

LESSON 8 Failing States

Abstract

The phenomenon of failing states is a high-priority concern relating to issues of security, human rights, and humanitarian and development assistance. “Failure” refers to a loss of control and loss of monopoly on the legitimate use of force. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace Defined as such, applies that characterization that to at least 28 countries today. Furthermore, the World Bank describes 30 “low-income countries under stress” at serious risk of state failure due to “very weak policies, institutions, and governance”.

Background

The phenomenon of “weak”, “fragile”, or “failed” states is a concern of high priority for the UN and regional organizations responsible for security, human rights, and humanitarian and development assistance. The 2002 U.S. National Security Strategy pronounced that “America is now threatened less by conquering states than we are by failing ones.” Kofi Annan has warned that “ignoring failed states creates problems that sometimes come back to bite us.” Failed states may export terrorists, drugs, infectious diseases, and create floods of refugees.

Foreign Policy and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace define a failed state by loss of control of its territory or loss of the monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Some would define “failure” as the lack the authority to make collective decisions, or the capacity to deliver public services. Other signs might be the outsize importance of the black market, failure to collect taxes, or recurring episodes of large-scale civil disobedience.

Foreign Policy and the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace devised and published a “Failed State Index” with twelve indicators of failed or failing states. For the clearest early warning signs of a failing state, among the 12 indicators, two consistently rank near the top. Uneven development is high in almost all the states in the index, suggesting that inequality within states—and not merely poverty—increases instability. Criminalization or delegitimization of the state, which occurs when state institutions are regarded as corrupt, illegal, or ineffective, also figured prominently.

For each country, scores are assigned for each of the twelve indicators. The indicators are as follows:

1. Mounting Demographic Pressures
2. Massive Movement of Refugees and Displaced Persons
3. Legacy of Vengeance - Seeking Group Grievance
4. Chronic and Sustained Human Flight
5. Uneven Economic Development along Group Lines
6. Sharp and/or Severe Economic Decline

7. Criminalization or Delegitimization of the State
8. Progressive Deterioration of Public Services
9. Widespread Violation of Human Rights
10. Security Apparatus as "State within a State"
11. Rise of Factionalized Elites
12. Intervention of Other States or External Actors

The "2006 Failed State Index" (found online at <http://www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsindex2006.php>) lists 28 countries in the "red" category, headed by Sudan, DRC, Cote d'Ivoire and Iraq. Sierra Leone, Chad, Yemen, Liberia, and Haiti are in the top ten. The index includes other countries whose instability is less widely acknowledged, such as Bangladesh (17th), Guatemala (31st), Egypt (38th), Saudi Arabia (45th), and Russia (59th).

The Foreign Policy/Carnegie work concludes that "about 2 billion people live in insecure states, with varying degrees of vulnerability to widespread civil conflict." It reports state failure has been apparent for years in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Somalia, manifested by armed conflict, famine, disease outbreaks, and refugee flows. Afghanistan and Columbia suffer from episodic fighting, drug mafias, or warlords dominating large swaths of territory. The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace notes that sometimes states collapse suddenly; however, often the demise of the state is a slow and steady deterioration of social and political institutions, for instance, in the case of Zimbabwe and Guinea. Countries emerging from conflict may be on the mend, but are in danger of backsliding (i.e. Sierra Leone and Angola). The World Bank suggests that within five years, half of all countries emerging from civil unrest fall back into conflict in a cycle of collapse (i.e. Haiti and Liberia).

A Foreign Policy article in the July/August 2005 edition (http://www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3098) points out that there are no easy answers to shore up countries on the brink of collapse. The article notes that although elections are usually considered conducive to reducing conflict, they may be ineffective or even counterproductive if they are rigged, attract a low turnout, or held during active fighting.

