Key Note Address

African Conflicts, Colonialism, and Contemporary Intervention
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Contemporary African states are products of European intervention and the importation of a now universal form of political organization from its European heartland. Nearly every state that currently exists in Africa reflects European conquest and imperial administration in boundaries and institutions. Often portrayed as chaotic, the entire continent is remarkable for having retained the international boundaries of the 1880s essentially unchanged. The challenge, especially since Independence has concerned how to refashion what Bertrand Badie calls the "imported state" into an arrangement that can assure order, that citizens take as legitimate, and that can convince the international community of sufficient performance on a growing list of criteria—human rights, efficient governance, and since the attack on the World Trade Center in New York on 11 September 2001, the capacity to control its territory and regulate transactions and movement across borders.

The "imported state", however, faces trouble in Africa. The present conflict in Cote d'Ivoire is estimated to have killed about 12,000 people since its start in September 2002. Sierra Leone emerges out of an eleven-year war that saw the near total collapse of its government and the establishment of a UN trusteeship. Liberia's warlord-turned-president faced UN sanctions for interfering in wars in neighboring countries. He fought in a war that killed about 8 percent of the country's population, then ran Liberia as his personal fiefdom until international pressure forced him to flee to Nigeria in August. The UN monitors an uneasy peace in Guinea-Bissau since 1999. Guinea receives large numbers of refugees from neighboring conflicts and faces political tensions of its own that governments and factions in the region exploit for their own ends. Nigeria regularly appears in international news media for its serious sectarian and ethnic violence. Congo and its neighbors remain embroiled in a conflict that destabilizes the entire region, despite a recent peace agreement. Zimbabwe's economy has shrunk to less than half its size in the mid 1990s. Somalia (or at least its southern half) still lacks a central government after more than a decade of on-going violence, and so on.

These countries experience the range of local and global forces that are responsible for state failure and conflict, a subject that I take up next. Together they cast some doubt on the viability of the state system in this region. I then assess outside efforts to reconstruct states, including armed intervention, democratization, economic reform, and the revival of new forms of trusteeship. Finally, I use this assessment to draw broader conclusions about the prospects for state reconstruction in Africa, especially in light of the recent rend of overseas intervention in Africa.

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GLOBAL CAUSES OF FAILURE

Some elements of conflict can be attributed to the ungluing of a colonial overlay on local societies. Colonial administrators and new leaders who succeeded them found that to exercise power they had to co-opt local strongmen, grafting them into what initially appeared to be a fairly uniform system of state administration. What is remarkable is not the disorder in recent years; rather, it is that this colonial arrangement survived so long.

African and non-African leaders have good reasons to sustain what Robert Jackson calls "quasi-states". Quasi-states, he wrote, are "ex-colonial states that have been internationally enfranchised and possess the same rights and responsibilities as all other sovereign states" (p.21). At the same time, they are unable to, or lack political will to protect human rights, provide order, or promote the social or economic welfare of citizens. But in the interests of global order, the post-World War II idea of self-determination, and recognition in the 1950s and 1960s of the high costs of suppressing colonial rebellions, colonial states were turned into independent states, regardless.

"Self-determination of peoples" remains a cornerstone of the UN Charter. This is not self-determination for Mendes or Akan or Efik or Yoruba or Hausa or Kanuri. Rather, it means self-determination in the framework of colonial administration, handed over to local leaders. The victory of this version of self-determination is codified in the 1960 UN Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples (Resolution 1514), which declared: "the inadequacy of political, economic, social or educational preparedness should never serve as a pretext for delaying independence."

This declaration faced its first test in 1960, as an army mutiny tore the Congo into several parts and government administration broke down days after the independence. This also signaled the start of international attempts to resuscitate failed states, at that time in the form of a UN peacekeeping force.

