## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Rethinking the Conflict-Poverty Nexus: From Securitising Intervention to Resilience

David Chandler*

We are witnessing nothing less than a revolution in international policy-thinking, with a shift from imagining that international policy-makers can solve development/ security problems through the export or transfer of policy practices or their imposition through conditionality, to understanding that problems should be grasped as emergent consequences of complex social processes which need to be worked with rather than against. This paper, prepared for the 2014 CEPA conference, focuses therefore less on the politicisation and securitisation of questions of conflict and poverty and more on the depoliticisation of questions of conflict and poverty, especially through frameworks of resilience.

## Introduction

The expansion of international desires to regulate, govern and secure the problematic 'borderlands' of fragile states, emerging from transitions and conflicts in the post-Cold War decades, has often been termed the 'conflict-poverty nexus.' This nexus was based upon the entanglement of governance, security and development concerns, seen as enabling new intrusive and coercive forms of external intervention. For some experts, poverty caused conflict, for others conflict caused poverty, without any conclusive consensus. Nevertheless, the assertion of links between conflict and poverty led to the merging of concerns associated with security, politics and humanitarianism on the basis of the superior knowledge and capacity of Western interveners (see, for example, the useful summary in Ikejiaku 2012). The rise of the conflict/poverty nexus of intervention necessarily assumed that knowledge and power operated in linear and reductive ways.

Following the apparent successes of ethical and humanitarian interventions in the 1990s, the response to the shocking terrorist attacks of 9/11 appeared to intensify the trend towards international policy-interventionism under the rubric of the conflict/poverty nexus. The 2002 US National Security Strategy expanded and securitized the interventionist remit, arguing that 'America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones' (NSS 2002: 1). Thus initiating what for many analysts was the highpoint of the security/poverty nexus, expanding international funding for preventive engagements addressing both the causes of poverty and the causes of conflict. The recognition that we lived in a globalized and interconnected world seemed to bind the needs of national and international security with those of conflict and poverty, creating a powerful interventionist consensus around the conflict/poverty nexus (Mazarr 2014).

* Centre for the Study of Democracy, University
  of Westminster, United Kingdom
  d.chandler@wmin.ac.uk

This linking of international and national security with conflict and poverty was a major concern amongst critical commentators worried over what was seen as the politicisation or securitisation of fundamental humanitarian questions by both domestic and international elites. For example, the ease with which international aid or assistance can be made fungible and diverted to support vested interests (especially in non fully marketised economies or weak states dependent upon military or business elites) is well demonstrated by Ayesha Siddiqa in her work on the military-business complex: 'Milbus' (Siddiqa 2007). Jennifer Hyndman has written powerfully on how emergencies have been politicised by the international community, encouraging the securitisation of refugees and displaced persons through more interventionist practices of humanitarian organisations, especially the UNHCR, now involved in the politics of problem-solving in states and preventing refugee problems spilling over into the West (Hyndman 2000; Duffield 2007).

Today the biggest concern of international policy-makers is not so much the need to cohere interventionist programmes to address the impact of conflict and poverty, but rather the alleged dangers of the unintended consequences of policy-making in a complex and interconnected world. This paper focuses on these assumptions to explain how the conflict/poverty nexus has been reconceptualised away from an emphasis on the asymmetrical and potentially oppressive discourse of securitisation and militarisation. Instead there has been an increasing emphasis on the problem of the linear and reductive understandings of policy-intervention itself (and the unintended consequences of such mechanistic approaches in the international sphere).

The transformation away from previous understandings of the conflict-poverty nexus is highlighted by the increasing international policy focus on the need to develop resilience. Resilience is defined broadly as the internal capacity of societies to cope with crises, with the emphasis on the development of self-organisation and internal capacities and capabilities rather than the external provision of aid, resources or policy solutions. For example, the United Nations defines resilience as:

> The capacity of a system, community or society potentially exposed to hazards to adapt, by resisting or changing in order to reach and maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure. This is determined by the degree to which the social system is capable of organizing itself to increase its capacity for learning from past disasters for better future protection and to improve risk reduction measures (UN/ISDR 2005).

Resilience has been highlighted as a key to a broad raft of international policy-making from conflict resolution to climate change and sustainable development (Chandler 2014; Evans & Reid 2014; Pugh 2014). Thus we are witnessing nothing less than a revolution in international policy-thinking, with a shift from imagining that international policy-makers can solve development/security problems through the export or transfer of policy practices or their imposition through conditionality, to understanding that problems should be grasped as emergent consequences of complex social processes which need to be worked with rather than against. Over the last decade, policy debates have shifted away from intrusive forms of coercive international governance and towards existing practices and knowledge, to be worked with on the basis that local capacities for resilience need to be at the heart of approaches to conflict and poverty.

For these reasons, my paper for this conference focuses on a slightly different convergence, not so much the politicisation and securitisation of questions of conflict and poverty but rather the *depoliticisation* of questions of conflict and poverty, especially

through frameworks of resilience. While I would not deny that the politicisation or securitisation of international policy intervention is a major problem, I argue that this should not blind us to a growing trend in international policy-making which suggests that conflict and poverty need to be 'depoliticised' or 'desecuritised,' i.e. seen as increasingly inevitable problems which need to be coped with through resilience rather than solved through the intervention of external actors.

