



# BUILDING STATES WHILE BUILDING PEACE?

Statebuilding and Security Sector Reform in Peace Agreements

POLICY BRIEF 2/2018

by Jan Pospisil

The claim that (re)building states is the best way to build peace dominated the peacebuilding debate in the first two decades after the end of the Cold War. However, empirical assessments on how the peacebuilding-statebuilding-nexus plays out in the empirical reality of peace processes are rare. Due to the difficulty of empirical measurement and the complexity of the effort, statebuilding is therefore most commonly assessed along a qualitative, case-study based methodology.

Statebuilding is difficult to measure and hard to quantify. The written text of peace agreements offers one potential avenue for approaching such measurement, since they contain written negotiated and, in most instances, agreed stipulations on what should be done in terms of an agenda for post-conflict change. The recently published Peace Agreement Access Tool PA-X<sup>1</sup> gathers all available peace agreements since 1990, about 1,600 documents in 136 peace processes, coded along 220 categories, some of them weighted. This data provides interesting insights into the reality of statebuilding in the course of peace processes, particularly when using some of the coded categories as proxies for statebuilding efforts. This is even more interesting since peace agreements are negotiated and represent certain political realities. Therefore, they provide a 'living' representation of actual statebuilding, possibly more than any other forms of measurement could.

This briefing paper uses ten variables coded in PA-X as proxies for the intended strength of statebuilding in peace agreements. These are references to political institutions,

constitution's affirmation, constitutional reform, elections, electoral commission, political parties reform, civil society, public administration, police reform, and armed forces reform. All ten variables are weighted in PA-X, which means that it is possible to distinguish general commitments without any implementation component from concrete, but weak commitments, and strong, thoroughly defined ones.

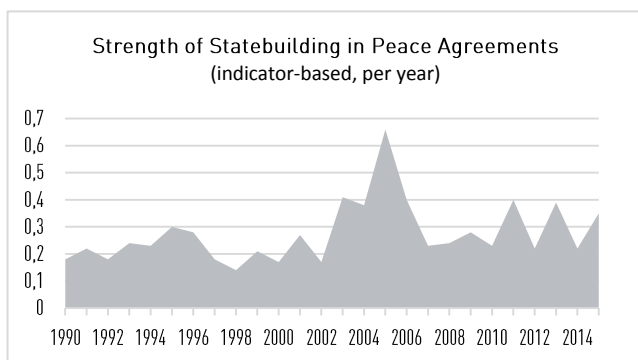
Analysing these ten variables provides an interesting and telling picture of what and how strong statebuilding is, in single agreements, in peace processes, which usually consist of several separate agreements, and cross-process trajectories along a timeline. Detailed methodical remarks are to be found in the footnotes. The analysis allows for identifying three statements:

**(1) Statebuilding gets stronger after 1990, but declines after a peak in the first half of the 2000s.**

As graph 1 demonstrates, statebuilding has always been a substantial part of peace agreements since the early 1990s. However, it develops a peak in the early 2000s, and then flattens out in the latter half of the 2000s, yet on a considerably higher level than before. These developments are very much driven by important peace processes that also set the standards for further negotiations and academic reflections: the 1990s are dominated by agreements from the Bosnia and Herzegovina peace process. The peak around 2005 is caused by a number of comprehensive peace processes consisting of a high number of interrelated agreements with strong statebuilding components that are happening at the same time: the CPA process between Sudan and what later would become South Sudan, the CPA process in Nepal, and the peace processes in the Philippines/Mindanao and in Somalia.

---

1 [www.peaceagreements.org](http://www.peaceagreements.org)



Graph 1: Strength of statebuilding stipulations in peace agreements across time<sup>2</sup>

These numbers chime with the literature on statebuilding and state fragility and the international statebuilding debate, which peaks in these years as well.<sup>3</sup> For example, the OECD INCAF Fragile States Principles were endorsed in 2007<sup>4</sup>, following a substantial academic and policy debate on state fragility. The now famous 'Fragile States Index' by the Fund for Peace was published for the first time in 2006.<sup>5</sup> This shows the close interlinkage between statebuilding practice and the statebuilding/fragility debate in policy and academia.

