

Linking Peace, Stability and Development: Engaging New Global Actors in the Debate

From 3-5 December 2014, over 50 participants took part in a joint Saferworld-Wilton Park conference on peace, stability and development in Istanbul. The conference provided a rare opportunity for stakeholders from conflict-affected states, emerging global powers and traditional development actors to share experiences, perspectives and ideas for greater cooperation in support of peace, stability and development.

The participants debated broad topics such as the relationship between peace, stability and development and the role of new global actors in supporting development in conflict-affected states in plenary sessions. In addition, they discussed the role and impact on rising powers in three specific contexts: India in Afghanistan, China in South Sudan and Turkey in Somalia. Particular thematic issues were also addressed, focusing on comparative development policies, transnational conflict threats, the post-2015 development agenda and economic engagement in conflict-affected states.

This report provides a summary of the conference discussions, including key discussion points and themes that emerged. The conference was held under the Chatham House Rule.

Background

Conflict-affected states are lagging behind other countries on development. With only about 20 per cent of the countries that the World Bank categorises as ‘fragile or conflict-affected’ being on track to meet the basic target of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and with the formulation of a new global development framework in 2015, the question on how to best address these challenges is more pressing than ever.

Due to their rapid economic growth and the effects of globalisation, **emerging global actors such as Brazil, China, India, Turkey and South Africa are playing an increasingly significant role in developing countries.** These actors are becoming more involved in various forms of development cooperation with conflict-affected states. And their views and policies on how to support development in conflict-affected states often differ from traditional development actors, in both modality and form.

Given the significant roles played by an increasing number of global actors, **an in-depth understanding of their perspectives** on the relationship between peace, stability and development as well as their own role in conflict-affected states is vital to inform the future direction of international development policy.

Aim

The conference aimed to **enhance understanding and different perspectives on peace, security and development among participants from conflict-affected states, emerging global actors and traditional development actors,** and to explore opportunities for greater cooperation between this range of stakeholders.

Seminar Sessions

The relationship between peace, stability and development

The conference opened with a **plenary debate about the relationship between peace, stability and development**. There was broad consensus that conflict, insecurity and violence undermine sustainable development, leading to a number of countries becoming trapped in a cycle of conflict and underdevelopment. Views on why international development efforts have had limited success in addressing these issues, and on how to help such countries break out of this vicious circle were more divergent.

The **complex dynamics involved in conflict-affected states** were highlighted as one of the reasons why achieving sustainable peace and stability has proven so challenging. Conflict-affected contexts are often characterised by fragmentation with no clear divisions between economic, criminal and political actors, or between combatants and civilians. Many countries where complex political transitions have taken place – including Libya, Yemen and Somalia – have relapsed into conflict despite huge amounts of international aid and support. In addition to these domestic dynamics, there are also a number of external stress factors that contribute to conflicts such as illicit financial flows and terrorism.

The **need for new and more flexible approaches and frameworks** rather than checklists and sequential approaches for understanding and dealing with these complexities was emphasised by several participants. Some participants welcomed the rise of new **multilateral institutions such as the BRICS bank and the China-led Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank**, viewing them as an opportunity for alternative approaches to be tested. Others were more cautious and pointed to the lack of coherence between development policies, for instance, the different views on conditionalities. One participant from a rising power, however, stated that approaches of new and traditional actors are quite similar and went on to question the concept of multilateralism as it “is linked to the liberal peace agenda and does not include enough different voices”.

Despite these different views, most participants recognised that increased multilateralism is a reality and **called for improved coordination between**

traditional and new development actors. A representative from a rising power stated that although self-interest and competition are common denominators among states engaged in conflict-affected countries, they must coordinate their actions more effectively in order to respond to crises and instability. He also said that new actors’ “non-traditional ways of engaging may be a better way to engage”. A participant from a conflict-affected state concurred and exemplified this by emphasising China’s continued focus on development in South Sudan during the current conflict while Western actors have put their development efforts on hold in favour of humanitarian work.

Views from conflict-affected states

A plenary debate on the **views and perspectives of conflict-affected states** followed, during which participants focused on identifying measures that could increase the prospects of achieving sustainable peace and stability in conflict-affected states.

