

TOO MANY COOKS: INTEGRATING THE RECIPES FOR POST-CONFLICT DEVELOPMENT

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A key challenge for those for those responding to the main criticisms of postconflict development is merely obtaining a sufficient understanding of the relationships between the complex array of actors and factors involved. Calls for greater coordination and coherence have emerged but it is still unclear whether these go far enough in providing a practically effective solution. This article examines the recent developments in postconflict development. It discusses the adequacy of these developments in respect of substantive and procedural concerns as well as the extent to which the situation on the ground is improved. It is argued that while these developments have made significant and much needed progress, they do not go far enough in order to effect meaningful change on the ground. A more encompassing and more deeply integrated approach is required to ensure that the multiple actors and factors can work together to produce a sustainable solution.

Keywords: Development, Integration, Postconflict, Peacebuilding, Coordination, Coherence

“We will not remove our red-tapeism unless you remove yours...Don’t expect us to give you a report every month: we will give you a report when we like to give you a report. There are too many groups of donors, reconstruction groups, assistance groups. I don’t know the names of all of them.”

(Hamid Karzai, former Afghan Interim Authority Chairman, in Chesterman 2004, 197)

1. Introduction

Post-conflict development is an overflowing broth. It is typically characterised by sloppy ingredient preparation, counterproductive teamwork, inept execution, and worst of all, the numerous head chefs are each following a different recipe. The decision to start cooking is often impulsive rather than properly considered, and as a result the final product is not only often inedible but potentially worse than no meal at all. Inevitably, the kitchen clean-up-job takes longer and is more difficult than the cooking itself. Such is the complexity of the problem that a key challenge for those for those attempting to find solutions is merely obtaining a sufficient understanding of the relationships between the myriad of actors and factors involved. Nonetheless, responses to some of the recurring criticisms of post-conflict development approaches have emerged. It however remains to be seen if these responses are adequate in addressing the criticisms or practically effective on the ground. This article will examine the recurring criticisms of post-conflict development approaches and recent

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developments which have attempted to respond to these criticisms. It will then discuss the adequacy of these developments in respect of substantive as well as procedural concerns as well as actually improving the situation on the ground. This article will argue that while these developments have made significant and much needed progress towards tackling these recurring criticisms, they simply do not go far enough in order to effect meaningful change, particularly with regard to substantive issues. A more encompassing and more deeply integrated recipe is required to ensure that the multiple actors and factors can work together to produce an edible dish. While a technically perfect solution to post-conflict development may not ever be feasible, a more integrated recipe will eventually mean that dining at the post-conflict development table becomes a less life-threatening experience.

2. The complexity of post-conflict development and criticism

Both history and academic literature are peppered with examples of well-intended yet ultimately ineffective post-conflict development. ‘Development’ itself is a broad and somewhat ambiguous term, and other phrases like post-conflict statebuilding and post-conflict peacebuilding are seemingly used interchangeably.¹ The purpose of post-conflict development is not entirely clear: some actors favour maximising economic growth and wealth while some scholars point to maximising political, economic, and social freedom (DfID 2013; Sen 1999). As to its substance, governments, international governmental organisations, non-governmental organisations, and academia variously point to activities as diverse as establishing democracy and fostering popular participation (Bhuta 2009, 38; International Rescue Committee 2013a); eliminating corruption (USAID 2013b); establishing the rule of law and a justice system and combatting lawlessness and crime (Farrall 2009, 134; Grenfell 2009, 157; Chesterman 2004); strengthening security and ensuring stability (Caplan 2005; UN Peacebuilding Commission 2011); ensuring respect for human rights (USAID 2013d); building state institutions (Caplan 2005); providing for infrastructure projects (UN Peacebuilding Commission 2010; USAID 2013a); embedding market economy principles (USAID 2013c); encouraging private enterprise and inward investment (Caplan 2005; International Rescue Committee 2013b); making and building peace (Richmond 2005); increasing the capacity of civil society (USAID 2013e); establishing the provision of public services (Caplan 2005; ActionAid 2013); and assisting with local conflict resolution processes and decentralisation (UN Peacebuilding Commission 2007a). In relation to the reestablishment of the rule of law alone, Samuels identifies no less than six UN entities, three additional IGOs (each with sub-entities), five development banks, seven state agencies, forty-nine NGOs (one of whom has thirty-three “constituent organisations”), and eleven private entities, all of whom as described as “key players” (Samuels 2006, 25–27). While donors provide financial assistance, dispersing the funds is not always straightforward. Governments may be corrupt while NGOs may create an artificially inflated economy (Bolton 2007, 106–109, 115; Chesterman 2004,

¹ Post-conflict development is used throughout this article in preference to either post-conflict statebuilding or peacebuilding. See Brinkerhoff 2005, 9–10.

