

DRAFT

Adam Merriam

adam.merriam@gmail.com

4 May 2009

Thesis

Security Studies Program, Georgetown University

## **Failed State or Failed Concept? Deconstructing the Notion of the 'Failed State'**

### **Introduction**

Since the end of the Cold War, and especially after the terror attacks of September 11<sup>th</sup>, failed states have been viewed as a festering source of global instability that have implications far beyond the state's borders. The 2002 United States National Security Strategy audaciously claimed that, "America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones."<sup>1</sup> Failing states have been seen as potential incubators for transnational security threats, including terrorism, humanitarian disasters, transnational crime, drug trafficking, and the spread of disease. This perception seemed to be confirmed in light of the 9/11 terrorist attacks that were planned from al-Qaida's stronghold in Afghanistan and caused failed states to be seen as a core national security interest. However, under closer examination, the concept of failed states reveals itself to be stunningly superficial and misleading. Since the conventional wisdom regarding failed states tends to generalize, exaggerate core security interests, aggregate a diverse, unrelated group of states, and is trapped in Western-based conceptions of statehood, there are perilous traps for policymakers if they base decisions within the failed state paradigm. How can policymakers make nuanced, informed decisions if they do not understand the diversity of the problem and its relative importance within the larger sphere of the

---

<sup>1</sup> United States. The White House. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Washington: September 2002. Pg 1.

DRAFT

nation's interests and global security?

The answer to this question is the paper's *raison d'être*, as it will illustrate the theoretical flaws that underpin the notion of the failed state and the policy implications that emanate from this deficient framework. This paper will begin by looking at theories of state and state development, the historical development of the failed states concept, and discuss the broad overarching themes in the body of literature on failed states. Next, the paper will critique the theoretical framework of the failed state and examine the flaws that detract from its usefulness. Finally, this paper will then illustrate how the theoretical shallowness of the failed state concept leads to misguided policymaking and a sub-optimal use of a nation's strategic, military, economic, and political resources.

### **Definitions and Concepts**

Before undertaking a theoretical and policy-based critique of failed states it is necessary to provide clarification for certain definitions in order to better understand this paper's analysis. First, I define a state as a political community with sovereignty over a population within a set of borders. This paper defines sovereignty as the application of authority within a given territory free from external interference. Authority, I define as the implicit and explicit extension of power by the state and its component institutions in order to control behavior, preserve order, and ensure state survival. Legitimacy is the explicit or implicit consent of those governed to the institutional authority of those in power.

### **Failed States Literature Review**

## State, Security, & Authority

The conventional wisdom that failed states pose substantial security threats to the global order is embodied in Robert Rotberg's 2003 *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* and 2004 work *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. To Rotberg the threat of failed states is so vital he describes it as, "...the critical, all-consuming, strategic and moral imperatives of our terrorized time."<sup>2</sup> Rotberg's conceptual framework regarding failed states categorizes failed states into collapsed, failed/failing, and weak states. Collapsed states are exceedingly rare, and examples include contemporary Somalia, 1990s Afghanistan, and 1980s Lebanon. Collapsed states are defined by an absence of political authority and the obtainment of security and political goods through private or ad hoc means.<sup>3</sup> Failed/failing states are defined by enduring violence between the government and an armed group or between different communities for political power.<sup>4</sup> Other features of failed states are the inability to control borders, loss of authority in certain parts of the territory, predatory elites, flawed political institutions, and limited provision of political goods.<sup>5</sup> Rotberg cites Angola, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Sudan, Sierra Leone, and Burundi as examples of this type of state.

The third facet of Rotberg's conceptual framework of failed states is weak states, which he breaks down into three categories. The first type of weak states is those that are

---

<sup>2</sup> Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators." *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Brookings Institution Press, 2003. Pg. 24

<sup>3</sup> Rotberg, Robert I. "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004. Pg. 9

<sup>4</sup> Rotberg 2003. Pg. 5-8.

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

weak due to widespread insecurity, such as Sri Lanka and Colombia. These states face insecurity in terms of insurgency or low-level civil war, but even though they may not control their entire territory they can provide political goods somewhat effectively and sustain economic growth.<sup>6</sup> These states may also be referred to as fragmented states depending on the degree of control they have over their national territory. The second type of weak states are states that have intercommunal tensions, but have mitigated them temporarily to prevent the emergence of violence.<sup>7</sup> Examples of these states are Fiji and contemporary Lebanon. The third type of weak state is the enduringly frail, which describes a wide variety of states including Haiti, Laos, and Mali, amongst others. These states, according to Rotberg, are perpetually weak due to consistently low economic development and limited provision of political goods, but have not crossed into failure because of a lack of internal cleavages or a drastic decline in quality of life.<sup>8</sup>

To understand the framework that underlies the literature on failed states, it is necessary to understand how statehood is defined and perceived. This understanding includes the roles and responsibilities of the state, and what it must have for it to be successful or strong, and what it must lack for it to be weak or failing. When looking at whether a nation-state is weak, failing, strong, or collapsed, the first measure that is examined is generally security. Within the body of literature, security is the one constant component in determining what makes a state and whether it is in the process of failure. This is not to say that security is the sole decisive factor in determining what a state is or whether it is failing, but according to Rotberg, security is the most crucial element on the

---

<sup>6</sup> Rotberg 2004. Pg. 14-15.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 19-20.

hierarchy of political goods as it is difficult for individuals and groups to substitute publicly provided security with private security.<sup>9</sup> He continues by saying that security is the most crucial element because if basic provision of security is adequate even if the political, economic, and social functions are not, the state can possibly avert failure by preventing widespread violence.<sup>10</sup> I. William Zartman disagrees by claiming that since all state functions are so intertwined it is difficult to perform them separately and, "...a weakening of one function drags down others with it."<sup>11</sup> Susan E. Rice and Stewart Patrick claim that though Rotberg factors in economic and political indicators, "His study defines state weakness as principally a function of conflict and human insecurity...."<sup>12</sup> Even though the state's effectiveness and stability is not wholly dependent on its capacity to provide security, it is the state's control on the monopoly of force that best permits its other functions.

Within the failed states literature the state's security role is seen as a function of the Weberian model where the state has a monopoly on the use of legitimate violence within a society. Max Weber said, "Today, however, we have to say that a state is a human community that (successfully) claims the monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force within a given territory."<sup>13</sup> Institutions and individuals may use force only to the degree the state permits. This use of authoritative force manifests itself in the state's provision of physical security to its population. According to Rotberg, security is

---

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>11</sup> Zartman, William I. "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse." *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Ed. Zartman, William I. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995. Pg. 5.

