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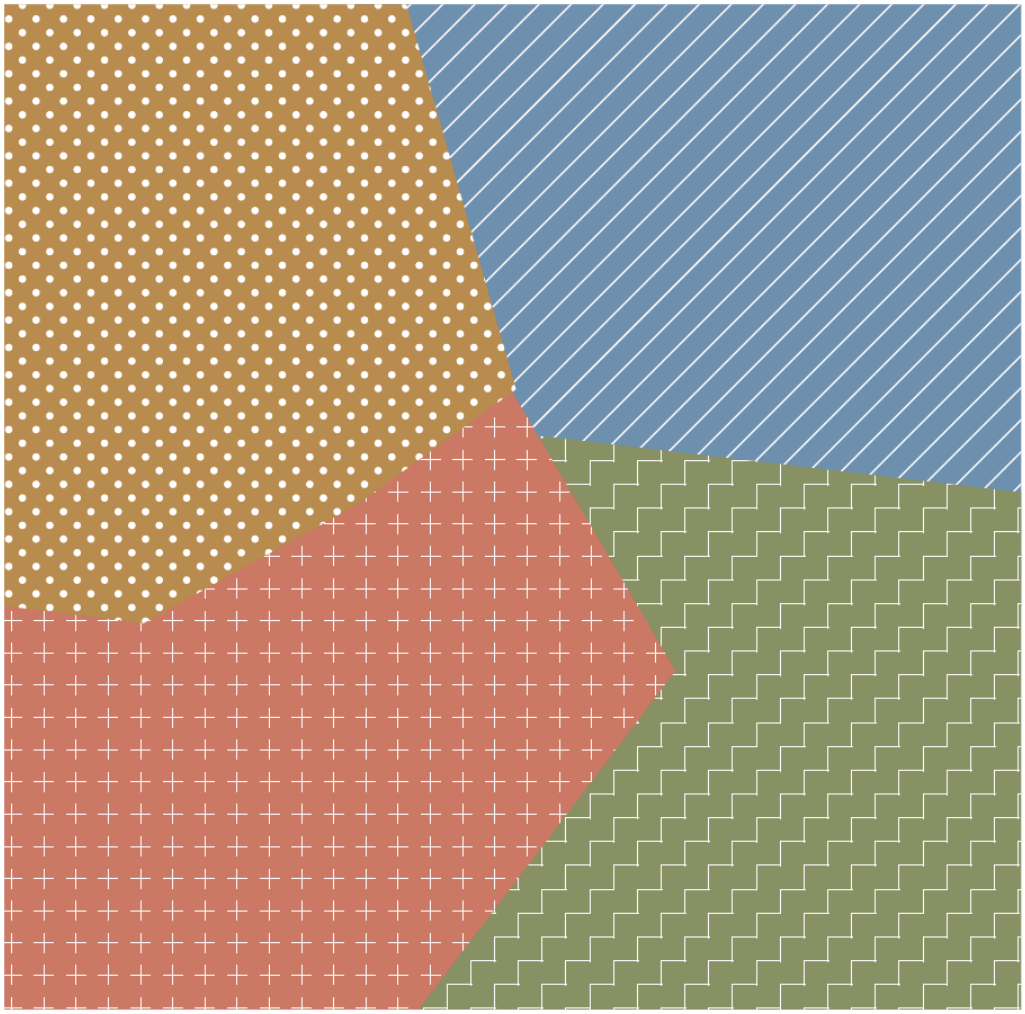

Assessing EU Support to Governance Reform

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Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding

This scoping study was produced as part of the project "Whole of Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding", which aims to enhance the EU's peacebuilding and conflict prevention capabilities.

This paper is part of the first series of orientation papers that were intended to indicate lines of inquiry and propose research questions, as a basis for discussion and input for the project's Theoretical and Methodological Framework. They seek to provide an overview of scholarly knowledge about the EU's capabilities and means for conflict prevention and peacebuilding in relation to several cross-cutting themes and clusters that the project focuses on. More information at www.woscap.eu

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Executive Summary

While the promotion of good governance has long been at the heart of EU's assistance to peacebuilding, stability, and security, it has gained yet more prominence among the set of EU values upheld in the post-Lisbon EU (common) foreign policy agenda, closely associated – and sometimes used interchangeably – with related values such as human rights, democratisation, and the rule of law (Hout 2013).

The linkages between good governance and peacebuilding have been foremost explored through the lense of malfunctioning and poor governance as a root cause of conflict. However, there is no solid evidence for what type of support to governance reform is most likely to lead to effective, inclusive, and sustainable peacebuilding. This scoping study will touch on this debate through the prism of EU foreign policy, by identifying the inherent dilemmas and tensions related to EU governance reform support. It will do so by analysing the different EU approaches and actors, their stated aims and methods.

Given that both the academic concept of governance and the EU's own definition of the term are quite extensive and cannot be covered exhaustively here, section two will limit itself to summarising the state-of-the-art on governance and (good) governance reform support from two angles. Firstly, we will review the policy approaches of international actors such as the OECD, World Bank, and UN which are often emphasising state-centric and technocratic practice of mainstreaming good governance principles. Hence – as the literature review shows – they pay little attention to local needs which are often fundamentally linked to identity, culture, history and norms. Furthermore, a lack of sufficient political economy analysis and a weak application to design and implement governance reforms are singled out.

