to be the “the twin sister of those going on in Europe since they were occurring simultaneously”²⁴. Despite the fact that Chile has had significant experience in democracy since the 19th century and that the dictatorship traumatised a population expecting the revival of its “lost democracy”²⁵, the fact remains that its democratic regime would have been considered “destabilised”. Further evidence can be drawn from another historical example: the tragic collapse of Germany’s Weimar Republic also goes to show that just because democracy has been implanted does not necessarily mean that it has taken root.

If the relationship between democracy and internal stability already appears rather tenuous, it is even more subtle in times of democratic transition, which most often is the context of “state-building” operations. Whatever their GDP levels, transitional regimes are particularly unstable: they are twice as vulnerable to revolutions, ethnic wars and violent regime changes²⁶. Concerning international stability, although so many American presidents, from Wilson to Bush, have defended the idea that democracy is a prerequisite to peace, there are certainly cases which prove the contrary. Fareed Zakaria pointed this out by highlighting the almost continuous involvement of the United States in some form of external warfare since the end of

²¹ Dobry, M., “Légitimité et calcul rationnel. Remarques sur quelques ‘complications’ de la sociologie de Max Weber,” in Favre, Hayward, Schemel (eds.), *Etre gouverné. Hommages à Jean Leca*, Paris, Presses de Sciences Po, 2003.

²² Michel Dobry shows that delegitimisation processes take place at very different rhythms: “ce sont fréquemment des basculements limités, locaux, à la marge – et non nécessaires “historiquement” – des visions du probable, du possible, du jouable, qui permettent de rendre compte de l’émergence de pratiques ou de mobilisation qui auront, sans que, le plus souvent, leurs acteurs ne le veuillent ou l’anticipent, des effets de délégitimation”. (See Michel Dobry’s “Valeurs, croyances et transactions collusives. Note pour une réorientation de l’analyse de la légitimation des systèmes démocratiques,” in Javier Santiso (ed.), *A la recherche de la démocratie. Mélanges offerts à Guy Hermet*, Paris, Karthala, 2002.

²³ Przeworski, A., “Democracy and the Market. Political and Economic Reforms in Eastern Europe and Latin America”, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

²⁴ Valenzuela, J.S., “Aux origines de la démocratie chilienne: la création d’institutions électorales au XIXème siècle,” in Jaffrelot, C., *Démocraties d’ailleurs*.

²⁵ Santiso, J., “Le passé des uns et le futur des autres. Une analyse des démocratisations mexicaines et chiliennes,” in Jaffrelot, C., *Démocraties d’ailleurs*.

²⁶ Lipset, S., “Some Social Requisites of Democracy: Economic Development and Political Legitimacy,” *American Political Science Review*, n°53 (1), 1959; Goldstone, J., Gurr, T.R., Marshall, M., “It’s all about State Structure. New Findings on Revolutionary Origins Data”, article presented at the meeting, *Social Science Research: Low Income Countries Under Stress, A Task Force Report*, World Bank, 2004.

World War II²⁷. As for democratic transitions, they must be approached with caution. In effect, regimes undergoing democratisation tend to stir nationalistic tendencies,²⁸ are often in the early stages of civil wars and are more inclined to warring with their external environment than dictatorships²⁹.

Let us clarify our position in order to avoid being criticised for views we are not directly defending, but which we nonetheless acknowledge: we do not seek to muster support for anti-democrats³⁰, but rather limit ourselves to objectively examining contemporary “democratic imperialism”;³¹ since building unrealistic expectations for fragile states in democratic transition will only lead to disappointment for both aid recipients and donors. If democracy is “the worst form of government except all others,” humility and patience are its strongest allies. It is therefore important to see that critical situations are not inherently bad. On the contrary, they are the product of situations of change, and therefore of uncertainty³². Although critical situations cannot be overlooked, it is crucial that they not be exaggerated.

An ambivalent push for democracy

Another discrepancy is to be found between donors’ pro-democratic rhetoric and the way in which aid is actually allocated.

By analysing the United States’ choices concerning official development aid allocation since World War II, it becomes clear that, far from using aid to support the most effective democracies, the United States has had a tendency to back countries with small coalitions, or systems generally unfavourable to the inclusion of diverse political factions or strong parliamentary bodies³³.