184, 200–201). In 2003 it was thought that there were 39,729 branches of international NGOs across Africa (Bolton 2007, 93). Assistance may be bilateral or multilateral; may involve subcontracting and third parties; and assistance may be conditional on expenditure on goods or services from companies based in a given state (Chesterman 2004, 188, 192; Bolton 2007, 115–117, 137–139). Local governments may or may not have ownership over NGO programmes (Chesterman 2004, 196, 198; Caplan 2005, 190–194). Different donors, and at times different agencies of the same donor, have unique requirements about how the funds are spent and how accountability and effectiveness is measured, recorded, and reported (Chesterman 2004, 192–193). There is evidence of tension between military and civilian entities; between UN agencies; and between government and non-government actors (Weinberger 2002, 245). All major actors have large media teams with additional differing priorities usually involving the maximising of income for NGOs or the maximising of a positive image for states (Chesterman 2004, 186–192). Thus the primary goals for many development actors are distinct from their functions as assisting entities for the local people. Added to this are the typical challenges of operating in a developing country: power cuts, lack of drinking water, absence of basic public services, transport and logistics difficulties, communications problems, and language and cultural difficulties. In the case of post-conflict development, all of the above takes place in areas of often considerable insecurity and violence. Economic and social distortions caused by floods of Westerners and money entering the country may exacerbate existing conflict or political problems. Peace agreements, if they exist, are often tentative and fragile and military operations may still be ongoing. It is surely little wonder then that many approaches to post-conflict development are subject to intense criticism and that many attempts at post-conflict development are unsuccessful.

Of all these criticisms—which include the lack of resource support for development activities (Chesterman 2004, 187; Foley 2008, 28); the lack of a focus on fragile states in particular (Chesterman 2004, 187); the imposition of Western institutions and values on states and their people not familiar with or receptive to such culturally foreign concepts (Bolton 2007, 89–90; Foley 2008, 40–41, 43; Richmond 2005, 173); geopolitical neo-colonialism, racism, and ulterior motives behind intervention and development (Chesterman 2004, 184, 191–192; de Coning 2008, 92; Bolton 2007, 112; Lawson 2013, 20); unrealistic time and progress expectations or demands (Chesterman 2004, 190; Farrall 2009); and the subordination of democratic or human rights objectives to economic or security objectives (Chesterman 2004, 191–192; Devereux 2009; Lawson 2013, 20)—by far the most emphasised and repeated is the need for improved and increased coordination and coherence (Uvin 1999). Roland Paris, building on the work of various authors since 2005 (Paris 2009; de Coning 2007; Picciotto 2005), identifies a number of elements: (1) coherence at the field level; (2) coherence at the donor level; (3) coherence within the UN; and (4) coherence at the headquarters level (Paris 2009). Paris commendably draws a distinction between headquarters level and field level coherence, which is not the same: theoretical memoranda of understanding may never come to be meaningfully implemented by the various actors. However, several criticisms can be made. First, elements (2) and

(3) seem to refer to the same type of coherence—namely across differing agencies of a given actor—and therefore could be merged. Second, Paris largely ignores the donor harmonisation element proposed by both Piciotto and de Coning. Multiple donors with multiple policy priorities can and do end up funding contradictory programmes, which Paris himself even acknowledges (Paris 2009, 59). Some degree of coherence between donors is crucial for achieving core objectives. Third, while Paris acknowledges the need for host government and civil society participation at field level, he does not extend these groups the same invitation at headquarters level. This could reinforce deprivation of ownership in respect of the programmes being delivered (de Coning 2007). Taking these issues into account, Paris' elements might be revised:

1. Entity coherence, where both states and IGOs such as the UN ensure that policies and operations across their disparate agencies are unified and coordinated within a given post-conflict context (whole-of-entity approaches)
2. Donor harmonisation, where donors (both state and IGO) strive towards harmonisation and integration of their various policy and development objectives
3. Strategic alignment, where at senior levels donor states, IGOs, and key NGOs align their actions against a joint strategic plan owned by host government and local civil society representatives
4. Operational coherence, where at a 'field level' relevant actors in relevant contexts ensure that their on-the-ground activities are coherent

For each of these elements, the various actors involved in post-conflict development have at least to some extent responded with specific initiatives designed to increase and improve coherence and coordination.