The second angle is the inclusivity approach which is at the heart of the Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP) project. From that perspective governance reform support can be understood as any coordinated action or initiative that aims to strengthen inclusive governance structures, processes, and outcomes by increasing their accessibility, representativeness, and responsiveness to all segments of society. Section two thus offers possible benchmarks for assessing EU governance reform support from an inclusivity and *Whole-of-Society* vantage point.

Section three will flesh out the EU's body of work on peacebuilding-related support to governance reform, examining some of the related key policies and instruments, as well as providing some empirical examples of EU governance reform support from the project's case study countries (Georgia, Mali, Ukraine and Yemen). This exploratory review suggests that the EU is primarily concerned with formal state governance reform support through its budgetary and geographical financial support. It does also to a lesser extents fund civil society in the governance sector, mostly through its thematic funding instruments. This leaves open the question how the EU's existing peacebuilding support to governance reform is able to address the root causes of conflict, as well as having a transformative capacity to support inclusive whole-of-society governance.

Furthermore, the section will indicate how governance reform relates to this research project's other key cross-cutting themes and clusters. It finds that there are strong overlaps with the cross cutting themes of Gender and Local Ownership, which both play a big role in the

design of good governance reform efforts. Furthermore, support to Security Sector Reforms is identified as having conceptual overlaps with EU governance reform support.

Section four summarises some of the main challenges pertaining to EU support to governance reform. Thus, it raises some explorative questions such as: in how far is EU Governance reform inclusive; engages with the local and political context; and is affected by the lack of a clear conceptual understanding of good governance reform. The section also points towards some key methodological challenges such as the difficulties to discern the impact made by EU governance support due to: 1. the variety of parallel used instruments and techniques, and 2. the complications of drawing generalizable conclusions based on the distinct case studies chosen for the WOSCAP project.

1. Introduction

While the promotion of *good governance* has long been at the heart of EU's assistance to peacebuilding, stability, and security, it has gained yet more prominence among the set of EU values upheld in the post-Lisbon EU (common) foreign policy agenda, closely associated – and sometimes used interchangeably – with related values such as human rights, democratisation, and the rule of law (Hout 2013).

The linkages between good governance and peacebuilding have been foremost explored through the lens of malfunctioning and poor governance as a root cause of conflict and an impediment to take remedial action towards a better, more peaceful future. However, there is no solid evidence on what type of support to governance reform is most likely to lead to effective, inclusive, and sustainable peacebuilding. This scoping study will touch on this debate through the prism of EU foreign policy, by identifying the inherent dilemmas and tensions related to EU governance reform support. It will do so by analysing the different EU approaches and actors, their stated aims and methods.

Given that both the academic concept of governance and the EU's own definition of the term are quite extensive and cannot be covered exhaustively here, section two will limit itself to summarising the state-of-the-art on governance and (good) governance reform support from two angles; namely, the policy approach of international actors such as the OECD, World Bank, and UN, and the inclusivity approach which is at the heart of the Whole-of-Society Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding (WOSCAP) project. Section two thus offers possible benchmarks for assessing EU governance reform support from an inclusivity and *Whole-of-Society* vantage point. Section three will flesh out the EU's body of work on peacebuilding-related support to governance reform, examining some of the related key policies and instruments, as well as providing some empirical examples of EU governance reform support from the project's case study countries (Georgia, Mali, Ukraine and Yemen). Furthermore, the section will indicate how governance reform relates to this research project's other key cross-cutting themes and clusters, namely: Gender, Local Ownership and Multi-Stakeholder Coherence, Information and Communications Technologies (ICT), Security Sector Reform (SSR) and civilian-military relations, and Multi-Track Diplomacy (MTD). Section four will summarise some of the main challenges pertaining to EU support to governance reform and raise some explorative questions which can serve to further examine the topic; it will also point towards some key methodological challenges to researching EU support to governance reform. Finally, section five will offer some brief concluding remarks on the main conceptual and practical implications of EU governance reform support.

2. State of the art on governance and peacebuilding

This section focuses on the questions of: what is governance and how does it relate to conflict? (2.1); what is the international policy agenda on using governance as a strategy in peacebuilding? (2.2); what is the critique regarding this agenda? (2.3); and lastly, what could governance reform support look like from a whole-of-society perspective? (2.4).

2.1. Governance and Conflict

Academic interest in the subject-matter of governance within the fields of Political Science, International Relations, and European Union (EU) studies has grown dramatically over the past two decades. States' monopoly (or at least normatively-assumed monopoly) on decision-making has become both eroded from above – in the context of globalisation – and contested from within – by a variety of social, cultural, religious, private or armed actors (Hänggi 2005; Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006; Chhotray and Stoker 2010). In the face of this 'new' complexity, the concept of 'governance' is often applied to tease out the multifaceted and multi-actor decision-making processes over socio-cultural, economic, and political areas. In academia this phenomenon is often called 'the new type of governing', or 'the governance turn' (see for example Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006; Ball 2009).

The scholarly discussion on governance is therefore concerned with identifying and analysing the structures, actors, and techniques involved in decision-making (Trieb, Bähr and Falkner 2007). For the purpose of this scoping study, governance might be defined as **a set of social, political, and private institutions from and beyond government coming together in collective action with the aim and purpose to shape, rule and/or control society and state** (Dudouet and Lundström 2013).

