

Online debate: ‘Local conflicts in transnational entanglements

On the occasion of - and in conjunction with the first Expert Event of the Knowledge Platform Security & Rule of Law, an online debate will be launched on ‘Local’ conflicts in transnational entanglements.

We cordially invite national and international experts, practitioners, and policy makers in the field of security and rule of law to engage in this online debate. The aim of this debate is to generate ideas and perspectives on

‘HOW EXTERNAL INTERVENTIONS CAN BE MADE MORE FIT-FOR-PURPOSE IN HELPING TO RESOLVE CONFLICT IN THE FACE OF TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES’

The central question for debate is:

WHAT ARE THE KEY IMPLICATIONS OF TRANSNATIONAL INFLUENCES ON PRESENT-DAY CONFLICT FOR THE OPERATION OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL INTERVENTIONS AIMING TO BUILD SUSTAINABLE PEACE?

We have broken down this question into a number of statements that seek to provoke discussion:

- Transnational influences have a decisive influence on the interests behind, and course of, present-day conflicts
- Transnational influences on conflict reduce the possibility to resolve conflicts locally

- Multidimensional external interventions are generally not able to deal with such transnational influences adequately. The consequence is that they fail to help build peace in a sustainable fashion, and conflict is likely to recur after they exit

Your views on any or all of these statements will be highly valued. They will both feed into the aforementioned Expert Event and the short research report that will be produced after the conference. This will advance concrete suggestions for policymakers.

Contextualization of the debate

Present-day conflicts are characterized by significant complexity. This is partly the result of increasing interconnectedness between the local and the global enabled by greater ease of communication, transport and technological progress. This complexity makes it difficult to understand, address and resolve current conflicts.

This is partly due to a diversification of the aims and interests of conflict parties, an increasing number and type of actors that can be involved, and a diversification of the strategies and tools they utilize. For example, conflict parties often pursue political, criminal and/or terrorist goals through mixed local-global strategies - defying simple categorization. In consequence, conflicts tend to feature political-criminal connections that tie the political elites involved in either the conflict or an eventual peace agreement to criminal organizations with transnational reach.

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A prime example is the global drugs trade in countries like Afghanistan, Guatemala and Mali. In some countries political and criminal actors and interests converge to the point of becoming near synonymous. This complexity permeates the meshing that many conflicts represent of regional conflict by proxy, civil war and sub-national conflicts that do not involve the state. It also changes the extent to which conflicts can be resolved locally. While locally driven and relatively inclusive peacebuilding solutions are required for achieving sustainable peace, these are no longer sufficient. For example, many conflicts are transnational in nature and yet the boundaries of state legitimacy and intervention remain national. With often very low regulatory, monitoring and enforcement capacities, most conflict-affected states have no hope of engaging in the type of international cooperation, or isolation of transnational conflict drivers, that can make peace sustainable by themselves.

The combination of such elements plays a role in conflicts acquiring a low intensity character, but with a long duration and intermittent spikes of high intensity. The conflicts in Afghanistan, Mali, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and South Sudan offer recent examples of most of these issues. Multidimensional external interventions, such as peacekeeping missions, can play an important role in preventing such conflicts from increasing and breaking their self-perpetuating dynamics. Hence, they are often an important part of international stabilization efforts. Yet, they tend to be country-specific, dominated by a military component and focus on restoring a central government through elections.

It has also proven to be very difficult to get the defense, development and diplomacy elements of multidimensional external interventions to work together in joint up fashion that can deliver the necessary synergies. Instead, external interventions would for example need to be able to identify inflows of illicit goods, funds and services through intelligence, manage them at borders and be able to act on the network of financial, political relations behind them. For this, building regulatory and enforcement capacity is key. In addition, parallel global activities might be necessary to cut off particular off-shore transfer centers and freeze assets.

This suggests that multidimensional external interventions are not necessarily fit for purpose. Despite several years of debate about ‘integrated ways of working’ and ‘comprehensive approaches’, a key question therefore remains how they can be improved to help address local peacebuilding challenges while these are so transnationally entangled and influenced.

Practical information

The online debate will feature on the website of the Platform. For more information about the Platform or the online debate please visit our [website](#) or contact the [Secretariat](#).