## (2) Statebuilding in Peace Agreements equals political institution building plus reforming the 'hard' security sector.

What are the main approaches of statebuilding as negotiated in peace processes? Graph 2 shows that, across time, the statebuilding emphasis is put on two pillars (see graph 2): one pillar is the strengthening of core security functions, the reform of the armed forces and the police,

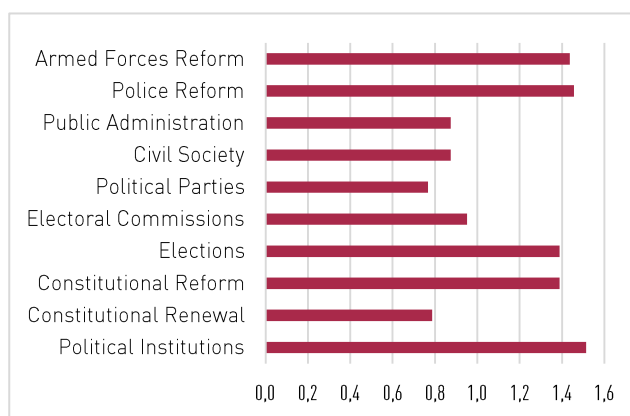
<sup>2</sup> This graph is based on a yearly average on a statebuilding index per agreement. This index ranges from 0 (none of the ten proxy variables present) to maximum 3 (all ten proxy variables present in maximum strength). An index of 0.5 for a particular year, therefore, means that the average peace agreement in the given year has a total strength of all ten indicators of 0.5 means that the average value of a single provision in a single agreement in the given year is at 0.5 (on a scale from 0 to 3), which is a considerably strong value due to the high number of agreements (e.g. ceasefires, implementation agreements) that do not include any stipulations concerning statebuilding.

<sup>3</sup> Jan Pospisil and Florian Kühn, 2016, 'The Resilient State: New Regulatory Modes in International Approaches to Statebuilding?', *Third World Quarterly*, 37:1, 1-16.

<sup>4</sup> See <http://www.gsdr.org/document-library/principles-for-good-international-engagement-in-fragile-states-and-situations/>. The OECD INCAF references to the 2007 principles are no longer available online.

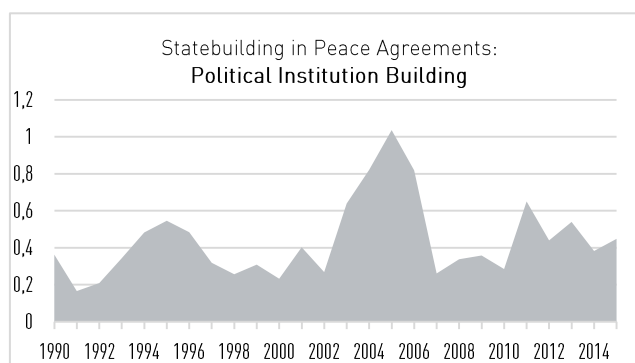
<sup>5</sup> <http://fundforpeace.org/fsi/>

what is commonly referred to as security sector reform (SSR). The second pillar is the work on core institutions of what is perceived as the basic functions of a functional democratic polity: an implemented constitutional framework, political institutions, and elections. In contrast, the 'software' of a democratically constituted policy remains surprisingly weakly addressed: civil society and, especially, political parties play comparably minor roles.



Graph 2: Strength of statebuilding-related variables in peace processes<sup>6</sup>

How strongly statebuilding is dominated by political institution building and security sector reform is further demonstrated by graphs 3, 4 and 5. The trajectories of institution building and SSR closely mirror the ups and downs of statebuilding as a whole (cf. graph 1). Political party reform and civil society support (graph 4) also mirror the general statebuilding trend, yet comparably lower scale.