Before exploring the link between governance and peacebuilding, it is worth noting that there is often a direct relation between the nature of governance and (armed) conflicts. Many intra-state wars are caused to a large extent by elite capture of state and governance, irresponsive to the needs and interests of large segments of the population. When there is a lack of institutionalised state-society channels for disadvantaged and marginalized groups to express their grievances or exert influence over decision-making, the option to use armed force gains significance (Dudouet 2009). Such groups often serve as (real or self-claimed) political support base for non-state armed groups (Dudouet and Lundström 2015). Intra-state wars are hence increasingly acknowledged as resulting from structural and protracted patterns of malfunctioning, weak, and/or exclusive governance (see example Miall 2003; Brinkerhoff 2007; Cortright 2012; Walter 2015). In turn, once a violent conflict has erupted it frequently also leads to (further) governance breakdown (Collier 2007).

2.2. Good governance as a peacebuilding strategy

Outside academia the development policy community has directed increasing attention to 'good governance' since the World Bank's recognition that 'a crisis of governance' was one of the main causes for the world's development problems (World Bank 1989: 60-61). Although

the Bank – and most major development organisations in its wake – primarily link the term to economic development and growth, its usage has become diversified. For instance, good governance took a political character when the UN started to use it interchangeably with 'democratic governance' in the beginning of the 1990s (Gisselquist 2012). Today good governance agendas are put forward by most international and regional organisations, albeit with slightly different definitions and practices (Hout 2013). The concepts commonly associated with good governance typically include effectiveness, efficiency, transparency, accountability, predictability, sound financial management, the fight against corruption, as well as respect for human rights, democracy, and the rule of law (Börzel 2008). Good governance agendas often have clear overlaps with 'statebuilding' although they tend to lack a political economy analysis which is especially pertinent in the post-conflict context plagued with corruption and other manifestations of weak governance (Carothers and Gramont 2013; Hout 2013; Unsworth 2015). Furthermore, economic governance is a constitutive element of a peacebuilding model which informs external assistance to governance reforms in conflict-affected countries in so far as rule-based economic systems provide a necessary framework for the efficient use of resources in support of sustainable growth and development. Rebuilding economic infrastructure is a precondition for securing broad-based growth, employment and welfare needs of the local population and addressing inequality and marginalisation, which are factors contributing to the emergence and protractedness of conflict (Bartlett 2015; Peterson 2014).

Since the mid-1990s good governance has thus become a key approach to post-war assistance by the international community, albeit with different models, techniques, and degrees of intervention and control (Keohane 2002). The negative realisation that malfunctioning or exclusionary governance may fuel conflict led actors such as the World Bank, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OECD) to suggest that good governance structures will decrease the chances of conflict onset or relapse. Typically, such endeavours to improve governance structures broadly aim to strengthen state institutions, consolidate the state's performance in terms of service delivery, security and rule of law, support civil society development and professionalization, or introduce/strengthen market economies (Kohler-Koch and Rittberger 2006). At the core of economic governance reforms to create open competitive market economies is the transformed role of the state as a regulator and facilitator of business environment, conducive to the enhancement of private sector as the main driver of economic development. Economic governance reforms have prioritised improvements in macroeconomic environment, financial sector management and privatisation. Good governance agendas thus carry normative assumptions on what governance should look like and how it should perform (Bartlett 2015; Peterson 2014). There is, however, to date little empirical evidence as to "what aspects of good governance are most important in discouraging repeat civil war. What is also unclear is the exact mechanism by which governance influences outcomes" (Walter 2015: 1264).

The methods and techniques used for external support to governance reform mainly centre around different types of direct and indirect financial and technical assistance packaged into various approaches and programs based on negotiation, conditionality, and bargaining (Börtzel et. al 2008; Carothers and Gramont 2013; Hout 2013).

2.3. Critical perspectives

Although governance has become a mainstream and rather uncontested concept, criticism against its policy usage does exist. Voices have been raised claiming that governance is a western-driven normative concept since it puts the 'western' state at the centre of analysis when attempting to explain how societies self-govern (Chhotray and Stoker 2010; Pouligny 2010).

There have also been substantial critical claims that governance is too focused on technical issues which ignore key determining aspects that shape governance such as matters of identity, culture, history and norms (Galvanek 2013; Bernhard 2013). When governance is conceptualised in exceedingly technical terms, it tends to over-emphasise the role and meaning of formal (state) institutions (Dillon and Reid 2000; Boege et al. 2009; Jarstad and Belloni 2012). This exceedingly technical and state-centric approach, along with attempts to introduce "the liberal framework of individual rights, winner-takes-all elections and neo-liberal free market economic programmes" (Chandler 2010a: 137), is often dubbed as 'neo-liberal' peacebuilding, and is often contested by local actors (cf. Chandler 2010a, Galvanek 2013, Boege et al. 2009).