<sup>12</sup> Rice, Susan E. and Stewart Patrick. "Index of State Weakness in the Developing World." Brookings Institution. 2008. Pg. 5.

<sup>13</sup> Weber, Max. *Politics as a Vocation*.

composed of several broadly defined responsibilities including, control of sovereign borders, protecting the citizenry from lawlessness, preservation of order, and the ability to exercise this authority effectively over the state's territory.<sup>14</sup> However, Robert H. Dorff asserts there are two ways in which a state can fail to provide security. The first way in which the state fails to provide security is that it is too weak to extend its authority to the periphery and it ceases to be legitimate.<sup>15</sup> This can create a vacuum for warlordism, militias, criminal organizations, or a retreat to relying on ethnic, religious, clan, or tribal ties to provide security. The other way in which a state can fail at its security responsibility is that if it wields its authority so indiscriminately against a state's citizens that the public provision of security is perverted from a public good to an arbitrary means of terror.<sup>16</sup> This situation one can see in North Korea and other totalitarian states. In this paper, I disagree that with the contention that this demonstrates state failure for reasons to be discussed later. What is common about many of these descriptions of state and security is the concept of authority, which must be wielded with credibility and capability in order to be effective.

### **Authority & Institutions**

Since authority is important in the state's wielding of force, it is necessary to examine how it operates institutionally and acts a communicative device between state and citizen within a failed state. A state that has a flawed provision of security generally has flawed institutional capability and structure, which if are eroded over time will lose

---

<sup>14</sup> Rotberg, Pg. 5-8.

<sup>15</sup> Dorff, Robert H. *Failed States After 9/11: What Did We Know and What Have We Learned?* International Studies Perspectives. 6 (2005): Pg. 21-23.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid., Pg. 15.

their ability to communicate authority. If the provision of security is understood to be an extension of state authority to control borders and protect citizens from various threats, then these institutions should be organized in a fashion that allows them the capacity to execute these roles. However, in the failed state this is not the case, and the institutions that provide authority are structured in a manner that pervert their intended responsibilities.<sup>17</sup> Over time if the state cannot use its authority to provide justice, security, or other goods, citizens will look to groups that can address their needs more immediately. This plants the seeds for creating a parallel power structure within the body politic.<sup>18</sup> According to the State Failure Task Force Report, in many failed states these are minority (or out of power) groups, which fuels identity-based resentment and stokes tension for revisions to political institutions.<sup>19</sup> Since the control of the state is tenuous and ability to exert authority limited, institutions will be structured to only provide security to those groups whose allegiance is integral for the continued control of the state or to those regions that can pose a direct threat to the center.<sup>20</sup> Herbst says that even if the state has capability to exert authority and use institutions to bolster authority, it may not seek to further its authority so long as it can sufficiently keep power at the center and advance its supporters' interests.<sup>21</sup> In this sense, the institutions of the state create a

---

<sup>17</sup> Nixon, Rod. "The Crisis of Governance in New Subsistence States." Journal of Contemporary Asia. 36.1 (2006): Pg. 81.

<sup>18</sup> Vinci, Anthony. "Anarchy, Failed States, and Armed Groups: Reconsidering Conventional Analysis." International Studies Quarterly. 52 (2008): Pg. 305-306.

<sup>19</sup> Goldstone, Jack A, et al. "State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings." McLean, VA: Science Applications International Corporation, 30 September 2000. Pg. 35.

<sup>20</sup> Herbst, Jeffery. "Let Them Fail: State Failure in Theory and Practice." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004 Pg. 306.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, Pg. 310.

situation in which their inability to exert authority throughout the territory creates power vacuums that lead to rivalry for state control, ethnic, communal, or identity based tensions, and inclines the state to view its own people as a threat and increases the likelihood that it will use its security apparatus in a predatory manner.

In a similar vein, Susan Rose-Ackerman asserts that the faulty legal and judicial institutions of the failed state play a role in its inability to provide security. Since the state is unable to provide security over its administrative territory, the legal and judicial institutions also suffer from this ineffectual implementation of authority. The lack of security on the periphery is seen in the uneven application of judicial and legal authority. Those on the periphery have insufficient means of addressing their security needs with an authority that is uninterested and unable to rectify injustice, increasing the impunity of criminality.<sup>22</sup> It would follow that the legal and judicial apparatus function like the security one, in that they are meant to reinforce the power of one group or the center, where it can buttress elites' control of the state. This incapacity of the security or legal institutions erodes the power of the state as sub-state actors take on more unsanctioned functions of authority. The rise of the sub-state actor in mitigating his own insecurity and providing justice is due to a communicative disconnect on the part of the state that is caused by improperly or insufficiently wielding authority.

Zartman says when a state's citizens lose their identification with the state it is due to the state's inability to provide security and other political goods, which erodes its confidence in these entities and the state ultimately loses its legitimacy to use norms and

---

<sup>22</sup> Rose-Ackerman, Susan. "Establishing the Rule of Law." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004. Pg. 182-183.



laws to restrain the individual's behavior.<sup>23</sup> This loss of identification with the state means the state has lost "...its power of conferring a name on its people and a meaning to their social action."<sup>24</sup> In many ways, Zartman's claim seems to imply that the inability to provide security and the incapacity to properly provide other political goods breaks the binds of the social contract. The individual's submission to the laws of the state weakens when there is a starker realization that the state has reneged on its most basic provision, physical security. When this disconnect is consolidated the citizen no longer makes demands of the state for it cannot follow through effectively and the state collapses into a vacuum as it has abdicated its rights to power.<sup>25</sup>

### **Economic Functions & Failed States**

Though security is the pre-eminent attribute of what a state is, and whether it can be determined to be strong, weak, or failing, there are other indicators of state failure which a state must fulfill to be endowed with "stateness." States that are generally unable to use their monopoly on legitimate force to provide security have trouble performing their economic and social functions. What economic and social functions must be performed by the state in order for it to be not seen as failing or weak is varied in the literature. Since most failed states are also economically developing states, the ability of the state to ensure sustainable and relatively equal economic growth is hindered by flawed institutions, difficulty collecting revenue, and an inability to mitigate disruptive economic shocks. What are economic indicators that could demonstrate state failure? Rice and

---

<sup>23</sup> Zartman, Pg. 5.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., Pg. 6.

Patrick look at Gross National Income, the recent growth of GDP, inflation, income inequality, and regulatory quality, which they define as the ability of the state to foster the development of private sector growth.<sup>26</sup> Another economic indicator is the State Failure Task Force Report's finding that states with a higher openness to international trade have a significantly lower risk of state failure.<sup>27</sup> These factors seem to be specious as they have difficulty differentiating whether they are causes of state failure or if they are effects of such failure.