Moreover, donors’ support for democratic regimes is in no way unconditional. Quite the contrary, their support depends on electors’ choices at the voting booths, as some donors would like to establish tailor-made democracies by determining electoral results before the actual election is held. This type of hypocrisy on the part of the international community is commonplace. In June 2005, while the Iranian presidential elections were being unanimously applauded, so long as the West’s preferred candidate Hachemi Rafsandjani was the projected winner, no one was bringing up the “nuclear threat” issue. However, a few months later, American Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice managed to obtain 75 million dollars to finance “the promotion of Iranian democracy”. The same phenomenon occurred in Palestine. While the United States and the European Union required that Palestine hold “truly democratic” elections in the presence of a myriad of foreign observers, when Hamas won the legislative majority in January 2006, the financial support which was benefiting many governmental structures was withdrawn.

²⁷ Zakaria, F., “The rise of illiberal democracy,” *Foreign Affairs*, n°76, 1997.

²⁸ Bayart, J.F., Geschiere, P., Nyamnjoh, F., “Autochtonie, démocratie et citoyenneté en Afrique,” *Critique Internationale* n°10, janvier 2001.

²⁹ Chua, A., “World on Fire”, New York, Doubleday, 2003; Mansfield, E., Snyder, J., “Democratization and War,” *Foreign Affairs*, n°74 (3).

³⁰ Gilley, B., “The New Anti-Democrats,” *Orbis*, vol.50 n°2, Spring 2006.

³¹ Kurtz, S., “Democratic Imperialism: A Blueprint,” *Policy Review*, n°118, April & May 2003.

³² Dobry, M., “Valeurs, croyances et transactions collusives. Note pour une réorientation de l’analyse de la légitimation des systèmes démocratiques,” op.cit.

³³ Bueno de Mesquita, B., Smith, A., “Foreign Aid and Policy Concessions”, unpublished article, May 2004, www.nyu.edu.

The impatience of donors

Pessimistic commentaries on the state of democracy³⁴ and civil liberties³⁵ in some fragile states – namely on the African continent - have not relented. Critical of the fact that “troublesome” candidates may be brushed aside, electoral lists mishandled, results manipulated, and the fact that opposition parties often resort to boycotting election results, many analysts believe these countries have incorrectly interpreted democracy’s “user manual” since they are unable to “rid themselves of ways of the past so firmly entrenched in hearts and minds”.³⁶ Viewpoints such as these reflect the West’s short memory of its own historical and political evolution.

The current brand of representative democracy in Western Europe and in the United States is the result of a slow evolution of its central components³⁷ and struggles, which were inherent parts of the progressive transformation towards this type of political organisation³⁸. Even in the West, the right to vote has not always been a given. On the contrary, the attachment to the right to vote has been built over time. The French representative voting system was based on property qualification³⁹ for half a century until the “universal” right to vote for men was introduced in 1848. In spite of having this right, voting was not an evident practice for many male electors, whose votes were easily bought for tangible benefits⁴⁰. Until the end of the 19th century, electoral mobilisations were largely constructed around favours and primary loyalties. As for voting regulations requiring the use of uniform envelopes, voting booths and voter registration (to prevent voting more than once), these were not established in France until 1913.

Those who blame the “fragility” of the processes at work in emerging democracies need to be reminded of the above facts. The historical dimension is all too often overlooked by those basing their arguments on fragile states’ “bad governance”.

Donors prefer acting in favour of democratic “regime-building”, which most often reflects their own agendas: implement public policies that will please voters back home, even though they are not the recipients of the aid. Donors need to see tangible results fast, sometimes even immediately, at the least possible cost. They forget that democracy is the result of a slow “learning” process, a “largely unconscious and contradictory historical process involving conflicts, negotiations and compromises between diverse groups”.⁴¹ This analytical bias seems harmless, almost even comical, when restricted uniquely to discourse, but it becomes more worrisome when it determines the international community’s assistance agenda in intervention

³⁴ In 2003, out of 52 African countries, only 18 had democracies which were “more or less respected,” while 17 others were façade democracies. Bouquet, C., “Du mauvais usage de la démocratie,” *Géopolitique Africaine*, n°14, April 2004.

