On "Failed States"
Serge Sur

The term "failed states" currently enjoys great success in the international literature.Like many others, it is of American origin and is a quite recent usage, its popularity dating back some ten years, roughly to the time of the large-scale massacres in the Great Lakes region of Africa, particularly Rwanda.The reality is much older, but up until that point it had not had a commonly accepted label attached to it. Empirically, everyone can clearly see what is entailed: a state apparatus can no longer fulfil its essential functions, particularly that of ensuring the physical safety of its population. The result is not just internal upheaval, but external repercussions – intervention from neighbouring states, a massive flow of refugees, contagious instability – with the result that international peace and security are, in turn, threatened. But this may be a function of very diverse situations: can we mix together natural catastrophes and political disturbances, for example; is it right or useful to bring such varied upheavals under a single head; can we see them as belonging to a single intellectual category?

This raises two simple questions. First, is the term "failed state" a formula or a concept - and, if it is a concept, what is its meaning? Second, what purpose does this concept serve? Does it serve only to describe and understand a series of situations or does it allow us to develop common responses to those situations, a strategy for action enabling us to remedy the failure of states? In the former case, we are dealing with an analytical concept only, a concept of interest to academics and researchers; in the latter, with an operational concept that also concerns politicians, international organizations, NGOs, the defence world and all those who have to take a stance and act when faced with situations of this kind. The remarks that follow are an attempt to clarify the terms and the options, without claiming to provide complete and definitive answers.

A Formula or a Concept?

We must make it clear from the outset that, when we speak of a failed state, we are not referring only to the public authorities or, in other terms, the state apparatus.In keeping with the international definition of the state, we are speaking both of the public authorities – government, civil service and armed forces – and civil society.A state is at once a defined space, a given social group, and an independent political power that ensures – and in theory ensures alone – that the whole remains cohesive. The question of failure concerns these various aspects and may arise out of any of these elements or all three. Let us begin with some concrete situations, before saying a few words about the general conceptions of international relations that may in part be informed by them – and we may here, summarily, distinguish two such conceptions.

Some Concrete Situations. We have mentioned Rwanda. We might also have recalled the dissolution of Yugoslavia fifteen years ago, if not indeed the problems of Lebanon or Cambodia more than twenty years ago – or, alternatively, Afghanistan after the Soviet intervention in 1979. And, going back in time, why not mention the Poland of the late eighteenth century when three European states – Prussia, Russia and Austria – had decided to divide its territory between them? In the preamble to the treaties signed between these three powers on 25 July 1772, we read:

> In the name of the very Holy Trinity, the factional spirit that maintains anarchy in Poland leading us to fear the total disintegration of the state, which might trouble the interests of the neighbours of that republic, impair the good harmony that exists between them and kindle a general war, Austria, Prussia and Russia… have resolved… to re-establish order

within Poland and to give that state a political existence more in keeping with the interests of their region.[i]

The solution proposed – namely, predation by Poland's neighbours – clearly seems as hypocritical as it is anachronistic, though perhaps recent events may give us pause here. But in this document Poland is certainly presented as a failed state, although the term itself is not used. If we return to the contemporary period, the examples cited clearly show there is no reason to restrict the phenomenon to Africa; Europe itself is not exempt.

Tending still toward generalization, might we not wonder whether the very expression "failed state" is not a pleonasm; whether the state is not by nature "failed", that is to say, incapable of maintaining stable, peaceful international relations; whether the state, as the form of political organization of societies that it is, is not in itself a creator of disturbance, violence and conflict that we should transcend to arrive at other forms of social organization? This is a maximalist conception of the failed state and one we should address on account of the influence it has exerted – and continues to exert – on a substantial section of internationalist thinking, especially in France, where the international and the state dimensions are often seen as standing in opposition to one another: on this view, the state is regarded as structurally defective, and the best that could happen to it would be for it to be overtaken by new forms of political organization.