First, it was argued that international development actors must adopt **conflict-sensitive approaches** in order to avoid the risk of doing more harm than good. In Myanmar, for instance, international actors risk reinforcing conflict dynamics between the state and ethnic minorities by providing indiscriminate support for government programmes. **A participant from a rising power expressed caution about external actors addressing conflict issues and engaging with non-state actors**, as it goes against the principle of non-interference in internal affairs. He went on to acknowledge, however, that practices of rising powers on the ground were in some cases becoming more flexible and promoting conflict resolution, partly in recognition of the negative impacts that conflict can have on economic interests.

A second theme to emerge was that international development efforts should be focused on building **positive rather than negative peace**. Improved relations between state and society are vital and can only be achieved through supporting democratic processes aimed at ensuring inclusiveness and participation. Nigeria was cited as an example of exclusionary decision-making along ethnic and religious lines where power is concentrated in the hands of a privileged elite, so the risk of widespread conflict and violence is high. A participant from a conflict-affected state emphasised that although international development actors have vested interests, they must support participatory processes,

as “national interests cannot flourish without an enabling environment”. While recognising the need to engage with non-state actors, one participant highlighted the difficulties often involved in identifying whom to engage with when facing a diverse and divided opposition.

Lastly, several stakeholders called for increased support from international development actors for **local civil society organisations (CSOs)**. One participant from a conflict-affected state expressed frustration over the programmes currently being implemented, which focus too much on activities such as roundtables rather than on concrete efforts that would make a difference for people on the ground. Several participants from rising powers emphasised, however, that in conflict-affected – and very often weak – states without capable institutions, there is a risk that CSOs become more powerful than the state itself. In the words of one participant: “CSOs might take on a type of ‘watchdog’ role, which would reduce opportunities for cooperation and open the door for the state to retreat”.

International engagement in support of conflict-affected states

During the third plenary debate, participants analysed **the role of new and traditional development actors in conflict-affected states** and their different views and perspectives on how to address conflict dynamics in the countries they engage in.

A large part of the discussion was dedicated to the **foreign policy principles and approaches of rising powers**. It soon became evident that although there are similarities between the approaches of rising powers, it would be wrong to assume that they act in a uniform manner. A participant from a rising power described the key foreign policy principles of China as non-interference, equal treatment and the continuation of development support during conflicts. One participant stated that although China might not recognise conflict-affected states as a specific category in theory, it recognises conflict dynamics in practice and has made efforts to influence them, for instance through ongoing mediation efforts in South Sudan. A participant from a rising power replied that although this is the case, China’s foreign policy principle of non-interference remains unchanged.

The approaches of several other rising powers were discussed, including Brazil, which also values the

principle of non-interference, while reduction of poverty is the main motivation of its development policy. Brazil was also said to prioritise direct aid for local capacity building. The high level of engagement of Turkish CSOs in development assistance in conflict-affected states stood in sharp contrast to the minimal engagement of CSOs from China, where civil society remains under-developed. **The different motivations of rising powers were highlighted**, with Brazil motivated in part by national pride at bringing lessons learned in the domestic context to other developing countries, while South Africa’s engagement in the surrounding region is primarily rooted in domestic security concerns. One participant suggested that China generally takes a more modest, technical and non-political approach when engaging in conflict-affected states.

The other main theme of the discussion was the importance of **addressing the root causes of conflict and insecurity and moving away from peacekeeping to peacebuilding**. One participant from a rising power stressed that addressing the root causes is equally important for emerging and traditional actors, and that the securitisation of development should be avoided. However, another participant questioned how rising powers are going to be able to address the root causes of conflict while maintaining the principle of non-interference. Several stakeholders from the traditional donor community recognised the failed efforts of Western development actors in addressing the root causes of conflicts.

Case studies of engagement in conflict-affected states

During the second day of the conference, participants had the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions focusing on **specific case studies of the engagement of rising powers in conflict-affected states**. The cases of India in Afghanistan, China in South Sudan and Turkey in Somalia were presented and debated in three separate breakout groups.

