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Public Administration in Conflict Affected Countries

Edited by

Juraj Nemec · Purshottama S Reddy



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FOREWORD

The International Institute of Administrative Sciences (IIAS) celebrates its 90th anniversary this year. In its long history, it tried to stay relevant to the public administration agendas of the time. Through its various research groups and events, it produced knowledge that marked different periods of public administration development in the world. This book, co-edited by Juraj Nemec, VP for Publications for the International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA), an IIAS affiliate with a focus on the teaching and training of Public Administration, and PS Reddy, Chair of the Program and Research Advisory Committee of IIAS, tackles an important context of public administration (PA) across the world, namely PA in conflict-affected countries. The inception of this project was in a conflict-affected country, namely Palestine, where the joint IASIA/MENAPAR (Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research Network) conference took place in July 2017. This adds to the authenticity of the book content. In a collection of sixteen country cases spanning countries from all continents, Nemec and Reddy try to disentangle the relationship between conflict and PA; how does conflict affect PA performance and in return how does PA cope with conflict in rebuilding state capacity to deliver services and ‘leave no-one behind’. Inevitably, the UN strategic development goals (SDGs) become a core pursuit of PA systems that can no longer be looked at as technical rational systems of service delivery, but complex socio-political systems situated within a web of internal and external interactions and performing variably depending on a variety of factors, some of which are common like corruption and transparency, but others are specific to different countries,

ranging from access to the European Union, state capture by the elites against the interests of the common citizen, lack of sovereignty and so on. While there can be no definitive answer on to how to recapacitate the state and its public administration during or post-conflict, the variety and richness of the country cases, written by researchers ‘on the ground’, provide a solid terrain to draw lessons and best practices from the different experiences. This book is all the more relevant to a post-Covid-19 era which has made many countries of the world, if not most, akin to conflict-affected countries. Indeed, PA across the world has to cope nowadays with situations similar to those engendered by conflict. At IIAS/IASIA, we are proud to add this book to our collection of seminal works, authored by two of our most distinguished scholars.

International Institute of Administrative Sciences,
Brussels, Belgium

Sofiane Sahraoui

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Introduction, Contextual Background and Scope

Purshottama S Reddy and Juraj Nemec

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Recent global history has been replete with frequent wars and conflicts and in some cases there is the added danger of countries reverting to a conflict situation once again (African Union, n.d.; IASIA, 2017). States emergent from conflict are at risk with almost 25 per cent of all-inclusive reconciliation settlements brokered collapsing due to a possible reversion into conflict and in some cases to a greater devastating calamity of authority and high levels of armed violence (NEPAD, 2005; UNDP, 2010a). It is a given that conflict not only has negative consequences for socio-economic

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welfare, but also on public health care and ultimately on the quality of life of the populace. However, it is also a key factor for the disproportionate number of illegal immigrants and refugees internationally (UNDP, 2016) who are in turn creating challenges in some of the countries they have moved to relative to basic services provision. It also has health and safety implications, more so relative to the global COVID-19 pandemic. Global surges in conflicts in the past decade have given rise to the largest number of displaced people in fragile countries, almost 59.5 million, the highest ever including those impacted by the Second World War. The estimated annual cost of the violence is almost \$100 billion, which certainly exceeds the aid received by the countries in question (UNDP, 2016).

It has been estimated that at least one-fifth of the global populace and that as many as one-third of the poorest people live in contexts described as fragile. It is estimated that out of the global population of 7.12 billion, approximately 1.5 billion are living in countries that are experiencing high levels of violence (UNDP, 2016). It is projected that by the year 2030, a significant percentage (1.9 billion people) of the global population will be residing in countries and regions of the world where there is chronic violence leading to political instability (Saferworld, 2014; IASIA, 2017). Keeulers (2017), demonstrating the huge cost of conflict worldwide, points out that the cost of global conflict is \$3 trillion annually or 13% of the international GDP, equal to every person spending \$5 daily annually, not to mention of course the human cost, which is beyond calculations.

Conflict-affected states are unable to undertake the principal functions of public governance or discharge basic service provision and suffer from political paralysis, arbitrariness, corruption, severe dispossession, abject poverty and political distrust. The prevailing situation is intensified in post-conflict contexts where the customary development processes are overwhelmed by the need to steer the state to some sort of normalcy after violent conflicts and a period of turbulence (UNDP, 2010b).

