Self-Help and Africa's Collapsed States

The Critical Role of Subregional Hegemons

Nikolas G. Emmanuel, PhD*

Despite ongoing debate over the past two decades, the international community appears far from adequately prepared to confront the complex problems of state collapse on the African continent and elsewhere. In these places, the central authority of the state has eroded to such a point that it leaves those trapped inside looking for nonstate alternatives for security as well as access to basic goods and services. In a great number of such instances, entities prepared to intervene and help reestablish collapsed states have remained on the sidelines, watching the chaos not only have an impact on local at-risk populations but also ooze over borders and exert its effects both nearby and far away. These extremely complex, volatile, and potentially contagious situations have left international actors perplexed and extremely hesitant to become involved, to say the least. Yet, failed states represent clear economic and security threats internationally. Such reluctance to intercede and provide assistance is troubling, given the tremendously high human and economic costs of state collapse.

Since the failed US intervention in Somalia in the early 1990s, humanitarian-military missions by major international actors to address state failure have proven short-lived at best (e.g., the United Kingdom in Sierra Leone or the European Union [EU] in the Democratic Republic of the Congo [DRC] and Chad / Central African Republic). Brief, tactical interventions rarely attempt to tackle the difficult, long-term tasks of strengthening these soft spots in the international landscape. Short-lived, very pointed missions can help stabilize a difficult situation, but such efforts alone cannot rebuild a collapsed state. These instances have left the relatively stronger subregional African powers such as Nigeria, Uganda, or Ethiopia trying to tackle the difficult task of restoring security and proper levels of governance to the failed states in their backyards. As Donald Rothchild indicates, "with no external enforcer to rely on . . . relatively better-functioning states are increasingly viewing some type of self-help as essential to reduce threats from violence."[1] However, one must ask if the regional security complexes dominated by particular subregional hegemons present a workable solution.[2]

---

*The author is an assistant professor in the Department of Political Science at Oklahoma State University. He received his PhD in political science from the University of California–Davis. His research focuses on the use of soft intervention strategies such as the deployment of positive inducements or negative disincentives to facilitate changes in the behavior of various actors in Africa.

The research presented here addresses these problems and concludes that the major international powers have a significant part to play in this dynamic; consequently, they should do more to increase the capacity and, perhaps more importantly, the legitimacy (at local, regional, and international levels) of subregional players in intervening to bolster the extremely weak states in their neighborhoods. They should do so because, if current trends continue, local core states will increasingly assume the burden of confronting state collapse, leaving the United States or EU member states to take on a more discreet role by providing training, intelligence, and assistance.

More than likely, regional and subregional actors in Africa organized around core countries will do most of the heavy lifting associated with interventions into the continent's collapsed and weak states in the foreseeable future. Angola, Ethiopia, Nigeria, Senegal, South Africa, Uganda, and other core African states have been left relatively alone to undertake the herculean challenges of extreme state weakness in places like Burundi, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan, and so forth. Granted, they frequently turn to subregional and regional organizations such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Southern African Development Community (SADC), Intergovernmental Authority for Development (IGAD), or the African Union (AU) for added legitimacy and resources. In reality, however, these core states for the most part are left on their own to supply and pay for assistance as well as suffer losses in their attempts to intervene and find solutions to these situations. These costs go far beyond the capacities of most African states by themselves. Besides the human and economic costs, however, intervening states frequently have mixed humanitarian and realist motives that significantly degrade their capacity to sustain protracted military and humanitarian interventions.

These two critical issues, capacity and legitimacy, undermine the practicality of having African actors undertake missions to rehabilitate fragile states on their own. These points need to be addressed in order to find African solutions to the problems associated with state collapse on the continent. In confronting these issues, this article discusses the experience of African subregional hegemonic state actors in their efforts to intervene in the continent's failed polities. In particular, the research presented here assesses the challenges that African core states confront in the current international political climate and the factors that influence their behavior in deciding when, where, and how to intervene. This article assumes that by helping to strengthen the legitimacy and capacity of key subregional actors, the international community can increase the ability of these crucial players on the continent to deal with collapsed states around them. Thus, we hope to stimulate further discussion about having African subregional actors confront failed states and the significant constraints involved. One needs to ask at what point core states on the continent can respond to collapse in their region.[3] In doing so, this article (1) examines the problems of collapsed states, (2) surveys potential solutions offered by African core states, and (3) assesses recent efforts of subregional hegemons to confront failed states on the continent.

Collapse

This discussion uses the terms *state collapse*, *state failure*, *fragile state*, and *extreme state weakness* interchangeably to refer to states that lack the capacity or the will to assure core functions of the contemporary state, especially providing security to their populations. Fundamentally, such states cannot control the activities of autonomous, private actors in their territories.[4] I. William Zartman succinctly points out that "state collapse . . . refers to a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart."[5] In an extreme situation, as in Liberia during much of the 1990s or Somalia since the late 1980s, the central state virtually disintegrates, and power devolves into the hands of local warlords or militia leaders. Frequently, from these acute instances, exceptionally violent and bitterly contested vacuums of authority emerge. These places represent "a black hole into which a failed polity has fallen . . . [where] substate actors [take] over."[6] Trapped inside, the collapsed state's "citizens" are left to fend for themselves while various nonstate actors wrestle for control of territory, people, and resources. Such circumstances illustrate Barry Posen's as well as David Lake and Donald Rothchild's version of the security dilemma operating at the domestic level.[7] As the state falls apart, groups arm to protect themselves in the "emerging anarchy" and the spiral of confusion while the heightened potential for violence begins to unfold. In the face of this uncertainty, local populations find themselves at extreme risk.

