INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN FAILED STATES

CHOICES AND TRADE-OFFS

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Abstract

INTERNATIONAL ENGAGEMENT IN FAILED STATES

Failed states have made it to the top of the international agenda following 11 September 2001. This paper gives an overview of the debate on 'what to do'. Firstly, it suggests an explanation of where these so-called failed states are coming from: Why do some states self-destruct? Secondly, four different approaches to failed states are presented and discussed - with special emphasis on the dilemmas and predicaments they each hold. The paper concludes that the question of what to do with failed states requires a political answer. Not a technical one.

Resumé

DET INTERNATIONALE SAMFUND OG FEJLSLAGNE STATER

Fejlslagne stater er - ikke mindst efter 11. september 2001 - kommet højt på den internationale dagsorden. I dette papir gives et overblik over diskussionen om, hvad det internationale samfund skal og kan gøre. Indledningsvist gives en mulig forklaring på, hvor disse såkaldte 'fejlslagne' stater kommer fra: Hvorfor - og hvordan - er der nogle stater, der tilsyneladende selvdestruerer? Papiret diskuterer derefter fire forskellige forslag til løsninger - med særlig vægt på de dilemmaer de hver især indeholder. Papiret konkluderer, at spørgsmålet om hvad man skal stille op med verdens fejlslagne stater først og fremmest handler om politik - ikke om teknik.

Introduction

This paper focuses on the options for international engagement in states where the central government has no effective authority and control over the territory - and where violent conflict is (or has recently been) rampant. Places in mind are Sierra Leone, Liberia, Afghanistan, Democratic Republic of Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, and Somalia. Whether such states are referred to as 'failed', 'collapsed', 'crisis' or something entirely different, is to some extent trivial. From a conceptual point of view, the significant question is not the label. What matters are the criteria behind the label: the content of the analytical category. In this paper, failed states are seen as sharing three significant characteristics: Firstly, the central government has effectively lost control and authority over the territory. Secondly, internal violent conflict is - or has recently been - rampant. Thirdly, the level of human suffering is appalling. Extreme poverty and hunger are widespread and growing. Atrocities are being committed. Human rights grossly violated and otherwise curable diseases turn into epidemics.

The combination of these characteristics presents the international community with two conundrums. Firstly, most of the instruments available to the international community depend on the existence of an effective state. But in a failed state, it makes little sense to exert pressure on or work with the state to change the situation. Warlords, drug barons and other 'men with guns' are the real power holders of the day, but are they also the future? Where in society does long-term authority and legitimacy rest? Secondly, the security situation in a failed state makes it difficult - if not outright impossible - for the international community to engage without some kind of military backing and protection. Even the handing out of food to starving civilians can be a deadly undertaking. The use of military force is, however, by no means a panacea and may in itself complicate and aggravate matters.

Regardless of how the international community decides to address a particular failed state, it will find itself confronted with unsolvable dilemmas, where choices have to be made between different objectives, values and principles. There is no magical solution to the problem of failed states. Only tough choices and real trade-offs. This paper suggests an analytical framework that may help mapping some of the paradoxes, contradictions and complexities at stake - and by doing so, perhaps clarify the difficult choices policy makers have to make, as they address the challenges posed by failed states.

The notion of a failed state applied in this paper is fairly narrow. Deliberately, focus is on states that have already failed - not on states that are fragile, weak or in risk of failing. This implies that

it is too late for 'early warning' and 'preventive measures'. The concern here is not how to prevent a state from failing, but what to do when a state has already failed.

The paper consists of two parts. The first part discusses the meaning of 'failed state' in the post-Cold War/post-9-11 World and suggests an explanation of why some states have failed. The second part of the paper presents four different approaches to addressing failed states and the dilemmas, trade-offs, paradoxes and contradictions they each hold.

Part One: Failed States in the 21st Century

"It is no longer possible to ignore distant and misgoverned parts of a world without borders, where chaos is a potential neighbour anywhere from Africa to Afghanistan."

UK Foreign Secretary Jack Straw[1]

The issue of 'failed states' presented itself forcefully on the international agenda with the collapse of Somalia's central government in January 1991.[2] Somalia - and subsequent crises in Haiti, Zaïre, Cambodia, East Timor, Sierra Leone etc. - was at the time primarily seen as a humanitarian and / or moral problem to the Western world. The need to 'do something' was driven mainly by politics. Not by strategic interest. Following 11 September 2001 this has changed. Failed states are now perceived by both USA and the European Union as national security threats.[3] They are perceived as real or potential 'safe havens' and 'breeding grounds' for al-Qaeda and other terror-

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[1] Straw (2002:98).

[2] In 1992, the UN Security Council declared "the magnitude of the human tragedy caused by the conflict in Somalia, ... a threat to international peace and security." (UNSCR 794/1992). This led to what is often considered the first 'humanitarian intervention'. The situation in Somalia also spurred the establishment of the CIA "State Failure Task Force" in 1994. The task force is still active under the new name "Internal Wars and Failures of Governance." http://www.cidcm.umd.edu/inscr/stfail/. See Gurr et al. (1998).

[3] See the US National Security Strategy from 2002 and the European Security Strategy from 2003. For policy research on this specific element of both security strategies see Rice (2003); Commission on Weak States and US National Security (2004) and Batt (2004).

ist groups.[4] And they are seen as hubs for all kinds of transnational organised crime, including trafficking in drugs, guns and humans.

Most recently, the discussion on what to do - how to fix broken states - has focused on the situation in Iraq. For the purpose of this paper, Iraq is, however, at best considered an atypical case. This paper holds that: "Failed states have not collapsed under external military pressure. … They have self-destructed by armed anarchy from within."[5] It also holds that this has implications for the challenges facing the international community. It makes a difference, whether the international actors have played a very recent and direct role in prompting state failure or not.[6] The situation in Iraq - and to a lesser extent Afghanistan - does not compare easily to situations in places such as Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Somalia, Sierra Leone, Chad, Yemen, Liberia, and Haiti.[7]

But why and how do some states 'self-destruct'? Robert Rotberg and others with him argue that 'bad' political leadership is at the root of state failure.[8] The following section offers a somewhat broader explanation that focuses on the larger historic context.

WHY AND HOW DO SOME STATES SELF-DESTRUCT?

When discussing failed states, it is en vogue to argue that state failure is a constant and recurring phenomenon of world politics.[9] The apparent outbreak of state failures following the end of the Cold War is neither new nor surprising. Instead, it was the near-absence of state failures during the Cold War that was unusual (but explainable since both super powers each propped up 'friendly' regimes and thus kept them from failing). What the world is witnessing today is - seen

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[4] It is, however, worth noting that Bin Laden did not take refuge in the southern 'lawless' parts of Sudan but rather in and around the firmly government-controlled Khartoum; and that he did not establish bases in Afghanistan until after Taliban had gained control over most of the territory. The attractions offered by weak or non-existing government structures and the inability of the international community to oversee activities within the territory may in most cases be overshadowed by difficulties facing international terrorists when operating in an insecure environment. See von Hippel (2002) and Menkhaus (2004b).

[5] Jackson (2000:295).

[6] Paris (2004).

[7] The list includes the ten 'most at-risk countries' from the Failed States Index of Foreign Policy & the Fund for Peace. See www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3098 (accessed 8 August 2005).

[8] Rotberg (2002); Jackson (2000); Chesterman, Ignatieff and Thakur (2004).

[9] Rotberg (2003); Herbst (2003); Jackson (2000); Clapham (2002); Cooper R. (2002a, b).

from this perspective - a return to 'normal'; to a situation where states 'fail' if they are unable to muster domestic strength and/or external support to remain standing. Yet, state failure in the post-Cold War World takes place in a global setting quite different from the pre-World War II situation.

First of all, following de-colonisation, the newly independent states are guaranteed survival. Regardless of their domestic strength and capacity to uphold their sovereignty, the post-colonial states are ensured continued existence as independent entities with fixed (or frozen) borders. This is a drastic departure from previous practices where weak states could be annexed entirely or in part by stronger states or divided into smaller sovereign states.[10] Secondly, state performance is increasingly measured against a new set of criteria. Concerns for the well-being of the population and their rights to life and freedom have entered the equation. Democracy and human rights mark the 'standard of civilisation' today. Thirdly, the contradictory forces of globalisation have transformed the role of the state, blurred the distinction between domestic/international, and changed the manner in which international relations or world politics are conducted. Non-state actors and transnational flows of commodities, capital, information, ideas, and people provide both political and theoretical challenges - and opportunities - to the territorially defined states and to traditional perceptions of inter-national politics.[11]

The story of state failure in the post-Cold War World takes its beginning with the dismantling of the European empires, which gradually began after World War I and gained momentum after World War II. Albeit with some resistance from their European masters, the former colonies gained independence, were recognised as sovereign states and became equal members of the international society with full membership of the UN and authority to issue passports, postage stamps and currencies.[12] As it turned out, however, they were not equal.[13] They were poorer and had worse infrastructure - both physically and institutionally. And in most cases their borders were drawn at random and with little or no attention paid to the cultural and social identities of the people living within and across these borders.