While the state is in most cases undoubtedly the principal actor in governance, there are many spaces and contexts which state governance does not reach or where it does not intervene (either in part or in full). These spaces should not be considered as 'ungoverned', as social, religious, cultural or private actors normally take up the principal governing role (Lundström 2013). Areas in which formalised Weberian state institutions blend with localised or traditional forms of governance are often referred to as hybrid systems of governance (Boege 2009, Lundström 2013). Following the understanding of Risse (2013: 9) we assume that governance covers three possible dimensions: (1) governance steered by the state (governance by government); (2) governance through cooperative networks of public and private actors (governance with government); (3) governance by non-state actors and self-regulation by civil society (governance without government). Ignoring the aforementioned aspects and factors of governance and implementing technical blueprint solutions to highly complex and contextual problems risk creating empty shell outcomes (Ottaway 2002). Finally, as mentioned above, the good governance agenda is closely associated with (external) political conditionality and compliance, potentially leading to a lack of local ownership or expressions of resistance, which puts into question the sustainability of reforms (Galvanek 2013).

2.4. A whole-of-society approach to governance reform support

Due to the central role which exclusionary, weak, or malfunctioning governance can play in increasing the risk for armed conflict, one of the core challenges for peaceful governance arrangements is to address the demanding issue of how power should be distributed, who should be involved in a decision and how rules, once agreed, should be enforced (Chhotray and Stoker 2010).

While seeking to address this intricate issue of power distribution, academics, practitioners, as well as the policy community, have in recent years paid growing attention to the notions of inclusiveness and participation in peace processes as well as in post-war governance (Barnes 2009; Paffenholz 2014; Dudouet and Lundström 2016). The argument

goes that both process- and outcome-related inclusivity in post-war transitions are conducive to stability and sustainable peace, by addressing the root causes of conflict. Process inclusivity refers to the level of participation in decision-making processes, both at the horizontal (inter-elite) and vertical (state-society) levels. Outcome inclusivity in turn refers to the degrees of representativeness and responsiveness of governance structures and policies with regards to the distribution of rights and entitlements across groups and classes in society: whether they favour dominant groups, or reflect fairly and genuinely the various interests and needs of all social sectors (Dudouet and Lundström 2016). Yet it remains to be more thoroughly researched what incentivises political buy-in from post-war elites to initiate and support inclusive governance reforms, as well as what techniques international and regional actors, such as the EU, can utilise to support such incentives for reforms (as will be explored in section 3).

This paper thus distinguishes two concurrent interpretations of governance: one focusing on the policy usage of good governance as a state- and elite-centric approach to post-war peacebuilding and our own approach to inclusive governance from a whole-of-society approach. According to the latter, governance reform support has a threefold purpose: 1) providing support to core political decision-making structures and institutions from and beyond government; 2) strengthening state-society relations by supporting the active participation of civil society, the private sector and marginalised social groups in governance institutions, processes, and outcomes; and 3) strengthening governance outcomes through increased legislative, policy, and service delivery responsiveness towards the whole spectra of society. Governance reform support from a whole-of-society approach is thus defined as any coordinated action or initiative that aims to strengthen inclusive governance structures, processes, and outcomes by increasing their accessibility, representativeness, and responsiveness to all segments of society.

3. EU governance reform support

This section aims to review the role of EU institutions and instruments in supporting (external) governance reform. By following the set of questions 'Why', 'What', 'How', 'Where', and 'Who', it will assess the motivations and nature of EU involvement in governance reform support (3.1) as well as summarise commonalities with other WOSCAP themes (3.2).

3.1. EU Governance Reform Support: Why, What, How, Where and Who?

3.1.1. WHY: Rationale behind EU (external) support to governance reform

Starting with the 1993 Treaty of the European Union (TEU) (commonly referred to as the Maastricht Treaty) and its adoption of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the principle of good governance has been given an increased role in the Union's foreign policy and foreign relations (Larizza and Landmann 2010). Since its very foundation the EU has also tried to position itself as an 'actor of good' who, by its own rhetoric, intends to share its internal peacebuilding experiences with third countries. In addition to such justifications, as adeptly summarised by Kotzian et al. (2011), the EU has both normative and security-related motives for supporting governance reform in third countries: 1) the EU as a political system prefers to be surrounded by political systems which have similar values and principles to its own; and 2) the EU prefers being surrounded by liberal democratic systems since such systems are commonly perceived as more peaceful and secure.

3.1.2. WHAT: The elusive nature of EU Governance support

Although the EU's good governance agenda has become a cross-cutting principle, and a peacebuilding objective in the emergent EU peacebuilding approach, which spans over the EU's foreign policies, institutions, and instruments, there is some conceptual confusion as to how good governance (sometimes referred to as 'democratic governance') should be defined as a principle (if defined at all), how it materialises into programming, and how it is differentiated from state-building and other forms of political support (Hout 2013; EPLO 2014).

