Nemzetközi Kapcsolatok
Doktori Iskola

ANSWER TO THE REVIEWS OF THE OPPONENTS

Rada Péter

The Rubik's Cube of Democratic Development

A Normative Model of Statebuilding

Ph.D. dissertation

Advisor:

Dr. Kiss J. László, CSc
university professor

Opponents:
Prof. Em. Dr. I. William Zartman, PhD
Dr. Peter Marton, PhD

Budapest, 2011

Nemzetközi Tanulmányok Intézet

General thoughts and the usefulness of a normative model

Even though the PhD dissertation is a single scientific outcome of a research process it may become the cornerstone of a longer effort of contributing to specific area of science. Bearing in mind that, the real indicator of success of a dissertation is the quality of the debate it could generate. I am honored that the "devil's advocates" of my dissertation are the most prominent experts on the field of development politics and conflict resolution. Prof. I William Zartman was the pioneer when he edited a comprehensive volume on the problems of state failure (1995) and Dr. Peter Marton was also a forerunner in this sense in Hungary when he edited the since unique book on state failure and statebuilding (2006).

The first and foremost aim of the dissertation was to rethink the existing knowledge on the very broad topic of state failure, statebuilding and democratization by assessing the achievements on the field and confronting the existing models and prescriptions with each other. In order to do so, the dissertation discovered and introduced a unique Hungarian device, the Rubik's cube, which served as a theoretic analogy for the dynamic and complex interdependencies of the different dimensions and sequences of statebuilding. Similarly to other normative models and analogies, the Rubik's cube methodology is also a subjective crutch of thinking in a sense that the author's personal opinions and knowledge gives the real substance behind the model. Due to this fact, the model may represent a different device for different scholars, which in fact is the engine of future debates. These debates represent the real scientific result and success of the Rubik's cube model.

Speaking of the complex system of international relations in the 21st century, we tend to search for the ultimate challenge which we have to solve first but it is difficult to identify a single phenomenon that is not connected to the other threats. We have to admit that the root of all challenges lies in the changed conditions for development. The states are prone to fail and state failure is a development trap from which the country cannot escape by itself. At the same time, we also have to state that any reaction of the international community presupposes a political decision. The decision makers, however, need clear advice. For instance, today, after nine years in Afghanistan or seven years in Iraq we can feel some apathy on the level of decision makers, especially in Europe. It is understandable that a politician sees the problem of state failure and statebuilding as a too complex puzzle which cannot be solved. Id est, it makes no sense to sacrifice time, money or the lives of the people involved in the reconstruction process. On the other hand, a politician may feel a moral duty to help people living under inhuman conditions, or may understand the security threat of untreated state failure. In conclusion, we need a new model which defines the problem clearly, which answers the question why we have to deal with failed states. We need a model which collects the experiences of former historic and normative statebuilding models, which can respond the query of what to do. And finally, we need

a model which can show how we have to manage the complex interdependencies of the different dimensions of development.

This is the model which was introduced by the dissertation. The starting point is the belief that democracy, or a functioning state is too difficult, if not impossible, to achieve in a failed state. But when Ernő Rubik invented his famous cube in the 1970s it was also held impossible to solve. The cube is a perfect analogy that six different dimensions can develop interdependently through different stages of development. On the other hand, the Rubik's cube model is not a masterplan for statebuilding but it proves that we can follow and repeat certain scheme during the process. Furthermore, the model is an exact summary of the existing statebuilding models and it aims at simplifying the thinking about state failure and the solutions.

On the hypotheses and methodology

The methodology of the dissertation served the goal of rethinking existing theories, models, analogies and concepts regarding state failure and statebuilding and of building an alternative model. This is an enormous area – labeled so far with different expressions, such as peacebuilding, nationbuilding, post-conflict reconstruction, etc. – and necessitates that one comprehensively analyzes – phrasing Prof. Zartman – or takes apart all the different terms and later puts it together as a synthesis that is in this case the Rubik's cube model. The empiric verification – as appeared in the critics of the opponents as which the dissertation lacks – could not be the goal of the present dissertation because the number of variables and factors are higher than the number of statebuilding exercises.

The three hypotheses – baseline or working assumptions as the opponents suggested calling them – help elaborate a new and comprehensive conceptual frame on a very complex field in order to ease the theoretic orientation. It is clear that the theoretic status of the assumptions is different. The first two assumptions are in a closer relation in a sense that they are more theoretic and conceptual questions and the best way to verify them is the assessment and re-conceptualization of the existing definitions. On the other hand – despite of the fact that the expressed methodological reduction of the dissertation was not to use comprehensive empiric cases – the third assumption is shot inevitably by the analysis and evaluation of the international practice on this field and related to the different dimensions of statebuilding. This effort is in this sense synthetic because it refers to empiric facts as well. Similarly to other scientific researches on the field of social sciences, the analysis of social phenomena is necessarily normative and empiric at the same time. Regarding the methodology, the challenge was the fact that the dissertation focused on a practical question by conducting theoretic research. It was a

conscious choice of the author to avoid the redundant information which could overburden the whole dissertation.

