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THE MENSCHWERPUNKT

What are we Talking about when we Talk about Fragile States?

Paul Jackson*

Abstract: This article aims to analyse some of the complexity in identifying types and stages of state failure in Africa. It takes three states, Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe. Each has emerged from conflict and is at a different stage of authoritarian rule. The article compares the nature of their failure, its historical evolution and causes. The core argument is that there are numerous dimensions of state failure that cannot be picked up by static indices. In particular, current attempts to provide 'objective' measures of state failure fail to take into account the evolution of failure within states. The article outlines a possible further line of enquiry based on taking account of stages of failure beyond post-conflict. Finally, the article suggests that the policy issue for the international community is how to prevent Sierra Leone from developing into a situation as that in Zimbabwe.

Keywords: State failure in Africa, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Zimbabwe
'State failure' in Afrika, Sierra Leone, Uganda, Simbabwe

1. Introduction

The idea of state fragility has become central to the debate on development and security, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). Accompanying this vivid interest in the most fragile areas has been a rapid increase in the number of indices representing different dimensions of fragility

with which to describe state failure. Around one billion people, including some 340m of the world's poorest, are estimated to live in this group of between 30 and 50 'fragile' states, most of which are in Africa.¹ There is a current international consensus that without better and more international engagement these countries will continue to provide insecure environments for both their people and globally. At the same time, most aid agencies have realised that fragile states require coordinated and well thought out interventions that can contribute both to security and to development more broadly. The key to managing this is the development of critical effective

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1 Paul Collier (2007), *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries are Failing and What can be Done About it*, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

governance mechanisms in a country to provide effective local ownership.

Despite the emergence of failed states as an important policy and analytical mechanism for understanding SSA in particular, there is a bewildering array of definitions of the meaning of 'failed'. Essentially, the concept involves varying combinations of inability to provide basic services; unstable, weak or predatory government; extreme poverty and concentration of deprivation in particular sub-groups; lack of sovereignty and inability to enforce territorial control; inability to enforce the rule of law; and also a high risk of recurring violence and accompanying low human security.

The identification of the reasons for failure and the changes in those reasons over time is critical to future aid policy in a context that is seen as having catastrophic consequences for the absorption and the effective use of aid. This has been accompanied by an analytical emphasis on human security, peace-building and state-building, along with the rise of the 'security-development nexus'.

Indices offer up only a static 'snapshot' of failure and cannot take into account the subtlety of failure or the significant and sometimes rapid development over time. The article sketches out an approach based on the analysis of experience in three Sub-Saharan African countries: Uganda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe. Although there are core differences between the three countries there are also similarities in terms of how they started from conflicts and then moved through post-conflict reconstruction and towards an authoritarian rule. As such there are both static and dynamic descriptors of state failure that may provide some lessons for prevention.

2. Methodological Approach

Uganda, Sierra Leone and Zimbabwe have been identified as 'failing'. Each one of these states has emerged within a post-conflict environment and from similar British colonial backgrounds. In the case of all three, the current regime has emerged from the post-colonial state after wars that were partly the result of centralised, authoritarian, and in some way exclusive – either ethnically or racially – governments. Each state was therefore subject to violent rebellion and conflict, leading to the development of a state with significant post-conflict support from the international community, particularly but not exclusively the UK.

The major difference between these three states is the timing of the conflict and post-conflict periods. The former Rhodesia fought a war that ended with the creation of Zimbabwe in 1980, followed by a nationalist state led by Robert Mugabe and a creeping authoritarianism that reached its apogee in the early 2000s. Uganda was subject to numerous upheavals throughout the regimes of Idi Amin and Milton Obote and a guerrilla war that eventually led to the overthrow of this cycle of authoritarian governments. From 1986 onwards the Museveni regime has maintained power and gradually developed an authoritarian style, fighting wars in the North and West as well as in the DRC. Sierra Leone was subject to a particularly vicious

overthrow of an authoritarian post-colonial government that lasted throughout much of the 1990s and ended in 2002; since then there have been democratic elections and a gradual development of the security sector under international tutelage.

