

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

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The state is no more than a composite of reality and a mythicized abstraction, whose importance is a lot more limited than many of us think (Foucault 2006: 103).

'Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way' (Tolstoy 2000: 3)

The rise and fall of great and minor powers, through either violent disintegration or conquest by outside forces, is far from a recent phenomenon. In the modern era, however, with state actors accorded the highest level of legitimacy (Lake 2008: 41), their collapse has the potential to threaten the very foundation of the global order. Though a contested concept, 'failed states' are most frequently conceptualised as 'a state where the government is no longer able to exert authority or *power* over its people and territory' (Devetak, Burke and George 2007: 388). Definitions such as these appear unambiguous, seeking to give primacy to material factors as the central determinant of the 'strength' or 'weakness' of a state. There exists, however, vast political, cultural, economic, and religious heterogeneity among many of the states currently contained within the rubric of 'failed states', as well as critical differences in the manner in which each state has undergone such 'failure'. Concurrently, some low-capacity states appear to maintain unchallenged international legitimacy, regardless of deteriorating internal standards. This is clearly problematic, as it implies that other factors, beyond the material, influence the application of the term 'failed'. This essay will explore this notion, arguing that the term 'failed state' is in fact primarily ideational, and centred on a subjective, overly broad and inconsistently applied criteria of the West. For this reason 'failed state', as it currently functions, is a concept of little use, containing too great a number of definitional inconsistencies to be doctrinally acceptable. This will be demonstrated firstly through an historical contextualisation, exploring the way in which conceptions of the state have transformed dramatically throughout history. The mutually constitutive dimensions of sovereignty, both internal and external, will next be evaluated. The definitional inconsistency of the term 'failed state' as it relates to a loss of a monopoly on the legitimate use of force will be further highlighted, through a comparative analysis of Zimbabwe and Mexico. Following this, definitional confusion resulting from the conflation of 'failed states' and authoritarian regimes will be examined, with specific focus given to the Rwandan example. The Failed State Index will also be explored, and its role in the projection of Western, liberal conceptions of statehood established. The post-war rebuilding efforts in Afghanistan will subsequently be critiqued, demonstrating clearly the centrality of ideational factors in the pathologising of 'failed states'. Lastly, definitional alternatives to the 'failed states' model will be offered.

The state, far from being an immutable actor in the international system, has undergone profound change since its genesis. For most of human history, individuals existed in societies void of a concentrated authority. Humanity's inexorable progression towards modernity, however, would eventually overturn this status quo, with an increasingly centralised and hierarchical polity emerging. This process would reach its logical end-point with the Peace of Westphalia, two treaties signed in 1648 by European powers, bringing an end to The Thirty Years War and marking the inauguration of the sovereign-state system (Keal 2007: 207; Morgenthau 1993: 254; Watson 1992: 186). At this juncture, it is important to note that the extent to which the Peace of Westphalia functioned as a singular transformative event has in fact been heavily disputed. Carvalho, Leira and Hobson (2011: 743), as well as Krasner (1993: 235), argue that the sovereign-state system, rather than emerging in a single transformative moment, evolved incrementally over a protracted period of time. Regardless of which perspective is correct, there is little disagreement that the modern state now functions as the prime actor in the international order; a fact most starkly demonstrated

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

following the Second World War, when the fundamental norm of sovereignty was near sacrosanct. This was partly the consequence of an understandable concern that an erosion of the norm of sovereignty through territorial revisionism could potentially trigger a Third World War (Zacher 2003: 245). Also, the bipolarity generated by the teleological struggle between the Soviet Union and the U.S. functioned structurally to safeguard state sovereignty in its purest form. This state-centric epoch, however, would fail to endure beyond the twentieth century.

