

SIS 490/590: Failed States

Monday/Wednesday 1:30-3:20
THO 331

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Office Hours: Tuesday 2-3 or by appointment

Course website: <https://catalyst.uw.edu/workspace/srad/20804/>

Failed states have been appearing in the news with increasing frequency. They are most likely to be discussed in conjunction with negative externalities that directly affect Western interests, such as global terrorism and drug trafficking. Yet state failure impinges more directly on a number of outcomes relevant to human security, such as civil violence, internal displacement, and degradation of public services.

This course will critically examine the causes and consequences of state failure. In order to do this, the course will analyze theories about the rise of the modern state and the preconditions for “successful” states to form and endure, then examine theories and case studies of modern failed states. Among questions that emerge are, How does political order arise? What factors enabled the rise of the European state, and what accounts for the non-universality of the European experience? What kinds of arrangements can substitute for formal stateness in providing security and public goods? How should the international community approach state failure and rebuilding? And last, would it be best to drop the concept of state failure altogether, but if so, what concepts should we use?

Assignments

- Response papers (different for grads and undergrads—see below) analyzing and critiquing reading
- Policy memo or country analysis (5-7 pp.)
- Final or research paper

Grading

Grades will be determined by the following formula:

- Response papers—25%
- Class participation—15%
- Policy memo—30%
- Final exam (or research paper)—30%

Important Dates

The response papers are due on the day that we discuss those readings.

The policy memo is due in class on Feb. 29. Oral presentation of findings is also on Feb. 29.

The final is March 12.

The optional research paper is due on March 14.

Participation

Since this is a seminar, participation is a large part of the grade. Most of every class will be taken up by discussion. Students should complete the reading by the dates indicated below. Instructor reserves the right to administer unannounced quizzes if it appears students are not doing the reading.

Response papers – for undergraduates

Every student will write 8 1-page response papers, (single-sided, double-spaced, 12-point font). *Students will submit it in hard copy at the end of class.* No late response papers will be accepted. Each paper should do 3 things:

1) Select one **major** reading of the day (i.e. a book chapter or scholarly article, not a newspaper article). In one sentence, state, in your own words, what you see as the main idea (thesis) of that reading. Then **briefly** interpret or define that argument/concept/idea and explain why it is important for understanding something about failed states, broadly understood.

2) Identify two key quotes from any/all of the readings that you find provocative, interesting, novel, or ridiculous, and note why you perceive it as such. (If the quotes are long, they can be single-spaced or written in smaller font.)

3) Devise two questions on the reading assigned for that day. The questions may be items that were not addressed but, you think, should have been. They may be framed as a challenge to a claim by an author that is not backed by the evidence, or that contradicts things other authors have argued. Or it might involve an implication of an argument, for example, whether the claim would stand up if taken to its logical conclusion. Or it might be an educated speculation about how the readings can be applied for policy purposes. Or something else entirely, as long as it comes out of the reading.

Be sure to indicate what text you are referring to, and page number if applicable, for each quote or reference. Full citations are not necessary; short-hand is OK. Indicate at the top which of your papers it is, i.e. “response paper #5”. Cleverer titles are optional. Variety is good. Don’t just specialize in one article.

Response papers – for graduate students

Graduate students will write *brief* (3 to 4-page; double-spaced, 12-point font) papers on the assigned reading for *four* sessions of your choosing. The papers are designed to help you engage scholarly arguments. They should *not* summarize the reading(s).

Instead, they should link the reading with broader themes addressed in the class. What is the broader significance of the readings? How do they advance our knowledge or frame an issue in a new way?

Each paper should evaluate the main argument(s) in the texts. Is the argument convincing and/or plausible? What evidence does the author bring to support it? What are the author’s assumptions or possible biases? If a claim seems problematic or unsubstantiated, how could it be corrected or further investigated? What additional evidence would strengthen the argument?

Papers should also compare and contrast the arguments in the readings. If there are readings assigned on that day by more than one author, compare them with each other. If only one author is assigned, compare the arguments to readings from previous weeks. Are the authors’ arguments complementary or contradictory? Why do they make different claims? Is it because they make assumptions that lead to different conclusions? Is it because they get their

evidence from different sources or gather it in different ways? Is it because they were written at different times and had different amounts of knowledge upon which to build?

Related, how does the reading build on the reading from past weeks? What is important to know in order to situate this week's readings? How are the elements connected? Or alternatively, how does this research contradict the earlier reading?

In writing this paper, you have to be selective. Choose only a few points on which to compare and evaluate the arguments. You do not need to answer all the questions posed here. Feel free to take risks. Don't spend time trying to divine the "right" answers, i.e., what the instructor wants to hear. Follow your ideas where they lead.

Paper Option 1: Policy Memo

This 5-7 page paper should address an issue relevant to failed states and make concrete recommendations to a relevant decision maker, for example a political leader in the region, a philanthropist, or an international organization. Write as an expert on your chosen topic and as if your opinion will be taken seriously. The style will differ from the response paper.