What are the historical causes, dimensions, characteristics, dynamics and comparative features of state failure? A chronological picture of the evolution of the authoritarian state in Africa may be illustrative of a possible path that, whilst not being linear or deterministic, offers a picture of post-conflict state failure that suggests ways forward as well as significant risks to contemporary policy in failed states.

Although clear definitions of state failure have remained elusive, most international development agencies have converged around the OECD Development Assistance Committee definition: "states are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their population".² State fragility would imply a failure of government to provide basic services to their populations and thereby failing to provide functions that may be expected of a state. The UK Department for International Development defines failed states as "those where the government cannot or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including the poor".³ Failed states fail to maintain a social contract through undermining the expectations of their populations, contested legitimacy and continual crisis. The idea of labeling a state as 'failed' remains controversial. In an African context there is a reluctance to reflect a set of assumptions that turn African states into imperfect or dysfunctional copies of European and North American states.⁴

The failure to control is the inability of the state to project its own power up to its own boundaries. This may be represented by a lack of security in border areas, or contested sovereignty with non-state armed groups, or it may refer to a failure of state institutions, including justice, welfare and basic services, to reach large areas of the population or specific regions. Most failed states consist of interconnected zones of control that frequently shift, where a state may control the centre, but where the degree of control alters as one moves away into other regions. Failure, therefore, is not an absolute measure; rather it is a scale of different levels of arrangement between states, militias, gangs, warlords, private companies, clans, religious groups, and secessionist movements. This is close to 'neopatrimonialism without the state' whereby relationships exist that may or not be connected to the state or officials.⁵ Just because an official government doesn't control a particular

2 OECD (2007), OECD/DAC Handbook on Security System Reform: Supporting Security and Justice, Paris: OECD, 2007. Available at: www.oecd.org/dataoecd/43/25/38406485.pdf (accessed November 2010).

3 DFID (2005), *Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states* Department for International Development, UK.

4 See for example, Morten Boas and Kathleen Jennings (2005), 'Insecurity and Development: The Rhetoric of the "Failed State"', *The European Journal of Development Research*, Vol. 17, No.3, 385-95; Robert Dorff (2005), 'Failed States After 9/11: What did we know and what have we learned?', *International Studies*, Vol.6, No.1, 20-34.

5 Timothy Raeymakers (2005), *Collapse or order? Questioning State Collapse in Africa*, Conflict research Group, Working Paper No.1, May.

geographical area, it does not mean that they are lacking alternative government structures.⁶

3. State failure in Sierra Leone, Uganda and Zimbabwe

Sierra Leone is a representative case for those who see the series of conflicts in post-colonial Africa as being rooted in state supported injustice and sustained marginalisation both of particular social groups and also of peripheral regions. Over-centralised and personalised rule exacerbated this marginalisation and this created a form of predatory rule whereby small groups of elites grabbed power and used the state to appropriate resources. Since independence in 1961, the ethos of Sierra Leone's political system has been characterised by centralisation of power and resources in Freetown coupled with a deep contrast between Freetown and the rest of the country. This led to constant war through most of the 1990s as an insurgency movement, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) led by Foday Sankoh and linked to Charles Taylor in Liberia, swept across the country, eventually being stopped by UK and UN forces, which led to a peace agreement in 2002.

Uganda has been subject to recurrent cycles of violence since independence in 1962. The progressively violent regimes of Amin and Obote precipitated economic collapse and intensified cycles of violence. Security governance within Uganda has been particularly problematic due to a separation of formal and informal security mechanisms and a deliberate degradation of the police as an internal security and justice mechanism. There are a series of key issues that deserve attention here: the domestic political system; the colonial legacy; internal wars; and politicised security governance.

Unlike Sierra Leone and Uganda, Zimbabwe is an authoritarian state that is subject to widespread political failure. Political implosion has meant that the military and security services have been able to appropriate political space for their own uses. The current situation in Zimbabwe is an attempt to ally the political elite with senior military officials in an attempt to prevent the political opposition, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), gaining access to real power.⁷ Zimbabwe represents the long term results of a security-led intervention following a peace process and the incremental militarisation of politics through a developed military.