However, failure or collapse does not always mean that the remains of the state completely disappear from the scene. Critical players acting in the name of the state may retain some control of the capital city and/or outlying areas, as with Sierra Leone or the DRC.[8] In such resulting "archipelago states," the central government loses or relinquishes control in all but particular pockets, mainly where lucrative resources are concentrated.[9] Clearly, the concept of state collapse is relative to each particular situation. In one instance, the central government may virtually fade away, as in Somalia, or it may retain a relatively strong core and security/administrative apparatus, as in Sudan.

Nonetheless, the collapsed state has several discernable characteristics: (1) a lack of control of the territory within its international borders, (2) low levels of state/leadership legitimacy, (3) low levels of social cohesion, (4) frail and ineffective public institutions, and (5) limited extractive and growth-promotion capacities.[10] Perhaps most importantly, the failed state lacks "a monopoly on the use of force" throughout its territory.[11] Robert Bates argues that this Weberian approach points out the central quality of such events: the failing state cannot or will not provide security to the people in its territory.[12] It cannot enforce law and assert its authority.[13] As Robert Rotberg points out, these entities "lose authority over sections of territory" and stop controlling their borders as negative externalities such as terrorism and piracy spill out into neighboring countries.[14] As the state withers, its authority is supplanted by a wide variety of actors who take over security and organizational functions of the state. These autonomous nonstate actors "seize upon the lack of restraint resulting from state weakness to engage in economic and political practices antithetical to the well-being of both the state in which they reside and of neighboring states."[15]

In such an environment, the collapsing state frequently exhibits extremely low levels of legitimacy among large sections of its population. The public shows either limited or no acceptance of state leaders, who in many cases are the central causes of problems in the first place. Poor governance frequently lies at the heart of failure. Such a situation is often exacerbated when the state uses violence, lashing out against its perceived opponents in an effort to maintain control. Such brutality, as in the case of Siad Barre's vicious repression of the populations in northern Somalia in the late 1980s, simply destroys any genuine claim to popular authority. This action undermines social cohesion as the state begins targeting members of particular communities and labeling them opponents of the state. Groups are pulled apart and divisions deepen, leading to heightened tensions and greater potential for violence.

As Zartman argues, collapse is the end of a long process of disintegration of state institutions.[16] Given these indicators, predicting state failure would seem relatively easy, but if frail and ineffective public institutions suggest potential collapse, one may tend to overpredict failure in much of the developing world. To a large extent, Africa has highly overcentralized and overexpanded states that take on too many responsibilities and go to extremes to concentrate decision-making power and resources in a small handful of elites. This tendency makes the state a significant "prize" to many actors, undermining regime longevity and stability.

Furthermore, capitals and other economically profitable locations become targets for a variety of state and nonstate actors that prey on them. Such behavior, as the authority collapses, weakens the ability of the state to extract resources and promote alternatives to failure. Corruption and mismanagement all too frequently leave available resources open to squandering and misallocation. The emergence of illegal economies also has an undermining effect, as state and nonstate elites compete for control of any lucrative, lootable resources. These illicit transnational trade networks fuel conflict and compound the situation in collapsed states, frequently spilling chaos across borders. The question then becomes, when does the menace of the externalities of state collapse justify self-help from more stable states in the region?[17]

The Spillover Effects of Collapse

State failure has an effect on multiple levels of the international system. The phenomenon clearly takes its biggest toll on the populations directly involved but also has a significant impact on regional and international stages.[18] Externalities or spillover effects that confront the global community include transnational terrorism, piracy, infectious diseases, regionalization of civil wars, attacks on coethnics across international borders, massive refugee outflows, illicit commercial networks of all types, environmental damage, disruption of trade flows, and costly peacekeeping and reconstruction efforts, among others. Some of these issues have grabbed the headlines of the world's major newspapers and have received much attention in Washington and elsewhere. Regardless of any awareness of the potential impact of state collapse, major powers have no real interest in intervening and rescuing the residents of failed states such as Somalia or the Central African Republic. However, considerable interest exists in tackling some of the externalities of these fragile states, such as terrorism, piracy, and so forth.

Consequently, in the past decade and a half, academics and policy makers have increasingly turned their attention to failing states. In 1994, for example, the Clinton administration began funding the State Failure Task Force (now the Political Instability Task Force), which has made great strides in comprehending the underlying factors involved in state collapse and identifying key variables to help predict future episodes of failure.[19] However, the events of 11 September 2001 (9/11) awoke the US government to the potential effect of the externalities of collapsed states such as Afghanistan. Shortly after, in 2002, Washington made fragile states a central plank in its foreign policy agenda, arguing that US national security was "now threatened less by conquering states than . . . by failing ones."[20] In 2004 the Bush administration took further steps to deal with such countries by putting together the US State Department's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, which attempts to facilitate interagency coordination on collapsed states across the national security bureaucracy. According to the US Agency for International Development, "Failing and post-conflict states pose one of the greatest national and international security challenges of our day, threatening vulnerable populations, their neighbors, our allies, and ourselves."[21] In 2005 Bush also established a Policy

Coordination Committee for Reconstruction and Stabilization Operations to facilitate cooperation among bureaucracies on this issue.[22]

However, since the 9/11 attacks, Washington has primarily expressed its focus on collapsed states in relation to the US war on terrorism—not to the dangers these situations pose to neighboring countries or their populations. Thus, regional bodies and the better-functioning states in the affected area are left to confront the direct effects of state collapse. Intervention by these core states represents the only attempt to bring some modicum of security to extremely unstable environments.

