

FAILED STATES AND THE EFFECTS OF INSTABILITY

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## CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

### Failed States and the Effects of Instability

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The demands of statehood, “ensuring peace and stability, the rule of law”, and “good governance” can be difficult to achieve (Hashi, 2015). It is not uncommon for some polities to fail outright. When a state lacks the capacity to enforce binding laws, monopolize force, and collect tax, for an extended period of time, it has failed (Lambach, Johais, & Beyer, 2015). The consequences of failure are rarely isolated. The instability associated with fragile and failed states causes disruptions for the international community. Responding to disruptions, outside actors may attempt to preserve authoritarian regimes in order to maintain or reestablish stability. The intent of this paper is to (1) review the definitions of states and failed states, (2) examine the internal and external effects of failed states, (3) review disruptive externalities caused by failure in the Middle East and North Africa and to (4) consider the effects of authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is more likely to disrupt its own citizens, rather than the international community. This by no means is an endorsement of oppression in the name of international stability. In the absence of stability some may reminisce about the old regime, but regression may only delay an inevitable collapse. In fact, predatory authoritarian behavior may lead to civil uprisings. Which in turn facilitate state failure and subsequent regional destabilization.

The international community must work through the challenges of state failure by offering appropriate assistance. A failed state is more disruptive to the international community *only* in regards to spillover (externalities) than authoritarianism.

## **Introduction**

There is a pattern of upheaval and collapse occurring in the Middle East and North Africa. Dictators and their predacious regimes are removed by either internal or external intervention. Often, when the rulers vacate, stability goes along with them. Countries struggle to stabilize themselves. Prolonged instability and lack of capacity may lead to collapse. This collapse is state failure. Once this has occurred disruption follows. Violence rages on. Protracted conflicts invite outside actors to participate. People flee in every direction. Causing enormous refugee flows. Terrorists and criminals alike find a safe haven amongst the lawlessness and disorder. It does not take long for the failed state to export its misery. These shared disruptions are known as externalities. They pose a significant risk to regional stability. One possible solution to curtail the unrest is to preserve the regimes; keep the dictators in power.

Dictators and strongmen have provided the Middle East and North Africa with stability in the past. Albeit by sometimes questionable means. Abrams (2012) recalls Hosni Mubarak's opinion in regards to regional politics - "they need a general to rule them". Mubarak's words are an example of someone failing to see the whole picture. It is not only the failed state that disrupts, but also the despotic actions of these 'generals'. They disrupt their people and the people in turn upend the country. Ali Abdullah Saleh, Muammar Qaddafi, Saddam Hussein, their removals led to collapse. Currently, Bashar al-Assad's stubborn hold on power is causing Syria's collapse. Removal may facilitate collapse, but behavior facilitates removal. There is a causal chain.

State failure is not the cause of externalities; it is a symptom of dissatisfaction. To preserve a regime or reappoint a strongman to curb instability resets the chain.

It does nothing to address the root problem. True stability, which would mitigate the externalities of state failure will come from good governance. These dissatisfied populations must determine what good governance entails for themselves. They are tasked with establishing a state that meets their needs. Both the arrival of statehood and state failure, can happen in a variety of ways.

## States and Failed States

In order to fully understand a failed state one must review the proposed definitions of statehood. As Lambach, Johais, and Bayer (2015) proclaim, “a definition of a state collapse has to proceed from a theory of the state.” When defining states and statehood, scholars tend to reference three common schools of thought: Westphalian, Hobbesian, and Weberian. Scholars and political scientists alike can trace the origin of mutually recognized sovereignty and modern statehood to the Treaty of Westphalia.

Spruyt (2002) not only gives a concise review of the Westphalian definition of statehood, but also calls into question the validity of such a definition in an ever globalizing international environment. “Modern statehood first took form in late medieval Europe” (Spruyt, 2002). It was here that rule, or authority, was first attached to territorial demarcation. In simplest terms, rivals cordoned their property from others and claimed sovereignty over it. With sovereignty came the assumption that fellow states would not interfere with in another’s internal affairs. “So strongly has Westphalia been identified with these principles that scholars sometimes denote the contemporary system as the Westphalian system” (Spruyt, 2002). Westphalian statehood and the declaration of sovereignty should protect a state against unsolicited intervention.

However, sovereignty is far from eternal. A state may claim sovereignty, but are they capable of it? A state lacking in specific capabilities is in jeopardy of being categorized as a failed state by the international community. Once this has happened, interventionists may claim the state, or rather former state, has forfeited sovereignty. Loss of sovereignty equates loss of legal protection.

Thus, leaving the collapse entity open to intervention, wanted or otherwise. Specific state capabilities are identified by both the Hobbesian and Weberian definitions of statehood.

Hobbes' concept of the state was not merely based of a declaration of sovereignty. Hobbes was very much interested in the relationship between the ruler and the subject. When these two bodies enter into such a relationship, it creates a state held together by an agreement. Hobbes called this agreement the social contract theory. Steinberger (2008) quotes Hobbes' Leviathan directly:

the Multitude so united in one Person .... of whose Acts a great Multitude, by mutuall Covenants one with another, have made themselves every one the Author, to the end he may use the strength and means of them all, as he shall think expedient, for their Peace and Common Defence'' (L17 Hobbes [1651] 1968, 228)

Steinberger (2008) describes this contract as "a product of prudential calculation" by individuals seeking peace and security. The world beyond law and order is far too dangerous for individuals, through cooperation, or a *contract*, they unite for survival. However, cooperation entails the willing abandonment of individual freedoms.