India in Afghanistan

India’s engagement with Afghanistan was presented as being **based on three imperatives**. First, India seeks to prevent terrorist attacks that threaten India as well as key regional partners and engagement in Afghanistan is a key part of this strategy. Second, the geographical proximity of Afghanistan is a powerful driver for engagement as it provides an

opportunity to support and strengthen a friendly neighbour. Finally, its development activities in Afghanistan are a part of India's ongoing strategy to create a trade, transit and energy corridor to Central Asia for India. In light of these three imperatives, India's engagement in Afghanistan can be seen not as a strategy designed for a conflict-affected state but rather a pragmatic response to a geopolitical reality.

The group also discussed the **nature of India's engagement**. Its development assistance to Afghanistan has become more significant in recent years with India now the fifth largest bilateral donor. India's development assistance has concentrated on providing direct support to build Afghan capacities in a range of areas, an approach that was described as distinct from that of many OECD actors who tend to follow the 'sectoral lead' approach with each Afghan Ministry having an international sponsor. Challenges associated with the latter approach include absorption capacity and a lack of accountability. It was argued that although the Indian government mostly focuses on improving Afghanistan's infrastructure, there is a strong presence of Indian non-governmental organisations (NGOs), which contributes to a diversity of development approaches.

When discussing **ways forward for India's engagement**, the need for India to capitalise on its comparative advantage in development cooperation was emphasised by several participants. India has the experience and capacity to undertake a variety of low-cost, practical development programmes – such as India's Barefoot College bringing electricity to rural villages by training poor women to become solar engineers – which OECD actors are less able to deliver. It was argued, however, that India is not making the most out of its comparative advantage over Western development actors in these areas. Although the public perception of India's engagement is largely positive, several stakeholders pointed to the frustration among many Afghans, who have to balance it with their relationship with Pakistan. Lastly, it was seen as doubtful whether India's engagement in Afghanistan can be viewed as a potential model for its engagement in other conflict-affected states.

Turkey in Somalia

Turkey's engagement in Somalia was considered to be different from that of traditional development actors. **It is characterised by a multi-track approach**, with several different Turkish

government agencies providing aid including its foreign aid agency, its housing agency and the health ministry of Istanbul municipality. In addition, Turkish NGOs, drawing on Turkish volunteers who are proud to be part of a wider Turkish effort, play an important role in Somalia. Other identified aspects of Turkey's engagement in conflict-affected states include mediation and security sector cooperation.

A large part of the discussion was devoted to **the trust that Turkey has managed to build up in Somalia** through the presence of Turkish citizens on the ground. This was considered a key constituent of its trust-building efforts with the Somali people. Contrary to other donors in Somalia, Turkey is perceived to be taking risks – personal, in terms of the security of citizens on the ground, but also financial, in terms of providing direct funding to the government. According to some participants, this 'trust capital' is also maintained through Turkey's ability to deliver on its promises, including tangible development inputs, such as hospital building.

With regard to **potential steps forward**, it was proposed that there is more room for Turkey to engage in closer partnerships with other international actors, to reach out beyond Mogadishu and to build up a more nuanced understanding of the conflict dynamics, which should guide its development efforts. It was also argued that Turkey could leverage on its trust capital and become a leader who pushes for inclusive political processes. However, Turkey's government seems reluctant to engage overtly on political issues. The group concluded that while there is a distinct Turkish model of engagement in Somalia relative to other donors, it should be not be seen as a typical model for Turkey's engagement that could be replicated in other conflict-affected states.

China in South Sudan

The group discussed China's adoption of a **consistent approach of adaptation** since the secession of South Sudan. Beijing's engagement with both sides of the conflict in South Sudan stands in sharp contrast to its one-sided engagement with the official government during the war in Sudan. The engagement is no longer only economic but also political, evidenced by China's focus on early warning systems, its collaboration with organisations such as the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development on reconciliation, as well as maintaining a Chinese

presence on the ground despite the shutdown of the oil fields. The South Sudanese people have also changed their perception of China: from being a pro-Khartoum actor to increased acceptance of China's role and contribution to South Sudan's development. The group was, however, unclear whether China's evolving approach in South Sudan demonstrates a substantive shift in its policy or pragmatic adaptation to a changing reality.

