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Towards a taxonomy of failed states in the New World Order: decaying Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and Haiti

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From the end of World War II until 1991 stability in the international state system was maintained by the two hegemonic powers—the USA and the former Soviet Union. During this period the internal weaknesses of certain member states, aggravated by irrational economic policies that led to low levels of economic growth, political corruption and dismal human rights records, were, to put things mildly, overlooked by the major powers in order to keep the weaker states within their spheres of influence. Now, however, some of these 'Fourth World', 'collapsed' or 'failed' states, as they are generically and somewhat incorrectly called, have imploded in full force, with the most graphic and heart-wrenching pictures making it difficult for even die-hard realists and isolationists to ignore.

Whether it be ethnic genocide in Rwanda, its cleansing counterpart in the Balkans, anarchy in Somalia, or Haitian 'boat people' heading towards south Florida, events in failed states cannot be ignored—at least not long before calls, faxes and electronic communications urging politicians to 'do something' start pouring in. But what is to be done? The trepidation surrounding US intervention in Haiti, Rwanda and Somalia, and US reluctance to get deeply involved in Bosnia (until recently) and Liberia attest to the absence of a well thought out and consistent strategy within the US foreign policy establishment and the larger world community. Indeed, even the phenomenon—failed states—is poorly defined. The term was made popular by the current US ambassador to the UN, Madeline Albright, but has not received the type of careful scrutiny that it deserves. Gerald Helman and Steven Ratner's excellent article, '*Saving failed states*', which appeared in the Spring 1993 edition of *Foreign Policy*, contains a practitioner's suggestions of what to do about failed states, but their attempt at developing what could pass for a taxonomy is rather feeble.

For example, Helman and Ratner put Bosnia, Liberia and Somalia in the same category, because, they say, 'governmental structures have been overwhelmed by circumstances'.[1] However, Helman and Ratner do not go on to discuss what these structures are, when in fact they are very important—if for no other reason than the fact that the circumstances surrounding state failure dictate how severe their difficulties will be and how much it will take to get them back on their feet. Besides, what states have not had their administrative and political systems

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'overwhelmed by circumstances' in recent years? Appearing in the winter (1995) edition of the *World Policy Journal*, Ali Mazrui's article on failed states focused exclusively and understandably on those of sub-Saharan Africa, which, of the five continents, has perhaps the largest concentration of such states.[2] William Zartman's book *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Autority* also does the same: it essentially depicts the all too familiar and painful travails of failed African states; yet sub-Saharan Africa does not have a monopoly in this area. Failed states are equal opportunity entities: depending on one's definition, they can be found in any part of the world.[3] This article will attempt to (a) develop a global taxonomy of failed states and (b) identify the factors that are associated with their failure. Using Haiti and Somalia, the article will conclude by exploring the pitfalls of external intervention in failed states.

The state

First, what is the state? The state may be defined, in the Weberian sense, as a territorial entity ruled by an authority that has a monopoly over the legitimate means of violence and that is recognised (or at the very least tolerated) by members of the polity and the larger international community. The key words are: territory, polity, authority backed by the monopolistic control of the legitimate means of coercion, and recognition at home and abroad. However, things have changed considerably since Weber's time, so much so that the modern state has for the past 70 years also been responsible for the delivery and/or strict regulation of a wide range of services of such significant externalities and economies of scale as to make their provision in less than optimal quantities by the market highly likely.

Protection against the hazards of fire, garbage collection, mail delivery, road construction and public utility services—eg electricity and telephone—are usually undertaken by public authorities, or regulated by them, to secure adequate supply, prevent price gouging and reduce the magnitude of the 'free rider' problem.[4] The state is also increasingly recognised as the 'natural' guardian of what the French call '*le patrimoine national*, meaning that it is expected to protect the environment and the nation's natural resources. Finally, the advent of the welfare state in the West in the 1920s and 1930s further enlarged the scope of public sector responsibilities to include not only coercive monopolistic control over a given territory, the delivery of externality-laden services or their regulation and environmental protection, but also the redistribution of wealth to the least fortunate members of the *polis*. In sum, the activities of the state may be broadly subsumed under the following categories: extractive, protective/regulatory and redistributive.

Conceptualising failed states

By and large, 'failed states' may be identified as those in which public authorities are either unable or unwilling to carry out their end of what Hobbes long ago called the social contract, but which now includes more than maintaining the peace among society's many factions and interests. The degree of

'stateness' that exists in a given social formation might be assessed in terms of the following questions: is there a well defined territory that is internationally recognised? Is there a polity whose social boundaries can be more-or-less delineated and which has a general sense of belonging to the country and state in question? How effective is the control exercised by whatever authority structure lays claim over the territory and polity? In other words, do public authority figures have a monopoly over the means of coercion nationally, or are there parts of the country that are off-limits? Are taxes—as opposed to tributes paid to local lords acting in the name of the state—collected, and do they make their way into state coffers?

If the delivery of externality-laden services is part of the state's responsibilities, as it is in many developing countries, how often does the garbage (garbage being a metaphor for all other public services) get picked up—if at all? How effective is state control of the natural environment—ie to what extent is the so-called eminent domain of the state protected from the predatory practices of poachers and illegal loggers? Because the welfare state is primarily a Western luxury that only rich countries can afford, it is probably not a good idea to measure the extent of 'stateness' in the Third World (much less in the Fourth World) by whether public authorities fulfil a redistributive function, lest one runs the risk of stretching the concept 'failed states' so much as to render it almost meaningless. However, a more general question might be raised, namely, does the state have any influence at all on legal private sector activities?