³⁵ According to the Freedom House Institute’s 2006 survey, only seven countries in Sub-Saharan Africa are considered as being “free” countries (“Freedom in the World 2006: The Annual Survey of Political Rights and Civil Liberties”, Rowman & Littlefield, 2006).

³⁶ Bouquet, C., “Du mauvais usage de la démocratie,” *Géopolitique Africaine*, n°14, April 2004.

³⁷ It should not be forgotten that in all representative regimes, the electoral body was for a long time limited to certain groups: universal suffrage was introduced in Great Britain in 1918; French women did not obtain the right to vote until 1946; and African Americans were only ensured voting rights in 1965 by the Voting Rights Act.

³⁸ For more on this topic see, Alain Garrigou’s “Histoire sociale du suffrage universel en France” (1848-2000), Seuil, Paris, 2002.

³⁹ Manin, B., “Principes du régime représentatif”, Calmann-Lévy, Paris, 1995.

⁴⁰ In 1863, Proudhon claimed that “la multitude est inintelligente et aveugle” (“the masses are ignorant and blind”) whereas Jules Ferry went a step further: “Un dernier trait de cette race excellente, c’est sa parfaite crédulité” (“a final trait of this excellent race is its perfect credulity”).

⁴¹ The distinction between “building” and “learning” was elaborated by Berman and Lonsdale (Berman, B., Lonsdale, J., “Unhappy Valley”, London, Longman, 1992).

areas. Moreover, it is often the source of donors' main capital sin: impatience during the building of institutional capacities, an impatience which is reflected in the desire to see rapid results, "political shifts" and disbursements.⁴² Interestingly enough, these expectations are based on quantified objectives, expert econometric constructs and the need to see convincing proof of progress.

Unrealistic expectations due to formalism and hesitation

This impatience is even more surprising and harmful given that contemporary states are now expected to fulfill many more duties than they did in the past.

Historically, homeland security was the state's primary function. For this, states had to generate and allocate resources. Yet prior to the 20th century, most European states were in no position to fulfill these two basic roles, often opting for coercion or capital accumulation. Those states undertaking both objectives simultaneously were often those which collapsed. In this respect, the evolution of France and the United Kingdom is an exception⁴³.

Therefore one might wonder whether there are really more failed states today, and if so, is their fragility caused by being overburdened by too many responsibilities?⁴⁴ Francis Fukuyama warned against the danger of multiplying the roles of the state⁴⁵. Basic accounting illustrates the difficulties encountered by fragile states: with only very limited resources from the start, trying to immediately fulfil so many roles (security, justice, health, education, economic development, social policy) results in all areas being underfunded and encourages unsustainable long-term policies.

Yet, while the new international doctrine has increased the range of state activities, it appears that donors are not assuming the responsibilities which go along with their raised expectations. As shown by Caplan and Pouligny, until very recently international interventions for state-building operations have privileged the formal and external notion of sovereignty⁴⁶. Often limiting their activities to highly technical dimensions, donors most often support projects which aim at installing what Adam Przeworski would call a "procedural democracy".⁴⁷ Aligning themselves once more with Samuel Huntington's ideas, they believe that "open, free and loyal elections constitute the essence of democracy and are a sine qua non condition of it".⁴⁸ Therefore, strategies for promoting democracy grant considerable importance to elections. However, according to the authors of the State Failure Task Force, elections are, in fact, the least important factor in a stable democracy. Guided by such policies which prioritise appearances, the international community is avoiding any in-depth democratisation process⁴⁹. Advancing with caution certainly has benefits when elaborating a strategy for minimising risks of interference, but it can become irresponsible when accompanied by very high demands. The international community's ambivalence is not only frustrating for local populations, but more importantly it encourages irresponsible behaviour on the part of partner country's political actors⁵⁰.

⁴² Birdsall, N., "Seven Deadly Sins: Reflections on Donors' Failings," Working Paper n°50, Center for Global Development, 2004.

⁴³ Tilly, C., "Coercion, Capital and European States AD 990-1990", Cambridge, Blackwell, 1990.