On the problem of state failure

The firs hypothesis was a statement that state failure is a trap of humanitarian and security threats from which these states are unable to escape by themselves. In order to support this assumption, the main task was to find the appropriate definition by re-organizing the existing knowledge in the literature.

Although, most of the international organization, leading think tanks and research groups and many scholars devoted energy and effort to find the definition of state failure the result was the birth of many competing views rather than a comprehensive terminology. The complexity of the phenomenon and the abundance of factors, conditions made the generalization almost impossible.

In our reading, state failure is a humanitarian problem and a security threat at the same time. The conceptualization of the phenomenon is the process of legitimization of interventions at the same time. In general, it means – and it is true that in social sciences we have to talk usually in conditional sentences – that without the help of foreign (f)actors, the situation in a failed state may not improve. It does not mean that there have been no examples of mainly internally driven development – as Peter Marton points out – in the history. Nevertheless, we have to keep in mind that the foreign intervention is not necessarily a direct military invasion, and the external dimension is always decisive. For instance, in the case of the mentioned Mozambique, the international community had the role in mediating the civil war.

The definition used in the dissertation re-conceptualizes state failure on the basis of security and in theory justifies international interventions. Because of the fact that per definition state failure is an international phenomenon which does not know borders and spills over neighboring countries, creating regional and in the worst case scenarios international instability. In the world of sovereign states, sovereignty protects all states from intervention under the aegis of the international law, but "cooperative sovereignty" means that sovereignty is not evidently attached to the state.

To sum up, we can label a state failed if it poses humanitarian and/or security threat either to its own population or to the external world. In this sense a dictatorship, or an authoritarian regime is failed or at least is on the margin of failing because it is not reliable in the long term whether the state is able to satisfy the needs of the people and not to pose security challenge to the outside world. In the modern world, authoritarian regimes cannot endure long because the external dimension, i.e. the international community does not treat them as a "full member" of the community. Thinking of the cube an ideal

typical failed state is a complete mess regarding the "starting position" of the cubelets, whilst an autocracy may seem to be close to perfect from one dimension (eg. security), whilst a total scratch from others.

On the existing knowledge related to statebuilding

The second main part of the dissertation examined the hypothesis/assumption according to which the logical answer to state failure is statebuilding. The dissertation focused on both the historical examples and on the normative prescriptions to state failure. The historical examples show clearly that the inevitably complex statebuilding processes cannot end with the same result in different situations and all the steps which need to be undertaken all have some prerequisites. That is the statebuilding exercise is necessarily sequenced. However, on the other hand the historical examples also suggest that different dimensions have strong effects on each other and their gradual development contributes to the success of the process, such as it happened in Germany or Japan. The normative frameworks and existing models also could not take a side whether statebuilding and democratization are sequenced or gradual processes. Both "camp" has convincing arguments, that is the truth is somewhere in between.

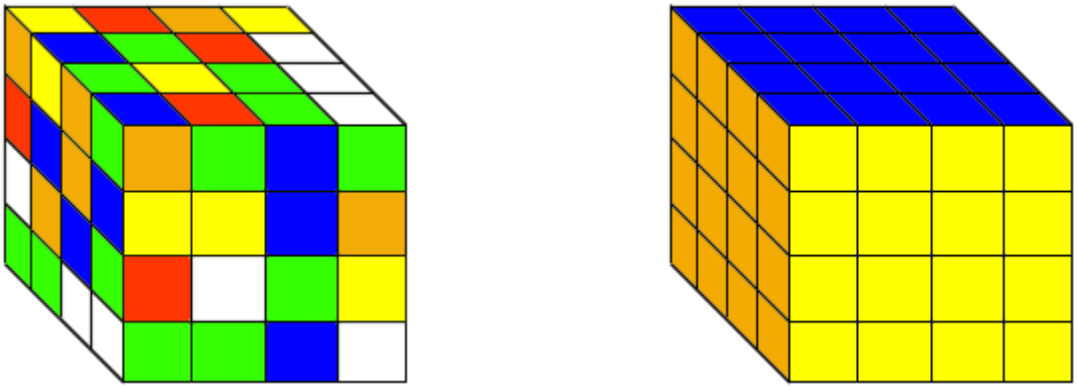
To sum up, the historical examples help understand the complexity of the process but are unable to provide clear and copyable blueprints. On the other hand, it is evident that normative models and logical frameworks of statebuilding draw conclusions from the historical examples. Thus, these examples are indeed necessary because they lead us to deeper understanding that statebuilding is influenced by the complex constellation of different latent and manifested factors, dimensions and sequences. Analyzing different factors which made statebuilding projects successful can give advice regarding the recent theoretical debates on statebuilding.

