The UK's approach to linking development and security: assessing policy and practice

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Concerns have been raised that the United Kingdom is reshaping its development approach in order to put its own security interests ahead of those of the poorest – what has been referred to as a 'securitisation of aid'. Critics point to the Department for International Development's (DFID) engagement in Afghanistan and Iraq and more recently, to the 2010 Strategic Defence and Security Review, which stresses the importance of tackling conflict and instability and emphasises the centrality of development assistance in this effort. The Prime Minister, David Cameron, has also explicitly said that 'development aid is a powerful instrument of our foreign policy' (2010), and some of the key countries selected for an increase in aid in 2011 – Afghanistan, Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen – are all sites of actual or potential terrorist threats.

Yet, this Working Paper argues that a closer look at DFID's engagement in these contexts suggests that UK aid has not been used purely to achieve geo-political and security objectives. In fact, this engagement stems from a recognition, emerging prior to the events of 9/11, that conflict and development are interrelated and that many of the world's poorest live in fragile or conflict affected countries. Furthermore, a number of legal and administrative 'firewalls' have been established to protect the UK's poverty focus in its development support and to avert the securitisation of its aid.

In recent years, however, and perhaps accounting for concerns of securitisation, there has been some breakdown of these firewalls, in contexts where the UK has militarily intervened and development interventions have been explicitly used to support counter-insurgency objectives (see Iraq and Afghanistan), often in detriment to their effectiveness in alleviating poverty. However, this does not appear to represent a trend in other fragile and conflict affected countries that DFID has engaged in.

More fundamentally, practical attempts at better integrating development and security have frequently been hampered by simplistic understandings of the relationship. As explored in this Working Paper, this has resulted in a lack of innovative approaches for better securing development outcomes and supporting peace.

Looking ahead, new ways need to be found to realise the policy commitment of better integrating development and security with the aim of reducing poverty and building peace. This will need to be underpinned by more nuanced analysis of how these dimensions inter-relate, with credible theories of change for how to support countries transitioning out of conflict, and much clearer coordination and joint working across government. This should be accompanied by much greater caution as to when and how development assistance should work alongside UK military support. To achieve this, the UK government will also need stronger mechanisms for prioritisation and for mediating between potentially conflicting priorities and goals.

1 Introduction

Security and development are increasingly recognised as intertwined and the notion that 'there can be no development without security and no security without development' is pervasive in much of the UK's development debate today. This reflects the recognition that over one-third of the world's poor live in conflict-affected countries and that achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) depends on tackling fragility and building peace (World Bank, 2011).

This represents a significant departure from the early 1990s, in which development practitioners in the UK and elsewhere were generally reluctant to engage in conflict contexts, as aid was seen as less likely to be effective. This resulted in high aid flows towards non-conflict countries, and the neglect of countries experiencing conflict, who increasingly became known as 'aid orphans'. Some forms of humanitarian assistance continued to play a prominent role in attempts to alleviate the most acute forms of suffering, yet high profile internal conflicts and widespread violence, such as in the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, highlighted the inadequacies of humanitarian action (by the UK and others) in this role.

The growing turn towards conflict affected countries has gone hand in hand with a belief that the nature of warfare and conflict is changing in the post-Cold War era (Kaldor, 1999). Rather than conflict between states, there is an increasing focus on conflict within states, with growing attention paid to complex interactions between state and non-state actors, regional spill-overs and international drivers such as globalisation (Duffield, 2001). This proliferation of different forms of violence and conflict, alongside the increase in the number of development actors and the emergence of a multi-polar world, continues to shape and reshape the development landscape.

Debates on how best to respond to these phenomena provide the background in which development and security come together in UK policymaking. Critics argue that the linking of development and security, particularly in the context of the Global War on Terror, has led to development assistance becoming 'securitised'; in other words, being diverted away from a conventional focus on poverty reduction towards combating threats to national security.

Despite ongoing conjecture on this issue, there have been few attempts to systemically analyse trends in development assistance with regards to conflict affected states. This Working Paper therefore seeks to assess the UK's policy on linking development and security and how this has been translated into practice.

The Working Paper mainly draws its analysis from secondary literature, interviews with key stakeholders and OECD DAC data on aid flows. It does not aim to provide a comprehensive review of all DFID and UK programming in fragile and conflict affected states but rather aims to provide an assessment of some of the practices that have stemmed from linking development and security. It takes the creation of the Department for International Development (DFID) in 1997 as its starting point.