The failure to maintain some semblance of economic control can have detrimental effects for the health of the state because unless it can play a positive role it can ultimately undermine its own authority by allowing the creation of a black market economy or rampant corruption. Without effective institutions to regulate economic activity and with few lucrative opportunities within a society, a state that has little authority to enforce laws and regulations renders itself unable to root out or deter corrupt bureaucrats, thus limiting the spoils of economic development and over time demonstrating the state to be a parasitic entity to its civilians.<sup>28</sup> Corruption can be more pernicious in states that have natural resources, such as with coltan in the DRC or oil in Nigeria, as the immense wealth at stake can be used to benefit those necessary for the elites continued hold on power without benefiting the state as a whole.<sup>29</sup> In extreme cases, the state becomes the only source of enrichment in society and leads to rise of challengers to the state that see control of the state apparatus as a means of gaining

---

<sup>26</sup> Rice and Patrick 8.

<sup>27</sup> Goldstone, Jack et al. Pg. 22.

<sup>28</sup> Van de Walle, Nicolas. "The Economic Correlates of State Failure." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004 Pg. 101.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

immense wealth. Collier argues this dynamic has produced violent rebel groups with no discernable political agenda beyond plunder in places such as the DRC and Sierra Leone.<sup>30</sup> In states lacking the ability to extract natural resources or those with extremely low revenue bases, economic incapacity is especially threatening because it starves the state of tax revenue to accomplish the basic tasks it already has trouble doing. What these various indicators of state failure illustrate is an institutional incapacity and inability to strike the right balance in its economic role and control inflation, corruption, inequality, or facilitate growth. Within most definitions of failed states, it is the inability of the state to play a useful economic role that can lead to state failure because if it is consistently seen as ineffective or even worse, predatory, citizens will pursue an economic livelihood outside the state's purview and the citizen's economic interests and those of the state will be at odds.

### **Failed States & Social Goods**

Some of the literature mentions the social goods that the state must provide, and how the inability of the state to provide these social goods represents an indicator of failure. The various types of social goods that the state must provide are so broadly defined its difficult to decipher whether the state's inability to provide these goods leads to failure. One factor included by several authors as an indicator of state failure is infant mortality.<sup>31 32</sup> Infant mortality is a reflective indicator of general quality of life,

---

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 96.

<sup>31</sup> Goldstone, Jack, et al. Pg. VI.

<sup>32</sup> Rice and Patrick, Pg. 9.

economic development, and the state's overall provision of public goods.<sup>33</sup> The Fund for Peace examines the state's ability to deal with demographic pressure, in order to measure environmental sustainability, economic productivity, and population pressures.<sup>34</sup> Rice and Patrick examine primary school completion, undernourishment, access to sanitation and clean water, and life expectancy.<sup>35</sup> Chickering and Haley see systemic gender inequality as demonstrating the marginalization of an important group in society that often is the most vulnerable when the authority of the state becomes weaker.<sup>36</sup> Whether the inability of the state to provide social goods is due to lack of capacity and capability or institutional incompetence or corruption, the failure to provide the basic necessities of life, whether it be food, education, water, or health care, indicate a form of failure that shows the state cannot capably respond to the fundamental needs of its citizens.

### **Literature Critiquing Failed States**

#### **Aggregating Diverse States**

Now that this paper has laid out an extensive description of what is seen to constitute failure on the part of the state, it is also necessary to examine the literature of those that are skeptical of the failed state concept. On a theoretical level, the critiques of failed states are based on a few central ideas. One of the most prominent critiques is that the term conceptually aggregates a broad range of states as failed, even when failure is measured on a continuum in which there are different gradations of failure. Charles T.

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., Pg. 35.

<sup>34</sup> "Failed States Index." Fund for Peace. 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Rice and Patrick, Pg. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Chickering, A. Lawrence, and P. Edward Haley. "Strong Society, Weak State." Policy Review. 143 (June/July 2007): Pg. 66.

Call says, since the indicators of failed states are so broad it ends up including states that encompass such a wide variety of different cultural, historical, social, and institutional contexts that it becomes an unhelpful definition.<sup>37</sup> He criticizes Rotberg's labeling of the Ivory Coast, Iraq, and North Korea as failed states. Call asserts, "Despite having made the most serious attempt to develop criteria to distinguish 'failing', 'failed' and 'collapsed' states, Zartman, Rotberg, and some policy-oriented projects have had difficulties developing indicators that are intuitively logical or widely shared."<sup>38</sup> The diversity of indicators and the lack of commonality amongst the states that are referred to as failed or failing render the definition as unhelpful and deficient from a theoretical standpoint.

### **Western Subjectivity**

The labeling of failed states is also seen as plagued by the problem of Western subjectivity. Boas and Jennings see the label of failed state as inherently political and based on Western perceptions of their security interests. They assert, "...that states called 'failed' are primarily those in which this recession and informalisation of the state is perceived to be a threat to Western interests."<sup>39</sup> However, in other states in which there is a similar type of state functioning, failure is tolerated and in some cases exploited for economic and security reasons.<sup>40</sup> They contrast the labeling of Afghanistan, Somalia, and Liberia as threatening failed states compared to Nigeria and Sudan, whose states are

---

<sup>37</sup> Call, Charles T. "The Fallacy of the 'Failed State.'" Third World Quarterly. 29.8 (2008): Pg. 1494.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Boas, Morten and Kathleen Jennings. "'Failed States' and 'State Failure': Threats of Opportunities?" Globalizations. 4.4 (2007): Pg. 476.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., Pg. 482.

failing but are not seen as security threats as these situations are acceptable to the interests of great powers. In a similar vein, notions about failed states are wrapped up in the idea of Western paternalism or neo-imperialism, as it is viewed as the West interfering in the political and economic affairs of a backwards state and redeeming it in the image of the successful Western model.<sup>41</sup> In examining failed states, especially after September 11<sup>th</sup>, this notion of viewing failed states through the prism of security interests was very evident as terrorism, rather than human security matters, became the primary threat of failed states and made it a more pressing security matter.

Mary Manjikian sees Western paternalism manifest itself in the form of an illness narrative in the theoretical discourse of failed states. To her, the strong or healthy state views the sick or failing state as a virus that if left untreated may spread to other states and threaten global stability.<sup>42</sup> By accepting the failed state as ill, it legitimizes the strong state infringing on the authority and sovereignty of the failed state, and restructuring or curing the state according to its definition of what a healthy state is, which is generally the Western model.<sup>43</sup> This narrative creates a theoretical dynamic which allows for the aggregation of diverse states as failed, because the failed state becomes a “thing” that resembles only other sick or dead things, rather than being imbued with its own distinct history or culture.”<sup>44</sup> In this sense, the failed state becomes objectified and in need of Western salvation to prevent their death or collapse.

