

Institutions for Sustainable Peace: Comparing Institutional Configurations for Divided Societies

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Formal state institutions are important for the regulation of conflict potentials but research results are inconclusive regarding the effects of single institutions on violence. These unclear results stem from a lack of integrative analysis, hence the main aim of the pre ISA workshop was to promote the exchange of scholars studying different institutions and contexts and to analyze the options for an integrated approach. The interaction of different institutions with existing specific societal divisions has to stand at the center of such an approach. The workshop also aimed at the interchange of different methodological approaches and a debate between quantitative and qualitative research designs. The workshop provided interesting discussion about concepts, definitions and coding of data.

The first section discussed the importance of constitutions for power sharing in divided societies. Andreas Mehler used a small N sample of postwar societies to answer the question why fundamental constitutional change is a strategy for peace in some contexts and not in others. The involvement of external actors was identified as an important factor. Based on a large N sample of 551 war terminations after World War II Gerald Schneider showed that constitutional choices are mostly a result of conflict outcome. While power sharing might be a long-term solution in divided societies, it can also lead to war recurrence in the short term. Christof Hartmann and Phil Roeder discussed the importance of territorial structures for conflict management and civil war onset. Hartmann analyzed the possibilities of vertical power sharing (decentralization) in Sub-Saharan Africa concluding that the relationship between vertical and horizontal power sharing institutions needs further investigation. Roeder asked whether decentralization (including autonomy and federalism) reduced the risk of secessionist war using a dataset of 168 nation-state conflicts between 1945 and 2009. His result was that decentralization rather increased the risk of secessionist war.

The three papers of the second session focused on different aspects of the relationship between civil war, violence and elections. Matthijs Bogaards discussed different concepts of power sharing to highlight the role of electoral systems as a tool for peace-building after the end of civil war. Hanne Fjelde presented a large N study on electoral violence in Sub-Saharan Africa (1989-2009) concluding that majority electoral systems increase the probability of electoral violence due to the higher stakes involved for all actors. Ben Reilly discussed the difficulties of political parties in postwar contexts. While most international actors and donors see free and fair elections as a main benchmark towards civil conflict management, empirically elections are a very contentious issue leading to violence, civil war recurrence or setbacks in democratization. Here external actors seem to be part of the problem rather than part of the solution.

The papers in the last section focused on the added value of an integrated approach. Sabine Kurtenbach analyzed the interaction of different institutions and reforms (territorial structure, electoral system, security sector, judiciary) in postwar Central America. Arguing that the institutional reforms did address some of the conflict causes (mainly the lack of political participation and somehow the marginalization of ethnic groups), but did not alter the social divisions. Hence institutional reforms did not result in reducing violence but in changing patterns of its organization (from collective to interpersonal violence). Matthias Basedau developed innovative measures for inclusive institutions and different forms of divisions to analyze the relationship between institutions and civil war for a sample of 34 African countries. The paper finds some evidence that inclusiveness might work when divisions are rather deep.

Discussion of the individual papers was started by in depth comments of a fellow presenter and then opened up to the whole group. The three chairs Donald Horowitz, Timothy Sisk and Håvard Hegre provided a series of general comments for the overall project. The following issues were identified as relevant for all papers:

- the relationship between internal and external actors and the resulting ownership for institutions and reforms;
- the relevance of path dependency for institutions;
- specific power relations and political economy as important factor for all divisions and the selection of specific institutions;
- concepts, measurement and data on divisions, institutions and the specific relationship between divisions and institutions;
- levels of analysis (national, subnational, local) and the importance of territoriality for divisions.

The papers discussed in the workshop will be thoroughly revised by the authors and then submitted for a special issue or section in the Journal of Peace Research (editors are favorable in general terms).

The discussions during the workshop have served as an important kick-off for a international network on institutions for sustainable peace hosted by the German Institute of Global and Area Studies (Hamburg, Germany). The network project received funding from the Leibniz association during the next three years (see www.giga-hamburg.de/lsp). The first network conference is going to take place in early September 2012 in Berlin (Germany) and will resume the pre ISA workshop discussions under the title "From Research Gaps to New Frontiers". The conference will be organized around the five general questions identified during the pre ISA workshop in San Diego. We will propose at least one panel or roundtable for the annual ISA convention 2013 in San Francisco.