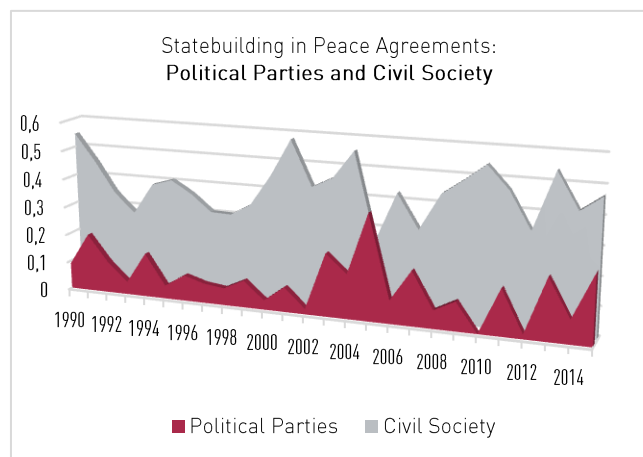


Graph 3: Political institution building in peace processes<sup>7</sup>

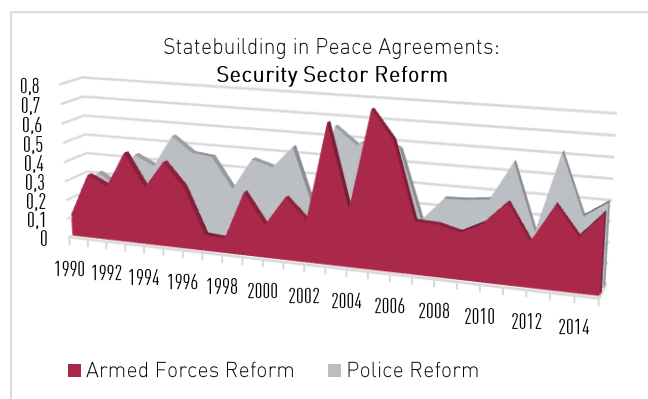
<sup>6</sup> While the statebuilding index refers to the same values as in graph 1, the unit of analysis in graph 2 is not the peace agreement, but the peace process, for which the highest value for each variable out of all peace agreements related to this process is taken. This explains the higher numbers.

<sup>7</sup> Methodology cf. fn 2.

Interestingly, civil society support remains a constant trend throughout, however on a lower level than political institution building, especially in the heyday of institution building during the mid-2000s. However, overall the composition of statebuilding in peace agreements does not significantly change over time.



Graph 4: Political party reform and civil society support in peace agreements<sup>8</sup>



Graph 5: Security Sector Reform in peace agreements<sup>9</sup>

Security Sector Reform (see graph 5) in peace agreements is a significant part of the statebuilding agenda, throughout all peace processes since 1990. Interestingly, and somewhat counterintuitively, police reform is a more constant and also stronger element compared with the reform of the armed forces. This is caused by a variety of factors, for example DDR processes in which members of non-state armed groups become integrated into the police, which necessarily results in a substantial reform of the

8 Methodology cf. fn 2.

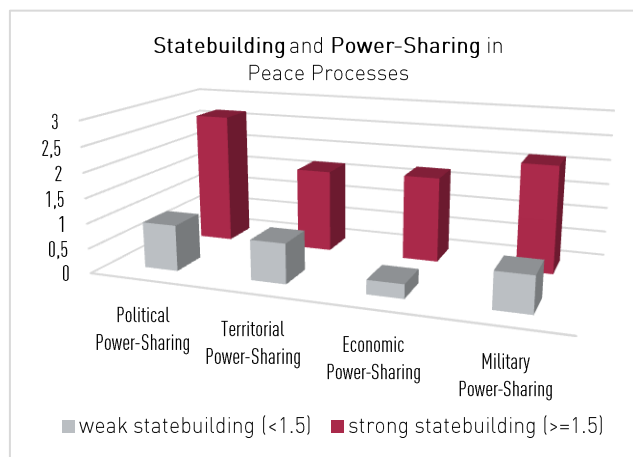
9 Methodology cf. fn 2. Armed forces reform and police reform do not include references to pure combatant reintegration. There needs to be a clearly identifiable reform element attached to any stipulation dealing with armed forces or police.

whole police structure, given that non-military police is often virtually inexistent in countries prior to a peace process.

