



State Building Interventions and the Elusive Search for State Capacity

A Public Lecture presented by Shahar Hameiri
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Considerable effort in recent years has gone into rebuilding failed or fragile states. However, the lively debates over the effectiveness of such state building exercises have tended to miss the fact that capacity building and the associated good governance programs, which comprise contemporary state building, are essentially about transforming the state – meaning the ways in which political power is produced and reproduced. State capacity is now often put forward as the missing link required for generating both positive development outcomes and security, blurring the dichotomous distinction between security and development. However, rather than being an objective and technical measure, capacity building constitutes a political and ideological mechanism for operationalising projects of state transnationalisation. The need to question prevailing notions of state capacity and the normative assumptions these carry has become sadly apparent in light of the failure of many state building programs in post-conflict states. Such programs have proven very difficult to implement, and implementation has rarely achieved the expected development turnarounds or alleviation of violent conflict in those countries. To identify the potential trajectories of such interventions, we must understand the role state building currently plays in domestic politics, and in particular the ways in which processes of state transformation and transnationalisation, whether intentionally or not, affect the development of different and often conflicting powerbases within the state. This argument is examined using examples from Solomon Islands and Cambodia.

Thursday 2nd April 2009

1:30 pm

Senate Room

All Welcome

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