

Building strong institutional capacities for stable states – national interest versus reforming process: positive practices and recommendations

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ABSTRACT

National goals and interests are a priority for every state, both for the population and for the state elites. However, it is important to point out that in certain societies there are internal fractions, different social groups or ethnic communities, which may aspire to different high goals. It should be properly followed and respected, both by the state authorities and from the foreign actors.

When promoting missions to encourage a reform process for the need to build the capacities of strong institutions as a condition for stable states, they need to be based on respect for national goals and interests, overall, but also to strive for affection from side of the public and proclaimed public opinion.

Within this paper, an analytical approach is promoted in the creation of an original theoretical framework for presenting a complete process of guarding capacities for strong institutions and stable states. Through the application of a qualitative categorical framework, through the analysis of existing facts, their comparison, specification and synthesis, conclusions and recommendations for action in specific social situations are drawn.

KEYWORDS: reform process, building capacities, strong, institutions, states

Received : 1/08/2022

Revised :

Accepted : 7/09/2022

Introduction. The changes that are taking place, to a large extent, have a direct impact on the ruling elites and their way of working and functioning, and indirectly on the entire public. Additionally, reforms of state institutions are inherently political, even if foreign actors may claim that they are pursuing only technical changes. This is exactly the main reason for the emergence of a certain level of resistance to missions and influences of this type, i.e. the domestic elites and the existing government will not adapt and accept the necessary changes, which will make the reintegration process more difficult and will make the same less successful. Consequently, there is an obvious possibility for domestic stakeholders to oppose the reform process initiated by the international community, known as domestic opposition theory (Pritchett, 2004).

Initially, it is necessary to approach an analysis of the challenge of the way and the level of efficiency and effectiveness of the functioning of state institutions. Furthermore, structures or practices that have proven to be sufficiently effective in other countries are identified, so that they are adapted to social opportunities and needs (Finkenbusch, 2021). It is important to point out that in this way all institutions in a country are challenged, towards a state of improving their level of work, integrity and credibility among different target publics in a society, which in a given situation can be met with infamy by a series of domestic opponents of this reform process (Howard, 2008)

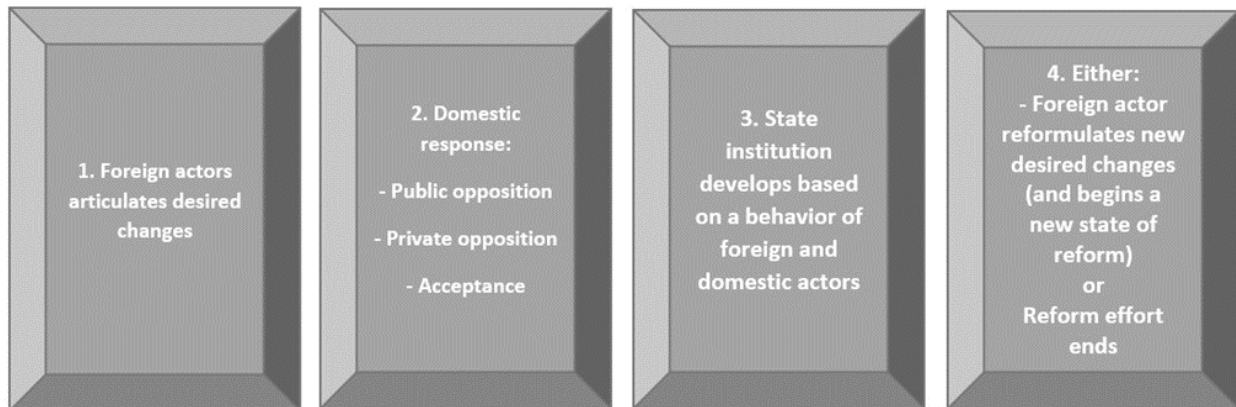
Moreover, a large number of individuals identify with national beliefs, whereby the actions of elites must be in the context of national identity in order to mobilize political power, making it particularly difficult for external actors to reduce the meaning and role of nationalism.

The importance of this academic paper stems from the need to highlight how important it is for stable states to put in place strong institutional capacities. Throughout history (especially from a more recent period), there are a number of examples where interventions by external actors are needed in a certain state, in order to start with special missions and a long-term reform process for building the capacities of state institutions and the way of their further functioning within democratic frameworks, all in order to be able to ensure a higher level of social well-being. What is of particular importance to emphasize is that foreign actors need to take into account the national interest and goals, in order to guarantee the support of the reform process by the general public and the state elites, on the basis of which they will raise their existing credibility.