However, calls for increased and improved coordination and coherence have themselves been criticised for focusing too heavily on procedural rather than substantive issues. In particular, Paris notes the “substantive-philosophical” differences in policy between major donors (Paris 2009, 59). Such differences are also reflected in NGOs (Cooley and Ron 2002, 5), IGOs (UN Peacebuilding Commission 2007b; The World Bank 2008), the academic community (see, for instance, de Coning 2007; de Coning 2008; Paris 2009); and in many post-conflict situations where the policy objectives of the local government are, at best, only superficially compatible with those of donor states.² Furthermore, scholars have also cautioned against overzealous coordination or the wrong kind of coordination (Paris 2009; de Coning 2007; de Coning 2008). A very tall order is therefore set for coordination and coherence responses: they must achieve balanced and proportionate cooperation among actors which improves both the substance and procedure of post-conflict development. Critical examination is therefore necessary to determine whether recent responses to the

² See, for example, the criticism attributed to the UN Millennium Development Goals and their alleged inadequacy for the well-being of the Timorese people (Government of Timor-Leste 2012) as contrasted with “the commitment [of the Government of Timor-Leste] to the Government of Australia to...pursue poverty reduction and improvements in health, education and other Millennium Development Goal (MDG) outcomes for all Timorese people” (AusAID 2011, para 2.3). A notable irony is that the Dili International Conference was in part funded by AusAID as evidenced by the acknowledgement at the end of the document.

above criticisms are balanced and whether they address substantive as well as procedural concerns.

3. Responses to criticism: recent developments

3.1. Entity coherence

Both the UN and a number of donor states have experimented with approaches to post-conflict development which integrate their various departments, agencies, and disparate policy priorities. Following much lamented criticism about turf disputes and patch protecting among UN agencies (Caplan 2005, 166–167; Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center 2011, 1), the UN has pursued a ‘Delivering as One’ approach, where one overall strategic plan for all UN agencies and interests is created and adhered to in a given post-conflict context. One report observes that the risks and benefits of UN integration are highly context specific (OECD 2006), with largely negative outcomes in Somalia and Afghanistan yet largely positive outcomes in DR Congo (Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center 2011). In the latter location integration is regarded as having improved security for the population and aid workers alike, which is mainly attributed to shared strategic objectives (the protection of civilians), logistical cooperation, and information sharing and effective liaison between humanitarian and UN actors (Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center 2011, 6–7). In Somalia however integration perversely seems to have had the opposite effect (Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center 2011, 6–7). UN Integration connects previously politically objective humanitarian UN agencies with politically subjective UN Missions in a country, potentially resulting in increased likelihood of attacks against those UN staff (Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center 2011, 5). Other commentators appear to be largely critical of UN integration: it has apparently failed to dampen the institutional rivalry between the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) (Caplan 2005, 166–167; Patrick 2000, 43–44); and in any case separate agencies retain separate decision-making structures with independent budgetary control (de Coning 2008, 11; Köhler 2011, 41). Indeed, separate budgetary control resulted in UN engineers being prohibited from repairing official buildings in Timor-Leste (Chesterman 2004, 195).

A number of donor states have adopted similar whole-of-entity approaches, albeit with varied results (Patrick and Brown 2007; OECD 2006). The primary criticism seems to be that competing policy goals of agencies are not necessarily of equal weight, which means that post-conflict development objectives can be jettisoned in preference to national security objectives, particularly in relation to counter-terrorism (Chesterman 2004, 192; OECD 2006, 8). Further, commentators agree that significant financial, human, and administrative resource constraints impede progress towards a common framework, and that internal resistance to such merging of objectives can be significant (OECD 2006, 8; Patrick and Brown 2007, 11, 133). There is also broad consensus that whole-of-government approaches are not actually achieving on the ground what has been agreed in capitals: the OECD notes that there are “considerable gaps between what has been agreed in principle