2 Linking development and security: the policy discourse

The links between development and security in UK policy discourse have evolved around three key narratives: First, that conflict negatively affects development and in turn, promoting development can help resolve conflict and build peace. Second, that in an era of globalisation and an increasingly inter-connected world, conflict cannot be ignored as its effects do not respect geographical boundaries and can present major risks to UK and international security. And third, that building peace and stability requires collaboration across policy spheres, particularly development, defence and diplomacy.

DFID's first White Paper, *Eliminating World Poverty: a challenge for the 21st Century* (1997), affirmed poverty reduction as being at the centre of the government's development programme but emphasised

the interrelation between development and security. Conflict was seen as an impediment to economic progress and sustainable development (DFID, 1997; 5). This placed the issue of conflict firmly on the UK development agenda and in the same year, DFID formed a Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department as well as developing new programmes, particularly in the field of Security Sector Reform (SSR). This was deemed to require collaboration across government, and the White Paper pledged to deploy 'diplomatic, development assistance and military instruments in a coherent and consistent manner' (DFID, 1997; 69). The 2000 White Paper, *Eliminating World Poverty: Making Globalisation Work for the Poor*, continued this narrative but placed particular emphasis on the impact of conflict on national security in the context of a globalising world. Conflict prevention and building peace were defined as both a moral duty and in the national self interest.

This was given added impetus with the events of 11 September, 2001, with the policy discourse increasingly linked to security concerns and the UK's wider foreign policy. As stated by Jack Straw, then Foreign Minister, in 2002, 'It is no longer necessary to prove a direct link between a troubled faraway country and the order of our own societies' (cited in Abrahamsen, 2005; 65). This marked a new interventionism (sometimes involving the military, such as in Afghanistan and Iraq) that sought to more proactively shape, manage and contain disorder in developing countries (Collinson et al., 2010).

Development interventions were expected to bolster security in these contexts; security, in turn, created the virtuous cycle to foster longer-term development. The 2006 White Paper, *Making Governance Work for the Poor*, clarified what this meant for policy and practice, putting forward a 'security first' approach that emphasised working more effectively across government, at a time in which the FCO and Ministry of Defence (MOD) were also focusing their attentions on issues of conflict and under-development.

This went hand in hand with an emphasis on stabilising so-called fragile states – although most attention was paid to countries in which the UK was militarily involved or had strong geo-political and security interests. For example, in Afghanistan and Iraq, DFID was expected to ensure its development efforts contributed to a wider stabilisation agenda. This was outlined in the MoD's Joint Doctrine Publication 3-40, *Security and Stabilisation: the Military Contribution*, in which economic development, state-building and peace-building took a central role. It was reinforced in DFID's 2009 White Paper, *Building our Common Future*, which introduced a 'peacebuilding-statebuilding' approach for DFID's engagement in conflict affected states. This approach also required DFID to 'put politics at the heart of its action' and once again reaffirmed commitments to greater collaboration across government.

These narratives have been taken up and furthered by the UK's current Coalition Government (elected in 2010). The 2010 Strategic Defence Spending Review (SDSR), for example, stressed the importance of tackling conflict and instability to foster national security and emphasised the centrality of development assistance in that role (HM Government, 2010). This has strengthened calls, as outlined in a cross-government Building Stability Overseas Strategy (BSOS), for an 'integrated approach' that combines development, diplomacy, defence and intelligence resources to ensure effective coordination across these areas (DFID et al., 2011). DFID is now part of a new National Security Council and the tri-departmental Stabilisation Unit will have more prominence as the integrated approach is rolled out. The renewed emphasis on integration was based on learning from Afghanistan and Iraq, where a lack of coordination between government departments was deemed to have undermined effective results.

The above analysis reveals that the underlying policy discourse on security and development has remained consistent since 1997, albeit with variations in the extent and explicitness in which different elements are emphasised. However, there has been a marked shift in contexts in which the UK is military involved, such as Afghanistan and Iraq, or where it has strong geo-political and security interests, such as Pakistan, with development framed within a stabilisation paradigm.

Examining the policy debate and discourse on its own, however, does not reveal much. Increasingly, as the next section demonstrates, the translation of this emphasis on the 'security-development' nexus

has been patchy, and at times there appears to have been a disconnect between the above narratives and the realities of practice on the ground. This raises questions for the current UK Government in terms of how it will realise this narrative in the future, and regarding the most effective ways to support countries to transition out of conflict and tackle poverty.