The **ambiguity of China's engagement in South Sudan** was highlighted; for example, the role played by Chinese commercial actors as both businessmen and official representatives of the government can lead to confusion. It has also proven difficult for China to maintain the principle of preserving the status quo in such a fluid and unstable environment.

Finally, several participants **called for a more coherent approach between OECD actors and new actors such as China in South Sudan** in order to prevent a relapse into conflict once a political agreement is reached between the warring parties. The group concluded by recognising that the complex case of China in South Sudan serves as a reminder of the fact that China's role should not be simplified; rather, genuine efforts should be made to understand how China is reflecting on its experience in South Sudan and responding accordingly.

Case study comparative assessment

Several **commonalities across all three case-studies** were identified. One such commonality was that these particular cases should not be viewed as generic models of rising power engagement in conflict-affected states that can or should be replicated in other contexts. Instead, they reflect the particularities of the specific context in question, which cannot be generalised to other cases. Further, rising powers themselves are still in the process of evolving their policies and practices in such contexts while reflecting on their own experiences. Differences between the rising powers were also pointed out, such as the varying roles of NGOs in the conflict-affected state and the degree of direct engagement in peacebuilding and mediation.

In all three cases, **the approach of the rising power was seen as distinct from that of OECD actors** – for instance in terms of an emphasis on providing tangible development inputs. One commonality between both rising powers and traditional development actors was highlighted –

they are all motivated by national interests and are facing geopolitical considerations.

There was general recognition of **the need for lessons to be learnt on both sides**. Traditional actors would benefit from adopting some of the alternative approaches of rising powers, such as Turkey's success in building trust in parts of Somalia. Rising powers can learn from traditional development actors' experience of engaging in conflict-affected states, especially in terms of shared conflict analysis.

Breakout groups

Convergences and divergences in development priorities towards conflict-affected states

The first breakout group looked at the **coherence of development policies towards conflict-affected states across the range of development actors**. Participants stressed the need to build genuine partnerships rather than simply focusing on coordination when striving for greater coherence of development policies. Too much coordination carries the risk of constraining innovative approaches and risk-taking, which are necessary elements of engaging in conflict-affected states. Another risk of coordination is that development actors simply seek the lowest common denominator between development approaches rather than focusing on how to achieve outputs.

There was general recognition that in **order for partnerships to be effective, they must build on equal participation and shared learning**. Currently, there is often an expectation that new actors should simply join pre-existing frameworks of traditional actors, whether or not they have proven effective. Unless they see credible efforts to address the democratic deficit in global governance, rising powers may remain reluctant to join existing frameworks. Several voices also called for these new development partnerships to be built on the comparative advantages – both technical and relational – of new and traditional actors.

The discussion highlighted that while the approaches of traditional development actors and rising powers towards conflict-affected states differ, **all international actors are learning how best to address the immensely complex and deep-rooted issues of conflict and instability**. They can – and should – learn from each other's experiences, preferably through genuine

partnerships in order to ensure policy coherence amongst international actors in conflict-affected states. In order for these partnerships to be effective, however, multilateral institutions and frameworks must reflect the changing world order as well as our evolving understanding of what drives development and underpins peace.

Economic involvement in conflict-affected states: addressing the causes of conflict

The second breakout group considered **different approaches to economic engagement in conflict-affected states**.

Several participants emphasised the global dimension of this phenomenon, as **'no economic activity is restricted to a national context'**. Illicit financial flows (IFFs) were said to function both as a cause and effect of conflict as they easily become part of the war economy. It was highlighted that Official Development Assistance (ODA) is only one part of a complex jigsaw when we consider the various forms of economic engagement that impact on development and peacebuilding: trade, investment and remittances all play a significant role. One participant stated for instance that remittances "work as a cushion, which keeps people alive in conflict-affected countries".