and the practice of ministries and agencies” (OECD 2006, 8), while Patrick and Brown observe that “whole of government efforts fall along a spectrum” (Patrick and Brown 2007, 11, 129). Despite these negative points, commentators have broadly but cautiously welcomed state attempts towards multi-agency coherence. Indeed, few direct criticisms of the implementation of this approach within any given state can be found within the OECD report, and nor does this report consider the impact of these approaches on the ground. This in itself somewhat undermines the value in the OECD report and the approaches of states—if states are not open to the public dissemination of critical analysis of their approaches then it is unlikely that those approaches will see any significant improvement. While greater state coherence is welcomed, almost all commentators are at pains to stress the need to avoid the development of an inflexible “bureaucratic straitjacket” (OECD 2006, 9). On the contrary there seems to be little risk of this occurring: states simply have not gone far enough.

3.2. Donor harmonisation

The OECD has taken a lead in developing international instruments the intention of which has been to harmonise development policies of donors and make aid more effective overall. The Rome Declaration on Harmonisation and the Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness were agreed between states, IGOs, and a limited number of NGOs and private entities operating in the development arena in 2003 and 2005 respectively (Rome Declaration on Harmonisation 2003). These documents were commendably unique in that they involved a range of non-state actors, as well as all the major donor states and a wide number of recipient states. There is also evidence—albeit from donor states themselves—to suggest that key obligations are being met (see, for instance, Cox and Thornton 2008; USAID 2011³). However, a recent survey monitoring the implementation of the Paris Declaration showed that of the 13 global targets set for 2010, only one had been met, and of the four indicators relating to the harmonisation of aid, only one had been met (OECD 2011). No such monitoring mechanism appears to be in place for the Rome Declaration, and in any case neither declaration is legally binding on any of the actors who have agreed to their implementation, which significantly limits actors’ accountability. Furthermore, neither declaration contains any reference to the integration of the substance of development assistance (development policies and priorities); they instead more vaguely refer to the coordination of the process of development assistance (when aid is given and how actors should work together).

In addition to formal arrangements, informal groupings of donor states such as the *Utstein* Group have tried to jointly examine post-conflict development policies and issues in order to achieve greater multilateral coherence (Norwegian Mission to the European Union 2009; U4 2013). The *Utstein* Group was initially an informal partnership between

³ Note however the contrast to Kirsti Samuels’ portrayal in relation to coordination efforts in East Timor (Samuels 2006, 16). No comparable studies of Paris Declaration implementation were immediately available from either the World Bank or the IMF.

the international development ministers from the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, and the UK in 1999. Although relatively ad hoc, the *Utstein* Group nonetheless succeeded in commissioning joint reviews with concrete recommendations (Smith 2004, 63; Lawry-White 2003; Kievelitz, Kruk and Frieters 2003; Mathisen 2003; King's College London 2003) establishing a joint but independent anti-corruption resource centre with a staff which continues to "support" eight development agencies, although the Netherlands has since withdrawn (U4); and managing to integrate the activities of a number of donors albeit in selected contexts.⁴ This legacy of enhanced development agency relationships has appeared to continue, despite the apparent end of the group itself. In South Sudan a Joint Donor Team of the Netherlands, Denmark, Norway, Sweden and the UK are jointly coordinating and administering their development programme through a pooled Multi-Donor Trust Fund (OECD 2006, 34–35). This appears to have the confidence of the South Sudan government since they have agreed to match donor contributions from their own budget at a ratio of two-to-one.

3.3. Strategic alignment

Until relatively recently, each donor produced their own strategy document for providing development assistance to a given recipient state:

“Britain produces a ‘Country Strategy Paper’, Japan develops ‘Country Aid Implementation Guidelines’, the United States has a ‘Strategic Plan’, UNDP uses a ‘Country Cooperation Framework’, and so on. This is replicated in the International Financial Institutions, which follow a ‘Policy Framework Paper’ (IMF), a ‘Country Assistance Strategy’ (World Bank), and so forth. Attempts to coordinate these disparate activities are, needless to say, complicated.”