Many of the former colonies - especially in Asia - succeeded in building fairly efficient and stable institutions. They gained the administrative and political capacity associated with modern state-

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[10] Jackson (1990); Herbst (2003).

[11] Mann (2002).

[12] Anderson (2004).

[13] Jackson (1990).

hood. In other post-colonial states - mostly in sub-Saharan Africa - the state building process was somewhat less successful and the 'state' remained an artefact with little domestic grounding or capacity.[14]

Numerous studies of post-colonial states have shown how they function according to logics entirely different from what the modern ideal type presupposes.[15] This insight is highly relevant when trying to understand state failure. It sheds light on a number of elements which may explain why and how some states have failed. These elements are presented below in an attempt to map the process through which a state may self-destruct.

The Neo-Patrimonial Monopoly State

The post-colonial state is often described as 'neo-patrimonial' and highly dependent on personal leadership. The ruler treats all matters of state as his personal affair; officials are his personal servants and subject to his arbitrary power. Such a state is both illusory and substantial. It is illusory, because it works in informal and ineffectual ways and has limited capacity to implement public policy. It is, however, also substantial because control of the state is the "ultimate prize for all political elites".[16] The neo-patrimonial state is thus "both strong and powerless, overdeveloped in size and underdeveloped in functional terms."[17]

Clapham has termed this a 'Monopoly State'. The entire system revolves around the leader, who is both omnipotent and extremely insecure. In managing his regime, the leader depends on his ability to control the major sources of power within the country. Only a very small range of people has capacity to influence the political process and gain access to the political benefits. Domestic opposition and challengers are forcefully suppressed, and the monopoly leader is determining the means through which those who stay in the political game can seek access and influence. Politics is a patronage operation, governed by the need for control on the part of the ruler, and the need for access to state benefits on the part of the subordinates and those whom they may be claiming or seeking to represent.[18]

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[14] Jackson (1990).

[15] Clapham (1996); Bayart, Ellis and Hibou (1999); Chabal and Daloz (1999); Reno (1998).

[16] Chabal and Daloz (1999:9).

[17] Chabal and Daloz (1999:9).

[18] Clapham (1996).

This personalized and privatized character of the state has been explained by Chabal and Daloz as the result of a 'lack of emancipation of the state from wider society'.[19] The state has never been properly institutionalised - it has not become structurally differentiated from society. Politicians, bureaucrats and military officers are first and foremost obliged to "their kith and kin, their clients, their communities, their regions or even to their religion."[20] No-one is responsible for - or expected to worry about - the 'general will' or the greater good of society.

The modern distinction between state and civil society makes little sense, when the state is not 'emancipated' from the wider society. The same goes for distinctions between politics / economics, formal / informal, legal / illegal. These modern dualities are largely absent in states, where intricate patron-client networks (modelled on the idea of family and kin) provide the basis for social order and political competition. Vertical and personalised links to those in power - 'Big Men' - are imperative for ordinary people or 'citizens'. The legitimacy of the 'Big Men' - whether local or national - rests on their capacity to redistribute resources to their clienteles. If they fail to deliver, they lose legitimacy and hence their power base. These informal - yet very real - networks of "mutually beneficial reciprocity"[21] are linked to the state only to the extent that it is the main locus of resources. If substantial resources can be generated outside the state - e.g. through shadow economic activities - the networks may operate without any linkages to the formal state.

During the Cold War, monopoly leaders often held similar patron-client relationships with one of the two global super-powers, who saw a strategic interest in propping up a 'friendly' regime.[22] Zaïre under Mobutu is one of the most obvious examples. The foreign relations of Zaïre were effectively 'privatised' - the formal façade of statehood were used as a mechanism for Mobutu's personal profit and gain; both when receiving official support (ODA and military assistance) from other states and in dealings with external companies on e.g. the rights to extract natural resources. Mobutu - the monopoly leader - got richer and richer, while his country became poorer and poorer.

Seen from this perspective, the collapse of formal state institutions is related to the state's loss of relevance and usefulness as a centre for resources and wealth. A neo-patrimonial state weakens when it is no longer able to secure its monopoly leader privileged access to and control over re-

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[19] Chabal and Daloz (1999).

[20] Chabal and Daloz (1999:15).

[21] Chabal and Daloz (1999:29).

[22] Clapham (1996); Ayoob (1995).

sources - or rather when competing elites or 'strongmen' are able to uphold and maintain their own patron-client networks outside the realm of the state. According to Clapham, this was exactly what happened during the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s, when first economic and later on political conditionalities were imposed on monopoly leaders, as the Western donors lost patience with (and strategic interest in) repressive regimes. Demands for economic and political reform severely restricted the regimes and challenged their power. In some cases this led to a change in government and/or a revival of the legitimacy of the states. In other cases, it has led to further weakening of the state institutions and in extreme cases to their collapse. Little is known about why some neo-patrimonial states collapsed (Zaïre, Somalia) while others moved on after a change of regime (Uganda, Kenya). One factor seems, however, worthy of special attention: Civil war.

New Wars and the Privatization of Violence

As the neo-patrimonial state got weaker, other domestic actors got stronger. In some states opposition groups, who had previously been successfully repressed, were increasingly able to fight back and thus challenge the state's monopoly of the use of force. In failed states, the state has effectively lost its monopoly on violence - violence, warfare and security have become privatized.[23]

The privatization of security ties in with the broader question of the transformation of war - away from 'regular' wars fought by national armies in uniforms towards 'new wars' among state and non-state actors or 'irregular armed forces' such as paramilitary units, warlords, rebels, mercenaries, militias, guerrillas, criminal gangs and terrorists.[24] The actual fighting among these warring parties is, however, minimal. Most violence is directed against civilians.[25] Territory is captured through control of the population rather than through military advance. And control over the population is secured through counter-insurgency techniques of sowing 'fear and hatred' and winning 'hearts and minds'.[26] In these new wars, "population displacement, massacres,

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[23] See e.g. Møller (2005).

[24] See van Creveld (1991). and Kaldor (1999).

[25] According to Kaldor (1999) the ratio of military to civilian casualties in wars in the early 20th century was 8:1. In the 'new wars' of the 1990s, the ration was exactly reversed 1:8. Although the exact numbers are at best imprecise estimates, the trend seems clear.

[26] Kaldor (1999) insists that the strategies of the new wars are only aimed at sowing 'fear and hatred'. Both local actors and international forces, however, often pay substantial attention to winning 'hearts and minds' - e.g. by providing basic social services and protection.

widespread atrocities are not just side effects of war; they are a deliberate strategy for political control."[27]

Waging war is expensive. Both for private and public armies. The warring parties are faced with what the World Bank calls an 'acute financing problem'.[28] Money come from neighbouring states and diaspora groups, from 'taxation' of local population, foreign investors and humanitarian assistance, from extraction of natural resources and drug production; from kidnapping, trafficking, prostitution, and smuggling. And from random loot and plunder of the local population. A clear distinction between 'armed groups' and 'organized crime' is thus very difficult to uphold; as is the distinction between 'rebel groups' and 'government forces'. Often the regime utilizes the same alternative sources of funding to sustain their violent activities.[29]

Most of these revenues can at the same time only be upheld through continued violence and instability. A war logic is thus built into the economy with powerful interests opposed to national reconciliation and peace.[30] External actors, who are benefiting from e.g. the illegal conflict trade in drugs, diamonds, timber, oil, arms etc., may also have strong interests in ensuring that 'peace talks' are unsuccessful. The globalised nature of the war economy thus contributes to perpetuating local conflicts.[31] This does not mean that civil wars are necessarily motivated by 'greed'. 'Real' political grievances and objectives may have initiated fighting to begin with.[32] It does, however, imply that the violent conflicts in failed states may have 'mutated', as warring factions increasingly use violence as a means of fulfilling economic purposes.[33]

Warlord Politics

With particular reference to Somalia and Liberia, Reno has coined the term 'warlord politics' to cover the phenomenon described above. In warlord politics, "political power is pursued almost exclusively through control of markets and accumulation, and state institutions play little, if any, role in regulating political competition. Violence, however, is needed to control the distribution of wealth and the building of political alliances." Reno claims that in places such as Sierra Leone, Congo and Nigeria, the weak-state leaders have addressed the internal threat of warlord politics

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[27] Kaldor (2000:5). See also Keen (2002).

[28] World Bank (2003:72).

[29] Kaldor (1999:101-102).

[30] Keen (2002); Kaldor (1999).

[31] Duffield (2001); Cooper R. (2002a, b); Kaldor (1999).

[32] World Bank (2003).

[33] Keen (2002:4); World Bank (2003:79).

by basically mimicking the warlords - transforming their own political authority into an effective means of controlling markets without reliance on formal state institutions.[34] The difference between warlords and state leaders in such states may be negligible.