Since then, states in Africa have become more difficult to maintain. Many scholars blame these problems on globalization. Global economic actors play a major role in violence in the region, but are not a primary cause of violence. Post-colonial states such as Singapore, UAE, and South Korea have seized advantages in the world economy. But it appears that intensified global economic transactions help undermine already weak institutions in Africa. Rulers in these states discover that it is easier to manipulate cross-border transactions and regulations for the benefit of a political clique, often in coordination with global criminal enterprises, rather than for the interests of most citizens. IMF and World Bank-sponsored reforms that focus on dismantling state regulations and bureaucracies further undermine formal state capacities. In some instances, multi-party politics aggravates elite competition for spoils and is associated with further collapse and disorder.

This process might be "normal", in that it might mark a syncretistic merging of European political forms with a reindigenization of political authority, much like the evolution of

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the Middle Kingdom into the modern sovereign state of China, or the Persian Empire's transformation into the state of Iran, or the bloody transition of predatory bandit organizations into political clans in Greece and a number of other countries.

Yet now more than in the past, states are essential building blocks of contemporary global society. There is no time for transition. The dangers that effectively stateless areas pose reinforce this assessment in Washington and elsewhere. Stateless areas lack political structures amenable to the standard technologies of control—military, economic, bureaucratic—that others believe are necessary to avoid dangers. Lacking a state, how can one fight HIV / AIDS, suppress freelance armed militias or keep out terrorists? The costly military interventions of non-Africans in Somalia, Sierra Leone, Liberia, and Cote d'Ivoire show the depths of anxieties about this problem. Outcomes there also cast doubt on whether current remedies are capable of addressing this problem.

INTERNAL CAUSES OF FAILURE

While the international environment plays a large role in shaping the process of state collapse, its causes are found in internal processes. These appear in three primary interactions, all of which are more common in Africa, compared to the rest of the world. These consist of a distinct political economy of what I can the "Shadow State", the alienation of youth, and the politics of insurgency in Africa.

The political economy of state collapse often began as crisis management. Rulers who inherited weak institutional tools and who faced unruly local strongmen devised ingenious ways of reining in these forces, while meeting the post-colonial demands of citizens for more state services. But by the late 1960s, coups in Benin, Togo, Ghana, Nigeria, and Sierra Leone alerted incumbent leaders of the dangers they faced.

Armed coups showed rulers that strengthening state institutions to control unruly associates could empower rivals instead. Effective bureaucracies, a strong army—the customary path of adaptation to the European state system among reformers in Japan, Thailand, Iran and Turkey—thus posed much greater dangers to African leaders. This politics, not the economies or the specific distributions of resources made these places good candidates for state failure. Statistics from 1960 show no reason any of these places should suffer present shortcomings. Ghana's living standards equaled South Korea's. Sierra Leone has the oldest western style university in sub-Saharan Africa, Fourah Bay College, founded in 1827. Cote d'Ivoire boasted of stable prosperity well into the 1980s.

Because of this institutional paradox, many rulers manage powerful political interests in ways that undermined their own state institutions. Taking advantage of the international norms that accorded them automatic recognition of sovereignty they turned states into façades behind which they accumulated wealth to build extensive patronage networks. Interventions into the economy, often as private businessmen, enabled politicians to use prerogatives of state power to accumulate more wealth. Control of the state enabled them to write laws and manipulate regulations to reward loyal political allies, a task usually at odds with providing for economic efficiency or widespread prosperity. Finally, control

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of the state equipped them to make deals with international businessmen, contract debts and receive foreign aid and military assistance.

Not surprisingly, this strategy of rule weakened other institutions of the state. As the demands of clients grew amidst ever present threats from rivals, real or imagined, there was less money to spend on health, education, or other services. The same logic of rule demanded the de-professionalization of militaries. Sierra Leone's Siaka Stevens, for example, only took office in 1968 after waiting a year for a counter-coup to throw out army officers who had seized power just as Stevens was to be sworn into office. The president barely survived a coup attempt in 1971. These and other conspiracies prompted the president to rely upon a collection of troops from neighboring Guinea, armed youth gangs, and assorted military advisors from overseas. Among West Africa's 16 states, two, Cape Verde and Senegal, have never had coups. The rest have had more than 30. This intentional abandonment of the state's monopoly of force—a characteristic of many countries in the region—fundamentally shaped conflicts that emerged in the 1990s as not only rebels, but multiple factions of its own military challenged governments.