## International Governance of the Conflict/Poverty Nexus

The conflict/poverty nexus assumed a universalist, linear and reductionist approach: that international intervention was the prerogative of leading Western states and that Western international specialists had the knowledge, technology and agency necessary to fix the various problems present in developing countries. The security/poverty nexus was therefore dependent upon a prior nexus of assumptions of superior Western/international knowledge, ethical values, political institutions and interventionist technology. The coercive politicization of humanitarianism – the 'humanitarian militarism' of the 1990s (Chomsky 1999) – was not necessarily an oxymoron, but, in fact, highlighted a crucial aspect of continuity in the production of the binary divide between the subject and object of intervention and the asymmetrical assumptions behind the role and duties, power and knowledge of policy-interveners and the capacities and rights of those subject to emergency policy-intervention. In this framing, the policy response tended to be one of centralised direction, under UN, US or EU control, based upon military power or bureaucratic organisation, which often assumed that policy-interveners operated in a vacuum where social and political norms had broken down, and that little attention needed to be given to the particular policy-context. Policy interventions broadly understood as linking conflict and poverty in the 1990s and early 2000s shared three key

aspects: 1) universalist; 2) mechanistic; and 3) reductionist.

### *Universalist*

Firstly, this model was universalist. Intervening states and international institutions were understood to have the power, resources and objective scientific knowledge necessary to solve the problems of conflict and human rights abuses. Debates in the 1990s assumed that Western states had the knowledge and power to act and therefore focused on the question of the political will of Western states (Held 1995; Wheeler 2000). Of particular concern was the fear that the United States might pursue national interests rather than global moral and ethical concerns (Kaldor 2007: 150). In this framework, problems were seen in terms of a universalist and linear understanding. It was believed that conflict/poverty programmes and interventions could be successful on the basis that a specific set of policy solutions could solve a specific set of policy problems. This framework of intervention reached its apogee in international statebuilding initiatives in the Balkans - with long-term protectorates established over Bosnia and Kosovo - and was reflected in the RAND Corporation's reduction of such interventions to simple cost and policy formulas that could be universally applied (Dobbins *et al* 2007). This set up a universalist understanding of good policy making: the idea that certain solutions were timeless and could be exported or imposed, like the rule of law, democracy and markets.

The universalist framework legitimising conflict/poverty policy intervention thereby established a hierarchical and paternalist framework of understanding. Western liberal democratic states were understood to have the knowledge and power necessary to solve the problems that other 'failed' and 'failing' states were alleged to lack. It was therefore little surprise that these interventions often challenged and brought into question sovereign rights to self-government, which had

long been upheld after decolonisation in the 1950s and 1960s. Many commentators have raised problems with the idealisation of liberal Western societies and the holding-up of abstract and unrealistic goals which tended to exaggerate the incapacity or lack of legitimacy of non-Western regimes (Heathershaw & Lambach 2008; Lemay-Hébert 2009). Beneath the universalist claims of promoting the interests of human rights, human security or human development, critical theorists suggested that new forms of international domination were emerging, institutionalising market inequalities or restoring traditional hierarchies of power reminiscent of the colonial era (see, for example, Chandler 2006; Douzinas 2007; Duffield 2007; Pugh *et al* 2008; Dillon & Reid 2009).

### Mechanistic

Secondly, the conflict/poverty nexus framework was mechanistic. The problems of non-Western states were understood in simple terms of the need to restore the equilibrium of the status quo - which was understood as being disrupted by new forces or events. Illustrated, for example, in the popular 'New Wars' thesis, which argued that stability was disrupted by exploitative elites seeking to destabilise society in order to cling to resources and power (Kaldor 1999) or that the lack of human rights could be resolved through constitutional reforms (Brandt *et al* 2011). The assumption was that society was fundamentally healthy and that the problematic individuals or groups could be removed or replaced through external policy-intervention (which would enable equilibrium to be restored). This was a mechanistic view of how societies operated - as if they were machines and a single part had broken down and needed to be repaired. There was no holistic engagement with society as a collective set of processes, interactions and inter-relations. The assumption was that external policy interveners could come up with a 'quick fix' – perhaps sending troops to quell conflict or legal experts to write constitutions – followed by an exit strategy. The problems of policy

based upon these mechanistic assumptions led to an extension of the cause-and-effect paradigm in the form of peacebuilding and statebuilding. These extensions were based upon the assumption that it was necessary to understand the endogenous causal processes at play and to search for the societal preconditions necessary for the establishment of liberal regimes of markets, democracy and the rule of law (Paris 2004; Chandler 2010).

### Reductionist

Thirdly, this framework was reductionist. Conflict and poverty were understood in highly reductionist ways as if they were distinct fields with distinct problems and mechanisms of measurement which could be brought into a relationship, and this relationship could be analysed in terms of cause-and-effect. This approach left out the interactive relationship between the state and society as well as multiple possible responses to the appearance of certain problems or governance failings (Scott 1998). Firstly, certain societies may be more prone to certain problems more than others. Rather than viewing these problems as discrete threats to otherwise healthy systems, vulnerability to conflict / famine / environmental changes should therefore be seen as a product of the social, economic and political systems in place, and addressed at that level (Commission for Africa 2005). Secondly, conflict, corruption, poverty or other problems manifest themselves differently in different societies and have different consequences and impacts, making any external measure or comparison impossible (with regard to development and poverty, see Sen 1999). Some societies may be better able to cope with the stresses and strains of poverty or inequality than others, for example. Similarly, conflict, corruption or other problems might be understood as reflecting processes of change and development, and therefore be seen as coping mechanisms, depending on the context of the society concerned (Cramer 2006).

