

MUST DO BETTER: THE AFRICAN STATE, THE AFRICAN STATE, AND THE STATE OF AFRICA

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Although the term “failed state” is no longer used in polite conversation, and even “fragile state” is starting to fall into disuse, there is no doubt that the inventors of these formulae had identified a real problem, even if they struggled to define it. This paper is concerned not with listing such states, or proposing criteria for fragility: arguably, too much has been written on that already. Nor does it offer policy prescriptions, except briefly at the end; there are too many of those as well. Rather it seeks to shed a little light on what the problem, or problems, actually are, and to reduce the definitional confusion. For that reason, the implications of both terms are explored here at some length. The principal focus is on Africa, but other parts of the world are mentioned also, where this seems useful.

There are a number of reasons why the discourse of failure and fragility has run into difficulties, especially in Africa. Not the least of them is the extreme sensitivity of Africans themselves to being characterised in this fashion. Both “failure” and “fragility” imply that things have gone wrong in a state, and logically that representatives of successful and non-fragile states should be invited to come and put them right. And indeed, to Africans, stigmatisation in this way can appear just another finger-wagging evaluation exercise by the West, intended to justify continued Western tutelage of their governments and economies.

However this may be, there are a number of other evident weaknesses in these formulations, which have become increasingly apparent over the years. It is recognised, for example, that the problem is not so much a failure of Africans to produce viable states, but rather the failure of the western nation-state concept to take root in Africa — indeed, many would argue that there was never much chance that it would do so in the circumstances of de-colonisation.^[1] Similarly, the elaborate methodologies of different organisations to develop criteria and lists of failed and fragile states have produced different and mutually incompatible results. Is Nigeria, for example, a fragile state or the lynchpin of regional security and prosperity? It can be either or both, depending on how we understand the term. Similarly, it has not escaped notice that the same countries which identify and seek to address the failure

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[1] See for example Basil DAVIDSON, *Black Man's Burden: Africa and the Curse of the Nation State* (Oxford, James Currey, 1992).

and fragility of others have themselves been demanding that states in Africa, for example, become smaller and perform fewer functions. Finally, the predictive value of such concepts, especially that of “fragility” has proved to be very limited.

But there are some deeper-seated problems behind this thinking, and it is with these that this paper is mainly concerned. First, there is some confusion about what we mean by “state”. In some contexts, it seems to mean “nation-state”, whereas in others (sometimes in the same document) it seems to refer to the apparatus of the state itself. Obviously, the two cases are quite different, and involve different criteria. The situation is complicated by the recent use of the term “situations of fragility.” This results in formulations such as the following, which defines a “fragile state” as one where “the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor.”^[1] Here, “state” obviously means “country”, whilst “government” presumably means “state”. It is not clear, either, why such a state (country) should be considered fragile (likely to fall apart) especially if it is capable of supplying these services but unaccountably does not do so (indeed, it is not clear whether any states in the latter category actually exist).

In theory, these changing terms are just successively more polite forms of the same idea. In practice, they imply quite different things. Failure is a situation in which something has happened; either a failure to establish a state in the first place, or the decay of a previously successful state subsequently. Fragility is a situation in which something might happen, although it is not usually clear what. As a term it is usually understood to mean “easily broken” or delicate.” Inasmuch as “situations of fragility” means anything, it is sometimes taken to refer to the risk of conflict and war, sometimes to regional problems, and sometimes to mean effectively what “failed state” used to mean. USAID adds the further category of “areas that are unstable or fragile.”^[2]

These different formulations — and they could be multiplied almost endlessly — cannot ultimately be properly reconciled with each other, because they are based on different sets of assumptions, and different perspectives and objectives, mostly drafted by committees required to produce consensus documents. In some cases, there is an attempt at innovative thinking and research, in others, the description of failed or fragile states is an old one, simply given a new packaging. Nonetheless, underlying these various formulations is a series of suppositions, not always articu-

[1] *Why We Need to Work More Effectively in Fragile States* (London, Department for International Development, 2005), p. 7. Emphasis added

[2] *Fragile States Strategy* (Washington, US Agency for International development, 2005), p. 9, available here: www.usaid.gov/policy/2005_fragile_states_strategy.pdf.

lated, which are common to development theory, security sector reform, conflict prevention and other associated disciplines. I will now try to explain what these are, and indicate whether there is any actual evidence that they are true.

To begin with, what are the “core functions” which a state is supposed to provide? There are many, varying, lists, including one in the DFID document just cited, but the most recent attempt at a comprehensive list is that of a French inter-agency working group. Fragile states “find it hard to provide law and order and guarantee their citizens security, and efficient governance (especially in terms of public finance management) deliver MDG-established social services, and underpin regional and international order and stability”^[1].

Several points are of interest here. First, there is no obvious internal logic in the list of criteria cited. Why is good financial management cited, but not lifting people out of poverty? Why law and order but not access to basic health-care? There can, of course, no be definitive list, but the connection of most of these factors with fragility, in the sense of a nation which might implode or disappear, is not evident. Indeed, it could be argued that strong and capable states are much more a threat to regional security than fragile ones. What may be meant here is something quite specific; the inability to provide contingents for regional peacekeeping operations as part of the (western-sponsored) African Standby Force. Looking through the many attempts to define “fragile states”, indeed, it is easy to conclude that here we are seeing simply the traditional governance agenda, given a lick of fresh paint, combined with criticism of states which “fail” to be like us, or “fail” to act as we think they should. It is not obvious, for example, why bad financial management should be a threat to the existence of states.

Second this list is essentially produced by reference to the modern western states which are sitting in judgment on the others. But scarcely more than a century ago, all states in the world were in this situation. Personal security for citizens and good financial management, for example, have only been taken for granted in the West for a century or so, and are not universal, even now. Provision of social services on a significant scale is even more recent. There is therefore a wealth of historical evidence about the fragility of states (nations) when states (administrations) fail to provide such basic services. Rather than falling into anarchy or domestic conflict, all European states (nations) became less fragile, enjoyed economic growth and increased stability and their states (administrations) became progressively more

[1] *Position de la France sur les États fragiles et les situations de fragilité* (Paris, France coopération, 2007), p. 1 (from the English text, available here: <http://www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/fr/IMG/pdf/EtatsFragiles.pdf>). I cite the official English text, which, as often, mistranslates “efficace” as “efficient”. “Effective” is what is meant here.

competent. In general, the same pattern has been seen in Asia in this century. Why the same process has not taken place in Africa is explained later, but the difference has relatively little to do with the kind of proposals made to help “fragile” states today.

This does not mean that states became more peaceful: generally the reverse was the case. As Charles Tilly famously noted, war made states, and stronger states made more destructive wars.^[1] Prussia/Germany, for example, played much less of a role in supporting regional stability between 1866 and 1945 than it had in previous eras, and this in turn is directly attributable to the greater unity, wealth and organisation of the state, which was increasingly able to offer its citizens more protection and security. Wars in Africa would therefore probably be more numerous and more destructive if states today were less fragile.

Nor was decreasing fragility helpful in avoiding internal conflicts. Western political elites fought a long and violent battle well into the 20th century to try to stuff the genie of representative democracy, unleashed by the French Revolution, back into the bottle again. Stability and growth produced a middle class and then a working class which demanded their share of power. Indeed, many of the security instruments of the state, including police and intelligence services, were developed as much to protect the state from the people as anything else. These demands caused social and economic conflict, extending to civil war in certain cases. Now obviously there is nothing that absolutely requires Africa to follow this model, but as a middle class develops — something Africa mostly lacks for the moment — tensions will certainly result.

There is, therefore, no historical evidence that fragile states (in the sense of countries with weak government systems) have necessarily been a source of domestic or regional conflict, and some evidence that the reverse may be true. But it is also argued that a state (in the sense of country) can be fragile if the state (in the sense of government and administration) does not enjoy “legitimacy” or respect a “social contract” with some or all of its population. “Legitimacy” has been defined as the perception “by important segments of society that the government is exercising state power in ways that are reasonably fair and in the interests of the nation as a whole.”^[2]

[1] Charles TILLY, War Making and State Making as Organized Crime, in Peter EVANS, Dietrich RUESCHEMEYER, and Theda SKOCPOL (edited by), *Bringing the State Back In* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1985).

[2] USAID, *Fragile States Strategy*, *op. cit.*, p.11.

The European Council has suggested that the “social contract” is broken “due to the State’s incapacity or unwillingness to deal with its basic functions, meet its obligations and responsibilities regarding the rule of law, protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms, security and safety of its population, poverty reduction, service delivery, the transparent and equitable management of resources and access to power.”^[1] Taken together, these criteria amount to formidable hurdles for a state if it is not to be considered fragile. (“Legitimacy” is itself also often defined more widely, to include some of the elements in the EU list).

There is evidently a fundamental dichotomy here, between what one could describe as positive state functions, such as provision of services and security, and what have to be described as negative functions when, in effect, the state is being asked to *refrain* from acting in certain ways, or even at all. This dichotomy reflects the very different origins of the component parts of the fragile states discourse. Some parts come from traditional development and poverty-reduction thinking, others from human rights advocacy, others from the new “governance” agenda and others still from newer concepts like access to justice and security sector reform. The result is an uneasy compromise, which enables almost any characteristic of a state (nation) or state (administration) to be considered an element of fragility if we do not like it.

Lists like the one above — and there are many such — therefore necessarily contain built-in contradictions. There is no consensus on what the “basic functions” of a state should be, and nor will there ever be, because the definition depends on political philosophy. As the OECD has noted, there are very different perceptions in countries as similar as France and the United States of what the state should provide, and French services could not be reduced to US levels without provoking massive civil unrest.^[2] Americans, according to opinion polls, would very much like a French-style health service, but are resigned to not getting one. It is, however, hard to know how we can measure “expectations” of services in countries, such as most of Africa, where the state has never provided very much, and where, outside the capital, people are seldom aware of it. Moreover, there is a tendency to mix together proposed state functions which are very different from each other, if not actually contradictory. Thus, the OECD DAC has argued that “States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic func-

[1] *Council Conclusions on a EU response to situations of fragility* 2831st External Relations Council meeting, Brussels, 19-20 November 2007.

[2] *Concepts And Dilemmas Of State Building In Fragile Situations From Fragility To Resilience*, OECD DAC Discussion Paper, 2008, p. 18

tions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations”^[1]

This is another very heterogeneous list, but of special interest here is the link between security and human rights. Two thoughts immediately present themselves. Firstly, there is a conflict of sorts between public security and human rights. The larger, more powerful and more intrusive a police force is, the lower in general will be the crime rate, if other things remain constant. Crime frequently explodes during democratic transitions, as the security forces have to change their way of operating. Moreover, human rights are classically assumed to be those which are won from the state (administration) by the people, and include such issues as free speech and freedom of assembly and from arbitrary arrest. A government does not “guarantee” such rights; or rather, any guarantee it gives is pointless unless it acts in a way that does not threaten them. In practice, a state which has a large and repressive security apparatus, and does not respect the rights of its population can only be called fragile in the very unusual sense of “strong.”

What is behind this, presumably, is the idea that a state which does not respect the human rights of its population is fragile because pent-up resentment and democratic expectations could threaten it. Whilst this is possible in theory, history suggests that it rarely if ever happens. The opposite is more usually true — it is periods of political liberalisation, when people become convinced that change is possible, that are more likely to produce violence and conflict.

By themselves, unfulfilled expectations and broken “social contracts” do not necessarily cause conflict, or even serious instability. Consider the cases of the former Soviet Union and the former Yugoslavia. The Soviet Union, whatever its defects, was a capable and well-organised state which provided a good level of social protection for its citizens. The abandonment of Communism brought about a catastrophic fall in living standards and the effective end of the social contract which had hitherto been in force. This process took place very rapidly, and there is little sign yet of living standards and social protection ever returning to 1980s levels. Yet, whilst the Soviet Union collapsed politically, and its successor states collapsed economically, there was little actual violence and conflict. By contrast, the Yugoslav economy was less badly affected by the interventions of the IMF and the transition from communism, but the disintegration of the former state involved much more violence, although Yugoslavs vented their anger not on the state, but each other. Curiously, however, the country which was worst hit by sanctions — Serbia — and which received no

[1] *Ibid*, p. 17.

aid of any kind from outside, was also the most stable. It was not formally involved in the fighting until attacked by NATO in 1999.

Obviously, therefore, anger and disappointment can be progenitors of conflict, but other elements are needed as well. It is clear that much depends on whether this anger and disappointment is general, or whether one part of the population is especially affected. It tends to be in the latter case that violence can result — either from resentment of the powers of a small elite, or discontent by groups that feel themselves to be oppressed minorities. Yet even here, this resentment does not automatically produce crisis and violence — other factors are needed as well.

In the case of Sudan, for example, the fundamental dynamic has been less ethnical (African/Arab) than the perennial struggle for power between the centre and the periphery. Since independence, Sudan has been ruled by a cabal of clans from North of Khartoum, and other regions, whether “African” or “Arab” have suffered politically and economically. But in a society organised on clan and village lines, organised resistance to Khartoum was very difficult, and, to the extent that a Southern resistance was possible, it was because of the charismatic leadership of John Garang. Even then, the fact that Garang was a Dinka meant that many non-Dinka leaders from the South (notably Riek Machar) preferred to align themselves with Khartoum.

Kosovo had a rather similar clan and village based political system, especially among the Albanian minority. In Tito’s Yugoslavia, all ethnic groups grumbled about real or fancied discrimination, but the regime firmly discouraged overt nationalism. So the Serb minority in Kosovo, marginalised and (in their eyes) oppressed by the 1974 Constitution, had no outlet for their grievances — Belgrade saw them as a problem. With the end of the Communist system and the return to nationalist politics, however, they were able to appeal to Serb nationalist sentiment, and nationalist politicians had to take notice, as well as non-nationalists like Milosevic, who did not wish to be pushed aside in elections which would be fought on a nationalist agenda.

Yet if the types of processes described here seem complex and contradictory, they are, in fact, much more complicated in reality. Partly this is because there are qualifications and qualifications to qualifications to be made to much of this analysis, but mostly because it — and virtually all similar analyses — fail to account for the role of outside actors, notably the West and the international institutions under its control. Whilst it is a matter of controversy whether the West deliberately set out to fragilise states (in both senses of the term) it cannot be seriously disputed that this was the effect, especially in Africa. The most successful cases of state formation and

economic growth — Japan, the Soviet Union, Korea, most recently China — did not depend on western aid or management of their economies at all. By contrast, most African states have had their economies, their government apparatus and their security sectors micromanaged by western governments and institutions for several decades now, with results which are, at best mixed.

It is therefore reasonable to ask at this point whether, with the multiplicity of definitions and the large number of different factors associated with the concept of fragility, this literature tells us anything useful, and whether fragility is in fact a useful concept. A logical further question is whether, in fact, fragility actually matters, and if so why.

The analyses already cited, and others of a similar type, are generally sensible and nuanced, and recognise that the problems are not easy, and that there are sharply different interpretations of the causes and effects of fragility. The problem arises when we try to aggregate the studies. So at one extreme, the list of Failed States (i.e. states which have already failed), produced by the Fund for Peace and *Foreign Policy* magazine has almost 180 states, under various categories. On the other hand, the World Bank's Country Policy and Institutional Assessments produce a list of about 45 "fragile" states — i.e. states where there is some risk of failure. Whilst it is true, of course that "all states are fragile in some respects",^[1] and that in many cases the authors are talking about rather different things, it is legitimate to ask whether, in total, all this work has contributed very much to our understanding. In particular, as David Carment notes, "most explanations of why states fail are... in isolation, inadequate analytical tools for either risk assessment or early warning. Many analyses point to fundamentally different causes of state failure; others rely on the monitoring of background factors and enabling conditions that are associated with the risk of conflict but do not themselves provide accurate information on the probability of specific events leading to failure."^[2] Given enough states and enough variables, as well as enough time, virtually any theory of fragility and failure can be supported by arguments made after the event. Moreover, such theories do not necessarily distinguish between cause and effect. Fashionable issues — child soldiers, for example — may well be linked to state failure, but do not cause it. After all, young people are much more likely to seek food, shelter, comradeship and adventure, in spite of the associated danger, if they have no homes or schools and are otherwise likely to starve in the streets.

[1] DFID, *Why We Need*, *op. cit.*, p.8.

[2] David CARMENT, Assessing state failure: implications for theory and policy, *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 24, No. 3, 2003, p. 408.

So does any of this matter? One problem is that most analyses are not very clear about what happens as a result of failure or fragility, beyond tautological arguments about the inability of the state then to perform its functions. In turn, this is because of the huge variety of crisis situations, and the fact that many turn out in ways which had not been anticipated. Some analyses see the consequences of state failure in almost apocalyptic terms. “When development and governance fail in a country, the consequences engulf entire regions and leap around the world.”^[1] Obviously this is not true all the time, or even much of the time. It is a reference to the events of 11 September 2001, and especially to the use by Al Qaeda of training camps in Afghanistan in the 1990s. The argument is a curious one, since Afghanistan under the Taliban was more organised and safer as a country than it had been before or has been since. Historically, in fact, opposition and guerrilla groups have sought to base themselves in states that could offer them logistic and financial support as well as security and good communications. And it would be an idiosyncratic group that based itself deliberately in a country where the government could not perform its functions and was at odds with its own population. But, given the sheer variety of ways in which fragile states can be defined, as well as the huge number of groups opposed to western policies of one sort or another, the argument that an example of the second might be found in one of the first is one which can never be wholly disproved.

It is also argued that the populations of these states, as well as the West, are at risk. Thus, the then British Foreign Secretary argued in 2002 that: “...wars in and amongst failed states have killed about 8 million people, most of them civilians, and displaced another 4 million.” And again, “state failure has brought terror and misery to large swathes of the African continent.” Once more, combinations of definitions and conflicts can result in such numbers, but it is instructive to look at some of the particular countries cited in the speech: the DRC, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

What is interesting about the DRC is not that it was a fragile state (and by some definitions it certainly was) but that it remained so stable for so long. Under the rule of Joseph Mobutu, the state collapsed, the Army and Police were deliberately enfeebled and the authority of the government practically vanished. And yet, somehow, the nation survived. It was not the internal problems of the state which brought about the millions of deaths in the late 1990s (exact figures will never be known) but specific external events, in particular, the invasion in 1996 by Rwanda and Uganda, to loot the mineral wealth of the country and place a reliable puppet in power in Kinshasa to replace Mobutu. When the puppet — Laurent Kabila —

[1] USAID, *Fragile States Strategy*, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

refused to behave as one, the two countries invaded once more to remove him. A number of other African countries then joined in, at least notionally, to support the DRC. The twenty-odd militia groups operating at one point in the eastern DRC were generally sponsored by outside states, notably Rwanda and Uganda again, who finally turned to fighting each other, largely through intermediaries.

Thus, the violence in the DRC would probably never have attained anything like its actual level without external intervention. Some of this intervention was western, as it had been throughout the country's history, including the sustainment of Mobutu in power as an asset during the Cold War. And in the late 1990s, the West could have stopped the war and saved millions of lives by using financial pressure to force the Rwandans and Ugandans to withdraw, but chose not to do so. Liberia, on the other hand, was certainly a failure as a state (for all that it was sustained by the US during the Cold war), but it descended into violence as a result of the political ambitions of Charles Taylor, whose interference in Sierra Leone, together with the ambitions of Foday Sankho, unleashed the civil war there.

All this reflects one of the enduring western delusions about violence and civil wars — that they “break out,” or that societies “descend into chaos” without any particular cause. It is a way of the West disclaiming responsibility for destabilizing countries in the first place. This may be by inflicting economic misery and causing poverty and suffering. It may be (as in the Former Yugoslavia) through the encouragement of the nationalist ambitions of certain groups considered “pro-western”. Paradigms of heart-of-darkness brutality are convenient ways of overlooking the West's ham-fistedness in countries like Rwanda, where French pressure on the Hutu government to democratise coincided with another external event — the invasion by Tutsi exiles from Uganda — and the West eventually brokered the disastrous 1993 Arusha Peace Agreement, which gave much more to the invaders than most Hutu politicians, or for that matter most Hutu, could accept. Indeed, if there is an (almost)-infallible indicator of state collapse, it is pressure from the West to hold competitive elections in tense political environments.

It is particularly easy to apply a kind of crude Hobbesian logic to the problems of the African state — indeed, Hobbes is quoted in Mr Straw's speech. But even leaving aside the fact that Hobbes's “state of nature” theories are not an accurate picture of reality, his “social contract” (he appears to have originated the term) call for the population to voluntarily surrender total power to an authoritarian and unaccountable state which then promises to protect them — one of the ways, of course in which a fragile state itself is defined.

Two other western misunderstandings complicate analysis of this question. First, is the idea of the state as an autonomous Weberian actor, separate from civil society and subject only to impersonal bureaucratic rules. Thus, the state can be acted on directly, with no need to worry about implications elsewhere. It is doubtful if this has ever been true. In the United States, for example, the politicisation of top positions in the national and local government apparatus means that it is often pointless to attempt to distinguish between the state, the party in power in the White House and the political and business interests that that party represents. At least in the United States, this situation is overt and acknowledged. In many African countries, it is as bad, if not worse, but it takes place behind a screen of a state which is theoretically autonomous. In fact, in many states (countries) the state (administration) is nothing more than a manifestation of the occult power systems through which the country is actually run. The state, as such, may not be particularly important, and may be no more than an acceptable facade for the real interests of politics, business, and organised crime (where the last two can be distinguished).

There is also the associated misunderstanding of the state as an exclusive actor; in other words, if the state is not carrying out a function then that function is not being carried out. But this is seldom the case. Indeed, informal networks, which may overlap with the state, are probably more important than the state itself for getting things done. Law enforcement and public safety are good examples. The enormous difference in levels of personal security in Japan and the United States, for example, has only a small amount to do with state capacity. It has much more to do with social capital and informal but effective methods of social control and surveillance. (It is striking, for example, to watch even tiny children walking unescorted to school in rural Japan, in perfect safety and under the gaze of every passing adult). Crime in such environments is viewed as a failure of social control, not a technical failure of the state apparatus. It follows that investing money in trying to improve the technical capacity of the state will be of limited use if the social capital on which any society depends has been destroyed. This is why rebuilding states after domestic conflict is far more difficult than after classical wars. In Japan and Germany after the Second World War, for example, the state, in both senses of the term, was rapidly rebuilt, in spite of a level of physical destruction much greater than anything experienced in wars today. (There was some assistance from outside, but this has been greatly exaggerated, especially in the case of Japan). In each case, however, social capital and community bonds remained strong, and the two societies were united by suffering and foreign invasion, rather than divided against themselves. By contrast, rebuilding social capital is far more difficult than

creating it, and may actually be impossible.^[1] As a result, in states (nations) where social cohesion has been damaged or has disappeared, and can thus be counted “fragile” it is not obvious what the solution is, or even if there is one.

The fact that most African states (nations) have remained viable even when their states (administrations) have broken down is due overwhelmingly to the persistence of non-state social structures, which may also overlap with the state itself; What is often described as “corruption” can be, in fact, a mechanism for social survival where the state (administration) is incapable of allocating resources and getting things done.

However, no amount of social capital can replace the state; the most it can do is strengthen it or prevent its decline. This leads us to the concluding point. It should now be clear what the security problem in African states actually is, and why such concepts of “failed” and “fragile” states, with all their internal contradictions do not really describe it. Briefly, it is accepted that states (nations) in Africa have not evolved naturally, as states in Europe and Asia did. In those cases, centres of power extended their control to the periphery, bringing economic resources under their control, raising taxes and thus expanding further. At each point, therefore, there was equilibrium between the capacity of the state (administration) and the task of directing the state (nation). Because African states were artificial creations, hustled into the world without preparation, the states (administrations) never had the capacity to manage the states (nations) which they were supposed to control. In such situations, the state (administration) is not able to control its territory or provide security, which discourages economic growth and allows exploitation of the resulting grievances by ambitious political opponents. The resulting instability further depresses economic growth, thus reducing resources and exacerbating the problem. The state (administration) thus feels understandably vulnerable and is afraid of being overthrown. It responds with a policy of repression, employing its security resources for its own protection. Elections, in such circumstances, are simply the continuation of this conflict by other means. Thus it is clear that the various criteria offered to describe weak states, although superficially contradictory, are in fact actually part of the same problem if viewed as part of a logical sequence.

The African security problem, therefore, resides in the inability of the state, by one definition, to control the state by the other definition. This incompatibility between the state and the state is the reason why I have insisted, perhaps tediously, on the distinction between the two meanings. But what do we do about it?

[1] On the destruction of social capital see Francis FUKUYAMA, *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity* (New York, The Free Press, 1995).

I have offered one radical solution elsewhere.^[1] But in any event, there is a series of simple things we can do. We can stop fragilising states by forcing them to spend less and employ fewer people. We can stop micromanaging their economic policies and then blame them for the consequences. We can invite them to follow successful examples of state formation elsewhere in the world, even if we do not necessarily like the results. We can stop demanding that they hold competitive elections in divided societies. And we can stop denying the role of the West, both in the past, and also today.

[1] "Feeling Good or Getting Better: Options for Security and Deelopment in Africa", *Journal of the Royal United Services Institute*, Vol. 151, No. 4, August 2006.