The conclusion of the Cold War heralded a significant challenge to the hitherto inviolability of state sovereignty. This fact was most immediately and dramatically realised through the apparent transformation of contemporary warfare. The increased causal role of eroding state authority in early post-Cold War conflict would highlight clearly the diminished relevance of Clausewitzian state-centric interpretations of warfare (Dexter 2007: 1058; Cassidy 2008: 150). In reaction to the conflicts of Somalia and Yugoslavia, the term 'failed state' emerged as an ad-hoc conceptual response to what seemed an entirely new form of conflict. For some theorists, the collapse of these states was inextricably linked to the economic factors of globalisation (Helman and Ratner 1992/3: 3; Kaldor 2005: 491). Others, however, viewed these issues through a largely determinist lens, portraying their 'failure' into Malthusian dystopia as an unfortunate inevitability (Kaplan 2000: 73; Huntington 1993: 35). While the term 'failed state' would gain influence throughout the post-Cold War years, it would require the terrorist attacks on September 11th for the concept to achieve the political salience it currently holds. The perception that states such as the U.S. were now threatened less by conquering states than by failing ones (NSS 2002: 1), inevitably led to a securitisation of the term (Grant 2004: 51). The label 'failed state' is now commonly employed to describe a host of troubled states, seemingly unable to achieve the material requirements crucial to state legitimacy. An examination of both the internal and external components of sovereignty, however, will demonstrate the ideational as well as material dimensions of state legitimacy.

Internal sovereignty is regarded as a core component of the legitimate state. Centred on the relationship between the sovereign power and its own subjects, internal sovereignty refers to a state's ability to exercise *de facto* political control over its territory (Heywood 2004: 92). The essentiality of this form of sovereignty is beyond question, commonly viewed as the most fundamental requirement for statehood. This was explored most famously by Max Weber, who judged the legitimacy of states solely by their ability to 'successfully hold a claim to the monopoly of the legitimate use of force' (1947: 154). Other prominent theorists, such as Herz (1957: 474) and Tilly (1992: 1), appear to define the state in a similar manner, reinforcing the importance of a coercion-wielding, autonomous territorial space. This definitional standard of the state would appear to define 'failed state' discourse following the conclusion of the Cold War. Judged against this Weberian standard, conflict-affected states throughout the 1990s were routinely determined to have surrendered their monopoly on force, with sub-state actors often forming rivalling power structures (Boutros-Ghali 1996: 45). One of the starkest examples of this phenomenon was witnessed during the First Liberian Civil War, fought between 1989 and 1996. This conflict was characterised by a state that had effectively ceased to exist as a legitimate functioning order, relinquishing both power and legitimacy to the violent contestation of several armed factions (Lowenkopf 1995: 91). It is crucial to note, however, that material factors such as a monopoly on force are a necessary but not sufficient requirement for state legitimacy.

Material factors, such as territory and bureaucracy, cannot determine the legitimacy of a state alone, as evidenced through an examination of external sovereignty. Highlighting the importance of the ideational in sovereignty reveals the highly contextual nature of the state. For the academic and practical worth of the term 'failed states' to be properly assessed, it is first necessary to properly grasp this fact. External sovereignty refers to a state's recognition as *ad jure* member of the international order (Wendt 2004: 294; Krasner 1999: 3). While internal sovereignty has historically been a precondition for external sovereignty, it is nevertheless essential to view these as distinct components of the state. External sovereignty demonstrates that aside from government, territory, and citizens, sovereignty, like numerous other concepts in international law, rests upon the international community believing it to be valid and important (Fowler and Bunck 1996: 403). This inevitably translates into factors beyond the material having a profound role in the determination of state legitimacy.

Recognition is a crucial requirement of state legitimacy, as numerous low-capacity states clearly demonstrate. Perhaps the clearest evidence for the importance of recognition is provided by the example of African states following decolonisation. Jackson argues that a majority of post-colonial African states, though little more than loose

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

patchworks of plural alliances and identities more closely aligned with that of medieval Europe, crucially differed by being defined and supported externally by the institutional framework of sovereignty (1987: 528). That states such as these, lacking in established administrative and legal institutions, held, and often continue to hold, equal sovereignty to high-capacity states, confirms that sovereignty is far from a monolithic concept. Rather, these 'quasi' or 'pseudo' states function essentially by international 'courtesy', with their sovereign status contingent upon the recognition of the international community (Bull and Watson 1985: 430). In order to fully appreciate the nature of the state, therefore, it is crucial to look beyond narrow territorial and coercive definitions. Instead, aspects of the state, such as population, authority, territory, and recognition, must be viewed as the product of a normative conception, both materially and socially constructed (Biersteker and Weber 1996: 3; Ashley 1984: 273). Accepting the central role of recognition in sovereignty is clearly necessary for a proper understanding of the term 'failed state'. Historical cases of this recognition being withdrawn highlight this fact further. Perhaps the most striking example of withdrawn recognition was that of the People's Republic of China from 1949 to 1971. Though an independent and Weberian state, China failed to be recognised by numerous members of the international community, and hence, was not considered for membership of the United Nations (Gandois 2008: 4). Similarly, the term 'failed state', once employed, implicitly suggests a withdrawal of the recognition crucial to state legitimacy. Given this, the often subjective and inconsistent manner in which the term 'failed state' is applied should be regarded as highly problematic.