The universalist, mechanistic and reductionist approach to conflict/poverty policy

intervention assumed that international intervention was the prerogative of leading Western states; it also assumed that the subjects of intervention were non-Western states and that Western international specialists had the knowledge, technology and agency necessary to fix the problems. Traditionally, in the discipline of International Relations, critical commentators have understood this as a paternalistic framework, reproducing relations of inequality and reinforcing or constituting more open hierarchies of power through the challenge to the rights of sovereignty (Chandler 1999; Bain 2003; Bickerton *et al* 2007; Hehir & Robinson 2007; Barnett 2010).

However, as will be considered further below, a second way of critically conceptualising conflict/poverty interventions has developed rapidly since the early 1990s, which engages with the knowledge assumptions at play in the legitimisation of intervention on the basis of universalist, mechanistic and reductionist understandings of the nature of social and political processes. These critics suggest that the claims of Western knowledge and power are false and hubristic, and that Western modernist understandings of knowledge as context-free and universally valid are problematic (see further Shilliam 2011; Law 2004). Conflict/poverty nexus policy-interventions assuming cause-and-effect relations are therefore criticised increasingly on practical and functionalist grounds rather than on ethical and political ones. Critics working within the second critical paradigm tend to reframe problems as emergent outcomes of complex processes rather than as discrete problems amenable to linear and reductionist policy interventions. This process is well articulated by Michael Dillon's conception of 'the emergency of emergence,' in terms of a shift in policy concerns from sovereign power over territory to biopolitical concerns over the circulatory and contingent processes of life (2007). For Dillon:

> It is precisely here in the ground of life itself that contemporary biopolitics

of security therefore intuit a pure experience of order, and of its mode of being, radically different from the Newtonian physics of a mechanistic and positivistic real that once inspired the west's traditional state-centric territorial geopolitics of sovereign subjectivity (2007: 13).

Problems to be addressed are thus no longer construed as amenable to sovereign forms of top-down power and cause-and-effect interventions but instead seen as a result of complex interconnected processes with no clear lines of causation (Dillon & Lobo-Guerrero 2008). Rearticulating problems in terms of emergent or complex outcomes necessarily prevents intervention from being understood as a technique of external problem-solving. The dominant alternative to addressing causes is governance at the level of resilience. Governance focused on resilience no longer necessitates claims of sovereign power and direction and thereby no longer poses the problem of political autonomy and state sovereignty.

In this framing, conflict, poverty and related problems become normalised, leading to coping strategies rather than crisis-driven discourses of policy intervention. The resilience approach relies on a systems- or process-based ontology, suggesting that policy-interventions need to work with - rather than against - organic local practices and understandings, and that there is a need for more homeopathic forms of policy intervention designed to enhance autonomous processes rather than undermine them (Drabek & McEntire 2003; Kaufmann 2013). These forms of intervention cannot be grasped within the liberal modernist paradigm central to the discipline of International Relations.

### The Shift Away from Securitisation

The shift from intervention at the level of causation to intervention at the level of resilience has been predominantly discussed in relation to the need to take into account the 'law of unintended consequences.' The

problem of 'unintended consequences' has become a policy trope regularly used as shorthand for the profound shift in the understanding of intervention, addressed in this paper. It can be understood as a generalised extension of Ulrich Beck's view of 'risk society' with the determinate causal role of 'side effects' or of Bruno Latour's similar analysis of today's world as modernity 'plus all its externalities' (see further, Beck 1992; Latour 2003). It seems that there is no way to consider conflict/poverty nexus intervention in terms of intended outcomes without considering the possibility that the unintended outcomes will outweigh the former.

The shift to the focus on resilience and coping, rather than causes, acknowledges the limits of policy intentionality based on cause-and-effect assumptions and explicitly challenges the rationalist and reductionist assumptions prevalent in disciplinary understandings of international intervention. By 2012, a decade after the extension of US concerns to problem-solving through extensive conflict/poverty interventions in potentially failing states, the US Defense Strategic Guidance policy was operating on a different set of assumptions: that US forces would pursue their objectives through 'innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approaches' rather than the conduct of 'large-scale, prolonged stability operations' (DSG 2012: 3, 6).

As Michael Mazaar argued in the leading US foreign policy journal *Foreign Affairs* in 2014, securing US goals of peace, democracy and development in failing and conflict-ridden states could not, in fact, be done by instrumental cause-and-effect external policy-interventions: 'It is an organic, grass-roots process that must respect the unique social, cultural, economic, political, and religious contexts of each country… and cannot be imposed' (Mazarr 2014). For Mazarr, policy would now follow a more 'resilient mindset, one that treats perturbations as inevitable rather than calamitous and resists the urge to overreact,' understanding that policy-intervention must work with rather than against

local institutions and 'proceed more organically and authentically' (Mazarr 2014). This is also reflected by high-level policy experts in the US State Department; according to Charles T. Call, senior adviser at the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, current US approaches seek not to impose unrealistic external goals but instead to facilitate local transformative agency through engaging with local 'organic processes and plussing them up' (cited in Chandler 2015).

