

UDC 327.8

<https://doi.org/10.48371/ISMO.2024.56.2.006>

IRSTI 11.25.40

ADDRESSING FAILED STATES

*Kulbayev B.¹, Kuzembayeva A.²

¹PhD student, al-Farabi Kazakh National University, Almaty, Kazakhstan,
e-mail: bekzat.kulbayev@gmail.com

² Assistant Professor, Narxoz University, Almaty, Kazakhstan, e-mail:
asiya.kuzembayeva@gmail.com

Abstract. This article revisits the complex issue of state failure, offering a new perspective on how systematic labeling can create contradictions among different states. The concept of state failure emerged as a significant topic in academic discussions toward the end of the 20th century and has remained a crucial item on the international agenda for decades. Various strategies have been employed to address state failure, sometimes with destructive outcomes. The United States' initial efforts to intervene in failed states often had adverse effects. In contrast, the United Nations has continued to focus on state-building efforts, which have evolved into broader peacekeeping missions. While the U.S. interventions set some perilous precedents, the UN's approach underscores its role as a key post-war institution, striving to maintain fragile regions and prevent a complete breakdown of international stability. Although powerful sources suggest that the phenomenon of failed states is diminishing, the underlying issues of chaotic territories and weak governmental structures persist. The enduring challenge of managing these fragile states highlights the ongoing need for effective international strategies to prevent instability and promote sustainable governance. We employed a range of methodologies, including case studies and qualitative analyses, to develop recommendations that align with the specified requirements.

Keywords: fragile state, intervention, security, state building, geopolitics, USA, UN, post-Soviet

Basic Provisions

The concept of failed states in international relations refers to countries that are unable to provide basic services and maintain control over their territory, resulting in a breakdown of governance, security, and socio-economic structures. This can lead to a range of issues such as civil unrest, violent conflict, terrorism, and humanitarian crises. Weak institutions, corruption, poverty, and inequality often characterize failed states.

Introduction

The concept of “failed states” was first introduced by the political scientist Gerald Helman and the journalist Steven Ratner in an article published in the journal *Foreign Policy* in 1992. The article was titled “Saving Failed States” and defined a failed state as “a state that can no longer perform its basic security and development functions and has no effective control over its territory and borders” [1, p.174]. However, the concept of state failure and the idea that states can become dysfunctional or collapse has been discussed by political scientists and international relations scholars for decades before the term “failed state” was coined. For example, the political scientist Charles Tilly wrote about the collapse of states in his 1975

book [2, p.131]. Since the publication of Helman and Ratner's article though, the concept of failed states has been widely adopted in academic and political circles to describe states that are unable to provide basic services to their citizens, maintain order and security, or participate effectively in the international community. The work of well-known Western researchers is devoted to this problem (*provided in the 'Literature Review'*). The concept has been used to analyze a range of cases, from Somalia and Afghanistan to Syria and Yemen, and continues to be an important area of research and policy concern in the fields of political science and international relations.

There have been various attempts to address failed states, but some of these efforts have been ineffective and even harmful. For example, the United States' initial approach to the issue, which involved military intervention and regime change, was unsuccessful in Iraq and Libya, and led to further instability and conflict. In contrast, the United Nations has pursued a more nuanced approach to state-building, focusing on providing support for governance, security, and development. This approach has been successful in some cases, such as in Timor-Leste, where the UN played a critical role in stabilizing the country after a period of violent conflict. However, the problem of chaotic territories and fragile governmental structures remains a significant challenge, and there are no easy solutions. The rise of non-state actors, such as terrorist groups, has further complicated the issue.

This article takes a retrospective look at the issue of state failure drawing parallels between the West and the East, while trying to come up with a new perspective on it.

Description of Materials and Methods

Working on this article, there have been brought through materials and methods to describe the research design and procedures used to investigate the concept of failed states. Systematic and comprehensive review of existing literature on failed states was conducted to identify and synthesize all relevant literature and to determine the current state of knowledge on failed states, overall developing the research question. Collecting data through analyzing surveys undertaken to investigate the public attitudes and perceptions about failed states, especially concerning the US foreign policy. Studying various cases of failed states helped to understand the specifics of different regions. The theoretical and methodological basis of the research work is the approaches generally recognized in the theory of international relations, particularly the fundamental provisions of political realism and neorealism.