The **importance of state capacity and good governance** in order to ensure that economic engagement by global actors benefits the recipient country and the local population was highlighted. In the words of one participant: "generations are paying the costs of ineffective contracts in weak states with natural abundant resources". The differences between global development actors were emphasised – traditional donors often attach conditions to their aid in order to foster human rights or good governance, while new actors tend to focus on delivering short-term, visible aid without conditions attached to their development assistance. One participant from a conflict-affected state questioned the prospects of achieving good governance as long as rising powers remain reluctant to engage politically and focus on visible but unsustainable development inputs.

In terms of **ways forward**, the group recommended that international actors should give space to home-grown inclusive leadership, build state capacity to combat corruption and ensure responsible financial management of state revenues so that it benefits people on the ground. All global actors should also strive to fully understand the local context and adopt

a conflict-sensitive approach. The complexity of conditionalities was debated — although conditionalities can help ensure accountability, they are controversial and are often seen to impose external policies on developing countries. As a potential solution, it was suggested that dialogue with the local population about their perspectives and priorities should shape donor conditionalities. Finally, support for vertical (state–society) trust-building and horizontal (between new and traditional donors) trust-building was identified as key to successful economic engagement as "trust is often more important than formal agreements".

The Post-2015 development agenda

The second group, which focused on the post-2015 development agenda, highlighted the challenges of policy coherence **and how it can address issues of peace and stability**.

Although there was clear agreement within the group that peace, stability and development are interlinked and **that peace should be included in the post-2015 framework**, the critical question of how to incorporate it within the framework remained. The perception in some quarters was that the peace agenda has been framed by traditional development actors in ways that are selective and limiting. Some participants pointed, for instance, to the exclusion of targets relating to weapons of mass destruction, and to foreign colonial occupation under goal 16 on 'peaceful and inclusive societies'. Concerns were also raised that goal 16 might lead to conditionalities being imposed on developing countries. There was recognition of the fact that goal 16 is the result of compromise between a wide range of member states and therefore it represents the 'lowest common denominator'.

Despite progress made so far, **the group identified a number of issues that need to be resolved** if the post-2015 development framework is to have a meaningful impact on people's lives. The question of how to ensure that the framework is truly universal and speaks to all countries is one such issue. Another important issue concerns measurability, as a lot of the target language is political and requires technical fine-tuning in order for progress to be adequately measured. However, there are considerable political sensitivities around this suggestion. Questions around how the burden of implementation will be set, the relevance of goals and targets to the core objective of poverty eradication and the role of the UN Secretary-General's Synthesis report also remain.

Building bridges: mutual engagement to handle transnational threats

A fourth group discussed **transnational threats, including illicit financial flows as well as issues such as terrorism and organised crime.**

The group focused a lot of its attention on **how these issues can be best defined and conceptualised.** It was argued that rather than tarring all actors involved in these systems with the same brush, it is important to distinguish between them and develop appropriate policy responses – security, political or economic – targeted at each group. Looking at the problem of terrorism in Somalia within a circular framework, the hard-core, globally linked jihadi extremists in the centre must be distinguished from the Somali political Islamists in the outer circle, who are more concerned about domestic issues, as well as from the Somali people in the third circle who are co-opted as a result of a lack of opportunity, threats or opportunism.

However, the problem identified by the group is that **international interventions to tackle the inner circle – notably securitised approaches – negatively affect the other stakeholder groups,** making the problem worse in the long-term. Instead, actions that need to be taken to reduce the influence of hard-core extremists are more about political dialogue and improving the lives of the Somali people. The challenge of balancing short-term responses to immediate security concerns with long-term solutions focusing on building sustainable peace was identified as a key reason to the failure for international actors to address transnational threats effectively.

A number of different international policy responses – including partnerships between private actors, NGOs and state agencies – were discussed. These sorts of **international partnerships could help promote longer-term approaches.** Traditional powers, rising powers and affected states themselves are all concerned with terrorism and violent extremism, and could be brought together around the issue. However, the group concluded that they would likely have different perspectives on how to deal with the threat, requiring more discussion about how to achieve policy coherence when responding to terrorism and extremism. The group concluded by emphasising that ultimately the most important actors in conflict-affected states are local people, and that their voices must be heard in these debates if sustainable peace and stability is to be achieved.