3 Development and security in practice

Turning to an examination of UK aid in practice, there has been an implementation of some of the key elements of policy discourse since the late 1990s, namely the greater use of development support to help resolve conflict; the direction of resources towards countries which represent threats to UK security; and (although this is in some ways the area of least substantive change) attempts to bring together the development, defence and diplomatic communities. But challenges remain in terms of how substantively these have been realised and what the impacts on addressing insecurity and under-development have been. Each of these is examined below.

3.1 Development aid to conflict-affected countries

In the late 1990s, and as DFID became established, UK development aid (despite the links initially made between security and development) tended to focus on countries with relative stability, where development aid was presumed to be more effective. This is shown in the dominance of aid flows to countries like India, Ghana and Tanzania (see Table 1).[1]

However, changing global trends and wider shifts in international debates (including recognition of the inter-dependence of security threats and the changing nature of conflict) contributed to a growing focus on conflict affected countries, from those in Central and Eastern Europe to sub-Saharan Africa and – particularly post 9/11 – countries like Iraq and Afghanistan. As Table 1 below demonstrates, in 2005, Iraq became the second biggest recipient of UK bilateral aid. Aid to Afghanistan has also seen a considerable uplift, peaking at the second biggest recipient of bilateral aid in 2010. The UK's military involvement in these countries partly explains their particularly high allocation compared to other fragile and conflict affected states.

Table 1: Top five recipients of UK bilateral aid since 1996

	1	2	3	4	5
1996	India	Kenya	China	Tanzania	Zimbabwe
1997	India	Guyana	Uganda	Zambia	Bangladesh
1998	India	Ghana	Uganda	Bangladesh	Tanzania
1999	India	Bangladesh	Ghana	Serbia	China
2000	India	Nigeria	Uganda	Malawi	Kenya
2001	India	Tanzania	Mozambique	South Africa	Nepal
2002	Serbia	India	Tanzania	Bangladesh	Afghanistan
2003	India	Ghana	Iraq	Pakistan	South Africa
2004	India	Bangladesh	Nigeria	Congo, Dem. Rep.	Uganda
2005	Nigeria	Iraq	India	Zambia	Afghanistan

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[1] To note – we do not include humanitarian aid in this analysis.

2006	Nigeria	India	Tanzania	Ghana	Bangladesh
2007	India	Mozambique	Nigeria	Bangladesh	Kenya
2008	India	Iraq	Bangladesh	Nigeria	Afghanistan
2009	India	Bangladesh	Tanzania	Ethiopia	Pakistan
2010	India	Afghanistan	Ethiopia	Pakistan	Uganda

Source: OECD statistics

Increased UK aid flows to fragile and conflict affected countries that can be seen as middle income, such as Iraq, potentially posed challenges for DFID aid allocations, which are supposed to reflect poverty reduction as their primary objective. In part, the then Labour government sought to mitigate this by accelerating planned withdrawals from other Middle Income Countries (Anguilla, Bulgaria, Croatia, Honduras, Macedonia, Peru and Romania), and reducing spending in others (Albania, Bolivia, China, Jamaica, Kosovo, Russia, South Africa and Sri Lanka) (Barder, 2005: 19). This was accompanied by an overall rising UK aid budget, so that aid flows have broadened to include a number of conflict-affected countries rather than being re-directed from others (Woods, et al., 2005: 26).

The 2010 Comprehensive Spending Review marked a continuation and escalation of this trend, projecting a rise in total UK ODA supporting fragile and conflict affected states from 22% in 2010 to 30% by 2014-15 (IDC, 2011). This is particularly pronounced in terms of bilateral aid flows. In March 2011, a Bilateral Aid Review (BAR) put forward a reduction in the total number of countries to receive UK aid but significant increases in aid allocations to countries which potentially pose threats to UK security, including Pakistan, Somalia and Yemen. At the same time, the BAR revealed a mixed picture, with some prioritisation of countries that pose a national security threat decreased, such as aid to Iraq which will be considerably scaled back (in line with troop withdrawal) and conventional 'donor orphans' such as the Democratic Republic of Congo receiving significant increases, alongside increases to key regional powers like Ethiopia and Nigeria (see Figure 1).