Unlike the absolute rule of the Westphalian sovereignty, Hobbes' contract demands something in return for obedience. "The purpose of the contract is to secure for all contractors the opportunity to live safely and contentedly" (Steinberger, 2008). The responsibility of providing such an environment or state, falls squarely on the shoulders of those in charge. This is the first obligation of the state. If a ruler fails to provide what Hobbes calls 'Peace and Common Defence' the contract is void and thus, the state has failed. This is especially true if the ruler is intentionally harming the population. The state may fail for some and not for others.

As Steinberger (2008) points out “if the contract has been abrogated for one of the parties, this does not mean that it is been abrogated for all of them.” The social contract applies to each individual. For some, especially those endangered by the state, the contract is null. Furthermore, there may be large portions of the population in open rebellion. They may be claiming the state has failed, but those who they oppose, those still living ‘safely and contentedly’, may declare the state has not failed (Steinberger, 2008). Conflict leads to yet another obligation of the state. However, this obligation is dependent on capacity. It is identified as the monopoly of force and it is central to Weberian statehood.

Lambach, Johais, and Beyer’s (2015) explore the Weberian definition of statehood. “The Weberian state has a legitimate monopoly over the means of physical coercion” (Lambach, Johais, and Breyer, 2015). The Weberian state builds upon both Westphalian sovereignty and the Hobbesian social contract. In addition to the above, the Weberian state will also have the ability to use force. A Weberian state is capable of defending itself from both internal and external threats. So, in the Hobbesian case above, when a portion of the population is in open revolt, the state has not failed if it has the power to quell its rivals.

### **Definition of Failure**

Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) use the Weberian concept to “disaggregate statehood into three dimensions of state capacity: making and enforcing binding rules, monopolizing the means of violence and collecting taxes.” If a polity has these abilities, then it is a functioning state. Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) by focusing on specific capacities have in turn created a clear definition of a failed state.



Such a state “has no meaningful capacities in its three core dimensions of rule-making, violence control, and taxation” (Lambach, Johais, and Beyer, 2015). These capacities, or lack thereof, must be measured against a specific duration of time. Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) declares failure or “state collapse” has occurred when a state “has no meaningful capacity... continuously over a timespan of at least six months.” Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) offer a logical definition of state failure. However, the international community is hesitant to agree upon any definition. This lack of consensus has become an obstacle to both recognized sovereignty and intervention.

The concept of failed states first entered political debate in the 1990’s. Gros (1996) offers a concise definition of a failed state referring to Hobbes’ social contract theory. Gros (1996) explains when “authorities are unable or unwilling to carry out their end” of the contract, the state has failed. Five factors may cause the state failure: “economic malperformance, lack of social synergy, authoritarianism, militarism, and environmental degradation” (Gros, 1996). All of these factors are obstacles for the state. A successful state, one that avoids failure, will *transition* from pre-obstacle statehood to post-obstacle statehood.

Transition events are occurrences the polity must overcome. Such events may range from natural disasters, economic collapse, or transnational conflicts. Also, it is possible for authoritarianism to trigger transition events. This transition event occurs when an oppressed population confronts predatory leadership. In this case there are three possible outcomes: resign, reform, or retaliate. Fragile states are more likely to fail during transitions. States functioning at the lowest levels lack the capacity to either maintain or reestablish stability when facing significant transition events.

However, some states respond to transitions by functioning in unexpected ways. These varying degrees of function and failure lead some to argue the current definitions of state failure lack applicability. For example, Gros' (1996) criteria of "lack of social synergy" is not significant according to others. Some may argue that Gros' (1996) factors fail to consider other possible manifestations of statehood.

Charles T. Call (2008) suggests we abandon a common definition of state failure altogether. He unabashedly calls state failure a "schoolmarm's scorecard according to linear index defined by a univocal Weberian endstate" (Call, 2008). Call (2008) questions the necessity of centralized government and the monopoly of force. He offers six conceptual deficiencies, the first being the "excessive aggregation of diverse states" (Call, 2008).

Some states, with various ethnic and religious groups occupying a single territory, may be viewed as excessively aggregated. Such an arrangement may be viewed as failed and fractured, but in reality it is a patch work of individual stable areas. Call (2008) also identifies what he calls "cookie-cutter prescriptions for 'stronger states'". Call (2008) points out that one prescribed solution to state failure is reestablishing security. However, as Call (2008) mentions the reestablishment of authoritarianism in the name of stability may exacerbate state failure. Governance is the main topic of the next deficiency - "democratization" (Call, 2008).

Call (2008) explains that state strengthening can occur in the absence of democratization. In such cases, a state may benefit from nation-building yet have portions of the population remain without representation. Call (2008) also mentions the "conflation of peace and stateness" as reason to oppose the definition of state failure.

He describes a view held by the UN that peace cannot, or is unlikely to occur, in the absence of declared statehood (Call, 2008). This may encourage external actors to support “predatory central governments” in order to reestablish the state quickly (Call, 2008). However, animosity between ruler and ruled still exists. Thus, perpetuating fragility and the risk of failure in the name of stability. Call (2008) also mentions “paternalism”.

A failed state may enter into a paternalistic relationship with an external authority. By doing so, they may forfeit sovereignty, a condition for failure, but the population may experience stability via its association with the external authority. Finally, Call (2008) questions Western responsibility in regards to these so called failed states. He accurately states that it was these colonial powers that drew the borders. The appropriateness of such a demarcation should be questioned. Especially, if failure is determined by a state’s inability to maintain such borders. Call (2008) willingly acknowledges the possibility and existence of polities functioning in spite of what others may consider failing criteria. Call (2008) may appear to provide contradictory information, both endorsing the declaration and forfeiture of sovereignty, but that is the exact point of his argument. Each state is unique. Therefore, a “prescribed definition” of failure is of little use (Call, 2008).