The World Bank prism is focused on the challenge of aid effectiveness; whether normal lending instruments can be used successfully in the context of a failing state.. It has identified about 30 "low-income countries under stress" (LICUS). The World Bank LICUS are characterized as having weak policies, institutions, and governance, and include those countries emerging from conflict. The World Bank notes that "because governments lack the capacity or inclination to use finance effectively for poverty reduction", aid doesn't work effectively in these environments. The bank notes LICUS are highly diverse, and that several are "policy-poor but resource-rich."
<http://www1.worldbank.org/operations/licus/documents/licus.pdf>

The World Bank designated LICUS as "states whose per-capita incomes fall below the GNI of \$875 in 2001 and which combine (i) poor policy performance (ii) low service

delivery capacity with (iii) a lack of responsiveness to their citizens.” A country was classified as a low-income poor performer if it scored in the bottom one-third of indicators on either policy management or service delivery *and* on responsiveness to its citizens. Countries that ranked in the bottom one-third of all three categories were considered “core” LICUS. The Bank emphasizes its “concern is how to address a complex syndrome, not a set of specific countries”.

EARLY TYPOLOGY AND TOOLS OF LICUS	
DETERIORATION	FRAGILE TRANSITION
Early Warning Indicators and Early Response System Portfolio restructuring Joint analytical work and scenario planning Protection of social and institutional capital: local level institutions Restoration of dialogue	Nationally owned results framework linking political, security, economic, and social recovery Intensive institution-building efforts, including budget support Transitional nongovernmental social service delivery Asymmetric reform
PROLONGED POLITICAL CRISIS	GRADUAL IMPROVERS
Joint analytical work and scenario planning Protection of social and institutional capital: local level institutions Restoration of dialogue - identification of entry points for change	Selective institution-building efforts Asymmetric reform Donor to donor harmonization, working backwards to full alignment and ownership

Britain’s Department for International Development has named 46 “fragile” states of concern, using a broader definition than the World Bank: “Governments that cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor”. Their position is that there is no agreed global list of fragile states, even though there is a consensus on some clear-cut examples (e.g. Somalia).

A UK Background paper argues that a critical gap is forward looking information and analysis: “Strategic Analysis serves two important functions: (i) it provides trends analysis that could contribute to the safety and security of UN personnel

(helping to prevent such disastrous events as befell Sergio Vieira de Mello and his team in Baghdad); (ii) it enables the Secretariat to plan and allocate its limited resources ahead of when they are actually needed, thereby enhancing the efficiency of the organization, and preventing budgetary pressures, as recently experienced with the sudden surge in peacekeeping operations.”

Lesson Plan

Review the Indicative features of fragile states - Box 1 page 8 of the DFID Report <http://www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/fragilestates-paper.pdf>

Examine the World Bank typology in their LICUS brief. <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTLICUS/Overview/20313429/LICUS%20Brief.doc>

Read the Background Paper by Tomlin, Gossage and Pengelly, “*International Crisis Response and Peace Support Capabilities*”. UK Prime Minister’s Strategy Unit, February 2005. It provides a broad overview and attempts to identify the gaps and challenges of security responses faced by the various actors in the international system and presents options. <http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/upload/assets/www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/strategy/4international.pdf>

Debiel et al. ask sets of questions encapsulating the key dilemmas and challenges when external actors are confronted with the reality of failing or collapsed statehood.

<http://www.i20.org/publications/Phase%20III/Fragile%20States/berlin.backgrounder.pdf>

They “regularly encounter grave problem scenarios to which solutions remain ambivalent.” Review their 7 sets of questions.

Read the review on Chauvet and Collier’s “Development Effectiveness in Fragile States: Spillovers and Turnarounds” and Levin and Dollar’s “The Forgotten States: Aid Volumes and Volatility in Difficult Partnership Countries”:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/32/59/34255628.pdf>

Review the debate on conflicting objectives for development, to consider which initiatives should be given priority (the security sector, for example). Read Chalmers regarding the relative priority to be given to security, “the ‘blind spot’ of development thinking”:

http://www.bradford.ac.uk/acad/peace/tmp/staff/chalmers_m/Supporting_security_World_Bank_seminar.pdf.