The conference entitled 'Linking peace, stability and development: engaging new global actors in the debate' was held at the Hilton Bomonti hotel in Istanbul from 3-5 December 2014. The three-day event was jointly organised and hosted by Saferworld, Wilton Park and the Istanbul Policy Centre. Over 50 participants came from three main stakeholder groups: conflict-affected states, such as Afghanistan, Somalia and Myanmar; emerging global powers, including South Africa, China, India and Brazil; and traditional development actors such as the UN, OECD-DAC, and European states. Participants came from NGOs, think tanks, inter-governmental organisations and governments.

Summary of key themes emerging

Rising powers have the potential to play an important role in catalysing new and innovative approaches in conflict-affected states, where they are increasingly engaged. Several commonalities were identified across the case-studies of India in Afghanistan, China in South Sudan and Turkey in Somalia. However, there were also clear differences between the cases, with each conflict-affected state case presenting a unique context for the rising power in question. As such, attempting to define a generic model of rising power engagement in conflict-affected states was discouraged.

In some general ways, the approaches and motivations of the rising powers are distinct from those of OECD actors. For instance, it was stated that rising powers focus more on the provision of tangible development outputs, such as infrastructure, and place more emphasis on the principle of non-interference. Despite these differences - and potentially because of them - rising powers and traditional development actors could learn from each other's experiences in what are extremely challenging environments. Stakeholders from conflict-affected states should also play a central role in any such exchanges.

It was broadly agreed that both rising and established international development actors should seek to foster a lasting 'positive peace' that goes beyond the mere absence of violence ('negative peace'). This would entail addressing the root causes of conflict, and adopting conflict-sensitive approaches in development and corporate interventions to avoid aggravating the conflict. It was also suggested that local CSOs should be consulted and engaged as much as possible. However, participants explained that rising powers are, in general, cautious when it comes to engaging with non-state actors, especially on political issues.

In order to foster more coherent and complementary approaches towards conflict-affected states, participants stressed the need to build genuine partnerships rather than simply focusing on ever more coordination. Too much emphasis on coordination risks stifling innovative approaches and risk-taking, and plays to the lowest common denominator. Several voices also called for these new sorts of development partnerships to be built on comparative advantages – both technical and relational – of rising and traditional actors.

Stability in conflict-affected states is undermined by a range of transnational threats, which are beyond the control of any single actor. Rising powers and traditional development actors should better understand the impact that their investments and financial flows, including illicit financial flows, have on conflict dynamics, and should address their responsibility for enabling them. Conflict-affected states will need enhanced state capacities and more robust and accountable governance if they are to maximise the benefits of economic relations with international actors.

International actors who seek to combat terrorism in conflict-affected states must better distinguish between the range of conflict stakeholders, from those at the centre to those at the periphery. If they are to avoid fuelling further grievances and conflict, they should accordingly develop targeted policy responses – security, political and economic – that are more tailored to the stakes and positions of different actor groups.

There was broad consensus that peace should be included in the post-2015 development agenda, but questions remain about how best to reflect it in the framework. The perception in some quarters was that the peace agenda has been framed by traditional development actors in ways that are selective and limiting. There was, however, recognition of the fact that Goal 16 in the Outcome Document of the Open Working Group is the result of hard-won compromises between a wide range of member states.

The rise of new global actors should be viewed as an opportunity for enhancing international engagement to promote peace and stability. Although there are many challenges confronting the international system, there are also grounds for optimism about its capacity to encourage more effective partnerships between traditional and rising powers when it comes to engaging in conflict-affected states.

About Saferworld

Saferworld is an independent international organisation working to prevent violent conflict and build safer lives. We work with local people affected by conflict to improve their safety and sense of security, and conduct wider research and analysis. We use this evidence and learning to improve local, national and international policies and practices that can help build lasting peace. Our priority is people – we believe that everyone should be able to lead peaceful, fulfilling lives, free from insecurity and violent conflict.

We are a not-for-profit organisation with programmes in nearly 20 countries and territories across Africa, the Middle East, Asia and Europe.

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