### 3) Strong statebuilding efforts in peace agreements are most likely linked to power sharing.

When looking at the peace process level, the power-sharing components in peace processes with strong statebuilding are much stronger than in those peace processes with weak statebuilding (see graph 6). This effectively means that states in peace processes are much more likely to be strengthened when there is a rather clear arrangement of how power is to be shared.

The motivation behind implementing statehood – to organise and institutionalise the sharing of power – is rather Hobbesian in nature, and effectively contradicts the ‘good governance’ talk by development policy actors: states in peace agreements are not about governance, but about government in the sense of sharing power – politically, militarily, and, to a lesser extent, economically and territorial.



Graph 6: Statebuilding and power-sharing in peace processes<sup>10</sup>

**Concluding Remarks.** Against the background of these observations, the interrelation of statebuilding and peacebuilding as implemented in peace processes via peace agreement commitments allows for three concluding statements:

10 For the methodological information about how the statebuilding and the power-sharing indexes are calculated cf. fn 6. ‘Weak statebuilding’ refers to all peace processes where the statebuilding index is below 1.5, ‘strong statebuilding’ to all peace processes where the statebuilding index is equal or above 1.5.



*First*, there is a strong correlation – however not a cause-effect-relationship – between power-sharing and political institution building. While this may sound completely obvious, it still explains why so many peace / statebuilding processes do not follow the trajectory towards functional, democratic statehood, but rather result in ‘formalised political unsettlement’<sup>11</sup>. Political institutions cannot implement democratic governance, since they are designed to mitigate the existing political unsettlement.

*Second*, despite long-standing critique in the literature of this fact, the democratic ‘software’ of state, such as political parties and civil society, is still not robustly addressed in peace processes. The available data, of course, does not allow for identifying this as a root cause of statebuilding failure. However, the continuous weakness in the realm of

democratic governance support is striking.

*Third*, knowledge production and policy practice in statebuilding are closely interwoven. The timeline suggests, however, that this does not mean that academic evidence is implemented by policy. It is rather the other way around: policy problems and policy practice are reflected and theorised by academia in the aftermath of their implementation. Against this background of circular referencing, both academic research and policy need to be careful not to accommodate themselves in a tautological relationship.

---

<sup>11</sup> Christine Bell and Jan Pospisil, 2017, ‘Navigating Inclusion in Transitions from Conflict: The Formalised Political Unsettlement’, *Journal of International Development*, 29:5, 576-593.

**Jan Pospisil** is Senior Researcher and head of the Vienna office at the ASPR – Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution. He is also part of the Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP), located at the University of Edinburgh. Jan’s research focuses on post-liberal approaches in the fields of peace and security, political settlements and resilience.

*This paper is an output of the Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP) funded by UK Aid from the UK Department for International Development (DFID) for the benefit of developing countries. The information and views set out in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the official opinion of DFID. Neither DFID nor any person acting on their behalf may be held responsible for the use which may be made of the information contained therein.*



ASPR cooperates with national and international partners.

Conflict Peace Democracy Cluster (CPDC)  
Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP)  
University of Edinburgh, School of Law  
Herbert C. Kelman Institute for Interactive Conflict  
Transformation (HKI)  
Sigmund Freud University (SFU)  
Austrian Federal Ministry for Defence (BMLV)

Find our publications here:

[www.aspr.ac.at/briefings](http://www.aspr.ac.at/briefings)  
[www.aspr.ac.at/report](http://www.aspr.ac.at/report)

**Austrian Study Centre for Peace and Conflict Resolution (ASPR)**

Rochusplatz 1, 7461 Stadtschlaining, Austria  
Phone: +43 3355 2498, Fax: +43 3355 2662, E-Mail: [aspr@aspr.ac.at](mailto:aspr@aspr.ac.at)  
[www.aspr.ac.at](http://www.aspr.ac.at) |  ASPR\_Schlaining |  ASPR.Schlaining

**Political Settlements Research Programme (PSRP)**

Find more information on PSRP / the PA-X database here: [www.peaceagreements.org](http://www.peaceagreements.org) | [www.politicalsettlements.org](http://www.politicalsettlements.org)