This highlights the gradual transformation from a situation where "control of the state is the ultimate prize for all political elites"[35] to one where "control over commerce rather than territory has become the key demarcator of political power."[36] The refusal of rebel-leader Foday Sankoh to accept a peace settlement in 1999 illustrates the difference well. The suggested settlement would have made him vice president of Sierra Leone. He was not interested. He wanted political control of the diamond trade instead and only when this was included in the deal, did he accept the peace settlement.[37] The slow and gradual nature of this transformation is illustrated by Somalia, where the final transition to statelessness was less momentous than one might expect, because the formal state of the Barre-regime already for years had been a relatively empty shell.[38]

Processes of state failure and collapse are often described as a vicious circle that catches societies in a 'conflict trap' filled with 'negative feedback mechanisms'.[39] Somalia illustrates, however, that protracted conflicts are dynamic crises. They change over time, as local communities and actors adapt to the situation.[40] Somalia today remains a highly insecure and dangerous place, but the intensity of armed clashes have diminished since the destructive warfare in 1988-1992. The character of lawlessness in Somalia has also changed considerably, as Sharia law, blood payments and informal 'neighbourhood watch' systems increasingly redress violent crimes and thefts (impunity persists for 'white collar crimes' committed by political and business leadership). According to Ken Menkhaus, a key to these changes is the gradual shift in the political and economic interest of the business community. New economic opportunities (e.g. for transit trade into Kenya and satellite phone companies) has shifted activities away from sale of arms, export of scrap metal and diversion of food relief towards activities that require a degree of stability, security, and predictability; not warfare and criminality.[41]

[34] Reno (1998:8).

[35] Chabal and Daloz (1999:9).

[36] Reno (1998:71).

[37] World Bank (2003:62-63).

[38] Little (2002:169).

[39] World Bank (2003).

[40] Menkhaus (2004a).

[41] Menkhaus (2004a).

This does not necessarily translate into support for the establishment of a new Somali central government. In many respects, economic life in Somalia has flourished after the collapse of the state.[42] It does, however, suggest that crises that appear self-perpetuating may have the potential to produce new social orders. It may well be that "the absence of the state does not simply produce chaos. It also reveals the outlines of alternatives to the state itself".[43]

MAINSTREAM AND CRITICAL VIEWS ON FAILED STATES

In this paper, failed states are seen as sharing three significant and interrelated characteristics: Firstly, the central government has effectively lost control and authority over the territory. Secondly, internal violent conflict is - or has recently been - rampant. Thirdly, the level of human suffering is appalling. Extreme poverty and hunger are widespread and growing. Atrocities are being committed. Human rights grossly violated and otherwise curable diseases turn into epidemics.

These characteristics are mainly descriptive. They do, however, build on an essentially normative notion of the state as a territorially defined entity, which is (supposed to be) under the control of a central government. Most policy debate on failed states also includes a set of functions, which all states are supposed to fulfil - but which some states fail to do. This is captured in the brief definition offered by Robert Rotberg: "A failed state is a polity that is no longer able or willing to perform the fundamental tasks of a nation-state in the modern world."[44] The functions most typically associated with the modern state are security [domestic law and order + protection against external threats], welfare [framework for social and economic life], and representation [act on behalf of the citizens in international forums].[45] More or less implicitly, it is argued that all states can be placed on a continuum of state strength in accordance to their performance - how well they fulfil the functions of a modern state.[46]

In opposition to this 'mainstream' view stands critical theory.[47] Critical theory questions the universal notion of a territorially defined state, and argues that "there are parts in which a classically

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[42] Little (2002).

[43] Anderson (2004).

[44] Rotberg, (2003:6).

[45] Milliken and Krause (2002); Clapham (2002).

[46] Rotberg (2003); Fukuyama (2004a, b, c).

[47] Duffield (2001); Bilgin and Morton (2002); Clapham (2002); Pugh (2004).

European conception of territoriality simply cannot be made to work, and is likely to lead - or has already led - to the collapse of the state as a viable unit of governance, or to the need to reconstitute states so that they correspond more closely to local realities."[48] Critical theory is less concerned with normative ideas of what a state is supposed to look like. It focuses on the real and existing institutions and social practices instead. Whereas mainstream thinking tends to see failed states as pathological anarchies, critical theorists argue that patterns of authority and social regulation exist in failed state - and may indeed be seen as the "outcome of different rationalities and the instrumentalisation of different forms of *dis*order that are more attuned to maintaining social bonds that 'work' in Africa."[49]

The explanation of why and how some states self-destruct, which was offered above, highlights firstly that failed states have never functioned as modern states; secondly that informal patron-client networks and 'shadow' economies continue to operate, and may in fact flourish, even after the state institutions have become irrelevant or collapsed.[50] Some of the core functions associated with the state may be undertaken by different types of non-state actors - warlords, traditional leaders, religious communities, neighbourhood or community groups etc. – who, amid chaos and bloodshed, provide some form of security and stability, perhaps a rudimentary justice system or access to very basic social services.[51] Basic human questions of how to ensure physical and economic security of oneself and one's dependants do not disappear because the state does.[52] The search for answers to these questions - and thus the mechanisms for exercising political power in failed states - may be difficult to detect for 'outsiders', but that does not make them any less real.[53]

The remaining part of the paper discusses four different suggestions of how the international community can and should engage in this bewildering complexity of failed states.

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[48] Clapham (2004:12).

[49] Bilgin and Morton (2002:74).

[50] See e.g. Little (2002) for an account of economic life in Somalia without a state.

[51] Reno (1998); Little (2002); Menkhaus (2004a + b); Blom Hansen and Stepputat (2005).

[52] Chesterman et al. (2004).

[53] Chabal and Daloz (1999); Reno (1998); Clapham (1996).

Part Two: Addressing Failed States

The international community's current interest in failed states reflects a mix of humanitarian, developmental and security concerns: The humanitarian imperative calls for the provision of humanitarian assistance - food, shelter, medical aid etc. to people in need. Humanitarian concerns are also invoked to justify the use of force; from sanctions to military force.[54] The widespread poverty in these states calls for increased and/or improved development assistance. The international community is now realizing that the ambitious Millennium Development Goals that it set for itself in 2000 cannot be fulfilled, unless something effective is done to turn the situation around in weak, fragile and failed states.[55] Last, but surely not least, the need to engage more effectively in failed states is prompted by security concerns. State failure is seen as a threat to both the local population and to international stability. As noted above, the main concern for the international community is the shadowy and criminal networks which may thrive in territories outside the control of national and/or international authorities.

Addressing failed states is thus almost over-determined. Clearly something needs to be done to address the humanitarian, developmental and security challenges. But what? What can the international community do to improve the lives of the people living in failed states and to counter possible threats to regional and global security related to state failure?

The following sections present four different answers to this question. These four answers - or approaches - do not add up to an exhaustive list of options available to the international community. Taken together, they do however capture some of the most pertinent questions and dividing lines in the ongoing policy debate on what to do about failed states. To facilitate comparison among the four approaches, a simple 2x2 table is helpful.

The table has two different dimensions. One is adherence to the principle of state sovereignty; the other is promotion of liberal values. 'State sovereignty' holds different meanings to the various approaches discussed below. To some it signifies a Westphalian right to 'non-intervention in domestic affairs'; to others it includes a post-cold war 'responsibility to protect'. Still others separate sovereignty from the territorial state and relate it to 'authority and power'. What matters to the discussion in this paper is, whether an approach is envisioning alternatives to an inter-

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[54] ICISS (2001).
[55] DFID (2005).

national system of formally equal units - states - or not. 'Liberal values' is a less-disputed concept, although it may also mean different things to different scholars. In this context, liberal values broadly refer to ideas such as multiparty democracy, free and fair elections, human rights, rule of law, capitalism, and market economy.

Table 1

	Sovereignty Reinforced	**Sovereignty Challenged**
Liberal	Peacebuilding	Liberal Imperialism
Non-liberal	Realism	Critical Theory

The table presents the dimensions somewhat falsely as dichotomies. Both dimensions are better understood as continuums along which different points of view or suggestions may be placed. Thus, the dividing lines between one approach and the other are not clear-cut. A number of arguments and analyses can be found in the grey zones between the four approaches. To facilitate comparison and discussion, emphasis is therefore placed on the key characteristics, which set the four approaches apart.

PEACEBUILDING

The first approach - which I will refer to as Peacebuilding[56] - comes close to being the official approach of the international community. It is enshrined in UN documents (starting with the landmark 'Agenda for Peace' from 1992) and policy papers and guidelines from leading donors and multilateral organisations, including the OECD, the World Bank and various UN agencies.[57] Differences of opinion exist within the peacebuilding community - e.g. on whether the term

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[56] The terms 'nation building' and 'state building' are also used to describe international support for post-conflict reconstruction. Peacebuilding covers a slightly broader agenda than state- or nationbuilding. Where state- or nation-building mainly are concerned with security and the institutions of governance, peacebuilding holds a wider societal - and often more civilian - approach. When looking at empirical studies of the actual interventions, the difference is, however, negligible (compare e.g. Paris (2004); Chesterman (2004); RAND (2003, 2005) and Ignatieff (2002).