Over against this conception stands a more realist or empirical view, which notes that there are historical situations, historical failings of certain states, but that the solution always involves not the transcending of the state, but its reconstruction; that the state remains an unsurpassable form of political organization, that it is in a sense the absolute horizon of international society. On this basis, we may distinguish several forms or stages of state failure. And we may attempt to give an account of the diversity of historical situations in the form of an empirical typology of failures.

The Maximalist Conception

In the maximalist conception, the state is structurally defective.This thesis forms part of several currents of thinking that exert great influence in France.It has, for example, traditionally been the position of the federalist schools of thought, which argue that the co-existence of sovereign states leads necessarily to predation and war, the example of the division of Poland being instructive in this connection. Hence the quest for new forms of organization, of which the European Union is both the product and the precursor. Jean Monnet was, for example, a fervent and effective architect of such forms.

More recently, it has been the transnationalist schools of thought – of which the anti-globalists are the political wing – that have taken the view that, even in periods of peace, states are incapable of meeting the universal needs of international society – for example, in terms of economic regulation, development, the environment, human rights and humanitarian law. They must, then, be supplanted by a form of global governance, achieved not through institutions, but through spontaneous networks, forms of concerted regulation between experts, interest groups and activists – in short by the primacy of civil societies over public institutions.

The two schools of thought come together on one simple theme: the state is too big for the local and too small for the international. Consequently, it is in need not of reform, but of being transcended. Evidence is provided by the fact that states themselves are incapable of

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i Cited in Albert Sorel, *La Question d'Orient au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Plon, 1889), pp. 227-228.

reconstructing failed states. They can strive to limit the effects of failure and to manufacture substitute structures, but they cannot solve their basic problems. All these disparate, intermittent phenomena can be said, on this view, to be premonitory signs of a final crisis of the state, a crisis that calls for radical change. Without embarking on a systematic discussion of these schools of thought which is not our subject here, we have to note that September 11th dealt a very heavy blow to these kinds of theory.

In respect of our concerns here, three consequences have ensued. First, we have had to acknowledge that civil societies are not a panacea: civil societies also include international organized crime networks, international terrorist networks, networks of uncontrolled proliferation of WMD. In other words, Al-Quaeda has superimposed itself, within dominant perceptions, on Médecins sans frontières or Amnesty International. Subsequently, it has come to seem that the answer to the forms of insecurity crystallized both spectacularly and tragically by September 11th depended on states and states alone. Lastly, what some have called "the return of the state" – wrongly, since it never went away – has given a new significance to the failed states phenomenon: it is no longer only within their borders or in the immediate vicinity that the threat they represent is located. That threat is becoming a virtually universal one, as a result of the space it makes available to clandestine immigration networks, mafiosi, proliferators, terrorists and other international criminals.

The Realist Conception

The realist conception is based on the historical failings of states.In this case, the state is no longer regarded as structurally infirm and intellectually doomed.It is seen as an historical form of social organization that has not as yet been replaced by any other. Admittedly, though there is a single model of the state at the juridical level and though all states are sovereign and equal, they are in reality very diverse, and increasingly so as they become more numerous.

An increase in the number of states, indeed a veritable proliferation of them, was a feature of the twentieth century. This was the product, initially and generally, of decolonization. Subsequently, and more particularly in Europe, it was caused by the break-ups associated with the disappearance of the USSR and the Communist bloc. Roughly speaking, the number of states has increased fourfold since 1945 – from around 50 to nearly 200. This underscores the fact, incidentally, that the state has in no way been transcended as a form of political and social organization. On the contrary, it has never before been so successful.

However, the proliferation of states is not the only interesting phenomenon from this point of view. We also saw certain states disappear in the twentieth century, including some very important ones - Austria-Hungary, the USSR, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia, in particular - not to mention the intermittent existence led by some, such as the Baltic states, or the tribulations undergone by the German state. In theory, a state is formed for eternity. At least it thinks of itself as eternal. In reality it may disappear. The disappearance of the state may represent its major failure or may be a response to that failure, insofar as smaller, but more robust states may form from its ruins. We may cite here the example of Czechoslovakia.