Figure 1: Top five aid recipients by 2014, Bilateral Aid Review (2010-2014)
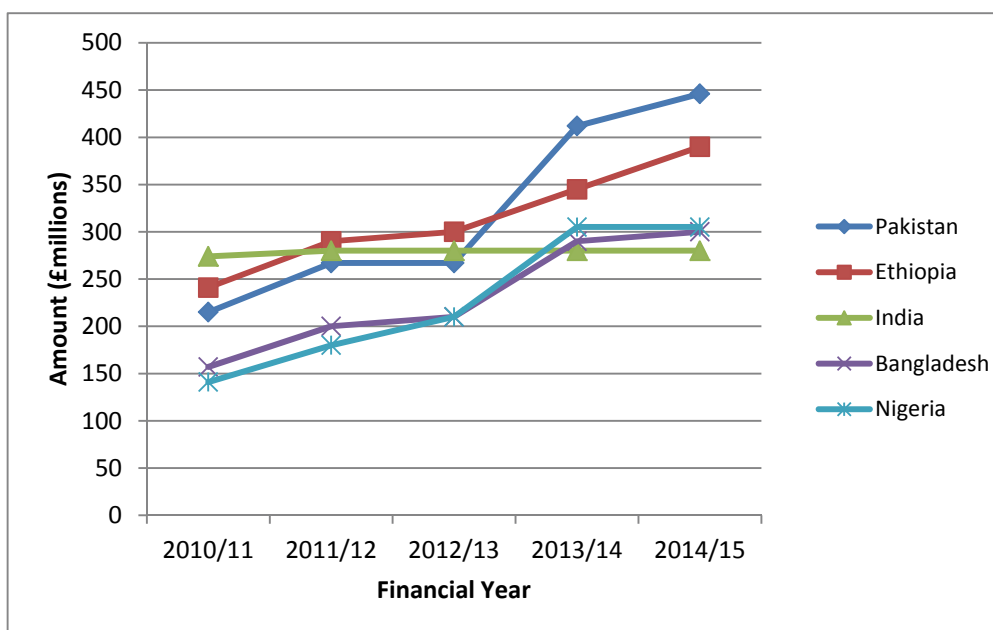
Source: DFID 2011a

3.2 How UK aid is spent in conflict countries

Assessing where aid goes only provides part of the picture in understanding how the linking of development and security has translated into practice. In addition, we need to reflect on how UK aid is actually being spent within these countries.

In general, much of DFID's interventions in fragile contexts have largely consisted of funding core development commitments such as basic services (health, water, education) and livelihood support. This is a logical consequence of the manner in which the relationship between development and security has been conceptualised and promoted within the UK. As the previous section highlights, DFID's policy discourse views on conflict and violence as stem from a lack of development and good governance (Cramer, 2006). In this way, conflict and fragility are linked to poverty, inequality and an absence of opportunities, and constitute what the World Bank labelled as 'development in reverse' (World Bank, 2003). Therefore, promoting and supporting development interventions are seen as means to counter development reversals and support the transition of countries from war to peace.

This has been, for example, DFID's approach in South Sudan. After the Comprehensive Peace Agreement in 2005, DFID invested in the provision of basic services, such as health and education, and has supported a series of recovery projects focused on livelihoods and sectoral support (Bennett et al., 2010). Similarly, a reading of DFID's operational plans for 2011-2015 for both Pakistan and Somalia, show that most development assistance will focus on basic service delivery with a particular focus on health, livelihood support and education (the latter particularly for Pakistan).
In parallel, DFID's engagement in fragile and conflicted affected states has increasingly sought to support national governments and systems, including through forms of support aimed at state building processes and some assistance channelled in the form of programme based aid (although forms of budget support in reality, have remained a small part of DFID's overall aid portfolios in these countries). This reflects the UK's commitments to aid effectiveness which, in its engagement with fragile states, has incorporated both the commitment to building greater national ownership of aid and supporting processes of state-building. For example, in Pakistan, 55% of DFID's assistance has been in the form of budget support to the Government (between 2001/2-2006/7), with the overall proportion of expenditure to Government related activities (budget support and project support) estimated to have risen from 50% to over 90% (Chapman et al., 2008; xiii). In Afghanistan, DFID provided the largest share of its funding to the central government through the Afghan Reconstruction Trust Fund, which in 2011 consisted of over 50% of DFID's support.

In many ways, therefore, DFID's engagement with fragile and conflict affected states has continued to reflect its approach to a range of non-conflict countries, with a focus on support to basic services and livelihoods and a growing emphasis on moves towards more programmatic aid. This is partly because of a number of firewalls (see Box 1) that have restricted DFID interventions to a poverty reduction mandate.