[57] A wide selection of relevant policy documents, analytical frameworks, guidelines etc. can be found at http://cpr.web.cern.ch/cpr/compendium/. The web page is run by the "Conflict Prevention and Post-Conflict Reconstruction Network" - an informal network of donor countries and UN agencies.

refers narrowly to 'post-conflict reconstruction' or more broadly to "the overlapping agendas for peace and development in support of conflict prevention, conflict management and post-conflict reconstruction."[58] The basic ideas behind Peacebuilding are, however, broadly shared. The various international actors involved in the field adhere to the same Peacebuilding framework - both with regard to their underlying normative beliefs and the operational principles.

Peacebuilding is often presented in technical terms - as a matter of "assisting communities and nations in making the transition from war to peace."[59] Peacebuilding is, however, far from technical, if by that is meant politically or ideologically neutral. On the contrary, Peacebuilding actively promotes liberal democracy and market economy. It is thus sometimes portrayed as a 'civilising mission' that involves the "globalisation of a particular model of domestic governance from the core to the periphery of the international system."[60]

This universalist string in Peacebuilding indicates that it is concerned not only with the problems of failed states. It claims to be of relevance to *all* societies in transition from war to peace - regardless of the state of the state.

Philosophically, the roots go back to John Locke and Immanuel Kant and their separate notions of 'republican' and 'trading' states being more peaceful internally and in their dealings with other states. In Peacebuilding this has been translated into a belief that political and economic liberalization are effective remedies against violent conflict (international and domestic).[61] Peacebuilding thus works on the assumption that international order and human security are best achieved by improving existing states - not by overthrowing the system of states.[62] Reinforcing sovereignty and promoting liberal values are interlinked and interdependent elements in a successful transition from war to peace. Peacebuilding is thus placed in the upper left cell of table 1.

The operational principles of Peacebuilding are based largely on 'lessons learned' and 'best practices' from earlier interventions. Critics of Peacebuilding often argue that the lessons are not

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[58] Tschirgi (2003:1).

[59] Brahimi (2000:ix). See also IPA (2003:3); Paris (2004:13).

[60] Paris (2002:638).

[61] For an interesting discussion on the linkages between Peacebuilding and the so-called 'liberal peace thesis', see Paris (2004).

[62] This was strongly expressed in UN Secretary General Ghali's "An Agenda for Peace" from 1992: "The foundation stone of this work is and must remain the state." This argument is repeated in the Canadian report on 'Responsibility to Protect' ICISS (2001).

as much learned, as they are spurned. Nevertheless, they can be summarized into five basic assumptions:[63]

1. Peacebuilding is a multidimensional enterprise which includes political, social, economic, security and legal dimensions. It also involves responses at the local, national, and international level.

2. Security is key. Establishing security is a pre-requisite for post-conflict peacebuilding.

3. Ownership. The people of a war-torn society must 'own' the reconstruction process. They must be involved in setting the agenda and leading the process. Building local capacity is vital for sustainability.

4. Time matters. Quick-impact interventions are critical for peacebuilding outcomes, yet reconstruction itself is a long-term process.

5. Coordination. External and internal private and public actors need to work within a coherent strategy, establish priorities and mobilise the necessary resources.

In different shapes these guiding principles run through most of the peacebuilding literature. Some texts include other aspects - e.g. the need to expand the analysis to include regional factors.[64] The main message remains, however, that the local population is - and should be - responsible for the peacebuilding process. External actors can help. But the transition from war to peace needs to be home-grown and 'owned' by the inhabitants. Otherwise it will not succeed.

Empirical studies highlight that a 'standard peacebuilding formula'[65] or 'standard post-war political package'[66] gradually evolved throughout the 1990s. The formula included "early post-conflict election and launching a full range of market-oriented economic reforms, followed by a declaration of peacebuilding 'success' and the termination of the operation usually within two or

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[63] The list draws on Tschirgi's 10 'operational principles of post-conflict peacebuilding' (2004:10-11).

[64] Mass and Mepham (2004).

[65] Paris (2004).

[66] Call and Cook (2003).

three years of its creation."[67] Also included in the political package were constitution-making, funding for civil society, and extensive state institution-building.[68]

The peacebuilding results are - at best - mixed. About half of the peace agreements to end civil wars collapse within five years of signing. Of 18 countries that experienced a UN peacekeeping mission with a political institution-building component between 1988 and 2002, 13 were classified as authoritarian regimes in 2002.[69] The local situation may have improved - compare e.g. present-day Cambodia with the Khmer Rouge period - but most interventions have failed to meet the high expectations of the peacebuilding community.

Why is that? Is it due to flaws in the implementation? Lack of resources, patience, and political will? Insufficient adherence to the operational principles? Or is the problem more fundamental and relates to flaws in the Peacebuilding theory as such? Can Western liberal models of democracy be exported to war-torn societies as a remedy to their problems?

Based on a review of major comparative academic studies and operational evaluations, Neclâ Tschirgi claims that "one of the persistent obstacles to more effective peacebuilding outcomes is the chronic inability of international actors to adapt their assistance to the political dynamics of the war-torn societies they seek to support."[70] Support for e.g. democratization has tended to favour elections, human rights promotion, and media development, which do not necessarily correspond to local needs. Similarly, rule of law efforts have been perceived as "largely apolitical, technical exercises involving transfer of know-how, when in reality they are profoundly political."[71] And little attention has been given to contradictions likely to emerge from the reforms of state and society - including possible tensions between elite interests and marginalized populations, and potential destabilizing effects of 'transitional problems' following liberal adjustment programmes, such as growth in inequality and unemployment.[72]

In different ways, these shortcomings reflect problems of ownership. They indicate that the standard peacebuilding agenda is being formulated, promoted and implemented by the inter-

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[67] Paris (2004).

[68] Ottaway (2003).

[69] Call and Cook (2003:1-2).

[70] Tschirgi (2004:i).

[71] IPA (2003:10).

[72] Call and Cook (2003).

national community - not by the inhabitants or their representatives. This is a fundamental breach with one of the key principles in Peacebuilding. It may, however, also point to an inherent contradiction in the Peacebuilding approach: On the one hand, the notion that the transition process needs to be locally owned. On the other, a fixed agenda of liberal democracy and market economy. This raises a number of questions.

- *Who represents the people in a failed state?*

The international community operates on the assumption that the national government speaks on behalf of the entire population and territory of the state. In a failed state, this assumption is particularly troublesome. The formal government has little authority and control - perhaps down to as little as daytime hours in the capital - and often its legitimacy is severely damaged. Who speaks on behalf of the people in such a situation? With whom should international peacebuilders engage? Where should national ownership rest?

Part of the answer is often found in peace agreements. Studies show that the nature and quality of the peace agreements are important for the peacebuilding results.[73] Studies also show that often the agreements are inconsistent, partly because the international actors - which were instrumental in negotiating the agreements - were unclear on whether the primary aim was to achieve peace or to create legitimate democratic institutions.[74]

Reaching peace agreements very often involves giving the leaders of warring factions a central role in the future state - e.g. as ministers in transitional governments. Providing them with incentives to mutate from warlords into peacelords.[75] Obviously such a strategy for peace holds a clear risk that these people, and the groups they represent, regard the state primarily as a source of personal income and power base and not as a vehicle for national reconciliation and reconstruction. A continuation of the neo-patrimonial state - albeit run by a complex alliance of former enemies instead of a monopoly leader. According to the International Crisis Group, Liberia illustrates the point: "The persistent focus at [the peace talks] on jobs, cars and money rather than the challenges confronting Liberia gives a clue to the character of the transitional government. It is an indicator, if one where needed, that the country's political class and its associated warlords

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[73] Stedman (2001).

[74] IPA (2003:7).

[75] Peake et al. (2004).

have little interest either in the technical efficiency of the government or its ability to deliver public goods to a broad range of citizens."[76]

In such a situation, the national government has little capacity and perhaps desire to formulate the visions and strategies that are supposed to guide the peacebuilding efforts. Although the façade of national ownership is kept intact, the international community often formulates the strategies themselves - more or less coordinated, and with more or less input from 'local voices'. According to a joint UN/World Bank operational note on how to work in fragile states, it "helps to define ownership "pragmatically" and apply a "principle of dynamic ownership" that "increasingly broadens the circle of participation in, and support for, the reform agenda."[77] Ownership in this context does not translate into responsibility or control but merely into "inclusion, participation, and dialogue". This may be the only realistic option available to Peacebuilders in failed states. Nevertheless, it implies that far-reaching decisions are made at international conferences and donor coordination meetings, where local representatives have little or no access. And it means that the population is left with few - if any - mechanisms for holding the international community responsible for the decisions they make on their behalf.[78]

- *Local capacity?*

Peacebuilding efforts are caught between the short term necessity of 'getting the job done' and the long term requirement of building local capacity to do the job. The problem is sometimes referred to as the 'transition gap' between humanitarian and developmental assistance, but it extends beyond that. According to the World Bank: "Post-conflict situations are often politically ripe for rapid and extensive reforms, but what is acutely lacking is the technical capacity to design and implement them."[79] Capacity building is, however, a long term process. Meanwhile, state functions and services will continue to be lacking and/or fulfilled by someone else.