(Chesterman 2004, 193)

The need to coordinate approaches to post-conflict development at a strategic level is nonetheless widely observed (see for instance Patrick 2000, 35). While most donors continue to produce their own documents there has been some progress in the form of Joint Assistance Strategies (JAS) (Lawson 2013). In Ethiopia a JAS has brought together the World Bank, the African Development Bank, Canada, the European Commission, Ireland, Germany, Sweden, and the United Kingdom, and has reportedly worked well (African Development Bank Group 2006). The criticism that civil society participation is required if some degree of legitimacy on the part of the people living in post-conflict states is to be obtained is addressed in part in Tanzania where a JAS has included a wide variety of non-state actors (Government of Tanzania 2006; Lawson 2013, 10). Nonetheless, the implementation of Joint Assistance Strategies remains ad hoc, as is their degree of success, and there is evidence that their use is dwindling (Lawson 2013, 11). Lawson also refers to the central issue affecting Joint Assistance Strategies: they take two to three years to draft

⁴ See, for instance, Norway Agency for Development Cooperation 2013 which details a joint programme between Norway and the UK on climate change activities in Ethiopia.

(Lawson 2013, 11). Such a timeframe is of little use in relatively volatile post-conflict environments, which may go some way towards explaining why successful joint strategies similar to those in Ethiopia, Tanzania and Bangladesh are much harder to find in post-conflict states.

The lack of strategic coordination of development activities in relation to post-conflict states was in part recognised during the 2005 World Summit which set the stage for the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Commission. The role of the Commission is to “advise on and propose integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery” (UN General Assembly 2005).⁵ Opinion is however split on whether the UN is the best entity to be assigned this role:

“The problem with [UN-driven coordination] initiatives is that placing the United Nations at the centre of several concentric rings of actors presumes that other players, such as major bilateral donors and NGOs, are of secondary importance. In reality, it is often the United Nations that plays a peripheral role.”

(Chesterman 2004, 203)

Tolbert and Solomon note the “unique” assets of the UN, which they claim are not possessed by any other post-conflict development actor: “its neutrality, the geographical breadth and experience of its staff, and its international legitimacy” (Tolbert and Solomon 2006, 58). However it might be argued that organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross and the World Bank also possess these attributes, although the former is a humanitarian organisation. Furthermore, the UN is not necessarily neutral: its most powerful body is dominated by five global powers and its missions engage in military activities against a given warring faction in a conflict. The same might be said for its international legitimacy. Nonetheless, the establishment of an international relatively credible entity that can strategically oversee coordination efforts provides a welcome mechanism for the merging of post-conflict development recipes.

Questions of whether the UN should take on this oversight role are nonetheless somewhat overshadowed by questions of whether the UN can effectively perform this role. Initial reviews of the extent to which the Commission involved local parties in drawing up integrated peacebuilding strategies (IPBS) have been largely positive, but concerns about the linguistic vagueness of these strategies have prevailed (Paris 2009; de Coning 2007; de Coning 2008). Despite this vagueness, IPBS nonetheless build on an extensive consultation with recipient states and delineate local and donor responsibilities in the peacebuilding process (see, for instance, UN Peacebuilding Commission 2007b). The extent to which the Commission is able to examine the most critical post-conflict states has also been questioned, given the Commission’s relationship with the UN Security Council (de Coning 2007; de Coning 2008). Despite the widely acknowledged reciprocal relationship, it would seem that political and security concerns continue to trump the need for development in post-conflict states. The resulting irony is that where post-conflict states do not feature

⁵ The 2005 World Summit also resulted in the acceptance of the ‘Responsibility to Protect’ doctrine in paragraph 138 of this resolution, thereby also attempting to address some of the substantive issues around post-conflict development.

on the political radar of the largest donors they are therefore more likely to benefit from increased coordination and coherence.

3.4. Operational coherence

Despite the rapid increase in the number of actors involved in post-conflict development, studies of operational systems of cooperation and coherence are rare. Apart from noting recipient state frustrations with the overwhelming number of actors, their various operational groupings, and the resultant delay in funds disbursement, prominent authors fail to even mention such mechanisms at a local level (Foley; Bolton). Hamid Karzai evidently echoed this feeling, expressing the sentiment that the number of cooperation groups may have served only to reflect the proliferation in actors rather than achieve concrete coordination in anything (Karzai in Chesterman 2004, 197). This sentiment is also acknowledged by de Coning:

“The internal peacebuilding agents report that they typically feel intimidated by the momentum, scope and depth of the external intervention. They are overwhelmed by the pressure to engage with all the assessments, proposals and plans generated by the sudden influx of external actors, and they are frustrated that despite all this activity there is typically little to show, in terms of immediate delivery, for their time and effort.”