In the discussion of the relationship between conflict and poverty today, increasing numbers of analysts, not only conservative or neoliberal theorists, have challenged the knowledge assumptions underpinning universalist, mechanistic and reductionist views of policy-intervention. It has become increasingly commonplace for radical critics, drawing on a wide range of critical social theory - such as new materialism, complexity approaches, actor network theory and philosophical realism - to suggest that the 'lessons learned' from the limited successes and outright failures of international intervention since 1990 concur with those drawn by pragmatic US policy advisors. This is a far cry from the understandings of policy intervention in the 1990s and early 2000s when it was precisely the grand narratives of liberal internationalist promise and social and political transformation (under the guidance of leading Western democracies), which inspired support for the extension of cause-and-effect policy understandings and the extension of claims of external interventionist authority. Liberal states were understood to have the right and the authority to undertake policy-interventions on the basis of ideological grounds, altruism and international security concerns.

International policy intervention, under the rubric of the conflict/poverty nexus, today is increasingly understood to be problematic if it is based upon the grand narratives of liberal internationalism. International policy intervention is not opposed *per se* or on principle, but on the basis of the universalist and hierarchical knowledge assumptions

which informed policy-interventions and produced the hubristic and reductionist promises of transformative outcomes (Owen 2012; Stewart & Knaus 2012; Mayall & Soares de Oliveira 2011; Mazarr 2014). According to the critical consensus, international policy-makers need to liberate themselves from the constraints of their outmoded mechanistic models, inherited from the Enlightenment in the seventeenth century and associated with Descartes' strict mechanical division between the mind and the body and Isaac Newton's view of the universe as a mechanical clock-work model of timeless universal laws.

## The Rise of Resilience

The focus on resilience, increasingly taken up by international policy-interveners, thereby insists that problems cannot be dealt with merely at the level of causation - i.e. by identifying and categorising a problem as if it could be understood in the reductionist terms of cause-and-effect, with every problem having a specific causation, which could be universally addressed through the development of a specific 'cure.' This reductionist view was held to fit well with a mechanistic understanding of policy intervention, the assumption being that the body of the state or society was essentially healthy and that a specific external cause could be isolated and addressed to produce a cure and a return to equilibrium and stability. This approach entirely excluded the specific internal and external historical, social, political and economic environment and also any understanding of what was necessary to encourage the state's or society's own capacities and capabilities to manage resiliently.

Intervention based on developing resilience therefore has no need for ready-made international policy solutions that can simply be applied or implemented. This therefore implies little possibility of learning generic lessons from interventions applicable to other cases of conflict or underdevelopment (on the basis that if the symptoms appeared similar the cause must be the

same). Crucially, this framing takes intervention out of the context of policy making and policy understanding and out of the political sphere of democratic debate and decision-making. The focus therefore shifts away from international policies (supply-driven policy making) and towards engaging with the internal capacities and capabilities that are already held to exist. In other words, there is a shift from the agency, knowledge and practices of policy interveners to that of the society, which is the object of policy concerns. As the 2013 updated UK Department for International Development Growth and Resilience Operational Plan states: 'We will produce less "supply-driven" development of product, guidelines and policy papers, and foster peer-to-peer, horizontal learning and knowledge exchange, exploiting new technologies such as wiki/huddles to promote the widest interaction between stakeholders' (DfID 2013: 8).

'Supply-driven' policies – the stuff of politics and of democratic decision-making – are understood to operate in an artificial or non-organic way, and to lack an authentic connection to the effects which need to be addressed. The imposition of (accountable) external institutional and policy frameworks has become increasingly seen as artificial and thereby as having counterproductive or unintended outcomes. Resilience-based approaches thereby seek to move away from the 'liberal peace' policy interventions – e.g. seeking to export constitutional frameworks, train and equip military and police-forces, impose external conditionalities on the running of state budgets, export managerial frameworks for civil servants and political representatives, impose regulations to ensure administrative transparency and codes of conduct – which were at the heart of international policy prescriptions in the 1990s and early 2000s (World Bank 2007; Eurodad 2006; ActionAid 2006).

It is argued that the 'supply-driven' approach of external experts exporting or developing liberal institutions does not grasp

the complex processes generative of instability or insecurity. Instead, the cause-and-effect model of intervention is seen to create problematic 'hybrid' political systems and fragile states with little connection to their societies (Roberts 2008; Mac Ginty 2010; Richmond & Mitchell 2012; Millar 2014). The imposition of institutional frameworks, which have little connection to society, is understood as failing, not only in not addressing causal processes leading to poverty and conflict but as making matters worse through undermining local capacities to manage the effects of problems (and thereby shifting problems elsewhere and leaving states and societies even more fragile or vulnerable). This approach is alleged to fail to hear the 'message' of problematic manifestations or to enable societies' own organic and homeostatic processes to generate corrective mechanisms. Triggering external interventions is said to shortcut the ability of societies to reflect upon and take responsibility for their own affairs and is increasingly seen as a counterproductive 'over-reaction' by external powers (see further, Desch 2008; Maor 2012).