A reform process for reorganization and building strong institutions

A reform process can be divided into several stages (four stages to check the model). Within the domestic opposition theory, actually the foreign actor seeks to implement particular demands or recommendations.

Figure 1: Steps in the reformation phase



Source: Radin(2020)

Within the first phase of the reform process, foreign actors formulate and articulate the changes in the target state institutions that they seek to accomplish. These changes may include adjustments in the formal rules, structures, or common practice of the institution. Furthermore, the desired changes may be framed as demands or recommendations depending on the international resources and the political and legal structure in the place, including whether a foreign reformer has legal authority over a society or is acting more as an adviser to the sovereign government of the country. In this context, it is particularly important to identify specific changes, directly targeted to solve certain manifested social challenges (Radin, 2020)

The second phase of reforming, there is a bidirectionality between the state elites and the mass public, in relation to the general decision on whether to accept the reforms or to oppose them, that is, not to support them.

During the third step of reforming, there is a certain change in the way the state institution's function, which is expected to improve, and all this is due to the behaviour of the foreign and domestic actors who are currently involved.

The fourth step of reform, the involved foreign actors set two scenarios. The first scenario would mean that they give up on the reform process and the invested effort, while the second scenario would mean that they reformulate the requirements and recommendations in a way that initiates a new reform cycle. All that depends on the support they have from the domestic government, the entire population, as well as the image they have achieved within the national framework, but also among other countries in the international community.

It is important to point out that the reform process does not always happen in this order, that is, it adapts to the existing needs and resources of a certain social framework, and it largely depends on the existing situational factor.

Action of foreign actors for effectiveness and capacity building in weak states: demands and recommendations

Understanding the real reasons for the need to reform the institutional capacity of a given society is identified as the main factor in terms of the success of the reform itself. More specifically, it is a process that analyses equally the internal resources available in a society, and the external capacity-building concepts that need to be implemented.

Interesting example from real practice is Bosnia and Herzegovina. The post-war mission in Bosnia began in 1995, when the international community arrived. The very concept offered by international organizations and institutions is in the domain of building peace, strengthening state institutions, as well as encouraging further development of the multi-ethnic society. The strengthening of the security and legal system is particularly influenced, in order to ensure the safety of the population, as well as to influence the reduction of the level of corruption and the proper functioning of the legal system (Toal, 2011)

Reforms in the domain of security are generally known in the Balkans, with the aim of making it a better place to live.

The main goal of foreign reformers is to advocate for changes to correct the problems they observe, with the aim of reducing their impact on the quality of life of the population, and over time, to completely disappear (Suhrke, 2001).

The reform process can be completely unpredictable. Understanding the origin of demands and recommendations is also useful for gaining insight about how foreign actors can improve reform efforts in the future.

The reform process is only possible if local practices are fully taken into account. According to Lant Pritchett and Michael Woolcock, international development efforts tend to adopt a strategy of "skipping straight to Weber" (Andrews, 2017), meaning that they seek to "reach service delivery performance goals in developing countries by simply mimicking" the organizational forms of a particular 'Denmark' meaning a model developed country. Moreover, according to Roland Paris and his observations, it can be seen that without exaptation, peacebuilding missions in the post-Cold War period have attempted to 'transplant' the values and institutions of the liberal democratic core into the domestic affairs of peripheral host states (Paris, 2008).

It is essential to point out that the reform process of institutional capacities must take place with full respect for human rights. Hence, the need can be seen from real intervention during state elections, protection of ethnic minorities, protection of women, resolution of ethnic conflicts, prevention of social segregation, as well as protection of the rights of different social groups. Consequently, the reform process must not under any circumstances initiate the protection of one ethnic group against another/other groups. However, the level at which the models will be initiated depends on the available resources of foreign actors and everyone involved in the process of building credible institutional capacities that through the reform process will be able to continue to act independently and meet the social needs of different target groups. Having resources available in larger quantities actually strengthens the mission's mandate. However, it is important to pay attention to the personal press of the foreign actors who are engaged and in charge of reforms in the institutions and the construction of strong institutions in the so-called weak societies, and which refers to their personal perceptions and experiences of the complete situation, which further implies the reform process. Still, there are also other political, bureaucratic or cultural pressures within peace-building organizations that influence the choice of demands or recommendations (Chandra, 2004)

In this context, it is important to mention the United Nations mission in Kosovo as an example. According to Severine Autesserre, everyday practices affect the level of effectiveness of the intervention, especially by reducing the possibility of understanding or adapting to local circumstances. At the same time, the actors who make interventions tend to emphasize thematic or generally accepted technical knowledge, as opposed to local knowledge in relation to the society where they are active. This tendency can lead to a range of dysfunctional practices, such as preferences for different mission allocations and external actors. In addition, all this can lead to a lack of institutional memory and knowledge regarding various events in society. In order to prevent some inconsistency, it is especially important to correctly select local partners who can provide a solid basis for the implementation of an effective concepts in the future (Peaceland, 2014).

