

Introduction

Since the early 1990s, international peace-promotion efforts have increasingly involved intrastate intervention.¹ Dubbed ‘peace-building’, these interventions have encompassed diverse activities, including military intervention, transitional justice and public administration and economic reform. In the 1990s, Western governments and international organisations operated largely on a naïve interpretation of the ‘liberal peace thesis’, assuming that stabilising ‘fragile’ and post-conflict states required rapid democratisation and marketisation.² However, from the 2000s, as failures of outcome and implementation abounded, peace-building has increasingly been delivered through ‘state-building’, which denotes a ‘broad range of programs and projects designed to build or strengthen the capacity of institutions, organisations and agencies – not all of which are necessarily part of the state apparatus – to effectively perform the functions associated with modern statehood’.³ Peace-building is thus frequently combined with state-building in a common effort to reshape target societies, polities and economies towards more peaceful outcomes.

Notwithstanding initial optimism, however, by the middle of the new millennium’s first decade, the inability of these Peace- and State-building Interventions (PSBIs) to attain many of their objectives, despite the mobilisation of often significant resources, became widely recognised by practitioners, leading to considerable soul-searching. Publications as diverse as the United States Army’s counterinsurgency manual⁴ and the World Bank’s *World Development Report 2011*⁵ have questioned the hitherto widely accepted view that the key to alleviating conflict in fragile and post-conflict states and societies in the long term is the promotion of liberal, ‘good governance’ and/or democratic institutions. Instead, these publications and others have

¹ Bellamy et al. 2004. ² Paris 2004. ³ Hameiri 2010: 2.

⁴ Department of Army 2006. ⁵ World Bank 2011a.

argued that interveners must learn in some cases to accommodate customary institutions, leaders and values as the price of stabilisation and development. Likewise, in the field of international development assistance, which closely intersects with the practice of PSBIs,⁶ established aid modalities, also premised on the promotion of (neo-)liberal economic policies and institutions, have been challenged by persistent failures of implementation and outcome.⁷ These failures have led to calls to jettison the conceit of aid's technocratic neutrality and take the politics of recipient societies more seriously when designing and implementing aid programmes.⁸

Amid this apparent crisis of confidence for international interventionism and development aid orthodoxy, many peace-building and development scholars have begun to look more closely at the way international interventions and donors interface with target states and their populations and how this interaction shapes intervention outcomes. Undoubtedly, PSBI outcomes range widely across countries, as well as within countries across different areas of policy and governance. In Solomon Islands, for example, some apparent successes in improving state revenue are matched by notable failures in reining in public expenditure.⁹ In other cases, such as Iraq and Afghanistan, despite considerable efforts and substantial funding, interveners have not even been able to prevent widespread violence and to promote the rule of law. This unevenness demanded explanation, and scholars have become increasingly convinced that it could in part be understood by looking at the precise interaction between interveners and the intervened. This was a welcome and much-needed shift from the earlier preoccupation by both policy-oriented and critical scholarship with refining or critiquing the ideas and modalities of interveners.

Reflecting the diverse fields examining various aspects of PSBIs, a variety of approaches to studying the interaction of international intervention and local politics have emerged, divided primarily between literatures on peace-building and the politics of development. Despite their similar subject-matter and broad objectives, these literatures have largely developed separately, with limited interaction. Peace-building scholars, who are largely based in the field of International

⁶ Duffield 2001. ⁷ OECD 2010.

⁸ Carothers and De Gramont 2013; Hutchison et al. 2014.

⁹ Fraenkel et al. 2014.