A comparative analysis of the 'failings' of both Zimbabwe and Mexico reveals clearly both the ideational dimensions and definitional inconsistency of the term 'failed state'. Somalia is routinely presented as the 'failed state' archetype, largely defined by its widespread lawlessness, terrorism, insurgency, crime, ineffective government, collapsed institutions, and piracy against foreign vessels (The Fund for Peace 2012: 1). Very few observers would argue against the notion that Somalia has fallen short of the essential requirements for statehood. Numerous other states that are similarly deemed 'failed', however, do not conform as easily to this standard of non-success. An example of this is the state of Zimbabwe. Citing severe economic and political vulnerability, the U.S. labelled Zimbabwe a 'failed state' in 2008, recommending that South Africa immediately seal off its border to the troubled state (The Australian 2008: 1). A brief examination of contemporary Zimbabwe demonstrates clearly the severity of its internal challenges. Though once economically secure, Zimbabwe has deteriorated to the point where over six million of its citizens face acute food shortages, agricultural output has plummeted, and over three-quarters of its working age population are unemployed (Mills and Oppenheimer 2003: 54). Perhaps equally problematic, contemporary Zimbabwe's political structure has profoundly weakened, unable to properly function under the pressure of authoritarian and kleptocratic rule. These political vulnerabilities were made manifest during the 2008 election, in which endemic violence and widespread corruption ensured the continued rule of Robert Mugabe, and the displacement of over 200 000 individuals (Power 2008: 18; The Economist 2008: 14). That Zimbabwe has categorically failed to achieve an acceptable economic and political standard is beyond question. However, before accepting the self-evidence of Zimbabwe as a 'failed state', it is worth recalling the Weberian standard of statehood. When scholars and policymakers claim that a state has 'failed', this assumption is often at least implicitly measured against a notion that a state's basic requirement is the maintenance of its monopoly of physical violence within a certain territory (Wulf 2007: 3). Though Zimbabwe's social, economic, and political problems are severe, its monopoly of force has not been critically eroded. Mugabe continues to exercise firm control of Zimbabwe's security services, including army, air force, and police forces, and as such, has little reason to fear a widespread internal insurgency (Rotberg 2010: 10). This demonstrates the difficulty in applying the term 'failed state' to troubled regions, which though deemed problematic by the international community, face little risk of collapse. A clear example of a state that presents an inverse to this categorisation challenge is Mexico.

Despite a large degree of international recognition, Mexico has clearly failed to achieve a Weberian standard of statehood. Endemic levels of violence generated by former President Calderon's so-called 'war on drugs' has claimed over 50 000 lives, as well as corroding many core institutions of the state (Correa-Cabrera and Nava 2012: 3). If sovereignty is to be judged by the standard of Max Weber, then it is difficult to view Mexico as anything other than failed. While this may initially seem hyperbolic, it is crucial to fully appreciate the level in which the 'war on drugs' has critically undermined the Mexican state. As a consequence of ongoing violence in 2011, the state of Tamaulipas in northern Mexico declared itself 'ungovernable', with many fearing Mexico was approaching 'critical mass', a period in which credible authority would be replaced by anarchy throughout the entire North of Mexico (Hale 2011: 6). Despite this direct challenge to its internal sovereignty, however, Mexico's external sovereignty remains relatively

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

uncontested. Even among those who stress the profound negative impact of 'war on drugs' on the Mexican state, there is a clear reluctance to re-conceptualise the troubled state as 'failed' (Jones 2011: 6:08; Ackerman 2009: 1). This unwillingness to hold Mexico to the same standard of other vulnerable states highlights an important dimension of 'failed state' logic. Rather than resulting from an objective truth, the term 'failed state' is centred on subjective interpretations, which prioritise the 'failings' of some states over others. This fact is explored by Call, who argues that powerful Western states view 'failing' or 'failed' states through a 'lens of their interests', treating strategically important vulnerable states fundamentally different than those that neither pose a serious threat nor possess important natural resources (2011: 322). This demonstrates clearly the primacy of ideational over material factors in the term 'failed state'. The implications of this inconsistent application of the term 'failed state' should be obvious; namely a definitional incoherence inhibitive to academic clarity and effective policy. This is made even more apparent through an analysis of the way in which the term 'failed state' is increasingly used to describe authoritarian regimes.