⁴⁴ Clément, C., "Au-delà des élections : repenser la stabilisation des Etats fragiles," in Châtaigner, J.M., Magro, H., (eds.), *Etats et Sociétés Fragiles: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement*, Karthala, Paris, 2007.

⁴⁵ Fukuyama, F., "State-Building. Governance and World Order in the 21st Century", Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2004.

⁴⁶ Caplan, R., Pouligny, B., "Histoire et contradictions du state building," *Critique Internationale* n°28, July-September 2005.

⁴⁷ Przeworski, A., "Democracy and the Market", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1991.

⁴⁸ Huntington, S.P., "Troisième vague. Les démocratisations de la fin du XXe siècle", Manille, Nouveaux horizons, 1991.

⁴⁹ Pouligny, B., "Promoting Democratic Institutions in post-Conflict Societies: Giving Diversity a Chance," *International Peacekeeping*, vol.7, n°3, Autumn 2000.

⁵⁰ Caplan, R., Pouligny, B., "Histoire et contradictions du state building," op.cit.

The inadequacy of analytical approaches

The formal, and often superficial, approach to governance fostered by donors and the discrepancy of their interventions with the sociological reality of fragile states are grounded in the inherent weaknesses of their analytical approaches. The systematic search for consensus by donor and recipient countries on “good remedies” also contributes to the problem. Donors very often act like physicians who, shying away from diagnosing the economic and social reality of their patients, would rather, under the influence of a strong laboratory of intellectual production, sell them the most powerful medicines: structural adjustment programmes in the early 80s, promotion of the private sector as the sole engine of economic growth in the 90s, the fight against poverty today, global warming tomorrow.... Donors will naturally place the blame on the attitude of the assisted country if the medication does not have its desired effect or causes unexpected collateral damages. Privatisation in Ivory Coast in the 90s provides a good example. Requested by the Bretton Woods institutions with the aim of fighting against the embezzlement of public funds, it ended up yielding the opposite effect: a transfer of these public funds to President Bédié’s acolytes.

Donors, especially multilateral donors, are hard pressed to analyse governance from a multidimensional perspective⁵¹. This is obvious from their knowledge base which essentially focuses on economic foundations and quantitative elements. An examination of the official mandates of the World Bank⁵² and the regional development banks elucidates this analytical bias. Given that these institutions are not officially authorised to intervene in the political affairs of their member states, they are cautious not to carry out in-depth studies on the political situations and not to mention taking such studies into consideration in their operations. Interestingly enough, the analytical studies sometimes undertaken by the World Bank are not considered in the CPIA. Most often these organisations concentrate on a conjunctural analysis of the country-risk and any political instability that might have an impact on their intervention (the analyses are in themselves fraught with methodological flaws. It is indeed obvious that the World Bank cannot ignore the opinion of its major shareholders, particularly the United States). After studying how the World Bank has constructed its governance indicators, Pierre Calame notes that in spite of the apparent diversity of sources and criteria used, only economic governance is taken into account⁵³. As “lenders”, the first criterion of multilateral financial donors is to evaluate the ability of states to reimburse the debt incurred. Thus, the issue of governance is simply equated with good management of public finances while ignoring political and social organisation.

While governance analysis relies on too limited information, fragile states tend to suffer more specifically from the implementation of an inappropriate paradigm. During the Monterrey Conference held in March 2002, donor countries reached a new consensus aimed at improving the efficiency of aid, as stated in Resolution 40 of the final declaration: “Effective partnerships among donors and recipients are based on the recognition of national leadership and ownership of development plans.”

In March 2005, during the Paris Conference, these principles were organised under three action principles – ownership, alignment, harmonisation - summarised in a diagram called “The Pyramid of Paris”. At the top of the pyramid are the national authorities of the recipient

⁵¹ Eugène, S., “Vers des critères d’évaluation de la fragilité des Etats”, in Châtaigner, J.M., Magro H. (eds.), *Etats et Sociétés Fragiles: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement*, Karthala, Paris, 2007.

⁵² Art. IV, section 10 of the Articles of Agreement of the World Bank: “The Bank and its officers shall not interfere in the political affairs of any member; nor shall they be influenced in their decisions by the political character of the member or members concerned.”