3.1 What are the Dimensions of State Failure?

Sierra Leone presents a relatively complex picture in terms of the dimensions of state failure. Emerging from war in 2002, the state has been reconstructed from scratch. The UK has reconstructed most core Ministries and a system of local government as well as security services. As of 2010, Sierra

Leone has a functioning police force and military as well as the ability to deliver basic services, even if those services are largely underwritten by external agencies.⁸ Sierra Leone has a positive score on the *Global Peace Index* (2010) of 96.⁹ At the same time, the current measurements of failure unusually differ. For example, Sierra Leone is ranked 29th on the 2010 *Failed States Index*, 13th on the 2010 *Index of State Weakness* and 9th on the 2009 *State Fragility Index*. Sierra Leone is firmly rooted to the bottom few countries in the United Nations Development Programme's (UNDP) *Human Development Index*. Until the 2009 index Sierra Leone ranked 177 out of 177 countries included in the index. In 2009 this has improved to 180 out of 182, with only Niger and Afghanistan below Sierra Leone.¹⁰

The Ugandan political system, based on Museveni's idea of 'The Movement', has had no effective opposition since the National Resistance Movement (NRM) took power in 1986. Whilst there are elections, the absence of an effective opposition and the crackdown on potential opposition groups some elements of the press, and recent persecution of homosexuals for example, means that there are issues over political legitimacy, including the democratic credentials of the government. These are particularly acute in those geographical areas that regard themselves as being outside the favoured ethnic groups, particularly amongst the Acholi in the North but also in the West Nile. In both areas the institutions of the state suffer from a lack of legitimacy due to past abuses, whilst the southern ethnicity of many of the military leads them to be regarded as an occupying force in some parts of the north rather than as a genuine security force.¹¹

Despite these internal political issues, Uganda remains relatively highly rated within the measurement of state failure. Uganda ranks only 21st on the 2010 *Failed States Index*, 27th on the 2010 *Index of State Weakness* and also 27th on the 2009 *State Fragility Index*. Uganda then is technically the most stable state of the three states examined here. In technical terms, the high capability of the Ugandan Civil Service, the stability brought by Museveni and the international role played by Uganda as peacekeepers in Somalia, for example, all contribute to Uganda's positive rating.

In many ways Zimbabwe's poor record in terms of international ratings reflects a structure that is a direct threat to the personal security of a number of its citizens and also fails to deliver services to much of the population. This is reflected in a poor performance in virtually all of the main failed state indices available. Zimbabwe rates as 4th in the 2010 *Failed States Index*, 1st in the 2010 *Political Instability Index*, 8th in the 2010 *Index of State Weakness* and 5th in the 2010 *African Governance Index*. Several of the key Ministries of state including Energy, Information, Foreign Affairs, Prisons and Railways are headed by senior military figures. Whilst there have always been close

8 Paul Jackson and Peter Albrecht (2010), *Security Sector Transformation in Sierra Leone 1997-2007*, Palgrave, Basingstoke.

9 Although this may be a result of Sierra Leone 'free-riding' on security provided externally by the UK.

10 Available at http://hdstats.undp.org/en/countries/country_fact_sheets/city_fs_SLE.html (accessed on 29th January 2010).

11 See Paul Jackson (2009), 'Negotiating with ghosts': Religion, conflict and peace in Northern Uganda', *The Round Table: The Commonwealth Journal of International Affairs*, Issue 402, June 2009, 319-332.

6 Paul D. Williams (2007), 'State Failure in Africa: Causes, Consequences and Responses', *Africa South of the Sahara 2007*, Europa World Yearbook, Routledge.