According to Bilgin and Morton, Western subjectivity in the theoretical framework of

---

<sup>41</sup> Call, Pg. 1499.

<sup>42</sup> Manjikian, Mary. “Diagnosis, Intervention, and Cure: The Illness Narrative in the Discourse of the Failed State.” Alternatives. 33 (2008): Pg. 341.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., Pg. 349.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., Pg. 343.

failed states is seen in labeling states as failed, failing, or weak because it is a false and arbitrary notion that is fitted into the context of Western foreign policymaking. They argue that the flaw in categorizing gradations of failure, as the kind offered by Rotberg, is that, "...the arbitrary and discriminatory nature of such taxonomy is barely recognised. Yet precisely such arbitrariness characterises the diagnoses of state failure within Western foreign policymaking."<sup>45</sup> The Western subjectivity inherent in the failed state discourse tends to see the failed state as it relates to the threat it poses to Western interests, which leads to a paternalism that ultimately leads to flawed policies and a misguided conception of statehood.

### **Theoretical Critiques of Failed States**

#### **Borders & Authority**

Now that there has been a substantial look at the literature dealing with failed states and the critiques of the concept, this paper will now attempt to synthesize the theoretical and policy flaws of the concept to illustrate its emptiness as a descriptive phrase and uselessness as a policy tool. The literature of failed states suffers from a serious deficiency in its inability to decouple state failure or weakness from the failure to reflect the Western notion of statehood and the responsibilities that entails. Many Western nation-states spent decades or even centuries and much blood and treasure in order to consolidate territory suitable to their historical, economic, and sociopolitical context in which they could effectively exert their authority. The states of Africa and the rest of the Global South gained independence within the last fifty to sixty years and are

---

<sup>45</sup> Bilgin, Pinar and Adam David Morton. "From 'Rogue to 'Failed' States? The Fallacy of Short-termism." Politics. 24.3 (2004): Pg. 173.

governing countries based on artificial borders reflecting 19<sup>th</sup> century European power politics rather than on the ability to successfully exert authority over the territory or historical, political, and cultural bonds that would make state formation easier. This is not to say that these borders should be voided in order for more viable entities to exist, as there is little desire in the international community or within these states for such a revision that might create more unviable states. However, it is important to take the artificiality of the borders into account in a geographical and political sense when considering state failure. In some cases, the poor successor states that emerged inherited territories that could not sustain a sovereign, viable political entity.

For example, landlocked Tajikistan is 93 percent mountainous, 50 percent of which is uninhabitable land, which has led to the development of regionalism as the nation's four regions have geographical and technological constraints on their communication and commerce.<sup>46</sup> This has led to major economic and political impediments to building a functioning state. William Beeman said, "Tajiks [were] given an impossible piece of territory with a disparate population and [were] forced to make a nation out of it."<sup>47</sup> Niger also has geographic constraints that hinder its ability to escape perpetual state weakness. Niger occupies territory almost two times the size of Texas and borders seven different nations.<sup>48</sup> The nation, one of the hottest on Earth, has 80 percent of its territory covered by the Sahara Desert and aside from a few fluctuating commodities is only capable of limited agriculture. With environmental constraints on

---

<sup>46</sup> Dadmehr, Nasrin. "Tajikistan: Regionalism and Weakness." *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Brookings Institution Press, 2003. Pg. 248.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> "Niger." CIA World Factbook. 19 Mar 2009. 25 Mar 2009.



## DRAFT

any sustainable economic production, it would be extremely difficult for any Nigerien government to obtain enough taxable revenue to exert their authority over a massive territory and protect long borders.

These two cases are important in understanding that geographical constraints are holdovers from artificial borders and may help explain why some states are perpetually weak or on the brink of failure. In these cases, the flawed notion of failed states becomes evident as the problem is the geographical limitations that the territory has on the state's ability to exert authority. The problem is not simply a matter of institutional capacity or economic development, but one of finding an alternative model in which authorities in these states can best (if possible) exert authority, though it might not fit into the Western model of statehood and the requisite monopoly on legitimate force.

In this sense, an odd paradox arises as the international community and the states of the Global South adhere to the composition and inviolability of the current borders, yet these very same borders do not accurately reflect the capability of the state to exercise authority. In order to work within this difficult dynamic perhaps it is necessary to understand "state failure" in this sense rather than its inability to mirror the Western notions of statehood. With geographical constraints, boundaries that do not match the possible exercise of power, and the integration of diverse peoples within the state, perhaps the Weberian model of statehood is not applicable.

### **Misreading Failure**

In a sense, "state failure" is a misnomer as it assumes that at some moment in time there was an "effective" or "normal" state. The notion that the state went from

being effective to failed further undermines the basic utility of the concept. For example, Afghanistan and Sudan illustrate instances in which the state was born into failure and has remained since. Since independence from the United Kingdom in 1919, the Afghan state as conceived of in the Western sense has never truly existed. Afghanistan is a nation divided on ethnic and tribal differences. The country is composed of Pashtuns, Uzbeks, Tajiks, Hazaras, and numerous other smaller ethnic groups, and has been never able to form a national consciousness.<sup>49</sup> Martin Ewans says, that while Pashtuns may refer to themselves as Afghans, other groups refer to themselves in terms of their ethnic identity.<sup>50</sup> Even within the Pashtun community, there are divisions between tribes and sub-tribal groupings and Pashtuns have a greater connection with their brethren in Northwest Pakistan than their compatriots. The writ of the state has never really gone beyond the cities to the countryside where ninety percent of the population lives, making these communities responsible for security, provision of services, and economic activity.<sup>51</sup> Governments have existed but have never been strong enough to sustain a degree of political stability. This dynamic has prevented any real exertion of state authority as control is stymied by warlordism and tribal parochialism that prevents the growth of a state that is not based on corruption and neo-patrimonialism. This lack of stateness can be evidenced by the difficulties the Karzai government and U.S.-backed coalition have had in creating the conditions for an effective state.