Initially, EU governance support was mainly concerned with anti-corruption and democratisation measures for building stable and predictable states. Since then, there has been a rapid proliferation of good governance clauses, often alongside or including human rights, rule of law, and democracy, as mainstreamed principles and values in all EU foreign policy agreements and instruments (Larizza and Landmann 2010). This trend is exemplified in the following two European Commission definitions. Firstly, a definition from 2003 mainly focusing on state capacities:

> *"Focusing on governance implies working with governments, contributing to building their capacities in all sectors of co-operation, such as health, education, transport, rural development, etc. It also entails specific support to administrative reforms, improvements in*

the management of public finances, security systems, etc. It finally involves fostering civil society and encouraging participatory approaches to public policies." (European Commission 2003: 3)

Secondly, a definition from 2008 emphasises state capacities along good governance principles:

"The EC distinguishes between three dimensions of democratic governance:

a) the core governance issues of rules, interests, resources and power; b) the governance principles: 'participation'; 'inclusion'; 'transparency' and 'accountability'; c.) the governance themes or governance clusters: (i) support to democratization, (ii) promotion and protection of human rights, (iii) reinforcement of the rule of law and the administration of justice, (iv) enhancement of the role of civil society, (v) public administration reform, management of public finances and civil service reform, (vi) decentralization and local government reform." (European Commission 2008: 5)

Notwithstanding the reference to civil society in these two definitions, a common denominator behind the EU's manifold definitions on good governance is that they are fairly state-centric and technocratic (Hout 2013 and EPLO 2014).

During the past 15 years the EU's conceptual understanding of governance and governance reform has broadened and evolved, for instance linking governance with (violent) conflict and fragility (e.g. in the 2001 Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts of the Council of Europe; the 2006 EC communication on "Governance in the European Consensus on Development"; 2011a European Commission communication on increasing the impact of EU development policy). Hence, the notion that good governance is interdependent with building peaceful and resilient societies has led to the EU's recognition that its support to governance reform should aim to achieve broader change in areas such as development, security, and conflict prevention, which are commonly linked to peace (Ibid. policy documents above and Larizza and Landmann 2010; Hout 2013; EPLO 2014). However, drawing on most of the EU's policy documents on governance it often remains elusive how such desired peaceful transitions can materialise from an operational perspective.

Equally, there is a realisation within the EU that simply focusing on providing capacity building to state institutions might be insufficient to address governance-related conflict drivers, and that there is a need to engage deeper with political issues, e.g. through better political analysis and putting this analysis to use (ECPDM 2015; Whaites et al. 2015). One example where the pertinence of engaging in deeper political rather than solely technical issues has already been raised is the EU's support to justice sector reform in Ukraine. Hence, the commissioned project attempts to shift its priorities from exclusively building judiciary capacity to supporting judiciary independence (Support for Justice Sector Reform in Ukraine 2015).

3.1.3. HOW: Main mechanisms to support governance reform

In order to support peace and security outside of its borders through governance reform support, the EU uses: "…political dialogue to promote governance reforms through persuasion and social learning; technical and financial assistance to strengthen capacities of state and non-state actors; and conditionality to manipulate cost benefit calculations… [of] government[s] and non-state actors by creating positive and negative incentives for reforms" (Börzel and Hackenesch 2013).

Political dialogue aims to encourage targeted governments to engage in governance reform and, in the long run, to shift their perceived interests and to internalise the norms and principles underpinning EU governance. Occasionally, for example when Human Rights are concerned, CSOs are included into such formalised diplomatic dialogue processes between EU representatives and a third country. Furthermore, public declarations and statements criticising or welcoming governance reform efforts are a commonly used diplomatic instrument pertaining to political dialogue (Dudouet and Clark 2009).

Financial support is materialised through two main, foreign policy oriented, channels under the the EC's Multiannual Financial Framework 2014-2020: 1) budget support via direct financial subsidies to third country's treasuries; and/or 2) indirect financial support to third countries via programs and projects with national governments, local and regional authorities, as well as international and non-governmental organisations (EPLO 2014). These two broad funding avenues, as well as political dialogue tools, encompass a wide variety of policies and practices, but there is so far no scholarly agreement on how to classify them from a conceptual point of view (see Kahn and Heller 2011). Some authors categorise them along a spectrum of positive tools (i.e. political incentives for reform) and negative tools (i.e. political pressure to reform) (cf. Börzel and Hackenesch 2013). In reality, the lines between the positive and negative dimensions of financial support are often blurred since the same instrument, agreement, and/or policy can be used in both encouraging and constraining ways to support reform or there might be different instruments (e.g. some with more negative, some with more positive incentives) within the same context (Kotzian et al. 2011; Ioannides 2014). This is exemplified for instance by the association agreements signed under the tutelage of the European Neighbourhood Policy (EnP) which incentivises faster and better progress towards democratic reform, while at the same time "suspension clauses have been quasi-systematically included in financial programmes dedicated to candidate countries and the financing of cooperation actions with countries in the neighbourhood" (Ioannides 2014: 17).

On a similar note, and linking the question where and how the EU provides support for government reform, good governance interventions not only represent an intrinsic goal of the EU, but are also often seen as precondition for reform support. In other words, for third countries to benefit from EU financial support, some degree of good governance needs to be already pre-existent – pertaining for instance to the willingness to enter in political dialogue, an existing national governance reform strategy, and a reliable programme to advance public financial management (EPLO 2014). This will ensure, "that resources are used for their intended purposes, mitigate risks, and create incentives for improved performance and results" (European Commission 2011b: 2).