In the context of the above, the influence of the USA in relation with building the state institutional capacities in Iraq and Afghanistan is also mentioned. Within this case, certain critical aspects can be pointed out during the process of external requests and recommendations, which refer to rapid system rotations and lack of adequate training in the local language. Most importantly, the biggest problem (or challenge) can be seen when foreign actors and implementers insist on the realization of certain general technical principles, without seeing their applicability to local circumstances and needs (Bremer, 2006).

During a process of reformation and realization of a mission, the main goal is to build strong institutional capacities in countries where peace is also in question. There are three important levels of authority that are followed for evaluation. It is about: the headquarters of the foreign mission; the countries that provide funds for the realization of the mission, as well as the personnel who are engaged for the

realization of the mission. Hence, it is particularly important that all these actors of influence have a unified attitude regarding the method and procedure of the realization of the mission, otherwise they would follow a series of requests and recommendations that will be in conflict with each other, which will reduce the credibility of the mission (Manning, 2007).

The main recommendation in this domain is to allow foreign actors to see the opportunities offered by domestic politics, however in an isolated situation in relation to domestic interest groups, in order to ensure the maximization of the success of the reforms. Foreign actors often learn from the mistakes that occurred during the implementation of a certain reform process while building strong institutions, thereby achieving greater success in the further stages of reforming.

Promotion of national goals and interests during the reform process

The promotion of national goals and interests needs to be in parallel with the concept of reforming certain institutional capacities. However, setting up such a synergy is not an easy process. It consists of several involved actors. It is about the state elites, the affected public, as well as the level of popularity of nationalism in a society.

Nationalism refers to the idea that a specific group should govern a territory. In societies where nationalism is politically important, individuals within the society tend to associate themselves with one or more identifiable groups, distinguished by a "salient political cleavage" within their society. Elites and political parties in these societies often compete for support within their particular group (Dobbins, 2007).

An interesting example for analysis in this context is Bosnia and the "ethnocracy" within its framework, through the existence of three main groups, Bosnian Muslim, Croat and Serb. Each of these groups has its own political representatives on the basis of which a political competition (focused primarily on identity issues) is ensured.

The presence of foreign actors in a certain country does not always refer to the need to build the capacities of state institutions. Nationalism is often influenced by many aspects. Namely, the political meaning and role of nationalism is not only an important aspect for analysis, but the specific history of political and economic modernization, the role of the elites, as well as the existence of a historical ethnic conflict, especially one that contributes to the emergence of violent behaviour, which would further initiate peace building (Wood, 2008).

In the context of the above, a distinction is especially made between the war and post-war period. Namely, according to Elizabeth Wood, individuals may be influenced by their personal experiences

during military violence, which may further translate to certain political beliefs and mechanisms, which would be inappropriate for the post-war period (Balcells, 2012).

In order to understand whether the reform process threatens the national goals and the very ideology of nationalism that is presented in a certain social framework, initially, foreign factors need to identify the national goals, according to different relevant groups. However, it is important to make a distinction with the political goals, because reducing them to the same level would cause an insubstantial fulfilment of the main mission through the reform process (Petersen, 2011).

Table 1 Dominant Nationalist Goals of the Major Groups in the Case Studies

SOCIETY	GROUP	DESIRED TERRITORY	DOMINANT NATIONALIST GOALS
BOSNIA	<u>Bosniaks</u>	Entire country	Political participation in unified Bosnia
	Serbs	<u>Republika Srpska (RS)</u>	Autonomy within RS
KOSOVO	Croats	Croat cantons of the Federation	Autonomy within Croat cantons
	Albanians	Kosovo	Independence
TIMOR-LESTE	n/a ^a	Timor-Leste	Independence
IRAQ	Shia	Iraq	Dominance over the Iraqi government in a unified Iraq
	Sunnis	Iraq	Political participation in unified Iraq
	Kurds	Kurdistan	Autonomy within Kurdistan
UKRAINE	Ukrainians	Ukraine	Integrity and defense of Ukraine

Source: (Radin ,2020, p.34)

In encouraging a reform process to build strong institutions in weak states, the overall process for implementing reforms may threaten national goals by eliminating local control over police control, thus undermining the existence of institutions in the system that are critical for regional autonomy (Staniland, 2014).