There is an increasingly prevalent view that, contrary to earlier assumptions, policy solutions can only be developed through practice by actors on the ground thus inversing the traditional disciplinary understanding of intervention as an exercise of external political power and authority. It does this through denying intervention as an act of external decision-making and policy direction as understood in the political paradigm of liberal modernist discourse. This can be seen through an examination of the policy shifts in the key areas of conflict and poverty and the reduction of the security/poverty nexus to the self-activity of empowerment.

Policy-interventions are increasingly shifting in relation to the understanding of conflict. There is much less talk of conflict prevention or conflict resolution and more of conflict management. As the UK government argues in a 2011 combined DfID, Foreign and Commonwealth Office and Ministry of Defence document, conflict *per se is* not the

problem: 'Conflict is a normal part of human interaction, the natural result when individuals and groups have incompatible needs, interests or beliefs' (UK Government 2011: 5). The problem which needs to be tackled is the state's or society's ability to manage conflict: 'In stable, resilient societies conflict is managed through numerous formal and informal institutions' (UK Government 2011: 5). Conflict management, as the UK government policy indicates, is increasingly understood as an organic set of societal processes and practices, which international policy-intervention can influence but cannot import or impose solutions from the outside. This brings into the mainstream the approach advocated by the peace theorist Jean Paul Lederach who states: 'The greatest resource for sustaining peace in the long term is always rooted in the local people and their culture' (1997: 94). For Lederach, managing conflict means moving away from cause-and-effect forms of instrumental external intervention which see people as 'recipients' of policy; instead people should be seen as 'resources,' integral to peace processes. Therefore it is essential that:

> ...we in the international community adopt a new mind-set - that we move beyond a simple prescription of answers and modalities for dealing with conflict that come from outside the setting and focus at least as much attention on discovering and empowering the resources, modalities, and mechanisms for building peace that exist within the context (1997: 95).

One of the central shifts in understanding conflict as something that needs to be 'coped with' and 'managed' rather than something that can be 'solved' or 'prevented' is the view that state-level interventions are of limited use. Peace treaties can be signed by state parties but unless peace is seen as an ongoing and transformative inclusive societal process these agreements will be merely superficial and non-sustainable (Lederach 1997: 135).

Just as peace and security are no longer understood to be securable through cause-and-effect forms of intervention reliant on policy-interveners imposing solutions in mechanical and reductive ways, there has also been a shift in understanding the counterproductive effects of attempts to export the rule of law (Cesarine & Hite 2004; Zimmermann 2007; Chandler 2015). The resilience approach is driven by a realisation of the gap between the formal sphere of law and constitutionalism and the social 'reality' of informal power relations and informal rules. This perspective has also been endorsed by Douglass North, the policy guru of new institutionalist economics, who has highlighted the difficulties of understanding how exported institutions will interact with 'culturally derived norms of behavior' (1990: 140). The social reality of countries undergoing post-conflict 'transition' could not be understood merely by an analysis of laws and statutes. In fact, there appears to be an unbridgeable gap between the artificial constructions of legal and constitutional frameworks and the realities of everyday life, revealed in dealings between individual members of the public and state authorities.

A key policy area where this shift (from addressing causes to resilience approaches) has had an impact has been in the sphere of poverty and development – the policy sphere previously most concerned with transformative policy interventions. Coping with poverty and natural disasters is clearly a very different problematic from seeking to use development policy to reduce or to end extreme poverty. However, discourses of disaster risk reduction have increasingly displaced those of sustainable forms of development because of the unintended side effects of undermining the organic coping mechanisms of communities and therefore increasing vulnerabilities and weakening resilience. Claudia Aradau has highlighted the importance of the UK Department for International Development (DfID) shift in priorities from poverty reduction strategies to developing community resilience, which

assumes the existence of poverty as the basis of policymaking (Aradau 2014). As she states: 'resilience responses entail a change in how poverty, development and security more broadly are envisaged.' This is clearly highlighted in DfID's 2011 report outlining the UK government's humanitarian policy:

> Humanitarian assistance should be delivered in a way that does not undermine existing coping mechanisms and helps a community build its own resilience for the future. National governments in at-risk countries can ensure that disaster risk management policies and strategies are linked to community-level action. (DfID 2011: 10, cited in Aradau 2014)

As George Nicholson, Director of Transport and Disaster Risk Reduction for the Association of Caribbean States argues explicitly: 'improving a person's ability to respond to and cope with a disaster event must be placed on equal footing with the process to encourage economic development,' highlighting the importance of disaster risk as a strategy for resilience versus the cause-and-effect approach associated with poverty reduction policy interventions (Nicholson 2014). Whereas development approaches put the emphasis on external policy assistance and expert knowledge, disaster risk reduction clearly counterposes an alternative framework of intervention, where it is local knowledge and local agency that count the most. Disaster risk reduction strategies stress the empowerment of the vulnerable and marginalised in order for them to cope and to manage the effects of the risks and contingencies concomitant with the maintenance of their precarious existence.

Understanding empowerment in instrumental cause-and-effect terms based upon the external provision of legal and political mechanisms for claims is increasingly seen to be ineffective. Rights-based NGOs now seek not to empower people to access formal institutional mechanisms but to enable

them to empower themselves. The resilience approach places the emphasis on the agency and self-empowerment of local actors, not on the introduction of formal frameworks of law, supported by international human rights norms (Moe & Simojoki 2013: 404).