⁵³ Calame, P., “Une lecture critique des indicateurs de la Banque Mondiale et la nécessité d’engager à leur sujet un débat fondamental”, p.20.

country which should establish the priorities and the policies undertaken in their country. It is to be noted, however, that their options are limited because in order for their debts to be cancelled or to acquire new credits, these authorities, no matter their political orientation, have to abide by a number of canons like poverty reduction strategy documents. Theoretically, the donors are at a lower level, aligning themselves with the objectives that have been established and harmonising their projects accordingly.

While the introduction of such principles is laudable and necessary to ensure that recipient countries take full responsibility for the definition and execution of policies, the same principles become very problematic when applied to fragile states. Simply put, the scheme is inappropriate given the situation of these countries, which lack precisely such a capacity to define and conduct political projects, as a result of the absence of political representatives and intermediary bodies. In other words, in a fragile state, ownership cannot develop due to a lack of leadership. Hence the conceptual framework is undermined.

We therefore suggest adding another pyramid to this conceptual framework, aimed precisely at constructing the absent part of fragile societies at the national level. It requires channelling the donors' actions towards the strengthening of the intermediary bodies - political, social, and economic - which should be able to create the social link with the population and encourage the development of a ruling class capable of defining the reform priorities to be undertaken.

We thus valorize political and social pluralism in our approach to democracy and believe that, as purported by Christophe Jaffrelot, "constitutional guarantees are a necessary condition but are not an end in themselves. (They can only provide) a framework for social and political organisations which are the actual foundations of democracy in the public domain"⁵⁴

More than just identifying "good policies", it is also necessary to: (1) Seek political solutions. (2) Reconstruct social capital. (3) Carry out sustainable actions. (4) Not focus solely on the fight against corruption.

Intervention in fragile states requires specific action subtly mixing vigilance, humility and patience from donors. The challenge is substantial: carrying out concurrently a "triple" political, economic and security transition⁵⁵.

Broadening our understanding of the intervention context

An in-depth understanding of fragile states enjoins us to focus on how the system functions rather than on its constituent parts. Consequently, donors should pay more attention to sector analyses as well as informal rules of political interaction. Developing projects in accordance with the sociological context should no longer be a secondary, but rather a central objective.

It is then necessary to take into account various modalities of governance likely to encourage a democratic transition. The consequences of a democratic transition involve divergent, multiple and heterogeneous processes⁵⁶. The strengthening of institutional capacities should not be limited solely to formal institutions but also to the diversity of other organisational forms.

Donors who have been reluctant in the past to use these types of analyses are progressively pursuing this approach. The recent initiatives by the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs⁵⁷ and

⁵⁴ Jaffrelot, C., "Comment expliquer la démocratie hors d'Occident?", in Christophe Jaffrelot (ed.), *Démocraties d'ailleurs*, Paris, Karthala, 2000.

⁵⁵ Caplan, R., Pouligny, B., "Histoire et contradictions du state building", *Critique Internationale* n°28, Juillet-Septembre 2005.

⁵⁶ Dobry, M., "Valeurs, croyances et transactions collusives. Note pour une réorientation de l'analyse de la légitimation des systèmes démocratiques", op.cit. .

⁵⁷ See "Stratégie gouvernance", Ministère des Affaires étrangères, 2006. www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/Stratgouvfrancaisdef.pdf

the UK Department for International Development⁵⁸ (DFID) aimed at putting the primacy of politics at the forefront of the development process attest to this change. These institutions have recognised that power strategies and political structure and mechanisms have a significant influence on a country's development. These approaches have stimulated debate on the processes of change and are now influencing intervention policies.

Nevertheless, some bias inherent to donors' rationale remains. The Power and Drivers of Change (DoC) approach, developed by DFID in 2003 continues to perceive change from either a "positive" or "negative" angle. However, to define processes of change in such categories is not as straightforward as it might seem: Are the wars fought in Central Africa a reflection of the chaos that is the norm in the region or do they participate in the construction of the states involved? Is the disturbing generalised division between "natives" and "non-natives" on this same continent a reflection of the traditional collective identities rooted in ethnicity or the product of dichotomies inherent to the democratisation of regimes?⁵⁹ Thus, while it is important to focus on the processes of change in order to adapt projects to their context, it seems to us that making projects the "vectors" or "inhibitors" of change, as done by DFID, is rather reductionist.