Sudan is another example of a state that is considered failed even though there never was an effective state that ruled over its national territory in a coherent and

---

<sup>49</sup> Ewans, Martin. *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics*. Perennial, 2002, Pg. 11.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., Pg. 4.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., Pg. 11.

effective manner. The product of Ottoman and British colonialism, the territory of Sudan was always somewhat imprecise and Britain's colonization of Sudan was more for strategic reasons as it created a buffer with France and was not economically exploited.<sup>52</sup> Prunier and Gisselquist say the Sudanese state became *al-hukum*, which emphasizes the exercise of power rather than administrative efficiency and economic development.<sup>53</sup> Upon independence in 1956, Sudan became constantly mired in internal strife with the Arab-dominated North at war with the South Sudanese or the Western region of Darfur. Control of the state is used merely to retain power and extract the benefits of state control to bolster those whose support is necessary to the maintenance of power, mostly Northern Arabs.<sup>54</sup> The state in Sudan exists primarily as a tool to enhance the power of the North at the expense of others. Therefore, applying the label of state failure to Sudan is a misleading concept as there has never been any sort of traditional political community within its borders and the state has never truly exercised authority over the entirety of the territory. Failure assumes a decline in something that once has been normal or expected, but based on the general context Sudan emerged from, the state has never had any modicum of effectiveness and labeling it a failed state obscures its deeply inherent flaws and demonstrates an ignorance of what "Sudan" is.

These two examples highlight a common flaw of the failed state concept in that the inherent defects of the state are misread as failure. When many of these states achieved independence, in some cases with no tradition of political governance over the

---

<sup>52</sup> Prunier, Gerard and Rachel M. Gisselquist. "Sudan: A Successfully Failed State." *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Brookings Institution Press, 2003. Pg. 108-111.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., Pg. 109.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., Pg. 113.

territory it inherited, its attempts to mimic Western ideals of statehood were unsuccessful. This creates a theoretical quandary in that how can state failure be arrested and ultimately reversed if the state's very foundations are fundamentally flawed. This problem rests on a flawed dichotomy of stateness, dependent on whether a particular state exhibits strong institutions and a capacity to exert authority over its territory.<sup>55</sup> The reality is much more complicated. Call writes that the state failure concept is rooted in a teleological assumption that a state can reach a final endpoint in which it can function as an effective polity.<sup>56</sup> Bessinger and Young astutely predict that, "Although the tug of liberal democracy and market economy is strong, as a referential emblem of 'normality' and as a global cachet of respectability, given the enormous problems of stateness that afflict these regions there is no longer a certainty that these represent the eventual destinations."<sup>57</sup> This assumption can lead to dangerous misperceptions of failure, as by focusing on the strength of authority at the center one may miss the alternative structures that can emerge from sub-state groupings, whether they be tribal leaders, regional authorities, or other forms of community organization that can exert authority and provide services.<sup>58</sup> By insisting on adherence to Western notions of statehood, the problem in some of these states is exacerbated and prolonged by excluding the possibility that a state with alternative, yet effective features can emerge in a manner more applicable to the circumstances of that state. This problem highlights our misperceptions of failure in that failure is defined as the inability to meet Western notions of the state, when it is the

---

<sup>55</sup> Bilgin and Morton, Pg. 173-174.

<sup>56</sup> Call, Pg. 1499.

<sup>57</sup> Young, Crawford. "The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics." African Affairs. 103 (2004): Pg. 48.

<sup>58</sup> Call, Pg. 1499-1500.

attempt to impose the Western notion of the state on a society with little political tradition, arbitrary borders, and different cultural and historical experiences that has created the situation it seeks to reverse. With such a theoretically flawed notion of state failure, it would follow that the policies that the West and the international community pursue are unsurprisingly misguided.

### **Broad Conceptual Framework**

Another problem with the failed state concept is that it links states and situations under a common rubric even though there is little commonality between them. Any term that can be used to encompass North Korea, Colombia, and Afghanistan, is truly lacking in explanatory power. Though much of the literature defines North Korea as a failed state, I argue that labeling it as such is misleading. Since the state's survival is dependent on its all-encompassing police state and continued isolation, there is no reason for the regime to reform its institutions in any meaningful way. Even though North Korea is economically backwards and has prevalent starvation and poverty, the autarkic Stalinist regime has a strong military and security service that exercises authority, though in a morally perverse manner.

In order to show how an overly broad model is used to describe failure, we shall return to Rotberg's definitions and categorization of states into collapsed, failed, and weak. He refers to Somalia as a collapsed state as over the past two decades it has remained mired in anarchy with no central government. He also cites 1990s Afghanistan and 1980s Lebanon as historical antecedents to Somalia. However, the notion of "failed states" Rotberg espouses is where his framework has problems with clarity and

consistency. He lists the failed states of the past decade as Afghanistan, Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Burundi, Angola, and the DRC.<sup>59</sup> State failure is not an ahistorical concept as it emanates from a historical, political, economic, and social context from which institutions fail and authority cannot be exerted. Reasons for the failure of these states may emerge from similar sources whether it was the kleptocratic leaders that used the state as their personal fiefdom and engaged in predation as in Sierra Leone and the DRC, or because of substantial ethnic and religious differences that have blocked the formation of a coherent political community as in Burundi and Sudan. Though it is not even as clear-cut in seemingly similar cases as Sierra Leone deals with disputes over control of mineral resources and the DRC has to deal with externally backed militias, a diverse ethnic milieu, and a massive territory that makes it extremely difficult to exert effective authority. How each state's failure manifested itself was also extremely different. Liberia and Sierra Leone gradually collapsed; Congo was the site of a regional proxy war; Sudan, which has effective authority in the Northern part of the country, has continued to fight the same struggles it has been since independence. Obviously all these states have a commonality in terms of violent internal struggle and government ineffectiveness, but referring to them all as failed states provides no insight on the nature of their struggles, the context they arose from, and what possible solutions could be used to solve them.

The concept of weak states that Rotberg uses to categorize states that have the potential to descend into failure due to insurgent activity, internal tensions, or endemic weakness is equally as broad. The distinction between failed states and weak states at

---

<sup>59</sup> Rotberg 2003, Pg. 10.

## DRAFT

times is confusing and incoherent. The threshold for what is weak and what is failing seems to be tenuous, as this category includes countries that lack any coherent similarity beyond surface level distinctions. Take for example the inclusion of Colombia and Sri Lanka into this category. Both state face insurgencies that control portions of national territory, but both are still able to provide political goods to its populace relatively efficiently. However, this explains nothing as to what the causes of these circumstances are or what possible resolutions could be. Colombia is fighting a drug-fuelled insurgency with ties to powerful cartels that have had a corrupting effect on state institutions and have allowed for violent crime to become pervasive throughout the country. Sri Lanka is fighting an ethnic Tamil insurgency that has killed tens of thousands over the decades it has persisted. Whether they are called weak or fragmented states the circumstances of the situations make simple categorization of these conflicts, at best superficial and at worst misleading as they call for different remedies, whether they be economic development and institutional development in Colombia or ethnic reconciliation and political reform in Sri Lanka. This shows the vagueness of the failed states concept as violence may manifest itself in numerous ways and the causes and solutions are only evident when considered in the context of a certain situation, making broad generalization and categorization to be of little utility.

