International Journal of Ethics and Systems

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Article information:

To cite this document:
Permanent link to this document:
https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOES-02-2017-0031

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State building in post-conflict zones: lessons from Palestine and Kosovo

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to explore the state-building attempts in post conflict zones. The neoliberal economic system has dominated the key international organizations such that the latter have designed their approaches for state building based on it. The framework of these approaches focuses on minimal state interventions in the economy and free markets by being as a "one size fits all". However, several prominent financial institutions such as the United Nations, World Bank and International Monetary Fund that have implemented some of these approaches in various regions resulted in limited success.

Design/methodology/approach – This paper is comparing two cases of state building before statehood and sovereignty, and this comparison comes in socioeconomic practices of international players and local governments.

Findings – This model has been carried out in Palestine and Kosovo but failed in meeting the expected demands of independence and prosperity. Instead, it resulted in more failures in the markets and caused a decline in the macro and micro economic indicators.

Originality/value – The key reasons for such failures, specifically in Palestine and Kosovo, are believed to be related to the top-down approach of policy-making, the lack of independence and sovereignty and the absence of popular and local participation in policies and plans. In such context, this approach has to be further revised to create a more inclusive participatory and representative model.

Keywords Neoliberalism, Palestine, Development, Conflict, Kosovo, State building

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

State building and economic development have been core areas of international relations since the end of the Second World War. Both concepts were developed at a later time in line with their increasing roles in international organizations. These organizations dominated the projects of state-building since the end of the Cold War and implemented the same approach in Africa, Asia and Europe.

Nevertheless, the neoliberal state-building became more questionable because of its contentious failures in the post-conflict zones. This is proven when several state building areas have witnessed economic failures and political unsustainability, while the same approach still exist as the only accepted model by the international players.

As a result of the Second Gulf War in 1991, the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) signed the Oslo accords in 1993 to establish a limited and gradually expanding autonomy in the West Bank and Gaza in parallel with bilateral negotiations as part of their