Institution: University of Reading

Unit of Assessment: UoA19 Politics and International Studies

Title of case study: Changing UK Policy Approaches to International Peace- and Statebuilding

Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2006–16

Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:

Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI: 2006
Dominik Zaum	Lecturer Reader Professor	2006 – present

Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–19

Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? No

1. Summary of the impact

Over the past decade, the decline in conflict has reversed, with a particular rise in conflict recurrence. This trend underlines the importance of frameworks that guide external interventions to support transitions to peace and stability. The UK is committed to spending 50% of its GBP15,200,000,000 (2019) annual aid budget on fragile and conflict-affected countries, which are home to some of the world's most vulnerable populations. Zaum's research has underpinned a change in the approach of the Department for International Development (DFID) and the newly merged Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) to peace- and statebuilding, via its *Building Stability Framework* (adopted in 2016). This framework provides evidence-based guidance on how UK aid can help build stability and meet the commitments set out in the 2015 Strategic Defence & Security Review and the UK Aid Strategy. In addition to underpinning cross-government training on building stability through international peace- and statebuilding, the research has also informed government spend of the GBP1,260,000,000 Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF). In so doing, it aims to ensure that aid can better assist communities, states and regions to make the long transition from fragility to stability.

2. Underpinning research

The body of work conducted by Zaum which underpins the impact in this case study has three overlapping phases.

The initial phase (2006–08) encompasses Zaum's research on legitimacy and statebuilding [Section 3, Ref 1] and was based on conceptual work, as well as extensive field research in Bosnia and Herzegovina (2000, 2001) and Kosovo (2002, 2003, 2006). It also included periods of working with the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia (2000) and the UN Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (2003). The research demonstrates how international organisations' understandings of state legitimacy shaped their institution-building blueprints and processes, including their interactions with local elites. It identifies the building of legitimate state institutions as one of their key statebuilding objectives. But it also explores the difficulty of doing so without regard for local norms, which are potentially in conflict with those of international statebuilders, and the detrimental consequences of this for the local legitimacy and the sustainability of local institutions. This issue was explored further in the second phase of Zaum's relevant research.

The second phase (2006–12), supported by the ESRC (ES/J00418/1) and the Stabilisation Unit, the World Bank, and the Carnegie Corporation of New York, encompasses Zaum's work on the political economy of statebuilding. It examines the impact of different donors' statebuilding practices on political and economic institutions in fragile states, as well as looking

at one particular political economy aspect of state fragility: corruption. The relevant research is both conceptual (for example, on the impact of corruption) and empirical, and rooted in qualitative field research (2008, 2009, 2010) using process-tracing and participant observation. By analysing anti-corruption efforts [Ref 3], the research shows the tensions between statebuilding on the one hand (where anti-corruption efforts could support greater state capacity), and peacebuilding on the other (where the same anti-corruption efforts could undermine the patronage relationships that sustained a degree of stability and contained violence). It problematises the common notion in peace- and statebuilding policies that different (liberal) reforms mutually reinforce each other. His contribution to an international research network on the political economy of statebuilding, which he co-directed [Ref 2], highlights the importance of engaging with informal political and social structures for statebuilding, rather than focusing predominantly on formal institutions. This further developed his earlier work on the importance of local norms.

The third phase (2011–16), supported by a DFID Senior Research Fellowship in Conflict and Fragility, and an ESRC public sector placement fellowship (ES/J00418/1) in the Stabilisation Unit, built on the conceptual and empirical work of the previous two phases and developed their implications in the context of relevant policy frameworks. Zaum's research in this phase explores the challenges faced by legitimacy-focused peace- and statebuilding policies and practices in deeply divided societies. It was shaped by close collaboration with DFID and the Stabilisation Unit through Zaum's part-time secondments to both (2011-2015). In particular, it explores the difficulty of reconciling different audiences to whom legitimacy claims are addressed, and their different normative and political reference points [Ref 4]. It also synthesises and evaluates the evidence on different anti-corruption interventions and policies in light of the insights from his earlier research on corruption and peacebuilding [Ref 5]; and in a study commissioned by DFID critically assesses the existing UK policy framework for peace- and statebuilding (Building Peaceful States and Societies, adopted in 2009), both in terms of the underlying conceptual assumptions and empirical evidence [Ref 6]. This work, first, challenges the notion that different drivers of stability reinforce each other, and argues that building stability requires difficult political trade-offs; and second, demonstrates that the existing policy largely missed the economic dimension of building stability. Finally, it argues that donors' predominant focus on the formal state and its institutions neglects the importance of regional/international and (often informal) local dynamics and structures for building stability. Outputs produced in this phase [Refs 5 and 6] directly impacted the development of the new policy framework, and shaped practices in country offices.