Relations, have primarily advanced the concepts of hybridity and friction, viewing the outcomes of intervention as stemming from conflict and accommodation between the agendas, institutions and values of liberal internationals and non-liberal locals.¹⁰ Meanwhile, scholars of the politics of development have focused on the effects of international aid programmes on domestic politics and economies, e.g. elite political settlements.¹¹

This emerging research agenda improves on earlier conceptions and critiques of PSBIs in that it takes seriously recipient states and societies when examining interventions and their outcomes. It seems odd that the agency of those targeted by intervention had previously been relatively neglected. However, although each approach has distinct strengths, collectively they fall short, in different ways, of adequately conceptualising and theorising the outcomes of international interventions. Their core weakness is that they neglect to understand the manner in which these interventions affect not only the nature and outcome of social and political conflict in recipient states and societies, but the very terrain upon which it takes place. The main objective of this book is therefore to engage with this latest wave of scholarship on international intervention and advance an alternative framework better able to theorise and conceptualise the important relationship between international interventions and local politics, and hence to explain diverse intervention outcomes in given contexts. As we elaborate, the way in which PSBIs operate means that the *politics of scale* invariably becomes a crucial dimension of the socio-political struggles shaping political and governance outcomes.

Public Administration Reform and the Politics of Scale

We have elected in this book to focus on a particular subset of PSBI and aid programming – public administration reform (PAR). This is, in part, for practical reasons, to make comparisons across case studies more meaningful by honing in on similar programmes. It is also because PAR is an especially prominent aspect of aid programming, where considerable funds and efforts are funnelled. Assessing total annual aid spending on PAR is difficult, as it is an ‘ad hoc

¹⁰ Belloni 2012; Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond and Mitchell 2012.

¹¹ Hutchison et al. 2014; Khan 2010; Parks and Cole 2010; Unsworth 2009.

categorisation of various reforms' that cut across the OECD's Development Assistance Committee's aid-by-sector statistics.¹² Nonetheless, the available evidence suggests that it is substantial. According to one assessment contained in a report by the World Bank's Independent Evaluation Group,¹³ one-sixth of the World Bank Group's lending and other support between 1999 and 2006 was directed at PAR. Indeed, PAR programming reflects, for interveners, the very essence of what the state is supposed to be and how state functions should be performed. As such, it is an important lens on key intellectual and programmatic developments in both the peace-building and development agendas in recent years. PAR was also selected, however, because it is a counterintuitive test case for our framework. PAR is often officially aimed at strengthening national capacity and legitimacy. As we will show, however, in the context of PSBIs, these programmes actually seek to fragment the national scale, leading to new struggles over the scale and mechanisms through which important public policy issues are governed.

Sometimes called 'public management reform' or 'public sector reform', PAR has been broadly defined as: 'Deliberate changes to the structures and processes of public sector organizations with the objective of getting them (in some sense) to run better'.¹⁴ It has been a core pillar of many international donors' aid programmes in recipient countries for over two decades, as part of the broader shift towards supporting 'good governance' as a precondition for development.¹⁵ Aid agencies have funded and encouraged PAR as a means of creating conditions seen as supportive of economic growth, development and subsequently security and political stability. It incorporates a wide range of programmes, including: changes to the organisational structure of state agencies; devolution of budgets and responsibilities to subnational authorities; creation of merit-based public service appointment, promotion and dismissal processes; and introduction of mechanisms for holding officeholders to account by citizens or other government agencies.¹⁶

Though donors and other international agencies have promoted PAR in many recipient countries, it has been a particularly prominent

¹² Scott 2011: i. ¹³ World Bank 2008: xiii.

¹⁴ Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011: 2.

¹⁵ Grindle and Hilderbrand 1995; Scott 2011.

¹⁶ Heredia and Schneider 2003: 3; Pollitt and Bouckaert 2011.

aspect of the PSBI agenda in so-called fragile states, where the urgency of getting public administrations to function ‘better’ appears to be acute for humanitarian, developmental and security reasons.¹⁷ Especially after the September 11 terrorist attacks, development agencies have developed a keen interest in working in fragile states.¹⁸ In 2011 alone, US\$53 billion, or 38 per cent of total official development assistance (ODA), is estimated to have been delivered in fragile states.¹⁹ In the context of PSBIs, public administrations working better usually means improving the delivery and quality of public services in key areas, such as policing, health, education and basic infrastructure.²⁰ The typical official rationale for making PAR central within PSBIs, grounded in a liberal-pluralist conception of statehood, is that a state capable of fairly and efficiently delivering basic services to the population it governs will win over people’s allegiance from more particularistic sources of authority, such as kin groups or anti-government rebels, thus becoming legitimate. This is seen as crucial since, as an Asian Development Bank (ADB) report on state performance in the Pacific argues, although the ‘state is not an answer to everything . . . [it is] best placed to resolve important collective action problems’ essential to development.²¹

