



Global Perspectives
Initiative

“The Hidden Success for Fragile States:
Reflections on Potentials and Challenges”

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SPEAKER

Bruce Jones, Vice President and Director of Foreign Policy at
The Brookings Institution

Michael Keating, Special Representative of the Secretary-
General for Somalia and Head of the United Nations Assistance
Mission in Somalia

HOSTS

Ingrid Hamm, Co-Founder of Global Perspectives Initiative
Stephan Balzer, Co-Founder of Global Perspectives Initiative



“THE HIDDEN SUCCESS FOR FRAGILE STATES: REFLECTIONS ON POTENTIALS AND CHALLENGES”

Hosted by Global Perspectives Initiative in cooperation with The Brookings Institution the lunch discussion mainly focused on the distinctions of fragility in Afghanistan and Somalia and the general reflections that can be drawn from these two examples. Both countries are facing the problems of fragility, political instability, violence and conflict as well as poverty and have to deal with various stakeholder and actors and their interests. But the situation is quite different.

Drawing from his experiences in Afghanistan and his current work in Somalia, Michael Keating described success factors, failures and learnings.

1. GEOPOLITICAL INTEREST AS AN OBSTACLE

In comparison to Afghanistan, Somalia is of relatively minor geopolitical interest. Development in the shadow of global interest makes it easier and faster to get things done. Afghanistan has been and still is one of the most important centers of political diplomatic development activities in the world and has been of major interest for the US and NATO, with major consequences: Too much money, too sudden, too many agencies, too few specialists, a lack of regional knowledge, no moderating platform, ignoring the will of the local people, missing the basic approach as well as too much media attendance. Even though Somalia is geopolitically significant due to its waterway and its long coastline, it never reached the importance Afghanistan has in this context.

2. MASSIVE INVESTMENT DOES NOT GUARANTEE SUCCESS

As a result of the geopolitical importance, the amount of money spent in Afghanistan has been much higher than is currently the case for Somalia. The development spending for Afghanistan in 2011 was as high as \$ 17 billion, in Somalia \$ 650 million. It was a challenge for institutions to absorb or for NGOs to allocate these huge amounts of money in an orderly or efficient manner.

3. RISK AVERSION

Due to a lack of trust in the local Afghani government and general risk aversion of many global agencies, the money has not been channeled through governmental systems and accordingly, no state capacities were developed. With the departure of the international humanitarian initiatives, many temporary structures have been broken away. The situation in Somalia resembles the one in Afghanistan, in that there are limited state capacities. Nevertheless in Somalia the international development community tries to channel small amounts of money through governmental systems in order to establish accountability and capacities.

4. CORRUPTION

Both countries are characterized by institutional deficits. Due to its focus on counter terrorism and security as well as pursuing the goal of fast successes, the international community has invested too much money in Afghanistan and thereby became unintentionally a driver for corruption. While this applies to a much lesser extent in Somalia, corruption in Somalia is mainly the result of the absence of public financial management and governmental control.



5. LACK OF STRATEGY

The international community hardly ever developed clear objectives in Afghanistan apart from a counter-terrorism agenda. State building has always been of second priority and the dense connectivity between state building and security has never been fully understood or realized. The role of development and the chance for a society to stabilize itself through development has not been recognized enough from the international community.

If the international development community draws the right conclusions from its experiences in Afghanistan, many opportunities for establishing stable, long-term structures could emerge, and this is what Michael Keating hopes for Somalia.

6. ROLE OF UN

The UN is, despite all the justified criticism, still the only international accepted and worldwide-acknowledged initiative, which can provide a platform for all actors and enable the necessary mediation. Whereas in Afghanistan the UN has never been invited to play this role, in Somalia the UN is a major player and is very much trusted by the Somali government, the civil society as well as the international community. On the contrary, the biggest problem in Somalia is that the UN is asked to do more than what they are resourced for.

Bruce Jones described three myths that constantly arise with regards to fragile states.

MYTH OF NEW

The issue of fragile states and the process of working with non-state actors are constantly described as a new phenomenon. This is, however, an ongoing process and the international community has been dealing with non-state actors for a long time, especially since the end of the Cold War.

MYTH OF FAILURE

The myth of failure and the myth of previous developmental initiatives not being successful stem from the interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq on the one hand and non-intervention in Libya on the other hand. Both have not been fully successful. This leads to the idea that dealing with development either with or without interventions will eventually always end in failure. However, it is a matter of defining developmental success and the initial situation. If it means to have perfect economic development, perfect human rights and perfect governance this is unrealistic. The base line for success is shifting from a situation where large scale violent is the dominant form of politics to one where it is not. Important if partial successes from the post-Cold War period include: Mozambique, Cambodia, Guatemala, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Eastern Slavonia, Bosnia and Kosovo. The literature shows clearly that the steady decline in levels of war during this period relies on national action to be sure, but in combination with the huge post-Cold War surge in mediation, peacekeeping, and post-conflict peace building.

MYTH OF DENMARK

The myth of Denmark describes the expectation of entering fragile states like Afghanistan and Somalia and leaving those countries after a short period of time (no more than three or four years) with stable institutions and governments; building kinds of inclusive, responsive, and accountable states like Denmark. This illusion ignores the timelines for developing countries. The fastest example to go from one level of governance to the next is South Korea, which has needed approximately 20 years to develop. Elsewhere it might take generations. We have to have lower expectations of what can be accomplished, and longer timeframes for accomplishing it.



Bruce Jones also stressed the issue that upcoming conflicts will be harder to solve due to a geographical shift towards the Middle East, where 90% of battle deaths for the past 5 years have occurred. There are several ways in which action in the Middle East is harder than in sub-Saharan Africa, which was the location for the majority of failed states interventions in the 1990s and 2000s. First, the cost structure is higher, because these are middle-income countries. Second, they have proportionality much larger and more effective armies, meaning that intervention and peacekeeping is a far more substantial challenge. Third, they have a higher level of geopolitical salience and powerful allies, reducing the space for western policy intervention.

LEARNINGS

The experts are convinced that security and development depends on smart input: "Quality In, Quality Out". Development can only take its effects if it's done the right way.

- **INCLUSION**

The international community has never embedded the political discussions in the Afghan population, and has not asked carefully enough for their ideas and wishes. Therefore, the approach for Somalia's development and security should be anchored in a political agreement amongst the Somalis. The inclusion of the local population is essential for the success of fragile states.

- **CONNECTIVITY**

Encouraging the development community to invest in security like police and in strengthening weak governmental institutions and taking into account that security can only be the consequence of a multidimensional approach and can't be just a military proposition.

- **TRUST BUILDING**

Creating trust through caring for the local administrations by transferring ownership and accountability. The military and the development initiatives should be embedded in a political frame beyond the UN, which can provide an overall political settlement. Therefore, the experts pleading to stay with and invest significantly in the UN, even though the UN has many things to improve.