7 Knox Chitoyo (2009), *Security Sector Reform in Zimbabwe*, Royal United Services Institute Occasional Paper, London, September.

links between the Zimbabwean military, the Zimbabwe Defence Forces (ZDF), and politics, this has accelerated since 2000 with an alliance between the military and ZANU-PF designed to prevent the MDC (Movement for Democratic Change) from gaining power.

3.2 What was the Historical Evolution of that Failure?

At independence in 1961, Sierra Leone became a unitary state politically dominated by chiefs with their urban allies, the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP). Following elections in 1967, the then mayor of Freetown, Siaka Stevens, became Prime Minister but the SLPP encouraged the military to intervene, and thereafter the military became progressively politicised. Following a series of other military interventions, Stevens assumed full presidential powers in 1968 and effectively held sway until his appointed successor took over following a one-party referendum in 1985.

This one-party state was marked by further centralisation of resources and power in Freetown and a growing alienation, amongst youth in particular, in the countryside. Also by this time, the regime was almost entirely reliant on a mixture of a security agreement with Guinea and various armed groups within the country paid off by the government. The state was systematically plundered, undermining every state institution in the process. With the state about to collapse Stevens handed over power and the added dimension of international mercenaries, coups and counter-coups in Freetown meant that the state was unable to resist the violence of the RUF. In January 1999, RUF combatants nearly seized control of Freetown using extreme violence.

The RUF security threat had largely dissipated by 2000, but the country was faced with a number of additional security issues, including unstable borders and neighbours, lacking security infrastructure and discredited institutions. The war produced a rapidly urbanised population with no economic status, a population about to be increased by ex-combatants. The spiralling decline in security in Sierra Leone is critical to what has been achieved in Sierra Leone since. Such a descent into anarchy as Sierra Leone experienced in the 1990s cannot be reversed by a short term programme.

The evolution of security in Uganda is dominated by the colonial Ugandan state which crudely, divided British-ruled Uganda into an impoverished north used as a recruitment pool for the military, and an economically strong south. The Ugandan state was centralised under Milton Obote and then Idi Amin, accompanied by well-documented bloody regimes that created an authoritarian structure that did not tolerate opposition. In a similar manner to Sierra Leone, security services were an integral element of power, concentrating on eliminating political opposition. The structure was underpinned by a military dominated by northerners who relied on this access for resources. This translated into a post-independence military dominated by northerners until the victory of the NRM in 1986. This then led to further violence as the dispossessed

northerners formed a succession of resistance movements, including the LRA that have lasted until very recently and have directly affected the poor security of parts of Uganda.

Zimbabwe is a longer story, going back to the end of the Rhodesian Bush War in 1980. The gradual politicisation of the military throughout, led to a conflation of ideologies into national security equating to the security of the state, the party and the Mugabe regime.¹²

In short, Mugabe first isolated and then destroyed political rivals in the security services and then proceeded to politicise senior military figures. This was partly implemented outside most of the formal military. But following the departure of the British Military Advisory Training Team (BMATT) in 2000 and the increased threat of political opposition from the MDC after the presidential elections of 2000, the militarisation of Zimbabwean politics proceeded apace. What the history of the integration process shows clearly is that the ZANU-PF and military alliance to isolate political opposition has been a long-term programme with the seeds sown in the early years of Zimbabwe.¹³

At the same time, the growth of opposition in the shape of the MDC led the regime to ally itself with the 'war veterans', which further cemented the links with the ZDF () and the political regime since many ZDF members were veterans themselves. The failure to prevent the popularity of the MDC led to major risks to the Mugabe regime in elections of 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2008, when despite widespread intimidation the regime had to resort to widespread vote-rigging to cling to power but was still forced to form a Government of National Unity in 2009.

3.3 What are the Key Characteristics of Failure?

All three states have had different varieties of centralised state. In the case of Zimbabwe, a post-colonial but ethnically exclusive government dominated the state, whereas the post-colonial experiences of both Uganda and also Sierra Leone show an increasingly centralised state that became more authoritarian with a series of rulers who became increasingly bloody. The structures of all three states were designed for regime protection and the systematic exclusion of elements of the population.

The security services of Zimbabwe were integrated and then developed by a UK BMATT until 2000, whereas the Uganda military has been supported by several external actors including the UK, and partners in the War on Terror. Sierra Leone has had a long-term intervention from the UK, particularly as part of a Security Sector Reform programme with investment in police, key ministries and security. Questions remain about sustainability and accountability of finance and ownership.¹⁴ There has also been a relative underdevelopment of civilian control of the security infrastructure in Sierra Leone notwithstanding the heavy external investment.

12 See, for example, Sabelo J. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009), 'Making Sense of Mugabeism in Local and Global Politics: 'So Blair, keep your England and let me keep my Zimbabwe', *Third World Quarterly*, Vol.30, No.6, 1139-1158.

13 See Paul Jackson, 'Military Integration from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe' *Civil Wars*, (forthcoming).

14 Jackson and Albrecht, 2010.

Lack of civilian control is echoed in Uganda where a security governance mechanism including Parliamentary oversight is formally mandated, but where there have also been significant off-budget expenditures on intelligence and paramilitaries outside these controls.¹⁵ The decline of the Uganda Police Force since the 1960s has been precipitated by the increased use of intelligence agencies to support regimes rather than provide security to the population. Lack of police capacity has resulted in escalating crime, particularly in the North; the creation of the Violent Crime Crack Unit (VCCU) and the Joint Anti-Terrorism Taskforce (JATT) to augment the police; and the continual use of military personnel within the police force. Capacity issues led to the mobilisation of local administration police, auxiliary forces and Local Defence Forces as well as private security firms, where in urban areas they outnumber the UPF by a factor of two.¹⁶ There are also several unofficial private security firms and local militias, and a proliferation of politicised security headed by senior political advisers. The *Kalanga Action Plan*, for example, has been implicated in extortion and intimidation. Whilst Museveni describes this as an “action group of the Movement which helps in gathering intelligence in disturbed areas”, opposition politicians describe it as a “terrorist organisation”.¹⁷

The geographical, political and economic isolation of Northern Uganda means that the South remains stable but subject to increasingly authoritarian rule and the security budget operates beyond public scrutiny. The periphery, in contrast, has been subject to violence by insurgents and counter-insurgents.¹⁸ Attempts to reform security governance in a *Defence White Paper* in 2004 resulted in the President accusing donors of interfering with Ugandan sovereignty, but the Paper is widely seen as essentially an attempt to prevent donors interfering with the accumulation of wealth by the political and military elite.

Within Zimbabwe the spread of politicisation has been accompanied by control of state institutions by the military as well as political control of and by the security forces. This has been seen in a number of operations linked to the forcible appropriation of land from commercial white farmers; attempted control of the 2002 elections including co-ordination of youth groups, war veterans and intelligence actors in intimidating voters; and the forced demolition of high density urban housing as collective retribution against MDC supporters. Additionally, there have been military-style operations by the ZDF, intelligence and paramilitaries in regions which had voted for the MDC. Indoctrination camps were established for the non-loyal and the Joint Operations Command effectively became a political organisation.

Along with control of state institutions, the military has been engaged in diamond mining and trading for some time. Starting in Eastern Zimbabwe, the military has abused diamond, gold and other mining operations, most of which are small scale, but many of which are extremely lucrative.¹⁹ It seems unlikely that the military will relinquish their control of such a profitable source of revenue easily; they have extended their interests in diamonds through involvement in the DRC, where the ZDF act as a conflict entrepreneur.²⁰ Diamonds have catapulted the military-political class of Zimbabwe into the global diamond trade through mining and later through the emergence of Harare as a major diamond processing centre. Diamond revenues have led to the accumulation of huge personal fortunes for military and political leaders in Zimbabwe, but also to the need to cling to power in order to further ‘milk’ the system.

The Zimbabwean military is inextricably entwined with both ZANU-PF and the illicit trade in mineral wealth, thus the nature of state fragility in Zimbabwe is not one of lack of control, rather it is one of a kleptocratic autocracy run by a military-political elite to the detriment of most of the population. This raises the question of whether a failed state is failed at all, or just a state that does not conform to a set of predetermined indicators that is therefore not much liked by the international community. In the case of Zimbabwe one interpretation is that of an elite that has allied itself to a repressive and capable security apparatus and then effectively been able to separate its own existence from that of the state itself through gaining access to diamonds. This access to the international diamond markets effectively means that the Zimbabwean elite do not need to provide services, collect tax or maintain legitimacy in order to continue controlling the country. However, this does not necessarily mean that this structure is liable to imminent collapse. In fact, it has withstood considerable international and domestic pressure for some years even if it does not fulfil the external conditions necessary to count as a strong state.

The danger faced by Sierra Leone and Uganda is that they too could wed military power with security without the development of civil and democratic institutions to exercise control. The fact that Uganda has access to diamonds and other minerals through the DRC and that Sierra Leone is also a diamond-bearing region is also relevant in terms of the ability of the military to maintain itself through access to lucrative international trade, rather than relying on domestic political consensus or access to taxes. Consequently, this may have dire repercussions for the future of those who rely on the state for the provision of services, since these states may become less interested in running a state as service provider and more interested in a state as security institution protecting personal fortunes.

4. Conclusion: Willing States to Fail?

Much of the scholarship on state failure rests on the balance between those states that fail as a result of lack of capacity and

15 For example, in the 1960s President Obote created the General Service Department (GSB) which was superseded by Amin's Public Safety Unit and the State Research Bureau, and following the fall of Amin in 1979 several GSB agents were formed into the National Security Agency. This has produced a legacy of distrust that the current Internal Security Organisation has struggled to throw off.

16 Sabiiti Mutengesha and Dylan Hendrickson (2008), *State Responsiveness to Public Security Needs: The Politics of Security Decision-Making. Uganda Case Study*. Conflict, Security and Development Papers, No. 16, June 2008, King's College, London.

17 Quoted in Mutengesha and Hendrickson, 2008.

18 A wide ranging Defence Review was carried out in 2002-4 and a *Defence White Paper* was also produced in 2004.

19 Human Rights Watch (2009), *Diamonds in the Rough: Human Rights Abuses in the Marange Diamond Fields of Zimbabwe*, June.

20 Chitiyo, 2009.

those that fail as a result of political will. The three cases are illustrative of how these two issues are inextricably entwined and how they influence each other. However, what they also show is that there are similarities within the political dynamics of failed states over time that can be drawn out despite significant differences. It remains difficult to come to any real conclusions about these states other than to point out that they are all at different stages of 'failure'. However, they do have certain similarities in the nature of their failure. They are (or were in the case of Sierra Leone) all hugely centralised, if not personalised states ruled by very small elites that included senior politicians and senior military figures. Both Museveni and Mugabe were insurgency leaders of politicised insurgent groups and have maintained those links over a long period of time. These relationships have morphed into unhealthy relationships based on personal greed and the politicisation of the military – or indeed the militarisation of politics in the case of Zimbabwe.

However, this does not imply a simple linear relationship or that the contexts of the case studies are the same, even if there are some similarities. Structural factors also combined within Africa to create local conditions unsuitable for state building: power was abused, and the Cold War then added another layer of difficulty on top of nation building. The colonial legacy of artificial borders meant additionally that some states were not geographically viable because they lacked the basic factors necessary to run a state and borders did not represent the ethnic, trade and traditional ties on the ground or they were simply too big.²¹ Contextual factors are also numerous, but can be summarised into five key areas:

The *first*, perhaps unsurprisingly, is the poor or even deliberately damaging behaviour of African leaders exercising patrimonial rule. Examples such as Samuel Doe and Charles Taylor (Liberia), Siaka Stevens (Sierra Leone) Mobutu Sese Seko (Zaire) and Robert Mugabe (Zimbabwe) are all examples of leaders who created kleptocratic regimes with the aim of personal benefit and to the benefit of specific elites at the expense of the majority of the population. Within the case studies this is a clear feature of the post-colonial state as well as its inheritors and in all cases has been a key causal factor in continuing conflict.

Second, there is the warlord, or the individual who opposes the government for a particular reason and who deliberately establishes a quasi-feudal system with him (and it is usually a 'him') at its head. The aims are usually very similar – personal gain, exploitation of the population, etc. – but they do not control the institutions of the state even if they contest state sovereignty. They do, however, exploit weak states and seek to benefit from the trappings of weak states, including access to the international community.

Third, African states frequently suffer interference from neighbouring states. At one stage in the 1990s and early 2000s, the Sudanese Government was certainly supporting the LRA in its bases across Southern Sudan, both as an ally in the fight against the SPLA but also as a proxy weapon against Uganda. At the same time, Uganda was supporting the SPLA as an anti-

Sudanese movement and also as a proxy force to attack the LRA's Sudanese bases. Even after these conflicts had died down, the two governments were both supporting different armed groups in the northern DRC and fighting what amounted to a proxy war.²²

Fourth, all of these groups have easy, cheap and quick access to a wide variety of armaments to fight all of these wars since the continent is awash with small arms in particular, heavier arms as well. This means that any group wishing to set up an insurgency can do so relatively easily since the entry costs are relatively cheap.

Last, but important, the destruction wrought by decades of rapacious and extremely damaging economic management of many states has left them unable to cope with the economic costs of fighting groups that contest sovereignty or, indeed, providing adequate employment opportunities for those who are likely to take up weapons or feel excluded enough to oppose the state.

All three sample states here are at different stages of a cycle of failure and incorporate different elements from the list above. The balance of these elements changes over time as centralised political power is increasingly able to accumulate resources, but in so doing alienates other elements of society. Sierra Leone has been through a complete failure and then a rebuilding process that has led the country to where it is now. Whilst security institutions are not failing, it is the basic economic infrastructure that remains to be developed. Uganda has resolved part of the regional problem it faced with Sudan and has subdued parts of the north and the LRA. This leaves the issue of how to rebuild trust in governance and security institutions in the north. Finally, Zimbabwe has been on a long slide downwards, and whilst the 2009 formation of the Government of National Unity appears to have improved some areas of economic activity, the slide has become precipitous. It remains to be seen whether the political-military nexus can be removed so easily and the issue of security governance and the de-politicisation of the security services remains at the heart of any way forward for Zimbabwe.

Seeing these three states as being at different chronological stages of post-conflict development raises some interesting questions for further research. In particular, will rebuilding the security institutions following conflict in Sierra Leone lead to a period where that country is regarded positively by the international community? Or, contrariwise, will it eventually become deeply politicised as the economic and political structures become increasingly exclusive and the political leadership becomes more reliant on security structures for regime protection and security structures more reliant on politicians for access to economic enrichment?

The Zimbabwean example of a peaceful end to a war, a peace agreement and internationally supported military integration and training for twenty years has eventually produced an effective security establishment that has by now become increasingly politicised and turned on its own people. In the Ugandan case, despite international military support and a view

21 Christopher Clapham, Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills (eds.) (2006), *Big African States*, Johannesburg, Wits University Press.

22 Jackson, 2009.

that Museveni is an ally in the War on Terror (and able to send troops), the government has constructed an internal security mechanism that is increasingly authoritarian. Sierra Leone remains at an early stage of the cycle, with significant external support from the UK in terms of training and equipment. This has been successful enough to provide troops for peacekeeping in Darfur in 2010. However, the SSR programme has been relatively weak in terms of civilian control, and there is a danger that the security institutions are far more capable than many of the civilian ones. This creates a difficult situation in many ways and one that is genuinely fragile. The danger in Sierra Leone is that a strong leader could inherit a strong security sector and begin to use it as a means of establishing authoritarian rule. It is incumbent on the international community to help prevent this situation by taking note of how failed states develop over time.

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Sabine Schulze, www.pw-portal.de Dezember 2010

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