

New JSRP Paper on Public Authority

The JSRP has published the seventh installment of its working paper series, **JSRP Paper 7: 'Public Authority and the Provision of Public Goods in Conflict-Affected and Transitioning Regions'** by **Kasper Hoffmann and Tom Kirk**.



The paper uses a systematic literature review to suggest that three emerging critical approaches to the production of public authority are identifiable within the contemporary literature on conflict-affected and transitioning regions. These approaches are termed the 'public authority from below perspective', the 'hybrid political orders lens', and 'political settlements analysis'.

Although hailing from diverse disciplinary backgrounds, the paper shows that these approaches share important traits. First, they suggest that to better understand the nature of public authority in transitioning and conflict-affected regions it is necessary to uncover how public authority actually works rather than departing from a theory of the state. This includes accounting for how power is legitimated and practiced within each context, and how claims to public authority are connected to the provision of public goods such as security and justice.

Second, they view competition, conflict and contestation as enduring features of public authority in such contexts, and call for empirical examinations of these processes to inform understandings of social change.

Third, the approaches argue that public authority is an emergent property, always in production and never definitively formed. This implies that neat dichotomies such as formal/informal, private/public, and modern/traditional should be applied with caution by analysts seeking to understand public authority from the perspective of people living with insecurity and change.

Despite these similarities, the conclusion suggests the approaches should be unpacked and their normative assumptions challenged. Each can then be drawn upon to arrive at empirical understandings of how public authority is produced and exercised, and how it relates to the provision of public goods in conflict-affected and transitioning regions.

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