But this is not always the case. For example, at least four of the six states formed from the former Yugoslavia – Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Macedonia – have problems which, if they do not threaten their existence, at least undermine their stability. If not officially failed, they are at least under close external surveillance and, in some cases, in receipt of permanent assistance. This leads us to the conclusion that we have to distinguish between several types, and possibly several degrees, of failure. It is at this point that we may ask ourselves whether it is right to bring

together under a single head what are, in reality, different situations; whether we should not argue in terms of situations rather than categories. The category of failed state might be said to lack homogeneity; it might be said to be the product of a superficial, rapid conception and, to quote Jean-Paul Sartre, an illusion generated by an "abstract internationalism", claiming to "achieve, by means of universality, an aristocratic detachment".[ii]

The Bankrupt State

We may set aside the notion of *bankrupt state*, which is sometimes used to refer to countries whose financial situation has deteriorated so badly that they can no longer pay the interest on their colossal public debts, meet their civil service wage bills etc. The notion of the bankrupt state also implies a solution to the problem:if such states could be declared legally bankrupt, then, through international intervention by the IMF or the IBRD, for example, their financial slates could be wiped clean – at the cost of putting their entire financial apparatuses into trusteeship.

This idea has sometimes been mooted in connection with Argentina's recent difficulties, but it has not been implemented. More generally, the financial failure of a state generates social and political tensions. For example, many military rebellions in Africa are linked to the fact that the state can no longer pay its functionaries, particularly its military forces or security services.

Weak, Divided, Incapable, Collapsed, Beleaguered…

A distinction can be made between "soft" and "failed" states: the expression "soft states" – "weak states" is also used – was employed as early as the 1960s by Gunnar Myrdal to refer to the post-colonial African countries that were new states produced by decolonization.[iii] These seemed to be of questionable homogeneity and stability. They were based on artificial borders, had no national, religious or cultural unity, were led by authoritarian, but fragile, governments and were dramatically under-developed. Their situation has not changed fundamentally since that time, and it is among them that we find the clearest cases of state failure.

We may also make a distinction, on the basis of the origin or the symptoms of the failure, between the states faced with ethnic oppositions, with internal conflicts between communities that are tearing each other apart – which expresses itself in reciprocal oppression, if not indeed in more or less organized massacres – and those whose public services no longer function, which can no longer fulfil their governmental functions, provide security, justice and education for all, which have high levels of corruption and criminality and where the state apparatus is, in some ways, disintegrating. This distinction is, however, more apparent than real: it is insofar as the state does not seem to serve the general interest by its authority and public services that communal or ethnic tensions emerge or prevail – the case of the former Yugoslavia is quite clear in this regard.

We may also distinguish between *collapsed states* and *beleaguered states*. The collapsed state is a state, like the former Yugoslavia that disintegrates beneath the weight of difficulties of internal origin. The beleaguered state is one that is confronted with infiltration and disorder originating among its neighbours – for example, in recent times, the former Zaire or the dangers currently besetting Ivory Coast. Here again, this is a relative distinction, because the phenomena

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ii Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?* Translated by Bernard Frechtman (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 145.
iii Gunnar Myrdal, *The Challenge of World Poverty* (New York: Random House, 1970).

are often intertwined. It does, however, illustrate the fact that failure may prove to be contagious and there is a high risk of a failed state exporting its difficulties to its margins, as in the case of Macedonia or the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Rogue States"

Another interesting distinction is that between *rogue states* and *failed states*.At first sight, these are opposite categories:a rogue state – another controversial notion of American origin – is a state whose policies represent an overt threat to its surrounding area because it violates international treaties or humanitarian law, exerts a police dictatorship or even sets about equipping itself with weapons of mass destruction.