The approach of 'finding organic processes and plussing them up' (as articulated by the US State Department policy advisor, cited earlier) is not limited to government policy interventions but has been increasingly taken up as a generic approach to overcome the limits of cause-and-effect understandings. Thus new forms of intervention appear as anti-intervention. For example, a study of Finnish development NGOs highlights that there is a denial of any external role in the process of civil society building as international NGOs stress that there is no process of external management in the selection of their interlocutors; they work with whatever groups or associations already exist and 'have just come together' (Kontinen 2014).

A similar study, in south-eastern Senegal, notes that policy interveners are concerned to avoid both the 'moral imperialism' of imposing Western human rights norms, but also to avoid a moral relativism which simply accepts local traditional practices (Gillespie & Melching 2010: 481). The solution forwarded is that of being non-prescriptive, avoiding and 'unlearning' views of Western teachers as 'authorities' and students as passive recipients (Gillespie & Melching 2010: 481). Policy intervention is articulated as the facilitation of local people's attempts to uncover traditional practices and 'awakening' and 'engaging' their already existing capacities: 'By detecting their own inherent skills, they can more easily transfer them to personal and community problem solving' (Gillespie & Melching 2010: 490). These processes can perhaps be encouraged or assisted by external policy interveners but they cannot be transplanted from one society to another, nor can they be imposed by policy actors. Tackling the effects of these problems as if they were the product of direct

causal relations thereby misunderstands policy needs through being trapped in the reductionist mindsets of liberal governance understandings.

In the examples of the resilience approach given above, it is clear that problems are no longer conceived as amenable to interventionist solutions, in terms of instrumental analysis of the chains of causation and relations between conflict and poverty on the basis of cause-and-effect understandings. This also takes the problems of conflict and poverty out of the political sphere. Those subject to new forms of empowerment and capacity building are not understood as citizens of states – capable of negotiating, debating, deciding and implementing policy agendas – but instead are caught up in never-ending processes of governing to enable resilience at the local or community level. Politics disappears from the equation and with it the clash of the co-constitutive concepts of sovereignty and intervention.

## Conclusion

The shift in understanding the problems of conflict and poverty, from addressing causes to discourses of resilience – focusing on the problem society's own capacities and needs and internal and organic processes – has been paralleled by a growing scepticism of attempts to export or impose Western models of analysis of conflict/poverty relations and causal mechanisms. In depoliticising discourses of intervention around enabling resilience, there is no assumption that the policy intervener is any way limiting the freedom or the autonomy of the state or society intervened upon. Furthermore, the discourse does not establish the intervening authority as possessing any greater power or knowledge, nor does it establish a paternalist relationship of external responsibility. The policy-intervention, in this framing, is articulated as one that respects the autonomy of the other and even enables the development of autonomous capacities. Interventions of this sort require no specialist knowledge

(and, in fact, tend to problematise such knowledge claims); instead they could be understood to require more therapeutic capacities and sensitivities, more attuned to open and unscripted forms of engagement, mutual processes of learning and unpredictable and spontaneous forms of knowledge exchange (see for example, Duffield 2007: 233–4; Jabri 2007: 177; Brigg & Muller 2009: 130).

While cause-and-effect problem-solving interventions – with crude levers of external power – might be out of fashion, international intervention appears to be alive and well: thriving on the 'non-interventionist' move towards resilience-based approaches oriented towards developing existing local capacities and capabilities. This form of projecting Western power and knowledge operate very differently to previous understandings of intervention through the conflict/poverty nexus. Not only does this not imply the undermining of sovereignty (the *sine qua non* of the understanding of intervention in the discipline of International Relations) but it also operates outside of modern liberal political understandings of policy-intervention, which assume a limited interference in the private sphere (of individual autonomy) in the cause of the collective good, e.g. for economic development, social fairness or collective security (Levin-Waldman 1996). Problems of conflict and poverty thus become de-politicised and de-securitised, seen increasingly as coping 'opportunities' rather than as reasons for social transformation. International intervention as resilience makes 'political' understandings of conflict/poverty problematic while removing intervention from political frameworks of critique.

## Author's Note

This paper is part of a Special Collection of papers on Conflict, Transition and Development emerging from a Symposium convened by the Centre for Poverty Analysis (CEPA), Sri Lanka, and the Secure Livelihoods Research Consortium (SLRC) in September 2014.

## References

**ActionAid** 2006 What Progress? A Shadow Review of World Bank Conditionality. Johannesburg: ActionAid. Available at: http://www.actionaid.org.uk/sites/default/files/what_progress.pdf.

**Aradau, C** 2014 The Promise of Security: Resilience, Surprise and Epistemic Politics. *Resilience: International Practices, Policies and Discourses*, 2(2) 73–87.

**Bain, W** 2003 *Between Anarchy and Society: Trusteeship and the Obligations of Power*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1093/0199260265.001.0001

**Barnett, M N** 2010 *The International Humanitarian Order*. Abingdon: Routledge.

**Beck, U** 1992 *Risk Society: Towards a New Modernity*. London: Sage.

**Bickerton, C J, Cunliffe, P** and **Gourevitch, A** (eds) 2007 *Politics without Sovereignty: A Critique of Contemporary International Relations*. Abingdon: University College London Press.