The concepts of statehood have been thoroughly addressed. A state must make a declaration of sovereignty and have the capacity to maintain it. State capacity may be challenged in a number of ways. Challenges are transition events, such as natural disasters and civil unrest. The future of the state depends on how it responds or negotiates the transition. When challenges exceed capacities, states fail. Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) offer a logical definition of state failure.

They suggest a state must maintain its capacity to enforce laws, monopolize the means of violence, and to collect taxes (Lambach, Johais, & Beyer, 2015). If a state is unable to do the above for a period exceeding six months, then it has failed. The ability to recover and reestablish order after a transition event is dependent on the Weberian monopoly of force. It is not simply the force to defend, but the required force to navigate existential threats. Failed states and the associated effects can be highly disruptive, not only to their own populations, but the international community as well. Those effects that challenge the state within its borders are internal. Those that challenge beyond are external.

## The Effects of State Failure

The effects of state failure occur both internally and externally. The internal effects disrupt the population directly. These effects include, but are not limited to, “poverty, disease, violence, and refugee flows” (Brooks, 2005). Refugees who flee their homes, but remain in country are known as internally displaced persons or IDPs. Once any one of these maladies traverses the border they become external. This phenomenon is commonly referred to as *spillover*.

The external effects (spillover) of state failure tend to be severe because they are the metastasized product of prolonged instability. Miller (2011) provides a few examples of such externalities: “insurgent movements, organized crime and drug-trafficking networks, piracy, pandemic disease, and ecological disaster” and “the occasional global terrorist organization”. If such externalities remain unmitigated they may lead to widespread regional instability. Thus increasing, not only the number of people affected, but the number of international actors drawn into intervening for the purpose of stabilization.

Intervention can be precarious. Firstly, interveners must justify their actions to their constituents and the greater international community. Intervention is no brief process. Also, intervention can be a catalyst for much larger conflicts, such as proxy wars. A proxy war may develop between opposing nations with vested interests in specific outcomes of the stabilization process. Lastly, as Coyne (2006) points out, “foreign government interventions can fail”. That is an extraordinary amount of risk to assume. The precursors to both spillover and intervention are the internal effects of state failure.

## **Internal Effects**

When governments lose their capacity to function, a number of things may happen. Unfortunately, it is the population of failed states who must experience these negative effects directly. Patrick (2011) concurs “failed states pose risks primarily to their own inhabitants.” There are several risks. Patrick (2011) directly references the Failed State Index or FSI, the annual report scoring fragility and failure by the Fund for Peace, proclaiming failed states “face a much higher risk of internal conflict, civil violence, and humanitarian catastrophe (both natural and man-made)”. Also, there is a greater likelihood that these people will be impoverished and uneducated, suffer discrimination, and lack basic health services (Patrick, 2011). It is these countries that generate global refugee flows. Refugee flows can become a major disruption for the international community, but they have internal origins.

At the initial stages of widespread violence people evacuate, but at this point they are still within the borders of their failed state. Sometimes they cannot move beyond the border and large populations of displaced persons begin to settle in different areas of the state. These are internal displaced persons or IDPs and they are indeed refugees. These people are barred from participation in the functions of the state and exacerbate failure. Situations like these are, but the international community must bear witness to events such as these, time and again, as states fail. When the internal effects of failure continue unmitigated for an extended period of time they may extend beyond the porous borders of the failed state. This is the threshold where internal becomes external; and the external effects pose a greater threat to regional and international stability.

## **External Effects**

The external effects of state failure have enormous disruptive potential. It is these effects that occur in the later stages of state failure. They mark the beginnings of regional destabilization, and tend to gain the most international attention. Miller (2011) identifies some of the external effects of state failure. He describes the failed state as an incubator for “serious threats” to both “regional and international order” (Miller, 2011).

Miller’s (2011) list of externalities include “insurgent movements, organized crime and drug-trafficking”. Trafficking is not only limited to drugs. Weapons and human trafficking are external effects of state failure, as well. Miller (2011) also warns of “piracy, pandemic disease and ecological disaster”. All of these effects originate from a state’s lack of capacity to prevent them. As Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) identified, when a state cannot make and enforce rules, monopolize violence, or collect taxes, criminals of all kinds, including pirates and terrorists, may operate with impunity. Lastly, Miller (2011) warns that “the 21<sup>st</sup> century is likely to see a steady increase in cross-border low-intensity conflict” in addition to the above mentioned externalities. It is fairly easy to conclude why failed states should be a matter of concern for the international community. Concerns seem to grow exponentially at the point of spillover.

## **Spillover**

Spillover is exactly what one would expect. It is the threatening characteristics of failed states expanding beyond their containers. Young et al. (2014) borrow the term “spillover” from medical research. It refers to “the moment a pathogen passes from one species to another” (Young et al., 2014).

In the case of failed states “spillover refers to the spread of violent conflict and its ramifications” from one country to another (Young et al., 2014). This happens frequently and it poses a major threat to regional stability.

When the internal mechanisms of a country cannot mitigate internal instability, they cannot prevent that instability from spreading beyond their borders. Young et al. (2014) identify contributors to spillover; “external support”, be it finance or direct military, from a third party contributes to spillover because it increases the total number of parties involved. “Refugee movements”, those fleeing instability, bring instability to other areas (Young et al., 2014). Picture the logistics neighboring countries must face in regards to refugees. The widespread violence causes millions to flee. Now internal problems become external problems. The effects of failure begin to compound; this is spillover.