Using both the classical Weberian definition of the state and its non-coercive, public services delivery capacity, it should be clear that not all states in the developing world are characterised by the same degree of failure, although failure may be traced to a common origin: an overall breakdown of the corpus of formal and informal rules governing society, accompanied by the disappearance of formal authority or its emaciation. Consequently, rather than gathering all failed states into one pile it makes sense to situate them along a continuum, starting with those that meet none of the criteria associated with successful statehood—internally recognised territory with a monopolistic authority exercising effective control over it, working constitutions, widespread agreement over societal ideals, etc—to those that meet some of them. (Presumably the 'successful' cases are those in which the state fulfils all of its ascribed functions, or, more realistically, most.) This way of conceptualising allows for distinguishing among states in terms of the severity of their failure, and most importantly, calibrating external intervention according to where states are on the continuum. Failure to appreciate the specificities of failed states may lead to the adoption by the international community of Procrustean policies, which are likely to fail, in the process making external actors even more reluctant to intervene in future cases.

Let us now explore the full spectrum of scenarios that can be plotted along the imaginary continuum. On one extreme, moving from, say, left to right are those failed states that may have internationally recognised borders but no centralised authority (eg Somalia). It must be said, however, that at the moment failed states of this type are rather rare, and let us hope that they remain so. Equally rare is the territorially-challenged state where there is an authority that is internationally recognised (though not necessarily by every single member of the community of

states), but the territory and polity that are juridically under the control of the recognised authority are ruled by another country. Palestine and Kuwait (during the Iraqi occupation) are examples of this type of failed state, which, again, like its anarchic counterpart, is as uncommon as it is untenable—in the long run.

Moving away from the extreme point of the failed states continuum, one finds in greater frequency cases in which some states have international juridical authority over a given territory and also what appears to be centralised authority, but in which their leaders lack the capacity to exercise power in any meaningful way. This deficit in the efficacious display of state power may, first of all, be a result of the presence of a counter-insurgency group (or groups), which may in fact be in control of large chunks of the national territory. These 'liberated zones' are often forbidden territories for government officials and may operate with separate constitutions, police forces, judges and economies; in essence, they become states within states. Cambodia, Nicaragua (under the Sandinistas) and Sri Lanka (now) are examples of this type of failed state. Counter insurgency movements are not the only threat to the effective exercise of authority. There are states—eg Haiti—whose history of weak centralised authority stems more from the absence of modern administrative structures, low levels of political development, communications and transport backwardness, and benign neglect of the hinterland than from the challenges posed by counter-military forces.

Finally, some states may have all the formal imprimaturs of statehood *à la* Weber, but members of minority groups may perceive themselves to have little in common with the majority and may be waiting for the opportune moment to use the right of exit. In this type of state, there are typically a formal economy and an informal one, where the bulk of economic activities may occur and which may be meant to benefit specific sub-communities within the state. Politically, the appearance of normalcy is largely maintained by authoritarian means (eg Tibet under Chinese rule). As soon as there is a democratic opening, however, 'oppressed' communities may begin to insist not only on greater autonomy, but outright break-up from the erstwhile state.

As a consequence, shrewd leaders understand that there are always strict limits to democracy to avoid the implosion of the state. Some, like Ataturk of Turkey, may go to great lengths to create a sense of national identity out of what is essentially a fractured, if not to say artificial, polity. The former Soviet Union crumbled with such breathtaking speed precisely because it contained within it polities that could not care less about the Soviet state, and because Gorbachev apparently seriously miscalculated the consequences of limited reform. Even before 1990 the Georgian Mafia had long found ways of circumventing the diktats of Moscow to benefit Georgia, as had the Chechens, the Ukrainians and the many other nationalities which formally made up the Soviet empire, but had long ceased to be, if they ever were, 'Soviets'.

A taxonomy

Based on the panorama presented above, it is now possible to construct a taxonomy of observable failed states using more or less concrete categories and examples. Five types of failed states are thus identified. First, there are anarchic

states, which by definition have no centralised government whatsoever. Here armed groups acting under orders from warlords, but sometimes also on their own, fight it out for the eventual control of a non-existing state; in the interim fighting may take place for the control of a region, a city or neighbourhoods thereof, and even for buildings of strategic, symbolic and life-sustaining importance (food warehouses seem to be a favourite target). Armed confrontations may also have no specific aim, as they are often triggered by boredom, the intoxicating effects of local stimulants, and the emotional immaturity of teenage fighters. Somalia and Liberia provide examples of this, but they are also the exception among failed states. Reconstructing these entities is most problematic, as the West found out in Somalia and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) did in Liberia.[5]

A close cousin of the anarchic state is the phantom or mirage state, of which today's Zaire is an excellent example. The difference between an anarchic state and a phantom one is that while all anarchic states are *ipso facto* phantom states, not all phantom states are anarchic. In phantom states there is a semblance of authority that exhibits its efficacy in certain limited areas—eg the protection of the presidential despot and his cronies—but in all others it is utterly invisible. Centralised authority in Zaire does not exist except to insure Mobutu's personal security and to keep ambitious political rivals, such as former prime minister, Etienne Tshisekedi, from eclipsing the man in the leopard-spotted cap. The signs of the phantom nature of the Zairean state are legion: people living in its far-flung eastern regions trade with their counterparts across the borders in Kenya and Tanzania rather than making the perilous journey to cosmopolitan Kinshasa. Within the country merchants have long stopped accepting the Zaire as a medium of exchange; they either barter or accept CFA Francs. Zairean soldiers occasionally rampage through commercial districts, thereby dispensing with any pretence at distinguishing between themselves and everyday thugs and thieves.

