
State Failure, State Collapse, and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons and Strategies

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Practically and conceptually, the 'state' is again under siege. Less than two decades after its 'rediscovery' by scholars (Evans et al., 1985; Hall, 1986), the central unit of analysis in international relations and comparative politics seems once again in crisis. Some authors, such as Robert Kaplan, present a vision of future chaos resulting from (in a dystopic twist on Marx) the withering away of the central governments of modern states in favour of tribal domains, 'city-states, shanty-states, [and] nebulous and anarchic regionalisms' (Kaplan, 1994: 24). Others welcome the weakening of the state in favour of either a more cosmopolitan (global) or more representative (local) vision of politics (Held, 1995, 1997; Rosenau, 1990, 1997). Still others, often accused of being anachronistic (or even reactionary), argue that in the absence of global or regional hegemony, the sovereign state remains the most appropriate solution to the problem of political order (Jackson, 2001; Krasner, 1999).

Perhaps it was always so. The modern state, since it emerged out of the ashes of the medieval order, has always been a work in progress. The aspirations of its most ardent defenders for legitimate, representative, redistributive or just governance have shimmered on the horizon distant from the reality of contemporary states, whether in their eighteenth century absolutist, or twentieth century authoritarian, versions. But it is against this backdrop that the current discourse of 'failed' or 'collapsed' states must be understood. For every claim that a state has collapsed, is failing, or is going to fail, contains two usually implicit definitions or benchmarks. One concerns the 'stateness' against which any given state should be measured as having succeeded or failed (the *institutional* dimension of state *collapse*), and the other concerns the normative and practical implications of such a failure (the *functional* dimension of state *failure*). Concern over the possibility of state failure thus often has as much to do with dashed expectations about

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the achievement of modern statehood, or the functions that modern states should fulfil, as it does with the empirically-observed decomposition or collapse of the institutions of governance in different parts of the world.

The articles collected in this volume all work with such benchmarks and assumptions, seeking to reflect critically and synthetically on state failure and state collapse. The main aims of the volume are:

- to develop more precise and nuanced concepts of state failure and collapse, as situations distinctive in important ways from state decay, political crisis and civil war;
- to examine the different and contrasting paths that have led to state collapse, and the inter-relationships between the national and transnational economic, political and social forces that are making instances of state collapse relatively more frequent in the contemporary era;
- to analyse the intervention strategies that the international community has adopted to respond to situations of state collapse, including considering how the efforts of external intervenors are constrained and thwarted, and how their activities may have unintended (or dysfunctional) consequences.

This introduction provides some overall context for the contributions, and highlights some key conceptual and political issues concerning the present and future of the contemporary state. It does so first by sketching some of the issues behind the modern process of state formation, and the different understandings of the roles and functions of the modern state that have emerged. Along the way, it develops further the two-fold concept of state collapse and failure (*institutional* and *functional*) to support a critical examination of the phenomenon of (and literature on) state collapse. Finally, it situates and briefly overviews individual papers in light of the different perspectives on state failure and collapse that have been developed.

It is important, however, to issue a caveat at the outset. This volume, and in particular this introduction, does *not* uncritically assume that there is an ever-widening crisis of state collapse in which new forces and contradictions (such as globalization and the decline of interest in propping up corrupt and often violent regimes) are causing increasing numbers of states to fail and some even to collapse. Although its incidence seems to be increasing, the scope of the phenomenon of state collapse depends in large part on how one defines it. Full-blown cases of state collapse, which involve the extreme disintegration of public authority and the metamorphosis of societies into a battlefield of all against all, remain relatively rare; in recent years only states such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Congo/Zaire and perhaps Albania seem to fit this definition. But if state collapse remains a rare phenomenon and state maintenance (in weakened or decayed capacity) remains the norm, it is nevertheless true that many more states are today failing to provide security and public order, legitimate representation, and wealth or welfare to their citizens. Places such as the former Yugoslavia, Georgia, Haiti,

Colombia and Afghanistan have all witnessed the near-total collapse of central authority over part or all of their territory, with the resulting disorder often causing great human suffering.

Certainly since discussion of the phenomenon of state *failure* seems to exceed the importance of the full-blown cases of state *collapse*, the linked concepts of state failure and collapse must resonate with a broader and more prevalent crisis in the capacities and legitimacy of modern states, or they must serve, like the canary in the mineshaft, as warning signals of a phenomenon that, it is believed, will engulf a wider swath of the world's peoples in years to come. Either way, the evidence needs to be interrogated, and set in some sort of dynamic historical context.

THE POLITICS OF THE MODERN STATE

The story of the emergence of the modern state can be told in several ways, historically and conceptually. In historical terms, its emergence is commonly (if simplistically) dated from the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Emblematic in this narrative is the Peace of Westphalia of 1648, which codified solutions to the problems of political order revealed in the Thirty Years War. The Westphalia treaties were but one of the early instances in which a concept of the modern state — as a sovereign territorially-based entity — was deployed by secular rulers to assert their control over their lands and populations. They arbitrated matters of faith and finances in the face of residual, but ineffectual, claims for a hierarchical authority structure centred on the church and its affiliated rulers (Osiander, 2001).