1.2 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.2.1 *Peace, Development and Post-Conflict Reconstruction*

Spiralling violent conflicts have been witnessed over the past few decades in different parts of the world and these events have directly and indirectly impacted the sequence of development and more specifically economic

growth (UNDP, 2016). Fragility and conflict are by their very nature progressively multifaceted, context specific and prolonged. In certain instances, conflict has resulted in grievances being harboured over a very long period which could last several generations (State of Palestine, 2019). Fragility is a deep-rooted characteristic and at least 90% of civil wars in the first decade of the twenty-first century occurred in states that had already experienced periodic conflict in the previous three decades (World Bank, 2011). The global drivers of conflict are:

- Grievances: the unmet needs of groups due to inequality and discrimination are readily available for armed conflict;
- Opportunities: are provided for livelihoods, accumulation and power;
- Feasibility: state unable to counter/buy off rebellion because it is weak; illegitimate/absent; and
- Catalysts: external shocks (political/security/economic and environmental) increase the intensity of internal fragility factors (UK Department of International Development and World Bank in UNDP, 2016).

States, both failed and weak, together with the majority of post-conflict states are viewed as a risk to global safety, and consequently it is imperative to prioritise their reconstruction and development.

The lack of peace and stability in certain countries and regions of the world also has the resultant effect of hindering development on the continents in question (Saferworld, 2014; UNDP, 2016). It is a given that peace and development are inextricably linked and are viewed as being interdependent and interrelated. In the absence of peace, no development will take place, and in the absence of development there can never be any eternal peace (NEPAD, 2005). The transition from conflict to peace in the case of conflict-affected countries is steered by their own peculiar conditions and specific post-conflict rebuilding systems, which develop as agreed and exclusive to their prioritisation, configuration, scheduling and sequencing (NEPAD, 2005; African Union, n.d.).

It is essential to reform and for that matter to restore the public institutions in these countries as they could be totally damaged or in some cases non-existent (Ryan, 2018). Globally, post-conflict countries differ in the form and gradation of damage experienced. However, virtually all them have experienced not only the loss of assets and skills, but also of the political, economic, financial, organisational, physical, technical and social

systems which provided the basic infrastructure for state functionality (UNDP, 2010a).

On a global level, the key role players and stakeholders involved in governance and development in conflict-affected and post-conflict countries have to address and respond to certain issues, which are also high on the international development agenda. This will relate specifically to the rebuilding of the affected countries, that is the physical/institutional infrastructure; reconstruction of the governance/public administration systems; and enhancing service delivery with the desired effect of improving the quality of lives of the citizenry (IIAS/IASIA, 2019).

Post-conflict reconstruction seeks to provide concurrent short, average and lengthy programmes to avert differences escalating, avoid reverting into violent conflict and for advocating and promoting reconciliation. In the final analysis, it is directed at responding to the origin of the conflict and to reinforce the essentials for societal justice and supportive peace and development (NEPAD, 2005). Post-conflict states in transition have to be responsive to human resource gaps, restoration of public administration and public resources transferal from predominantly an emergency/security logic to one of public governance and service delivery (African Union, n.d.). Whilst transitional short-term policies have proved ineffectual and at times counterproductive, there is mounting acknowledgement that multi-dimensional approaches are more in line with facilitating a robust social contract between the citizenry and state and its citizenry which is a strategic component for resilient peace and sustainable development (UNDP, 2016).

Consequently, the development of capacity in such contexts cannot be conducted in a context not totally impartial, but at the same time involves theoretically conflicting developments and in the final analysis creating “winners and losers” (UNDP, 2010a).

1.2.2 Transition from MDGs to SDGs

The majority of post-conflict countries have not made substantial advancement towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and some of them have been harshly affected and have experienced regression in human development (UNDP, 2010a). The World Bank (UNDP, 2016) then also pointed out that the progress achieved towards the MDGs can be reversed for countries relapsing into conflict.