Third, there are anaemic states whose status stems from two sources. States may be anaemic because their energy has been sapped by counter-insurgency groups seeking to take the place of the authority that is formally in power. Not much can be done about this type of state until state leaders either defeat the enemy on the battlefield or accommodate their demand. States may also be anaemic because the engines of modernity were never put in place; as a result, as population growth puts increasing demands on archaic structures, state agents are in no position to assert effective control. In failed states of this sort, there is usually a modicum of centralised authority, but one that is so emaciated that state agents outside the capital city (or even in some neighbourhoods within it) are left entirely to fend for themselves; in essence, they become local and regional bosses loosely affiliated with authority figures at the centre.

Haiti would be an example of a counter insurgency-free anaemic state. Much of the human rights violations committed under the *de facto* government were carried out by *tontons macoutes* of the ancien Duvalier *r'egime*, who merely had an affinity of interests with the Haitian military (hatred and fear of Aristide supporters) and were trained in similar methods of repression. Not every order—perhaps not even most—to kill and maim came from Port-au-Prince. The extremely weak capacity of Haiti's institutions was vividly under-

scored shortly after the US-led occupation, when a relatively minor skirmish between US marines and Haitian soldiers in the northern town of Cap-Haitien quickly led to the disintegration of the entire Haitian armed forces, even before the nominal head, General Raoul Cedras, could order 'his' troops not to resist.

There is a subtle—but not insignificant—difference between a counter insurgency-free anaemic state and a phantom state. The anaemic state is able to fulfil some of its functions, however locally, niggardly and sporadically, whereas the phantom state does not even attempt to do anything beyond protecting the maximum leader, whose personal survival is said to be essential to that of the state. In anaemic states electricity may be provided by public authorities for a few hours daily, in phantom ones people make do with private generators. Garbage may be collected every month instead of every week, but people in anaemic states can at least take solace in the fact that their refuse will eventually be collected. These examples, which the reader may be inclined to think of as trivial, are meant to underscore one thing: that the universe of failed states is wide ranging. On a somewhat brighter note, the state in countries with anaemic but unchallenged (in the territorial sense) centralised authority may be down but not out; its reconstruction is potentially less problematic than in the first two prototypes.[6]

Fourth, there are captured states, which typically have a strong centralised authority but one that is captured by members of insecure elites to frustrate—and in the extreme eradicate—rival elites. Rwanda is not a failed state because it lacks strong and effective centralised authority. Quite the contrary. The country has had a tradition of strong local and regional governments with power broken down all the way to clusters of ten families.[7] State failure here stems not from weak centralised governments, but from the fact that the state does not embrace the entire *polis*, only that part which members of the hegemonic elite think it should embrace. In Rwanda, once the order for genocide was given, it was carried out with sweeping efficacy, with *Radio Milles Collines* and its vituperative programming fuelling the carnage. Members of the Rwandan army and their militia allies relied on information provided them by local—largely Hutu—officials when seeking out Tutsis for extermination. The death of perhaps as many as 1 million persons, most in a three-month period or less, could not have been carried out without a measure of organisation at the state level.

One of the reasons states are often captured has to do with the inability of their elite members to agree on a common set of rules by which to govern. At the base, there may also be communities that are so different in outlook that the national space is the only thing they share in common. Here politics is unabashedly a zero-sum activity; direct control of the state is sought not only to advance the corporate interests of the dominant faction of the elite, but to undermine the capacity of rival factions to protect theirs. In the extreme, as pointed out above, this type of politics in the captured state can lead to intermittent genocidal conflicts—as has been happening in Rwanda and Burundi since their independence—or violent clashes between government troops and irredentist groups supported by the elite faction that is out of power, and anarchy, as was the case in Lebanon throughout much of the 1970s and 1980s, until the Syrians, with Arab and tacit Western acquiescence, intervened by

placing themselves as a buffer between the Christian Maronite community and the various Muslim factions.

Fifth and finally, there are states that failed *in vitro* (they are called aborted states), meaning that they experienced failure even before the process of state formation was consolidated. The tragedy of Bosnia and former Soviet Georgia originated from too rapid a shift from quasi-federation status to independence without the attendant safeguards for the protection of minority rights, and bellicose neighbours (Serbia and Russia respectively) which were willing to use the lack of specificity surrounding these rights as a pretext to undermine the transition to statehood.[8] Angola and Mozambique (until recently) might fit this category; they never achieved control over the legitimate means of violence since they have had to fight counter insurgency groups, created and sustained by outside powers (the USA and South Africa) from the start of their independent existence.

To summarise, in the typology just presented five types of failed states may be identified on the world scene: the anarchic (Somalia and Liberia), the phantom (Zaire), the anaemic (Haiti and Cambodia under different circumstances), the captured (Rwanda) and the aborted (Bosnia). These categories do not remain fixed; states may straddle them at particular points in their history. Nor are the categories to be seen as 'stages' through which nations must go before descending into the abyss. Liberia passed from an anaemic state to an anarchic one—'skipping' phantom status in the process—with the overthrow of Samuel Doe. Rwanda, a captured state under northern Hutu domination, briefly descended into anarchy from April to July 1994, until the Rwanda Patriotic Front (RPF) marched into Kigali and re-established centralised order, this time under Tutsi hegemony.