Box 1: UK firewalls for development

A set of 'firewalls' exist within the UK's legislative and administrative frameworks that protect development from other security objectives (Lockward, 2010; Barder, 2005).

The first of these is the International Development Act 2002, which establishes poverty reduction as an over-arching purpose of British development assistance, as set out in Section 1 of the Act: 'The Secretary of State may provide any person or body with development assistance if he is satisfied that the provision of the assistance is likely to contribute to a reduction in poverty.' The Act does not apply to ODA spent by other government departments (FCO, MOD) but as around 85% of ODA is spent by DFID, it does cover the majority of UK aid. Moreover, the UK has remained committed to using OECD DAC definitions for ODA, which include benchmarks as to what can (and cannot) be included in aid definitions – and they exclude counter terrorism activities.

This is reinforced at the administrative level. Under the Labour government, a set of Public Service Agreements were introduced, as three year agreements set during the spending review process negotiated between relevant Departments and the Treasury. Under Labour, two PSAs were particularly relevant, PSA 29, which mandated that 90 percent of DFID's budget be spent on low-income countries and PSA 30 which applied to DFID, FCO and MOD and committed to reduce the impact of conflict through enhanced UK and international efforts. The Coalition government's 2010 spending review abolished the use of PSAs, and instead requires business plans from each Department. Current business plans run from 2011-2015 and do not include explicit commitments to poverty reduction, although across all three departments they do contain commitments to increase efforts in fragile states.

However, there are some examples where the 'firewalls' around poverty reduction appear to be breaking down, particularly where there is a UK military presence and/or strong UK security interests (e.g. Afghanistan, Iraq, Pakistan) (Lockwood, et al. 2010).

The nature of DFID's involvement in stabilisation has perhaps drawn most attention in this respect, since it does seem to mark a significant shift in the way development is delivered. In Afghanistan, for example, DFID sought to proactively contribute to stabilisation in close cooperation with the MoD and FCO. This involved direct involvement in the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), underpinned by the theory that once the military secured or cleared an area as part of its counter-insurgency campaign, aid projects (sometimes in the form of 'Quick Impact Projects' - QUIPs) could provide 'peace dividends' to help legitimise the host government and intervening forces and initiate broader public service delivery and state consolidation (Collinson et al., 2010).

In this regard, DFID's development assistance became directly embedded in a counter-insurgency strategy and, where there was a lack of NGO or other aid partner presence due to insecurity, the military sometimes played a direct role in implementing and managing projects. For example, as part of a Joint UK Plan for Helmand, DFID provided support to agricultural and livelihood programmes through the Ministry of Reconstruction and Rural Development and also funded QUIPs, which sought to deliver tangible 'peace dividends' and serve as a bridge for longer term development and state-building (Gordon, 2011). The QUIPs largely involved a mixture of civil and security infrastructure projects (roads, upgrading police stations, etc.), building of schools and supporting agriculture (ibid; 40). The aim was that these projects, in limited geographical locations, could help consolidate the area of influence by the military in detriment of the Taliban – clearly placing development aid at the service of a politicised security objective (ibid).

The increased focus on Pakistan is also striking in this respect. Pakistan emerges as the major UK aid recipient in the future, with bilateral aid increasing from £12.5 million in 2000-01 to £215 million in

2010-11, with a projected rise to £446 million by 2014/15 (see Figure 1). This will make Pakistan the largest aid recipient for the UK in 2015, the rationale for which is that Pakistan presents particular security threats. DFID's 2011-2015 Operational Plan for Pakistan emphasises investment in primary education, maternal health, micro finance and wealth creation, as well as governance and security, with a particular focus on the border areas and with a majority of funds channelled through the government. However, how this is implemented in practice – and how such significant increases can be absorbed – has yet to be seen.

Despite the starkness of this example, it is notable that these remain largely isolated cases, reflecting some specific security imperatives for the UK and some of the political dynamics around making the case for aid (see Lockwood, et al. 2010). Therefore, it remains important to place this upscale in aid to Pakistan within a broader perspective where significant levels of bilateral aid will also go to countries like Nigeria, Ethiopia and Bangladesh which have high levels of under-development, and also remain important for regional security in their respective areas.

3.3 Understanding the impact of UK aid to conflict countries

Fears have been raised that UK aid and development support risks becoming 'securitised' where it is seen as serving security interests rather than development imperatives. This reflects a response to actual practice in specific cases (Afghanistan, Iraq) and to a political narrative that increasingly links development assistance to security concerns.