Finally, the inability for fragile and failed states to maintain their borders facilitates spillover. Porous borders create the necessary conditions for internal problems to become externalities. The most significant concern may be terrorism. The fear of terrorists planning and exporting violence from the anarchic environment of failed states, has had a major impact on international policy making.

### **Transnational Terrorism**

Terrorism has been a concern of modern nations for decades, but it was the attacks of September 11th that placed transnational terrorism on the top of Washington’s priority list.



Susan E. Rice (2002) explains that the primary concern the US has with failed and failing states is that “they serve as attractive safe-havens and staging grounds for terrorist organizations.” It is now widely accepted that the perpetrators of 9/11 conceived, planned, and executed their operation from the confines of a failed state – Afghanistan. Rice (2002) describes fragile and failed states as “convenient operational bases” for “international terrorists”. The terrorists find safety in the failed states lack of capacity to enforce laws and monopolize violence. The connection between lack of central authority and terrorism is claimed by many like-minded scholars. Yet, there are other scholars who question the connection between failed states and terrorist networks.

It is wise to investigate the possible link between failed states and terrorism. Simons and Tucker (2007) agree that failed states indeed generate “refugee flows”, “trafficking of drugs, guns, and humans”, and “spread of disease”. However, they argue that “international terrorists do not appear to come predominantly from failed states” (Simon and Tucker, 2007). They cite that of the “759 prisoners” held at Guantanamo Bay in May 2006, only “34% come from failed states, if Afghanistan is included”. One may have a difficult time supporting why Afghanistan would not be included in the company of failed states. Still, 34% is by no means a majority. If the connection between failed states and terrorist operatives is so strong one may expect this percentage to be much higher. Simons and Tucker’s (2007) findings may be interesting, but there are exceptions. The Islamic State is an active transnational terrorist group that is a product of state failure. They brazenly employ violence not only to frightening their enemies, but to recruit from the ever increasing ranks of disenfranchised Muslims across the globe.

Such violent and intentionally sensational disruptions provoke intervention.

Unfortunately, intervention can be difficult.

### **Intervention**

Interventions are the actions conducted to mitigate the effects of state failure.

Intervention may be militaristic or humanitarian in nature. Military intervention is just that; military operations with the intent to neutralize or deter an opposing force.

Humanitarian interventions are actions usually carried out by non-governmental organizations (NGOs), such as the Red Cross, for the purpose of alleviating human suffering. Occasionally, military and humanitarian interventions will be carried out simultaneously. Ideally, intervention will mitigate suffering and replace a dysfunctional state with a functional one.

It can occur both internally and externally. Internally intervention may include widespread demonstrations from dissatisfied populations. Such assembly based interventions may be a reaction to Hobbesian state failure. When oppressive regimes fail to provide safety and target portions of the population outright, the state ceases to exist at that moment for the endangered group. So, demonstrations can in fact be interventions, demanding a predatory regime, step down in order for the people to draft a new social contract. This process may happen via external means as well. Similar to internal populations, external populations, those of the international community, may be compelled to address the external effects of state failure. Occasionally, members of the international community become outraged by the abusive behavior of some authoritarian regimes and call for intervention.

A more likely cause of intervention would be to mitigate externalities. However, intervention can be costly and unpredictable. Prior failures continue to inform current and future interventions.

The international community first began to experience the disruptive effects of failed states after the end of the Cold War. Patman (2015) explains how a new and “globalized security context” along with “domestic outrage” could provoke nations into intervention. In the absence of dueling super powers, policy makers had to identify the next threat to international stability. Patman (2015) offers several different schools of thought; one particular school is centered on the idea of the of global security. This global perspective describes a world where ‘intra-state’ violence could quickly escalate to ‘inter-state’ violence (Patman, 2015). Somalia was the stage for the international community’s first attempt at state failure intervention. Patman’s (2015) description of the events in Somalia are not intended to provide a case study in failure, but to illustrate the pitfalls of intervention. And how previously mishandled interventions can influence future attempts.

Following the collapse of Somalia’s government, the country slipped into chaos. “Constant civil war and drought had combined to produce a catastrophic famine killing an estimated 300,000 Somalis” (Patman, 2015). The group of policy makers that supported ‘cooperative security’ recognized the disruptive potential Somalia posed for the international community (Patman, 2015). Images of human suffering supported the case for intervention as well. When aid failed to reach its target, the US intervened to distribute food and establish security in Somalia. The intent was to provide famine relief and perhaps showcase the abilities of the globe’s only remaining super power. However, good intentions led to “bitter disappointment” (Patman, 2015).

Americans are familiar with what happened. US forces attempted to capture leaders of an opposing force found themselves involved in a massive firefight. The US suffered casualties. Sadly, it was the broadcast images of their bodies, desecrated at the hands of the Somali criminals, that brings us to Patman's (2015) other point – "domestic outrage".

"After the battle of Mogadishu, President Clinton responded to strong expressions of domestic outrage by quickly announcing the withdrawal of all US troops in March 1994" (Patman, 2015). Intervention will always be weighed against public opinion. Is it worth it? This is Patman's (2015) "Somalia Syndrome". It is offered not as an examination of Somalia's state failure, but as a cautionary tale. Intervention is dangerous and things may go horribly wrong. Patman (2015) explains that when "less than vital national interests" are at stake, "willingness to take casualties" is "extremely limited." Addressing global security issues has suffered from temporization ever since. Regardless of the approach, security issues are very real. Failed states do require intervention in order to stymie global repercussions.

Intervention primarily comes in two forms: military and humanitarian. Nations may provide either or a combination of the two. Opinions on appropriate and successful intervention vary. Stabilization seems to be the primary concern of interventionists. Many scholars have offered cases illustrating tangible stabilization in the absence of centralized governments.