3.1.4. WHERE? Political and geographical factors influencing governance reform support

The decision by EU institutions to use the aforementioned instruments and techniques is also compounded by the EU's room to manoeuvre according to its political and economic leverage within a third country in question: the less political and economic leverage the EU has, the lesser political conditionally it can attach to its governance reform support. Likewise, the closeness to the EU's external borders plays a role in what type of techniques and instrument

will be utilised: countries that are either association, accession, or member state candidates will be subject to stronger and more comprehensive push for reforms than countries more afar. In other words, leverage is partly dependent on the level of asymmetry between the third country and the EU, and the geographical and political proximity to the EU's borders. Historical (e.g. a colonial past) and cultural ties which specific member states (MS) have with a third country in question, as well as the EU's or MS economic interests, can also have an impact on which type of instrument or techniques are utilized (Kahl and Heller 2011; Youngs 2008, Kotzian et. al 2011; Chandler 2010b; Schimmelfenning and Sedelmeier 2005).

3.1.5. WHO? Mapping of EU institutions and instruments involved in governance reform support

As previously stated, although good governance is a cross-cutting theme for the vast majority of EU foreign policy, good governance reform plays a larger role in some instruments, agreements, and policies than in others. The relevant instruments can be categorised along geographic and thematic dimensions.

Governance reform support is implemented at the national and regional levels through geographic funding instruments. In terms of the selection of our case studies, for countries within the European Neighbourhood and (potential) candidates for either association or accession (such as Georgia and Ukraine), long-term instruments and agreements which aim to harmonise these countries' governance with the EU *acquis* are of highest relevance. When it comes to governance reform support, the most crucial instruments for these types of countries are the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), Association Agreements, European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), and Eastern Partnership (EaP).

For *Ukraine*, the strongest instrument for governance reform support has been the agreements specifically aiming for EU integration such as the EaP and the ENP (External Action Service a). The Association Agreement was signed in 2014, although by the time of writing it has not yet been implemented in full due to the current political situation. In practice EU reform support to Ukraine has targeted the justice sector and legal institutional reform, constitutional reform, and electoral support (Institute of World Policy 2015).

In the case of *Georgia*, the ENP, EaP, and the 2014 Association Agreement have been the main instruments for EU governance reform support (External Action Service b). Key EU interventions in the governance area have focused on support for stable and effective institutions and rule of law as well as juridical and legal reform (Ivane Javakhishvvili Tbilisi State University 2015).

The regional Sahel Strategy is the key founding agreement that shapes EU-*Mali* relations. In the Strategy strong and accountable institutions that are able to deliver services are stressed as a key element to governance in relation to security and development. A specific focus is placed on access to justice, local governance and decentralisation processes, electoral support, women's representation in political decision-making bodies, and support to civil society (External Action Service c). Specifically in Mali, the EU governance reform support has in recent years been mainly concerned with the constitutional order, Presidential elections, and governance and justice reforms (University of Law and Political Sciences of Bamako 2015). Much of the regional funding is dispatched through the European Development Fund (EDF),

the EU's main instrument for providing development aid to African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries (European Commission a). In EU headquarters, the Sahel Strategy is often referred to as a success case when it comes to a coherent and comprehensive EU approach.

EU-*Yemeni* relations are in turn guided by three main documents: the Cooperation Agreement between the European Community and the Republic of Yemen, the Yemen-European Community Strategy Paper, and the Multi-Annual Programme. The Cooperation Agreement primarily deals with trade and poverty reduction, while the Strategy Paper and the Multi-Annual Programme are more concerned with good governance reform which was one of the main policy priorities before the recent political crises. More precisely, governance support was geared towards electoral reform, support to the Parliament and political parties, support to the justice sector, and support to Rule of Law and Human Rights (External Action Service d; External Action Service e; External Action Service f). Starting in 2011, the EU has also been one of the key international actors who have supported the political transformation process (Political Development Forum 2015). As part of this process, the National Dialogue in Yemen which can be seen at the cross-section between the EU's efforts in Mediation and Dialogue and Governance reform support (as in setting the rules of the game for governing in Yemen) has been strongly supported by the Head of the EU delegation in Yemen (Girke 2015).

In addition to direct bilateral and regional policies and agreements, there are some complementary thematic instruments which also encompass governance reform support. The Development Cooperation Instrument (DCI) thematic programme supports developing countries, who do not take part in the Pre-Accession Instrument, by funding activities and projects that aim to strengthen the participation of civil society and local authorities in governance (European Commission b). In 2014, Yemen received approximately 3 Mil € and Mali 3 Mil € through the DCI thematic instruments (European Commission 2015).

The Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR) also provides funds and technical assistance to support democratisation processes (e.g. through electoral support or strengthening state capacity) and to incentivise third countries to mainstream human rights and democracy into their development polices (European Commission c). In Yemen, for example, EIDHR had allocated money for a project aimed to increase women's participation in elections, implemented by the Yemen Organisation for Defending Rights and Democratic Freedoms Foundation. However, due to the current political situation most EIDHR-funded projects in Yemen are currently on hold (Source: personal exchange with EIDHR focal point for Yemen).

The Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace (IcSP) is a relatively new EU instrument that has as a mandate to respond quickly to situations of crisis and conflict through both short-term (Article 3 IcSP) and long-term interventions (Article 4 IcSP) , including by advancing the development of democratic and pluralist state institutions (European Commission d). In Mali, for example, the IcSP has provided funding to support the electoral process. In Yemen various projects related to governance and peacebuilding received funding, concerning with e.g. reform of the Yemen interior ministry in order to increase its effectiveness and responsiveness or strengthening the capabilities of national institutions and civil society organisations to implement transitional justice processes (Insight on Conflict 2015). In Ukraine the IcSP provided financial support to the Election Observation Mission implemented by the OSCE. In Georgia subsidies went to the UNDP project *Dialogue Coordination Mechanism* which aims to empower NGOs and civil society organisations (CSOs) at the local level to participate in decision making and agenda setting (UNDP 2013).