The immediate effect of fragility and conflict on sustainable human development is substantial as highlighted by the (Table 1.1):

A significant majority of the fifty countries categorised as fragile, conflict or crisis affected only managed to achieve one/two of the fifteen MDGs in 2015 (UNDP, 2016). The World Bank (Saferworld, 2014) has pointed that “fragile” or “conflict-affected” states are possibly more likely to be off target four times than they are to have achieved any of the MDG goals on track to do so.

The MDGs ushered in 2000 did not contain anything explicit on peace and security as a global goal; however, this was implied more specifically in the Millennium Declaration which constituted the basis of the MDGs. There was agreement that the focus of the MDGs was not expansive enough to cover all the challenges currently being faced by the international community today, notably poor governance, state corruption and a dramatic intensification of overt conflict and consequently needed to be extended.

There is currently an acknowledgement, according to Keeulers (2017), that the basic performance of public administration reconstruction to make it functional is critical in any post-conflict country in terms of regaining its capability as a nation; resilience of its populace and institutions; and flexibility of its institutions and reinstatement of trust and social cohesion. The need for an operational public administration is more of a necessity presently given that all countries (including conflict-affected) are required to implement the ambitious 2030 development agenda.

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development provides a vision to respond to the trials of the most susceptible societal groupings to make

Table 1.1 Impact of fragility/conflict on the MDGs

	<i>Fragile/conflict-affected countries</i>	<i>Other countries</i>
Halving poverty	Two-thirds failed to halve poverty	One-third of developing countries failed to halve poverty
Child survival	Only one in fifty reached the goal of lowering under 5 child mortality	One in seven reached the goal of lowering child mortality
Education	Twenty per cent are on track to meet the education target	Fifty per cent among developing countries
Water	Twenty per cent are on track to meet the water target	Sixty-one per cent of other countries are on track

Source: Authors, based on OECD (2015)

certain that they are included in economic growth benefits, improvements in communal developments and environmental safety. The notion of “leaving no one behind” is an integral part of all the SDGs and particular emphasis has been placed on income inequality, discrimination and those viewed as being disadvantaged (Republic of South Africa, 2019).

At the 68th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, held on 13 September 2013, several global leaders highlighted the importance of peace and the linkage to development (Saferworld, 2014: 4): “In advancing the development agenda, we must cherish peace as we do our eyes, ... to uphold peace is the purpose of the UN Charter as well as the pre-conditions for the MDGs” (China); “Our Continent stands ready to continue to engage the rest of the world as a partner in formulating a global development agenda that will guarantee peace and stability”.

The nexus and positive linkage between sustainable development and peace, stability and security has been high on the governance agenda globally over the years and consequently is not a new discourse in public governance. It has been a key focus of the philosophy and practice of post-conflict governance (NEPAD, 2005; UNDP, 2016).

A recent study conducted in 2018 by the Overseas Development Institute (2018) pointed out that only 18% of states viewed as being fragile and conflict affected are on track to meet particular SDG targets relative to unmet rudimentary needs. Approximately two billion people currently reside in countries beset by fragility, violence and conflict and the probability is overwhelming that millions of people will be left behind, notably the poorest and those disadvantaged due to their ethnicity, religion, age, sex, disability, political belief and geographical location (UNDP, 2019).

The implementation of the 2030 agenda is dependent on effective, transparent and accountable public administration, as pointed out by Keeulers (2017) for the following reasons:

- it provides many of the services required to attain many of the targets under different goals;
- it is the principal instrument through which many states exercise their legitimate authority to collect taxes to finance development and invest in environmental sustainability and disaster resilience;
- plays a critical role in strengthening the participation of states in global governance institutions;

- it remains the primary vehicle through which the executive at national and subnational levels engages with the populace, civil society and private sector and also facilitates public participation and gender equality; and
- it is one of the fundamental institutions of government that can promote rule of law and all human rights of the populace.

Sustainable Development Goal 16 of the post-2015 development agenda seeks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels (UNDP, 2016). This is the basis of public administration and essential for good governance, and more specifically it seeks to:

- promote the rule of law nationally and internationally and ensure equal access to justice for all;
- substantially reduce corruption/bribery in all forms;
- develop effective, accountable and transparent institutions at all levels;
- ensure responsive, inclusive, participatory representative decision-making at all levels;
- broaden/strengthen the participation of developing countries in global governance institutions;
- ensure public access to information and protect fundamental freedoms in accordance with national legislation/international agreements (State of Palestine, 2019).