### **Theoretical Flaws & Misguided Policy**

#### **Terrorism, National Security, & Failed States**

Now that this paper has documented the theoretical flaws of the failed state concept it is necessary to illustrate how the misguided theory informs poor policy in

dealing with these states. There are three major problems with the policies pursued to remedy the problems of failed states: the perception of them as vital security threats, the treatment of the wrong symptoms, and the lack of institutional resources and capabilities to deal with the problem. After the Cold War, failed states were viewed as threats primarily in terms of humanitarian catastrophe, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Though this is still part of the threat of failed states, the main threat they pose shifted to terrorism after the 9/11 attacks. This section will look at the various risks that could emanate from failed states and whether they are severe enough to the extent that they pose a substantial threat to national interests and global security. The definition of national interests I will work from is what Kennan called the two fundamental objectives of U.S. foreign policy. Though his conception of interests is rooted in the Cold War, they are broad and relevant enough to be of use today. The national interests are "...to protect the security of the nation, by which is meant the continued ability of this country to pursue the development of its internal life without serious interference, or threat of interference, from foreign powers."<sup>60</sup> The second national interest that is pursued through U.S. foreign policy is "...to advance the welfare of its people, by promoting a world order in which this nation can make the maximum contribution to the peaceful and orderly development of other nations and derive maximum benefit from their experiences and abilities."<sup>61</sup> From this conception of national interests this paper will examine the exact nature of security threats from failed states and whether it is a vital national interest to rehabilitate them.

With the shift to a unipolar system and the entrenched hegemony of the liberal

---

<sup>60</sup> Gaddis, John Lewis. *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*. Oxford University Press, 2005. Pg. 26.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid.



## DRAFT

international order in the early 1990s, many states faced a surge of violent upheaval as the loss of great power patrons and the spread of democratic government acted as a sledgehammer to the façade that had covered up flawed states. These years saw violence and war that shocked the bounds of human consciousness in the former Yugoslavia, Rwanda, Somalia, Congo, and the Caucuses. The violent upheaval is not very intrinsically different from that which was seen during the Cold War, which saw violent instability and conflict in Guatemala, Nicaragua, Nigeria, Burundi, Yemen, and Mozambique, amongst many other places.<sup>62</sup> Though the sources of the conflict may differ, the reason why this instability is perceived to be more dangerous is based on three reasons. First, in a more globalized world, instability in one country has the possibility of spreading and causing regional instability that hinders the freer flow of commerce. Second, the dominance of a liberal international order and the ease of communication has entrenched in the global consciousness the notion of a common humanity in which oppression of people anywhere threatens people everywhere and must be remedied even at the expense of sovereignty. The third reason this instability is perceived as different and more threatening is that in the shift from a bipolar to a unipolar world, what previously would have been seen within the context of great power rivalry is now seen in how it threatens the post-Cold War global order. This paradigm shift places all violent upheaval as a threat to the global order that must be resolved in order for it to economically thrive and entrench its liberal norms.

Though it is often said terrorism is the greatest threat that emanates from failed states, it is unclear whether this is empirically true. Afghanistan did not become a serious

---

<sup>62</sup> Walt, Stephen M. "Another 'Axis' to Grind? The Dangers of Glibness." Foreign Policy. 20 Feb 2009.

base of operations for Al-Qaida until the Taliban had taken secure control of most of the nation. By September 11<sup>th</sup>, the Taliban had control over 90% of Afghan territory and only in this brutally imposed stability did Al-Qaida have a base to train and plan operations. Terrorist organizations would find a difficult time thriving in a failed state, especially one ravaged by civil war, as their ability to train, finance, and recruit would be hindered by becoming merely another side in the conflict. Terrorism is more likely to thrive in “weak” states where the government lacks the will or capacity to root out terrorists such as in Northwest Pakistan or the Yemeni countryside. Failed states are not particularly breeding grounds for terrorists either. Most of the foreign fighters in Iraq came from Egypt, Syria, Sudan, and Saudi Arabia, only one of those a failed state.<sup>63</sup> As of 2004, only 13% of terrorist groups on the U.S. Treasury Department’s list operated in failed states.<sup>64</sup> As Simons & Tucker claim, failed states do not produce international terrorists because the skills valuable to terrorism are better utilized locally and because it would be difficult for such people to travel or operate unnoticed in more functional, interconnected societies.<sup>65</sup> Some of the violence occurring in failed states may have a regional context but generally the violence is the product of local circumstances and employed to achieve localized objectives.

Even if it is accepted that failed states are a source of terrorism that threatens global security, military force has shown to be of limited utility in eliminating these footholds. Al-Qaida need not even occupy a state to threaten global security. The use of

---

<sup>63</sup> Simons, Anna and David Tucker. “The Misleading Problem of Failed States: A ‘Socio-geography’ of Terrorism in the post-9/11 Era.” Third World Quarterly. 28.2 (2007): Pg. 388.

<sup>64</sup> Ibid., Pg.389.

<sup>65</sup> Ibid., Pg. 388.

communication to coordinate and recruit as well as using the unrestricted flow of global finance to fund operations allows terrorists to operate worldwide in a decentralized, autonomous manner. The infrastructure and logistical deficiencies of failed states, and the fact they are removed from the international financial system make them less than optimal places to be based. In this sense, it is not failed states that should be the focus of counterterrorism efforts, as policies should concentrate on limiting terrorist's efforts to exploit instantaneous communication and obtaining financial resources. Furthermore, another way to combat terrorism would be to improve domestic security in one's own state because Al-Qaida can launch terrorist attacks "...without having access to a safe haven such as Afghanistan, as subsequent attacks in London and Madrid demonstrate."<sup>66</sup> Therefore, seeing terrorism through the prism of failed states is misguided because it overlooks the fact few terrorists come from failed states, terrorists need a modicum of stability to operate, require access to the global communication and financial systems, and have adapted their organizational model to operate by exploiting the underbelly of globalization so they do not need an established safe haven to threaten national interests and the global order.