**Brandt, M, Cottrell, J, Ghai, Y** and **Regan, A** 2011 *Constitution-making and Reform: Options for the Process*. Geneva: Interpeace. Available at: http://www.constitutionmakingforpeace.org/sites/default/files/Constitution-Making-Handbook.pdf.

**Brigg, M** and **Muller, K** 2009 Conceptualising Culture in Conflict Resolution. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 3(2): 121–140.

**Cesarine, P** and **Hite, K** 2004 Introducing the Concept of Authoritarian Legacies. In Hite and Cesarine (eds) *Authoritarian Legacies and Democracy in Latin America and Southern Europe*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press.

**Chandler, D** 1999 *Bosnia: Faking Democracy after Dayton*. London: Pluto.

**Chandler, D** 2006 *Empire in Denial: The Politics of State-Building*. London: Pluto.

**Chandler, D** 2010 *International Statebuilding: The Rise of Post-Liberal Governance*. London: Routledge.

**Chandler, D** 2014 *Resilience: The Governance of Complexity*. London: Routledge.

**Chandler, D** 2015 Resilience and the 'Everyday': Beyond the Paradox of 'Liberal Peace.' *Review of International Studies*, 41(1): 27–48. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0260210513000533

**Chomsky, N** 1999 *The New Military Humanism: Lessons from Kosovo*. London: Pluto.

**Commission for Africa** 2005 *Our Common Interest: Report of the Commission for Africa*. Available at: http://www.commissionforafrica.info/wp-content/uploads/2005-report/11-03-05_cr_report.pdf.

**Cramer, C** 2006 *Civil War is not a Stupid Thing: Accounting for Violence in Developing Countries*. London: Hurst & Co.

**Desch, M C** 2008 America's Liberal Illiberalism: The Ideological Origins of Overreaction in US Foreign Policy. *International Security*, 32(3): 7–43. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1162/isec.2008.32.3.7

**DfID (Department for International Development)** 2011 *Saving Lives, Preventing Suffering and Building Resilience: The UK Government's Humanitarian Policy*. London: DfID. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67468/The_20UK_20Government_s_20Humanitarian_20Policy_20-_20September_202011_20-_20Final.pdf.

**DfID (Department for International Development)** 2013 *Operational Plan 2011–2015 DFID Growth and Resilience Department*. London: DfID.

**Dillon, M** 2007 Governing Terror: The State of Emergency of Biopolitical Emergence. *International Political Sociology*, 1(1): 7–28. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/j.1749-5687.2007.00002.x

**Dillon, M** and **Lobo-Guerrero, L** 2008 Biopolitics of Security in the 21st Century: An Introduction. *Review of International Studies*, 34(2): 265–292. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0260210508008024

**Dillon, M** and **Reid, J** 2009 *The Liberal Way of War: Killing to Make Life Live*. London: Routledge.

**Dobbins, J, Jones, S G, Crane, K,** and **DeGrasse, B C** 2007 *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND.

**Douzinas, C** 2007 *Human Rights and Empire: The Political Philosophy of Cosmopolitanism*. Abingdon: Routledge-Cavendish.

**Drabek, T E** and **McEntire, D A** 2003 Emergent Phenomena and the Sociology of Disaster: Lessons, Trends and Opportunities from the Research Literature. *Disaster, Prevention and Management*, 12(2): 97–112. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/09653560310474214

**DSG** 2012 *Sustaining US Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense*. Washington, DC: White House.

**Duffield, M** 2007 *Development, Security and Unending War: Governing the World of Peoples*. Cambridge: Polity.

**Eurodad** 2006 *World Bank and IMF Conditionality: A Development Injustice*. Brussels: European Network on Debt and Development. Available at: http://www.eurodad.org/uploadedfiles/whats_new/reports/eurodad_world_bank_and_imf_conditionality_report.pdf.

**Evans, B** and **Reid, J** 2014 *Resilient Life: The Art of Living Dangerously*. Cambridge: Polity.

**Gillespie, D** and **Melching, M** 2010 The Transformative Power of Democracy and Human Rights in Nonformal Education: The Case of Tostan. *Adult Education Quarterly*, 60(5): 477–498. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0741713610363017

**Heathershaw, J** and **Lambach, D** 2008 Introduction: Post-Conflict Spaces and Approaches to Statebuilding. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2(3): 269–289. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17502970802436296

**Hehir, A** and **Robinson, N** (eds) 2007 *State-Building: Theory and Practice*. Abingdon: Routledge.

**Held, D** 1995 *Democracy and the Global Order: From the Modern State to Cosmopolitan Governance*. Cambridge: Polity.

**Hyndman, J** 2000 *Managing Displacement: Refugees and the Politics of Humanitarianism.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

**Ikejiaku, B V** 2012 Poverty-Conflict Nexus: The Contentious Issue Revisited. *European Journal of Sustainable Development*, 1(2): 127–150.

**Jabri, V** 2007 *War and the Transformation of Global Politics.* Basingstoke: Palgrave. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230626393

**Kaldor, M** 1999 *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era.* Cambridge: Polity.

**Kaldor, M** 2007 *Human Security: Reflections on Globalization and Intervention.* Cambridge: Polity.

**Kaufmann, M** 2013 Emergent Self-Organisation in Emergencies: Resilience Rationales in Interconnected Societies. *Resilience: International Policies, Practices and Discourses*, 1(1): 53–68.