Of course, sovereignty so defined was in part a legal fiction that corresponded in only a loose way to political realities. Only states that were recognized as sovereign by other sovereign states possessed sovereign rights, and the legal claim of sovereignty had to be asserted in practice — rulers had to gain and keep *de facto* control. Several states, such as France, had been doing this long before Westphalia, and the main 'non-state' (the Holy Roman Empire) remained politically salient (in peace negotiations) until its dissolution in 1806. Even the most successful early state-claimants really possessed very little control over their territories. What Mann (1993) calls the 'intensification' of state power, and others call 'state centralization', was a long time coming, and state borders were not impermeable nor were populations closed off to outside influences. From the outset, the modern state thus represented an *ideal* of sovereign territoriality to which rulers aspired, but which they seldom achieved. Even Western European states today do not always reach the Weberian pinnacle in which a rationalized central bureaucracy enjoys a monopoly of organized violence over a given territory and population.

Conceptually, the triumph of the state as *the* solution to the problem of political order can be told in at least three different, albeit inter-connected,

ways. Following Charles Tilly's metaphor of 'war-making and state-making as organized crime', it can be seen as a more-or-less inadvertent process by which state elites, seeking to consolidate their hold on power, acted as the equivalent of protection rackets, offering (often minimal) security in return for extraction, thus unleashing a long process that contributed to the development of the modern state (Tilly, 1985, 1990). Following the liberal tradition of political thought, it can be seen as a process of 'social contracting', either between rulers and subjects or among subjects themselves, by which individuals surrendered their unlimited freedoms (and unlimited insecurities) to live within a civil order that guaranteed security and which enjoyed therefore a certain political legitimacy. Following a political economy tradition, the emergence of the modern state can be understood as an efficient mechanism for ensuring property rights and securing markets that allowed capitalism (and imperialism) to flourish. Later struggles for redistribution and welfare were also inscribed in this narrative.

Whatever the preferred account, it is clear that the process of modern state formation proceeded in an enormously complex fashion over roughly five centuries. Along the way there also developed an elaborate discourse of statehood in which the modern (sovereign territorial) state acquired a series of other attributes (Del Rosso, 1995). But the three core functions or activities represented by the three intertwined narratives of the state — providing security, representation and welfare — provide a convenient way to summarize the functions a state is to supposed to perform. In the most straightforward sense, failure to perform these functions is a failure of the state. This opens the way to our broader conceptualization that goes beyond institutional collapse to encompass functional failure in some of its extreme forms.

War, Order and (In)security

Behind Tilly's formulation that states make war, and 'war makes states' (Tilly, 1985: 170) lies a process by which (in theory, at least) the institutions and instruments of modern violence are subordinated to political authorities. Tilly and others working in this vein (Ayooob, 1995; Downing, 1992; Rasler and Thompson, 1989) do not present a mechanistic, universal process, but a complex constellation of factors (extraction, protection, war-making, state-building) that produce at different times and places different sorts of governance structures. State forms can range from representative to authoritarian or even predatory, but in even the most repressive the state does not fail to emerge. The assumption underlying these arguments is that institutions of organized violence have always (or nearly always) ultimately been made to serve *political* interests, and hence to run in tandem with the state-making process, rather than undermining it. There are, however, two important observations that need to be made about this assumption.

First, a tension exists between the *institutional* and *functional* understandings of state failure: state institutions can persist even while the state fails to fulfil what we understand as its key attributes. As pointed out by Christopher Clapham, although Rwanda has frequently been called a collapsed state by policy-makers and journalists, the genocidal war that took place in that country in 1994 was *not* enabled or produced by the Rwandan state disintegrating. Instead, the genocide was produced by ‘highly disciplined agents of the state [who] pursued the task of murdering many of its people with hideous efficiency’ (Clapham, this volume).

Second, and perhaps more importantly, scholars are now beginning to recognize the role that war-making (in the sense of the role of institutions of organized violence in state formation, rather than actual fighting of wars) can play in the process of state collapse. Briefly, there are three central issues:

- what happens when the interests of a narrowly-based or illegitimate government are fused to instruments of organized violence in the absence of other institutional counterweights?
- what are the forces leading to an erosion or reinforcement of the state’s monopoly on the legitimate use of violence?
- what are the tradeoffs between ensuring order and security through institutions of organized violence and fulfilling the other two main functions of the modern state (representation and welfare)?

In practical terms, this leads to a focus on the role of armed forces (military, paramilitary and other) in society; the process of ‘military development’ (acquisition of modern arms and institutional forms) and the pathologies of violence and repression that can emerge through state violence (such as in Iraq) (Krause, 1996; Reno, 1998); the role of force in *rentier* economies and that of actors with access to ‘conflict goods’ (Cooper, and Cramer and Goodhand, this volume; Keen, 1998); or the erosion of the state’s monopoly of the legitimate use of violence through the widespread availability of modern weapons (Musah, this volume).

Representation and Legitimacy

The notion that the state has to represent the symbolic identity of state subjects is a relatively new one, dating perhaps from the eighteenth or early nineteenth century. Not surprisingly, there is little consensus over exactly what makes a state legitimate or representative in concrete terms. Leaving aside the observation that *de facto* ‘the history of the modern state is in no small part a history of rulers who are illegitimate’, the modern notion of statehood has entailed a series of different attempts to resolve the question of how states and regimes could be made legitimate in the eyes of the people

(Jackson, 1990: 22). Nationalism and democracy (accompanied by rule of law and respect for human rights) are often proposed as the two most important means by which these functions are realized.