That the term 'failed state' often identifies state authority, rather than its absence, as a catalyst for state 'failure', is clear evidence of both the ideational nature of the term, and its overly broad scope. As outlined earlier, the paradigm shift in U.S. security strategy following the terrorist attacks of September 11th had a profound impact on the way in which 'failed states' were conceptualised. This was clearly evident in the rhetoric of former President Bush who argued "...on September 11, 2001, we found that problems originating in a failed and oppressive state, 7000 miles away could bring murder and destruction to our country" (cited in New York Times 2006: A18). The rhetorical conflation of oppressive states and 'failure' has inevitably meant a broadening of the range of issues that determine state failure. This shift in consciousness towards 'failed states' has only been exacerbated by the dramatic contemporary increase in human rights advocacy, a bi-product of the conclusion of the Cold War. Increasingly, interpretations of the state seek to move beyond the narrowness of Weberian conceptions and explore the actual legitimacy of monopolised force. A clear manifestation of this growing trend, which seeks to re-conceptualise sovereignty as conditional, has been the emergence of the principle of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P). Though inchoate, R2P seeks to re-imagine sovereignty as contingent upon a states willingness to protect its own population from mass atrocity crimes (Luck 2008: 1). Both the securitised rhetoric of U.S. policy, as well as the focus on illegitimate force by human rights advocates, has effectively broadened the term 'failed states' beyond its formerly narrow focus on ungoverned spaces. The expansion of the 'failed state' definition, however, has been problematic, frequently resulting in misdiagnoses of troubled states. This is especially true of states that have featured mass-atrocity crimes. An example to consider is that of Sudan, a state commonly framed in Hobbesian terms. Yet, though both Sudan and Somalia share the classification of 'failed state', Somali violence is a symptom of state failure, while Sudanese violence is a consequence of state policy, highlighting the fundamental difference in the issues affecting both states (Traub 2011: 52). Though it is morally right and necessary to demand accountability from those states determined to disregard human rights, this is best done in a manner that does not include the intellectually exhausted terminology of 'failed states'. The consequences of an overly broad 'failed state' definition were perhaps most dramatically realised during the 1994 Rwandan genocide.

The misapplication of the term 'failed state' to classify the genocidal policy of the Rwandan government was a crucial factor in the international communities inaction. The Rwandan genocide was one of the bloodiest chapters in modern history. In the span of one hundred days, Hutu militia groups, under the direction of government elites and state-controlled media, exterminated over 800 000 Tutsis and Hutu sympathisers (BBC News 2008: 1). Perhaps the most troubling aspect of this modern genocide, however, was that despite the scale of this crime, an attempt by the international community to adequately engage with its actual causes failed to materialise. Western media and policymakers instead portrayed Rwanda as a collapsed state in which an 'all-against-all conflict, rooted in old hatreds' was unfolding (Mueller 2000: 65). The role of these perceptions in the subsequent genocide was exemplified by former Special Envoy to Somalia, Robert Oakley, who when speaking of Rwanda argued against the international community deploying military forces 'each time there is an internal crisis in a failed state' (Cited in Sciolino 1994: 1). Comments such as this fundamentally obscured the reality of the Rwandan genocide.

The Rwandan genocide was not an unavoidable consequence of 'state failure', but rather the bi-product of highly destructive state policy. The genocide was the deliberate choice of a modern elite, aimed at fostering fear to maintain power (Des Forges 1999: 6). This highlights the crucial distinction between Rwanda during the 1994 genocide and collapsed states such as Somalia. In Rwanda, it was precisely the existence of a modern, bureaucratic state-

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

structure, able to fully implement destructive policies of ethnic classification, dehumanisation, and extermination, that allowed it to conduct a genocide of such speed and intensity (Stanton 2009: 128; Huband 2004: 220). Viewing the violence through a 'failed state' lens greatly contributed to international inaction, critically exposing the weakness of 'failed state' as a tool of analysis. As the Rwandan example highlighted, the common, yet flawed conceptual approach of conflating authoritarian and 'failed states' can have profound negative consequences. It must be noted however, that recent attempts have been made to construct a definition of 'failed states' that successfully encompasses a larger number of possible causal factors.