Cases of Collapse in Africa

This article's identification of critical cases draws from the Political Instability Task Force's data set available in "Consolidated Problem Set," using it to examine the "major political instability events" episodes (referred to here as state collapse) from 1989 to 2009 in Africa.[23] We address this time period for two reasons. First, earlier conflicts leading to collapse in much of the developing world were dominated by the Cold War. The end of this East-West struggle left many states and regions to sort out various civil wars and problems of state weakness by themselves. Second, after 1989 one begins to see the emergence of regional security complexes in Africa aimed at confronting state collapses on the continent and the civil conflicts that frequently accompany them. Less than a year after the fall of the Berlin Wall, the Nigerian-led Economic Community of West African States Monitoring Group (ECOMOG) intervention into Liberia in August 1990 represents an important turning point in this evolution.

Furthermore, one might ask, why look at Africa? Simply, this continent suffers more from extreme state weakness and outright collapse than any other region on the planet. According to the Political Instability Task Force, in the past two decades, 26 of the 53 countries in Africa (49 percent) have experienced some form of failure (table 1). The length of the episodes varies from six months for Guinea in 2000 to more than 40 years for Uganda (1966–2006).

Table 1 also underlines the intractability of many of these cases, the 29 episodes having an average length of 141.8 months or almost 12 years. State failure, it appears, does not simply go away on its own. It endures, making outside help crucial. Furthermore, one should point out that state weakness

Table 1. Interventions in collapsed states in sub-Saharan Africa, 1989–2009

State	Start Date	End Date	Total Duration (months)	Major Power	UN	Regional Body	Core State(s)
Algeria	5/91	12/04	163				
Angola	1/75	3/02	326		UN		
Burundi	8/88	5/05	201		UN	AU	South Africa, Ethiopia
Central African Republic	3/03	—	73*	France	UN		Libya
Chad	10/65	10/94	348	France	UN	Organization of African Unity	Libya
Chad	10/05	—	43*	EU, France	UN		
Comoros	9/95	4/99	55	France			
Congo-Brazzaville	6/97	12/99	30				Angola
Congo-Kinshasa	3/92	—	193*	EU, France	UN		Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Sudan, Chad
Djibouti	11/91	6/94	31	France			
Egypt	2/92	3/99	85				
Ethiopia	7/61	5/93	382				
Ethiopia	2/99	6/00	16		UN		
Guinea	9/00	3/01	6				
Guinea-Bissau	6/98	9/03	63			ECOWAS	Senegal
Côte d'Ivoire	9/02	4/07	55	France	UN	ECOWAS	Senegal
Kenya	10/91	9/93	23				
Lesotho	5/98	1/99	8			SADC	South Africa
Liberia	11/85	8/03	213		UN	ECOWAS	Nigeria
Mali	6/90	1/95	55				
Mozambique	7/76	10/92	195		UN		
Rwanda	10/90	7/01	129	France	UN		
Senegal	9/92	12/99	81				
Sierra Leone	3/91	3/02	132	UK	UN	ECOWAS	Nigeria
Somalia	5/88	—	251*	US	UN	AU	Ethiopia (unilateral), Uganda (AU)
South Africa	8/84	6/96	142				
Sudan (North-South)	7/83	1/05	258		UN		
Sudan (Darfur)	2/03	-	74*		UN	AU	
Uganda	4/66	5/06	481				
Average			141.8				

Source: Political Instability Task Force, "Consolidated Problem Set," version 2010, http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/PITF%20Consolidated%20Case%20List2010.pdf.

*These cases are ongoing; the duration lists the number of months through April 2009.

is a chronic affliction for many countries, with new episodes reoccurring regularly. All five of the current ongoing cases (i.e., Central African Republic, Chad, Congo-Kinshasa, Somalia, and Sudan) have experienced multiple periods of state collapse since independence.[24] Sudan, for example, has effectively been a failed state since 1956, except for a brief period from 1972 to 1983. Besides its recent emblematic and virtual total collapse of governance, Somalia also experienced instability in the 1960s. Additionally, the DRC went through extremely difficult times shortly after independence, again in the 1970s, and most recently since 1996. Chad also has been described as a "mere geographic expression" on a map for most of its existence, suffering from repeated episodes of state collapse.[25]

Intervening in the Collapsed State

It is important to notice that 17 of the 29 African episodes (59 percent) of state collapse from 1989 to 2009 experienced some sort of outside intervention. In this study, the term *intervention* refers to an external third party's coercive intrusion into the internal affairs of a state for the purpose of restoring order (i.e., some semblance of security). These actions utilize the armed forces of the outside state or a group of states primarily to protect at-risk populations within collapsed states from wide-scale suffering or death, as well as to help reestablish the central government. Such interventions seek to assist the various actors within the collapsed state in overcoming the security dilemma by facilitating information flows between them as well as helping these groups commit to peace and renewed order. As Patrick Regan, Richard Frank, and Aysegul Aydin point out, "third-party interventions . . . are . . . attempts to manipulate the preferences of warring parties and, thus, conflict outcomes."[26] Although their research specifically addresses interventions in civil wars, the same idea holds for collapsed states, which frequently share similar dynamics.