3. References to the research

The underpinning research has made original contributions both conceptually, in particular with regard to the role of legitimacy in peace- and statebuilding processes, and empirically, in particular with regard to the impact of external peace- and statebuilding interventions on political and economic dynamics. It has generated novel qualitative data on peace- and statebuilding processes, based on extensive field work. It has significantly contributed to the advancement of the peace- and statebuilding debate. All of this is reflected in the research's funding through competitive grants and the publication following peer review by leading academic publishers.

1. Zaum, D. (2007) *The Sovereignty Paradox: The Norms and Politics of International Statebuilding.* Oxford University Press, Oxford. doi:10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199207435.001.0001

2. Zaum, D. and Berdal, M. (eds) (2012) *Political Economy of State-building: Power After Peace.* Routledge Studies in Intervention and Statebuilding. Routledge, Abingdon

3. Zaum, D. (2013) 'Corruption and state-building'. In: Chandler, David and Sisk, Timothy (eds) *Routledge Handbook of International Statebuilding*. Routledge, Abingdon, pp. 15–28. doi:org/10.4324/9780203370377

4. Zaum, D. (2012) 'Statebuilding and governance: The conundrums of legitimacy and local ownership'. In: Curtis, Devon and Dzinesa, Gwinyayi A. (eds) *Peacebuilding, Power and Politics in Africa*. Ohio University Press, Athens, OH, USA, pp. 47–62.

5. Zaum, D, Taxell, N. and Johnson, J. (2012) *Mapping Evidence Gaps in Anti-corruption: Assessing the State of the Operationally Relevant Evidence on Donors' Actions and Approaches to Reducing Corruption.* U4 Issue Papers. 7/2012. Report. Christian Michelsen Institute, Bergen.

6. Zaum, D., Heaven, C. and Gippert, B. (2015) 'Building peaceful states and societies: A critical assessment of the evidence'. Department of Politics and International Relations, University of Reading. Internal paper produced for DFID.

4. Details of the impact

The rising prevalence of conflict over the last decade, and its consequences, such as forced migration, institutional decay and economic dislocation, have meant that a growing number of countries are considered to be fragile. Not only are these states at greater risk of suffering a recurrence of violent conflict, but absolute poverty is increasingly concentrated in fragile states, with estimates suggesting that by 2030, they will encompass over 80% of the world's poorest populations.

In 2015, the UK therefore made two significant commitments with regard to fragile states: first; in the National Security Strategy (NSS), the UK committed to spend 50% of its GBP15,200,000,000 (2019) aid budget in fragile and conflict-affected countries; and second, the UK Aid Strategy emphasised the strengthening of global peace, security and governance as one of the four principal objectives for its overseas development aid.

As the government department responsible for improving the coherence and effectiveness of British development policy in fragile states, DFID embarked on a process of refreshing its relevant policy, Building Peaceful States and Societies (adopted in 2009). This resulted in the 2016 *Building Stability Framework* which was underpinned by Zaum's research [Section 5, Sources 6 and 7]. Now embedded in DFID's country office strategies, the framework also operationalises the commitments in the NSS and the UK Aid Strategy. The framework provides a "an evidence-based handrail" [Source 9] to policymakers for the development of strategies and programmes to address fragility, and informs cross-government spend on fragile states.

Development of the new DFID policy framework through continued engagement

Further to Zaum's secondment to DFID as a Senior Research Fellow in Conflict and Fragility (2011–15) he was invited by DFID to critically assess the evidence underpinning its approach to building stability in fragile and conflict-affected states. Forming part of the external advisory group, Zaum's engagement resulted in the shaping of the new *Building Stability Framework* [Source 9].