It should first identify and give some background to the problem to be addressed. Why is it a problem? What historical or other details are necessary to consider in comprehending the problem and deciding how to address it? Whom does the problem affect? Why would it be good to solve? Who would benefit? How has it been addressed in the past? Why have those efforts been insufficient?

Second, it should propose a solution to the problem. What concrete steps should the policy maker take? Why would this work better than what has been tried before? Why is it better than other policies that one could conceivably propose? What kind of resources are necessary to carry it out? How costly (in terms of money, political capital, or time) will it be to mobilize these resources? What are some possible pitfalls or sources of resistance to this policy and how can they be overcome? How will we recognize if the policy is successful? By what metric?

Some points to keep in mind when writing your memo:

- Identify a specific problem and say why (and for whom) it's a problem.
- Note and briefly review strategies that have been tried before.
- Be realistic about what's possible and the resources available.
- Be detailed about the problem and solution rather than vague.
- Tailor the memo to the reader.
- Include metrics by which the strategy can be evaluated
- Anticipate challenges to your strategy and sources of resistance and consider ways of dealing with them.

--Don't spend too much of your 5-7 pages giving background. Give only as much as is necessary.

Turn in a short summary of your proposed memo on 1/30.

Option 2: Country Analysis

Choose a country that is weak/fragile/failed. Provide a nuanced assessment of the state of that state that goes beyond simple description. Use theoretical concepts from class to analyze stateness historically and contemporaneously. For example, how do geography, resources,

ethnicity, colonialism, leadership, etc., independently or together explain how your state arrived at its set of circumstances?

Using publicly available data, analyze the different elements of stateness in that state. What are the sources of weakness that could lead to further deterioration? What aspects of the state function well? How do the different aspects of stateness interact? Finally, what are the likely prospects for the state in terms of stateness in the future? Look beyond the conventional wisdom. What, if any, is the popular discourse about the country? What does it get wrong?

Don't make assumptions based on how others have labeled your case. Consider whether indices do a good job of describing it. Disaggregate the components of stateness to show whether "all bad things go together" or, in fact, states may embody seeming contradictions.

You should utilize data sources that are not pre-assembled to measure state failure. Sources may include UN Human Development Indicators, Transparency International, Freedom House, World Bank Worldwide Governance Indicators (WGI), and others.

Turn in a short summary on 1/30.

Oral presentation

On February 29, students will make a 5-minute presentation of their research, using Power Point. It should summarize the problem and main findings/recommendations of the policy memo.

Final Exam

There will be a comprehensive final exam consisting of two parts: i) short-answer identification of concepts, people, and events; and ii) essays from a list of study questions that will be handed out in advance.

Optional Research Paper

Students can choose to write an 8-10 research paper instead of taking the final exam. Graduate students are especially encouraged to choose this option. Students should submit a one-paragraph abstract for approval by the instructor on 1/30.

Reading

Articles and book excerpts are on e-reserve. Large files will be on the course website.

There are two required books:

Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton University Press, 2000).

Barnett R. Rubin, *The Fragmentation of Afghanistan: State Formation and Collapse in the International System* (Yale University Press, 2002).

Reading Schedule

Week 1

Introduction: 1/4

Week 2

Conceptualizing and Identifying Failed States: 1/9

“Fixing a Broken World,” *The Economist*, January 29, 2009.

Robert Kaplan, “The Coming Anarchy,” *Atlantic Magazine*, February 1994,
<http://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1994/02/the-coming-anarchy/4670/>

Susan Rice and Stewart Patrick, “Index of State Weakness in the Developing World,” Brookings Institute. Available at http://www.brookings.edu/reports/2008/02_weak_states_index.aspx

2010 Failed States Index, *Foreign Policy* magazine:
http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/06/21/2010_failed_states_index_interactive_map_and_rankings

States and State-building: Taming Violence: 1/11

Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation,” in H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, eds., *From Max Weber*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 77-80.

Mancur Olson, “Dictatorship, Democracy, and Development,” *American Political Science Review* 87, 3 (Sep., 1993): 567-576.

Robert H. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart* (Cambridge University Press, 2008), ch. 2 (15-29).

Week 3

1/16---no class

War and State-building: 1/18

Charles Tilly, “War Making and State Making as Organized Crime,” in *Bringing the State Back In*, eds., Peter Evans, Dietrich Rueschemeyer, and Theda Skocpol (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985), 169-91.

Boaz Atzili, “When Good Fences Make Bad Neighbors: Fixed Borders, State Weakness, and International Conflict,” *International Security* 31, no. 3 (2007): 139-173.

Week 4

Geography and Control: 1/23

Jeffrey Herbst, *States and Power in Africa: Comparative Lessons in Authority and Control* (Princeton University Press, 2000), chs. 1-2 (11-31, 35-57).

James Scott, *The Art of Not Being Governed*, (Yale University Press, 2009), ch. 2 (40-63).