In the longer perspective, social contract philosophies and doctrines lie behind the ideas of both democracy and nationalism. Theorists such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau, without any hint of modern conceptions of democracy or nationalism, presented different forms of a social contract as seventeenth or eighteenth century solutions to the problem of why sovereigns should be obeyed when their rule was no longer ordained by Church and Emperor. Ultimately, the people grant the state the right to rule over them in return for the state providing security from civil disorder and war. The more radical, or liberal, extensions of social contract thinking characteristic of the Age of Revolutions developed a language of the nation in terms of a body of citizens whose collective sovereignty constituted them as a state, giving them the right of popular self-determination (Mayall, 1990: 38–42). The stage was then set for the fusion of ideas of nationalism and democracy to the idea of the state, which in the nineteenth century became tightly linked with the socio-economic changes catalysed by the industrial revolution.

For many scholars, nationalism as the embodiment of the idea of the state was thus a nineteenth century attempt to bind people as citizens to their industrializing post-revolutionary European states through giving the population a ‘civic religion’ (Hobsbawm, 1990: 85; see also Gellner, 1983): the *nation-state*.¹ For others (Posen, 1993), nationalism was an essential (and instrumentalized) means of mobilization to meet the needs of modern warfare. Either way, most West European states emerging from the conflagrations of World Wars I and II, and the social struggles of the inter-war period, came to contract for their legitimacy through an extensive franchise that was linked (through such things as citizenship laws) to the language and practice of nationalism and the nation-state. The normalization of the nation-state as an institutional and political ideal was complete, as was the idea that nationalism could be mastered (to avoid pathological forms) and channelled by state elites in an instrumental top-down process to meet the needs of the modern state.

The intertwined development of democracy and nationalism in the West through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries should not obscure some problematic aspects of their relationship that are important for the issue of state failure and state collapse. While the *idea* of democracy has emerged in the twenty-first century as largely uncontested (if not universally accepted), one must recognize that a wide variety of institutional *forms* of representative

1. There is of course the contrary view that sees nationalism as a deeper historico-cultural phenomenon that can even take on religious or mystical overtones (Anderson, 1991; Smith, 1994). Without entering into this debate, we take the view that the attributes of modern nationalism that are relevant to the issue of state failure/collapse are derived from its more recent (primarily nineteenth century) manifestations and sources.

rule have emerged (consociational, republican, federalist, parliamentary, corporatist, etc.) to accommodate the different constellations of sub-national communities within states. Moreover, in a number of Western states the consolidation of democracy into a stable institutional form was unresolved until the last part of the twentieth century, or is still unsettled today (for example, Northern Ireland, Corsica, Quebec, Scotland, Catalonia). Similarly, despite the wide support enjoyed by the idea of self-determination of peoples as a foundation for state legitimacy, the twentieth century history of nationalism contains many examples that call into question its appropriateness as a foundation for state building. Certainly nationalist excesses have been widely regarded as a key element in the causes of World War II (and in a different way, World War I). Finally, there remains an underlying and persistent tension between democracy and nationalism, since the possibility of a 'tyranny of the majority' can only be excluded in communities where individuals possess a complex matrix of cross-cutting interests that present a myriad of opportunities for majority coalitions, thus muting the importance of nationalism as a societal glue. The only other alternative — homogeneous communities with no plurality of nations struggling within (only a plurality of interests not linked to questions of political identity) — is more hypothetical than real in most parts of the world.

The result is the existence of several dilemmas or paradoxes that are directly relevant to the process of state-formation and state collapse in the post-colonial world:

- is a top-down and instrumental concept of nationalism (essentially state-led) an appropriate model for the relationship between state and nation, and for successful state- and nation-building projects (Schuurman, 2000)?
- what kind of nationalism emerges in the absence of the material conditions out of which the Western concept evolved (in particular, in pre-industrial societies with no contractarian tradition of state–society relations), and is it state-weakening or state-strengthening?
- which of the different institutional expressions of representative rule are compatible (or incompatible) with which visions of contemporary nationalism (exclusionist, hyphenated, contractual, organic)?

These questions highlight that the relationships between state and nation, and between national identity and representative rule, are dynamic products of political struggle, which have rarely been imposed successfully from the outside (or from above). Given our concern with cases of state failure and collapse, attention to the representative functions of the state leads to a focus on failures of nation-building and their implications for potential state collapse (in places such as Nigeria, Afghanistan or Sudan, for example). It also invites consideration of the impact of communal conflicts over recognition and representation (such as of the Albanians in Macedonia, or the Abkhaz in Georgia), and the relationship between conflicts cast in the

language of self-determination and state collapse. The normative implications of these questions, especially of the last one (perhaps a collapsed state is a good thing if 'more perfect' political communities emerge from the debris), are inescapable.

Wealth and Welfare

A third optic on the modern state sees its emergence as tightly tied to the development of modern capitalism (Giddens, 1987: 122–71), and as an institutional form particularly well suited to it. It is impossible to trace the links between economics and the state in any easy way, but two historical themes are particularly relevant for our concern with state failure and collapse: the need for a stable politico-legal framework to foster economic growth and development, and the rise of the welfare and entitlement state as a powerful glue that binds citizens to their state. With respect to the first theme, in the early modern period, capitalism was able to take root and flourish in Europe within a particular normative and institutional matrix in which political and coercive power in Western Europe was sufficiently decentralized to permit the expansion of market relations without nascent state elites being able to overwhelm merchants through tight state control (exit often being an easy option). Simultaneously, the emergence of a pan-European merchant class was facilitated by the vestiges of the Roman and medieval orders, in which merchants understood themselves (as did other social classes) to share a common set of legal and cultural norms that facilitated such things as the development of stable property rights, trade, enforcement of contracts, and so forth (Hall, 1986). It is difficult to overestimate how closely linked the political and economic spheres were: as Giddens points out (1987: 150), a rational, law-governed economic sphere 'derives from the very same sources as the sphere of sovereignty so elemental to the nature of the modern state'.