However, as with many other forms of international intervention, available evidence suggests that PAR programmes rarely achieve the intended outcomes.²² Donor explanations for failure often emphasise technical matters, such as capacity, resourcing and sequencing.²³ Critics, including within major aid organisations, have instead begun to stress the folly of treating PAR, and development aid in general, as a technical issue, emphasising its inherently political nature. This reflects the broader ‘political economy turn’ in development aid, which, although highly visible in the literature, is yet to have a substantial impact on actual aid programming.²⁴ Hillman, for example, argues that, particularly in post-conflict situations, ‘even apparently straightforward reforms to personnel management are inherently

¹⁷ Brinkerhoff and Brinkerhoff 2002. ¹⁸ Marquette and Beswick 2011.

¹⁹ Gisselquist 2015: 1269.

²⁰ Brinkerhoff 2005; Fukuyama 2004; Ghani and Lockhart 2008; Hillman 2013; World Bank 2011a.

²¹ Laking 2010: 8. ²² Gisselquist and Resnick 2014; Hillman 2013.

²³ E.g. World Bank 2008.

²⁴ For an overview, see Carothers and De Gramont 2013; Hutchison et al. 2014.

political and prone to controversy'.²⁵ Relatedly, scholars and practitioners have also increasingly questioned the assumption of a linear relationship between state capacity, legitimacy and the efficient delivery of public goods and services. They have emphasised that state legitimacy, while essential for long-term stabilisation, often has other, more deeply ingrained, sources.²⁶ The hybridity literature in peacebuilding has also questioned the liberal conception of state legitimacy. For these authors, legitimacy results from greater accommodation of truly local or everyday institutions and values in governance, not necessarily from the construction of liberal polities.²⁷

We accept that PAR programmes are indeed inherently political and contested, because they necessarily involve attempts to reallocate power and resources.²⁸ However, we argue that a core dimension of the social and political struggles shaping how power and resources are allocated following international intervention is over the territorial scale at which particular issues are to be governed. This is implicitly recognised by the hybridity scholarship, with its focus on local–international interactions. But hybridity scholars wrongly treat local, national and international as pre-given categories of actors, institutions and/or values, rather than as contested, and hence changeable, scales of governance that actors produce. Consequently, many hybridity scholars misunderstand the role the politics of scale plays in shaping the outcomes of PSBIs.

In political geography, scale refers to vertically differentiated, hierarchised social, political and economic spaces, each denoting 'the arena and moment, both discursively and materially, where socio-spatial power relations are contested and compromises are negotiated and regulated'.²⁹ Scales may reflect existing political tiers within a state, such as a village or the nation, or cut across them, e.g. bio-regions, transgovernmental networks or 'the global'. In all cases, however, they are not natural, but produced through strategic political action and socio-political contestation.³⁰ Whether local, subnational, or indeed

²⁵ Hillman 2013: 2.

²⁶ E.g. Batley et al. 2012; Brinkerhoff et al. 2012; Fukuyama 2013; Hillman 2013; Krasner and Risse 2014; McLoughlin 2015; OECD 2010; vom Hau 2012.

²⁷ Belloni 2012; Boege et al. 2009; Johnson and Hutchison 2012; Lemay-Hébert 2009; Mac Ginty 2011; Richmond and Mitchell 2012.

²⁸ Heredia and Schneider 2003; Hillman 2013. ²⁹ Swyngedouw 1997: 140.

