

Politics versus Development:

Is Evaluating in Fragile Contexts becoming Impossible?

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Background

- Norway and other Western engaging more in fragile and post-conflict situations: Afghanistan, Palestine Sudan, Western Balkans
- Complex situations involving “3 Ds”: Diplomacy (politics), Defence (security), Development
- Political leadership engagement \Rightarrow *Politics*, *Security* dominate (“War on terror”), *Development* poor third
- While most funds come from development budget *allocations* driven (at least as much!) by political, security concerns



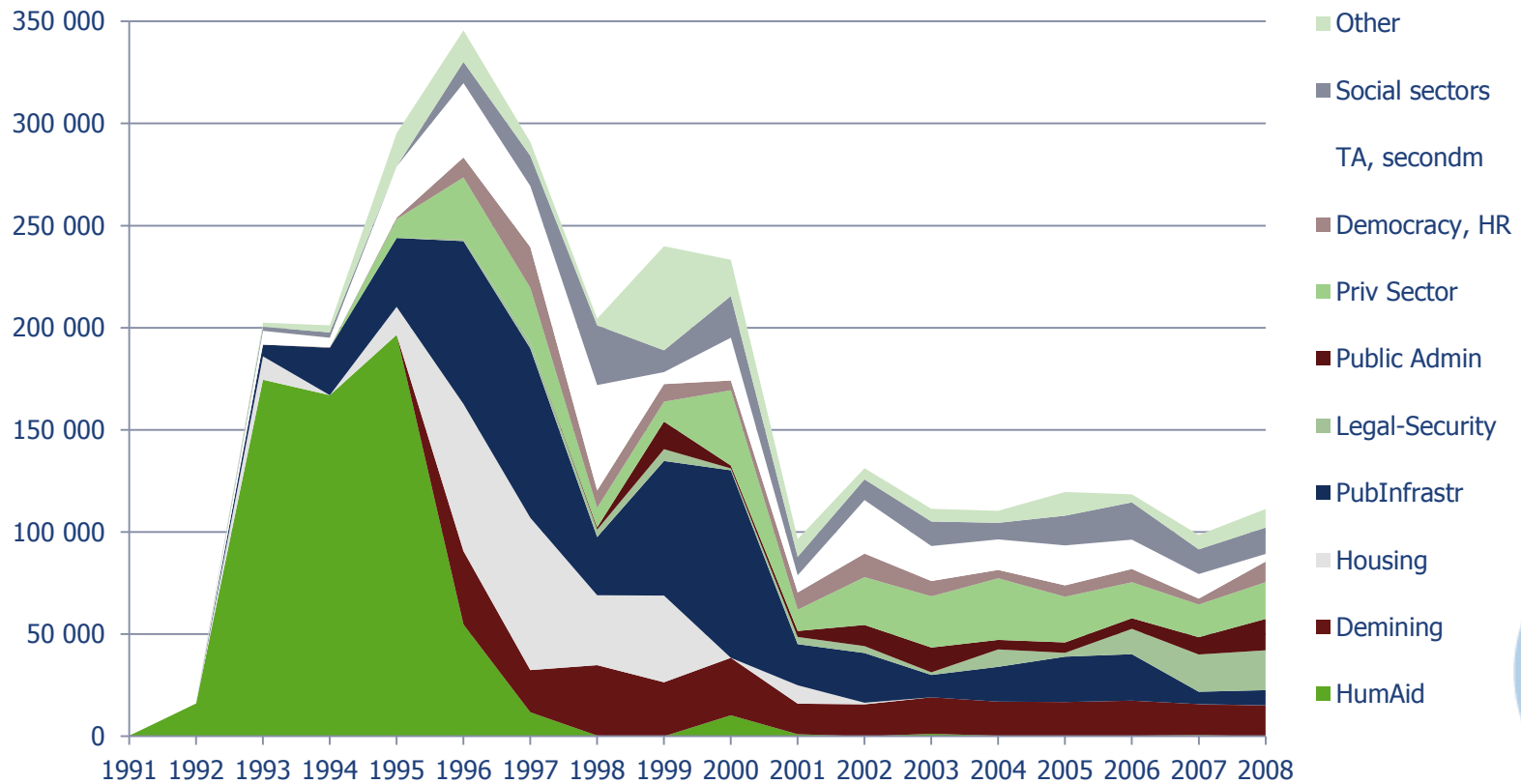
First Experience: Western Balkans

- Norway engaged as of 1991:
 - Bosnia war ⇒ Humanitarian assistance ⇒ Reconstruction ⇒ Development/building of state ⇒ Democratisation/political independence, Euro-Atlantic integration (EU, NATO)
 - Kosovo conflict: largely same pattern
- Norway spent NOK 10 billion 1991-2009
- Since considered “emergency” only annual allocations :
 - Wanted “flexibility” ⇒ ability to quickly change priorities
 - Annual project agreements (de-mining: 15 x in Bosnia)
 - Planning pro-forma, results reporting on activities, Outputs
- Little formal strategy or longer-term results focus
- Total portfolio badly fragmented - 4,000 agreements!



Norwegian Aid to Bosnia 1991-2008

Sector funding, in NOK '000



Assistance to Bosnia

- “Paris Agenda for Aid Effectiveness”: Donors have not applied this agreement well
- Fragile Environments: Donors in driver’s seat!
- After humanitarian phase ⇒ Core projects emerged:
 - Demining – Housing – Public infrastructure
 - Legal sector – Private sector dev’t
 - Human rights, democratization, reconciliation
- Most of funding to traditional development fields, standard operations
- While “quick response” funds clearly very useful, 10-20% of allocations would in most cases be sufficient



Bosnia as "Development Case"

- "Quick response" to standard development challenges ⇒ Efficiency over-riding Effectiveness concerns:
 - Poor local anchoring thus little local resource mobilization (funds, skills), commitment (Nor vs. Swe housing programs)
 - Poor definition of long-term results ⇒ unclear sustainability (infrastructure, private sector development, NGO sector)
 - Poor cross-cutting concerns – sectors "stand-alone" ⇒ missed opportunities for *political* objectives (reconciliation)
- Long-term Capacity Development in particular poor
 - Political analysis, understanding excellent – development instruments for addressing them poorly understood
 - Many classic development cooperation mistakes
 - No criteria for evaluating political decisions



Norwegian Quality Assurance

- Generally poor. In Western Balkans, *ten* evaluations after 18 years, 10 BNOK – *none* Outcome, Impact
- Auditor-General's office: (AGO)
 - Pointed to poor planning, oversight, control 1996
 - Neither AGO nor Parliament followed up
 - AGO with no different, "more appropriate" QA instruments
- Complex, conflict-rich, corrupt ⇒ "quality assurance lite" !
- *Especially* in fragile situations ⇒ popular participation, planning, ownership critical
- When offered alternatives, most seem to prefer voice and involvement to quickly delivered turn-key solutions
- No discussion on cost of keeping QA at acceptable levels



Can we Evaluate in Fragile Situations?

- Afghanistan:
 - Scanteam partner assessing performance-driven resource allocations in health, using Randomized Control Trials
 - National Solidarity Program, largest development programme, extensively monitored with “traditional” tools
 - Helmand province subject of innovative but data-intensive monitoring – DFID sees as innovative and promising
- Iraq:
 - Outcome evaluation for UNDP on USD 250 mill portfolio
 - Governance, performance assessments of multi-donor funds
- Fragile, conflict-affected situations exactly where need to apply the basic lessons learned
- If politics drives decisions ⇨ undermines accountability