However, despite these legitimate concerns, there is evidence that under development and insecurity are inter-related in many instances – it is no coincidence that no low income conflict affected country has yet achieved any of the MDGs (WDR, 2011). In the twenty-first century, patterns of conflict, violence and threats are recognised as proliferating and diversifying, from patterns of organised crime to terrorism to civil unrest as a result of global economic shocks to the effects of global warming. While there has been significant progress in addressing poverty, a group of countries appear to be trapped in repeated cycles of violence, contributing to low economic growth and poor human development indicators (Ibid; Collier, 2010).

Therefore, the attempt by the UK government to better integrate security and development concerns should be welcomed – particularly where this is not shaped by counter-insurgency/terrorism objectives. But significant challenges have been apparent for DFID – and for the UK Government more broadly – in realising this narrative in practice.

A growing body of work, for example, suggests that there are significant shortcomings in the UK's effectiveness in linking development and security in practice. Analysis from numerous country experiences reveals weaknesses in the understanding of how security impacts on development and vice versa and some mistaken assumptions on how these two dimensions can be addressed.

Assessments of UK support to Sierra Leone, for instance, highlight challenges of a linear assumption of the transition from security to development. UK support to Sierra Leone over the last decade is seen has having improved security and addressed core issues such as access to justice. There has been no major violence since the end of the civil war in 2002, and the police were credited with ensuring peaceful elections in 2007, prompting Sierra Leone to be hailed as a successful example of the 'security-first' approach to development (Denney, 2011). However, this approach itself meant a delayed shift towards more conventional development programmes, such as in water and sanitation. As DFID's Security Sector Reform manager (from 2004 to 2007) acknowledged 'the international community … struggled to demonstrate a peace dividend to a frustrated population… In short, there was security, but there was no development, and whilst it was true to say that security now required development, no one was sure how best to achieve this' (cited in Denney, 2011: 9-10). Therefore the security first approach over time appeared to weaken the ability of DFID and others to respond to a range of

development challenges. Thus improvements in security alone cannot be assumed to lead to improved development outcomes or vice versa (Ibid: 16).

Assessments of the UK's engagement in Southern Sudan (now South Sudan), serve to question the effectiveness of a focus on the delivery of basic services as a means to promote peace without paying sufficient attention to the wider political economy and incentives at play. A recent evaluation of donor engagement in Southern Sudan found that the choice of aid instruments (by DFID and others) undermined the efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery programmes in Southern Sudan and that overall there had been a failure to deliver timely and tangible peace dividends to the Southern Sudanese people (Bennett et al., 2010).

This was in part because of 'assumptions that the transition from conflict to peace is linear and logical' (Pantuliano, 2009) and that the theories of change underlying much donor support to Southern Sudan confused marginalisation with under-development as a key driver of conflict (Bennett et al., 2010). This meant that links were made between service delivery improvements and conflict prevention but that in reality 'the link between delivering services and abating violence is not found in Southern Sudan' (Bennett et al., 2010: xv). Instead, key drivers of conflict lay in ethnic divisions, land and cattle disputes and disaffected youths – all issues not easily influenced by the socioeconomic forms of development assistance currently provided (Ibid: xvii).

Furthermore, the maintenance of rigid distinctions between security and development appears to have contributed to a lack of attention to changing patterns of violence and security, which UK development aid approaches have failed to engage with. For example, in many post conflict states, rates of domestic and criminal violence have actually increased following peace agreements (Elhawary et al., 2010). Countries like Guatemala and El Salvador illustrate how, despite the end of prolonged civil war, patterns of impunity and criminal activity can continue to create ongoing insecurity (Ibid.; World Bank, 2011). Where UK development support has not engaged with these realities, it is unlikely to achieve either security improvements or to support improvements in development indicators over a sustained period.

What has been lacking to date is the recognition that service delivery can have both positive and negative effects on pathways out of fragility and the building of state legitimacy and capacity, depending on whom the citizens perceive as providing the services (Fukuyama, 2004; Call, 2011; Putzel, 2010). UK aid reveals some common assumptions about the potential of service delivery for creating peace dividends and 'quick wins' in stabilisation and early recovery settings; but growing evidence also suggests that not enough emphasis has been placed on how these relate to security and justice (see also World Bank, 2011).