Additionally, since nonintervention historically has been the norm in the Westphalian state system, some parties might construe such actions as hostile intrusions. However, to give legitimacy to these military actions, what remains of the rump state frequently invites an outside third party to come in. Further, either an international body such as the United Nations (UN) or a regional body such as the AU or ECOWAS can justify such interventions. Generally speaking, James N. Rosenau observes that these actions have two primary characteristics: (1) they break the convention or norm of nonintervention, and (2) they are intentionally directed at altering the structure of political authority—qualities shared by external military interventions.[27] A variety of actors participate: 10 of the 17 interventions by third-party actors in African failed states involved major powers (EU, France, United Kingdom, and United States); 15, the UN; nine, regional bodies; and 11, African core states.

Concerning global powers, several interesting trends appear in the data on intervention in Africa's collapsed states. In the post-Mogadishu international environment, only the EU, France, and the United Kingdom have sent their military forces into failed-state environments with the goal of providing security to populations and stabilizing the central government. These actions were relatively short—several months at the most. The United Kingdom went into Sierra Leone from May to June 2000 with a small force of about 1,000 troops to repulse the Revolutionary United Front and revive the flailing peace process under the aegis of the UN. The EU and France undertook brief missions in the DRC in Ituri and Kinshasa, as well as slightly longer missions in both Chad and the Central African Republic, along the Sudanese border. The only exception to these types of short-lived interventions has been France's involvement in the Côte d'Ivoire, which has continued since 2002. Aside from these exceptions, other actors have assumed the lion's share of stabilizing and resuscitating Africa's failed states.

Historically, the UN has served as the central participant during direct armed interventions in collapsed states in Africa and elsewhere, but that organization no longer goes in alone or puts troops on the ground first. Currently, African organizations and states play the predominant role in initial military operations in Africa—a clear, growing trend that has created a multitiered conflict-management system. The UN coordinates initial intervention by regional forces, providing legitimacy and material to support a local reaction. This trend began in the early 1990s as a response to the ECOWAS direct military intervention in Liberia, which was organized by the ECOWAS regional body and began in August 1990. Shortly thereafter, "in his 1992 report, *An Agenda for Peace*, former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali argued that regional security arrangements be used to lighten the UN's heavy peacekeeping burden as foreseen in Chapter 8 of the UN Charter."[28] Since this concept of burden sharing has blossomed in

Africa, African subregional bodies—including ECOWAS, SADC, and IGAD, along with the AU—have begun developing their own security complexes and deploying their own troops in a growing number of failed states and civil conflicts. In turn, the international community increasingly has tried to bolster the response capacity of these subregional and regional organizations. Africa has experienced this evolution in cooperation more than any other region on the planet. The model is now being implemented in Sudan/Darfur and Somalia but has appeared in a number of other cases during recent years, including Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Comoros, and Lesotho, to name a few. This scenario represents a new trend in the geopolitical order of Africa specifically and the international system more generally. Previously, African states had preserved the status quo, closely defending internal sovereignty. One of the central points of agreement in the Organization of African Unity—the Westphalian concept of nonintervention—has changed since the end of the Cold War.

Table 1 lists four interventions undertaken by all four types of actors (i.e., major powers, the UN, regional as well as subregional organizations, and core African states), either together in a synchronized operation as in Sierra Leone or the Côte d'Ivoire. On seven occasions, the UN teamed up with a regional body such as the AU in Darfur or ECOWAS in Sierra Leone. In all of these cases, the regional or subregional organization introduced troops from a number of countries around a core intervening state, such as Nigeria, Uganda, or South Africa. The Nigerian-led ECOWAS operations in Liberia and Sierra Leone, closely coordinated with the UN, are classic examples of this trend. This pattern of "African solutions to African problems" has recurred in a number of prominent cases, including the Senegalese-led ECOWAS action in Guinea-Bissau, the South African–led SADC operation in Lesotho, and the current Uganda-led AU/IGAD action in Somalia. This tendency signifies a new chapter in the way that relatively stronger African states confront their weaker neighbors. However, one should add that these regional and subregional bodies play a significant role in legitimizing the actions of hegemonic core states in Africa. As Francis Deng and his coauthors argue, "responsible regional organizations can facilitate cooperation, regularize relations, build confidence, and develop norms that help to manage conflict."[29] Organizations such as IGAD in

East Africa or ECOWAS in West Africa have contributed heavily to this process.