Both the EIDHR and the IcSP (under Article 4) have a focus on supporting CSOs involved in projects related to improving human rights and democracy, with the underlying aim to improve state-civil society interactions and cooperation. A similar role is played by the Civil Society Facility (CSF), the "biggest budget line available for supporting civil society development in the neighbourhood and candidate countries" (Ioannides 2014: 19).

Given the EU's interpretations of governance reform support (or good governance) and the types of endeavours it supports to that regard, it can be concluded that geographical instruments have a strong focus on strengthening state institutions and their ability to function and to provide basic services to their citizens. To some extend the EU's thematic instruments share this state-centric focus, but they also strive to channel substantive support to civil society organisation, including human rights organisations and women's empowerment groups. One major task for the WOSCAP project will be to examine through in-depth empirical research the respective levels of emphasis by EU institutions across the different dimensions of governance support which have been highlighted here.

3.2. Connections and Overlaps with Other WOSCAP Themes

There are several areas of overlaps and intersections between governance reform support and the other clusters and cross-cutting themes of the WOSCAP project. Gender inclusion in governance is an increasingly important topic for the EU, in particular with the adoption of United Nations Resolution 1325. The principles of Local ownership and Multi-Stakeholder Coherence (MSC) are of high relevance for negotiating, designing, and implementing EU support to governance reform. The assumption is that local ownership and anchoring of such a process would make reforms more legitimate and efficient. The relevance of Information and Communications Technologies (ICT) for governance reform can be assumed to be useful for political and civic oversight and monitoring of ongoing reforms. Security Sector Reform (SSR) and civilian-military relations overlap on an institutional level with governance reform, since reforming security institutions and providing civilian oversight over security forces and institutions as well as (re-)building trust between security forces and citizens are significant aspects of post-war governance reform. Finally, Multi-Track Diplomacy (MTD) can be conceived as a tool which can be used to negotiate the design of governance reform, particularly if governance structures are part of the mediation/ negotiation/dialogue agenda.

4. Research avenues and methodological challenges

Section four deals with the main challenges of EU governance reform support in order to derive some avenues for future investigation (4.1), and reflect on the methodological difficulties of conducting empirical research on the topic (4.2).

4.1 Avenues for future Research

4.1.1. Conceptual confusion

As touched on in section 3, governance reform represents a cross-cutting theme which should, in principle, be encompassed into all EU foreign policies. However, what became clear from the review on EU policy documents is that the term's comprehensive ambitions to cover a multitude of issues and contexts adds to its conceptual confusion and a lack of definitional precision within the span of EU institutions, policies, and instruments (cf. Hout 2013; EPLO 2014). Therefore, one is left to wonder:

How do actors within the EU sphere understand the term differently? Does it create problems in terms of strategy towards good governance reform if different hierarchical levels – from HQ to Delegations – have different understandings?

4.1.2. The politics of governance reform

Another crucial argument put forward by academic and practitioners over the last years is that governance reforms are inherently political (cf. section 2.2 and 3 and Leftwich 2008; Hout 2013; Unsworth 2015; Hudson and Marquette 2015). Politics can be understood here heuristically as "political processes that underpin policy choices and the creation of effective institutions (formal and informal), and political context that shapes how those process play out" (Unsworth 2015: 50).[1] As pointed out by Hout (2013) and Galeazzi et al. (2015), EU governance programs often fail to be grounded in political economy analysis[2] and such analysis, when it occurs, is rarely used when designing and implementing reform. This might hinder a process of determining what kind of reform is possible or 'good enough' to reach effective change in a given context. Of course, exceptions do exist, such as the constructive use of in-depth political analysis for improving governance reform in Senegal (cf. Galeazzi et al. 2015), or the aforementioned example of justice sector reform in Ukraine (section 3.1.2). Moreover, the internal political economy of the EU (e.g. strategic shifts away from peacebuilding towards hard

[1] Drawing on a definition by Leftwich 2008 stating that politics is: „[a]ll the activities of conflict, co-operation and negotiation involved in the use, production and distribution of resources, whether material or ideal, whether at local, national or international level, or whether in the private or public domains".

[2] PEA (heuristically speaking): deep analyses of (1) elite pacts/ political settlement and (2) the political rules of the game/ institutions.

security, austerity measures, pressure to deliver results) may have an influence on sustainable governance reform support worth examining (Whaites et al. 2015).

- Do actors involved in EU governance reform support constantly engage with the political context in which they support governance reform?
- In how far does the EU's own political economy influence the "long term" perspective governance reform programmes are recommended to take in order to be sustainable?

4.1.3. Actors' mapping

Within the limits of this paper, only an exploratory glance into the multitude of actors and their roles involved in EU governance reform support could be given. Thus, in order to gain a deeper understanding of these issues, the following question needs to be taken up:

- What range of (international, state and non-governmental) actors within and outside of the EU architecture are involved in EU governance reform efforts, and what is the nature of their relationships and coordination?