From another point of view, however, a rogue state is a potential failed state, because the measures taken against it from outside may lead to its collapse – e.g. Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge, current Afghanistan or Iraq. We may even ask what would become of Syria or Iran – or indeed North Korea or Nigeria – if the regime were to disappear. The interface between rogue state and failed state may also depend on the perception one has of it: in the case of Darfur, for example, we may take the view that Sudan is incapable of controlling private militias, but also that those militias are, in reality, acting with its collusion and that it is actually responsible for genocide.

We may conclude this brief catalogue with an element that is common to the various situations: they all have international implications. This is an aspect of the definition of failure too: a failed state is a state that cannot solve its problems alone; it is a state that needs external intervention, even if it does not request it. Failures do, admittedly, differ in their nature. A bloody dictatorship poses a challenge to humanitarian law, and hence to universal values. This may lead to an external intervention – e.g. Cambodia, Rwanda, Kosovo and, to a lesser extent, Iraq. But the flow of refugees troubles and disturbs the neighbours of a state, which raises more directly a question of regional security. More generally, the existence of spaces beyond the reach of state authority, in which gangs operate unrestrainedly – as in the case of Sierra Leone where they compete to control the diamond trade – fuels international criminality, the child-soldier phenomenon and terrorism, if not indeed the proliferation of WMD, which raises a more general problem of international security.

But this is to slide into the discussion of responses to state failure. We have now to ask ourselves whether the notion of failed states can be operational; whether it can lead to organized responses, to a strategy of normalization and, if so, to what strategy or strategies.

Reactions:Prevention and Preemption

Generally speaking, thinking and doctrine on this subject run along two complementary paths:the prevention of failures, and reactions where there is manifest failure.These are also alternative paths. That is to say, there is no sense in the second unless the first has not been taken or has produced no results. We shall devote the following remarks to this second path – remarks which, here again, contain more questions than solutions, since, though we can identify the problems, that does not mean we know how to solve them. *Prevention.* This is apparently the easiest and the least costly. It is also the noble approach, since it avoids all violence and should require only limited resources.

In reality, it is for a whole range of reasons the most difficult to implement. As a result, it still belongs more to the realm of theory than to that of practice. Both Boutros Boutros-Ghali's

Agenda for Peace (1992) and the Evans-Sahnoun report, *The Responsibility to Protect (2001),* have thus remained largely theoretical.

The idea governing this approach is that we should be able to identify in timely fashion the dangers of a state's integrity being undermined, either by the disintegration of the state apparatus or by the intensification of internal tensions that can lead to armed confrontation, when the state in question does not seem able to respond to those dangers. We shall then be able to speak of "failing states", a situation that calls for preventive action. The identification of these states assumes several preconditions of different kinds – first at the level of analysis, then at the level of strategy.

At the analytical level, to begin with, we have to be able to identify the premonitory signs. This requires both information and vigilance. With regard to the premonitory signs, we could rely on some definite criteria: where the governed are concerned, the degree of national cohesion; where governments are concerned, their quality and honesty; where the government/governed relationship is concerned, respect for human rights, the existence of a pluralist system and free elections. We might, in this way, have spotted the disintegrative factors in the Yugoslav situation in due time.

However, vigilance is often lacking, because other states are occupied with their own priorities or are held back by the principle of non-intervention in the internal affairs of another state. Admittedly, the leading states have their analytical tools and remain carefully informed of the risks affecting the states concerned. But they are not necessarily ready to make their information or analyses public, or even to share them.

As for the international organizations, they do not always have the necessary means of information-gathering. They are most often dependent on information provided on a discretionary basis by their member states. Successive Secretaries General of the UN have complained about this. However, when, on the initiative of Mr Perez de Cuellar, an analysis and foresight unit was created within the United Nations, it soon became apparent that its resources were structurally inadequate. Moreover, if these organizations have the requisite information, they do not always use it – the example of Rwanda and the Dallaire telegram is well known.