Current 'failed state' definitions expose even more starkly the ideational and distinctly Western dimensions of the concept. Acknowledging the limits of assessing the strength of a state solely against a Weberian standard, proponents of 'failed state' terminology have sought to create a broader and more representative list of factors to determine state 'failure'. Arguably, the most cited of these is Foreign Policy's Failed State Index (FSI). The FSI examines demographic pressures, refugees, group grievance, human flight, uneven development, economic decline, delegitimation of the state, public services, human rights, security structures, factionalised elites, and external intervention (Foreign Policy 2012: 1). An examination of these numerous factors is highly revealing, confirming firstly the overly broad nature of the FSI. The fact that weak states featured on the FSI can be deemed 'failed' for such divergent reasons betrays the inherent weakness of an overexpansive criteria for failure. Secondly, tools such as the FSI highlight the extent to which 'failed state' dialogue is still largely dominated by ideational notions of a principally Western state model. This is confirmed by Morton, who examines the central role of 'failed states' within the foreign policy of the UK and U.S. Morton argues that UK institutions, such as the Ministry of Defence (MOD), the Department for International Development (DfID), the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), and the Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO), actively project the view that 'failed states' represent a 'deviancy from the norms of Western statehood' (2005: 372). Given this, methods to address 'failed states' have inevitably centred on enacting policy aimed at realigning states with Western, liberal norms. This, however, is highly problematic. Firstly, the assumption that the vast number of politically, culturally, religiously, and economically distinct states featured on the FSI are able to equally conform to the ideational standard of the West is quixotic. Secondly, and perhaps more troubling, the rigid imposition of a Western standard of statehood upon vulnerable societies carries with it vague notions of neo-colonialism, far likelier to lead to an institutionalisation of new hierarchies of power, than a levelling of the 'deeply unequal global playing field' (Chandler 2006: 64). The example provided by Afghanistan's post-conflict reconstruction is a clear example of this danger.

Ongoing capacity-building efforts in Afghanistan demonstrate clearly the problems inherent within current 'failed state' conceptions. Afghanistan arguably serves as the clearest practical articulation of 'failed state' policy, post-September 11th. In early 2006 Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice repeatedly cited Afghanistan as an example of state failure, highlighting the apparent inability of Afghan authorities to control their territory and limit the influence of al-Qaeda (cited in Call 2008: 1493). Viewing Afghanistan through this 'failed state' prism, the international communities post-invasion response focused heavily on rebuilding Afghanistan's state and security sector. What has proven a key failing of policy of this type, however, is the implicit assumption that Afghanistan existed as a Weberian state prior to its contemporary problems. Rather, the historical tensions between predominantly tribal traditions and a more centralised authority has meant that Afghanistan has never possessed a state structure in a modern Western sense; a fact that is central to the international communities current inability to form a cohesive Afghan government and army (Nojumi 2002: 2; Jalali 2002: 74; Akpinarli 2009: 158). The consequences of implementing policy based on an ideational and subjective Western standard for states such as Afghanistan has exposed some of the critical weaknesses of the term 'failed state'. Jackson argues that state building and Security Sector Reform (SSR) within Afghanistan has essentially served to extend liberal norms, with the focus on the 'replacement of dysfunctional societies' creating a political incoherence regarding the form of state being created (2011: 1803). The preoccupation of the West with a state structure-centric approach to peacebuilding has also meant other important issues within Afghanistan has been largely overlooked. Of these, perhaps the most critical are the central role of opium in the prolongation of the Afghan conflict (CIA 2000: 1; Sedra 2007: 162), as well as the effects of ongoing and destructive patriarchal structures (Hauslohner 2010: 1). Afghanistan is clearly a state in need of significant assistance from the international community. This assistance, however, must be applied with greater attention to the local context of post-conflict settings, and free of the demands implicit in rigid Western assumptions of the state.