The reconstruction of social capital

Despite ubiquitous references to "integrated" or "global" approaches, the interdependence of economic, political, legal and security issues in fragile states is not sufficiently taken into account⁶⁰. Given the triple transition taking place in these countries, collaboration between defense, public assistance to development and foreign policy actors is necessary. Sarah Cliffe emphasises the importance of sharing information as well as seeking a consensus on common understandings⁶¹.

An "integrated" approach further emphasises the priority that should be placed on the revitalisation of the social link - the (re)construction of the collective identity⁶². The case of Iraq stands out. Even though the country was not a democracy, the Iraq ruled by Saddam Hussein was in many ways a "strong" state. However, its social fabric deteriorated progressively from 1990 onwards, as a result of the embargo. This occurred notably through the regression or elimination of the ruling classes (as was the case in Afghanistan and Cambodia). The intervention of the coalition in 2003 and the measures taken after the fall of Saddam Hussein were the final straw that destroyed a considerably weakened social fabric. The "de-baathification" effort that deprived the country of the leaders it needed for its reconstruction was thus a "fatal mistake that transformed the dry cleaning mission of the public service into an enterprise for exclusion".⁶³ Today, the destruction of the pre-existing social fabric has stifled the reconstruction of a social contract between the Sunnis, Kurds and Shiites of Iraq.

If donors undertake the mission to participate in the reconstruction of a fragile state, they should not then fail to perceive the local dimension as multifaceted and complex. Local

⁵⁸ Duponchel, M., "L'approche Drivers of Change du Department for International Development britannique", Note interne, Agence Française de Développement, November 2006.

⁵⁹ Bayart, J.F., Geschiere, P., Nyamnjoh, F., "Autochtonie, démocratie et citoyenneté en Afrique", *Critique Internationale* n°10, janvier 2001.

⁶⁰ Pouligny, B., "Promoting Democratic Institutions in post-Conflict Societies: Giving Diversity a Chance", *International Peacekeeping*, vol.7, n°3, Autumn, 2000.

⁶¹ Cliffe, S., "Acteurs de la diplomatie, de la sécurité et du développement. Un programme de collaboration" in Châtaigner, J.M., Magro, H., (eds.), *Etats et Sociétés Fragiles: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement*, Karthala, Paris, 2007.

⁶² On the importance of preserving or reconstituting the "social fabrique": Colletta, N., Cullen, M., "Violent conflict and the transformation of social capital: Lessons from Cambodia, Rwanda, Guatemala and Somalia", Washington DC, World Bank, 2000.

⁶³ Brun, T., "Comment fabriquer un Etat fragile? Réflexions à partir de l'exemple irakien", in Châtaigner, J.M., Magro, H., (eds.), *Etats et Sociétés Fragiles: entre conflits, reconstruction et développement*, Karthala, Paris, 2007.

realities must thus be taken into account on such divergent issues as citizenry and political links, reconstitution of networks of microeconomic relations as well as the articulation at the sub-regional, regional and even international levels⁶⁴.

An interesting concept developed by Frances Stuart, "horizontal inequality", compares the level of access to resources and power among the various constitutive groups of a state as well as within the groups themselves⁶⁵. Based on studies carried out in Sierra Leone, Kenya, Rwanda, Biafra, Eastern Pakistan, the Balkans and Northern Ireland, it illustrates how horizontal inequalities can encourage alliances between leaders of rival groups, contribute to the construction and instrumentalisation of group identities, and even generate a state "terrorism" fostered by those afraid to lose control of their resources. In order to avoid the widening of these inequalities, which we should emphasise once more are not restricted to economic inequalities,, donors must encourage equitable access to resources for all groups sharing the same territory as well as encourage inclusive policies targeting disadvantaged groups.