There remain the NGOs, which are in theory disinterested, but whose information is by no means always reliable. On the one hand, they are interventionist on principle, since international action is for them a source of legitimacy, resources and visibility. On the other, their analyses may be ideologically skewed. We may, however, stress the quality of one NGO, namely *Crisis Watch*, created by the former Australian foreign minister Gareth Evans. This endeavours to identify dangerous situations and find solutions through a kind of private diplomacy or by making suggestions to governments. *Crisis Watch* publishes a regular Internet bulletin providing an update on tensions and risks at both the international and national levels.

Identifying failing states involves, secondly, *the strategic level*, though appropriate measures still have to be agreed upon. If we go back to the Yugoslav example, we can see retrospectively that the best course would have been for Europe to organize an amicable divorce between the various republics with the prospect of them all joining the European Union in the long term. In reality, some countries – e.g. France – attempted to maintain the unity of the country, while others – e.g. Germany – hastened its break-up, a contradiction that merely accelerated and amplified the violence. Only Macedonia had the benefit of preventative measures, with the deployment of an international security force, the presence which made it possible to maintain peace generally, then to ensure peaceful co-existence among the different communities.

One last remark on this subject: we generally refer to this type of approach as prevention.

But we might ask ourselves whether the term *pre-emption* would not be more exact. This approach presupposes, in fact, that the threats of failure are already present, and becoming aware of them is more of the order of an alert than prevention. Actually, when the premonitory signs are perceptible, it is already later than one thinks. Prevention in the proper sense of the term comes earlier in the process. It consists, rather, in ensuring that the state is sufficiently coherent and stable not to go off the rails in this way – for example, making certain that it is based on a democratic regime that respects human rights, equality between citizens, and individual and collective freedoms.

It is not simply at the level of principles that democracy is superior. It also provides greater solidity and stability for states because it allows for the peaceful expression of differences. And it permits the peaceful resolution of those differences on the basis of a shared rule of respect for the majority view, while human rights ensure respect for minorities. At bottom, the minimal conception of democracy is that it should constitute a procedure for the peaceful settlement of disagreements: without it, there is no other solution than civil and political violence. Elections are a procedure for deciding between opposing groups and arguments on the basis of a common rule (government by the majority while respecting the rights of the minority) that is accepted by all.Irrespective of any preference of an ideological character, the superiority of democratic regimes lies in their capacity to ensure the peaceable development of societies and the peaceful resolution of internal tensions. This was summed up by Tocqueville in one of his insightful formulas: *"Elections are institutionalized revolutions"*.

In these conditions, the best form of prevention in Europe is participation in the European Union, which imposes criteria that are likely to make for solidity and stability among the member states. This is, indeed, one of the paradoxes of the Union: while it is oriented towards the construction of a new economic and political entity, if not indeed a model of political organization that goes beyond the state, one of its most tangible outcomes is that it strengthens its member states, and this is actually one of the things which new members, for example, look to it to do. And this goes also for the old members: where would Belgium be, for example, without the European Union, which enables it to put its inter-communal tensions into perspective? The EU is not alone in contributing to this type of preventive action in Europe: we may, in this connection, also highlight the OSCE's oversight of elections or its protection of minorities within a broader framework than that of the European Union.

Crisis Management

After crisis management comes the reconstruction of states.In practical terms, these are two successive stages. In situations of emergency, crises have to be managed and there has to be intervention to halt violence. In the longer term, there has to be action to reconstruct the failed state.

Crisis management raises many questions that reach far beyond our preoccupations here. We shall examine only those that concern us directly. Generally, there is both a security and a humanitarian aspect to the problem: the security of persons and things has to be re-established or maintained and assistance has to be brought to distressed populations, if only to prevent the situation becoming more serious.