Stabilization may come from unlikely sources. Some interventionists may pursue the establishment of a centralized government. This is easier said than done. There are alternative stabilizers. Bilgin & Morton (2002) state "other mechanisms of social regulation can mitigate internal security threats" or instability.

They suggest that intervention efforts may include rebuilding “patrimonial networks such as warlordism” in order to stabilize the country (Bilgin & Morton, 2002). In such a way warlordism functions much like authoritarianism. However, unlike a regime that is able to maintain a universal monopoly of force, warlords control much smaller areas. It is from these small, yet relatively secure areas that greater overall stability may be established. Therefore, warlordism in this scenario, is an asset not a threat. Rather than a centralized government challenged by a competing de facto state or single warlord, we find several warlords. Each overseeing their own fiefdoms, holding small monopolies on power, but nonetheless creating a stable environment via equalization. Bilgin and Morton (2002) are not the only ones to suggest deviation from the centralized government model of statehood.

Prah (2004) discusses alternative examples of success as well. Prah (2004) states there may be a need to “eschew an imitative or a ‘one-size-fits-all’ approach” to intervention. “With the benefit of hindsight it is clear that the attempts to insist on centralized unitary models have in almost all instances failed” (Prah, 2004). Interventionists must recognize that stability may be dependent on the “cultural realities” of the affected area (Prah, 2004). Understanding cultural proclivities may be necessary to establish what Brooks’ (2005) calls an alternative theoretical framework for stabilization. Brooks (2005) plainly states “not all states will or should survive in their current form.” She further explains that “many failed states might benefit more from living in a ‘nonstate’ society than in a dysfunctional state” (Brooks, 2005). However, this is not the main point of Brooks’ (2005) argument.

Brooks (2005) would like to see “an international legal order that permits and values numerous different forms of social organization.” As previously stated, failed states have no rights under international law. They, by definition, are excluded from meeting with sovereign nations to discuss intervention. Exclusion of those directly involved may hinder the stabilization process. Woolaver (2014) describes this legality of intervention.

States by definition have sovereignty. Some argue when a state fails, due to “a minimal degree of effectiveness” the state ceases to exist and thus forfeits its sovereignty (Woolaver, 2014). Once sovereignty is lost, the situation may become unpropitious. “It is lawful to impose international administration on failed states; there are expanded rights to use force when the target is a failed state” (Woolaver, 2014). Labeling a semi-functional system as dysfunctional or failed in order to facilitate intervention may lead to further destabilization. The reality of intervention leading to less desirable outcomes has not been overlooked. “There is a strong belief that the label failed state is used primarily to legitimize potential military and other interventions, which largely benefit those who are doing the intervening” (Hashi, 2015). This may be cause for concern. Coyne (2006) states it is assumptive that “reconstruction efforts by foreign governments generate a preferable outcome”. He explains that this “assumption overlooks” that “interventions can fail”, they may “do more harm than good”, and that effective “indigenous governance mechanisms may evolve” (Coyne, 2006). Coyne (2006) offers “indigenous governance mechanisms” as potential self-stabilization. A state may correct itself in the absence of intervention. This process may take some time. And how long is the international community expected to tolerate externalities? The real human costs of failed states remain a legitimate concern for the international community.

Patrick (2011) explains that “failed states pose risks primarily to their own inhabitants.” Of course there is the ever present fear of externalities and regional destabilization, but Patrick (2011) describes the “atrocities against civilian populations” in failed and failing states as the “brutal truth”. He then lists the next most effected group. “The heaviest brunt of state failure is borne by neighboring states” (Patrick, 2011). One may conclude that distance shields other nations from the suffering and instability of failed states. Patrick (2011) warns this is not the case. He cites economist Paul Collier and Lisa Chauvet, estimating the “total cost” of a failed state, “for itself and its neighbors” to be “\$85 billion” (Patrick, 2011). Such costs can be detrimental to the global economy. Simply put, money going to failure is not going anywhere else. “The international community has a vested interest in the fate of the world’s most dysfunctional countries” (Patrick, 2011). Unfortunately, all these scenarios are currently playing out across the Middle East and North Africa. Utilizing Lambach, Johais, and Beyer’s (2015) definition of failure, one may identify multiple failed states across MENA. Yemen’s population is suffering from widespread conflict and lack of basic services. The NATO led intervention in Libya has failed. Libya remains fractured and unstable. Syria has drawn multiple outside actors into its civil war. Here, one may easily identify, both internal and external effects of state failure and review the effectiveness of intervention.

## **Failure in MENA**

A functioning state provides for its citizens. Such provisions include safety, basic goods and services, and the necessary stability for a population to thrive. Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) identify the three most vital functions as the ability to enforce law, control violence, and collect taxes. When the state lacks the ability to accomplish any of the above, the state is at risk for failure. As discussed, failed states present internal populations and the external international community with a myriad of problems. The negative and often far reaching effects of failure, may encourage the international community to intervene. Currently, interventions are taking place in Yemen, Libya, Iraq, and Syria. Each one of these countries has failed in a unique way. The situations vary both in severity and complexity. Unfortunately, successful intervention remains elusive. The most calamitous scenarios may be playing out in Yemen. Yemen has struggled with stability for decades. There has been an absence of capacity for an extended period of time; well over six months. The country unarguably meets the criteria of Lambach, Johais, and Beyer's (2015) conceptual definition of a failed state. The Yemeni people are struggling within the confines an unprecedented collapse.

### **Yemen**

Yemen, with its turbulent history of colonialism, arbitrary demarcation, and authoritarianism, has lurched into failure. All the internal effects, the "wider regional conflicts, economic and security costs, refugee flows, trafficking in illicit goods", and "lost trade and investment opportunities", which accompany failure are present (Rice, 2003). Yemen has no universal capacity to enforce binding laws.