Literature Review

The concept of failed states has been studied and analyzed by various scholars, policymakers, and experts in international relations and development studies. Here are some of the authors and their works that raise the matter of failed states.

Robert I. Rotberg, in his book "When States Fail: Causes and Consequences", examines the causes and consequences of state failure and argues that the

international community has a responsibility to address these issues [3, p.212]. He suggests that failed states are a breeding ground for terrorism, organized crime, and other forms of instability, and that the international community must take a more proactive approach to promoting good governance and democracy.

In the “Failed States: The Abuse of Power and the Assault on Democracy”, Noam Chomsky explores the concept of failed states and argues that the United States and other powerful nations are responsible for many of the problems faced by less developed countries [4, p.148]. Chomsky argues that powerful nations often interfere in the affairs of less developed countries, leading to destabilization and political unrest. He discusses the role of the United States in toppling democratically elected governments in countries such as Iran and Chile, and the impact of economic policies such as neoliberalism on developing nations. Chomsky also explores the concept of state terrorism and the use of military force by powerful nations to achieve their political objectives.

Another author who has written extensively on the topic of failed states is Robert D. Kaplan. In his book “The Coming Anarchy: Shattering the Dreams of the Post Cold War”, Kaplan argues that the world is moving towards a state of anarchy, where failed states will become the norm [5, p.203]. He suggests that the collapse of the Soviet Union has led to the fragmentation of traditional societies and the rise of ethnic and religious conflicts, which will only intensify in the future. Kaplan also discusses the impact of globalization and how it has exacerbated the problems faced by failed states. He suggests that as the world becomes more interconnected, the problems faced by failed states will become global problems, leading to increased instability and conflict.

In addition to Chomsky and Kaplan, other authors who have written on the topic of failed states include Francis Fukuyama, Jeffrey D. Sachs, and Thomas Homer-Dixon. Fukuyama, in his book “State-Building: Governance and World Order in the 21st Century”, discusses the challenges of building effective states in less developed countries [6, p.75]. Sachs, in “The End of Poverty: Economic Possibilities for Our Time”, argues that poverty can be eliminated through effective development policies [7, p.38]. Homer-Dixon, in “The Upside of Down: Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization”, explores the impact of environmental degradation on failed states [8, p.126].

One of the most recent and influential work on the matter is probably “The Ideology of Failed States: Why Intervention Fails” by Susan L. Woodward, which examines the concept of failed states and the effectiveness of external interventions in addressing their problems [9, p.163]. In the book, Woodward argues that the concept of failed states is a flawed and misleading one that is often used to justify external interventions that are ineffective and counterproductive. She contends that failed states are not a distinct category of state, but rather a label that is applied selectively to certain countries based on political and ideological considerations. Woodward also explores the different types of external interventions that have been used to address failed states, including military interventions, state-building efforts, and humanitarian aid. She argues that these interventions often have unintended consequences and can exacerbate the problems they are meant to address, such as

by fueling corruption, reinforcing ethnic divisions, or creating new power imbalances. The book draws on case studies from around the world, including Somalia, Iraq, Haiti, and Bosnia, to illustrate the limitations and failures of external interventions in failed states.

Results

Reviewing the literature, we have found that there is no universally accepted definition of the concept and methods to address it; the notion has steadily been decreasing in popularity within the academic and political discourse. However, the threat to international security coming from the matter is substantial.

The research has explored the effectiveness of various approaches to state-building, such as military intervention versus a more nuanced approach like the one pursued by the UN. It has analyzed the root causes of state failure, such as poverty, corruption, and inequality, and examined how these factors contribute to the emergence of failed states. Drawing some parallels with post-Soviet state-building, it has displayed the spread of the issue on the geopolitical map. The consensus seem to indicate that there has been a little to no effective approach addressing failed state.