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

Policymakers and academics must disregard the term 'failed state', in favour of terminology that is both more accurate and less pathologising to vulnerable states. Theorists such as Rotberg, who seemingly view any deviation from the Western state ideal as an ill to be corrected, echo many of the more problematic assertions of modernisation theory (2004: 6). Additionally, implicit within these perspectives is the false assumption of a prior state of success. This is a fallacy, and holding states to this unachievable ideal does little to improve the conditions of their inhabitants. It must be stressed that even Western European states today do not always achieve the Weberian ideal; a centralised bureaucracy that enjoys a monopoly of force over a given territory (Milliken and Krause 2003: 3). Despite this, however, there is a clear and troubling insistence on placing all states, no matter how disparate, upon a scale of progress in which a successful state is one that best reflects purely Western norms. As highlighted throughout this essay, the manner in which states and structure are mutually constitutive is of profound importance when examining the effect of labelling states as 'failed'. States deemed failed inevitably become re-conceptualised by foreign policy elites as security, rather than human rights or development challenges (Call 2008: 1499). This often has very real and negative consequences for the state in question. This is demonstrated by a comparison between the peacebuilding resources invested in the Balkans – especially Kosovo, Eastern Slavonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina – with those invested in many African cases (Newman 2009: 439). The international community must instead adopt an approach to vulnerable states that offers a clear and realistic path out of fragility.

There exist a number of more favourable alternatives to the term 'failed state'. One example of this comes from the recently formed G7+ group of fragile states, a voluntary diplomatic organisation that represents 17 states that have been most targeted by the FSI. G7+ focuses on peacebuilding and statebuilding goals, and aims to find local, context-sensitive solutions to instability; rather than results centred on the binary finality of failed/not failed (Leigh 2012: 1). For troubled states such as Somalia, Zimbabwe, and Afghanistan, this is clearly crucial. New approaches to statebuilding must be developed that fully take into account a state's 'indigenous social fabric and institutions', and integrate communal cooperation together with state structures (Kaplan 2009: 89). This illustrates the importance of formulating context-dependent policy, rather than policy broadly applied through liberal democratic frameworks. Security and prosperity will only arise in these troubled states, once the norms, institutions, and strategies, of largely liberal-democratic peacebuilding interventions effectively integrate with the everyday lives of local actors affected by conflict (Richmond and Mitchell 2012: 1). This cannot occur until academics and policymakers move beyond the term 'failed state'.

This essay has demonstrated the extent to which ideational, rather than material factors, underpin current 'failed state' logic. The highly subjective and inconsistently applied set of factors frequently used to determine the 'failure' of certain states stands as clear evidence of this. For this reason, this essay has argued for policymakers to discard politically motivated 'failed state' definitions, and instead embrace terminology and policy of greater academic clarity. Following the conclusion of the Cold War, with a greater focus given to internal state vulnerabilities, 'failed state' terminology gained widespread acceptance as a tool of analysis. The term 'failed state', however, has unfortunately served to obscure, rather than illuminate the exact nature of state decline. An understanding of the core components of sovereignty, and in particular, its external requirements, highlights this fact clearly. A withdrawal of international recognition is far more crucial to state delegitimation than a material deterioration of its internal standards. This was evidenced clearly through a comparative analysis of Zimbabwe and Mexico. While both states exhibit profound vulnerabilities, the impression of international legitimacy has served to insulate Mexico from the perception of 'failure'. Also demonstrating both the ideational and inconsistent nature of the term 'failed state' is the way in which it has been used to describe authoritarian regimes. The example of the Rwandan genocide demonstrated the profound consequences that can result from viewing crimes of centralised state structures as the bi-product of state collapse. Perhaps most importantly, however, the term 'failed state' betrays itself as a definition fundamentally centred on Western perceptions of the ideal state. The flawed prescriptive approaches that inevitably follow this pre-conception have proven ill suited to elevating the standard of vulnerable states. Policy must instead be aimed at elevating the internal standards of weak states through context-sensitive approaches. That there currently exist numerous states that present a profound danger to their own population, neighbouring states, and the international order, is beyond question. Pathologising these troubled states as 'failed', however, is likely to only increase the severity of their problems. Instead, the international community, particularly the West, must discard notions such as 'failed state', as well as state reform strategies solely based on a Western standard. By embracing context-sensitive, pragmatic policy directed at the advancement of living standards within vulnerable states, the international community can affect

Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

significant positive change globally. This will only be possible, however, once the term 'failed state' is finally and fully discarded.

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Is Failed State a Useless Term?

Written by Neil Renic

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