**Kontinen, T** 2014 Rights-based approach in practice? Dilemmas of empowerment in a development NGO. Unpublished paper, presented for 'After Human Rights' workshop, University of Helsinki, 13–14 March.

**Latour, B** 2003 Is Re-modernization Occurring - And If So, How to Prove It? A Commentary on Ulrich Beck. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 20(2): 35–48. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0263276403020002002

**Law, J** 2004 *After Method: Mess in Social Science.* Abingdon: Routledge.

**Lederach, J P** 1997 *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies.* Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace.

**Lemay-Hébert, N** 2009 Statebuilding without Nation-building? Legitimacy, State Failure and the Limits of the Institutionalist Approach. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 3(1): 21–45. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17502970802608159

**Levin-Waldman, O M** 1996 *Reconceiving Liberalism: Dilemmas of Contemporary Liberal Public Policy.* Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh.

**Mac Ginty, R** 2010 Hybrid Peace: The Interaction between Top-Down and Bottom-Up Peace. *Security Dialogue*, 41(4): 391–412. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0967010610374312

**Maor, M** 2012 Policy Overreaction. Working paper, Hebrew University of Jerusalem. Available at: http://portal.idc.ac.il/he/schools/government/research/documents/maor.pdf.

**Mayall, J** and **Soares de Oliviera, R** (eds) 2011 *The New Protectorates: International Tutelage and the Making of Liberal States.* London: Hurst & Co.

**Mazarr, M J** 2014 The Rise and Fall of the Failed-State Paradigm: Requiem for a Decade of Distraction. *Foreign Affairs*, Jan-Feb. Available at: http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/140347/michael-j-mazarr/the-rise-and-fall-of-the-failed-state-paradigm

**Millar, G** 2014 Disaggregating Hybridity: Why Hybrid Institutions do not Produce Predictable Experiences of Peace. *Journal of Peace Research*, 51(4): 501–514. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0022343313519465

**Moe, L W** and **Simojoki, M V** 2013 Custom, Contestation and Cooperation: Peace and Justice in Somaliland. *Conflict, Security & Development*, 13(4): 393–416. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14678802.2013.834115

**Nicholson, G** 2014 Inequality and its impact on the resilience of societies. Association of Caribbean States, 22 July. Available at: http://www.eturbonews.com/48253/inequality-and-its-impact-resilience-societies

**North, D C** 1990 *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511808678

**NSS** 2002 *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America.* Washington, DC: White House. Available at: http://

www.state.gov/documents/organiza-tion/63562.pdf

**Owen, D** 2012 *The Hubris Syndrome: Bush, Blair and the Intoxication of Power* (revised ed.). York: Methuen.

**Paris, R** 2004 *At War's End: Building Peace after Civil Conflict.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790836

**Pugh, J** 2014 Resilience, complexity and post-liberalism. *Area*, 46(3): 313–319. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/area.12118

**Pugh, M, Cooper, N** and **Turner, M** (eds) 2008 *Whose Peace? Critical Perspectives on the Political Economy of Peacebuilding.* London: Palgrave Macmillan. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1057/9780230228740

**Richmond, O P** and **Mitchell, A** (eds) 2012 *Hybrid Forms of Peace: From Everyday Agency to Post-Liberalism.* Basingstoke: Palgrave.

**Roberts, D** 2008 Hybrid Polities and Indigenous Pluralities: Advanced Lessons in Statebuilding from Cambodia. *Journal of Intervention and Statebuilding*, 2(1): 63–86. DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/17502970701592298

**Scott, J C** 1998 *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed.* New Haven: Yale University Press.

**Sen, A** 1999 *Development as Freedom.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**Shilliam, R** 2011 'The Perilous but Unavoidable Terrain of the Non-West', in Robbie Shilliam (ed.) *International Relations and Non-Western Thought: Imperialism, Colonialism and Investigations of Global Modernity*: 12–26. Abingdon: Routledge.

**Siddiqa, A** 2007 *Military Inc.: Inside Pakistan's Military Economy.* London: Pluto Press.

**Stewart, R** and **Knaus, G** 2012 *Can Intervention Work?* London: W. W. Norton & Co.

**UK Government** 2011 Building Stability Overseas Strategy. London: Department for International Development, Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Ministry of Defence. Available at: https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/67475/Building-stability-overseas-strategy.pdf

**UN/ISDR** (Secretariat of the International Strategy for Disaster Reduction) 2005 Terminology: Basic terms of disaster risk reduction. Available at: http://www.unisdr.org/2004/wcdr-dialogue/terminology.htm

**Wheeler, N J** 2000 *Saving Strangers: Humanitarian Intervention in International Society.* Oxford: Oxford University Press.

**World Bank** 2007 *Conditionality in Development Policy Lending.* Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: http://siteresources.worldbank.org/PROJECTS/Resources/40940-1114615847489/Conditionalityfinalreport120407.pdf

**Zimmermann, A** 2007 The Rule of Law as a Culture of Legality: Legal and Extra-legal Elements for the Realisation of the Rule of Law in Society. *ELaw - Murdoch University Electronic Journal of Law*, 14(1): 10–31.