Before continuing to the positives and negatives of African-led interventions, this article addresses another trend—one that is potentially dangerous and growing. Table 1 identifies six African subregional hegemons that have unilaterally undertaken military operations in neighboring failed states, an action that runs counter to the tendency towards burden sharing. The most remarkable cases are Rwanda and Uganda in the DRC, Angola in Congo-Brazzaville, and, most recently, Ethiopia in Somalia. These relatively stronger states became involved in their neighbor's affairs without consulting the UN or other African organizations, seriously putting into question the legitimacy and legality of their operations, undermining their efforts, and putting their troops at risk. Without outside legitimacy, unilateral interventions by neighboring states often impose a complicating layer of interstate rivalry on the collapsed-state situation in which the interceding actor may take sides (or seems to have done so), discouraging compromise and compromising attempts to stabilize the situation.[30] This was clearly the case recently with the Ethiopian incursion into Somalia. Even though they might not have supported Islamist forces in the country, Somalis galvanized themselves against what they perceived as the Ethiopian invader. Their reaction deeply complicated Addis Ababa's ability to undertake a successful mission.

Regardless, at least three advantages exist for using subregional forces in humanitarian-military interventions, compared to more international forces from the UN.[31] First, subregional forces have a better understanding of the conflicts in their neighborhoods, the cultures they are dealing with, the local norms, and acceptable and unacceptable behaviors. Local problems, however, may directly involve neighbors—or, as in the case of Ethiopia and Somalia, historic animosities can complicate relations between neighbors, making military interventions unacceptable for some parties. Second, regional forces may enjoy better acceptance by the local populations. Local fears of foreign domination and even neocolonialism can emerge when major international powers appear likely to intervene, as occurred in the failed US intervention in Somalia in the early 1990s. Armed forces from regional and subregional actors do not encounter such objections although exceptions do exist. Finally, African interveners have commonly demonstrated a stronger and more lasting commitment to remain in a neighboring failed state—witness the Nigerian-led ECOWAS operation in Liberia, which lasted close to eight years. Furthermore, subregional players have a much greater interest in solving conflicts in their region because they suffer more directly from the various externalities than do outside actors. Both regional and subregional actors in Africa have some significant advantages over extracontinental actors. However, they also face unique problems that inhibit their ability to intercede in local failed states as well.

For all of their potential, African actors are constrained by two important factors: impartiality and lack of resources.[32] First, mixed motives and realist state interests can overwhelm more altruistic, liberal desires to lend a helping hand and strengthen the international state system, thereby subverting the legitimacy and credibility of the intervening state. It is hard to argue that neighbors will always be objective, neutral, and impartial. Ethiopia's recent involvement in Somalia demonstrates that even actors with significant military assets (relatively large armed forces) and international support can become bogged down by legitimacy problems. With this intervention, a question arose about whether Ethiopia was acting as a benevolent or malevolent hegemonic power in the subregion.[33]

This scenario leads to at least two clear definitions of hegemony. On the one hand, according to a liberal definition, the hegemon is a positive leader who encourages, cooperates, and sacrifices for the common good and to advance regional norms of peace and security. A more realist definition, on the other hand, would argue that the hegemon is a negative, exploitive power that desires only to cooperate with others in order to meet its own narrow interests. One can hardly argue that any intervener remains completely objective, neutral, and impartial. Undoubtedly, subregional actors may have important vested interests in their own backyards, and the process of disassociating liberal from realist intentions becomes murky. Self-interest frequently dominates the reason to intervene. Some of the less altruistic reasons to intervene in a neighbor's affairs include

- territorial expansion (Morocco / Western Sahara);
- the desire to defend domestic security interests (Ethiopia/Somalia);

- the desire to build military capacity against domestic challenges or subregional enemies (Angola/Congo-B, Congo-K against the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola [UNITA]);
- the desire to create security linkages with the international community to build domestic capacity (Uganda/Somalia or Nigeria / Liberia, Sierra Leone); and
- the desire to build international credibility/respect (Nigeria under Sani Abacha and its actions in Liberia).

Second, subregional actors in Africa lack sufficient resources to sustain involvement in such complex emergencies for the long term. The fact that local groups within the failed state frequently identify this dilemma weakens the clout and seriousness of the intervention. Most African states simply do not have the money to finance costly military operations, leaving the larger or relatively wealthier states on the continent overwhelmingly dominant. Clearly, Nigeria and South Africa, along with a few others, will play a disproportionate role in such interventions. Few expect the Gambia or Swaziland to take the lead role in major operations in failed states in their respective subregions. To overcome this deficiency, extra-African actors such as the United States, France, or the EU can assist interventions and build the capacity of local actors to intervene. As John Predergast noted, though, "the big money problem is that the Americans and the Europeans promised over the last decade that as long as the Africans deployed in these kinds of situations, we would pay for the soldiers and equip them. And we haven't done it."[34]

So can we truly talk of African solutions to African problems without outside assistance? The continuing crises in Somalia, Zimbabwe, Darfur, Chad, the Central African Republic, the DRC, and so forth, demonstrate the weaknesses of the way "African solutions" have been implemented (or any solution for that matter, African or international). Nonetheless, the AU and subregional bodies such as ECOWAS, SADC, or IGAD send forces, frequently wrapped around a core African subregional hegemon, to places where no other international actor would dare to tread. Uganda's and Burundi's mission in Somalia offers the clearest example of this type of action. As indicated earlier, major powers are reluctant to become involved in Africa, and the UN is too cumbersome and slow to react, leaving the onus of intervention to local states. The next section profiles the primary African subregional hegemons before analyzing their interventions in the continent's collapsed states.