(de Coning 2008, 102)

Indeed if all the preceding forms of cooperation and coherence are to have any meaning, such goals must be translated to the operational level: cooperation and coherence is only beneficial if it results in positive outcomes for those living in post-conflict states. Evidence suggests that cooperation and coherence measures are simply not working on the ground (Patrick and Brown 2007, 130, 138; de Coning 2008, 90).

There are however some positive examples of operational coherence. In Kosovo a shared sense of commitment contributed to role generosity and ensuring the contiguity of overlapping or multi-layered boundaries provided for improved communication and planning (Caplan 2005, 175). Of the various post-conflict tensions noted above—civil-military, state-NGO, and internally within given entities—civil-military cooperation seems to be the most successfully repeated with good outcomes in Bosnia (Caplan 2005, 175) and DR Congo (Humanitarian Policy Group and the Stimson Center 2011, 6–9). More research is needed on operational cooperation mechanisms in post-conflict states, particularly in respect of their practical effects. Continual meetings and actor groupings are worthwhile only if they actually serve the interests of those they are intending to benefit.

4. Integrating post-conflict development recipes

As it has been shown, while progress has been at times slow, the international community has nonetheless attempted to respond to longstanding criticisms of lack of coordination and coherence in post-conflict development. However, the majority of these

responses fail to address what may be underlying substantive issues: if donor policies remain discrete then improved coordination alone is unlikely to result in “mission accomplished”.⁶ On the other hand, substantive harmonisation—the merging of donor policies—is also likely to be ineffective since this will likely lead to a greater disparity between, for example, development agencies and military forces within a given donor and across multiple donors. What is needed is a process of integration: substantive policy unification alongside procedural activity coherence. This process of deeper integration is represented in figure 1.

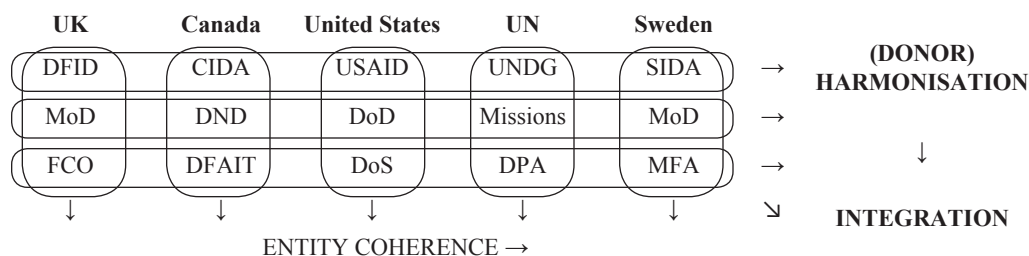


Figure 1 Process of deeper integration

Since the evidence of current responses to cooperation and coherence criticisms suggests that the opposing forces of drive towards either entity coherence or donor harmonisation inhibit the achievement of the other (Patrick and Brown 2007, 135), the diagonal arrow is of greatest significance in figure 1. A given agency, across both donor states and relevant IGOs, must attempt to gradually achieve both entity coherence and cross-donor harmonisation simultaneously.

The integration model above makes a number of assumptions which should be acknowledged. First, figure 1 merely illustrates rather than accurately maps substantive and procedural actions. Some donors may have more than three relevant agencies while other entities such as NATO, the World Bank, and private contractors may be involved at, for example, a harmonisation level but not necessarily at an entity coherence level. As well as simultaneously horizontally and vertically, integration may also occur diagonally: the military of one donor may need to substantively and procedurally cohere with the development agency of another donor in a given context (Patrick and Brown 2007, 139).

Second, the selected donors above are entirely arbitrary: integration will not be effective without a broad spectrum of donors. Of course, it is assumed that donors would willingly pursue such integration. OECD DAC members can reportedly be more interested in the retention of sovereignty than establishing joint ventures (Patrick 2000, 42). The United States provides foreign assistance with the explicit purpose of furthering the interests of the

⁶ Although this phrase is widely attributed to US President George W Bush in a speech delivered from the aircraft carrier USS Abraham Lincoln on 1 May 2003, in fact Bush never said these words. On the contrary Bush clearly stated that the United States would continue to assist Iraq with its post-conflict development: “Major combat operations in Iraq have ended. In the battle of Iraq, the United States and our allies have prevailed. And now our coalition is engaged in securing and reconstructing that country.” See Office of the Press Secretary 2003, para 1.