One of the practical questions confronting donors in failed states is how service delivery by non-state actors (which often is all there is) can be 'scaled up', while at the same time national

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[76] International Crisis Group (2003:4).

[77] UNDG/World Bank (2005).

[78] For a highly critical analysis, see Stockton (2005).

[79] World Bank (2003:177).

institutions and their legitimacy are being (re)build.[80] On the one hand, the donor community wish to reach out to as many people as possible. On the other hand, they wish to boost the popularity of the state, which is seen as pivotal for long-term peace and stability. How can tangible health and education services (continue to) be provided through non-state actors, while emerging state structures gradually take over responsibility - and credit?[81] This question is high on the agenda in capitals such as Kabul.

The time constraint is also evident in the tension between the desire to withdraw international military troops as soon as possible and the desire to leave in place stable national structures capable of providing security and upholding law and order. This means strengthening the police, the army, the judiciary - all the branches of the state, which often have been involved in re-pression and violence against the population. Building genuine trust in these institutions is time-demanding and sits uneasily with a desire to 'bring home the boys'. The challenges of security sector reform are illustrated by these impressions from Sierra Leone: "The horror of brutal am-putations was still very fresh in people's minds. …There was therefore an overwhelming feeling of the perpetrators being substantially rewarded for their actions. With regard to members of the military, the attitude of some of the [international] officers sent to implement these changes did not help matters. Some of them were extremely arrogant with the attitude of 'you guys know nothing and have messed up really badly so we have come to totally re-educate you'."[82]

- *Local solutions?*

The predicaments described above may be addressed by working with local or traditional forms of governance or authority. This option often requires difficult choices and perhaps the sacrifice of values, which liberals hold dear. Traditional forms of authority may be repressive of women's rights, individual rights, minority rights, property rights and other rights.[83] At the same time these local alternatives often compete with the state for the loyalty of the population, and while they may confer fewer rights than established states (are supposed to), they often protect those rights, which they do extend, far more effectively.[84] Field studies suggest that international efforts often

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[80] The policy discussion mainly takes place within the OECD/DAC's "Joint Learning and Advisory Process on Difficult Partnerships", see www.oecd.org/dac/lap. See also Leader and Colenso (2004).

[81] Berry et al. (2004).

[82] Creighton-Randall (2005).

[83] Call and Cook (2003:11).

[84] Anderson (2004: 3).

misunderstand the nature of local coping mechanisms and either miss opportunities to strengthen them or, at the extreme, undermine them. This happens for instance when emergency food assistance weakens local agriculture markets, and when international peace initiatives displace local moderates.

It seems clear that if peacebuilding efforts are to become more successful, they need to become more attuned to local reality, and less attached to tools "that have become virtually standardised through application in other international rescue attempts."[85]

Numerous 'guidelines' and papers on 'lessons learned' and 'best practices' emphasise that there are no 'blue-prints' or 'one-size-fits-all' to building lasting peace. Each case is unique and different. Yet, Peacebuilding in its core reflects a uni-linear model for the development of societies. It builds on a general and universal theory on the relationship between economic, social, and political development and holds that a combination of democracy and market economy is suitable for all societies and eventually will bring about lasting peace. This implicit assumption that 'all good things go together' is rejected in different ways, by the remaining three approaches. They each hold different answers to the dilemmas of Peacebuilding. The Liberal Imperialists replace the illusion of national ownership with firm international control. The Realists focus on stability and disregard liberal values. And Critical Theory advocates for looking beyond the territorial state towards genuine humanism. In varying degrees, they each challenge the universalism of Peacebuilding.

The three approaches are presented in turn below - starting with Liberal Imperialism.

LIBERAL IMPERIALISM

A growing body of literature argues that Peacebuilding is inadequate and unsuitable to meet the challenges and threats posed by failed states.[86] Relying on 'home-grown processes' and 'national ownership' will not do the trick. A measure of force and imposition is required, as "continued international surveillance will be the local political price paid for failure to provide security to a country's civilian population."[87] In a failed state, the locals cannot occupy the driver's seat.

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[85] International Crisis Group (2004).

[86] Rieff (1999); Cooper R. (2002a, b); Krasner (2002, 2004); Fearon and Laitin (2004); Mallaby (2002, 2004a, b, c); Paris (2004); Kuznetsova (2004).

[87] Fearon and Laitin (2004:41).

Executive authority must rest primarily in the hands of external actors, if a failed state is to be successfully turned around. Only gradually - over a span of decades - can authority be relinquished to a new indigenous replacement.[88] In extreme cases, external authority structures may need to be in place indefinitely.[89] Following Robert Cooper, Sebastian Mallaby and others, this approach is referred to here as 'Liberal Imperialism'.[90]

Liberal Imperialism departs with some, but not all, the principles and assumptions of Peacebuilding. Liberal values such as human rights, democracy and market economy remain core concerns. And as the peacebuilders, liberal imperialists are led by a "strategic and moral responsibility to intervene on behalf of beleaguered citizens."[91] Their main objective is to bring about "a world in which the efficient and well-governed export stability and liberty."[92] Liberal imperialists are thus to some extent frustrated peacebuilders, who have learnt the "uncomfortable but necessary lesson" that "left to their own devices, collapsed and badly governed states will not fix themselves."[93] In some ways, the main difference between Liberal Imperialism and Peacebuilding is the timeframe. A Peacebuilding presence is temporary and has - ideally - a clear exit strategy. Liberal Imperialism, on the other hand, is open-ended, perhaps even permanent. This idea of extended international control of the inner workings of a state is fundamentally at odds with the principle of state sovereignty. Liberal Imperialism is thus placed in the upper right corner of table 1.

Liberal Imperialism is not as fully developed, coherent and operational an approach as Peacebuilding. It consists mainly of different observers' calls for stronger and longer international engagement in failed states - coupled with a variety of policy suggestions on how this may be

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[88] Rotberg (2003:31).

[89] Krasner (2002).

[90] Cooper R. (2002a, b); Mallaby (2002); Rieff (1999). The term 'imperialism' is controversial. It brings connotations of colonialism, repression and exploitation. Not all the authors referred to in this paragraph would call themselves 'liberal imperialists'. Not least because critics of strong international engagement in failed states often use the term to evoke exactly the connotations of the 'bad old days'. Nevertheless, the term catches the content of the approach more precisely than terms such as 'post-colonial trusteeship', 'neo-trusteeship' or 'shared sovereignty'. Similarities exist between the reasoning of current strand of US neo-conservatism and Liberal Imperialism, the main difference being the latter's concern for international legitimacy and insistence of a long-term international presence.

[91] Rotberg (2003:31).

[92] Cooper R. (2002a, b).

[93] Krasner (2004:86); Rotberg (2003:31).

realised. A few basic elements are shared by most of the observers. These are summarised in the following three paragraphs:

1.   The commitment of the Western states is pivotal for success

Wealthy democracies have a special responsibility for "bringing peace and prosperity to the populations of badly governed states and reduce the threat that such polities present to the wider international community."[94] Doing so is also in their best self-interest as the threats and dangers from failed states grow stronger. Liberal Imperialism thus sees a convergence of interests: "The weak still need the strong, and the strong still need an orderly world."[95]

Despite this 'enlightened self-interest', Liberal Imperialism is nevertheless concerned that Western powers will remain hesitant towards becoming bogged down in 'pre-modern zones of chaos'.[96] Failed states are a classical collective action problem for the major states: The costs of ensuring political order in the periphery are concentrated on those that take action, while the benefits are diffuse and will be enjoyed by all.[97] This leads to an 'insufficient supply' of long-term commitment and resources for the task. It does, however, also imply that there may be positive incentives for burden sharing and multilateral responses.[98] To capitalize on this and increase the supply of international engagement in failed states, new institutional arrangements are needed.

2.   New international institutional arrangements are needed to combine legitimacy and efficiency.

Liberal Imperialism is concerned with questions of both legitimacy and efficiency. Suspending a state's sovereignty (de facto or de jure) by assuming executive authority backed by military force, needs some form of international legitimacy. Otherwise it is mere occupation. The United Nations Security Council is the preferred source of international legitimacy, but if the Security Council cannot agree, Liberal Imperialism holds that legitimacy may also be found on moral

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[94] Krasner (2004:120).

[95] Cooper R. (2002a, b).

[96] Cooper R. (2002a, b).

[97] Fearon and Laitin (2004:13).