As the main and essential conclusion in relation to the above, it is pointed out that in certain social frameworks some groups may protest that foreign actors and their reform actions threaten the

national goals, but this should be to a minimal extent. In fact, they may be threatened by the level of democratic development that is being initiated

The spiral of silence Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann – public opinion in the role of supporting the reform process by foreign actors

In the context of the formation of public opinion based on the acceptance of a "new reality", that is, the support of new directions for social action, such as those brought by the reformation process, the theory of the spiral of silence by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann is also mentioned (Noelle-Neumann, 1993).

What connects this theory to the presented facts and aspects of thinking within this paper is the first thesis of her theory which is actually related to the source of the power of public opinion. Public opinion as social surveillance is focused on ensuring a satisfactory degree of social consensus on the values and goals of the community. According to this understanding, the power of public opinion is so great that it cannot be ignored neither by the authorities, nor by citizens or social groups, nor by foreign actors. That power springs from the threat of isolating the individual. The interaction between the individual and society gives power to common consciousness, common values, and common goals, while simultaneously threatening those who deviate from those values and goals (Weber, 1958).

Within the framework of this theory, the understanding of the need to reduce cognitive dissonance and ensure consensus in society is initiated; at the same time, the mass media should be in the role of a coherent "public eye" and a source of information about the dominant social norms, that is, as a simultaneous control of the public opinion of the citizens and the government (Pierre, 2008). In his research, Noelle-Neumann concludes that the fear of isolation among individuals who deviate from the majority consensus is the force that causes the spiral of silence as a generator of public opinion.

According to the Noelle-Neumann model, consensus can only be based on conformity. However, conformity is not the only form, that is, a way of forming consensus through social influence.

Critics of Neumann's model argue that conformity does not necessarily preclude any kind of deviation from the majority. The type of conformity can also be used to provide an opportunity for mutual influence, which allows for the modification of persistent attitudes, opinions, and behaviors.

During the reforming process, external actors need to strive to gain the affection of the local population, all in order to have greater credibility and support for their mission and necessary goals for realization. Only in that way can the public be expected, to a certain extent, to "deviate" from its position, or conformal zone, in the direction that is needed for the achievement of higher goals, for the general well-being of the entire community. However, in order to initiate such an approach, external actors need

to have clearly defined goals and a transparent approach from the beginning, which will win the public's favor. In addition, the behavior of the elites in such a case goes in the direction of the behavior of the majority, from where they derive their legitimacy (Gerald, 1973).

In his discussion of public opinion, Noelle-Neumann clarifies the power of public opinion in terms of Lazarsfeld's thesis on the "band-wagon effect". She believes that similarly to this effect, the spiral of silence stems from the assumption that individuals in their environment observe the signals of power or weakness of different opponents (William, 1964). But according to Noelle-Neumann, there are two differences between these conceptualizations: (1) in the motive for such observation (for the mechanism of the "train effect" the prevailing motive is to be on the side of the winners, while for the spiral of silence the key motive is to avoid the threat of isolation); (2) in time: the spiral of silence emphasizes gradual incremental changes resulting from ongoing social processes, while the "train effect" assumes more unexpected jumps from one position to another, resulting from new information about who is in leadership (taking into account the mission of foreign actors and their goals aimed at improving future social practices and thereby strengthening the functioning capacities of state institutions) (Radin, 2020).

Conclusion .The discussion that is attached within this paper in its essence makes a connection between the need for: (1) reorganization of the capacities of a society, from the aspect of the functioning of the institutions and improvement of their forms of action in order to make the decisions made more effective; (2) the need to set up a reform process and a mission by foreign actors to build strong institutional capacities, as a condition for stable states; (3) the need to respect national goals and interests when setting up reform processes of institutional capacities, because only in this way the mission can have positive public support and credibility; (4) to strike a balance between public opinion, state elites and foreign actors, when it comes to promoting short-term and long-term goals of a reform process.

The paper discusses the theory of the spiral of silence by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, in a way that encourages thinking that public opinion as social surveillance can be crucial in initiating a reform process by foreign actors in a country. Namely, only in that way, by setting a full level of transparency on the part of foreign actors, can one expect to mobilize public opinion in support of the reform process for building strong institutions, as a basic criterion for stable states.

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