No party is able to establish a monopoly on the use of force. Yemen, ever poverty stricken, faces an economic abyss. The latest turn of events began with the Arab Spring demonstrations.

Ayoob (2014) explains Yemen has been suffering from “domestic instability” and “internal conflict” for some time. However, after ousting autocrat Ali Abdullah Saleh, Yemeni “regional, tribal, and sectarian divisions” have devolved into civil war (Ayoob, 2014). It is common for rival factions to compete for power. The likelihood for competition is greater when a vacuum has been created. The circumstance in Yemen are no different. Rampant fighting has completely upended the country. Saleh’s successor, President Abdel Rabbo Mansour Hadi has been unable to establish a monopoly on the use of force. Hostilities have forced the president to flee the country (Rayman, 2015). Any administrative capacity, in regards to enforcing binding laws, has left with him.

The fighting that catalyzed Hadi’s departure, has continued, nearly uninterrupted since 2011. Battle hardened groups, such as the Houthi, present a significant challenge to Hadi’s forces (Rayman, 2015). However, neither side is capable of eliminating the other. The lack of progress only serves to exacerbate the fighting. Ayoob (2014) describes “anarchical conditions” have led Al-Qaeda in the Arab Peninsula (AQAP) to establish their base of operations in Yemen. The presence of transnational terrorists has become a major concern for outside actors. Their presence ensures U.S. drone operations, widely permitted under President Saleh, will continue. Also, regional rivals Iran and Saudi Arabia are trying to manipulate Yemen’s outcome. The Iranians have been supplying the Houthis, fellow Shi’a, with weapons. This has provoked a Saudi response.

“Saudi-led military intervention has intensified the country’s civil strife and brought about a humanitarian catastrophe affecting more than 20 million civilians” (Larison, 2015). The Saudi intervention appears to be causing more harm than good. The Saudi military, as well as the Houthis, have been accused of war crimes (Mohamed & Shaif, 2016). “Hundreds of civilians have been killed in airstrikes while asleep in their homes, when going about their daily activities, or in the very places where they had sought refuge from the conflict” (Mohamed & Shaif, 2016). Although the Saudis claim to have control over a majority of the territory, Houthis control key cities, such as Sana’a (Mohamed & Shaif, 2016). Intervention in Yemen appears to be contributing to, rather than resolving the violence. Unfortunately, when violence remains unchecked, noncombatants tend to suffer most.

The conflict in Yemen has “created a humanitarian crisis that threatens to become one of the most severe in the world” (Stewart, 2015). Without functioning institutions, people have lost access to the most basic services, to include food and water. It is estimated that six million Yemenis are near starvation “and altogether 13 million—half of the country’s population— “are in desperate need of food (Larison, 2015). Famine and the search for safety have caused significant refugee flows. Burki (2016) reports “2.5 million people have been forced from their homes”. Many have amassed along the Saudi Arabian border. The severity of Yemen’s humanitarian crisis is classified at the highest possible level (Larison, 2015).

The current situation in Yemen simply did not exist under President Saleh. There was no proxy war or humanitarian crisis, and therefore no disruptive externalities. Of course Yemen was poor and corrupt, but it was nowhere near as bad off as it is now.

If one were to see Saleh's departure as the cause for failure, then a case could be made to keep such characters in office. However, it was president Saleh's behavior while in office that steered Yemen towards failure. To put him or similarly styled despot back in power may address the immediate instability, but not serve Yemeni needs in the long run.

Yemen continues to disrupt its population and the greater international community. The continuous fighting has drawn outside actors into the conflict. Lawless has attracted transnational terrorists. Yemen will continue to produce externalities until it is properly stabilized. Sadly, the pattern of removal and collapse continues in Libya.

## **Libya**

Libya's descent into failure has occurred in much the same way as Yemen. The Arab Spring demonstrations that hastened Saleh's departure, sparked Qaddafi's demise as well. In the aftermath of Qaddafi's removal and subsequent execution, several factions have been vying for a monopoly on the use of force. Libya is currently divided among rival "governments" (Menan, 2016). The lack of cooperation has stalled the once gas and oil rich economy. Experiencing their own humanitarian crisis, Libyans are no better off than the Yemenis. As in Yemen, the destabilization and failure of Libya began in the power vacuum created in Qaddafi's absence.

Qaddafi responded to the Arab Spring challenge rather despotically. Described as a legitimate "madman", Qaddafi never entertained the thought of reform (Greenwald, 2014). When demonstrators gathered arms, he swore to fight the end. In an attempt to prevent mass murder, NATO intervened. Aiding several anti-regime militias, international forces quickly dismantled Qaddafi's military apparatus.

Qaddafi was killed by a mob shortly after. At this point, militias began competing with one another for power and resources. Qaddafi's successor, Prime Minister Ali Zeidan, was unable to control the militias.

Zeidan's administration was constantly undermined. "Libya almost stopped exporting oil because the main ports on the Mediterranean had been seized as a result of a mutiny among militiamen" (Cockburn, 2015, p. 113). Like Yemen's President Hadi, Prime Minister Zeidan too was forced to flee his own country (Cockburn, 2015, p. 113). Lacking unified leadership, Libya is described as a "land of chaos and tribalism" (Greenwald, 2014). Libyans suffer without provisions amid the chaos.