States may also exhibit more than one attribute simultaneously; in some cases, a state may be anaemic precisely because it has been captured by one group. The capture of the federal government of Nigeria by the so-called northern Fulani clique explains why it enjoys so little support in the largely Yoruba southwest and barely functions there except at gunpoint, literally. The point is, however, that the failed state types identified in these pages suggest that a Procrustean approach to rescuing them, assuming one is developed at all, is likely to miss the nuanced nature of their failure. For example, the rescue of failed states that have no centralised authority—eg Somalia—may require much more in the way of financial resources and external political and military commitment than in those where there is some authority, eg Haiti.

Factors associated with failed states

Why do some states fail while others succeed? Much ink has been spilled among social scientists, especially comparative scholars, trying to answer this question, and more still is likely to flow.[9] Here, rather than trying to identify the 'root causes' of state failure, a more modest attempt shall be made merely to identify the internal factors associated with the phenomenon. Needless to say, associations do not always connote causations, but, as will be seen shortly, given the recurrence of the same associative factors in places as geographically and

culturally different as Somalia and Haiti, this writer believes that there might be more than simple coincidence at work (Bosnia will henceforth be omitted from the discussion because its case is seen as different from the others: Bosnia evaporated before it was born). Five factors appear to correlate strongly with the implosion of failed states: economic malperformance, lack of social synergy, authoritarianism, militarism and environmental degradation caused by rampant population growth.

Failed states tend to be the Bart Simpsons of the international economy; they are perennial underachievers.[10] According to data pulled from the 1990 *World Bank Development Report*, Somalia, Rwanda and Haiti recorded some of the lowest growth rates between 1965 and 1988. Rwanda was at the head of list with an average annual growth rate of 1.5%, followed by Haiti at 0.5% and Somalia at 0.5%; Liberia's average annual growth rate during this period was missing. Not surprisingly, GNP per capita in 1988 dollars was low in all three countries. Haiti came first with $380, which went down to $250 per annum during three years of military rule, followed by Rwanda at $320 and Somalia at $170; again there were no corresponding data for Liberia.[11]

Contemporary failed states are also marked by a high degree of social dislocation, as reflected in extreme income disparity between the very rich and the very poor—with virtually no middle class in between. The middle class, as Lipset correctly wrote some time ago, is the glue that holds society together. But whereas Lipset emphasised the role of the middle class as a defender of liberal democratic values, largely because of its superior education, the middle class actually does something else that is much more important. The middle class gives the poor hope that with hard work and a bit of good luck they can move up a notch or two; at the same time, it also tells the rich that no matter how imprudent they are, they can be sure that wretchedness is not their final fate. As a consequence, in societies with large middle classes, members of the elite may be more willing to take investment risk and more open to redistributive public policies than in those where the only alternative to wealth is thought to be abject poverty.

The lack of a middle class of some significance in failed states, which therefore forces the rich and the poor to confront each other directly and violently, is often reflected in the nature of politics, which is usually dominated either by parties of the extreme right (eg ARENA in El Salvador) or the extreme left (eg the Khmer Rouge in Cambodia). Class cleavages are not the only social cleavage in failed states. One also finds a sharpening of the division between town and country folk, and, not surprisingly, an absence of articulation and complementarity between agriculture and animal husbandry, which the vast majority of the people engage in, and the rest of the economy. Liberia's vast hinterland is still largely untouched, except by timber and mineral smugglers; the huge Firestone rubber plantations have historically operated outside the subsistence peasant economy. Somalia's pastoral economy also operated alongside the rest of the economy, and therefore out of the control of centralised authority in Mogadishu, when it existed.[12]

Socially, the Americo-Liberians (ie descendents of American slaves who settled in Liberia after 1848) were seen (and saw themselves) as outsiders within

Liberia's social structure. They did not venture much outside of Monrovia; they had their own schools, churches and lodges; and generally held their fellow Liberians in low esteem. Until Doe's takeover, the Americo-Liberians also controlled the modern sector of the economy and the country's politics. Likewise, people in Port-au-Prince, even those who inhabit its squalid slums, refer to their fellow Haitians in the countryside, who represent at least 70% of the total population, as *nègres en dehors*, which literally means black outsiders.[13] Moreover, the generally light-skinned, French-speaking mulattos of Haiti, many of whom hold dual citizenship (or at least foreign residency cards, known in the USA as 'green cards'—just in case an extended retreat is necessary) have long maintained great distance between themselves and the vast majority of their dark-skinned countrypeople.

In fact, in Haiti there is neither a national nor a nationalist economic elite which perceives its future prospects for accumulation in terms commensurate with a general rise in the standard of living of the masses. Instead, operating on zero-sum assumptions, there is a strong propensity among the elite, including its truly foreign (historically French and German but American since the first occupation) component, to accumulate as much as possible, using the most invidious means, with the expectation that fortunes can literally go up in smoke in a short period of time. The results are slavery-like conditions on factory floors, extremely low wages in the small industrial sector, tense labour–capital relations (on rare occasions when labour is allowed to organise openly without fear of being violently repressed by hired goons), even more egregious exploitation of the peasantry—which explains the alarming destruction of the countryside—and massive capital flight and tax evasion, all of which have the effect of transforming the pseudo-elite's fears of political instability into self-fulfilling prophecies.