The development of the new policy framework comprised detailed consultations with a wide group of experts on fragile states. This involved Zaum's participation in workshops, including hosting one workshop at the University of Reading in March 2016 [Source 9]; and participation in a further workshop in Cambridge in 12 April 2016 [Source 9]. At these meetings, 'Building peaceful states' [Section 3, Ref 6] (produced during his secondment to DFID) was provided to participants as "a comprehensive basis for our [DIFD's] re-thinking [of the 2009 policy]" [Source 9]. The key findings were also presented to different policy audiences across government, including DFID and FCO conflict advisors. For example, Zaum was invited as a panel member alongside the leader of the drafting team to discuss building long-term stability at the cross-government "Wilton Park Future of Conflict" conference in March 2015 [Source 9].

The final revised framework, underpinned by 'Building peaceful states' [Section 3, Ref 6], was adopted in 2016 [Source 1]. The research was acknowledged by DFID as being "central to the development of the new framework" and it "challenged the key assumption in DFID's previous approach that strengthening state legitimacy, in particular through enhanced delivery of public services, leads to stability" [Source 7].

In 2020, the Foreign Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO) commissioned Zaum to conduct further research to inform a review of the Building Stability Framework and the development of a new conflict policy for the FCDO.

Embedding the new policy across government and training

Zaum played an important role in supporting the embedding of the new policy framework across the government. This included initially speaking at the DFID Professional Development Conferences (2015 and 2016), followed by a continued role in increasing skills capacity across government in three key areas.

First, as described by the FCO, Zaum's work "has formed a central part of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) and wider British Government (HMG) training offer on Conflict" [Source 8]. As part of the FCO's Diplomatic Academy offer, this includes staff working for international organisations such as the UN. Having won a competitive tender, Zaum produced an online module on conflict policy based on the key findings and arguments in 'Building peaceful states' [Section 3, Ref 6]. "Zaum delivered a high-quality product, which sets out for staff the conceptual and practical tools available to HMG to best address the many conflict situations we face, from Afghanistan and Iraq, to Libya, Syria, Somalia, Myanmar, South Sudan and Yemen" [Source 8]. As of January 2020, the module has been completed by over 60 HMG staff [Source 8]. It has "helped develop HMG understanding of how to navigate the challenges and trade-offs involved when the UK becomes involved in conflicts and post-conflict situations overseas" [Source 8].

Second, the research was incorporated into the Stabilisation Course, the core training course for civilians deployed by the UK (DFID's cross-government Stabilisation Unit) to support stabilisation efforts in fragile and conflict-affected states [Source 6]. This "is run quarterly by the UK Stabilisation Unit for HMG staff and officials from other countries involved in stabilisation efforts such as the US, Canada, and Germany; as well as overseas training for recipient countries such as Somalia and Egypt. Ca. 100 participants per year take part in the course" [Source 6]. Zaum was requested by the Stabilisation Unit to offer the initial training as part of the course, and provided four training sessions in 2017 and 2018 on "What Works" in building stability, structured around the framework and his paper. Feedback highlighted that the sessions significantly improved the participants' understanding of the challenges facing fragile and conflict-affected states and the evidence as to "what works" [Source 6].

Third, Zaum has provided training that has further embedded the use of the Building Stability Framework to the military through an online module on peace operations for the Army Higher Education Pathway, a degree programme provided by the University of Reading for UK army officers in partnership with Royal Military Academy Sandhurst; and since 2015, through an annual lecture on addressing state fragility to the Joint Services Command and Staff College (the training programme for senior UK military commanders and staff officers, as well as international senior officers, with an annual intake of ca. 150).