United States rather than the interests of post-conflict states or their people (Lawson 2013, 19–20). However, a number of donor states have signalled their interest in achieving greater coherence and harmonisation, such as those donor states which have both implemented whole-of-government approaches and those which have joined collaborative groups such as *Utstein*.⁷ While all donors should be encouraged to participate in integration to some degree, diversity in depth and breadth of involvement will allow for greater flexibility in post-conflict states, which are highly context specific (Paris 2009; de Coning 2008, 92). Time will also be a balanced factor: integration in a given post-conflict context which takes too long will be ineffective and possibly counterproductive, while a rushed process will result in poor outcomes and a loss of context-specific flexibility, not to mention genuine involvement of local actors. A trade-off is evident: immediate, broad and total integration will do no more to serve the interests of those living in post-conflict states than the absence of any integration whatsoever.

Third, and perhaps most importantly, even if donor integration manages to successfully balance the delicate factors above, an approach which is exclusive to donors will not be sufficient to achieve better post-conflict outcomes on the ground. Alignment, where the integrated product of donor policy objectives is matched with those of the recipient state, and where NGOs, the recipient government, and recipient civil society organisations are involved in this process, is still required. In other words, a mechanism is needed which can translate the integrated donor product into a flexible and responsive set of priorities fit for the local context, owned and driven by the recipient government, and involving all relevant actors, not least representatives of the people of the recipient state. The UN Peacebuilding Commission has tried to initiate this process with some success, but its efforts are constrained by its narrow purview of post-conflict states; its tendency to resort to ambiguous objectives; its own lack of coherence with the integration strategies of other key IGOs such as the World Bank; and its undue focus on administrative process rather than substantive progress. The burden of responsibility for the success of the Peacebuilding Commission experiment surely rests squarely on the shoulders of member states: non-aligned states must be willing to shift their focus towards substantive issues while powerful states must be willing to more equitably balance development objectives with security concerns (after all, lack of development is increasingly recognised as a security concern). Actors must also recognise that the Peacebuilding Commission cannot be a substitute for formal and informal networks of procedural and substantive integration (Ricigliano 2003) and the interests and self-determination rights of the people of post-conflict states must be paramount in post-conflict development.

Finally, an updated legal framework is required to signpost the flow of coherence traffic. The Paris and Rome Declarations espouse laudable principles, but their non-binding status and their excessive procedural rather than substantive focus inhibits effective action (Köhler 2011, 3).

⁷ Donor states with whole-of-government approaches that are also supported by U4 include Australia, Belgium, Canada, Germany, Sweden and the UK. See Patrick and Brown 2007; U4 2013; Smith 2004; OECD 2006, 14.

5. Conclusion

The phrase ‘too many cooks’ is somewhat clichéd in relation to post-conflict development, yet its use represents both an underestimation and oversimplification of the coherence and coordination problem. Reducing the number of cooks alone is unlikely to achieve success; in any case the cooks must first and foremost agree on what to cook. It is uncertain whether the solution is to be found in a Gordon-Ramsay-like centralised structure or in a number of cooks simply working more harmoniously. Furthermore, clichéd culinary metaphors are of ultimately limited value—they struggle to analogise that post-conflict states themselves, and their people, must be at the centre of any efforts towards post-conflict development: external actors are merely there for support. This article has examined a number of recurring criticisms of approaches to post-conflict development and some of the international community’s responses. It has discussed to what extent these various responses have been successful in meeting the coherence and coordination challenge of post-conflict development, with specific reference to substantive progress and improving the situation on the ground. While some progress has been made, the legacy of those responses remains more superficial than meaningful and more procedural than substantive: they simply do not go far enough. Returning briefly to the metaphor, the post-conflict development recipe—while sellotaped together in places—remains largely fragmented and separate. Unless the various actors involved pursue more substantive solutions, and fast, the post-conflict development dish will likely remain inedible and the cooking process will serve the image enhancement interests of the cooks rather than the hunger needs of the diners. While those living in post-conflict states literally starve, the search for the cookbook continues.

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