How have elite groups that are culturally and racially distinct from the people they dominate been able to remain in power? They have maintained their dominant position by controlling state power directly (as the Americo-Liberians did before Doe), or by forging alliances with 'indigenous' politicians and soldiers based on the understanding that, in return for elite financial support, they will protect elite wealth from mob expropriation during such times as when the vast army of the poor rises up in rebellion.[14] This arrangement, which is little more than the national army of a country serving as a *de facto* private security corps, is known in Haiti as *la politique de doublure*, wherein domination by a tiny quasi-expatriate minority is hidden behind the veil of demagogic majority rule of the *noiriste* (ie Black power) type. No matter the chosen stratagem (direct or indirect control of the political system), the end result has been highly authoritarian rule maintained by military or proto-military regimes.

Militarism has played a significant role in the current *denouement* of failed states. It involves not only the institutions that are traditionally associated with the military (the army, gendarmerie (in the Francophone world), navy and air force), but also the police and paramilitary gunmen who work closely with the former. Generally poorly trained, lacking in discipline and unable to isolate itself from factions, the military is perhaps the biggest threat to stability and nation-building in the developing world today. That threat becomes all the more real in the absence of countervailing democratic civil

society institutions, and in the face of economic decline and the continuing arms race. As expenditures on the acquisition of expensive military hardware become difficult to justify in core countries (the West and Russia), the Third World is likely to become the next growth market for arms merchants, which will in turn intensify the effects of the burden that military expenditures impose on financially emaciated societies.

It may not be entirely coincidental that the failed states *par excellence* of the 1990s were at one point or another led by military men: Siad Barre in Somalia, Samuel Doe of Liberia, Juvénal Habyarimana in Rwanda and Raoul Cedras in Haiti. In fact, it would appear that the more militarised a country, the greater the intensity of its failure. Before its disintegration, Haiti's army consumed as much as 40% of the national budget, in a country that has the lowest per capita income in the Americas and has only ever been at war with itself. At the time of their descent into complete anarchy Somalia and Liberia were two of the most heavily militarised states in Africa, ranking consistently among the top recipients of US military aid during much of the Cold War.[15] The sight of gun-toting minors—some as young as nine years old—rampaging through the streets of Mogadishu (in 1993) and Monrovia (in 1996), with no respect for public order and private property, may be the most visible index of state failure, but the seeds were actually sown years earlier.[16]

Failed states also appear to be more likely to be afflicted by Malthusian phenomena, such as rapid population growth and dwindling natural resources. Three-fifths of Rwanda's population in the early 1980s was under 30 years of age. The annual rate of population growth during that time was 601 persons per square mile, making Rwanda the most densely populated country in Africa. Although Somalia's average population density has hovered around six persons per square mile, this is actually quite misleading, for only 2% of the land is arable.[17] Because most Somalis are either farmers or nomadic livestock producers, competition for farmland and pasture has probably been quite intense among rural dwellers. Given the fragility of the eco-system in the Horn of Africa, it is safe to say that population pressures in Somalia exert a much greater influence than low population density would at first suggest. Half a world away, Haiti, with a population of seven million and a size barely exceeding 10 000 square miles, is one of the most densely populated countries in the Americas (756 persons per square mile, to be exact). After years of uncontrolled tree-cutting, Haiti is an ecological disaster; there is little topsoil left to reinvigorate agriculture in the short term so as to make the country self-sufficient in food production.

It was once thought that ethnic heterogeneity facilitates state failure, while homogeneity corrolates strongly with success. The case against this argument has become considerably stronger in recent years. The ethnic mix of a country does not by itself lead to cataclysmic outcomes, but its management, however, may. Rwanda and Somalia are two of the most ethnically homogeneous countries in sub-Saharan Africa, and Haiti has no ethnic problem. By contrast, one of the most stable countries in Africa, Cameroon, is also perhaps its most ethnically and linguistically diverse—with well over 150 ethnic groups and a double legacy (unique in Africa) of French and British colonialism. Ethnicity has

proven to be a destabilising factor only when used by frustrated and insecure elites for their own end (remember the case of the captured state).

Black South Africa did not have an ethnic problem until Chief Buthelezi—with assistance from the former white minority regime—decided to fan the flames of Zulu nationalism in order to assure for himself a role in post-apartheid South Africa. Likewise, the former Yugoslavia was one of the most multi-ethnic, stable and relatively successful states in Eastern Europe until Milosevic, faced with the abrupt end of the Yugoslav Federation, sought to maintain his power base by resurrecting latent Serbian nationalism using local Bosnian Serb leaders as surrogates. The slaughter of largely Tutsi civilians in Rwanda was orchestrated by insecure Hutu extremists who feared that former President Juvénal Habyarimana (himself a Hutu) was giving away too much to the minority Tutsis. In the end, the universal factors appear to be economic stagnation, social dislocation, authoritarianism, militarism and the ghost of Malthus. These factors tend to feed on each other in a circular fashion, thus generating what might be called the vicious circle of state decay.

Some readers might conclude that by focusing on internal causes exclusively the author is putting the blame entirely on the people of failed states. This is a valid criticism, which, in the absence of further explanation, requires a loud admission of *mea culpa*. To the extent that failed states are members of the international community, and many were in fact colonies until recently, external causes—colonialism and imperialism generally—have had a significant impact on their unravelling. Indeed, many developing states have become virtual dumping grounds for 'surplus' weapons, consumer goods and toxic materials produced in the industrialised world, while their own goods are excluded from lucrative international markets. Any analysis that does not recognise the external dimension of state decay in the developing world would be, to say the least, incomplete and tantamount to blaming the victim entirely.