Thus when states such as Congo, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, and now Cote d'Ivoire have come under armed challenge, there is no real state in the sense of providing services to the public and exercise coercion to protect them. Instead, rebels emerge from among the plethora of private militaries connected to members of patronage networks. As the control of old patrons wanes, these entourages and those who felt denied their rightful share of wealth seized opportunities rush to control these economic resources for themselves, ideally as the new claimant to the façade of state sovereignty. These armed groups therefore are not causes of state failure. Rather, they are products of states that already collapsed, replaced with patronage politics rooted in the economy.

Prior to the start of fighting, collapsing state bureaucracies, and diminished capacity of governments left even committed officials unable to provide services to citizens. This puts most people, but especially youth, in an environment either of urban unemployment or what Paul Richards calls the "rural slum", a shifting population of young people in a violent world, often drawn into armed networks of informal economies upon which politicians built their fortunes. Whether as diamond diggers in Sierra Leone, smugglers in Liberia or political muscle for Nigerian or Zimbabwean politicians, desperate youth end up as foot soldiers at the bottom of this fragmenting patronage politics. Deprived of economic opportunities outside the Shadow State sphere of political connections, these youth became recruits of would-be warlords.

The Sierra Leonean sociologist Ibrahim Abdullah also points to the emergence of alienated youthful intellectuals as key actors in conflict. As job opportunities disappeared or were possible only with Shadow State connections, educated youth rejected aspirations to join this corrupt elite, dreaming instead of radical alternatives, increasingly ones that have no place for states. They found their constituency among what he calls the "lumpen proletarian" youth culture of the ruined economy. Scholars argue over the impact of urban and rural uneducated youth and alienated intellectuals on the course of conflicts, but their importance is widely recognized.

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Finally, insurgents from neighboring states feature in every conflict in Africa. Just in West Africa, UN investigators documented the role of the Liberian NPFL in training and arming Sierra Leone's RUF. The Government of Guinea supported Liberia's LURD, which recently fought its way to Liberia's capital. Likewise, Liberia's president Taylor sponsored groups that destabilized Guinea. Cote d'Ivoire's war includes two rebel groups, Movement for Justice and Peace and the Popular Movement for the Greater West that signal in their names a connection to Liberia. Finally, one should mention the very important role of France and its tacit alliance with agents of state decay in the region, especially Liberia's president Charles Taylor. French support bolstered him as a rebel leader in 1992, when the French ambassador to Cote d'Ivoire paid him a visit. Taylor has become a primary purveyor of instability now in Cote d'Ivoire and Guinea, and as noted earlier, was a key factor in prolonging Sierra Leone's war. This also explains virulent anti-French sentiment in Cote d'Ivoire, where many people hold France responsible for the country's plight. This, coupled with France's protection of Rwanda's genocide regime in 1994 is a fascinating and horrible story. And as recently as this January, France's government invited Charles Taylor to Paris in violation of UN sanctions against him and his government. Then this month Zimbabwe's Robert Mugabe received official French hospitality, despite EU sanctions against his regime.

Regardless of which factor is most responsible for West Africa's violence—Shadow State politics, youth alienation, or cross-border destabilization—all create conditions that are common to wars of state collapse. As such they shape efforts of policy makers in Africa and outside the continent to formulate a response.

OUTSIDE RESPONSES TO STATE FAILURE AND CONFLICT
In the context of the US experience with terrorism, but also within the recent evolution of international human rights and other legal norms, there is a growing non-African consensus that African states simply have to be rebuilt, given the high costs of state collapse. Large-scale migration, uncontrolled, often illicit economic activity, and the tendency for such consequences of state collapse to spread, along with massive human rights violations, become incubators for disorder.

For hardheaded officials in distant ministries, concerns center on the possibility that these places can become havens for terrorists. (One sees such justifications among Australian officials in justifying interventions in Papua New Guinea, East Timor and the Solomon Islands.) That is, failure in one state threatens the security of other states, and if there are enough failed states in one region, they can weaken the orderly structure of states and the predictability and methods of control of populations that come with that state structure.