Such actions can be implemented through mediation involving various groups with opposing interests. Mediation saves the donor from having to identify "actors of change" - actors who are more likely to carry out "good policies". The "drivers of change" approach, like those suggested by DFID, inevitably favours some groups over others, and thus tends to perpetuate horizontal inequalities. It is important to be cautious with naïve and "romantic" perspectives⁶⁶ that seek to differentiate a good local level from a poor one and most often lead to the "demonisation" of the actors in power and valorization of civil society. The issue is not about treating all the actors and their intentions on the same footing, but rather being vigilant and sensitive without ignoring the complexity of the links uniting or dividing these actors, as well as their interdependence.

In Kivu, the dispute over whether the Banyamulenge were citizens of the former Zaire was instigated by a provincial "civil society" which was lauded for its strong opposition to the dictatorship of Marshall Mobutu. This civil society instrumentalised the issue for its own interest⁶⁷. Thus, if the stakes in fragile states lie in the redefinition of the social contract, and if this is impossible to achieve without a civil society, it would be sufficient to strengthen the latter while keeping in mind the lessons of Alexis de Tocqueville – who considers associations as places "where the heart is enlarged"⁶⁸ - as well as the conclusions drawn by Nina Eliasoph – for whom associations can be places for the avoidance and even the "evaporation" of politics⁶⁹.

Responsible and sustainable involvement

The practical implications of the remarks made about the scale and complexity of the problems to be considered, though numerous, are grounded on a number of fundamental points. First, donors must act with a determination imbued with humility. While they should be global in their approach, donors also have the obligation to recognise the fact that they play a limited role as external actors. It is thus preferable for the aid of each donor to be concentrated on a few projects, that is, focused in areas under its control. The goal is to better understand the framework in which it operates and thus identify the areas of focus for a targeted intervention. The approach advanced by some like Paul Collier - to encourage massive budgetary assistance

⁶⁴ Châtaigner, J.M., and Gaulme, F., "Agir en faveur des acteurs et des sociétés fragiles", op.cit.

⁶⁵ Stuart, F., "Tackling Horizontal Inequalities", in World Bank, Evaluation and Poverty Reduction, Proceedings from a World Bank Conference, Washington, 2000.

⁶⁶ Lemarchand, R., "Uncivil States and Civil Societies: How illusion became reality", *Journal of Modern African Studies*, n°30, June 1992.

⁶⁷ Bayart, J.F., Geschiere, P., Nyamnjoh, F., "Autochtonie, démocratie et citoyenneté en Afrique", *Critique Internationale*, n°10, Janvier, 2001.

⁶⁸ Tocqueville attributed the strength of the American democracy to associations which determined the structure of civil society in the United States and could limit any possible authoritarian tendencies of the government by exerting pressure on it. Tocqueville, A., *De la Démocratie en Amérique*, vol.2, Paris, Flammarion, 1981.

⁶⁹ Eliasoph, N., "Avoiding Politics: How Americans produce apathy in everyday life", Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

in fragile states - poses a double risk: a non-negligible possibility of massive embezzlement - depending on the level of debasement of the financial systems of the partner state - as well as a risk of failing to understand the local reality.

The integration of the temporal dimension is vital. It brings home the fact that the formation of the state and democracy is a long-term process. It also widens the scope of traditional public development aid policies. Too many requirements would likely destabilise fragile states further. The international community must thus establish realistic programs for itself as well as for the beneficiaries of its assistance in order to fulfil its promises in a responsible manner. Various approaches can be outlined: adapt the tools of intervention to the situation, recognise the political role played by the donors, provide assistance in a flexible manner and be aware of the opportunities arising from changes and crises that might occur. ODA policies should give room for sustainable actions and this implies reducing their uncertain and volatile components⁷⁰, while also focusing on the development of capacities and taking charge of the subsequent human costs.

These remarks seem so obvious, however, they are hardly implemented. A comparative study by the Cligendael Institute on international assistance for elections, human rights and the media in eight post-conflict societies, underlines the reluctance of donors to fund the operational costs of the organisations involved, opting instead for specific projects of limited duration⁷¹. While international aid has been involved in the creation of new organisations, it has hardly assisted in their effective consolidation. ODA has led to the creation of numerous NGOs⁷² which excel in the organisation of seminars and workshops and other highly visible projects of a short-term nature. However, due to lack of means for the development of sustainable activities, the impact on the greater project concerning the restitution of the social contract and the development of democracy has been weak.