Efforts of Subregional Hegemons

The states listed in table 2 along with a handful of other subregional core or hegemonic states have been at the heart of African armed missions into collapsed states for the past two decades. The relatively stronger states appear to be central to any attempt to successfully build any regional solution to collapsed states on the continent. The situation in Africa requires a group of benign, well-intentioned core states willing to build and sustain regional and subregional security complexes. Regional actors need to develop the vision and ability to help create and sustain legitimate African security structures capable of dealing with extremely weak states such as Somalia, Sudan, the Central African Republic, or the DRC. For example, many members of the international community view Nigeria as an important partner for peace in West Africa and an essential catalyst for the ECOWAS interventions in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Like Nigeria in ECOMOG, the core states (table 2) have formed the backbone of regional and subregional military operations in failed states across the continent. As Deng and his coauthors indicate,

> Regions generally are organized around certain states that have the power and position potentially to play the role of hegemon or act as a pole around which the security or insecurity of other states revolves. The "core state" in each regional constellation possesses key assets in the form of geographical position, military, economic, political and diplomatic resources, and recognition as a regional leader. A large and powerful state inevitably compels its neighbors to shape their security policies, and to conceive of conflict management, with reference to itself.[35]

Each of these hegemons has reacted to the weak states in its neighborhoods in its own way, and each possesses different configurations of available, deployable resources. Interestingly, Ethiopia—the poorest subregional core state with an annual gross national income (GNI) per capita of $220—has the largest armed force in Africa with around 200,000 personnel, a carryover from both its recent conflict with Eritrea and its long civil conflict. South Africa, boasting the highest GNI per capita ($5,760), has a moderately sized but highly professional armed force of about 55,750 men and women. These two factors—GNI per capita and size of the armed forces—are critical elements in determining the military and economic capacity of a given state to intervene and maintain operations in a collapsed-state environment.[36]

Table 2. Profiles of African "core states"

Core State	Gross National Income Per Capita (2007)	Population (millions) (2008)	Armed Forces Size (2008)	Intervention Tendency
Angola	$2,560	17.5	120,000	Unilateral
Ethiopia	220	85.2	200,000	Mixed
Nigeria	930	151.5	76,000	Multilateral
Senegal	820	12.9	17,000	Multilateral
South Africa	5,760	48.8	55,750	Multilateral
Uganda	340	31.9	45,000	Mixed

Sources: "Country Profiles," BBC, 2012, http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/country_profiles/default.stm; "Background Notes," US Department of State, 2012, http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/; and International Institute for Strategic Studies, *The Military Balance, 2008* (Oxford, UK: Taylor and Francis, 2008).

However, legitimacy and giving the appearance of a benevolent hegemon are perhaps equally important to the success of assisting in the resuscitation of a failed state. As mentioned earlier, it is interesting to notice that core states do not always decide to intervene under the aegis of a regional or subregional organization. Such unilateral behavior brings into question the intentions of the third-party intervener. For example, one can make a case in point for the perceived lack of legitimacy of the Ethiopian incursion into Somalia (2006–9). The questionable intentions of Ethiopia inflamed various armed opposition groups in Somalia, undermining Addis Ababa's efforts to stabilize the situation. Ethiopia went into Somalia with some US assistance, but it did not receive authorization from the UN, AU, or IGAD (an East African subregional organization). In the end, this unilateral activity failed, in large part because of the questions surrounding legitimacy. However, one could have perceived Senegal's intervention in neighboring Guinea-Bissau as a hostile act, given the interconnected relations between the two countries, including the Casmanace rebels' use of Guinea-Bissau as a safe haven and staging ground for operations in southern Senegal. However, Senegal received authorization from ECOMOG before going in, thus bolstering the legitimacy of the operation.

At times, as in the case of Uganda, the third-party intervener sends its armed forces to a failed state for different reasons, depending closely upon the situation. Uganda felt a direct military threat from the externalities and extreme violence of the DRC in the late 1990s, deciding that it had to intervene to protect its own interests. These operations, which have gone on for the past 13 years now, have raised questions concerning the overall benevolence of Ugandan activities in the DRC (they are far from being alone). Yet, Uganda has also demonstrated recently that it can be an important player in the regional security structures in East Africa and the Horn of African, leading the AU/IGAD mission in Somalia, regardless of the terrorist attacks carried out in Uganda itself by the militant group Al-Shabab in the summer of 2010.

Clearly, as argued here, an intervening state that appears to be a threatening power, acting alone and out of pure self-interest (geopolitical, economic, etc.), subverts the legitimacy of its actions, regardless of that state's overall military and/or economic capacity. Both capacity and legitimacy are important variables to consider when analyzing any type of military intervention in an extremely weak state environment.

Before this discussion continues, some issues need clarification. First, as demonstrated by the data presented in tables 1 and 2, regional and subregional actors play ever more important roles in reacting to state collapse in Africa. Since the early 1990s, major international actors such as the UN have promoted this trend. Furthermore, at the heart of these interventions, several African core states have committed the vast majority of the troops and have undertaken command of the various missions. Examples include Nigeria's peacekeeping operations in Liberia under ECOWAS and the current Ugandan mission in Somalia under the aegis of the AU. However, this article argues that these subregional hegemonic states lack the capacity, and at times the legitimacy, to maintain operations in collapsed-state environments without outside assistance.