The development of the welfare function of the modern state is a much more recent phenomenon. The nineteenth century rise of the welfare state can be seen as intertwined with the emergence of modern nationalism and the extension of the *basis* of state legitimacy to include a concern for the economic well-being of the citizens and for the overall management of the national economy. State elites have long been concerned with the wealth of the state, as early mercantilist doctrines highlight, but the extension of this concern to the welfare of citizens begins only with the foundation of the modern welfare state in Bismarck's Germany (health, education, even pensions), and the subsequent consolidation and generalization of these gains throughout Western Europe and (to a different extent) North America. One result is that notions of citizenship and membership in the national community are now more closely linked to welfare entitlements (in the broadest sense), to the extent that such things as large-scale migration (or

even small-scale migration, in some cases) is perceived as a threat where it coincides with the restructuring and retrenchment of Western welfare states (Heisler and Layton-Henry, 1993).²

These two themes are directly relevant for the contemporary discussion of state failure and collapse. To begin with, the first dimension on which the state can fail relative to the economy would be its inability to provide a stable politico-legal framework in which human, social and economic capital can be accumulated and invested. Uncertain rules of the game (or no rules at all) act as a powerful disincentive to all but short-term high-return economic activity (often associated with extractive industries), or to enclave economic development (such as export zones) with few backward and forward linkages to the local economy. As pointed out by Boyce and Duffield (both in this volume), this function of the state is one of the most difficult to restore (or create) in a post-collapse or post-conflict context, and it often comes only as part of a more comprehensive reshaping of state-society relations. Here the pertinent questions are: what are the minimal conditions of governance required to foster a climate conducive to the investment of human, social and economic capital; and what are the roles and influence of the international community and international institutions in creating these conditions? Recent work by the World Bank (Colletta et al., 1998; World Bank, 1998) demonstrates that these questions are on the multilateral agenda, but coherent answers are some distance away.

Second, the welfare functions assumed by post-colonial states differed in critical ways from the industrial welfare state model, which was based loosely on a redistributive mechanism and (relatively) efficient taxation system. Post-colonial welfare functions often assume the form of price subsidies on core commodities (bread, cooking oil, and so on) or other indirect subsidies, and they are often paid for by external or internal rents (such as commodity exports, international loans and foreign aid). The ability of most of the world's poorer states to sponsor effective redistributive or allocative social development policies is extremely limited — as is highlighted, for example, by publications such as the UN's *Human Development Reports* (Clapham, this volume; Vivian, 1994). More significantly, the welfare structures that are in place often play a central role in regime legitimation and maintenance strategies, through neo-patrimonial distributive structures that are not efficient in an economic sense, and that can therefore increase societal fissures or exacerbate inter-group conflicts (see, for example, Cramer and Goodhand, this volume). Under circumstances of economic globalization (understood as a set of economic transformations that increase the relative power of mobile factors of production — capital or, to a lesser extent, labour — and whose

2. This is so despite the fact that immigrant communities tend on the whole to contribute more to social welfare systems than they receive, and also tend to alleviate the demographic crunch associated with an ageing population.

benefits are distributed in widely unequal fashion across a population) in which even the welfare functions of advanced industrial states have increasingly come under stress (Esping-Anderson, 1990; Pierson, 1996), the welfare functions of lesser-developed states are even less likely to be able to provide for the basic needs of their populations.

Situating Post-Colonial State Failure and Collapse

As this overview suggests, challenges to and reworking of the modern state's institutional and functional expressions have been ongoing throughout the past few centuries. Attempts to pin down the essential nature of the state (the ideal criteria and functions assigned to it) end up reifying or idealizing it, stripping what is after all a human (social and political) construct of its historicity. Even when the state is regarded as an ongoing political process, there has been little question about the desirability of continuing the state-building project. In the long-term search for solutions to problems of political order the state has been reformed and remade, but since the end of empire as a political form, it has been the state — and not some other form of political organization — that has been promoted as *the* answer to addressing social and economic upheaval, conflict and war.³ The aspiration to viable statehood thus rests on a deeply ingrained *assumption* about appropriate forms of political organization and order.

This has important implications for how we understand state collapse and failure, especially in the post-colonial world, since in these parts of the world the narrative of the developmental state has been crucial to the discussion of state failure and collapse. Here scholars and policy-makers have adopted and sustained a vision of the role of the state in the post-colonial world that combined all three of the above narratives of security, representation and welfare. In retrospect, the vision that new states were to build legitimate nations, provide wealth, and guarantee security within the span of a few decades of achieving formal independence was, to be kind, somewhat naive. One can only expect such success if the idea of the state is taken completely out of its historical context, and regarded as an institutional form that owes little or nothing to the historical forces that created it. One (somewhat ironic) way to think about the contemporary anguish over state collapse is to note that what has collapsed is more the *vision* (or dream) of the progressive, developmental state that sustained generations of academics, activists and policy-makers, than any real existing state.

3. Strictly speaking, a global system of states dates only from the final breakup of the Portuguese empire in the 1970s, or even from the 1990s if the former Soviet Union is viewed as the last European empire to undergo decolonization. But the *idea* of empire died some time before that, probably in the aftermath of World War I.