The key challenges experienced by developing countries in implementing the above relative to public administration include, inter alia, intransigent public sector and limited responsiveness to global economic/political changes; widespread corruption impacting socio, cultural and administrative sectors in states; inflexible public leadership, complicated regulations/laws/administrative processes and resistance to change inherent in the culture/conduct of state institutions; and political instability that hinders state-building efforts in weak/conflict-affected states despite efforts to develop a stable public administration system (State of Palestine, 2019). Political instability implies state incapacity to effectively manage crises and conflicts within societies, which in some cases lead to political violence. Conflict-affected states are among the most corrupt globally and it is

viewed as particularly damaging to state-society relations (UNDP, 2016; African Union, n.d.).

Transforming public administration in post-conflict states globally entails some critical challenges that need to be addressed, namely:

1. Developing effective leadership: transforming behaviours/attitudes/beliefs of public functionaries in democratic contexts to perform effectually. Leadership and institutional development complement each other as conflict is directed to relevant structures (legal/political);
2. Building operative bodies: all-inclusive institutional growth is imperative as all sectors (public/private/non-governmental) are overhauled to address state necessities and the historical/political/cultural framework. Principles of fairness, uprightness and commitment have to be inculcated;
3. Consolidating human resources: philosophies, approaches, attitudes and capabilities of public representatives should change for effective functioning in democratic settings;
4. Creating instruments for inclusive governance: all societal groupings should be included with decentralisation facilitating participation/advancement; and
5. Improving citizen-centric service delivery: vibrant democracies and a stable/responsive public service have to enhance service delivery. Impartial social policies should endorse fair/efficient public administration in all public sectors (United Nations and United Nations Development Programme in Reddy, 2018).

It is quite apparent that certain defined pre-requisites are key to developing a resilient post-conflict state which is viable and sustainable.

In responding to the issues highlighted above, the following needs to be taken cognisance of:

- Sustain political stability in developing mutual trust and confidence amongst all parties within the state to facilitate development; create a democratic code of ethics in public policy-making; encourage dialogue amongst the citizenry to acknowledge their needs and targeted development to achieve them; and
- Challenge conflicts by combining the rule of law; key regulations of national laws; court decisions; eradicating the movement of unlawful

weapons; approving interim development solutions/policies. Global energies should be directed towards promoting peace, rebuilding affected countries and facilitating humanitarian/development initiatives due to displacement of people (State of Palestine, 2019).

Strong public administration in post-conflict countries globally is key for public policy-making to support political, economic and social stability in the broader context of the SDGs (IASIA, 2017: 11). SDG policies need to be linked within the broader context of open government and technological advancement despite limited resources (State of Palestine, 2019; UNDP, 2019). As pointed out by Keeulers (2017) the 2030 agenda has unreservedly placed a well-functioning public administration at the core of development, human rights, peace and security.

1.3 LOCUS AND FOCUS OF THIS BOOK

The International Association of Schools and Institutes of Administration (IASIA) in collaboration with the Middle East and North Africa Public Administration Research Network (MENAPAR) organised its annual international conference in Ramallah, Palestine, in 2018. The conference theme “Public Administrations Role in Building and Strengthening Post-Conflict States” proved to be very relevant and appropriate to the region in question given the location of Palestine. Despite the fact that many delegates did find it challenging travelling to Ramallah amidst the security situation, the conference was well-attended and attracted a large number of delegates and international development organisations (IIAS/IASIA, 2019).

The crucial findings emanating from the conference on governance of post-conflict states, highlighted by Ryan (2018), include (1) lack of a defined strategy, (2) extreme politicisation, (3) overlapping responsibility/accountability, (4) patronage/lack of appointments on merit, (5) absence of trust/breakdown of social contract, (6) poor public service delivery/productivity, (7) low levels of professionalism, (8) infra-structural incapacities and (9) corruption (UNDP, 2016). Recommendations made following the conference include, inter alia, greater clarification on post-conflict terminology in the international literature; international development organisations/citizenry have a fundamental part to play in participation and developing the required trust; international development organisations have to develop common