These three assumptions—the increasing role of regional actors, the prominence of core states, and the difficulties of capacity and legitimacy—lead this research to two underlying hypotheses. Primarily, the magnitude of the spillover effects, or externalities, of a collapsed state is inversely related to the local subregional hegemon's relative power capabilities and regional legitimacy. That is, stronger states that promote liberal norms and act as benevolent hegemons can do a better job of helping their weaker neighbors. In direct relation to this hypothesis, it would be in the best interest of the international community to strengthen these core states (in terms of capacity and legitimacy), thus reducing the threat of collapsed states on the continent and beyond.

Do subregional hegemons really help bring an end to state collapse? The research presented here poses this question as its dependent variable (DV). Table 3 identifies a number of recent episodes of state failure and arranges a trichotomous outcome. A case receives a score of "low" if the intervener does not end the failure episode, a "moderate" if problems related to state weakness in the target persist after the end of operations, and a "high" if the mission restores the central government and ends the collapse. To determine the factors that influence this outcome, the research identifies three explanatory or independent variables (IV) as having importance. First, what was the military capacity of the intervening state? Cases with militaries over 50,000 personnel—the average strength of all of the core states' armed forces—received a score of "high." "Low" indicated states with armed forces of under 50,000. Second, how did the relative size of the intervening third parties' economies play into the ability to successfully undertake and sustain military operations in the failed-state environment? Here "high" designates a strong economic capacity with a GNI per capita over $1,750—again, the average for the subregional hegemonic states. The final explanatory factor addresses the regional legitimacy of the core state's operation, the intervener receiving a "yes" for a mission embedded within a UN, regional, or subregional operation and a "no" for a unilateral action.

Table 3. Key collapsed states and intervening subregional hegemons

Collapsed State (n=16)	Subregional Intervener	DV: Contribution to End of Collapsed State	IV1: Military Capacity	IV2: Economic Capacity	IV3: Regional Legitimacy
Burundi	Ethiopia	Moderate	High	Low	Yes
Burundi	South Africa	Moderate	High	High	Yes

Table 3. (*continued*)

Collapsed State (n=16)	Subregional Intervener	DV: Contribution to End of Collapsed State	IV1: Military Capacity	IV2: Economic Capacity	IV3: Regional Legitimacy
Central African Republic	Libya	Low	High	High	No
Chad	Libya	Low	High	High	No
Congo-Brazzaville	Angola	Moderate	High	High	No
Congo-Kinshasa	Angola	Low	High	High	No
Congo-Kinshasa	Rwanda	Low	Low	Low	No
Congo-Kinshasa	Uganda	Low	Low	Low	No
Congo-Kinshasa	Zimbabwe	Low	Low	Low	No
Côte d'Ivoire	Senegal	Moderate	Low	Low	Yes
Guinea-Bissau	Senegal	Moderate	Low	Low	Yes
Lesotho	South Africa	High	High	High	Yes
Liberia	Nigeria	High	High	Low	Yes
Sierra Leone	Nigeria	High	High	Low	Yes
Somalia	Ethiopia	Low	High	Low	No
Somalia	Uganda	Low	Low	Low	Yes

In a preliminary assessment of the available data, an ordinary least squares (OLS) regression indicates a few general trends (table 4). First, regional legitimacy appears closely related to the more successful interventions in this sample. These operations were parts of larger regional activities. Not only was the direction of the regional legitimacy variable positive, in the expected direction, it was also highly significant, far below the typical 0.01 threshold. AU and subregional efforts in Burundi, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, and Sierra Leone offer excellent examples of this trend. This statistical result indicates that the regional legitimacy variable plays a large role in explaining whether or not an African intervention was successful. When African states work within regional bodies, their efforts to help revive collapsed states are more fruitful.

Second, military capacity had an impact on the success or failure of a mission in a failed state. On average, intervening third parties with large armed forces perform better at stabilizing failed states than do their counter-parts on the continent with smaller armies. Finally, the other IV, economic capacity, which measures GNI per capita, was not in the expected direction and had a negative impact on the outcome variable.

Table 4. Results of OLS regression

OLS Regression (n=16)	Coefficient	Significance
Military Capacity	0.64	0.080
Economic Capacity	-0.13	0.720
Regional Legitimacy	1.09	0.002
Constant	0.79	0.008
r2 = 0.668		

Conclusion

Because major powers probably will not intervene and because the UN is too slow and too cumbersome to help stabilize and rebuild collapsed states, African regional organizations and core states will likely do much of the work in this area on the continent in the foreseeable future. The international community needs to strengthen interventions by such regional and subregional actors in two ways: capacity and legitimacy. This initial examination of the available data on third-party missions into failed states in Africa reveals that states possessing the most developed militaries and backed by African interstate organizations have the highest likelihood of success. A deeper understanding of these processes requires the gathering of more data and the employment of better analytical tools to help African states and agencies relieve the massive human suffering and instability in the international systems caused by state collapse.

Notes

1. Donald Rothchild, "The Effects of State Crisis on African Interstate Relations (and Comparisons with Post-Soviet Eurasia)," in *Beyond State Crisis? Postcolonial Africa and Post-Soviet Eurasia in Comparative Perspective*, ed. Mark R. Beissinger and Crawford Young (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2002), 207.

2. Edmond J. Keller, "Rethinking African Regional Security," in *Regional Orders: Building Security in a New World*, ed. David A. Lake and Patrick M. Morgan (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University, 1997), 296–317. See also Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, *Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003).

3. Steven R. David, “Why the Third World Still Matters,” *International Security* 17, no. 3 (Winter 1992–1993): 134.

4. Rothchild, “Effects of State Crisis,” 189. See also Mohammed Ayoob, *The Third World Security Prediciment: State Making, Regional Conflict and the International System* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995).

5. I. William Zartman, “Introduction: Posing the Problem of State Collapse,” in *Collapsed States: The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority*, ed. I. William Zartman (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1995), 1.

6. Robert I. Rotberg, “Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators,” in *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 9, 10.

7. Barry R. Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” *Survival* 35, no. 1 (Spring 1993): 27–47, http://www.sais-jhu.edu/cmtoolkit/pdfs/posen-1993.pdf. See also David A. Lake and Donald Rothchild, “Containing Fear: The Origins and Management of Ethnic Conflict,” *International Security* 21, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 41–75, http://www.metu.edu.tr/~utuba/Lake.pdf.

8. Theodore Trefon, “Introduction: Inventing Order,” in *Reinventing Order in the Congo: How People Respond to State Failure in Kinshasa*, ed. Theodore Trefon (New York: Zed Books, 2004), 3–4.

9. William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1998).

10. Rothchild, “Effects of State Crisis,” 189–216.

11. See Max Weber, *The Theory of Social and Economic Organization*, trans. A. M. Henderson and Talcott Parsons, ed. Talcott Parsons (New York: Oxford University Press, 1947).

12. Robert H. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart: State Failure in Late-Century Africa* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 5.

13. Francis Fukuyama, “The Imperative of State-Building,” *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 2 (April 2004): 21.

14. Rotberg, “Failed States,” 5.

15. Rothchild, “Effects of State Crisis,” 190.

16. Zartman, “Introduction.”

17. Myron Weiner, “Security, Stability, and International Migration,” *International Security* 17, no. 3 (Winter 1992–1993): 104.

18. David A. Lake, “Regional Security Complexes: A Systems Approach,” in Lake and Morgan, *Regional Orders*, 296–317. See also Keller, “Rethinking African Regional Security.”

19. See “Political Instability Task Force,” 19 January 2010, http://globalpolicy.gmu.edu/pitf/.

20. President of the United States, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington, DC: President of the United States, September 2002), 1, http://merln.ndu.edu/whitepapers/USnss2002.pdf.

21. “Civilian Response: History and Background,” United States Agency for International Development, 2012, http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/civilianresponse/history.html.

22. “National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44 [Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Stabilization and Reconstruction],” 7 December 2005, http://www.fas.org/irp/offdocs/nspd/nspd-44.html.

23. Political Instability Task Force, “Consolidated Problem Set,” version 2010, http://www.systemicpeace.org/inscr/PITF%20Consolidated%20Case%20List2010.pdf.

24. Ibid.

25. Jean-Pierre Magnant, “Tchad: crise de l’état ou crise de gouvernement,” in *Etats d’Afrique Noire: Formations, mécanismes et crise*, ed. Jean-Francois Médard (Paris: Karthala, 1991), 173.

26. Patrick M. Regan, Richard W. Frank, and Aysegul Aydin, “Diplomatic Interventions and Civil War: A New Dataset,” *Journal of Peace Research* 46, no. 1 (January 2009): 137.

27. James N. Rosenau, “The Concept of Intervention,” *Journal of International Affairs* 22, no. 2 (1968): 165–76. See also Rosenau, “Intervention as a Scientific Concept,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 13, no. 2 (June 1969): 149–71.

28. Adekeye Adebajo, *Building Peace in West Africa: Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea-Bissau* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2002), 16.

29. Francis M. Deng et al., *Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1996), 131.

30. Ibid., 132.

31. See Gareth J. Evans, *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990’s and Beyond* (Canberra: Allen and Unwin, 1993).

32. Herbert Howe, “Lessons of Liberia: ECOMOG and Regional Peacekeeping,” *International Security* 21, no. 3 (Winter 1996–1997): 145–76.

33. Chris Alden and Mills Soko, “South Africa’s Economic Relations with Africa: Hegemony and Its Discontents,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* 43, no. 3 (September 2005): 368.

34. Quoted in Colum Lynch, “African Union Force Low on Money, Supplies and Morale,” *Washington Post*, 13 May 2007, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2007/05/12/AR2007051201567.html?hpid=moreheadlines.

35. Deng et al., *Sovereignty as Responsibility*, 133.

36. Marc V. Simon and Harvey Starr, “Extraction, Allocation, and the Rise and Decline of States: A Simulation Analysis of Two-Level Security Management,” *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 40, no. 2 (June 1996): 272–97.

Visit our web site
http://www.au.af.mil/au/afri/aspj/apjinternational/aspj_f/Index.asp