Those who support this perspective increasingly share interests with those who support more vigorous enforcement of international human rights and other legal norms. For them too, failure simply cannot be tolerated, and must be contained, if not reversed. The imposition of foreign courts, and even foreign administrations are justified if this will halt abuses.

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The primary (and I believe unintended) consequence of this convergence is the imposition of a deeply conservative vision of world politics on Africa. As the 1815 Congress of Vienna declared that the turmoil of French-inspired radical republicanism must be contained behind a wall of perpetual autocratic monarchy, today's conflicts in Africa will be locked beneath the framework of the rejuvenated system of existing states.

Actions such as sanctions against "conflict diamonds", arms embargos and so forth address Africa's place in the global system of states and the world economy. Most remedies also involve open-ended commitments of overseas finance and personnel to build domestic African institutions. In this regard, conflict resolution efforts can be compared to massive interventions like the colonial project that created European style states in Africa in the first place. But is the current effort sustainable? The UN operation in Sierra Leone has cost about a billion dollars a year since 1999, this in a country with a GDP of US $650 million. French intervention in Cote d'Ivoire occupies 3,000 soldiers and consumes about a million euros a day. Guinea-Bissau appears to rely upon UN and EU bureaucrats to run most essential state services, and to a lesser degree so do peaceful countries like Mali and Niger, where foreign aid has constituted the single largest source of government finance for the last decade.

Are alternative configurations possible? This is an interesting—and realistic—question but not one that the international community will soon entertain, especially if the US or Europe suffers a second spectacular terrorist attack. It is highly relevant, however, to ask this question, given the almost inevitable failure of the alternatives now on the table.

Taken broadly, current global power politics and idealist efforts offer a "Back to the Future" scenario as the international community (now multi-lateral instead of rival colonial powers) reoccupies African states, and builds them up (now with greater local participation) to be handed to African leaders. First, this includes the institution of "democracy", defined as the restoration of order and institution of multiparty political competition with regular, usually internationally monitored elections. The second is "good government", defined as the construction of institutions able to provide order and basic services to citizens. Third is "economic liberalization", which demands that economies be organized along market principles with limited state intervention and management.

This vision of what states should be in Africa is so deeply entrenched that there is virtually no consideration of alternatives. But is it successful? Let us look at each element of state restoration in turn.

Do international efforts result in the restoration of order stable enough to sustain formal democracy? This effort starts with re-professionalizing armies, precisely the opposite tack of Shadow State regimes. The record is not good in Sierra Leone or Liberia. Peace treaties in both countries featured provisions to re-build armies, only to see them fragment again and become instruments of ambitious contenders for power. A private company, Executive Outcomes, did a fine job of training Sierra Leone's army in 1995-96, but this created tensions with parts of the military that were sidelined, as this always

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does. Training had no lasting positive impact. 89 days after EO left the country the army mutinied and joined with rebels to impose a nine-month reign of terror until a Nigerian expeditionary force kicked them out in 1998. After UN-sponsored training they rebelled exactly one day after the departure of the Nigerian force in 2000, only to be chased out again, this time by a British expeditionary force that remains in the country.

Are ethnic militias and home guards viable alternatives? Experience in most of Africa's wars and among Nigeria's ethnic militias show that they can protect supporters from attackers. But away from their kin they behave as bad or worse than rebels and fragmented armies. Remnants of national armies see them as competitors. Countries such as the former Yugoslavia, Somalia, Congo, and Sudan all have very unhappy human rights experiences with ethnic militias

Democratic elections are a cornerstone of international mediation of conflicts. Most, however, follow disastrously damaging negotiations. Sierra Leone returned to war after the 1996 Abidjan agreement and the 1999 Lome agreement. Each agreement insisted on a place for rebels and army factions in peacetime governments at the insistence of outside mediators. Liberia's strongest warlord then used intimidation to get elected in 1997, and as I noted earlier, was a primary agent of regional destabilization ever since.