Yet, without denying the importance of the external environment, it can also be retorted that, in so far as the latter will always be a constant over which failed states have no control, it is counterproductive to dwell on things that one cannot control. Approaches such as world-system and dependency theories, which emphasise the external environment exclusively, inevitably lead to intellectual cul-de-sacs wherein one is forced to conclude that failed states are too weak to do anything about allegedly oppressive capitalist forces at the centre, and that the only way out of the morass is a worldwide socialist revolution, which today seems more like a utopia than a possibility. Worse, such analyses may be used by corrupt authoritarian demagogues in the periphery to hide their own shortcomings.

By contrast, society-centred analyses, such as the one adopted here, in spite of the immediate sense of doom that they convey, are inherently more positive, since societies, as ever changing social organisms, are assumed to contain the seeds of their own rejuvenation. In addition to building a taxonomy of failed states, to emphasise that there are differences between them, this article is concerned chiefly with the internal factors associated with state decay. An examination of the 'causal' role played by the external environment probably

requires a separate article, although how the international community responds to the effects of state disintegration is covered in the next and final section.

What is to be and not to be done? Somalia and Haiti juxtaposed

Because not all states fail in the same way, there can be no overarching formula for rescuing them. As this article attempts to show, it matters very much whether a state is anarchic or weak, for, in the former, institutions need to be completely reconstructed, in the latter they may only need to be strengthened. Similarly, in a captured state it is at least theoretically possible for rival elite factions to come to terms as to how to govern, whereas in the anarchic state there may be no elite to speak of. In addition, because the factors that 'cause' states to fail are largely internal ones, *ex-post* external intervention of the military type is likely to provide only temporary relief from the harmful effects of state decay. Again, this is because they who say failed states also say failed governance and institutions, which are essentially internal matters over which the international community may have some influence but not nearly the amount necessary to shape things from a distance.

However, as remarked earlier, the intensity of suffering in failed states, magnified many-fold by the ongoing communications revolution and progress in transportation, will inevitably lead to calls for more successful member states 'to do something'. Thus, the dilemma for the international community in the post-Cold War is this: while it is neither moral, practical nor politically feasible to ignore the problems in failed states, there is a serious lack of knowledge of how best to help solve these problems. Furthermore, even when knowledge is available, the unwillingness of citizens in core countries to sacrifice their sons and daughters for causes whose immediate benefits are not readily apparent—even while they also demand that their governments take action—further reduces the range of policy instruments available to decision makers, with the margin of error being set at practically zero. The death of 17 US soldiers in Somalia caused such an uproar in the USA that it almost singlehandedly derailed Operation Provide Comfort.

Not surprisingly, the international response to crises in failed states has vacillated between denial, half-hearted intervention (or, what one observer called 'expensive publicity stunts'), and a propensity to use the experiences encountered in one instance as bases for making policy decisions in entirely different circumstances. The net effect of this Procrustean approach to failed states policy making—if one can be said to exist at all—is likely to be a reduction in the chances for success of the latest intervention, which then makes policy makers even more reluctant to launch future 'humanitarian' rescues. Also not surprisingly, post-World War II institutions and regimes, more specifically the United Nations, the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, have been at the centre of the efforts to assist failed states. Timidity caused by the inability to articulate interventions on Cold War (ie 'national security') grounds, Procrusteanism and institutional irrelevance and inertia have been the main reasons why 'humanitarian' rescues have had, to say the least, a spotty record. The cases of Haiti and Somalia are instructive.

Conventional wisdom has it that the reason the Somali mission failed was because of so-called mission creep, meaning that the more limited objective of feeding starving Somalians was eventually superseded by others, such as disarmament. More specifically, some analysts have argued that the US–UN forces, by trying to disarm the forces loyal to Farah Aideed and by going so far as to put a bounty on his head, ended up taking sides in what was essentially a local conflict.[118] This interpretation has been so widely accepted by US and UN officials that the decision not to aggressively disarm paramilitary groups in Haiti was based primarily on the so-called Mogadishu effect. Upon closer examination it is also overly simplistic, wrong, and very dangerous. Disarming proper did not lead to disaster in Somalia; it was, rather, an ill-conceived mission with contradictory components (humanitarianism mixed with militarism) and, more importantly for this article, disarming under conditions of total anarchy that were the Achilles' heel of the venture.

The fall of Siad Barre in 1990 led to the division of Somali society into different armed factions, the most important of which were headed by Farah Aideed, Ali Mahdi and General Morgan, Aideed's son-in-law, whose forces were especially strong in the southern port city of Chisimayu. Haiti, however, presented a different picture. The coup that toppled President Jean-Bertrand Aristide in 1991 did not lead to the fragmentation of the country. The Haitian army and its allies kept a tight reign by appointing a number of civilians to run the government from 1991 to 1994, while it concerned itself with the brutal prosecution of Aristide supporters. The Haitian parliament, though packed during the period by pro-military legislators, was kept open, as was even the possibility of Aristide being allowed to return under the 'right conditions'. Meanwhile, the *chefs de section* (rural constabularies), though operating largely on their own, kept order in the countryside.