Colonialism and After: 1/25

Herbst, chs. 3-4 (58-136)

Week 5

Civil Wars I: Ethnicity and Borders: 1/30

Monica Duffy Toft, "Indivisible Territory, Geographic Concentration, and Ethnic War," *Security Studies* 12, no. 2 (2002): 82-119.

Charles King, and Neil J. Melvin. "Diaspora Politics: Ethnic Linkages, Foreign Policy, and Security in Eurasia." *International Security* 24, no. 3 (1999): 108-138.

Leslie Gelb, "The Three-State Solution," *New York Times*, November 25, 2003,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2003/11/25/opinion/the-three-state-solution.html?pagewanted=all&src=pm>

Thomas Ricks, "Merits of Partitioning Iraq or Allowing Civil War Weighed, *WaPo*, April 30, 2006,
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/04/29/AR2006042901142.html>

Reidar Visser, "Iraq's Partition Fantasy," *Open Democracy*, May 18, 2006,
http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-iraq/partition_3565.jsp

Thomas Friedman, "Tribes with Flags," *New York Times*, March 23, 2011,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/03/23/opinion/23friedman.html>

Civil Wars II: Political Economy: 2/1

James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (2003): 75-90.

Michael L. Ross, "Blood Barrels - Why Oil Wealth Fuels Conflict." *Foreign Affairs* 87 (2008): 2-8.

Lydia Polgreen, "Congo's Riches, Looted by Renegade Troops," November 15, 2008, *New York Times*,
<http://www.nytimes.com/2008/11/16/world/africa/16congo.html>

Week 6

Warlords: Order within Anarchy: 2/6

William Reno, "Illicit markets, violence, warlords, and governance: West African cases." *Crime, Law and Social Change* 52, 3 (2009): 313–322.

Vadim Volkov, "Violent Entrepreneurship in Post-Communist Russia," *Europe-Asia Studies* 51(5), Jul., 1999: 741-754.

Kimberly Marten, "Warlordism in Comparative Perspective." *International Security* 31, 3 (January 2007): 41-73.

Failed States and Transnational Networks: 2/8

Carolyn Nordstrom, "Shadows and Sovereigns," *Theory, Culture, and Society* 17(4), 2000: 35-54.

Charles King, "The Benefits of Ethnic War: Understanding Eurasia's Unrecognized States," *World Politics* 53 (July 2001): 524-552.

Stewart Patrick, "Weak States and Global Threats: Fact or Fiction?" *The Washington Quarterly* 29, 2 (2006): 27–53.

"Viktor Bout, Arms-Dealer Extraordinaire," *The Economist*, Dec. 18, 2008.

Week 7

Somalia: The Archetypal Failed State: 2/13

Scott Peterson, *Me Against My Brother: At War in Somalia, Sudan and Rwanda* (Psychology Press, 2001), chs. 1-2 (2-35).

Ken Menkhaus, "Governance without Government in Somalia: Spoilers, State Building, and the Politics of Coping," *International Security* 31, 3 (2006/7): 74-106.

Seth Kaplan, "The Remarkable Story of Somaliland." *Journal of Democracy* 19, 3 (2008): 143-57.

Afghanistan I: Failure: 2/15

Rubin, TBD

Week 8

2/20—no class

Afghanistan II: Intervention and Failure to Rebuild: 2/22

Berman, "From the Sun King to Karzai," March/April 2010, 1-7; + "Après Louis, Hamid" (response), July/August, 2010.

The 2009 Afghanistan debate, *The New Republic*, October 2009: Stephen Biddle, "Is there a Middle Way?" Oct. 20; Michael A. Cohen, "Disputations: False Dichotomy"; Andrew J. Bacevich, "Disputations: Root Causes," Oct. 29.

Warlord, Inc.: Extortion and Corruption Along the U.S. Supply Chain in Afghanistan, Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs of the Committee on Oversight and Government Reform, June 2010: 1-40.

Week 9

Third Country Case Study: 2/27

TBD by class demand

Class Presentations: 2/29

Week 10

International Intervention I: Gung-ho for State-building... 3/5

James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Neotrusteeship and the Problem of Weak States," *International Security* 28, 4 (April 2004): 5-43.

John J. Hamre and Gordon R. Sullivan, "Toward Postconflict Reconstruction." *The Washington Quarterly* 25, 4 (2002): 85-96.

Gareth Evans and Mohamed Sahnoun, "The Responsibility to Protect," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 81, No. 6 (Nov. - Dec., 2002), pp. 99-110.

International II: ...or Perhaps Less is Better: 3/7

Jeffrey Herbst, "Responding to State Failure in Africa," *International Security* 21, 3 (Winter 1996): 120-144.

Edward Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," *Foreign Affairs* Vol. 78, No. 4 (July/August 1999).

Christopher J. Coyne and Peter J. Boettke, "The Problem of Credible Commitment in Reconstruction," *Journal of Institutional Economics* 5, 1 (2009): 1-23.