Overall, the work is meant to provide insights and recommendations for policymakers and practitioners to address the issue of state failure. It shall encourage the development of more effective strategies aimed at promoting inclusive governance structures that can effectively address the needs and aspirations of all citizens, and prevent the emergence of failed states.

Discussion

A Threat for Us

“The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states”, the crucial sentence from the US 2002 National Security Strategy [10] that precisely conceptualizes the unprecedented rise of the ‘failed state’ paradigm on the international scene. The followed “Global War on Terrorism” declared by the President George W. Bush Jr.’s administration, which was concluded by President Barack Obama’s decision for withdrawal from Afghanistan finalized during the next two presidents’ terms (leaving the country to the Taliban and the state of affairs that we have after 2022) illustrated the ultimate instance of intervention that did not work. These twenty years drew crucial line (rather decline) for the American role in international relations system since the country entered the period as the unipolar leader and found itself uncrowned in the multipolar world at the end of it.

According to the numbers provided by NATO officials, the United States has (arguably unsuccessfully) spent by 2010 on Iraq and Afghanistan, in proportionate dollar terms, about half of what it spent winning the Cold War in the period from 1945 to 1989 [11]. Naturally, it did not take long before the public (and academic) opinion changed towards questioning the very concept of intervention and failed states agenda [12].

A threat for US, which it started with, shone a spotlight on the very important issue of failed (or fragile) states. However, the vital concept, raised in academic

circles long before, turned into another tool of political manipulation. It consequently resulted in two spoiled precedents:

- The later unveiled US 'misbehavior', which compromised the ever intentions of the major power, created a loophole for other powers with imperial ambitions (take the Russian-Ukrainian conflict).
- The problem of failed states never seized to exist, rather evolved into greater bubble that now has even scarier prospects of explosion; the problem, which now is harder to solve as the very 'how-to-guide' showcased by the most influential power lost its own way, making the dilemma of state-building shatter in its foundation.

The UN-ited Effort

The United Nations has made significant efforts towards state-building in countries that have been ravaged by war, civil unrest, and political instability. State-building refers to the process of creating or rebuilding the necessary institutions and infrastructure required for a functioning state. The UN's state-building efforts aim to establish stable and democratic governments, promote peace and security, and improve the lives of citizens.

One of the UN's most notable state-building initiatives was the establishment of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) in 1999. This was in response to the violent conflict that erupted in East Timor following a referendum on independence from Indonesia. UNTAET was responsible for the administration of East Timor, including law enforcement, public services, and governance, until the country gained full independence in 2002.

The UN has also played a key role in state-building in post-conflict countries such as Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Afghanistan. In Sierra Leone, the UN helped to establish a new government, rebuild the justice system, and provide assistance with economic and social development. In Liberia, the UN helped to disarm combatants, establish democratic elections, and support the rebuilding of institutions such as the police and judiciary. In Afghanistan, the UN has worked to support the country's government and rebuild its infrastructure following decades of conflict [13, p.64].

State-building is a complex process that requires a long-term commitment and sustained effort. The UN's state-building efforts have faced numerous challenges, including political instability, corruption, and resistance from armed groups. However, the UN's experience in state-building has shown that sustainable progress can be made through a combination of political engagement, economic development, and social programs.

Despite the challenges, the UN's state-building efforts have made significant strides in promoting stability and democracy in countries that were previously torn apart by conflict. These efforts have not only improved the lives of citizens but have also contributed to global peace and security. The UN's continued commitment to state-building is essential for building a more just, peaceful, and prosperous world.

A Successful Case of Succession: USSR

Ironically, path to independence with all its highest remarks tend to be key ingredient for becoming a failed state when it is a result of imperial fallout. In this

sense, the outstanding transition of the former Soviet states coined perhaps another look on state-building, which has unexpected potential.

The successful state succession in the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) after the collapse of the USSR can be attributed to several factors:

- **Political will:** The leaders of the newly independent states in the CIS had the political will to make the transition from a Soviet-style centrally planned economy to a market-oriented economy. They recognized the need for economic and political reforms to make their countries more attractive to investors, and they implemented policies to attract foreign investment.