Thus, whereas in anarchic Somalia state authority was completely absent by the time the international community decided to intervene, in anaemic Haiti there was a semblance of it. The presence of centralised—and after October 1994, legitimate—authority in Haiti, even in skeleton form, has been consequential. Shortly before being returned to power by US forces in October 1994, Aristide was allowed by the US Information Agency to broadcast several messages calling for reconciliation among Haiti's protagonists, which probably kept pre-democracy restoration violence to a minimum (Somalia, unfortunately, did not have a national figure of Aristide's stature). In his first speech back to Haiti the President asked his supporters not to take the law into their own hands, but that if they suspected people of carrying weapons illegally, they should promptly alert the multinational forces. As a result, some of the biggest arms caches that the Americans discovered in Port-au-Prince came from tips provided by Haitians, including the few relatively professional police officers from the defunct Haitian army who wanted to be drafted in the new interim police force.

It was Haitians who were making citizens' arrests of the much hated attachés and delivering them to US soldiers, who, remembering Somalia, would almost as quickly release the prisoners to avoid the appearance of partiality. By contrast, Farah Aideed could count on members of his sub-clan in southern Mogadishu to shield him from the US–UN manhunt; he also benefited from the general chaos

of the moment. In sum, the chances for a successful disarmament campaign in Haiti were much higher than they were in Somalia; yet US (and UN) officials, traumatised by the last experience, failed to calibrate their decisions according to the specificity of the context at hand, thus unwittingly undermining the success of Operation Restore Democracy and endangering Haiti's future stability.

Officials of the Clinton administration proudly point to the absence of US casualties—there was only one death from hostile fire—in Haiti as a confirmation of their having learned the right lessons from Somalia by not, among other things, aggressively disarming the supporters of the former military regime. But this—again—is a complete misreading of the events, for the absence of US casualties in Haiti has more to do with conditions on the ground than any military strategy designed at the Pentagon. First, there were probably a lot fewer guns in Haiti than there were in Somalia (which also brightens the prospects of a successful disarmament campaign in Haiti). Although weapons and ammunitions were reportedly stacked in the former armed forces headquarters, Cedras balked at distributing them on a massive scale until it became clear that an invasion was imminent.

In addition, the most visible enemy in Haiti was a standing army (the *Forces Armées D'Haiti* or FAD'H), whose members were known and whose high command was in fact trained in the USA. Even the armed civilian supporters of the military—the so-called attachés—were, by and large, members of the neo-Duvalierist party FRAPH which kept meticulous records of their activities (including torture methods) and whereabouts. Thus, in Haiti US forces were not exactly in a no-man's land. Using both the visibility of the enemy and its penchant for good record-keeping—if not to mention its ties to the US intelligence community—US forces were able to keep casualties to a minimum by keeping a close watch on the most dangerous individuals, going so far as to warn them of reprisals they might be expected to encounter should acts of violence directed at US soldiers be found to have been instigated by them.

Finally, US troops' involvement in non-lethal activities—so-called nation-building—was kept to a minimum in Haiti because there were already scores of Haitian and foreign Non-Governmental Organisations in these areas, as well as some government participation. In Somalia, once the international community, under initial US prodding, did get involved, it quickly found out that, because of the advanced stage of state disintegration, its efforts were likely to come to naught unless it tried to establish or revive permanent institutions (eg centralised government, a justice system, a penal system, etc); in Haiti, the task was facilitated somewhat by the fact there were some structures (archaic and weak to be sure) with which to work. For the international community the lesson provided by Somalia and Haiti bears repeating: It matters very much where a country is on the failed states continuum.

Concluding remarks

Ongoing implosion in Haiti, Somalia, Liberia, Rwanda and other failed states may have its roots in inadequate domestic institutions, but these cases also

underscore the failure of post-World War II international regimes and organisations. The founding fathers of the United Nations intended it to resolve interstate differences; in fact, the UN charter explicitly forbade UN interference in the internal affairs of member states. With the end of the Cold War, however, new challenges (or, perhaps more appropriately put, challenges that used to be, *noblesse oblige*, conveniently ignored) call for new regimes. Bold questions need to be raised by scholars, including the following. Are there circumstances under which the inviolability of state borders becomes less sacrosanct, which might then justify international 'interference' in the 'domestic affairs' of failed states? Need genocide occur (Rwanda) and anarchy reign (Somalia) before international intervention takes place? Is it time for a kind of post-Cold War failed states intervention regime, involving the creation of a rapid deployment force composed of international volunteer soldiers and humanitarian aid workers, who can be called up fairly quickly to avoid the kind of carnage that the world witnessed in Rwanda—and may witness again in neighbouring Burundi and possibly Zaire? Who would control such a force (at a minimum, it should never be, or be seen as, a back door for reintroducing colonialism), finance it and determine its modus operandi?

Multinational lending organisations, such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund, may be no better equipped for the task of economic construction (not reconstruction) in failed states than the UN is for dealing with the political and military consequences of decay and anarchy. After all, the Bretton Woods organisations were created to help in the rebuilding of ravaged post-World War II Western Europe; as such, they are ill-suited to deal with failed states, whose economies, among other things, need to be built rather than merely reformed. Indeed, the problem with failed states is not that there is too much state, which the World Bank and the IMF, mainly through privatisation and state personnel attrition, know how to reduce, but rather too little, which they are ideologically ill-disposed to help enlarge.