Supporters of coalitions and comprehensive peace deals tout the experience of Mozambique in the early 1990s. There, however, RENAMO had no remaining external patron to whom it could turn to overturn the peace agreement. In fact, rebel-government negotiations usually fail, mostly because there is no viable power structure or institutions for participants to integrate into, a complaint rife among RENAMO's backers.

If outsiders are willing to force an agreement, then stay to guarantee its provisions, a "peace settlement" can be imposed. Sierra Leone, for example, continues with its unusual, but widely accepted trusteeship under the direction of the former colonial power. Even so, January saw the flight of a militia leader from the capital to neighboring Guinea, followed by what appeared to be staged riots in that country's capital. Sierra Leone's "solution" also relies on open-ended British willingness to maintain a protectorate in a part of the world in which it has no evident strategic or economic interests.

Economic revival is a distant glimmer. Sierra Leone and Liberia struggle along at about half to a third of their peak national incomes in the 1970s. Cote d'Ivoire's economy has lost a generation of progress, even if the country is peacefully unified now. It has proven difficult to revive effective state institutions capable of providing public services and promoting commerce. Sierra Leone's government collected only $10 million in internal revenues in 2000, compared to about US $250 million in the mid 1970s. About two-thirds of Liberia's US $60 million revenues in 2002 paid for the security details of President Taylor.

Effective reform requires dismantling the Shadow State, which means that local elites will have to give up their main sources of private wealth. This is likely to require very long-term direct outside control over the state, an effective re-colonization. Agents of

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this trusteeship are likely to find themselves caught in battles between factions of this elite on whose behalf and for whose state they are supposedly acting.

CONCLUSION

These forces that undermine state restoration, especially the persistence of Shadow State economies and incumbent elites with substantial stakes in them, coupled with the tendency for insurgencies to operate across international borders, continue to counter-balance the rewards of state reconstruction, even given the substantial sums spent on this effort. There is no indication that the basic structures of state institutions will be restored in Africa's worst off states, at least not anytime soon. Order, democracy, and a growing economy are not going to happen under present conditions, no matter how much is spent or how ardent the wishful descriptions of imminent breakthroughs in World Bank reports.

This gloomy prognosis does not characterize all of Africa. Nigeria managed to organize an election on 19 April that involved far less violence than many predicted. Nigeria's president may have many shortcomings, but a hidden success of his tenure has been the demobilization and disarming of substantial segments of the military. There are some glimmers that Nigeria's Federal Government is tackling the difficult problem of reorganizing police services. Throughout the country community associations mobilize to devise solutions to their own problems. Ijaw women learn that connecting with international environmental groups is a good way of pressing their demands for good governance where the exploitation of oil and fair distribution of its revenues is, as the great Nigerian scholar Claude Ake recognized, "the stuff of politics in Nigeria." Christian and Muslim religious organizations for a time in Kaduna in reining in armed groups of youths last fall, and play a big role in limiting the spread of sectarian violence.

Throughout Africa, people continue organizing or struggling to find solutions for the problems of state collapse. It is very typical though for many, especially those with access to outside resources, to promote restoration of states on their old foundations. This is sensible; reorganization could open a Pandora's box of unanticipated (and nasty) outcomes. The reorganization of the Yugoslav political space was awful and unwelcome. In contrast, though it does not suit all, the states that succeeded the Soviet Union offers promise to many. But the world got off light in that event!

Africa's overall re-configuration, on the other hand, will likely be more profound. Politics in many places is not based upon social structures that are conducive to building strong states. Maybe something else is required. The leaders of the UAE succeeded in fooling the rest of the world into thinking they ruled a state, and it is accepted as such. But it is organized in very novel ways, and its leaders were able to exploit a particular period in world history that tolerated heterogeneity in political organization, a condition that no longer exists.

As for Africa, clearly not all of its states will collapse. But many of them have, and this process and the agents involved are not exceptional in this continent. Better then to ask the question of how to get from here to there (and study how people on the continent get it done), rather than to go back to an idealized version of what went before.