- **Prudent economic policies:** The newly independent states in the CIS pursued prudent economic policies that helped stabilize their economies and create the conditions for growth. They introduced market-oriented reforms such as price liberalization, privatization of state-owned enterprises, and the creation of independent central banks to control inflation.

- **International support:** The international community provided significant support to the newly independent states in the CIS, both financially and politically. International organizations such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank provided loans and technical assistance to support economic reforms, while the United States and European Union provided political and diplomatic support.

- **Interdependence:** The newly independent states in the CIS recognized that they were interdependent and needed to work together to build strong economies and institutions. They established regional organizations such as the Eurasian Economic Union and the Collective Security Treaty Organization to promote economic integration and security cooperation.

- **Peaceful transition:** The transition from the Soviet Union to the independent states in the CIS was relatively peaceful, with few instances of violence or armed conflict. This helped to create a stable environment for economic and political reforms.

Naturally, one could argue that the modern look of the post-Soviet countries does not fit the western (considered universal) standards of a prosperous state, with their authoritarian regimes, weak democratic institutions, and limited freedom of speech and press leading to human rights abuses, restrictions on civil society, and challenges to democratic governance [14]. However, it would not be correct taming them failed ones either. Perhaps, it is too abstractive to apply this model on the current fragile states, for instance hypothesizing whether Afghanistan would have avoided its failed status if it had been a part of the USSR or on the African fragile states having more stable development after the decolonization had they been integrated deeper. Overall, the nature of the stable state transition of the CIS republics after such a huge geopolitical disintegration deserves a page in the paradigm of failed states in terms of preventing from new ones emerging.

The Current State of Failed States

The situation with failed states varies depending on the region, but there are several countries that are frequently cited as examples of failed/fragile states. Here is a look on the current state of some of them to comprehend the geopolitical stretch the problem draws out:

1. **Somalia:** Somalia is often cited as the quintessential failed state. It has been plagued by decades of civil war, political instability, and violent extremism. The government controls only a small portion of the country, and most of Somalia is ruled by competing clans and armed groups. The economy is weak, and basic services like healthcare and education are virtually nonexistent in many areas.

2. **Yemen:** Yemen has been embroiled in a brutal civil war since 2015, which has devastated the country's infrastructure and economy. The conflict has left millions of people on the brink of starvation, and the country is also facing a cholera epidemic and other public health crises. The government is weak and fragmented, and much of the country is controlled by Houthi rebels.

3. **Syria:** Syria has been mired in a civil war since 2011, which has resulted in the deaths of hundreds of thousands of people and the displacement of millions more. The government has lost control of large parts of the country, and various factions are vying for power. The economy is in shambles, and basic services like healthcare and education are severely limited.

4. **Afghanistan:** Afghanistan has been in a state of conflict for decades, and the country is currently facing a surge in violence following the withdrawal of U.S. troops in 2021. The Taliban have retaken control of much of the country, and the government is weak and fragmented. The economy is heavily dependent on foreign aid, and basic services are limited in many areas.

5. **Venezuela:** Venezuela is facing a deep economic crisis, with hyperinflation and widespread shortages of basic goods. The government has become increasingly authoritarian, and opposition leaders have been jailed or exiled. The country is also facing a humanitarian crisis, with millions of people leaving the country due to the dire economic situation.

The list could go on. Perhaps the most cited source, publishing annual reports on The Fragile States Index provided by the Fund for Peace, has even some stable-looking countries characterized as maneuvering at the danger zone. Naturally, there are plenty of centers with their various academic and political views on how to evaluate “fragile” states or uncontrolled/chaotic territories and whether to label them at all [15]. However, the notion has the right to exist and the linked potential threat in the present globalized world seems to be real. Despite last statement, recent groundbreaking events such as the global economic stagnation caused by the pandemic, environmental challenges and natural disasters, and the ongoing Russian-Ukrainian war have captured the world’s attention.

