



The pace of peace: The challenge of building stability in states affected by conflict

Speakers:

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Chair: Lanre Akinola, Editor, 'This is Africa', Financial Times Ltd

Tuesday 1 October, 5.30-7.00pm

Manchester Central – Cobden Room 2 (secure zone) Refreshments will be available

BACKGROUND

The pace of peace: The challenge of building stability in states affected by conflict

According to the World Bank, approximately 1.5 billion people live in countries affected by conflict. In an age of global uncertainty, the competition for power and scarce resources intensifies. This generates cycles of repeated violence, frail governance and rising instability. Today, the impact of these cycles of violent conflict and their constraints on development litter news headlines. To illustrate just a few recent examples there is the fractional rivalries and corruption afflicting Afghanistan's problematic 2014 transition and the on-going and deep-rooted security challenges ignited by extremism in Pakistan. In addition, there is the alarming rise in inter-communal violence in Nigeria's middle-belt and northern states, as well as fierce clashes between Islamist militant groups and escalating retaliatory attacks by government troops in Mali. In post-Qadhafi Libya, assassinations, urban violence and communal conflict jeopardises an already extremely fragile transition and the civil war in Syria continues to undermine stability in countries beyond its own borders.

What appears to be unambiguously clear is that peacebuilding is a global public good, where the benefits – or lack thereof – extend beyond national borders, generations and population groups, albeit in different ways. There is growing agreement that addressing the complexity of violent conflict in fragile regions of the world requires the development and support of legitimate and credible local institutions. Such agencies are regarded as better equipped at adequately functioning within specific national, social and political realities in an effort to inform, connect and empower ordinary citizens in meaningful ways. Moreover, such institutions can support the type of transformation considered vital in curbing instability through delivering security, justice and employment for all.

Today, the local challenge of peacebuilding takes place against a dynamic backdrop in which global development cooperation, defence and foreign policy thinking and practice are in a state of on-going flux. In the industrialised world, domestic economic priorities are high on political agendas and remain firmly dominated by concerns about the fragile global economic recovery, stagnant domestic growth, high unemployment, a lack of business confidence and an extraordinary sovereign debt crisis in the Eurozone. Arguably, these factors have accelerated the comparative decline in the political and economic influence of traditional centres of power as new power centres emerge. Paradoxically, the rise of countries such as Brazil, Russia, China, India and South Africa is juxtaposed by increasingly impressive economic might accompanied by deep rooted development challenges. It is within this context that the task of developing a coherent foreign, defence and development policy which identifies and supports local solutions to promote peacebuilding and long-term stability has become alarmingly urgent.

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