### **Treating the Wrong Symptoms of Failure**

Another problem that stems from the theoretical flaws of the failed state concept is that policy tends to focus and remedy the wrong symptoms. Call mocks the Fund for Peace's insistence that policymakers promote policies for failed states that strengthen core institutions, including military, police, civil service, the justice system, and

---

<sup>66</sup> Ibid., Pg. 389.

leadership.<sup>67</sup> The focus on strong institutions is well intentioned and in some cases the weakness of state institutions is a major problem. However, it may be the case that strengthening state institutions may be counterproductive in certain situations by either perpetuating oppression or one group's marginalization at the hands of the state. This focus on strengthening institutions and ensuring order may reflect a misreading of the symptoms of state failure because in some cases a strong or consolidated state power may be the problem and not amenable to the Western ideals of a Weberian state. In states where military and police are the source of predation and the judiciary, political leadership, and civil service are innately corrupted, then reforming these systems rather than consolidating power might be the answer. By treating the symptom of state strength instead of state reform, the West continues to buy into the notion that these states can only exist in the Western model rather than one more suited to their circumstances and social context.

One overlooked symptom of state failure that until recently has been absent in policy prescriptions for resurrecting failed states has been the notion of civil society. Failed states, especially ones that have suffered protracted brutal violence, endure what French sociologist Emile Durkheim called "anomie," a condition in which the previously accepted values no longer are valid and no socially approved lines of behavior exist.<sup>68</sup> With peoples' trust in the state at a low point, and trust in their compatriots equally as strained, any rebuilding of the state must restore the loss of trust and increase interaction across the social realm. Rebuilding civil society can go beyond reducing tension and

---

<sup>67</sup> Call, Pg. 1496.

<sup>68</sup>Fituni, Leonid L. "The Collapse of the Socialist State: Angola and the Soviet Union." *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Ed. Zartman, I. William. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995. Pg. 155.

increasing trust and communication in failed states. It also can be an integral player in increasing state capacity, effectiveness, and legitimacy. Christopher J. Coyne draws from De Tocqueville in saying, "...that the maintenance and sustainability of the political is directly dependent on the nonpolitical," especially if the establishment of a democratic state is the goal.<sup>69</sup> Realistically, civil society in and of itself is not a panacea as it may produce groups that are oppressive, undemocratic, and as likely to cause state failure.<sup>70</sup>

However, Zartman suggests institutions must be built from the bottom up, though there must be someone at the top temporarily so institutions can be built in order to return the state to the center of political and social organization in civil society.<sup>71</sup> Dealing with civil societies rather than just states can allow for the emergence of an increased and broad means of association on social, economic, and political interests, rather than narrow group interests, while creating a safety net and a check on the rebuilding state apparatus. Even allowing local control of state building initiatives gives citizens a stake in the functioning of the state.<sup>72</sup> At the same time, a diversified civil society can facilitate contacts between citizens and politicians, while performing an oversight function to deter predation and corruption. Focusing on civil society may bolster the state and reduce tension and mistrust in a society, and may produce a more contextually accurate political structure, rather than a focus on rebuilding Western style structures that led to failure in the first instance. This requires a substantial shift in how policymakers view failed states, away from state-centric notions of strengthening flawed institutions to

---

<sup>69</sup> Coyne, Christopher J. "Reconstructing Weak and Failed States." The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies. 31.2 (Summer 2006): Pg. 147.

<sup>70</sup> Ibid., Pg. 153.

<sup>71</sup> Zartman, Pg. 269.

<sup>72</sup> Chickering and Haley, Pg. 68.

construct a Weberian-based Western state to accepting a structure that may not resemble a Western concept of the state, in which state and society interact differently.

### **Institutional Capacity & Flawed Policy**

Another substantial impediment to altering policy solutions for failed states is a general lack of institutional capacity and resources that keeps policy wedded to an outmoded approach. Since the U.S. sees security threats from failed states primarily in the context of terrorism, international crime, nuclear proliferation, and regional instability, its not surprising that policy primarily focuses on strengthening states' institutions and ability to exert authority.<sup>73</sup> This has two negative effects in that by viewing failed states within the context of Western security threats policy tends to focus on strengthening flawed state institutions rather than making them more effective and accountable and by creating an impulse towards intervention. Though our threat perception now includes threats from non-state actors, the training and bureaucratic institutions within the Department of Defense and State Department are very much state-centric. Since the nature of the problem in failed states is seen through Western security interests, policy tends to focus on strengthening the already flawed state, which may have been one of the main causes of the security problem.

An example is the growing relationship between the U.S. and Pakistan after 9/11. Pakistan had a role in bringing the Taliban to power in order to bring stability to Afghanistan so that it could act as strategic depth in a war with India and as means to open up Central Asia to Pakistani goods. After the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan and the

---

<sup>73</sup> Wyler, Liana Sun. "Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service. 28 Aug 2008.

## DRAFT

movement of Taliban and Al-Qaida fighters into Northwest Pakistan, the U.S. provided billions in military aid to Pakistan. The assumption was that the Pakistani military could defeat the fighters there and help remove a threat that would push Afghanistan into failure. This approach failed. The Pakistani military had control over foreign policy, ISI's ties with the Taliban created an impediment, the military was trained to fight a war against India and not a counterinsurgency, and continued U.S. backing of President Pervez Musharraf created turmoil and stoked anti-Americanism within Pakistan. The focus on Pakistan's military capacity to root out Taliban and Al-Qaida remnants was counterproductive in that it created a backlash towards the Pakistan government, exacerbated the situation in Afghanistan, and pushed Pakistan towards failed statehood.

The Pakistan example illustrates several reasons that the flawed theoretical notion of failed states leads to flawed policy proposals. First, it was assumed that by strengthening the military power of Pakistan to exert their authority in the Northwest region of their country it would bolster the power of the state and arrest Afghanistan's failure and Pakistan's weakness. Second, there was poor understanding of the Afghan and Pakistani state as it failed to factor in the ties between Pashtuns on both sides of the porous border. Furthermore, the unusual relationship between the central government and Pakistan's Federally Administered Tribal Areas made it extremely difficult for military action to be successful without provoking a public backlash from the tribal leaders that felt their autonomy was being infringed upon. Third, the focus was primarily on using military force and there was little commitment to development aid in these territories. Lastly, by relying solely on the Pakistani state, especially the military, to root out the Taliban and Al-Qaida there was a failure by the U.S. to engage in a dialogue with

the Pakistani people. American reliance on a flawed Pakistani authority to carry out the military operations eroded its legitimacy as the military were seen as fighting the Americans' battle for them and the Pakistani people did not see that they had a personal stake in the fight against terrorism. This shows that the flawed understanding of failed states within institutions and bureaucracies will produce and reinforce policy rooted in state-centric ideas modeled on Western notions of statehood. This will lead to counterproductive policies such as attempting to strengthen a state institution (Pakistan's military). The U.S. failed to achieve its objectives and pushed both Afghanistan and Pakistan closer to the brink of collapse.