Adoption and implementation

The new evidence-informed framework [Source 1] has changed DFID's previous focus on strengthening service delivery in order to build state legitimacy. Instead, as the Independent Commission on Aid Impact (ICAI) notes, the "research questioned the causal links between service delivery and state legitimacy, prompting DFID to rethink its approach" [Source 3, p.9]. A second change in the new policy framework reflects Zaum's research [Section 3, Refs 1, 2, 3 and 6] through a greater emphasis on engaging with informal and non-state actors. Finally, his research has informed the recognition that different aspects of peace and statebuilding conflict, and require trade-offs rather than mutually reinforcing each other [Section 3, Ref 3]. This "underpins the theory of change for stabilisation being set out in the recent revision of the *The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation: A Guide for Policymakers and Practitioners* ([a report published in] 2019) as well as heavily influencing the Elite Bargains and Political Deals research project (2018), which underpinned the Guide" [Source 6].

The Framework has also shaped the cross-government Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability JACS tool (2017) [Source 2], the strategic assessment underpinning UK National Security Council strategies, and the GBP1,260,000,000 Conflict, Security and Stability Fund (CSSF). The JACS explicitly picks up the recommendation of the Framework to consider the regional context of stability (p.13), and to look at informal structures and non-state actors (p.18). For

some countries not experiencing conflict, such as Jordan, the development of the strategies and the programme portfolio by country offices and embassies relied on analysis directly based on the Building Stability Framework [Source 4, Section 4.8]. A number of DFID projects in fragile states have explicitly referenced the Framework in their business cases for CSSF funding [for example, Source 2]. These include the cross-government CSSF flagship rule-of-law programme in Pakistan [see also Source 7], the CSSF Stability Programme for Lebanon, a civil society programme in Myanmar, and a regional initiative to counter illicit financial flows in Africa. The Building Stability Framework, has also shaped UK government strategies and processes including The UK National Action Plan on Women Peace and Security 2018 – 2022 [Source 10].

DFID staff have confirmed that by November 2019, the Building Stability Framework was "now used widely across DFID's field offices, including Pakistan …, Afghanistan, Myanmar, Nepal and a number of African countries. The Framework has become the foundation for policy discussions relating to fragility and conflict (in DFID, with other UK Government departments and with our external partners) and is helping to shape future thinking and directions in terms of decision making from Secretary of State downwards, and shapes funding in most of DFID's offices … The Framework also served as the basis for a series of CSSF training events, which have been delivered by DFID" [Source 7]. Beyond the UK's global approach to the EU, the insight from his research that "not all good things go together and that interventions in fragile states require trade-offs between different state- and peacebuilding objectives" [Section 3, Refs 4 and 6] is explicitly reflected in guidance from the European Commission for development practitioners [Source 5].

In summary, addressing the global need for building long-term peace, and reversing the increase in repeated conflicts, Zaum's research has informed donors' attempts to rethink their approaches to fragile states, not just at DFID/FCDO, but also beyond the UK. The change in approach is significant. It embeds research findings which emphasise the importance of considering difficult political trade-offs as well as that of engaging with informal political and social structures for statebuilding. Government institutions are now equipped to work with local and international partners to reduce the terrible consequences of violent conflict and address the threats that are generated by instability overseas.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[S1] DFID (2016) *Building Stability Framework* (Referencing 'Building peaceful states'– Section 3, Ref 6 – pp. 4 and 21).

[S2] Joint Analysis of Conflict and Stability, Guidance Note (pp.13 and 18) and example Business Cases for CSSF funding.

[S3] 'ICAI annual report 2015 to 2016', ICAI, London, June 2016. (Referencing 'Building peaceful states', p. 9, and *Building Stability Framework*).

[S4] ICAI. 'The Conflict, Security, and Stability Fund aid spendng: A performance review', March 2018 (Section 4.8, p.17).

[S5] European Commission, Operational Note No. 3 – Stakeholders, Guidance Package on Social Protection across the Humanitarian-Development Nexus, Brussels, May 2019 (p.17).

[S6] Testimonial from DFID's cross-government Stabilisation Unit

[S7] Testimonial from Head of Governance, Security and Poverty Pillar in DFID

[S8] Testimonial from FCO

[S9] Email communications – centrality of 'Building peaceful states' (Section 3, Ref 6) for policy reform

[S10] UK National Action Plan on Women, Peace & Security 2018 - 2022