

PREFACE

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In more and more countries with challenged statehood, federalism is being discussed as a model for reform. Under various pre-conditions, expectations are being addressed towards federalism worldwide.

The ability of federalism to integrate diverging interests, autonomy movements, and territorial conflicts peacefully is emphasized. It is, however, apparent, that peace and development with or by federalism are not guaranteed. For federalism reforms, a dialogue with the community is essential, which has to take place in the context of a democratic system and by mutual consent on its principles.

The concepts of federalism and decentralisation are thus facing support as well as various challenges and political circumstances are rather deteriorating than improving. How can federalism help satisfying critical voices? What requirements need to be fulfilled to overcome economic negligence (or its impression) and to prevent the extension of social rifts? Which role do security forces play to overcome conflicts that tear at a nation's unity?

These questions were discussed at the International Munich Federalism Days 2016, the sequel to the Wildbad Kreuth Federalism Days series. More than one hundred political and social scientists, politicians as well as activists from twenty-two countries discussed in the four day-conference, under which circumstances political reforms, aiming at establishment of federalized structures and mecha-

nisms can be successful. This book presents their findings of the discussions from eleven countries.

Despite its challenges, the concept of federalism itself is increasingly sought after by countries harbouring inherent geographical or ethnical tensions. The decentralisation of political power can help unifying interests and thus strengthening the country as a whole, making it easier for its citizens to identify themselves with it. The cases of the Philippines, Nepal or Myanmar are good examples. Here, federalism has been included in the political discourse. In some countries like Israel or Ukraine, federal models are discussed for pacification, but have yet to leave the stage of theory (See Oleh Berezyuk's article on current obstacles for decentralisation in Ukraine).

On the other hand, the cases of Yemen and Nepal show that the decentralised allocation of power or resources associated with federalism can also be the source of unrest instead of its remedy (see Hari Bansh Jha's article on the reasons of the failed implementation of Nepal's 2015 constitution). This further leads to the question which is also being discussed in the later part of this book: do certain economic preconditions have to be in place to ensure a stable federal state or is a decentralised structure necessary to ensure an economic and social balance? Even stable democracies such as Germany, have to re-evaluate their mechanisms as the case of fiscal equalisation between the Free State of Bavaria and other German states shows.

In order to maintain stability in a democracy, armed forces and police can play a significant role as well. Armed conflicts and military juntas – traditionally supporting centralised structures – have prevented the full implementation of decentralised structures as examples in this book show. On the other hand, a decentralised security force (police) with local accountability can increase effectiveness. However, a transition from a centralised to a decentralised security force is a tremendous act which can leave a power vacuum or incur substantial costs (this challenge is illustrated in Luis Cedeño's article on the case of Venezuela).

This book mirrors the manifold challenges democracies face with the practical implementation of decentralised structures. At the same time, it provides ideas and solutions from various perspectives. For this reason, I am confident that this book will be a significant contribution to the international exchange on the topics of federalism and decentralisation.

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She served as Bavarian Minister of State for Federal Affairs and was a long-standing member of both the German Federal Parliament as well as the Parliament of the Free State of Bavaria.