On the Rubik's cube analogy

The real added value of the dissertation is the new alternative model which includes all the achievements and lessons of and from the historical examples and existing models. The theories and normative models may show the strengths and weaknesses of the statebuilding process in general, but usually they cannot answer why the process is not linear in certain cases. The existing models all take a side in the academic debate on which elements of the statebuilding process we should focus.

The baseline idea behind the model was the intention to provide a "new heuristic device" of highlighting and understanding the basic coherence and dilemmas of the statebuilding's dimensions.

The innovative idea of using the Rubik's cube analogy has enjoyed attention of prominent scholars and the author was invited to international conferences to present his idea. The basic virtue of the analogy – differently from the existing models – is the possibility to demonstrate the permanent interdependent development of the dimensions and there is no need to overemphasize one or another dimension.



The Beginning and the End Situation of the Solution Process of the Rubik's Cube. Source: Hardwick n.d.

Dimensions/ *sequences*	*Basic needs*	*Interim authority*	*Emerging local ownership*	*National level development*
security	Stop fighting	Safe and secure environment for development - Avoid renewed fighting	Strengthening security institutions - legitimacy - local participation	Consolidate local capacity - exit point
institutional	Basic administration and authority	Transitional authority and the rule of law	"Power sharing" local vs. external	Participation and democracy
economic	Rebuilding key infrastructure	(Re-)provision of key public goods and services	Local initiatives and investments	Sustainable development
societal	Stop (ethnic, religious etc.) violence; violence is not the same as conflict	Address the causes of hostility – reconciliation	Civil society development	"Nation-building"
domestic	Alternative governance – overcome the spoilers	Interim mixed governance solutions - negative governance (stop not effective practice and transitions)	Local governance	National governance
external	(Humanitarian) intervention	Trusteeship	Regional security	Integration in the globalized world

The BIEN matrix of the dimensions and the necessary tasks of statebuilding

The alternative normative model of statebuilding explains the steps and factors in six dimensions and four sequences which mutually influence each other. The greatest challenge in verifying the assumption was the untreatable number of independent variables and the difficulty of incorporating them in a single and coherent model. Thus, the Rubik's cube model is necessarily normative because the definitions unavoidably build on the existing knowledge on this field. In this sense – as Prof. Zartman criticized aptly – despite of the fact that the main philosophy of the alternative model was to

counter the existing debates on the field that take a certain position and ignore the externalities, the author needed to follow a certain arguments to be able to handle the enormous interconnections, variables and dimensions in a single model even if it weakens the wish to stay evenhanded in the debates.

Security enjoys dominant attention during the first stage. Security here means a broader category than for instance simply concentrating on stopping fighting. Security means the satisfaction of the basic needs of the people in all dimensions. The need for external assistance is also predominant in the argument of the dissertation because the first hypothesis/assumption stated that a failed state is unable to escape the trap by itself. Furthermore, democratization of a "failed state" is a complex process of statebuilding, thus putting democratization and the development of the civil society in the 3rd and 4th stages does not mean that these processes are not present earlier. The sound constellation of "development opportunities" is needed in all dimensions, such as the necessity of the regional political regimes to support the democratization and statebuilding processes. The model did not intend to annul the existing models. It rather aimed at constructing a new schema of thinking by using the existing knowledge and experiences, i.e. eventually by "taking side". The analogy of the Rubik's cube's solution methodology helps understand, explain and anticipate the interconnected development of the dimensions through certain sequences. The alternative model which uses the analogy of the Rubik's cube solution methodology contradicts the arguments of both the gradual and sequencing "school". The reality shows that a statebuilding process is a permanent and dynamic development, but on the other hand the designers of a statebuilding exercise have to follow some steps in a certain order. This is also an answer why different statebuilding exercises showed different outcomes. The steps, the dimensions and the variables which influence the final outcome are different in each situation.