³⁰ Brenner 2001: 592; Smith 2010.

national and global, scales are part of a single social whole; they ‘do not exist in mutual isolation but are always interconnected in a broader, often-changing inter-scalar ensemble’.³¹ In turn, the ‘politics of scale’ – a concept first coined by Neil Smith³² – denotes contestation over the construction of scales, as well as over differentiation and ordering among various scales.³³

The scalar arrangement of political life is always contested because different scales afford different configurations of actors, power, resources and political opportunity structures.³⁴ Shifting scales – *rescaling* – can change these configurations, potentially changing political outcomes.³⁵ For example, Gibson³⁶ shows how authoritarian subnational elites strive to keep issues ‘local’, since at this scale their interests prevail. Conversely, their opponents often try to transform issues into ‘national’ matters, since they can find more allies and resources at this scale to tilt the balance against local strongmen. Similarly, ‘scale jumping’³⁷ to a regional or global scale is a strategy often used by weaker socio-political groups to advance political objectives undermined by powerful interests dominating another scale.

The politics of scale is a crucial focus of socio-political conflict relating to PSBIs and PAR programmes, because these interventions essentially operate through *state transformation*.³⁸ Donors are not simply trying to build national capacity and legitimacy, leaving the form and function of the state otherwise unchanged, but rather to internationalise or transnationalise strategic parts of the apparatuses of target states. Their aim is to rescale parts of the ostensibly domestic administrations of recipient states so that these become not so much responsive to local demands, which are often viewed as pernicious or dysfunctional, but to international governance agendas, geared towards meeting international targets and aspirations.³⁹ Donors often attempt, for example, to intervene in parts of the bureaucracy responsible for designing budgets and disbursing funds, to limit the control of local elites, seen as corrupt and self-serving, over the public purse and redirect funds to objectives that they deem more appropriate, such as primary education or paying off interest on public debt. In Solomon Islands, as we show in Chapter 3, a Core Economic

³¹ Brenner et al. 2003: 16. ³² Neil Smith 2010.

³³ Brenner 2001: 599–600. ³⁴ Hameiri and Jones 2015. ³⁵ Gough 2004.

³⁶ Gibson 2013. ³⁷ See Smith 1992. ³⁸ Hameiri 2010.

³⁹ Hameiri 2010; Harrison 2004.

Working Group (CEWG) was established at the demands of donors and the International Monetary Fund as a forum for the government to discuss its economic policy with the main donors, as well as for monitoring the implementation of agreed reforms. However, the Solomon Islands Ministry of Finance and Treasury, which represents Solomon Islands on the CEWG, has itself been heavily rescaled through the secondment of donor and Overseas Development Institute personnel.

These efforts, which are perhaps ironically justified as supporting state capacity and enabling self-governance, reflect a broader trend in international politics away from conceiving of national sovereignty as autonomy from external interference, towards its reinterpretation as responsibility vis-à-vis the international community.⁴⁰ They also reflect a concurrent shift from intervention to governance in international development aid delivery, whereby donor programming is not imposed from the outside and temporary, but becomes deeply embedded within the ostensibly domestic apparatuses of recipient states, whose formal sovereignty remains intact but where substantive authority is shifted to the transnationally networked technocrats and regulators.⁴¹ Similarly, interveners have more recently attempted to rescale subnational – even village or community – governance in response to the apparent failure of efforts to produce desired outcomes through the central state’s bureaucracy. Most notably in Iraq, following the evident failure of centralised state-building efforts,⁴² the US military sought to alleviate the deadly sectarian civil war of 2005–6 by supporting sheikhs and other local strongmen through transfers of weapons and funds, to establish order in their localities and excise al-Qaeda.⁴³ This was combined with efforts to link these groups with the Baghdad government to ultimately bring them under centralised authority.⁴⁴ Thus, although PSBIs work through states, not by undermining or supplanting them, they tend to produce fragmented forms of multi-scalar statehood.

However, because rescaling is so pivotal to PSBIs in general and PAR specifically, scalar strategies have become also integral to the way that domestic actors respond to these programmes, as they struggle to

⁴⁰ Bickerton et al. 2007; Chayes and Chayes 1995.

⁴¹ Hameiri 2010; Williams 2013. ⁴² Dodge 2005. ⁴³ Kilcullen 2009.