4.1.4. EU governance support and the local

As pointed out in section 2.2, it is essential for external donors to consult, interact with, and adapt to local forms of governance rather than solely applying state-centric blueprints of governance reform. This advice is particularly relevant for EU governance support, as it emphasises the strengthening of state-based institutions.

Furthermore, in instances where the EU supports CSOs (e.g. through EIDHR and the ICsP) there is a tendency of EU institutions to mainly fund highly professionalised and urban NGOs while often ignoring crucial grassroots organisations such as trade unions, social movements and religious charities that might be closer to society (Marchetti and Tocci 2011). On the other hand, EU funding priorities might not be in line with what might be actually required on the ground, disenfranchising local NGOs in need for funding from the society they are embedded in (Marchetti and Tocci 2011). This range of challenges leads to various potential research questions such as:

- Does/ how does EU governance reform support take into account local, existing governance structures, including those of non-state actors (Private sector and civil society)?
- What does securing local consensus on public policy priorities mean and how can the EU adjust the existing governance reform instruments to the local context and local needs?
- Have EU institutions taken into account issues of "governance" as framed by locals?
- Does the EU learn from local civil society/community-based approaches to lobby for governance-related reforms if it does not have the carrots and sticks to "enforce" them?

4.1.5. Inclusive governance support

Drawing on arguments cited in section 2.1 and 2.2 exclusive forms of governance have been increasingly linked to higher risk for conflict onset, fragility, and conflict relapse. This recognition is reiterated in some of the EU's policy documents (cf. section 3). However, the link between EU governance support practices and inclusivity remains to be researched in more detail.

- How inclusive is the EU's engagement when it comes to promoting the role of women, marginalized groups, and armed groups in its governance reform support agenda?

4.1.6. Levels of intervention

The EU's various instruments which can be harnessed in support of governance reform operate at the regional level (e.g. Sahel strategy, EaP, EnP), nationally (Association agreements, cooperation agreements) and locally (via funded projects). From a whole-of-society perspective to peacebuilding, one ought to examine in how far principles of inclusion and participation play a role at the different levels of engagement (both in policy and practice) and if they help to make governance support more sustainable.

- What is the most sustainable and/or inclusive level of engagement in governance support – regional, national, local?

4.2 Methodological Challenges

As aforementioned, good governance – and with it governance reform – often lacks conceptual clarity within the EU context. Moreover, it is a cross-cutting theme over the entire EU foreign policy spectrum of institutions, instruments, and bilateral agreements, and it may thus prove quite challenging to try to tease out which policy or technique is used when and where, and what impact it has. Different instruments, policies, and agreements might be overlapping or at times even contradictory. This might be in particular challenging when researching long-term effects vs. short-term effects of governance reform and when comparing legally-binding and non-legally binding clauses on governance reform support. This also raises further questions on how to systematically examine the ways in which EU governance principles and values are materialised into programming and policies, what impact these programmes and policies have on the ground, and how they are coordinated mutually and with other donors. The analysis will have to factor in the outcome of existing evaluations of EU governance support activities, if these are made available to the researchers.

In addition, the quite distinct features of the case studies for this project might prove to be both a methodological strength as well as a methodological challenge for this topic. On the one hand a broad selection of case studies will most likely serve as an interesting and rich base for identifying and comparing a large variety of EU techniques for governance reform support. On the other hand, the EU has different political, economic, and geographical interests depending on the level of EU-third country asymmetry (strong or weak leverage) and proximity (both geographical proximity as well as how close the country is to becoming a member-state).

Thus, it might be challenging to systematically identify clear cross-case comparable elements of governance reform support.

Another methodological challenge concerns the difficulty to discern the distinct effect and impact of EU governance reform support in relation to the plethora of other international donors or agencies that are providing support in the same area – especially where different actors and approaches targeted at governance reform may well be duplicating, contradicting, or at best overlapping with one another.

To summarise, the research will be able to generate meaningful findings if it manages to discern what types of peacebuilding-driven EU governance support endeavours have proven to generate positive change (negative examples – of course – can foster learning too); at the same time the research needs to discern in how far these endeavours take account of whole-of-society and inclusive approaches; and, finally, which role the context has played in influencing their outcomes.

5. Conclusions

This preliminary review of the EU's principles and activities in the area of governance reform has highlighted the fact that (good) governance lacks conceptual clarity within the span of EU institutions, policies, and instruments. This seems to be partly caused by the fact that the concept of good governance represents a cross-cutting theme which should, in principle, be encompassed into all EU foreign policies. In other words, the principle of good governance has manifold meanings and is translated in various ways across distinct EU foreign policies, instruments, and techniques. Turning to the preliminary identification and analysis of what type of governance reform the EU choses to support in third countries, a succinct literature review shows that it is dependent on a variety of factors, pertaining to the EU's leverage (asymmetry level) and its political and economic interests (proximity level) in a given country of intervention. A concise review of the concrete actions and initiatives endorsed by EU programmes and actors suggests geographic instruments for financial and technical assistance place a primary emphasis on formal state governance reform support, whereas thematic instruments also support civil society efforts to shape governance processes and outcomes. The question remains – and should be tackled through WOCAP's empirical research – to which extent the EU's existing capabilities for governance reform support are able to address the root causes of conflict as well as having a transformative capacity to support inclusive whole-of-society governance.

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