Discussion Questions

1. Debiel et al. provide recommendations for the challenges and dilemmas faced by external actors confronted with the reality of failing or collapsed statehood.

- i. How should external actors deal with ruling elites? Are they normally guarantors of state stability or does short-term regime stabilization ultimately set the course for state failure?
- ii. Who should be responsible for public service delivery? To what extent can, or should, the international community provide these services?
- iii. Who should guarantee security? Are there alternatives to the state? Can non-state violent actors play a constructive role?
- iv. At which level should the state be strengthened? Which opportunities and risks arise as a result of decentralization or federalization measures?
- v. How should the international community deal with *de facto* statehood? Is the conventional concept of sovereignty outdated?
- vi. When is it permissible for the “international community” to avert its gaze from crisis states? Which approach should be adopted in relation to “poor performers”?

Question: Do you agree with their recommendations? To what degree can they be applied in Sudan? Haiti? East Timor?

2. “The challenge is a global problem requiring a global solution. Unfortunately, the consensual nature of ‘routine’ UN negotiations means that progress is unlikely to be made with any great speed. The G8 has begun addressing the issue, but by definition, they are an exclusive body and cannot unilaterally reform global institutions. ...What is needed appears to be beyond the current realm of possibility: a technical, un-politicized international forum open to all states wishing to be constructive where the issue can be properly addressed. Until such a time, reform processes will continue in a fragmented manner, and though progress will undoubtedly occur, the sum of the parts will be less than the potential whole.”[Tomlin, Gossage and Pengelly]

Question: Can the L20 provide the forum that the UK paper characterizes as “beyond the current realm of possibility”?

3. It is essential to have timely and accurate information to make decisions on intervention in conflict in failing states. In 2000, the Brahimi report (Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations) recommended the creation of an Enhanced Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat to provide forward-looking risk analysis. This proposal was blocked by the G77, fearing that they would effectively be giving the UN the power to spy on them.

Question: How can the Brahimi proposal be reframed so as to provide required safeguards and still remain effective? Could this initiative be brokered by the L20?

Recommended Web-based Resources

Debiel, Klingebiel, Mehler & Schneckener: “*Between Ignorance and Intervention in Fragile States*”

<http://www.i20.org/publications/Phase%20III/Fragile%20States/berlin.backgrounder.pdf>

See the Foreign Affairs Canada web cast:

Non-Proliferation, Arms Control and Disarmament e Discussion Resources
Video Interview with James Dobbins

http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/cip-pic/current_discussions/jamesdobbins-en.asp

For further background on lessons from past interventions read the short article by James Dobbins, a review and comparison of two books on the UN and US experience in “Nation Building”. <http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/spring2005/nation.html>
Dobbins examines eight instances in which the United Nations took the lead in “the use of armed force in the aftermath of a crisis to promote a transition to democracy” and eight in which the United States took the lead

America’s Role in Nation-Building: From Germany to Iraq, James Dobbins, John G. McGinn, Keith Crane, Seth G. Jones, Rollie Lal, Andrew Rathmell, Rachel Swanger, Anga Timilsina, RAND/MR-1753-RC, 2003, 279 pp., ISBN 0-8330-3460-X, \$35.

 [Full Document](#)

The UN’s Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq, James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, Andrew Rathmell, Brett Steele, Richard Teltschik, Anga Timilsina, RAND/MG-304-RC, 2005, 316 pp., ISBN 0-8330-3589-4, \$35 (paperback).

 [Full Document](#)

For an extensive list of links to relevant sites on see CUNY’s Program on States and Security on line resources

<http://www.statesandsecurity.org/links.php>

Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations

http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/

For a map of ongoing United Nations Peacekeeping Missions, see

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm>