

The Anatomy of Failed States Syndrome in Africa: Diagnosis and Prognosis

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Abstract

The African continent is witnessing an unending spate of failed states, particularly since the end of the Cold War. This incidence, considered as a syndrome, bears political, economic and social repercussions for the societies concerned and the international community as a whole. These include the ravages emanating from governmental collapse, structural decay, institutional failures, economic bankruptcy and untold hardships for the populations. In contemporary times, a number of factors have further worsened the condition of the states in question. These include military coups, rise and spread of terrorist activities, economic dislocation, civil and political strife, ethnic and civil wars, among others. The study undertakes an investigation of the phenomenon in its current manifestations which portray a continuum in the literature such as weak states, fragile states, vulnerable states, collapsed states and failed states. The study, as its methodology, probes the existing literature and utilizes the available data at the global level for a better understanding of the African situation in a comparative framework. It is established that the factors which underpin modern state formation in Africa include imperialist, colonialist, as well as neo-colonialist forces which truncated and constrained state formation and consolidation in its original form as obtained elsewhere. Contemporary African states, therefore, suffer from structural and institutional complexes which cumulatively undermine their capability to manage their survival, security and persistence in the inter-state system. It is recommended that the African states,

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some of which are equally responsible for mismanagement and misappropriation of available resources through bad leadership, with the intervention of corporate organizations and multilateral institutions, organize appropriate interventions towards preemptive and institution-building measures, instead of reactionary strategies. Collective security and multilateral responses would also benefit security arrangements at the sub-regional and regional levels, in support of the African security architecture.

Key Words: Africa, failed states, political development, realism, constructivism

Introduction

The African continent has been grappling with the phenomenon of failed states, variously but fittingly described as “weak states”, “fragile states”, “vulnerable states” and “collapsed states”, particularly since the end of the Cold War. These conditions have, in fact, become a syndrome, thus an unending epitome of systematic rapture and collapse of state institutions, rendering the state incapable of performing its functions and obligations to society. Considered as a continuum in the literature, the above conceptualizations metaphorically resonate with the stark realities of, among other conditions, economic decay, institutional incapacitation, political chaos and leadership failure on the continent. The structural condition of these states, explained by the undignified underlying features outlined above, require as a priority, careful diagnosis, in order to delineate the possible pathways towards recovery and institutional regeneration. Overcoming such prohibitive impediments, which have presumably not been a committed activity in terms of the appropriate prognosis at the highest levels of decision-making, thus constitutes the basis for the current preoccupation.

There is a plethora of exploratory works by scholars purportedly to uncover the causes and effects of state failure globally. Notable among these individuals are Robert Rotberg (2003); Daniel Lambach (2004); Noam Chomsky (2007); Mwangi S. Kimenyi et al. (2010); Jonathan Di John (2011); Alberto Pecoraro (2012); and Pablo Hernandez et al. (2016). The focus on Africa, against this background, is to generate or revive interest in a continent most afflicted by the 'epidemic'. One would recall the historical cases of Algeria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Rwanda, Sudan, Chad, and currently, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Libya, Mali, the Central African Republic, Libya, among others. Deplorable as it is, it often results in political disintegration, economic turmoil and deprivation, institutional incapacitation and social disruption. Thus, the relevant issues dissected in this endeavor are not selective but holistically dealt with in order to uncover the unwanted debris for a new beginning. The critical issues relate not only to understanding the factors responsible for state failure, but ultimately bring to the fore a more pragmatic, if not down to earth, explanation of decades of political, economic and social decadence and disintegration pertaining to such afflicted African states.

One critical issue is whether there is the possibility for a turn-around through a combination of individual state and multilateral responses. This is because, increasingly, these conditions require institutional interventions and regional engagements which have been seemingly token in nature. It, therefore, warrants the question whether there is an apparent abandonment of these states, instead of a more vigorous and collective push for their revival and survival. The first activity in seeking appropriate solutions to such an unacceptable and worrisome 'sore' is to understand the root causes.

The objectives of this exercise, therefore, consist of accomplishing the following tasks:

- Discuss state formation and the phenomenon of failed states in a global context;
- Examine the factors responsible for the condition of failed states in Africa and globally;
- Understand the structural impediments working against their recovery;
- Determine an institutional framework for possible pathways, both national and multilateral.

Understanding the State: Concepts and Categorizations

Before delving into the condition of state failure and the characteristics it is associated with, it is worthwhile to explore what is considered a stable state in so far as it possesses the requisite features. A stable state must have a defined territory, a legitimate government, a permanent population and recognized under international law with the requisite sovereignty. These qualifications enable the state to perform the functions which underpin its security and survival. To be able to perform these functions, state power or capability entails having the resources, both tangible and intangible, for persistence in the international system. Tangible resources consist of both human and natural resources, while the geographical space consists of the land, sea and air components which support its developmental functions. It also requires a security apparatus or sector which translates into a standing army or armed forces to defend the territorial integrity and sovereign existence of the state. Additionally, there should be a police service that provides security for its citizenry and prevents crime. Also crucial is an industrial and manufacturing base for the production of goods and services in support of economic development. It is equally vital to invest in the available human resource or the population to acquire the relevant skills and expertise for national development (Russet & Starr, 1999). Also necessary are intangible resources for the attainment of a well-functioning political system that asserts itself independently in international relations. These consist of such

values as state competence, autonomy, patriotism, loyalty and a supporting ideology, determined by the political and ruling classes and the citizenry as a whole.

Based on these explanations pertaining to what a stable state is, it is appropriate to delve into state formation from a Western perspective, obviously a historical activity and the contemporary manifestations in the international system. Certainly, it stretches back to the Treaty of Westphalia of October 24, 1648 when, after the Thirty Years War (1618 to 1648), the evolving nation-states of Europe were given a lease of security and survival by the Roman Catholic Emperor, Ferdinand III. His intervention gave these Western principalities the blessings of territorial integrity and sovereignty by which they ceased the incessant hostilities and wars, accepted mutual co-existence while pursuing their national interests without resorting to violence in settling their disputes (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2001: 201). The processes of state consolidation continued through institutional, constitutional and other structural and evolutionary adaptations and adoptions. The values of individual rights and freedoms, the obligations of states and governments, responsibilities to other state actors, the consolidation of international legal regimes and respect for international law, were all practiced and perfected over time. These were undertaken amidst periods of rebellion, protestations and insurrections against civil authority, aimed at providing the basis for co-existence, whether within or external to the state.

Exemplary in this regard was the French Revolution of 1789, instigated by the French bourgeoisie to rescue themselves from a decadent monarch, Louis XVI and his household, headed by Queen Antoinette. The avowed commitment of the revolutionaries to the principles of Equality, Liberty and Fraternity moved them to engage in unrelenting and ruthless excesses of killings and murders, often through the use of the

guillotine (Louis and the wife Antoinette suffered this violent opprobrium). There also occurred the forceful opening and release of prisoners from the Bastille as a testimony of the commitment of the revolutionaries to liberty and justice.

The fleeting arrival of Napoleon Bonaparte, a French artillery officer from Egypt in 1799 and his Brumaire coup d'état expanded the tasks of the French revolution. He was determined to assume absolute political control of the entire Europe. It led to the outbreak of the continental wars which was instigated by his apparent insanity to fight and defeat all the revered monarchies of Europe, conquer their thrones and transfer same to his cronies. The unrelenting resolve of European leaders, however, compelled the initial exile of Napoleon to Elba, his return and pledge to continue the war, and his eventual arrest and permanent exile to St. Helena in 1815. With regard to European state formation and consolidation, the forced departure of Napoleon was followed by the establishment of the Concert of Europe or the Metternich System. The Concert of Europe was designed to create an organizational framework that guaranteed the survival and security of the existing monarchies and nation-states of Europe, examples being Germany, France, Sweden, Spain, among others (Dougherty & Pfaltzgraff, 2000: 296). In effect, the new organizational structure was designed to maintain the status quo or balance of power, which ensured that the European inter-state system persisted and was protected against any infantile or revolutionary uprising, similar to the Napoleonic experiences. A true demonstrative resolve of this new security commitment was that European nations attended the regular biennial conferences which rotated among selected cities of the member states, beginning with the Congress of Vienna (Austria) in 1815.

The emergence of Otto von Bismarck as the leader of Germany heralded a new phase in European statecraft by roundly

condemning “round-table conferences” or diplomatic resolution of the political differences among the leading statesmen of Europe. His preference was through the instrument of “blood and iron” or war with the forceful seizure of lands and territories that he felt, rightly or wrongly, belonged to the unified and greater Germany he was building. As a tactical and strategic maneuver, he very soon converted the Prussian state and the German principalities (Zollverein) into an integrated Germany by 1871. In the process, additional territories were carved from neighboring states, for instance, Alsace-Lorraine was forcefully taken from France and integrated into Germany.

The consolidation of European nation-states also ushered in another phase of state expansion by which imperial conquests of foreign lands was in vogue, what is termed “clean slates” (virgin lands or territories) outside Europe. Since these were no longer available on the European continent, statesmen of Europe decided to look elsewhere for such new lands, particularly “under the sun”, thus Africa, and also in Asia and the Americas. These far-flung societies were, by this time, equally engaged in evolving and consolidating their own political structures, governance systems and institutions. The major drawback to these evolutionary processes, taking Africa for instance, was that there was no effective resistance, as they lacked the capacity or capability to withstand the more sophisticated military and political arsenal of the invading European forces. The conquest of these developing political systems and the destruction of bulging socio-economic and cultural institutions across Africa speaks eloquently in this regard. The Asante kingdom (Ghana), Dahomey (Republic of Benin), Buganda (Uganda), Zulu (South Africa), Benin, Bornu and Oyo (Nigeria) are a few examples of these centralized political systems which were conquered and colonized (Boahen, 1986; Ajayi, 1961)

The resulting strangulation, some would call it truncation, of these societies, due to European imperialism and hegemonic exploitation, put paid to any considerations of building indigenous socio-cultural and political edifices on the continent. The most heinous and regrettable development at this time was the Berlin Conferences of 1884-1885 under the chairmanship of Otto von Bismarck, the German Chancellor. The mandate of the conferences was to put legitimacy on the lands the various European powers forcefully acquired and claimed as their possessions. Examples include the French in North and West Africa, the British in Eastern, Southern and West Africa, the Portuguese in West,

South-West and Eastern Africa, Belgium in Central Africa and Germany in Western and Southern Africa. From thence, Africa was not only dismembered physically, but torn into bits and pieces as legitimate European possessions. This was metaphorically portrayed as the 'balkanization' of the continent (Nkrumah, 1964) resulting in Africa's traditions, customs and practices desecrated and condemned as heathen.

It becomes clear that isolating Africa for the purposes of this work provides the basis for appreciating the failed-state syndrome in its contemporary rendition. It also helps in understanding the historical context from which state failure in Africa and elsewhere originated. The unquenchable zest for the continent's resources during the periods of enslavement and colonization, both human and material, resulted in a thread-bare treatment of the organizational and institutional structures of the continent. These are legacies that cannot be considered as irrelevant in any consummate reflection about the conditions of contemporary political and economic system existing on the African continent. The consolidation and viability of African states could then be expressed not solely in terms of what currently prevails but

putting together the vagaries as well as the opportunities for state formation and resilience in the interstate system.

This deserves appropriate scrutiny because soon after a few decades of independence, African states were ridiculed as undeserving of equal status with the rest of the world's nation-states. The literature gleefully categorized African states as suffering from negative sovereignty contrasted with the positive sovereignty that the core or industrialized nations possess (Jackson, 1999). The critical issue then is to understand when and how failed-statism in Africa commenced. It is clear that the modern state system which evolved in Western Europe but was truncated in Africa constitutes a veritable yardstick for measuring state failure or stability. It is now fashionable and an expectation that the modern state with its requisite western-style features and trappings be replicated in Africa and the rest of the developing world as the standard or measuring rod. The reservations about state formation and consolidation in the context of developing world experience do not hinder scholarly definitions of the modern state, regardless of the structural limitations and impediments in achieving consistency.

Recent reflections on the number of states in the international system as provided by Rotberg (2002 & 2003), for instance, had the following classifications. It consists of fifty-four states in the pre-World War One period thus before 1914. The number climbed to fifty-nine states in the post-World War One period or after 1919. Sometime after the Second World War (WWII), the number of states increased to sixty-nine states (1950). As a result of the independence explosion in Africa in the early 1960s, the number rose to ninety states. This increased to one hundred and ninety-one (191) states after further independence in Africa, Asia and Oceania, as well as the collapse of the Soviet Union and Yugoslavia. Currently, there are one hundred and ninety-three

(193) UN-member states, following the addition of East Timor and South Sudan.

Failed States in Contemporary Context

The literature abounds in explanations of the phenomena of failed states at both the global and regional levels. Noam Chomsky (2007) quoting from Alperovitz's work (2005) stated that the concept of "failed states" is "frustratingly imprecise", but goes on to mention some of the primary characteristic of failed states. These include "their inability or unwillingness to protect their citizens from violence and perhaps even destruction" (Chomsky, 2007). This condition is due to the fact that there is no longer legitimate state capacity to exert its political or legal might on the state. There is also the tendency by such states to assume that they are above domestic and international law and exhibit such freedom by carrying out aggression and violence against the citizenry. Robert Jackson and Carl Rosberg (1982) talked about the failed state having two faces, the juridical and the empirical. The failed state employs the juridical face outwardly which allows the government to engage in international relations, while the empirical face which is turned inward represents the institutional capacity of the state and its ability to implement its policies and provide public goods. In this regard, when the empirical capacity of the state is weak, states exhibit failure, "stop providing services to their populations and the monopoly of violence erodes to the point that armed insurgencies start to gain control over parts of the institutions (ethnic, religious, cultural or regional groups" (Lambach, 2004). He believes there is no agreed threshold for state failure but could be viewed as "a continuum of statehood", ranging from the weak state, which could provide some degree of public goods, to a completely collapsed state where the institutions might have disappeared in their entirety.

Within this cluster of state formation and consolidation are also episodes of state failure and the accompanying periods of weakness, fragility, vulnerability and collapse. A close look at the recent statistics by the Fund for Peace (2020) reveals that the most fragile states include Myanmar (coup d'état), Afghanistan (violent change of political power), Burkina Faso (violent extremism), Haiti (assassination of political leadership) and Lebanon (deepening economic and political crisis). On the other hand, some states have been able to reduce the incidence of fragility with the biggest decrease occurring in Maldives (-3.1%) through boost in tourism and shipping towards economic growth and development, Cape Verde (-2.8%) through growing democratic and inclusive development policies, Moldova (-2.5%) boost in tourism and shipping, and Uzbekistan (-2.4%) political and economic reforms. Earlier in 2020, the Fund for Peace classified the following as failed states: Yemen, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Central African Republic, Chad, Sudan and Afghanistan.

In its Fragile States Index, the Fund looked at twelve metrics to determine the fragility of a state.

Table 1: Matrix for State Fragility

METRIC	EXPLANATION
Security Apparatus	Security threats to a state such as bombings, coups and terrorism.
Factionalized Elites	The fragmentation of state institutions along ethnic, class, clan, racial or elites and the use of nationalistic political rhetoric by the ruling elite, such as nationalism.
Group Grievance	Focuses on divisions and schisms between different groups in society, particularly political divisions.

Economic Decline	Considers economic decline and possibly related to poverty within a state.
Uneven Economic Development	Considers economic inequality, regardless of the actual performance of an economy.
Human Flight and Brain Drain	Considers the economic impact of human displacement and its consequences on a state's development.
State Legitimacy	Considers the representativeness and openness of government and its relationship with its citizens.
Public Services	An indication that refers to the presence of basic state functions that serve the people.
Human Rights and the Rule of Law	Considers the relationship between state and its population in so far as fundamental human rights are protected and freedoms are observed and respected.
Demographic Pressures	Considers the pressure upon states caused by the forced displacement of large communities as a result of social, political, environmental or other causes.
Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs)	Measures the pressures upon states caused by the forced displacement of large communities as a result of social, political, environmental or other causes.
External Interventions	Considers the influence and impact of external factors in the functioning, particularly security and the economy of a state.

Source: Fund for Peace (2020).

The characteristics of a failed state, based on the above, include the inability of the central government to project its authority over its population or its territory. Similarly, the state undergoes a de-legitimization process by which its legitimate authority is eroded and is unable to make collective decisions, provide or implement public policies. Under such conditions, civil liberties and human rights are no longer protected (Fund for Peace, 2020). Residents of a failed state have no physical security and no stable political and economic systems in place. The state is also unable to interact with other states and be considered as a full member of the international community. The fall-out effect from this is the emergence of a predatory and corrupt government marked by civil war, ethnic violence, insurgency, high crime rate, genocide and overly bureaucratic processes, judicial incompetence, and military interference in politics.

The Realist-Constructivist Debate and Reconstructing the Failed-State

International relations as a field of study has been engulfed with a plethora of theories and conceptualizations. Often, this is as a result of the differences among scholars, practitioners and intellectuals, based on their philosophy, ideology or interpretation. These variations in thought, reasoning and practice has also affected the quintessential meaning and relevance of the state as an actor in the international system. Realism, as the foremost theoretical underpinning of what the state-system is and how it is organized, has been buffeted and dissected to the point of being rendered anachronistic; yet, it persists. This explains the immediate relevance of the theme of failed states to the discussion. According to realist thought, the state is the dominant actor in the international system, acts rationally and with a unitary purpose, designed to maintain its survivability and security as immediate objectives (Morgenthau, 1978; Waltz, 1979, Mearsheimer, 2001).

The traditional meaning of what constitutes the state and how it organizes itself, often embarking on violence and conflict to survive and compete in the international system, is assumed as normalcy, in so far as it accords stability. This creates the understanding that in a typical anarchical international system, all states are equal and exist largely through self-help and pursue interests motivated by survival instincts, they should all possess the requisite capacity and capability, following from either the desire for security maximization (Waltz, 1979) or the quest for power maximization (Mearsheimer, 2001; Snyder, 2002). If these characteristics and values depict the essentials of how the state system is organized, then it is equally acceptable to probe the assumption that all states, regardless of the stages of development and nature of participation in the system, including the competences, material endowment and resourcefulness, must adapt and adopt the traits and qualities of the traditional states.

The theory of constructivism, however, provides a critical stance on these issues and argues for the need to recast the basic assumptions of international relations since the core aspects of realist assumptions are socially constructed, constituted by prescribed forms of practices, processes and interactions. According to Alexander Wendt, the foremost proponent of constructivism, “the structures of human association are determined primarily by shared ideas rather than material forces, and that the identities and interests of purposive actors are constructed by these shared ideas rather than given by nature” (Wendt, 1992). Essentially, constructivism considers the gamut of social science research as based on interpretation rather than explanation, a situation that requires a modicum of neutrality. For others, an understanding of the shared ideas and identities which are applied in constructing reality are critical and necessary, at least to ensure some minimum level of predictability and order (Hopf, 1998). In this regard, international relations and the foundations of the international system, for that matter, are not

only determined by power politics but also by ideas. Thus, the fundamental structures of international politics are social rather than strictly material. Changes in the nature of social and political interactions between states can bring about a fundamental shift toward greater international security.

In Wendt's critical explanations of neo-realism, he is of the view that the causal powers attributed to 'structure' by neo-realists are not 'given' but are determined by the way structure is constructed, in terms of the institutions and social practices. The meaning and application of structure by neo-realists is misplaced and not factual since state behavior requires proof about the interests and identities within the existing anarchy which may not be supportive of a self-help situation, but only meant to support the neo-realist conception of security as competitive, creating a win-lose condition. Alternatively, a positive dynamic could equally create a co-operative international system where security of others could be valuable to themselves and remove any pretensions of self-help. The conclusions and assumptions of neo-realism and realism in general, are thus held to be constant and exclude any other forms and methods of social interaction.

It is obvious that constructivism tends to discard the conclusions and assumptions of neorealism and the defining effect of anarchy on the actions of international actors. It also moves away from the underlying presumptions of materialism so that the necessary identities and interests of actors assume useful roles in international relations. In this regard, actors are not merely governed by the essentials of a self-help system but largely by their identities and interests which are vital in analyzing state behavior and performance, predisposed to the outcome and social structure of such ideas. Significantly, objects, ideas and actors are all imbedded within social interactions, with the understanding that there is diversity in people's activities, situations and bear meanings. For both Alexander Wendt (1992)

and Martha Finnemore (1993), though ideas and processes usually explain the social construction of identities and interests, these ideas and processes create their own structure which influence international actors.

These assumptions, from a neo-realist or structuralist perspective, contrasted with those of the constructivists, open the gateway to explore some of the fundamental flaws which underline the thinking behind the failed state syndrome as a global phenomenon and in the peculiar condition of such states in Africa. There seems to be this falsity that there are certain yardsticks or standards that all states in the international system must measure up to and anything contrary negates the quintessence of statehood. If these assumptions were true and rigidly applied, there would be no room for posing the fundamental questions relating to state formation in Africa in its traditional and historical sense, much more the external factors and forces which impinge upon this acceptable normalcy or stability. It possibly amounts to naivety to assume that African states should be treated differently on this pedestal of state failure or perceived as non-warranting of scrutiny, purportedly to analyze and understand their unfavorable circumstances of non-performance and decadence in the international system. Yet, a dignified approach in this regard would be to delve into the critical variables of social formation, political organization, intervention of external forces and the ensuing cracks or destruction of the relevant institutions which defeat the central assumptions of modern statecraft, resilience and development.

Failed States in (sub-Saharan) Africa

In the last decade or so, all the indices which are applied in explaining the failed state syndrome and the performance of states generally in the international system, be it politics, economics, trade or social development, relegate African states to the very doldrums of incompetence and non-performance.

Wikipedia, in its May 2023 worldwide classification of failed states, mentioned the following states - Afghanistan, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Iraq, Cote d'Ivoire, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, Sudan, Syria and Yemen as the most afflicted by failed-statism. Out of the thirteen states on the list, eight are from Africa. All the states in the list were previously colonized societies by European powers and interestingly, all the other five nations, except Haiti, are from Asia but all affected by similar colonial backgrounds.

It is further explained that all the indicators point to the fact that these states have lost their effective ability to govern their populations. It states further that they all maintain legal sovereignty but experience a breakdown in political power, law enforcement and civil society, leading to a state of near-anarchy, as was futuristically proclaimed, looking at Africa (Kaplan, 1994). In this regard, the governments are unable to tax and police their populace, control or maintain territorial integrity, make provisions for filling political or civil office vacancies. The worst part is that their national infrastructure cannot be maintained and this leads to economic decline and lack of development. All these result into widespread corruption and criminality with constant intervention of both state and non-state actors, be it terrorist groups or civil and ethnic strife, resulting in near or complete societal breakdown. Sooner or later, it creates an avenue for military interventions from within and outside the state and could degenerate into involuntary population movements and refugee situations.

Based on these clarifications, it is useful to establish some linkages between the analysis of failed-statism and the historical background of almost all the African states. Earlier discussions on social formation, political organization and economic development in general pointed to a European onslaught on indigenous African institutions during the era of colonialism.

These political systems never recovered but were forced to accept the imposition of foreign structures, policies and ideas for development. The Berlin Conference of 1884-1885 and the ensuing colonization of the continent deserves critical review in the scheme of things. It consisted of the appropriation and exploitation of the continent's resources by European powers without any type of accountability or compensation. The European powers, primarily consisting of Belgium, Britain, Germany, France and Portugal, among others, used these possessions as extensions of their respective nations. They constituted the bases for sustaining their economies, converting the raw materials into finished products and sold back to the 'natives', further enriching the industrialists and their respective state apparatuses. The natural resources, particularly the mineral wealth of Africa (including gold, diamond, bauxite, manganese, uranium, cobalt, etc.), were exploited to enrich the nations of Europe.

The periods of independence in Africa, effectively after World War Two (WWII), was supposed to lay a new beginning for ideological, institutional, economic and political transformation for the newly independent states. It is reminiscent of the clarion call by President Kwame Nkrumah during Ghana's independence that Africans should be allowed to manage their own affairs (Nkrumah, 1964). Independence, however, never translated into the dreams and vision of the early African leaders because they were soon caught in the geopolitical maneuvers and ideological animosities of the superpowers, capitalism versus communism. The ideological divide, notwithstanding, developing nations (then the Third World, the First World being Western capitalist nations and the Second World, the communist or Soviet-led economies), quickly organized themselves into the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM). This signaled their supposed neutrality from the geopolitics of the moment.

It did not help matters but rather worsened their plight since the perception was that they were not truly aligned but held on to the apron strings of one or the other superpower for foreign aid, be it economic, military, financial or technical assistance. The fragility of the political and governance institutions of these states largely affected their resilience in the international system. These conditions did not help in constituting viable nation-states which could compete in the inter-state system. Very soon, all these states succumbed to the idea that they needed to develop their economies, provide welfare services for their societies and meet the expectations of their growing populations. These expectations could not materialize partly due to the unequal production and trading system that was encountered. These states are largely raw material producing nations, with little or no industrial base, could not determine the prices of the goods produced and their economies largely dominated by foreign interests such as Multinational Corporations (MNCs), financial conglomerates and banking institutions. The overall effect was steep indebtedness of developing countries, soon to be followed by the intervention of the Bretton Woods institutions, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD or the World Bank).

It has never occurred and is very unlikely that the majority of African states would ever achieve semi-peripheral, much more core status in the global economy. They mostly belong to the periphery and their circumstance has always been marked by the very indices and variables which are applied to failed states. The issue of state retrogression does not come into the equation but rather political and economic stagnation largely explain their level of development. It also seems illogical to assume that African states that are categorized as failed states did ever make the cut into 'stable' economies or political systems, with the possible explanation that due to the adoption of wrong policy initiatives, they find themselves in the bracket of failed states.

There are certainly issues of bad economic management, poor leadership, creeping indebtedness, civil strife and external interventions which create the conditions for failed-statism. The argument, however, is that the performance of African states has never put them in the category of being stable or high performing states, so that they gradually deteriorated as the indices under failed states purportedly demonstrate.

One may draw an unwitting conclusion that the Wikipedia report suggests high performance by these states but suffered deterioration and, unable to replicate their former status, began to descend the slippery road of instability, weakness, collapse and failure. Using the same line of thinking, it becomes logical to assume that the conditions of Chad, DR Congo, Niger, Somalia, Sudan, South Sudan, among others, were formally in the league of stable economies. However, in the past few decades, they are unable to maintain the same performances. They then descend the unfavorable slope of non-performance, incapacity, incompetence, frivolity and rapture to the point of failed states. That has never been the case, and it seemingly confuses the reality of these underdeveloped economies. In the exception of Libya, and to some extent, Cote d'Ivoire who were better performers before their descent into civil conflict, it is unfathomable to draw the conclusion of having failed only recently.

In the particular case of states in Africa, the periodic classification into the various categories of weak, fragile, vulnerable and failed, seem not to reflect the contextual issues involved, much more the international dimensions of their situation. All nations aspire for grandeur and competence, and with clear national interests and unimpeded policies, would be able to attain those heights. African societies suffered and continue to suffer from multiple interventions which are inimical to economic and political development. The historical antecedents of imperialism, colonialism, exploitation and underdevelopment which were

earlier discussed should receive sober reflection. Under unfavorable conditions, Africa lands were appropriated and distributed among powerful state actors from Europe, their political identities usurped or altered, and their societies provided with foreign identities. After these came the period of independence, happening in the last seventy or so years. It takes more than exhortation and ideological tutelage for these states to achieve stability and development.

Compare this trajectory to the evolutionary path that western societies followed to reach their current state of development. They amassed the wealth of other societies, forcefully exploited their resources, dictated their very existence, and demarcated their lands for their own enrichment. On the other hand, they pursued their own political ideologies and systems of governance and arrived at their current status of industrialized nations in the international political economy. The possibility never occurred for states in Africa to evolve naturally and select their paths of development. Consider how all the fifty-five African states began, call it products of balkanization, started afresh by emulating the examples of Western societies, with all the vagaries of applying foreign languages, organizing institutions, policies, leadership styles, development paradigms, among others.

The missing link in all this is the designation associated with the performance criteria, labeled differently as stable or normal, unstable or weak, fragile or collapsing or completely failed as a state. It seems to be removed from contextual examination since these and similar states globally are coerced to embark on journeys unfamiliar and foreign, with little or no consideration of their differing historical backgrounds, nature of incorporation into the capitalist world system of production (Wallerstein, 2020) and imposed political institutions which aver to the benefit of the industrialized north.

It is granted though that the categorization of failed states cannot go without scrutiny. The lifestyle of the African political class and elites, the prevailing governance systems and participation in an unequal global economy often produces unsavory results for the societies concerned. They are unable to independently manage economic and political development in ways that bring growth and welfare to the citizenry. The pursuit of self-interest, dictatorship, corruption, clientelism and nepotism explain the daily condition of these societies. This is not acceptable and certainly instigates responses from interested parties, including those who are genuinely committed to a new beginning for these states, mostly in the developing world, Africa inclusive.

Pathways to Economic Recovery and State Consolidation

An appreciation of the historical and contextual dimensions of failed-statism constitutes an objective basis from which to work towards acceptable and meaningful processes of rebuilding failed states. In the African context, the historical antecedents provide a profound peep into past developments, whether by commission or omission, by colonial powers and neo-colonial interests. The legacy bears debilitating results for the continent, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. There was never the occasion for African societies to choose independent paths of political and economic development, as they were coerced to act as copycats of Western societies. This process continued and became consolidated with the attainment of independence from the first half of the twentieth century. The examples of mostly North African states, including Egypt, Sudan, Tunisia and Morocco are testimonial in that regard until the entrance of Ghana, first south of sub-Saharan Africa into that league in 1957.

In the exception of South Africa (which also went through a condemnable phase of apartheid), Morocco, Egypt and a few others, all the current member states of the African Union are potentially marked for state failure of a sort. Majority of them are

lower income countries, drowned in economic indebtedness, political and civil strife and periodic attacks of terrorists. Most of the attempts at capitalist transformation and liberal democratic elections by these states have often resulted into chaos and instability. The situations in Nigeria, Ghana, Kenya, Senegal, Tanzania, Namibia, Cote d'Ivoire and Zambia, perceived as some of the moderately best-performing ones, are a far cry from being stable and relate to the very challenges enumerated above.

The immediate concern is how to resolve the challenges associated with their present predicament as failed states. The conceptualizations are only descriptive of the symptoms but the reality is tackling the endemic difficulties from national, regional and international levels. African states cannot run away from the difficulties and challenges, some of which are self-inflicted and some others emanate from the international environment. These have been further compounded by the vagaries of globalization and the associated vicissitudes. It is certainly unthinkable or unrealistic to function outside the international system and, therefore, the interventions must be organized along the lines of cooperation, collaboration and integration. This is not the time for African states to exhibit the realist posture of self-help, though in effect, a trait of the inter-state system.

- **The Role of INGOs - the United Nations**

Initial reflections in terms of reducing the trend of failed-statism in Africa point to a vigorous intervention by intergovernmental organization in the stature of the United Nations. The global body has dutifully played the role of peace-keeping during the Cold War era, conveniently shelved under "Chapter Six and Half" of the UN Charter. Currently, the UN indulges in similar but quite different mandates in the developing world. This is variously labeled as peace-building, peace-making and peace-enforcement, in short, peace support operation (PSOs). The idea is to adopt a radically different approach in arresting the spate of failed-

statism in the developing world, with emphasis on Africa. The new agenda must be geared towards pro-activeness instead of being reactionary. Reacting to conflict situations by dispatching troops on fire-fighting missions and operations do not resolve the underlying challenges of state weakness, fragility or collapse.

Intervening through newer methods of institutional, financial and technocratic collaboration with political leaders and civil society groups before the situation reaches the threshold of instability and insecurity could serve as a guarantee against state collapse. The financial and technical demands on the UN would certainly increase but the benefits to systemic stability and societal regeneration are preferable. In essence, this transition of injecting technocratic skills and expertise, institutionalization and financial inputs falls in line with pre-empting state failure or a build-in early warning system. Whiles former interventions are often reactions to conflict situations, the new method would be based on signals of early warning so as to prevent their occurrence.

- **Development Partners**

The second mode of intervention demands multilateral responses from the international community, particularly from development partners who should be committed and prepared to assist in providing financial assistance, more in the form of grants instead of loans. The missing link for these African societies is that they are mostly commodity producing nations and having little financial leverage. The industrialized nations must work out programs and projects with adequate financial investment to inspire the completion of such development programs. Again, there should be a policy change where development partners are invited to assist in resolving economic, political and social bottlenecks. There should be policy-driven responses through, technical, social and economic interventions to supplement genuine governmental efforts by political leaderships of these

states. The policy initiatives from foreign governments and development partners are to create or establish “growth poles” in the states concerned towards sustainable national development.

- **Multinational Corporations and NGOs**

Thirdly, multinational corporations, financial institutions and non-governmental organizations should periodically assist with grants, create avenues for collaborative ventures and invest in the critical sectors of these economies. A major segment would be to enhance the practice of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in critical areas of the economies. Engaging in the provision of social and economic infrastructure such as hospitals and clinics, establishment of roads and highways, providing for the education of the youth, boosting trading regimes and activities, both nationally and internationally should be welcome.

- **African Military Institutions**

Other critical sectors which require intervention is revamping the security sectors through collaboration with development partners and resilient African military institutions with technical assistance. Such collaboration with security institutions of state shall play important roles for the maintenance of territorial integrity and upholding sovereignty in support of national development. The various branches in the security sector, including the armed forces, the police service, prisons, customs and immigration, among others, must attract the necessary support in order to perform their mandated roles in keeping with the needs of state and society. In the same vein, the relevance of member-states participating in African security structures pertaining to the building of a viable African security architecture will inure to the consolidation of all members. Exemplary is the establishment of the Stand-by Forces which are attached to the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) is demonstrative of the AUs resolve in this regard. These institutions could provide the necessary support for sub-regional

assistance in situations of civil, ethnic and political upheavals and disturbances, towards the promotion of regional peace and security.

- **African Regional Integration Institutions**

Membership of sub-regional and regional organizations must be a veritable source of promoting economic development through integration initiatives. The current constitution of RECs in all the sub-regions of the continent can serve a purposive drive for continental trade and economic development. The African Union (AU) through the African Continental Free Trade Agreement, has recognized eight of such sub-regional institutions as the building blocks of the organization in order to promote intra-African trade and investment opportunities. These are laudable initiatives and must receive the necessary attention from development partners as credible initiatives to enhance multilateral and regional trading systems.

- **NGOs and Civil Society Groups**

Non-governmental organizations plus religious groups and associations can play vital roles in strengthening the capacity of civil society groups to effectively discharge their civic responsibilities. Their functions and activities should be laced with the values of loyalty, patriotism and true citizenship in their areas of operation. Importantly, it calls for political leaders to enhance participatory democracy, one based on inclusiveness so as to harness the skills, expertise as well as the potentials of the entire citizenry. Political elections which are supposed to provide the basis for effective governance must be constitutionally driven. The rule of law should constitute the basis for liberal democracy where civil liberties, political rights and freedoms for the governed are respected. It also means that political election results must be respected, devoid of any form of rigging or deceit in order to instill confidence and trust in the democratic process. The integrity of all the political institutions, including

independent electoral commissions, and all arms of government must democratically discharge their responsibilities.

- **Political Leaders and Good Governance**

The economies of most African states are in their worst forms, either due to recent developments in the international system, or financial malpractices and abuses by the political class and economic managers. There must be a conscious attempt by the players and gate keepers, at both the fiscal and monetary levels, to keep clean records to avert the constant indebtedness and over-borrowing from external sources which are equally misused through profligacy and corruption. Transparency and accountability are critical areas for good governance and credibility in the developmental process. The opulent display of wealth by the political class in contrast to the abject poverty, squalor and disease of the majority of the population send wrong signals about effective and responsible leadership. These conditions can prompt civil strife and hostility among the electorate and general populace. Access to employment, educational opportunities, health delivery, housing facilities, transportation and food security along the production chain can prove beneficial in raising the living conditions of the people and assure the populace of a truly representative democracy.

Conclusion

The concept of failed states has been discussed to tease out the different understanding and applications in the literature which is variously described as weak, fragile, vulnerable, collapsed. The prevalence of these conditions in the developing world, particularly in Africa, is on the increase and deserve scrutiny and analysis. The position of the study is that the historical, traditional and contextual application of the state or state system has been narrowly applied and do not provide the basis for a systematic or comprehensive analysis of the condition of failed-statism. In the process, state formation in the European conception and application was explored to generate a relevant formula for

enquiry. It has also become generic to apply the concept of the state and, for that matter, state failure to prevailing conditions in the developing world without using the relevant tools for comparative analysis.

This necessitated the need to probe the differences between state formations in Europe, compared to what obtained in Africa, where the incidences of failed states have been on the rise. Another issue of critical importance and which constitutes a crucial point of departure is the inability to examine or explain the roles played by external forces in state formation and political organization in Africa. The gaping contrast demonstrates the negative effects on contemporary states in Africa, in particular, and the developing world in general. Centuries of imperial conquest and decades of colonialism and underdevelopment are important variables which have proven helpful in analyzing the real differences between the two prevailing systems, thus stable and failed political system.

In furtherance of this same objective, existing theoretical and conceptual tools were employed to assist in examining the inherent shortcomings in the literature. Realism, with its umbilical cord of neo-realism and structuralism, were applied to reveal their appreciation and understanding of how the inter-state system operates, largely driven by the structure and the constraints of anarchy. The other school of thought, constructivism is applied to draw the limitations of this approach since the realist interpretations seemingly ignore the concerns of interpretation and identity in drawing their conclusions. The structure of the international system which is overly based on self-help, can equally work on the basis of cooperation, depending on the players or actors of the international system.

It is, therefore, a useful exercise to categorize states according to their evolutionary and developmental path, without any external

hindrance or subjugation, while taking cognizance of the fact that social and political formations in other parts of the international system were hindered from their natural evolution, seemingly truncated and deprived of political and economic consolidation. This conclusion is not meant to reduce the significance of the argument of failed-statism but rather to point out the variations in the respective status of states in the contemporary international system or the global political economy.

Recommendations

A number of suggestions are offered for appropriate interventions by multilateral institutions and non-state actors to reduce the severity of the predicament faced by failed states and the likelihood of this occurring in the future. These include roles for the United Nations whose primary responsibility is for the promotion of international peace and security. Other multilateral institutions, for instance, the IMF and World Bank, international financial conglomerates and multinational corporations should intervene, not as firefighters, but play the roles of early warning systems. This could be done by injecting finance capital, technical assistance and security overlays toward state rejuvenation and consolidation. In the specific case of Africa, the African Union, assisted by regional economic communities and other relevant structures and agencies can help in providing intra-African cooperation towards economic development. Some of these include integration networks, trade relations and security cooperation at the sub-regional and regional levels.

The states themselves must embark on relevant initiatives that would propel the governments and the people towards inclusiveness, political participation, protection of human rights and freedoms, and guarantee employment opportunities through investment in skills acquisition and expertise. It also requires enhancing national security through intelligence gathering and

collaborative efforts with African neighbors and development partners towards ensuring overall national development.

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