[98] Fearon and Laitin (2004); Rieff (1999).

grounds. Legality need not be the only source of legitimacy. This echoes the debate on human-itarian intervention and the responsibility to protect.[99]

The concern for legitimacy extends beyond the question of authorization. Operational legitimacy is also needed to ensure that the 'mandate' is fulfilled in an orderly fashion. This relates both to questions of efficiency - who can do the job - and to questions of accountability - to whom should they answer. The challenge is to ensure access to the resources of the powerful states, while not leaving 'trigger-pulling power' un-checked."[100] Reforms of the UN - most notably the Security Council - are called for. At the same time, many also point to the need for strengthening organisations that are "not subject to the influence of non-democratic leaders" and where "the underlying national capabilities and voting powers are more aligned" than in the UN.[101] In essence: Organizations controlled by USA and other Western states such as NATO and the World Bank.

3.   A robust military presence is needed to provide a secure arena for reform.

The security situation in a failed state demands an international military presence capable of pro-tecting civilians, combating spoilers, and establishing security.[102] When multiple irregular armed groups apply guerrilla and insurgency techniques, the international military presence must engage in counterinsurgency to establish security and impose peace. Traditional peacekeeping notions of 'consent', 'impartiality' and 'use of force only in self-defence', which tend to be favoured by Peacebuilding, are inappropriate for interventions in failed state. Such situations call for much more 'robust rules of engagement'. Relying on 'best-case' planning and starting with a small light-ly armed international force is bound to encounter 'mission creep' when confronted with the complexities and realities in a failed state. It can also be a dangerous illusion that may lead to 'complicity with evil', as atrocities continue and international peacekeepers do nothing to prevent them.[103] A rapid and effective deployment of credible armed forces is necessary, if humiliating and morally indefensible failures like Congo and Angola are not to be repeated. To many observ-ers this further underlines the need to get the Western countries actively engaged, as NATO countries are seen as the only ones capable of projecting the kind of power needed sufficiently

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[99] ICISS (2001).

[100] Fearon and Laitin (2004).

[101] Krasner (2002); Mallaby (2002).

[102] Fearon and Laitin (2004).

[103] Weiss (2001); Fearon and Laitin (2004).

fast and efficient.[104] To others, it underlines the need to establish a standing UN army ready to go at the order of either the Secretary General or the Security Council.[105]

Liberal Imperialism is criticised from different angles. Some argue that it is already unfolding in places such as Kosovo, East Timor, Afghanistan and Iraq - and that this reflects traditional Western Realpolitik under the influence of a new balance of power; not a moral shift in their foreign policy towards ensuring "the quality of life and equity for all human beings."[106] Others hold that liberal interventionism jeopardizes international order and stability, because it spurs disagreement and conflict among the great powers. Ensuring stability and avoiding tension and conflict among the great powers are more important than protecting human rights.[107]

In different ways both arguments highlight a contradiction between the values Liberal Imperialism sets out to promote and protect and the means it wishes to apply. The moral legitimacy of international trusteeship rests on serving the interests of the governed - the population of the failed state - yet the governed are held to lack the capacity to determine their own interests and have no mechanism for holding the external bodies accountable.[108] The 'tyranny of benevolence', as William Bain calls it[109]. Such paternalism resonates poorly with human rights, human freedom, human security and human dignity. Some critics hold that "People who live in independent countries protected by a right of non-intervention are free from external intervention to succeed in their common endeavours as a political community. They are also free to fail."[110] Others argue that the contradiction can only be overcome by establishing a cosmopolitan world order that can uphold and protect the rights of all people around the globe.[111]

The special role and 'responsibility' of Western states, which Liberal Imperialism claims exists also carries tensions with it. It essentially introduces a three-tier international system consisting of democratic states, non-democratic states and entities under international trusteeship. Such a hierarchical order is fundamentally at odds with the idea of sovereign equality. Furthermore the "marriage of a humanitarian impulse with the need for national security creates a powerful

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[104] Rieff (1999).

[105] See e.g. Dimitríjevics (2005).

[106] Bain (2001); see also e.g. Chandler (2004).

[107] Jackson (2000:291).

[108] Chandler (2005); Bain (2001).

[109] Bain (2001).

[110] Jackson (2000:411).

[111] Kaldor (2000).

justification for invading and taking over foreign countries."[112] Why should this right / responsibility only apply to Western states? What about the neighbouring states who are immediately threatened by the chaos of a failed state? And how does one avoid wars of aggression being disguised as humanitarian intervention?

Liberal Imperialism acknowledges these tensions. Their concern is, however, the undersupply of intervention in failed states. According to them, the outside world is paying too little attention to the problems in Sierra Leone, Liberia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Somalia, Haiti etc. They do not worry that all of sudden, foreign states - democratic or non-democratic - will scramble to take over control of these places.

The final criticism levelled against Liberal Imperialism, which will be discussed here, relates to question of feasibility. Liberal Imperialism essentially argues that 'fixing failed states' is a matter of political will and resources. If only the powerful states put themselves to it - and have the stamina to stay the course and pay the price - they can create states that eventually will be able to take charge of their own affairs and prosper.[113] The claim is, however, largely based on speculation and an assumption that the 'instruments' are available. That the donor community knows how to keep the peace, deliver basic services, build local capacity and governance institutions, and strengthen civil society in failed states - or will learn to do so along the way. Yet history has repeatedly shown that stable states and societies are build from the inside. It is essentially an internal process. And responsibility must - as Peacebuilding argues, but often fails to deliver - rest with the people who are going to live with the result.

The dilemmas discussed above question the 'implicit alliance' between rich states and poor people, which to different degrees underpin both Liberal Imperialism and Peacebuilding. Both argue that in failed states, the security concerns of the West overlap and coincide with the interests of the local population. The remaining two approaches are somewhat more sceptical of the degree of mutual interests between the ordinary people in a failed state and the world's most powerful states.

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[112] Faguet (2004:6).
[113] Rieff (1999).

REALISM

While those arguing in favour of Liberal Imperialism want the 'internationals' to do more, other observers are arguing in favour of doing less. They worry that the post-Cold War promotion of liberal values jeopardizes international order and stability and leads to interventions, which are overly comprehensive, ambitious and unfocused. The argument ranges from conservative defences of state sovereignty and non-intervention[114] to pragmatic calls for 'putting security first' in state-building efforts.[115] In common they have the notion that order and stability are more important than human rights and democracy - both in international politics and with regard to the inner workings of states. They question the universality of liberal values - but maintain it with regard to the territorial state. This line of reasoning is referred to here as 'Realism' and placed in the lower left cell of table 1.

Taking a realist approach to failed states implies firstly, that the international community (i.e. in effect: USA and its allies) should refrain from intervening in a failed state out of purely human-itarian concerns; only if the situation constitutes a threat to stability or national interests should forceful action be taken. USA and its allies should stay clear of "an open-ended commitment to human freedom [and] learn to say 'no'."[116] They should only intervene 'where it counts'. Second-ly, interventions in failed states should focus on establishing order and stability; not on promot-ing a particular model of governance.

According to this line of reasoning, Peacebuilding leads to interventions that are too comprehensive, too ambitious, and too unfocused. Rather than trying to address underlying chronic problems of human security and human development, interventions in failed states should focus at the immediate origins of state failure and concentrate more narrowly on restoring the state's capacity to maintain security.[117] State failure demands urgent action and fast results - not long-term comprehensive socio-economic and political reforms, the result of which may even be highly uncertain.

Similarly, interventions inspired by Liberal Imperialism are considered both dangerous and utopian. Dangerous because they may spur disagreement among the great powers.[118] Utopian

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[114] Jackson (2000).

[115] Ottaway and Mair (2004).

[116] Krauthammer (2004).

[117] Ottaway and Mair (2004).

[118] Jackson (2000).

because the resources for establishing long-term trusteeships are not available: "Kosovo might serve at best as a template for interventions in small countries to which wealthy members of the international community attach a great deal of importance. As a general model it is simply unsustainable."[119]

Putting security first and focusing on what is realistically attainable is thus to some extent a matter of cost-efficiency - of making the most of what is available. For instance, by taking an unprejudiced look at the private military companies, and considering whether they might do a better and cheaper job than the current UN peace-missions. Especially in Africa, where well-trained and well-equipped Western forces remain highly reluctant to get bogged down.[120] At the core of such an argument lies the assumption that a few hundred well-trained soldiers may be all it takes to restore some degree of security in a failed state. The governments in Liberia, Sierra Leone, the DRC, and the Côte d'Ivoire were not "confronted by the equivalent of war-hardened Vietcong backed by the North Vietnamese government, but by bands of poorly armed, trained and commanded child soldiers, petty criminals, drug addicts, and desperados, and still they lost."[121] According to this reasoning, the insurgencies were 'successful' less because of their own strength than because of the weakness of the state they challenged.

On another - and more fundamental - level, calls for 'putting security first' implies a critique of liberal approaches for having lost track of what the core function of a state is - and for projecting values and norms, which may be laudable but not necessarily relevant to the local situation. First of all, the 'Hobbesian' problem of establishing effective institutions that can provide security and stability is what matters in a failed state. Secondly - and related to this - democratization is not a solution to dysfunctional states. Democracy is a good thing in itself, but it can only work where there is a functioning state. State-building comes first.[122]

According to Realism, liberal approaches falsely assume that democracy-building and state-building are "mutually reinforcing endeavours or even two sides of the same coin."[123] They are not. In fact, liberal emphasis on the legislative and judicial branches of government, on decentralization

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[119] Ottaway and Mair (2004).