Perhaps this is a bit harsh. There is little doubt, however, that the twentieth century decolonization process illustrates just how ingrained statehood had become in the modern imagination. The forces that gave rise to the post-1945 wave of decolonization included the growing effectiveness of colonial resistance movements, super-power pressures for an end to formal empires, and the exhaustion of the colonial powers themselves. But part of why decolonization arose with such force was a 'widespread change of mind and mood [in and after World War II] about the... legitimacy of colonialism' (Jackson, 1987: 526; see also Jackson, 1990; Crawford, 1993). This movement against colonialism extended liberal concepts of self-determination to the colonial possessions of the European empires, making independent statehood for colonies into a new international norm and eventually, international legal principle.

In other words, statehood was rendered as the only possible mode of governance for the world — and this despite the 'pseudo-statehood' of many of the candidate states. Many of the states that were created in the decolonization process did not qualify for statehood by the criterion of international law in use by the 1930s, namely 'the existence of effective government, with centralized administrative and legislative organs' (Brownlie, 1979: 74). Yet they nonetheless were granted independence and their governments, however quickly they left behind founding constitutions and took on authoritarian and dictatorial powers, were treated by other governments as *bona fide* representatives of national communities. This 'pseudo-statehood' was in some cases converted into 'real' statehood, especially in Asia. But in many other instances, especially in Africa, post-colonial state building resulted in the formation of what Robert Jackson (1987: 526) has called 'quasi-states':

The state in Africa is... more a personal- or primordial-favouring political arrangement than a public-regarding realm. Government is less an agency to provide political goods such as law, order, security, justice, or welfare and more a fountain of privilege, wealth and power for a small elite who control it... Many governments are incapable of enforcing their writ throughout their territory. In more than a few countries... some regions have escaped from national control... [and the states] are fairly loose patchworks of plural allegiances and identities somewhat reminiscent of medieval Europe. (Jackson, 1987: 527–8)

One could extend Jackson's logic to conclude that such pseudo- or quasi-states were never really states, and thus that the puzzle is not how and why they may fail, but how and why they exist or persist at all.

The assumption that statehood is an appropriate institutional form, even in environments which would seem hardly propitious for its flourishing, has come to be partly questioned, especially by Africanists writing about 'the crisis of the African state' (Young, 1988: 25; see also Hyden, 1999). Their analyses are part of a broader trend in development studies that, instead of taking states for granted, now treats them as a major impediment to development — as political systems that have failed to live up to the expectations that people had of them after independence, and that must be overhauled in order

for development to succeed.⁴ But even this critique *still presupposes* that modern statehood (albeit reformed) is the only form of political organization that makes any sense for the post-colonial world (Ayoob, 1995). In some of the treatments of ‘overhauling the state’ there also remains an expectation that it will not be so difficult to change the institutions and political structures of either quasi-states, or the new pseudo-states created by the dissolution of the Soviet Union. The 1990s literature on a ‘third wave’ of global democratization, ‘a democratic *Zeitgeist* [that] swept the globe’, is a good illustration of this tendency (Diamond, 1997: xiii; see also Huntington, 1991).

It is now somewhat easier to understand how and why the topic of state *failure* has received high-profile attention in recent years from both the scholarly and policy-making communities. Beyond the limited prospect of state collapse, lie the dashed hopes of development apparent in many regions of the world, and beyond this lies the broader crisis of the modern state system. Understood as a *systemic prospect*, state failure is causally linked to increased and widespread humanitarian suffering, regional instability, and transnational threats of international organized crime and terrorism. It is thus not just treated as the local population’s Hobbesian nightmare, but also as a potential source of insecurities for the core states of international society, and as a phenomenon that threatens to undermine the modern project of achieving political order.

Given this analysis, one might expect that the extreme case of state *collapse* would be a prominent object of study for those working on state failure, and/or that scholarship on state failure would deploy a coherent set of concepts and distinctions with which to study the processes of state failure and the extreme cases of state collapse. But with some notable exceptions, such as Zartman’s (1995) landmark edited volume, this is not the case. In the most prominent literature, instances of state collapse have been treated either simply as additional cases of political crisis or civil war in countries (Esty et al., 1998), or as the extreme end of a continuum of the weakening of state governing capacity that it would be unhelpful to analyse separately (for example, Dorff, 2000). The large-scale State Failure Task Force project, led by Ted Robert Gurr (Esty et al., 1998), treats state failure and collapse merely as ‘new labels’, and does not distinguish state failure (that is, functional failure) from the much larger category of political crises and wars.⁵

4. The best analyses of statist assumptions in development come from critical development studies such as Ferguson (1990); these do not share the ‘overhauling the state’ approach found in the broader literature, which includes numerous World Bank publications as well as the contributions of development scholars such as Sørensen (1993, 1998).

5. The State Failure Task Force (at <http://www.bsos.umd.edu/cidcm/stfail/index.htm>) represents a particularly egregious case of data and method-driven research, which attempts to assimilate the phenomenon of state collapse within existing categories of analysis, and outside any political or historical context.

This failure to distinguish conceptually the phenomena of state failure and collapse blurs the different processes that lead to functional failure or to institutional collapse, and obscures the relative rarity of full-blown state collapse. State maintenance (in whatever weakened or decayed capacity) is still the norm, and state collapse the exception. This is true for Africa, despite its being home to the majority of collapsed states of the contemporary era (see Musah, this volume). It is also true if one chooses as a reference group the roughly forty states that have gone (or are going) through civil wars since the end of the Cold War. In only about a third of these is it appropriate to say that the conflict was based in and/or helped lead to a situation of state collapse.