In addition, the model pays attention to the interaction and development of the different dimensions in each sequence. Differently from other normative models which overemphasize the role of a single dimension, the Rubik's cube analogy introduces the dynamic and simultaneous development of six dimensions: security-military; institutional; economic; societal; external and domestic. The connection among the dimensions is different in each sequence and the beginning situation is also not the same in case of different countries. The way of thinking is similar to Richard Little and Barry Buzan's argument (2001: 72-77) according to which sectors (dimensions) are only analytical devices and it depends on the researcher and the situation which dimensions are in a closer relation and which are needed to be examined together. That was the logic of the dissertation as well when it relied on the joint analysis of different dimensions in different constellations during the stages, such as the security, domestic and external during the first stage, or the security, external and institutional during the second stage. Using to many dimensions separately would have risked complicating the analysis to a point where it would have been impossible to write down any theoretic findings.

It was impossible to elaborate a set of universally needed tasks but it is possible to highlight the important problems in each dimension in each sequence. The dimensions are rather sets of different factors which influence the development of each other and eventually the success of the state. Differentiating among the dimensions is possible only on the theoretic level. This is due to the fact that the dimensions and factors are overlapping and their relation and interconnected development can be explained as the solution of "edge pieces" or "edge groups" of the Rubik's cube.

The future of the model and possible development of the analogy

The anticipated outcome of the dissertation and the introduced alternative model of statebuilding is a "theoretic crutch" for handling the interconnected dimensions and stages during the statebuilding process. The model is a good basis for further researches by serving as a method for analyzing the success or failure of statebuilding processes and by estimating the influence of different dimensions in certain situations.

Such a model as the Rubik's cube analogy is successful if it creates basis for future researches. In this sense, the author believes that the alternative model of statebuilding fulfilled this role. The author has been invited to several international conferences to present the model, and several international publications are in progress which are built on the model.

The model and the dissertation is the first step in the future research which intends to refine several questions by confronting the theory with the practical reality. As it can be read in the reviews of the opponents, there are important areas where the model can and should be developed further.

1) It is highly debatable – as Prof. Zartman and Marton both note – whether foreign interventions are needed at all. It will be necessary to analyze the ways how and why foreign actors participate in a statebuilding process: their intentions, grand strategies, their willingness etc. Furthermore, it has to be refined how much foreign involvement defines a foreign intervention. E.g. the foreign assistance of opposition NGOs, parties, or armed groups constitute foreign intervention?

2) What are the negative consequences of foreign interventions? As Prof. Zartman notes, the foreign crutch become habit which are difficult to drop. In connection with this, the basic question is the exit strategy and the conflicting ideas on it of the local stakeholders and the interveners. The major challenge is the timely displacement of the foreign authority and the responsible local succession.

3) The statements of the model can be supported by empirical data. The determined goal of the dissertation was not to use empirical cases, but it does not mean that a future research cannot provide a comparison between the ideal-typical Rubik's cube case and the real situation in certain countries. In this sense – as Marton points out – the analogy can be a baseline to develop further models adapted to specific cases or judge the performance of "development institutions" such as the World Bank. The next step in line with this argument could be a thorough examination of the possibilities in Afghanistan and elaborate a cube which fits in the Afghan reality.

4) A model is necessarily the simplification of the complex truth. There are certain cases where the beginning situation makes it impossible to find an algorithm to solve the cube (e.g. the color of the cubelets does not fit in the big constellation). Such a case is for instance, what Marton mentions, the political reality for instance in Sudan. The secession means that more cubes are born. In this case, the original cube is modified and the external dimension is extended by factors which were domestic before.

5) Another interesting question is: who is orienting a cube, because there is no such as a consistent international community that possess a single interest. And it is also questionable that there are evenhanded "smart hands" who are able to follow all the steps of the solution methodology and arrange cubelets in the right positions. The future research has to focus on the question of the obstacles of operationalization of the solution strategy.

To sum up, the Rubik's cube methodology tried to collect the key assumptions related to state failure, statebuilding and democratization and to characterize the interconnected dynamics of the different dimensions during the development through the four stages of the process. Its added value is the accomplishment which may generate further debates on the field.

References

Buzan, Barry and Richard Little, 2001. *International Systems in World History*. Oxford: Oxford University Press

Hardwick, Chris, n.d., Solving the Rubik's Revenge. URL: http://www.speedcubing.com/chris/4-solution.html (Accessed: January 12, 2010)

Marton, Péter ed, 2006. *Államok és államkudarcok a globalizálódó világban*. Budapest: TLI.

Zartman, I. William, 1995a. Posing the Problem of the Failed States. *In*: Zartman, I. William, ed., *Collapsed State*. London: Lynne Rienner. pp 1-14

Zartman, I. William, 1995b. Putting Things Back Together. *In*: Zartman, I. William, ed., *Collapsed State*. London: Lynne Rienner. pp 267-73