⁴⁴ Biddle 2008.

promote governance outcomes favourable to themselves. These groups often seek to promote or constrain the rescaling of governance, as well as shape the actual functioning of rescaled apparatuses, in ways that best serve their interests and normative agendas. As such, powerful actors and groups will typically attempt to resist rescaling or modify the operation of rescaled institutions when rescaling is seen to undermine the basis of their power, by threatening its material underpinnings and/or the ideology rationalising it. They will support rescaling when it is seen to reinforce their interests and normative agendas and undermine their opponents.⁴⁵ Therefore, as we elaborate in Chapter 2, analysing the outcomes of PSBIs requires attending to the intra- and inter-scalar contestation – material and ideological – that results through, and in response to, these programmes, and specifically to the relative power of the coalitions mobilising to promote, resist or modify rescaling in particular contexts. As we shall see, even when the material preponderance of interveners appears overwhelming vis-à-vis domestic social forces, their capacity to attain desired policy and governance objectives is powerfully mediated by the scalar strategies of recipients, especially of recipient governments. In other words, how public administrations function and the capacities of their different agencies to pursue particular policy agendas in the context of PSBIs are invariably established through struggles between coalitions of socio-political forces, in which the politics of scale is a key aspect.

Domestic groups' scalar strategies in response to donor PAR programmes can take one of three forms – the first and second strategies relate to the agency of recipient governments. Because PSBIs maintain the formal sovereignty of target states, the implementation of PAR programmes necessitates at least the tacit consent of recipient governments. Governments thus retain a key role as 'scale managers',⁴⁶ able to harness national sovereignty claims to affect what interventions are allowed in, and in what ways. One possible response by recipient governments is to completely reject PAR programmes, thus preventing the rescaling of apparatuses altogether. Outright rejection of all foreign assistance is quite rare because the resources offered by interveners are typically attractive to embattled governments in poor countries. A second, and particularly significant, response is selective adoption. This entails the use of the state's scale management function, not to

⁴⁵ See Hameiri and Jones 2015: 51–74. ⁴⁶ Peck 2002: 340.

reject intervention wholesale, but to selectively admit or constrain PAR programmes and rescale in ways that bolster the authority and control over resources of existing elites who dominate the national scale. This may also involve efforts to affect the ways that apparently rescaled institutions function, as well as to shift resources from rescaled to non-rescaled parts of the bureaucracy. But this selectivity is not simply a matter of choice; it reflects the broader political economic context, shaping socio-political power relations more generally, and the role of political and bureaucratic elites within this. The elites dominating the national scale will thus adopt or resist rescaling efforts not just to advance narrow, pecuniary interests, but often out of ideological conviction, to protect important allies or to undermine ideological or political rivals.

A third response, which often occurs alongside the second, is localisation. Usually, localisation is attempted by relatively weak groups, seeking to contest the power of elites dominating the national scale, by attempting to harness PSBIs' fragmenting of the national scale and the attendant blow to the authority of national elites to shift governance downwards, thereby bolstering their power and control over resources. Localisation is not only a weapon of the weak, however; it could also be attempted by powerful elites when rescaling to a subnational level is seen as potentially reinforcing their power against donors and domestic contenders. These efforts often involve ideological appeals to the legitimacy of modes of governance based in socio-culturally organic subnational communities, versus that of apparently 'transplanted' postcolonial institutions like the state. Related is the call that local groups and governance structures should enjoy greater autonomy and improved resource-allocation. Localisation efforts are sometimes reinforced by the donors' ubiquitous government decentralisation agenda.⁴⁷ They are sometimes also supported by what scholars of peace-building have identified as the 'local turn' – interveners' promotion of apparently customary institutions and forms of authority to stabilise recipient societies.⁴⁸

An important part of this localisation agenda, typically missed by those endorsing it from outside, is that defining the local and its scope of governance and authority is inherently contested. While those supporting localisation seek to bolster their power, this is likely to be

⁴⁷ See Hadiz 2010. ⁴⁸ Mac Ginty and Richmond 2013.