Thus, standard macro-economic prescriptions found in structural adjustment programmes and aimed at reducing the scope of state activities miss the point entirely. Such donor-sponsored belt-tightening efforts require states that can (a) negotiate the terms of aid conditionalities and (b) implement them even in the face of widespread resistance. The entropy in failed states is usually of such a magnitude that they are unable to do either; moreover, however necessary standard reforms might be, tasks of a more basic nature (ie strengthening the control span of centralised authority, reducing the level of violence, rebuilding a justice system, collecting the garbage, etc) might be even more necessary.

The financial rescue of failed states will probably require deviations from traditional lending practices, involving a mixture of risk-taking, a willingness to experiment, and resolve in the face of setbacks and even relapse. In the vexing world of state collapse and the widespread violence that usually follows, traditional Weberian organisational structures—built implicitly on stable and predictable environments—will simply not do; failed states are too messy and volatile to facilitate the tasks of deliberative international bureaucrats. Yet the world continues to rely on the Bretton Woods institutions, in spite of their manifest irrelevance in some states.

In the end, however, increased activism and perspicacity by the international community will not by themselves put an end to state failure, though they may help in mitigating its worst effects. In this century, not to mention in those past, the states that have succeeded have been those that were willing (and able) to bring about the types of internal reforms necessary to adjust to the vicissitudes of a rapidly changing world economy; the failed ones have been those whose institutions have proven to be oblivious (even hostile) to change. So it is likely to be in the 21st century. External actors can play a role in effecting the slide toward deceased or anarchic, phantom, anaemic, captured and aborted failed states, but it will, of necessity, be short-lived. The emergence of successful states with robust economies and healthy political systems is ultimately tied to internal processes of change, which take years and centuries to develop. Countries can be nudged towards the promised land, but they cannot be forced by others to enter it at gunpoint; ultimately they have to do so on their own and, realistically, not all will.

Notes

[1] Gerald Helman & Steven Ratner, 'Saving failed states,' *Foreign Policy*, 89, pp 3–20.

[2] Ali Mazrui, 'Blood of experience: the failed state and political collapse in Africa', *World Policy Journal*, IX(1), pp 28–34.

[3] William Zartman, I (ed.), *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Autority*, Boulder, CO: Lynn Rienner Publishers, 1995.

[4] The fact that the state has provided these services in much of the developing world—or for that matter, much of the industrialised world—does not mean that they absolutely cannot be provided by private firms. The externalities normally associated with 'public goods' can be internalised under certain circumstances, thereby making their private delivery possible. In fact, there is an emerging literature on the privatisation of public services in the developing world, and a rising interest by donors in the topic. See Gabriel Roth, *The Private Provision of Public Services in Developing Countries*, Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1987. See also Arturo Israel, *Institutional Development*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989.

[5] ECOWAS is composed of Nigeria, Ghana, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Senegal, Benin and Burkina Faso.

[6] For an excellent discussion of the weaknesses of the Haitian state, see Jean Ruffat, 'Reconstruire L'etat en Haiti', *Revue Politique et Management Public*, 9(1), pp 100–120.

[7] Renè Lemarchand, 'Managing transition anarchies: Rwanda, Burundi, South Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32(4), pp 581–605.

[8] I am somewhat uncomfortable with the label 'aborted' to describe both Bosnia and Georgia, for 'aborted' connotes finality. Given recent international efforts, it is possible that there will be an internationally recognised entity called Bosnia, although how real it will be and how long it will last even the key actors—eg Tudjman of Croatia, are not sure. As for former Soviet Georgia, it still has serious troubles, including continued interference from Russia, but its survival as a nation-state seems less uncertain now than it did three years ago. Georgia's difficult transition to modern statehood is examined by Ghia Nodia in 'Georgia's identity crisis', *Journal of Democracy*, 6(1), 1995, pp 104–116.

[9] Among the most noted works on why nation-states and empires rise and fall are Mancur Olson's *The Rise and Decline of Nations* and Douglas North's *Institutions, Institutional Change and Economic Performance*, for which the latter received the 1993 Nobel Prize in economics. Mancur Olson, *The Rise and Decline of Nations: Economic Growth, Inflation, and Social Rigidities*, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1982. Douglas North, *Institutions, Institutional Change, and Economic Performance*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

[10] Bart Simpson is a popular cartoon character in the USA from a television show called The Simpsons. For the reader who may not be familiar with The Simpsons, Bart is the opposite of another US popular culture fictional character, Forrest Gump, who, in the movie of the same name, constantly overachieves.

[11] World Bank, *World Development Report 1990*, Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990.

[12] For a general discussion of the problems of pastoral management in the Third World, especially in the Horn of Africa, see Stephen Sandford *The Management of Pastoral Development in the Third World*, Chichester: John Wiley, 1983.

[13] David Nicholls, *From Dessalines to Duvalier: Race, Color and National Independence In Haiti*, London: Macmillan, 1988.
[14] Michel Laguerre, *The Military and Society in Haiti*, Knoxville, TN: University of Tennessee Press, 1993.
[15] Earl Conteh-Morgan, *American Foreign Aid and Global Power Projection*, Dartmouth: Dartmouth Publishing Company, 1990.
[16] Jeffrey Goldberg 'A war without purpose in a country without identity', *New York Times Magazine*, 22 January 1995, pp 36–39.
[17] World Bank, *Sub-Saharan Africa: From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* Washington, DC: World Bank, 1992.
[18] For a typical exposé of this view expressed by an insider, see Jonathan Howe, 'The United States and the United Nations in Somalia', *Washington Quarterly*, 18(3), 1995, pp. 49–62.