Flawed conceptualization of failed states and the misguided policies that are products of that misunderstanding are evident in America's defective policy planning and implementation. Though things have improved over the past several years in terms of developing capacity for development in failing states and assisting civil society, the U.S. still relies heavily on states in implementing development assistance.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, there are limited financial and personnel resources in the State Department and USAID, which has lessened the effectiveness of their initiatives and hampered the formation of a coherent strategy. The more state-centric side of the failed state assistance generally goes towards strengthening state institutions that can exert authority in order to uphold Western security interests, especially for counterterrorism.<sup>75</sup> Even though depending on the nature of the assistance this can be beneficial, it does not really resolve the flawed foundations of these states and perpetuates the notion that only through strengthening the capacity to exert state authority can failure be prevented. This reflects the inability to

---

<sup>74</sup> Chickering and Haley, Pg. 72.

<sup>75</sup> Wyler, Pg. 15.



## DRAFT

understand that state failure goes beyond the control of the monopoly on violence within a society and is the result of a series of interconnected historical, cultural, economic, and social dynamics that must be incorporated into any strategy. The focus on this type of assistance illustrates that policymakers have internalized the theoretical flaw of failed states as solutions are based on Western assumptions of statehood, Western interests, applying strategies to a broad swath of states, and misreading the causes of failure.

## **Conclusion**

After examining the theoretical defects of the term failed states, and examining the misguided policies that are based on this flawed idea, it is evident that by viewing failed states under a broad paradigm the scope of policies that can be undertaken to remedy these situations is limited. Any sensible grand strategy must marshal its limited military, economic, political, and technological resources in a manner that fits its desired ends of fulfilling national interests and ensuring global security. It is extremely difficult to manage this balance when looking at failed states as a global trend based on similar circumstances. The current theoretical knowledge on failed states creates problems in policy by hindering the creation of a coherent strategy and creating broad-based strategies for countries regardless of their importance, current situation, nature of failure, and historical circumstances. The solution here is not another phrase or narrative that will create the same overarching generalizations and problems that failed or weak states do, but just a greater sense of restraint and cautiousness to realize that development of states is a long, difficult, and often bloody process. This critique of the failed states concept has several important implications. First, it allows for the emergence of flexibility and nuance

## DRAFT

in formulating policy and strategy, as failed states need to be viewed outside ahistorical generalizations and Western perceptions of statehood. Second, this critique of failed states allows policymakers to develop strategies that focus on what can be done rather than what should be done. This allows policymakers to realize that the Weberian state is often not a desirable or feasible end goal and that idealistic expectations for state-building missions are not appropriate. Lastly, it calls into question whether failed states are vital or threatening to American security interests. This is because state-building missions with idealistic, teleological end states will not necessarily remedy security threats because their objectives do not necessarily address the source of the security problems. Thus, if external actors are to involve themselves in failed states they must realize the limits of their power to influence a situation and not try to reinforce the Western state without concern for a state's history and circumstances.

Works Cited

- Bilgin, Pinar and Adam David Morton. "From 'Rogue' to 'Failed' States: The Fallacy of Short-Termism." Politics. 24.3 (2004): 169-180.
- Boas, Morten and Kathleen Jennings. "'Failed States' and 'State Failure': Threats or Opportunities?" Globalizations. 4.4 (2007): 475-485.
- Call, Charles. "The Fallacy of the 'Failed State.'" Third World Quarterly. 29.8 (2008): 1491-1507.
- Chickering, A. Lawrence and P. Edward Haley. "Strong Society, Weak State." Policy Review. 143 (June/July 2007): 59-80.
- Coyne, Christopher. "Reconstructing Weak and Failed States." The Journal of Social, Political, and Economic Studies. 31.2 (2006): 143-162.
- Dadmehr, Nasrin. "Tajikistan: Regionalism and Weakness." *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Brookings Institution Press, 2003. 245-260.
- Dorff, Robert H. "Failed States After 9/11: What Did We Know and What Have We Learned?" International Studies Perspectives. 6 (2005): 20-34.
- Ewans, Martin. *Afghanistan: A Short History of its People and Politics*. Perennial, 2002.
- "Failed States Index." Fund for Peace. 2008.
- Fituni, Leonid L. "The Collapse of the Socialist State: Angola and the Soviet Union." *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Ed. Zartman, I. William. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995. 143-156.
- Gaddis, John Lewis. *Strategies of Containment: A Critical Appraisal of American National Security Policy During the Cold War*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

DRAFT

Goldstone, Jack A, et al. "State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings."

McLean, VA: Science Applications International Corporation, 30 September 2000.

Herbst, Jeffery. "Let Them Fail: State Failure in Theory and Practice." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004. 302-316.

Manjikian, Mary. "Diagnosis, Intervention, and Cure: The Illness Narrative in the Discourse of the Failed State." Alternatives. 33 (2008): 335-357.

"Niger." CIA World Factbook. 19 Mar 2009. 25 Mar 2009.

Nixon, Rod. "The Crisis of Governance in New Subsistence States." Journal of Contemporary Asia. 36.1 (2006): 75-101.

Prunier, Gerard and Rachel M. Gisselquist. "Sudan: A Successfully Failed State." *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Brookings Institution Press, 2003. 101-123.

Rice, Susan E. and Stewart Patrick. "Index of State Weakness in the Developing World." Brookings Institution. 2008.

Rose-Ackerman, Susan. "Establishing the Rule of Law." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004. 182-212.

Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators." *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Brookings Institution Press, 2003.

Rotberg, Robert I. "The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States." *When States Fail*:

DRAFT

- Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004.
- Simons, Anna and David Tucker. "The Misleading Problem of Failed States: A 'Socio-geography' of Terrorism in the Post-9/11 Era." Third World Quarterly. 28.2 (2007): 387-401.
- United States. The White House. The National Security Strategy of the United States of America. Washington: September 2002.
- Van de Walle, Nicolas. "The Economic Correlates of State Failure." *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*. Ed. Rotberg, Robert I. Princeton University Press, 2004. 94-112.
- Vinci, Anthony. "Anarchy, Failed States, and Armed Groups: Reconsidering Conventional Analysis." International Studies Quarterly. 52 (2008): 295-314.
- Walt, Stephen M. "Another 'Axis' to Grind? The Dangers of Glibness." Foreign Policy. 20 Feb 2009.
- Weber, Max. *Politics as a Vocation*.
- Wyler, Liana Sun. "Weak and Failing States: Evolving Security Threats and U.S. Policy." Congressional Research Service. 28 Aug 2008.
- Young, Crawford. "The End of the Post-Colonial State in Africa? Reflections on Changing African Political Dynamics." African Affairs. 103 (2004): 23-49.
- Zartman, William I. "Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse." *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*. Ed. Zartman, William I. Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1995