By contrast, there has been more study of state collapse as a distinctive phenomenon undertaken by practitioners (governmental and non-governmental). However, this policy-oriented literature has mostly focused on post-collapse intervention strategies, or on specific economic, political or security aspects of state collapse. Concern about the prospect of state collapse has therefore not been matched by attempts to understand the conditions of its emergence (state collapse out of state failure) in a focused and sustained way. This inevitably has consequences for the quality of policy analysis, since a good understanding of processes of collapse is crucial to determine, for example, how the political reconstruction of collapsed states might best be approached.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS VOLUME

If state collapse as conceptualized above is uncommon, even in the contemporary context, what justifies a special issue of *Development and Change* devoted to its study? There are essentially three factors. First — and closest to immediate policy analysis aims — collapsed states present distinctive challenges to external agencies and organizations that might intervene in civil wars or (as is also increasingly the case) propose to structure and guide post-conflict reconstruction efforts. In order for the goals of external interventions to have any hope of being achieved, this distinctiveness needs to be drawn out and made part of the analytical basis for aid efforts.

The example of humanitarian relief work can make this more concrete. Humanitarian relief in its traditional expression was predicated on the existence of states, on conflicts taking place between state armies, and on some level of residual political accountability existing between the warring parties and the societies they claimed to represent or defend. In recent years humanitarian relief agencies have become more experienced in working in civil war and famine 'complex humanitarian emergencies', but this work has typically depended on agency-state agreements (such as the negotiated access of Operation Lifeline to relief sites and camps in the Sudan) and thus on the continued existence of the state. In situations of state collapse,

however, there is effectively no state with whom to make these agreements or to regulate, prioritize or direct aid flows. There is also limited (if any) accountability between warring parties and local populations, which puts the security of both vulnerable populations and aid workers at far greater risk than in the past (Muggah and Berman, 2001). Gaining a better understanding of situations of state collapse would help humanitarian agencies, many of whom have recognized the difficulties of working in collapsed states, to develop better strategies to meet these challenges.

Second, compared to the Cold War era, instances of state collapse may be becoming relatively more common. This makes it plausible to move beyond particularist explanations of state collapse (collapse as a condition caused by events and circumstances unique to a state's history). Although explanations of state collapse will always entail context-specific factors, scholars may now be able to discern recurrent patterns in processes of state collapse and acquire a better understanding of what makes some states more vulnerable than others to the dynamics leading to state collapse. This kind of study is also important in that it can lead to identification of new (or at least historically more pronounced) dynamics with relevance for future developments in fragile states. One example is the trade in conflict goods, which is shown by the study of collapsed states to have been a central aspect in state disintegration in places such as Congo, Sierra Leone, and Liberia. There is also the potential in other states (for example, Nigeria) for war over the control of strategic resources, 'involving rebel groups and privatized armies, making state institutions irrelevant' (Doornbos, this volume).

Third, taking up the issue of state collapse has merit in that it forces us to reconsider some of our least-examined assumptions about states and the state system. Once state collapse is seen, not as an 'abnormal' event, but as one possible outcome of the ongoing process of state formation (and decay), we can enter into a dialogue with other scholars who examine the historical evolution of the Westphalian system. Most of this work attempts to re-historicize the contemporary state system to break out of the static vision inherited from a realist perspective on international relations (Keohane, 1986; Mearsheimer, 1994/95), and to present a more dynamic or evolutionary vision of states and sovereignty. Few of these scholars, however, seem to consider state collapse as a plausible, even perhaps likely, outcome for some states in the system. They likewise seldom examine the possibility that the forces that produce strong and legitimate states in some contexts can, interacting with different local and historical conditions, generate weak and collapsed states in others. An engagement with the phenomenon of state collapse thus raises important issues for the future of world politics and our understanding of states and sovereignty.

Taking these arguments as its cue, the first section of the volume, titled *States, Statebuilding and State Collapse*, tackles three broadly conceptual issues. Christopher Clapham's contribution on the challenges to statehood in a globalized world highlights the distinctive trajectory of post-colonial

state formation, and explains how a post-World War II world order that helped to maintain post-colonial states has given way to a much less conducive context. In light of this, Clapham argues that vulnerable states are liable to get caught in a vicious circle of decay, with the most vulnerable becoming quasi-permanent conflict zones. Thus, statehood is *not* a given for some parts of the international system.

Parallel to this, Martin Doornbos grapples with the conceptual fuzziness associated with the concept of state collapse. He develops a focus on the linkages (and match or mismatch) between state and society in many conflict-riven states in order to better understand processes and dynamics of state collapse. An important point he makes is that state collapse does *not* mean that societies and territories lack all semblance of order, or that all of the functions of a modern state go unfulfilled. In fact, within (and between) societies there often exists a variety of local governance structures and traditional authorities that do not depend exclusively (or mainly) on state structures. In some situations of state collapse, these networks (such as the clan-based structures in parts of Somalia) may continue to provide communities with a means of conducting their lives and ordering their affairs. As a result, state and society often are evolving along different trajectories of modernity, with increasing disjunctures between their different constituent units.