[120] Weiss (2001:423); Møller (2005).

[121] Ottaway and Mair (2004).

[122] Ottaway, Herbst and Mills (2004).

[123] Carothers (2002:9).

and on civil society has more to do with redistribution of state power than with state-building.[124] To hard-core realists, state-building is first and foremost a matter of bolstering the capacity of the executive branch of government - of (re)building the state's monopoly of violence and as a consequence (re)establishing law, order and stability.

As was the case with Peacebuilding and Liberal Imperialism, Realism also encounters contradictions and tensions when confronted with reality. Because Realism is a highly pragmatic approach, it is less plagued by the type of intrinsic ethical paradoxes that liberal approaches encounter. The main concern for Realism is whether it can succeed in delivering order and stability - and whether this 'really' is what matters. How realistic is Realism at the end of the day? To gauge this, three questions - posed from a liberal perspective - are discussed below.

- *How can you avoid having to deal with the same situation over and over again if you do not address the underlying problems?*

The essential claim of liberal approaches - and thus its main objection to Realism - is that unless the underlying root causes of state failure are addressed, the 'conflict trap' cannot be escaped. Opting for short-term stability will not produce long-term order. As long as people's basic human rights - civil/political and socio-economic - are violated, there can be no stable peace - and thus no stability.

A hard-core realist might argue that it does not really matter. It is probably cheaper and easier to go back and 'drain the swamp' once more if need be, than to pretend to fix the structural problems within a foreign society. A more pragmatic realist might argue that the structural problems may be addressed through development assistance and support for reforms *after* a state has been established. To fend off the critique, both realists might also point to the fact that ambitious peacebuilding interventions have not been entirely successful in producing turn-around states. International peace missions have more than once had to return shortly after departing (witness Angola, Haiti, and Sierra Leone).

- *How can you determine which failed state 'counts' and which do not?*

The fact that Afghanistan fell entirely off the Washington radar after the Soviet withdrawal and that this neglect came back to haunt USA 11 September 2001, is a sombre critique of the realist

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[124] Carothers (2002:17).

idea of only engaging 'where it counts'. Realism looks at the world as it is now and concerns itself with the immediate dangers and strategic concerns. Not with the prevention of future threats. Therefore liberal approaches would argue that it is an inadequate response to the long-term security concerns of the Western world.

A realist rebuttal of this critique might argue that the 'Afghanistan-blunder' underlines the need for sound and focused analysis - not the need for comprehensive engagement around the world.

- *How can leaders in USA and Europe ignore popular pressure to 'do something'?*

Realists sometimes claim that public opinion is a major obstruction to prudent - and realistic - foreign policy today. Western leaders are afraid to tell their voters that what is happening in country X is terrible, but they do not really care enough to do something about it.[125] Public opinion demands that leaders 'do something' and thus prompts them to engage in 'humanitarian' interventions of little or no strategic concern. This line of reasoning is flawed by its assumption that failed states (or foreign policy in general) play a central role to Western voters. It typically does not. The argument, however, may hold a kernel of validity. Globalisation has changed world politics - and thus the conditions for conducting foreign policy.

States are not the only international players any more (if they ever were). They share the scene with a broad variety of non-state actors, including transnational companies, multilateral organisations and civil society groupings. And they are confronted with issues that cannot be confined to or dealt with solely within the territorial borders of any state - from pollution to organised transnational crime. In a globalised world, defining what constitutes core national security and strategic interests may be somewhat more complex than Realism holds. Not because of public opinion, but because the world is more interconnected, integrated and interdependent than Realism acknowledges.

CRITICAL THEORY

To a broad and diverse group of authors, the three previous approaches are all 'mainstream'. They all employ the same Western-biased, state-centric approach and build on the same simplistic notion, that if some states do not 'work', it is because they have failed to adopt the formula that

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[125] Rieff (1999).

has worked elsewhere.[126] Their different emphasis on 'national ownership', 'international control' or 'security first' merely reflects nuances within the same paradigm. Not real choices between genuine alternative approaches. This point of view is referred to here as 'Critical Theory'.

Critical Theory rejects universalism with regard to both the territorial state and liberal values. It does not see the state as "the natural, default organizational structure of human community"[127] but as "a distinct and particular institution with a number of historical and contemporary competitors."[128] Furthermore, it holds that multiparty democracy and market economy are not the end-destination of History, as Fukuyama proclaimed after the collapse of Soviet communism. Alternatives exist and will continue to develop as history continues to unfold around the world. Based on this denunciation of both the state and liberal governance, Critical Theory is placed in the lower, right cell of table 1.

Critical - or 'alternative' - literature on failed states is a diverse and fragmented body. It is also fairly limited - especially with regard to questions of 'what to do'. Most critical analysts are primarily concerned with exposing the ideological basis of mainstream approaches and the economic, political and security interests which they are seen to serve.[129] 'Problem-solving' is not an explicit part of their research agenda.[130] What they do offer is a broad variety of arguments for looking beyond and below the level of the state and focusing on the structural features of the global system and its real-life consequences for actual human beings living on the ground. The specific governance failures of the individual leadership of failed states are of less concern to Critical Theory than the interplay between external and local factors and the manner in which it produces and reproduces differing forms of order, authority and control.

Most Critical Theorists, however, do end their analysis by pointing a direction for future policies, perhaps even with concrete suggestions for alternative actions. The following discussion of Critical Theory as an approach to failed states is based mainly on such 'pointers'. It therefore does not add up to a coherent alternative strategy or policy for addressing failed states. Nevertheless, within this fragmented research agenda, three issues may be singled out as core elements in a hypothetical 'Critical Theory Plan of Action' for failed states.

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[126] Clapham (2002:789).

[127] Anderson (2004:1).

[128] Anderson (2004:1).

[129] See e.g. Bilgin and Morton (2002).

[130] Bellamy and Williams (2004:205).

1. Acknowledge the problematic universality of statehood

Rather than focusing on discrete instances of state failure and collapse, Critical Theory argues that attention should be on the 'failed universalisation' of the 'imported state' within the post-colonial world.[131] It is the globalisation of the territorial state model that lies at the core of the problem. Both diplomats and intellectuals must therefore refrain from trying to reassert the primacy of statehood. What they need to do instead is figure out how to deal with 'degrees of statehood' and 'zones of statelessness' - not insisting on 'helping' by (re)constructing states that were never truly states in the modern sense of the word anyhow.[132]

The practical implications of this advice are less developed. Some have argued that in the case of Afghanistan, the international community should give up the illusion of creating a strong central state. Instead, it should opt for some form of 'ordered anarchy' that could create "minimal conditions for medieval civilisation: the avoidance of major armed conflict, the security of main trading routes, and the safety and neutrality of the capital".[133] Such a system would not only protect the key interests of the international community (stability and order). It would also provide the people of Afghanistan with what they need most: The cessation of war and the possibility of pursuing basic economic interests.[134]

2. Regard non-liberal institutions as adaptations to the neo-liberal world order

According to Critical Theory, liberal approaches project a falsely harmonious image of world order. The current system of global governance is *not* a "benign undertaken involving state and non-state actors in a collective pursuit of global security, an open and inclusive economic system, effective legal and political institutions, global welfare and development, and a shared commitment to conflict resolution."[135] The neo-liberal world order is marked by structural violence, which helps create the climate for conflict and state collapse.[136] The post-colonial world is systematically disfavoured and excluded from the global market. To many inhabitants in the third world, the only economic opportunities lie in the extralegal sector - from unauthorised sale and smuggling of legal goods, to drugs production and illegal trade in diamonds and timber.

[131] Bilgin and Morton (2002:75).

[132] Clapham (1998).

[133] Ottaway and Lieven (2002:6).

[134] Ottaway and Lieven (2002).

[135] Duffield (2004).

[136] Cooper N. (2002).

The growth of the shadow economy is seen by mainstream approaches as both a cause and a symptom of state failure. Critical Theory on the other hand sees it as flexible adaptations to a neo-liberal world order of inequality, exploitation and exclusion.[137] The shadow networks are best understood as innovative non-liberal forms of order and authority. As such they may reveal the outlines of the alternatives to the collapsed state.[138]

Critical Theory rarely comes up with suggestions on how to change the neo-liberal world order. They do, however, point to the need to acknowledge the complicity of Western economies and companies in facilitating the growth of shadow economies. And to approach the issue in a holistic manner that takes into account both the livelihood concerns of the poppy farmer, whose fields are burned down in the war on drugs, and the larger picture of global conditions for trade and investment.[139]

3. Address the Crisis of Humanitarianism

At the core of liberal approaches to failed states lies the assumption that security and development are closely linked and that one cannot be pursued without the other.[140] This is referred to as the Security-Development Nexus. Critical Theory is highly sceptical of this 'merger of development and security' or 'securitisation of development'.[141]

Mark Duffield - a leading Critical thinker - argues that the "tying of aid to an interventionary agenda of pacification and liberal-democratic reform" has politicised both development and humanitarian aid and lead to a crisis of humanitarianism.[142] Instead of saving lives, the international community is supporting social processes and political outcomes.[143] Longer-term peace objectives are privileged over shorter-term life-saving measures;[144] and the possibility of a better tomorrow is held out as a price worth paying for suffering today.[145] The inhabitants of the failed states, however, are not given the opportunity to choose for themselves what kind of 'help' they

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[137] Duffield (2001:136).