This can also translate into mistaken assumptions about what is driving conflict. In Afghanistan, the UK government was seen as having focused on the wrong drivers of conflict – namely by emphasising the lack of development and government presence, rather than on continuing insecurity and the nature of governance (Gordon, 2011). As a result, the UK military were unable to provide security beyond some limited territory and grievances emerged (which the Taliban exploited) from the fact that aid projects were distributed according to a post-2001 political settlement that favoured some groups over others (Ibid; Goodhand and Sedra, 2009). In that regard, DFID's interventions suffered from similar problems as in South Sudan and Sierra Leone; they identified the wrong drivers of conflict and failed to understand how these relate to drivers of development. Furthermore, advocating and supporting a certain conception of development that did not account for these complexities may have had the adverse effect of creating further conflict, particularly where it was deemed to be favouring some groups over others (Elhawary et al., 2010).

This underpins the need for greater reflection on the nature and trajectory from 'war' to 'peace' (Foresti et al., 2011). A linear transition has often been assumed, from conflict to stability and development but in practice this has rarely been the case. Instead, there can be multiple processes of institutional transformation and state formation – and repeated cycles of violence. This may mean there is a need to

collapse many of the divisions made, for example between the UK's engagement in conflict and post conflict phases (Ibid.).

In these contexts, it is important to understand poverty in the context of wider peace building and state building issues. The government's Building Stability Overseas Strategy has taken on board this challenge, highlighting the need to move beyond 'one size fits all' models and working to strengthen the overall evidence base and conceptual foundations for engagement in conflict affected and fragile states (DFID et al., 2011). This is a welcome and much needed development, but again the key proof will be whether and how this is translated into practice.

3.4 The new security architecture: cross government coordination

To date, the lack of clarity regarding the linkages between security and development and the failure to translate policy commitments into practice has been reflected in challenges in integrating development assistance (and DFID) with a wider security architecture and finding ways to mediate between competing objectives and imperatives across government.

This brings us to the third key aspect of the UK's policy discourse, namely the commitment to greater cross-government policy coherence on security and development issues. As the analysis above sets out, tackling the underlying causes of poverty and conflict requires action across a range of policy spheres and therefore success can depend on effective collaboration and coherence. Moreover, the growing belief that UK security threats are increasingly transnational and can grow from insecurity and under development in other countries (rather than from a particular block, as in the Cold War) has led to a significant reconfiguration of the security architecture in the UK. It has required much greater collaboration, for example between the Home Office, FCO and MoD but also with a wider range of departments, including DFID but also those with a remit around trade, climate change and community cohesion.

The most proactive attempt to building collaboration in relation to conflict countries has been the creation of a tri-departmental Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (later renamed the Stabilisation Unit), which has had a particular focus on training and deploying civilian expertise to work in insecure environments. Its primary focus to date has been on Afghanistan, as well in working to pull together key lessons on support in conflict countries.

In addition, Conflict Prevention Pools were set up to bring together resources and encourage joint working across DFID, FCO and MOD. While the departments retain the integrity of their individual expertise (the FCO focusing on diplomatic initiatives of dialogue, negotiation and mediation; the MoD using its security background for peace support, enforcement and training; and DFID working towards poverty reduction through sustainable development, good governance and access to justice), the Pools allow for joint research, programming and funding to maximise the impact of UK interventions overseas (DFID et al., 2001). The Pools' budgets include programme spending (as per the priorities each Pool established) and peacekeeping costs (both multilateral and UK interventions).

In practice, there have been ongoing challenges in terms of the different timeframes and imperatives that these various departments are working to, with MoD having an immediate security focus, the FCO dealing with issues over weeks and months and DFID looking at long term processes spanning decades (Lockwood et al., 2010). Moreover, cross government coordination still lacks an authoritative mechanism to 'adjudicate' between different departments when tensions arise. This was proposed by a Cabinet Office 'Countries at Risk of Instability' project in 2005 but was not realised as individual departments were reluctant to give up their individual influence. Thus, competing objectives have not always been resolved and at times there are still unclear or uncoordinated strategies in specific country contexts.

In general, while there has been some progress in terms of common resources, there has not been much evidence, however, of harmonised objectives or common strategies across these three departments (Patrick and Brown, 2007: 24). The Stabilisation Unit is not yet seen as having been able to influence UK engagement beyond Afghanistan. Moreover, all three departments continue to largely develop their own country strategies and to use their own tools to analyse the context. Some efforts have been made in some countries to develop joint strategies, and this is emphasised in the BSOS, but in practice it still remains largely reliant on the individual personalities and incentives of field staff rather than as organisational priorities for each country.