Tribal warfare has caused many to flee their homes. Caring for Libya's refugees is a monumental task. Libyans lack basic necessities. Menan (2016) states, "approximately 200,000 people do not have access to nutrition". In total, two million Libyans are in need (Menan, 2016). Ali Al-Zaatary, United Nations Secretary General in Libya, estimates \$166 million is needed to cover "humanitarian challenges in terms of providing food and medical treatment" (Menan, 2016). Much like in Yemen, Libya's failure has become enticing for terrorists.

Terrorists failed to establish bases in Libya under Qaddafi. He had "harshly put down" Islamist movements in the past (Vandewalle, 2012, p. 145). However, lacking concerted opposition, Jihadist-Salafism has settled in Libya. The notorious Islamic State has captured a portion of Libya's coastline. Their proximity to Europe has not been overlooked. The US has launched "airstrikes targeting an IS training camp in Libya" (Menan, 2016). Having external actors conduct prolonged operations in Libya will do little for stability.

For better or worse, Libya was unified under Qaddafi. His rule prevented the fracture of Libya for 42 years. However, like Saleh, Qaddafi's accomplishments were not the result of good governance. He provided stability via "torture, lengthy jail terms without a fair trial, executions and disappearances" (Asser, 2011). To promote Qaddafi's leadership is to promote repression. It was not his absence that brought about state failure; it was repression.

Libya's externalities threaten to destabilize North Africa. Their divided economy cannot meet the needs of the people. The lack of governmental control allows for terrorist activities. US and European forces will be repeatedly drawn to Libya in an attempt to neutralize the terrorist threat. This pattern of collapse, externalities, and repeated intervention attempts exists in Iraq as well.

## **Iraq**

Iraq slipped into failure when Saddam Hussein's Baathist government was targeted by the 2003 US led invasion. Lambach, Johais, and Beyer (2015) include Iraq on their list of failed states; meaning Iraq lacks the meaningful capacity to enforce laws, control violence, and collect taxes. This began with the fall of Baghdad. Shortly after, Iraq's legal system was systematically dismantled by the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA).

The impulsive actions of the CPA rendered Iraq impotent to protect itself. Pfiffner (2010) reports that, CPA head Paul Bremer, fearing Baathist sympathizers, relieved '85,000 people' of their government positions. This included essentially all police and military personnel.

Pfiffner (2010) questions the reasoning behind such a decision, ‘many officers in the Army were professional soldiers, and the rank and file enlisted soldiers constituted a source of stability and order’. Stability and protection became the responsibility of sectarian militias and criminal gangs. The Islamic State, then Al-Qaeda in Iraq, easily recruits from the ranks of the frightened, angry, and unemployed. Many are compelled to align themselves with such groups to alleviate failure induced suffering. The sheer scope of suffering has created a humanitarian crisis.

Terrill (2008) systematically identifies the consequential effects of Iraq’s failure beginning with “the flow of refugees”. Terrill (2008) states that “2.4 million Iraqis have fled” and that an additional “2 million have become internally displaced”. These numbers continue to increase. Like those in Yemen and Libya, Iraqi refugees need assistance, to include housing and medical support. “6.9 million Iraqis need immediate access to essential health services and 7.1 million access to water, sanitation, and hygiene assistance” (*Lancet*, 2015). Again, we see a toppled dictator, a failed state, a humanitarian crisis and terrorists.

The pattern in Iraq has been the same. However, rather than Hussein being removed by internal demonstrations, he was removed via external intervention. There had been attempts in the past to oust Hussein, but all had failed. All arguments about legitimacy aside, the US did invade Iraq and forcefully dismantle the regime. Ultimately, this difference matters little because Hussein’s departure, much like Saleh’s and Qaddafi’s, hastened Iraq’s collapse. As despicable as Hussein was, he managed to keep Iraq running for decades. Iraq’s current state of affairs has some reminiscing of the days of Saddam.

Abu Zeed (2016) reports some Iraqis believe “Iraq would be much stronger and more united — despite the bloody acts and human rights violations during his rule” (Abu Zeed, 2016). Again like Saleh and Qaddafi, it was Hussein’s poor leadership that catalyzed Iraq’s failure. The US must take credit for their rule, but Hussein and his fellow Baathists are by no means innocent. Once again good governance seems to be the answer.

Simpson (2014) proposes the only solution to the ongoing crisis is to turn states into “real” countries again. This may be easier in theory than practice. Iraq’s internal stabilization may depend on greater regional stabilization. Any Iraqi progress may dissolve in the wake of Syria’s exported misery.

## **Syria**

Syria was fragile before its own civil uprisings. The war in Iraq and its struggle with authoritarianism set the stage for collapse. Syria’s situation differs little from others previously mentioned. Like Yemen and Libya, Syria’s civil war began with the Arab Spring. Like their counterparts, Syrian’s demanded reform. President Bashar al-Assad, much like Qaddafi, responded to the publics demands with violence. However, much unlike Qaddafi, Assad survives and the situation continues.

The fighting first began in the city of Daraa, where security forces began shooting demonstrators (Kaphle, 2014). Skirmishes between protestors and Assad loyalists escalated in both frequency and severity. “In just a year, the Syrian uprising evolved from a largely peaceful and organic revolution into a full-scale sectarian civil war” (Hokayem, 2013, p 39). By the second year, the Assad regime had used chemical weapons against the rebels (Kaphle, 2014).

Such disparate acts not only confirm lawlessness, but illustrate the importance of a monopoly on use of force. However, no such monopoly exists in Syria. Large swaths of the country are controlled by hostile and opposing entities. “Syria’s societal, rural and urban fabric is being shredded” (Hoyakem, 2013, p 40). Like Yemen and Libya, fighting has caused many to search for safety. Iraq, Turkey, Jordan, Lebanon and Israel have been “affected in a myriad of ways, from refugee inflows to cross-border incidents” (Hoyakem, 2013, p 207).