[138] Anderson (2004); Blom Hansen and Stepputat (2005); Duffield (2001).

[139] Cooper N. (2002); Reno (1998).

[140] Tschirgi (2003).

[141] Duffield (2004).

[142] Duffield (2004:18).

[143] Duffield (2001:95).

[144] Stockton (2005:12).

[145] Duffield (2001:107).

want. Furthermore, the securitisation of development has severely compromised independence and neutrality of the UN-system and the NGOs and thus further deepened the crisis of humanitarianism. To Duffield this is manifested in aid workers being drawn into the political game as targets for kidnapping and killings.

The solution, according to him, is not a 'return to humanitarian basics'.[146] The world has moved beyond that. A much more profound answer is needed to escape the "wider security mentality" that divides the world into "leading 'homeland' states" and the global 'borderland' of failed states, shadow networks, rogue states and so on."[147] Duffield has yet to formulate the details of such an answer. He has, however, hinted that it may include a mixture of everyday choices - such as refusing to distinguish between 'the starving child' and 'the poor child' - and more philosophical challenges - such as acknowledging a 'world of competing truths and rights to existence'.[148] And perhaps a shift from liberal 'global governance' to genuine 'cosmopolitan governance'.[149]

As it follows from the presentation above, the main weakness of Critical Theory as an approach to failed states is its lack of operational recommendations for policy makers and practitioners. It comes up with very few suggestions on what to do - how to alter the structures that are causing humans to suffer and die in the 'borderlands'. At one point Duffield advices Western politicians "to think carefully about the uncritical evocation of security at every opportunity … [and give] more urgency to tackling the root inequalities, divergent opportunities and destabilising futures that are driving it."[150] He fails, however, to present them with suggestions on how to do this in a manner that is not merely reproducing the peacebuilding approach, which he so adamantly objects.

Some might argue that this is not a short-coming but a strength of Critical Theory. Western politicians - the international community - are not supposed to do anything - except allow the inhabitants to develop alternatives to the 'nation-state model' that has failed.[151] "Let them fail" -

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[146] Duffield (2004:19).

[147] Duffield (2005:157 and 2004:8).

[148] Duffield (2004, 2005).

[149] Duffield (2001:258-259).

[150] Duffield (2005:157).

[151] Herbst (2003:312).

and provide - eventually - "international recognition to the governmental units that are actually providing order to their citizens as opposed to relying on the fictions of the past."[152]

From an ethical point of view it is difficult to see how such a 'hands-off-policy' is morally superior to the disclaimed policy of Peacebuilding and its holding out the possibility of a better tomorrow as a price worth paying for suffering today. The crisis of humanitarianism is unlikely to be solved by letting 'them' fail and leaving 'them' to sort out the mess for themselves. Not least if one accepts the critical claim that the neo-liberal world order is 'producing' state failure. How should the inhabitants of failed states escape these structural conditions on their own? Something apparently needs to be done by 'outsiders'. Critical Theory just does not offer very many clues to what.

Concluding Remarks

The donor community is currently engaged in a lively debate on the need for 'radically different approaches' to fragile states. Arguments from all four approaches appear in this debate. First and foremost, calls for stronger and more long-term international engagement are emphasised repeatedly by leading countries, including UK and USA.[153] Few, however, go so far as to suggest the establishment of trusteeships or protectorates. The need for ensuring genuine local ownership of the transition process is still standard language, as donors remain faithful to the foundations of the Peacebuilding approach. Traces of Critical Theory are more difficult to find in official papers. Only fractions of the analysis are finding their way into some Western organisations. The German Development Ministry e.g. argues that "the links between political clientelism, informal and criminal networks and the use of resources are probably the most significant aspect of state failure in strategic terms."[154] In contrast, Realism may turn out to be a main source of inspiration in the donors' search for radically different approaches to failed states.

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[152] Herbst (2003:315).
[153] DFID (2005); USAID (2005).
[154] BMZ (2004:15).

The OECD/DAC recently launched a set of 'principles for good international engagement in fragile states.'[155] They focus almost exclusively on the need to rebuild the central institutions of the state and are thus paying attention to the realist argument of getting 'back to basics' and the core functions of the state. According to the Finance Minister of Sierra Leone, donors are supplying ample funds for security sector reforms, but very little money for what he calls 'the bread and butter sectors'.[156] There may thus be a growing tendency to opt for 'security first'. This would also tie in with a possible lowering of the level of liberal ambitions. The British development agency, DFID, for instance now speaks of the need for 'good enough governance'[157]- and the UN and the World Bank hold that post-conflict reforms need to be properly sequenced and timed.[158] Confirmation of the trend can be found in the chair's summary of a recent OECD / DAC senior level forum. According to this "It is often important that international actors focus initially on supporting the authorities to assume the key functions of the state, including security, law and order." Yet, the summary adds that this should be done: "- in a manner consistent with democratic norms and principles, (while of course not neglecting the need to provide basic services)."[159] Apparently, the comprehensive lingo of Peacebuilding is hard to lose.

The presentation and discussion of the four different approaches have demonstrated that built-in contradictions and tensions are found within all suggestions on how to address failed states. Neither of the approaches presented in this paper escapes difficult choices and tough trade-offs. This reflects the complexity of reality as much as it reveals 'flaws' in the theories. A 'grand theory' that could solve all predicaments and dilemmas, without encountering any new ones along the way, would be too complex to understand - or too simplistic to make sense. Addressing failed states is not a technical task, which can be delegated to 'experts'. It is a highly political undertaking that requires genuine political choices.

This does not imply that the search for better ways of dealing with the challenges should be called off. There can be little doubt that more knowledge is needed to guide the political choices and help make them as informed as possible.

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[155] OECD/DAC (2005a).

[156] Speaking at Senior Level Forum on Development Effectiveness in London, 13-14 January 2005

[157] DFID (2005:20).

[158] UNDG/World Bank (2005).

[159] OECD/DAC (2005b).

A major challenge in this regard will be to improve the knowledge and understanding of the realities on the ground - and the real life impact of different types of international engagement in failed states. Donor guidelines and 'lessons learned papers' emphasise repeatedly the importance of in-depth knowledge of the specific situation. They underline that there are no 'one size fits all' or blueprints to apply. Each situation is unique and should be addressed as such. Yet, it is also widely acknowledged that international actors often display an almost "chronic inability to adapt their assistance to the political dynamics of the war-torn societies they seek to support."[160]

According to Jeffrey Herbst, this is in part caused by 'legal blinders' that prevent the international community from truly recognising the phenomenon of state failure. Legally, it equates sovereign power with control of the capital city. Whoever controls the capital is recognised as legitimate ruler of the entire territory, regardless of how the actual situation on the ground looks.[161] The same legal - and normative - blinders may also be preventing international actors from understanding and supporting the informal systems, which provide the people living in failed states with a modicum of security and predictability. Too often, ordinary citizens are seen as passive victims of state failure, when in fact they are experts in the art of survival and adaptation.[162]

A recent case study commissioned by the UK NGO-Military Contact Group highlighted - perhaps not entirely surprisingly - that perceptions of 'security' differ significantly among international actors and local populations.[163] The voices of local communities are, however, not being heard in the transition. The dominant voices in all three cases [Afghanistan, Kosovo, Sierra Leone] are those of the peace support operations and the assistance agencies. Not the local communities.

Clearly a better and more thorough understanding of the local context is needed, if the international community is to succeed in its efforts to address state failure. More work is needed - both conceptually and empirically - to bridge the aspirations of external actors with the realities on the ground. This is an extensive research agenda. It might cover explorations of local alternatives to the state model as well as studies of the international community, its institutions and the dynamics that move them. Perhaps most interestingly, the research agenda may also cover innovative combinations of the two: Fresh analyses that take into consideration the 'realities on the

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[160] Tschirgi (2004:i).

[161] Herbst (2003).

[162] See e.g. Menkhaus (2004a).

[163] Donino et al. (2005).

ground' as they play out both in global power centres and in the outskirts of Mogadishu or in the Ituri region. Such work may provide fresh answers to the donor community's call for 'radically different approaches' to failed states.

Meanwhile, back on planet Earth - where people are living, dying and making decisions every day - is it, however, also worth recalling that Dante reserved the hottest room for those who vacillated: The international community should not become a victim of paralysis by analysis.[164] Clearcut confidence and moral certitude on how to address failed states are likely to remain wishful thinking for a very long time. Yet, the political choices - tough as they are - have to be made anyway; one way or the other.

[164] Weiss (2001:425).

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