4 Conclusions and ways forward

Our analysis reveals that the UK's policy on development and security has centred on three key narratives: that conflict negatively affects development and more attention needs to be paid to promote peace; that conflict presents major risks to UK and international security; and that tackling conflict requires collaboration across government departments. These have been consistent themes in UK government policy and there have been concerted efforts at engaging with conflict affected countries, which are now major receivers of the UK's development aid.

Yet, there are significant shortcomings in the effectiveness of linking development and security in practice. DFID's efforts have in the main centred on addressing poverty reduction, including through the provision of basic services, in countries affected by conflict, based on the assumption that these interventions would help tackle conflict and improve the prospects for peace. The reality, however, is that the relationship between conflict and development is more complex. There are multiple drivers of conflict that interact in different ways. Similarly a focus on addressing insecurity alone cannot be presumed to lead to greater development outcomes, as the Sierra Leone case reveals.

This leaves a remaining challenge to ensure that development interventions are effectively catered to address those specific drivers of conflict in each country. This will often require more than development interventions (and poverty reduction support) alone and this is why cross-government coherence remains important.

The government's BSOS has taken on board this challenge of complexity, highlighting the need to move beyond a 'one size fits all' model (DFID et al., 2011). This is a welcome and much needed development and one that also needs to ensure that greater collaboration between government departments is realised. This should focus on both ensuring complementarity between approaches and mitigating tensions between short term objectives, such as counter-terrorism or counter-narcotics, and longer term development and state-building ones.

The cases of DFID engagement in countries like Afghanistan and Iraq suggest that explicitly linking development support to counter-insurgency processes and objectives has jeopardised development outcomes and threatens to subordinate development assistance to military objectives. Furthermore, the effectiveness of these approaches will largely depend on the success of military led stabilisation interventions, which to date have a poor track record (Collinson et al., 2010). So, while Ministers are likely to continue to perceive a need to demonstrate the benefits of UK development spending on national security, in practice this should not undermine efforts at effectively supporting the poorest and most vulnerable.

Despite the difficulties of achieving results in practice, the UK has emerged as something of a 'market leader' in linking security and development. It is well placed to continue playing this role in the spearheading of new aid approaches, which go beyond business as usual and ensure more flexible, responsive and context appropriate support. Looking forward, it will require three key strategic shifts.

Firstly, there is a need to revisit the theories of change currently in use for support to countries experiencing conflict. At times, effectiveness has been undermined where the theories of change which underlie security-development programming have not been made explicit and have not been built on accurate assessments, for example of the drivers of insecurity or under-development. As a priority, new aid programmes under the Bilateral Aid Review agreements should be tested for their theories of change, using robust context and conflict analysis. Forms of problem driven political economy analysis may be particularly helpful here to reveal underlying incentives and institutional dynamics (Wild and Foresti, 2011).

Secondly, new approaches to risk are needed, combined with new thinking on the approach to programming to ensure that future support is sufficiently flexible and responsive. The shift to much greater support to countries affected by conflict will necessarily involve higher levels of risk – in terms of how aid will be used and whether it will achieve its objectives (as set out in the recent report by the UK's Independent Aid Commission, see ICAI 2011). These are contexts where political settlements and institutions are themselves evolving and where dynamics on the ground can change rapidly. They require much better understanding of risk and much better systems for risk management. This is needed to ensure that 'do no harm' principles are observed and that there is much more early warning of potential threats (including where development assistance is not likely to achieve its aims). This goes hand in hand with the need for more flexible and responsive programming, which can respond to risks over time.

Thirdly, this is now a key moment to substantively realise cross government coordination. The creation of specific mechanisms – such as the Conflict Pools or Stabilisation Unit – has not overcome differences in organisational culture and approach across UK government departments. But collaboration now needs to be within the DNA of departments who need to work effectively in conflict countries. Wherever possible, context analysis should be shared by DFID, FCO, MOD and others. Moving towards joint analysis would help support developing common understandings of the security-development nexus. Moreover, moves towards greater joint strategy will need to address the potential trade-offs and tensions inherent within the security-development nexus. The CRI report recommended a unit within Cabinet Office, at the centre of government, to mediate between departments and to arbitrate where there were potential conflicts of priorities (CRI, 2005). To fully realise cross government coordination, a mechanism such as this is needed. But it will require clearly defined roles and responsibilities to ensure that it does not further reinforce trends towards the securitisation of aid.

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