First, when we are confronted with overt violence, we have to ask where is the *threshold* at which intervention becomes desirable? This is a question of judgement, but interest also plays its part: for example, Australia will pay greater attention to East Timor than the European countries; France will be more concerned with Ivory Coast than Germany, the UK more watchful

in Sierra Leone than France. But one or more states must have both an interest in, and a capacity for, intervention for an action to be possible. This explains those situations that go to the bad amid relative indifference, as in Darfur,[iv] or the long-standing lack of action over Liberia before the United States made up its mind to provide minimum cover.If nothing is done, then there remains humanitarian action, support for NGOs, which for states means pretending to do something without really committing themselves.

Second, what is to be the *basis* of action, given that crises originate in an internal situation that it is properly for each state to resolve within its own frontiers? Can there be resort to armed force in a unilateral way? Can a state intervene militarily on the territory of another, even if humanitarian concerns provide the basis for that intervention? In principle the United Nations charter prohibits such interventions, except in cases of legitimate self-defence, which is not applicable in this case. If a Security Council resolution can be obtained permitting the formation of an intervention and security force, all is well once states are found that are willing to participate in it.

But what if the Council will not or cannot reach a decision? There remains the possibility of a humane intervention, also known as humanitarian intervention, led by a state or group of states acting on their own responsibility.[v] This is different in nature and scope from humanitarian interference, but its lawfulness is disputed. The doctrine could have been proclaimed six years ago, at the time of the Kosovo affair, but this step was – perhaps wrongly – not taken. The Evans-Sahnoun Report, *The Responsibility to Protect* (2001), retains a cautious – indeed, over-cautious – approach. The result of these legal prevarications is that it is difficult, when emergency situations present themselves, to react at the right moment.

Lastly, what form should action take, what *means* should be committed? This is a problem that concerns the defence sector specifically, since appropriate forces and strategies are needed. It has constituted a major field for the activity of armed forces in recent times and, hence, the question of failed states largely concerns the defence apparatus. Alongside military action properly so-called, there is also a civil, humanitarian and administrative strand, so that soldiers in action have also to be able to work together with civilian missions, international functionaries and NGOs.

The military authorities may also have cause to conduct negotiations in the field with

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iv It was not until January 2005 that the Report of a Commission of Enquiry on Darfur was drawn up, a report submitted to the Secretary General on the basis of Security Council resolution 1564 (18 September 2004). And this document of more than 160 pages confined itself to requesting that the case be referred to the International Criminal Court, created by the Rome Convention in 1978. Since the USA denies that court any jurisdiction, this proposal became a means not of preventing or curbing the massacres in Darfur, but of embarrassing the United States in the Security Council as part of a long-running diplomatic game. The USA had eventually to agree to the referral. But what view are we to take of a strategy that consists in putting the perpetrators of genocide on trial, when the effective solution would clearly have been to prevent them from doing harm, or to stop them as quickly as possible by armed intervention? One has the impression that idealism and cynicism meet here in a common passion for failure, since ultimately no one seems interested in the massacres themselves, but only in the media and diplomatic use that can be made of them, either to embarrass a partner or to pass off a problem on to a legal authority entirely incapable of resolving it.

v Serge Sur, "Le recours à la force dans l'affaire du Kosovo et le droit international," *Les Notes de l'IFRI,* 22, 2000.

belligerent factions to obtain ceasefires, the withdrawal of irregular forces, the disarming of militias etc. All this assumes officers have received special training for missions that extend far beyond military action in the narrow sense. Maintaining security itself requires a type of action far removed from war-fighting. Moreover, even when it comes to deploying armed forces, it is often necessary to interpret international mandates that may be drafted in vague terms.

State Reconstruction

State reconstruction is the long-term objective. There is no other since, as we have said, no alternative formula to the state has been found. Recent experience is not always encouraging, and not just in Africa, as is shown by Bosnia, Afghanistan, Iraq and even Kosovo, even though, strictly speaking, the latter is not a state. Other situations hang in the balance – and we are thinking here of Africa: Ivory Coast, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, among others. Cambodia is perhaps one of the only cases of relative success, or Lebanon, though in this latter case at the expense of the creation of a protectorate which recent developments have shown to be precarious.

The United Nations has acquired a considerable experience in this connection, but is substantially lacking in resources. It has been able, with the aid of regional organizations, specialized institutions, concerned states, and NGOs, to define integrated strategies of nation-building and state-building The United States has often stressed that it is not interested in nation-building, even if its own policy sometimes forces it to engage in it. On the other hand, it is a field in which the European Union can play a part, having both resources and expertise. It has expertise partly because of the historical – and, particularly, colonial – experience of several of its members and partly by dint of the successive phases of enlargement of the Union, which have involved thoroughgoing internal reform on the part of the new members.

However, the weakness of the EU is at the military level. It lies in the absence of appropriate collective intervention forces that are credible in the way that American forces can be – or could be until the setbacks surrounding intervention in Iraq. The EU needs this capacity, not to assert its power or develop a war-mongering policy, but to contribute more effectively to peace-making or peace-keeping. For the moment, the EU's contribution lies more in the civil domain.

While the reconstruction of the state is being awaited – or when that reconstruction is delayed, which is most frequently the case – a kind of practical trusteeship over the area in question generally eventuates. There is no definite legal status for this international trusteeship; it is based on regulations particular to each situation. It has at times been suggested that the trusteeship regime, for which provision was initially made in the United Nations Charter in 1945, should be renewed, with the reactivation of the Trusteeship Council that is one of the main organs of the UN.[vi]

Moreover, such a reactivation would make it possible to make up for the delay in reforming the Security Council and find an international political-administrative body that could define a mode of management and reconstruction for failed states. However, this idea runs up against a large number of objections, particularly from the non-aligned states. They see it as a way of implicitly creating a general category of weak states, placed under the surveillance and domination of the powerful ones.

The Security Council, by the anti-terrorism and anti-WMD-proliferation measures it has

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vi Alain Dejammet, *Supplément au voyage en Onusie* (Paris: Fayard, 2003).

imposed on all states (particularly through resolution 1373 of 28 September 2001 or 1540 of 28 April 2004), has already assumed oversight over them. In this way it may create new categories of failed states, namely those which will not or cannot obey its commands, and take the internal administrative, legal or policing measures entailed by these resolutions. Hence a degree of distrust on the part of the developing states towards intensive intervention, even intervention by international organizations.

Strategic Precepts

In conclusion or, more exactly, to pull the foregoing remarks together, the strategic directives can be boiled down to a few precepts, which are clearly simpler to formulate than to apply.

We should have indicators that enable us to pick up failures and identify the states under threat of failure, gauging the seriousness of that failure and the consequences that may flow from it, particularly in terms of regional and international security.

It is desirable to be able to act early, as the longer action is delayed the more expensive and uncertain it is. However, to avoid the suspicion of self-interested, predatory intervention by a particular state, it is desirable that such action should follow from an objective and independent report validated by an international or, at the very least, collective authority.

In the same spirit, it is preferable that the action should be coordinated by one or more international organizations, though it should not be the case that states, which alone have the necessary financial and, where relevant, military resources, pass the buck to organizations by entrusting them with responsibilities they are not capable of shouldering. So far as these international organizations are concerned, there is no automatic preference for the United Nations, and the choice of, or convergence between, global and regional organizations is a question of aptness. We should think in terms of comparative advantage or added value, not in terms of institutional hierarchy.

Lastly, it should be possible to deploy a broad and flexible range of resources at the diplomatic, legal, military, humanitarian and political levels. Since the situations that will face us are in each case individual, we cannot have rigid responses or a single, automatic approach, but this does not mean we should not have thought ahead about modes of action, so as to deploy pre-planned or pre-established resources rapidly. Hence the Brahimi Report (2000) on the reform of peacekeeping operations rightly suggested that legal formulas should be laid down in advance, so as to facilitate the organization of missions and timely temporary management of the areas and populations concerned. In other words, we should have at our disposal a series of options, from which we choose the most appropriate combination at the opportune moment.

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