The election control commission, National Elections Watch (NEW), established in Sierra Leone during the May 2002 elections is a case in point. While the intervention of NEW helped ensure good conduct of the elections, the commission was quickly dissolved due to lack of funding and was therefore unable to oversee local elections held at the end the same year⁷³. More recently, questions have been posed about the impact on long-term development of the 500 million dollars provided by the international community for the organisation of elections in the DRC.

The dangers of an exclusive agenda

After highlighting the multiple challenges faced by fragile states, it is important to reflect on whether the fight against corruption should be the leading agenda of the international community.

Paul Wolfowitz, a disciple of Machiavelli for whom "...if a prince seeks the glory of the world, he ought to desire to possess a corrupt city ...", made the elimination of corruption his top priority following his appointment to the helm of the World Bank in 2005 (this now appears quite ironic, considering he was later forced to quit over allegations of favouritism regarding a promotion and pay deals given to his partner, who was a staff member of the Bank). A significant level

⁷⁰ In many countries such as Haïti, the uncertainty in the flow of aid has undermined the coherence of the peace and state reconstruction programmes as well as the economic development program.

⁷¹ A study whose results have been publicised by one of the scholars of this institute, Jeroen de Zeeuw, "Projects do not create institutions: the record of democracy assistance in post-conflict societies", *Democratization*, vol.12, n°4, August 2005.

⁷² During the 90s, the number of NGOs defending human rights rose from 4 to 40 in Cambodia.

⁷³ Example cited in: Jeroen de Zeeuw, op. cit.

of corruption is considered a major obstacle to the development of socioeconomic rights⁷⁴ and controlling corruption is one of the six dimensions identified by the World Bank in its construction of governance indicators⁷⁵.

Though the intention is laudable, it should however be examined attentively. Can the agenda of change actually be led by the agenda of the fight against corruption? Or, in other words, can corruption be considered only as an inhibitor to change?

While it cannot be denied that political problems have stifled the development of many countries plagued by massive and paralysing corruption, success stories like those of East Asia have also, in some cases, been associated with a high levels of corruption, which still persist in many developed countries. These historical facts should encourage us not to limit our consideration of the phenomenon of corruption to its demonisation. Corruption is not a moral problem but a problem of administration and state management⁷⁶. It should be considered as such and efforts should be made to go beyond analyses of a culturalist or functionalist nature. While it is exaggerated to argue that corruption has a regulatory function without which some economies would slip into chaos, it cannot be ignored that parochial corruption can participate in the integration of some actors who are likely to suffer from social marginalisation⁷⁷. Market corruption, on the other hand, is inherent in processes of state formation and integration in a global world. Thus, in the fight against corruption, the underlying social link must be examined carefully.

If the international community considers these collusive practices as abhorrent and seeks to eliminate them, it will have to tackle the problem head-on, that is, from a structural perspective. To simply undertake measures targeting only the actors or systems of fragile states in order to improve on their governance would be reductionist. These networks will remain widespread as long as partners in the developed countries continue to be involved in the exchange. Strengthening regulations and control of international financial flows would be a much more satisfactory policy than those proposed by donors who all too often target only the local level. If the international community shows that it will no longer “look the other way” and go along with corrupt market practices, the view held by developing states of their own interests will change as a result of a lack of partners in exchange. The responsibility of sending such a signal lies with us.

We should not ask fragile states to put an end to our own fragilities, as they face many more challenges themselves.

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⁷⁴ Kaufmann, D., Kraay, A., and Mastruzzi, M., *Governance Matter IV: Governance Indicators for 1996-2004*, World Bank, 2005.

⁷⁵ The six indicators of governance published by the World Bank during its Annual Assembly held in Singapore in September 2006 are as follows: voice and accountability, political stability and the absence of violence, government effectiveness, regulatory quality, rule of law, and the control of corruption.

⁷⁶ Mény, Y., “La corruption : question morale ou problème d’organisation de l’Etat”, *Revue française d’administration publique*, n° 84, October/December 1997, Paris.

⁷⁷ In the case of parochial corruption, the exchange is characterised by the quest to perpetuate social relations, and self-interest is not the underlying motive of the exchange.