



Institute for  
State Effectiveness

## *Redefining the Role of the State in the 21st Century*

### **ISE State of the State Initiative**

#### **BUILDING A STRATEGIC/SHARED AGENDA**

The sovereignty gap – the gap between the recognition of the state as the foundation of global order and its capacity to address the needs of its citizens – presents a central global challenge. Today, the consequences of collapsed states are clearly evident: mass migration, terrorism, transnational criminal networks, and environmental degradation. In every region of the world, citizens are losing confidence and trust in their governments, the political process, and multi-national institutions. The forces of globalization and digital connectivity are disrupting traditional patterns of governance, economy and society, and contributing to a growing crisis in state legitimacy.

Since 2006, ISE has worked to build consensus around the idea that improving the functioning of states in a way that serves their citizens is essential to international order. Over the last decade, some countries have made impressive progress navigating the challenges of adaptation and stand as examples to leaders embarking on similar paths. Others have struggled to adjust to shifting local and regional challenges, and some have descended into violence and disorder. Now, an unprecedented combination of challenges is undermining established order and creating uncertainty in developed and developing countries alike. Simultaneously, changing demographics and technological innovations are presenting significant opportunities. The emergence of these disrupting factors, however, has not been met by a shared understanding of how to address the drivers of instability relating to the sovereignty gap or paradox, and navigate these uncharted waters.

To advance that understanding, several questions need to be answered: What have we learned collectively over the last decade? How should we best define and categorize the landscape for the state – the ‘state of the state’ – today? What are the key challenges and opportunities in the coming decade? And how might we collectively anticipate and prepare for this decade?

#### **ABOUT THE ‘STATE OF THE STATE’ INITIATIVE**

Launched in April 2016, the State of the State Initiative (SoS) process aims to reinvigorate a collective agenda on state effectiveness by assessing emerging global trends, building on the

lessons of the last decade of reform and state-building, and exploring the ‘how-to’ of making the state more effective and legitimate.

The Initiative brings together leading reformers and thought leaders from both the public and private sector and many different regions to assess and design strategies to tackle challenges to reform and development, and explore how the international community can support leaders in closing the sovereignty gap.

## **THE ROADMAP: KEY EFFORTS**

### **1. Global Consultations on the State of the State**

The Initiative has already begun a series of consultations with an international mix of country leaders, senior practitioners, prominent civil society figures, and experts to get a clear picture of the current landscape; key findings will be published in Fall 2016.

### **2. The Partners’ Consortium**

On 6-7 June 2016, ISE convened a meeting of senior figures from the public, private, and civil society sectors to reflect on challenges to and opportunities for the role and functions of the nation-state, and the status of current approaches to country reform and development. The meeting was co-hosted in New York City by the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF) and Smith Richardson Foundation (SRF), and co-chaired by RBF President Stephen Heintz and SRF Senior Vice President Marin Strmecki.

### **3. Dialogues and Issue Reports**

A series of regional dialogues and issue reports will explore specific themes, topics, and geographies with key partners from donor agencies, universities, government, philanthropy, and the private sector. We will also launch ISE’s new **Sovereignty Index**, which will provide baseline measurements and a dynamic tool with which to measure the sovereignty gap in individual countries.

### **4. Reformers’ Network and Advisory Group**

History has shown that leaders who have deep knowledge of local conditions and experience confronting challenges and identifying pathways for transformation generate the most creative and successful ideas. As part of the SoS process, a Reformers’ Advisory Group will be established to both guide the work and act as a sounding board and advisory panel. The group will include reformers from countries that have made successful breakthrough transitions, as well as those who are leading transformations today. The talent and energies of this group will be vital to the success of the larger initiative, and provide a platform for learning and sharing – thus enhancing opportunities for dialogue on the applicability of different approaches to contemporary challenges in governance and accountability.

## **5. A Strategic Agenda for the State in Times of Change**

At a final high-level forum, the Initiative will bring together national stakeholders with leading practitioners and scholars on development, security, and diplomacy to finalize a ten-year strategic agenda for the state in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a platform for advancing peace and stability.

### **Partner With Us**

ISE works with a range of partners to generate new ideas and find solutions to meet the challenges of reform and adaptation. We have a deep understanding of what has worked and why in many contexts – from urban development issues in Brazil and Singapore, to community participation in Indonesia, and citizen consultation in South Africa and Nepal. ISE carries out its work in partnership with like-minded organizations and initiatives, and is always looking for new opportunities to join forces with others. For more information on the Initiative and partnerships, please contact Marika Theros, ISE Fellow and Project Lead, State of the State Dialogue, at [marikatheros@effectivestates.org](mailto:marikatheros@effectivestates.org).