To close this section, Alexandros Yannis examines the international community's growing interest and concern with state collapse. For Yannis, international discourse on state collapse dates from the end of the Cold War, and draws on emergent fears about globalization and its implications for state authority, as well as (often-related) regional and international security threats now identified as being linked to domestic breakdown. Equally important has been the 'turn to human rights' in post-Cold War international society. Yannis points out that international institutions for ensuring or providing international peace and security are predicated on the internal stability of member states of the international system. Contemporary institutions are poorly adapted to addressing state collapse, however, and will have to be changed extensively if the normative agenda now current is to be realized.

The second part of the volume presents *Anatomies of Failure and Collapse*, including both country-specific case studies and broader analyses of contributing factors. Leading off the country-specific studies, William Reno focuses on Nigeria as a case of a failed state that he argues has considerable potential for collapse. Reno traces this potential to governmental rule that has been and continues to be hostile to state institutions and public order. Beyond (deliberately) creating functional state failure, governmental misrule limits or prevents mass movements for systematic change from gaining ground and instead lays the basis for interest-based, narrow, and ultimately anti-social change movements. State failure is thus made self-perpetuating, in that even opposition to the state is hostile to public order.

This account, with its emphasis on a socio-economic calculus underlying conflicts in failed states, is complemented in the study of Afghanistan by Christopher Cramer and Jonathon Goodhand. Afghanistan's history of state formation is marked by efforts by Afghan state rulers to build a modern nation state, only to have these efforts interrupted and reversed by violent resistance. At the heart of this troubled career, according to Cramer and Goodhand, has been the inability of state-builders to develop in a sustained way a monopoly of violence, and the path of *rentier* statehood pursued practically throughout the twentieth century to attempt to modernize the state despite tribal forces that could not be defeated or sidelined by trumping claims to authority (national or religious). Current reconstruction efforts do not sufficiently address this history, including the imperative for a strong central state that it reveals, and what it teaches as to the legitimacy of radical Islam and fragmentary regionalism cum warlordism. Nor do these efforts sufficiently recognize the regional dimensions of the Afghan conflict, crucial to Afghanistan's collapse in the 1980s, and needing attention today if Afghan state-building is not to fail yet again.

The political and ideological elements in Cramer and Goodhand's study are taken further in Spyros Demetriou's examination of Georgia. Georgia represents a case in which the processes of state formation and collapse are intertwined. The legacy of Soviet nationalities policy (an 'external' influence in a certain sense) meant that crucial fracture lines existed between Georgian, Abkhaz and Ossetian populations. Demetriou argues that these fracture lines could have been overcome, but that instead they were seized by post-Soviet politicians intent on gaining leverage on political power through violent means. From the outset (1990) armed violence was a means of gaining influence, and 'private' armies were increasingly used to terrorize different communal groups (to force migration and perpetuate ethnic cleansing), to consolidate a hold on the war economy, and to support clientelistic networks. In spite of some capable leadership by Eduard Shevardnadze, the economic weakness of the state and endemic corruption has so far thwarted efforts to strike the kinds of bargains necessary to move beyond this cycle of disintegration–reconstitution.

All of the case studies in the volume refer to international and global dimensions of state collapse. Broader analyses in this vein are provided by Abdel-Fatau Musah and Neil Cooper. Surveying Africa, Musah makes the crucial point that the state — not warlords or groups within the state — is frequently the primary source of violence. State collapse is often presaged by widespread violence and predation by the state against its own citizens, as the core function of providing security erodes. This violence is facilitated by the activities of foreign private military actors (loosely, albeit somewhat inaccurately, described as 'mercenaries'), and the easy availability of small arms and light weapons. If less directly, regional and Western governments may also contribute through engaging in the arms trade, participating in resource exploitation in collapsed and collapsing states, and using alliance

diplomacy to protect economic interests and to contain unfriendly regimes. So may international financial agencies, through the cover that structural adjustment has given to corrupt elites to further privatize the state. Parallel to this, Cooper focuses on the importance of conflict trade — ‘trade in goods that directly supports the war efforts of actors in conflict’ (Cooper, this volume). Diamonds, timber, drugs, rare minerals, and other such goods often become, in places such as Colombia, Sierra Leone, Cambodia, or Angola, the *objects* of conflict, control over which guarantees actors the ability to continue fighting. But as Cooper points out, these goods possess little value outside of a global market that perpetuates the subordinate position of certain states.

Section three turns to *Relief and Reconstruction*, with contributions that treat the immediate problems of humanitarian relief and peace-building in failed and collapsed states (Daniel Chong and James Boyce) and the longer-term issues related to institutional reconstruction (Jarat Chopra, Marina Ottaway and Mark Duffield). Chong adopts a political economy perspective to consider some of the major dilemmas created for humanitarian relief agencies by predatory, war-based parallel economies. These include dilemmas of military protection — for example, military accompaniment may be necessary to reach vulnerable populations, but it can inject money and supplies into a conflict and thereby exacerbate and lengthen it. Based on a comparison of two different international aid interventions in Cambodia in 1979–82 and the early 1990s, Chong examines contrasting policies to address the dilemmas he identifies. One of his main findings is that unless there is active commitment at all levels of the international system, relief agencies really have few options available to manage the potential negative effects of their assistance.