Syrian refugee flows are arguably the largest ever recorded from a single conflict. “Overall, the United Nations says 10.8 million people in Syria -- half the population -- are currently in need of humanitarian assistance” (Bauer, 2014). In addition to harboring refugees, the international community continues to give a significant amount of aid. The U.S. alone “has provided more than \$3 billion in humanitarian aid to Syrians” (Sprusansky, 2015). However, the refugee flows will continue until the fighting stops. This is unlikely. An attempt by Russia to preserve the regime militarily has only prolonged instability. There is concern that “if the Assad regime falls, Syria will be divided up into ethnic- and sectarian- based mini-states in constant conflict with each other” (Ayoob, 2014, p 11). Assad’s capacity has been reduced to an “Alawite statelet” in the west (Cockburn, 2015, p 204). Such contraction has destroyed Syria’s economy.

Obviously, those carving out their own states do not contribute. In turn, Syria’s economy and development has been devastated (Hoyakem, 2014, p 192). It is believed that Syria lost \$48 billion in 2012 (Hoyakem, 2014, p 192). Instability, poverty, and famine has empowered terrorists.



Salafi groups, such as the Islamic State, provide order and assistance, to boost their ranks (Hoyakem, 2014, p 101). Division, intervention, and terrorism, is halting any progress towards stabilization.

Syria presently lacks capacity to enforce laws, a monopoly on use of force, and maintain a tax based economy. “Syria has thus become a part of a region-wide tussle for supremacy or pre-eminence “(Ayoob, 2014, p 108). Of all failed and fractured states, Syria may be the most difficult to restore. Young et al. (2014) suggest “Assad may have to be part of the solution”.

One may deduce from the pattern of removal and collapse, that removal should be avoided. Furthermore, once a regional strong man, such as Saleh or Assad, has been removed interventionists should work to quickly reappoint a dictator. This would be done for the sake of stability. Stability prevents externalities. “After all, Assad has never posed a threat to the West or the Arab Gulf States” (Young et al., 2014). Russia is intervening on Assad’s behalf, but it is doubtful that their motives are regional stability. However, if Assad and his allies were able to reestablish a monopoly of force in Syria, some stability may follow. Should the international community preserve authoritarian regimes in the name of stability? The idea of a quick fix is tempting. However, authoritarianism may be a poor choice in the long run.

## Authoritarianism

When faced with the externalities of state failure, the international community may consider keeping an oppressive regime in power to stabilize the situation. Outside actors have given support to regional monarchs and dictators before. In the past, The U.S. had given Iraq's Saddam Hussein both military and economic support to contain the threat of instability during the Iran-Iraq War. Yemen's former President Saleh aligned himself with Saudi Arabia. Currently, Russian President Vladimir Putin is attempting to provide similar support to the Assad regime. Bellin (2004) examines authoritarianism in the Middle East.

Bellin (2004) describes the Middle East as being truly exceptional in regards to authoritarianism. Authoritarianism is a coercive apparatus (Bellin, 2004). This apparatus hinders reform and democratic initiatives, but in turn may provide a significant degree of stability (Bellin, 2004). It does so by maintaining Lambach, Johais, and Beyer's (2015) capacities of the state: enforcing binding laws, possessing monopolies on power and violence, and taxation. Bellin (2004) concurs, stating autocrats "resist popular mobilization" (public demonstrations), strengthen their power monopoly via alignment with "international support networks", and "maintain fiscal health". Such scenarios, though far from ideal, have prevented state failure in the Middle East and North Africa. Preserved states are less likely to produce harmful externalities. Toppling dictators can be risky. It has failed in Yemen and Libya; Iraq continues to struggle. Bellin (2004) states there is a greater likelihood of autocrats being replaced by autocrats, rather than democracies.

Lacking effective institutions, removal of the coercive apparatus will lead to chaos (Bellin, 2004). Fear of causing less desirable outcomes only confounds the intervention debate.

Authoritarianism offers no panacea. In fact, authoritarianism may instigate resistant popular mobilization. This only supports Gros' (1996) argument. Gros (1996) associates authoritarianism with implosion and subsequent failure. Authoritarianism may impede externalities, but fails to produce a healthy state. These dictators and strongmen may cause more problems than they alleviate. "They wasted decades that were marked by corruption and theft, repression and brutality" (Abrams, 2012). Remember, Arab Spring demonstrators sought dignity above all else. An oppressive state regardless of outwardly appearances remains fragile. Lasting state health is "ultimately tied to internal processes of change" (Gros, 1996).

## **Conclusion**

A failed state is more disruptive to the international community *only* in regards to spillover (externalities) than authoritarianism. A state that has lost its capacity to enforce laws, monopolize force, and collect tax has failed (Lambach, Johais, & Bayer, 2015). Failed states present their populations and the greater international community with a variety of problems. These include, but are not limited to, refugee flows, transnational conflict and crime, disease and terrorism. Failed states, such as Yemen, Libya, Iraq and Syria are contributing to greater regional destabilization. Successful intervention remains elusive and often exacerbates deterioration. Seeking a quick fix, some outside actors resort to supporting oppressive regimes. Such regimes do in fact serve as barriers to externalities.

Autocrats maintain state capacity by force and the state will function as long as they maintain control. However, authoritarianism should be cause for concern. For it is authoritarian misdeeds that create the necessary conditions for a transition event. During such events fragile states are more likely to fail. Failure is what we want to avoid. Unfortunately, there is no easy solution. Countries cannot be forced to succeed, “ultimately they have to do so on their own and, realistically, not all will” (Gros, 1996).

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