Conclusion

While there have been notable strides towards addressing this challenge through fostering international cooperation, it is essential to approach the issue with a degree of skepticism and acknowledge that it will be a difficult and long-term effort. Several factors, such as a lack of political will, the complexity of the

challenge, limited resources, and resistance from local actors, may make it arduous to tackle this challenge. Addressing the root causes of conflict and instability will require sustained political will, a coordinated approach, and a commitment to promoting lasting solutions. As we add the finishing touches, we would also like to offer some additional insights on each paragraph to aid in its further development:

- *labelling*: while the concept of weak states and uncontrollable territories has evolved over time, as discussed in the introduction, labeling these nations as ‘fragile’ or ‘failed’ may do more harm than good by negatively impacting their political perception and public image. It may be more effective to address the underlying issues on the ground, such as weak or nonexistent institutions, lack of control over territory, and the inability to provide basic services like healthcare, education, and infrastructure, as well as issues like corruption, poverty, political instability, and armed conflict. Rather than focusing solely on terminology, a more practical approach may be to tackle these problems step by step;

- *scientific approach*: the literature review revealed that, overall, the topic of failed states has been extensively explored by a number of authors from various disciplines, including political science, economics, and sociology. While there is some disagreement among these authors regarding the causes and solutions to the problem of failed states, there is a general consensus that failed states pose a significant threat to global stability and must be addressed through effective policies and international cooperation. We would like to underline the Woodward’s recent critically acclaimed work (*see ‘Literature Review’*), where the author offers a critical and nuanced analysis of the concept of failed states and the challenges of external intervention in addressing their problems. She concludes by proposing alternative approaches to addressing the problems of failed states that prioritize local ownership and agency, respect for human rights, and a focus on long-term sustainable development;

- *political approach*: as the ‘Discussion’ part showed, there are many complex factors that contribute to the failure of states, including historical legacies, economic factors, political dynamics, and external pressures. These failed states face numerous challenges, including weak institutions, corruption, sectarian and ethnic conflicts, and terrorism. They also lack access to basic services such as healthcare, education, and infrastructure, leading to high levels of poverty and unemployment. Addressing these underlying factors and promoting good governance, rule of law, and respect for human rights are essential to preventing and reversing the failure of states. Accordingly, a forced intervention from the position of strength could have severe consequences as the US case on the matter demonstrated. The UN, however, seems to have become that mitigating factor in this regard, despite the criticism of its ineffectiveness;

- *spotlight*: as demonstrated by the case study in the preceding section, the scope of the problem at hand is broad and complex. Consequently, the ramifications of failed states can be extensive, carrying significant implications for the global community. Such states may become safe havens for terrorists and criminal organizations, thereby endangering the security of neighboring nations and the international community at large. Additionally, they may contribute to regional

instability, conflict, and the displacement of populations. Although current geopolitical and economic issues have garnered much of the world's attention, it is essential to acknowledge that redirecting our focus does not present a solution to the underlying problem.

Overall, our argument is that instead of solely focusing on state-building, it is imperative to address the underlying factors contributing to state failure, namely poverty, corruption, and inequality. We recommend engaging with non-state actors and integrating their viewpoints to promote stability and development. The ultimate goal should be to establish inclusive governance structures that can effectively meet the needs and aspirations of all citizens, thus preventing failed states from emerging.

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ДӘРМЕНСІЗ МЕМЛЕКЕТТЕР МӘСЕЛЕСІН ШЕШУ ЖОЛДАРЫ

* Кульбаев Б.¹, Кузембаева А.²

*¹ PhD докторант, әл-Фараби атындағы ҚазҰУ, Алматы, Қазақстан,
e-mail: bekzat.kulbayev@gmail.com

² Тарих ғылымдарының кандидаты, доцент, Нархоз Университеті,
Алматы, Қазақстан, e-mail: asiya.kuzembayeva@gmail.com