Chong’s conclusion is echoed in Boyce’s study of the peace-building potential of foreign aid. For Boyce, foreign aid has potential importance (in principle) as a peace-building tool for the international community. However, there are a number of limitations in practice. Concentrating on the Bosnian case, Boyce notes that aid and assistance can be used (or channelled) in ways that exacerbate rather than resolve conflicts, especially where deep social cleavages are involved. The usefulness of even the best-designed aid conditionalities is likewise limited where there are no (or weak) state authorities with whom to deal. Conflicts and tensions between different donor priorities (geopolitical and/or commercial versus the interests of peace-building) also mean that the ‘best designed’ aid packages and conditionalities are seldom realized in practice. Finally, there are imperatives internal to international financial and donor institutions (such as the need to ‘get the money out the door’) that run counter to imposing and sticking to strong conditionalities. If the billions of dollars spent on post-conflict peace-building are to be more effective, donors must acknowledge both the political nature and impact of aid, and the ‘politics’ of aid conditionality.

For the original designers of the UN Transitional Administration, East Timor was to be an innovative project in state-building. Underlying sources of conflict were to be fundamentally transformed under the UN governorship, and a multi-party democracy was to be established that drew on and encouraged popular participation. Jarat Chopra's study of East Timor lays out the plans to achieve these goals, including decentralization of the UN's political authority (that of a formal government in East Timor) and the creation of popular representation in the form of consultative councils. He then analyses how these plans were thwarted by individuals and groups in the Transitional Administration, with the result that the East Timorese government appears on a path to one-party rule, with the newly-created armed forces already politicized.

Chopra's study shows that the organizational culture and interests of external intervenors can contribute to serious failings in institutional reconstruction. Most notably, 'peace-maintenance' doctrine, even at its most innovative, presupposes a political vacuum in 'governmentless' places and thus obscures local political dynamics. This issue is taken further in Ottaway's examination of the international community's efforts at democracy promotion in failed and collapsed states. Ottaway observes that the ethos underpinning democracy promotion is to use external assistance as a 'short-cut' to the Weberian state, rather than relying on internal processes of state formation. The chances of this approach succeeding depend heavily on the distribution of power in the country — something not yet sufficiently recognized by Western donors. Ironically, donors have also developed a blueprint for reconstruction that is becoming more and more complex, to the point of absurdity when seen against the backdrop of the actual human and institutional capacities of states such as Sierra Leone, Cambodia or Mozambique. Ottaway's conclusion is that although it may be relatively easy to *create* institutional structures, the transformation of these structures into *legitimate* institutions is extremely difficult, and only marginally affected by external actors. Unlike much conventional 'critical' scholarship on democracy promotion and external intervention, Ottaway does not dismiss entirely the utility of such projects, but concludes that 'bargain-basement imperialism' — 'rebuild[ing] a collapsed state according to a favourable model but with minimal resources' (Ottaway, this volume) — does not and cannot work.

In the concluding contribution, Mark Duffield provides a broader understanding of the problems and limitations of external intervention presented in this section. For Duffield, the engagement of development and relief agencies with increasingly intractable conflicts (violent and simmering) has led to a radicalization of external assistance, as donor agencies (and NGOs) grow willing to countenance intervention practices that penetrate deeper and deeper into the social, political and economic fabric of recipient states. Rather than being the chaotic, barbaric and irrational contexts which aid agencies take them to be, the 'new wars' have been an occasion for local

actors to refashion and transform 'the opportunities of liberal globalization . . . into new (and essentially non-liberal) forms of autonomy, protection and social regulation' (Duffield, this volume). The link to state collapse is not difficult to find: many of the redefined relationships involve 'opting-out' of formal or legal relations to political and economic institutions (through such things as parallel trade and the shadow economy), thus facilitating the collapse of state institutions and the slide into violence. On this account, post-collapse reconstruction is unlikely to break this cycle as long as the imperatives facing local actors dictate 'exit' as opposed to 'voice' or 'loyalty' as an appropriate strategy (Hirschman, 1970).

CONCLUSION

The issues that frame this volume are really a large agenda for research, which a collection such as this can only begin to address. Nonetheless, the collection already makes several notable advances. Contributors carefully examine the phenomenon of state collapse, including historicizing this 'other face' of state formation and drawing out how and why today's international context is less conducive to the maintenance of states than it was during the Cold War. They also give empirically-grounded insights into recent cases of state collapse, potentially emergent situations of this kind, and the conditions and dynamics that can lead to state collapse as well as to (at least partial) reconstitution. Finally, they analyse contemporary responses to state collapse, questioning the assumptions underlying relief, conflict resolution and reconstruction efforts and, when appropriate, proposing alternative strategies. These efforts serve collectively to extend the study of the issue of state collapse and to open avenues for further debate and research.

We consider it important for such debate and research to recognize — as this volume has sought to — that state failure and state collapse must be distinguished from each other, and must *not* be subsumed under the vague, broad and ambiguous headings of political conflict or civil war. State collapse is different. It poses challenges both to the Whig narrative of a progressive worldwide march to modern (usually liberal) statehood, and to the 'anti-statist' vision that regards the erosion of state forms as an opportunity for new forms of political community to emerge at the local or cosmopolitan (global) level. The modern state continues to be a work in progress, and the potential for failure or reversal remains present. Similarly, post-modern political forms of authority and legitimacy may emerge in different parts of the world, but these are just as likely to be dystopic as celebratory, and they still need to answer the fundamental questions of political order that animated the emergence of the modern state in Europe. A close study of the processes that can lead to state collapse, to the dynamic interplay of global and local forces in state collapse, and to the normative

and practical underpinnings of the international community's efforts to recreate states after collapse, can shed light on some of these broader reshaping of the global political order in the twenty-first century.

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