Аңдатпа. Бұл мақалада мемлекеттің дәрменсіздігі сияқты күрделі мәселе қарастырылған және жүйелік жіктеудің қай дәрежеде әр түрлі мемлекеттер арасындағы қайшылықтарға алып келетіндігіне қатысты жаңа көзқарас ұсынылады. Мемлекеттің дәрменсіздігі тұжырымдамасы 20 ғасырдың аяғында академиялық пікірталастың маңызды тақырыбына айналды және ондаған жылдар бойы халықаралық күн тәртібіннің маңызды тармағы ретінде айқындалды. Мемлекеттің дәрменсіздігі мәселесін шешу мақсатында кейде ауыр салдарлармен де аяқталған әртүрлі стратегиялар қолданылды. АҚШ-тың дәрменсіз мемлекеттердің ішкі істеріне араласуға жасаған алғашқы әрекеттері көп ретте жағымсыз нәтижемен аяқталды. Керісінше, Біріккен Ұлттар Ұйымы өз күш-жігерін ірі бітімгершілік миссияларының бөлігіне айналған мемлекеттік құрылыс мәселелеріне жұмсады. АҚШ-тың араласуы кейбір қауіпті прецеденттерді туындатқызғанымен, БҰҰ өзін әлсіз аймақтарды сақтауға тырысатын және халықаралық тұрақтылықтың толықтай күйреуін болдырмауға ұмтылатын соғыстан кейінгі негізгі институт ретінде айқындайды. Бқпалды ақпарат көздері дәрменсіз мемлекеттер феномені басыла бастағандығын айтқанымен, бейберекет аумақтардың және әлсіз үкіметтік құрылымдардың негізгі проблемалары әлі де сақталуда. Осындай дәрменсіз мемлекеттерді басқарудың тұрақты проблемасы тұрақсыздықты алдын алу және тұрақты басқару мақсатында тиімді халықаралық стратегияларды қабылдау қажеттілігін көрсетеді. Осы талаптарға жауап бере

алатын ұсыныстарды дайындау үшін біз тақырыптық зерттеулер мен сапалы талдау сияқты бірқатар әдіснамаларды қолдандық.

Тірек сөздер: әлсіз мемлекет, интервенция, қауіпсіздік, мемлекеттік құрылыс, геосаясат, АҚШ, БҰҰ, посткеңестік тәжірибе

РЕШЕНИЕ ПРОБЛЕМЫ НЕСОСТОЯВШИХСЯ ГОСУДАРСТВ

* Кульбаев Б.¹, Кузембаева А.²

*¹ PhD докторант, КазНУ им. аль-Фараби, Алматы, Казахстан,
e-mail: bekzat.kulbayev@gmail.com

² кандидат исторических наук, ассистент профессора, Университет
Нархоз, Алматы, Казахстан, e-mail: asiya.kuzembayeva@gmail.com

Аннотация. В статье рассматривается сложная проблема несостоятельности государства, предлагая новый взгляд на то, как системное навешивание ярлыков может создавать противоречия между различными государствами. Концепция несостоятельности государства стала важной темой академических дискуссий в конце 20-го века и на протяжении десятилетий оставалась важнейшим пунктом международной повестки дня. Для решения проблемы несостоятельности государства использовались различные стратегии, иногда с разрушительными результатами. Первоначальные попытки США вмешаться в дела несостоявшихся государств часто имели неблагоприятные последствия. Напротив, Организация Объединенных Наций продолжала уделять особое внимание усилиям по государственному строительству, которые превратились в более широкие миротворческие миссии. В то время как вмешательство США создало некоторые опасные прецеденты, подход ООН подчеркивает ее роль как ключевого послевоенного института, стремящегося сохранить хрупкие регионы и предотвратить полный крах международной стабильности. Хотя влиятельные источники предполагают, что феномен несостоявшихся государств уменьшается, основные проблемы хаотичных территорий и слабых правительственных структур сохраняются. Непреходящая проблема управления этими хрупкими государствами подчеркивает постоянную потребность в эффективных международных стратегиях для предотвращения нестабильности и содействия устойчивому управлению. Мы использовали ряд методологий, включая тематические исследования и качественный анализ, для разработки рекомендаций, соответствующих указанным требованиям.

Ключевые слова: хрупкое государство, интервенция, безопасность, государственное строительство, геополитика, США, ООН, постсоветский опыт

Статья поступила 03.06.2024.