



**Susan L. Woodward**

# **The Ideology of Failed States**

**Why Intervention Fails**

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What do we mean when we use the term “failed states”? It makes no sense theoretically and empirically, and is a political threat to countries so labeled. To explain the term’s popularity, this book begins with its origins, how it shaped the conceptual framework for international development and security in the post-Cold War era, and why. It argues that one should focus on the actors who are promoting and implementing this concept and its policy agenda, not the states so labeled. Detailed analysis of international actors’ policies in peacebuilding, statebuilding, development assistance, and armed conflict shows that they focus primarily on building their own operational capacity for intervention, not on statebuilding, that their ideology of failed states responds to the absence in these countries of what they need operationally to act, and that they actually create the characteristics they identify with failed/fragile states. The book concludes with a return to the unreformed international organization of development and security, including its linkage, if the trap of this ideology can be escaped.

**Susan L. Woodward** is a professor of political science at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She has more than twelve years’ policy experience, including nine from 1990 at the Brookings Institution, where she wrote *Balkan Tragedy*. Woodward has been interviewed frequently on TV and radio, and has given congressional and House of Lords testimony. She created an analysis unit for UNPROFOR during the Bosnian war in 1994, and in 1999, the initial research program on conflict, security, and development, for DFID, including advice on its aid to Kosovo and Moldova, at King’s College, London.

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SUSAN L. WOODWARD

City University of New York, Graduate Center



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## THE IDEOLOGY OF FAILED STATES

What do we mean when we use the term “failed states”? It makes no sense theoretically and empirically, and is a political threat to countries so labeled. To explain the term’s popularity, this book begins with its origins, how it shaped the conceptual framework for international development and security in the post-Cold War era, and why. It argues that one should focus on the actors who are promoting and implementing this concept and its policy agenda, not the states so labeled. Detailed analysis of international actors’ policies in peacebuilding, state-building, development assistance, and armed conflict shows that they focus primarily on building their own operational capacity for intervention, not on state-building, that their ideology of failed states responds to the absence in these countries of what they need operationally to act, and that they actually create the characteristics they identify with failed/fragile states. The book concludes with a return to the unreformed international organization of development and security, including its linkage, if the trap of this ideology can be escaped.

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## Acknowledgments

When Mariano Aguirre asked me in June 2004 whether I would be interested in a Ford Foundation grant to do a critical analysis of the concept of state failure, “reframing the international economic and political agenda,” and if so, would I prepare an initial concept note, I had no idea that I would eventually join a very special circle of researchers from a large part of the world<sup>1</sup> nor that my own research would take me to so many countries I had only dreamed of visiting,<sup>2</sup> perhaps only in retirement. Expert workshops in New York, Buenos Aires, Vilanculos (Mozambique), Coimbra, and Madrid also introduced me to a world of European and North American foreign affairs and development officials whom Aguirre could attract. Although I surely did not fulfill his hopes, as the subtitle he added to my grant proposal stated, “a project on the post-colonial state, the conceptualization of state failure and international responses, and the impact on security worldwide,” this perspective of an intrepid Argentine peace activist and journalist (even with an MA degree from Trinity College, Dublin) also opened an entirely new world to me, albeit one with which I already had great sympathy. Organizing two expert

<sup>1</sup> It may be important to know that I was the first in this circle of grants and what I called, in my final report to the Ford Foundation, a “pioneering” series of grants by Aguirre while still at the Ford Foundation (and which Aguirre actually followed up when he moved to FRIDE in Madrid and then NOREF in Oslo); and I still think so. In my final report to Ford, I characterized Aguirre’s program as prioritizing “the creation of a global network of scholars and policy researchers to give those working in countries of the global South full recognition and appreciation in the work of Northern institutions and intergovernmental organizations, and to create a genuine North–South and South–South collaboration on research and policy advocacy.” I continue to value this objective.

<sup>2</sup> The Ford grant allowed me to talk with experts and officials and give seminars on the subject in Australia, China, Haiti, India, Kenya, Mozambique, Nepal, Nicaragua, Singapore, and South Africa. Contacts through the project with other grantees brought invitations not only to workshops in Buenos Aires, Coimbra, and Madrid but also in Oslo, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, Santiago (Chile), Sri Lanka, and Stockholm.



workshops myself, one on the concept of state failure and the other on the relation among “economic strategy, aid policy, and the state in countries emerging from war,” writing and presenting more than forty seminars and conference presentations in eighteen countries, including fourteen written papers (some published) and eleven published journal articles, giving radio interviews on the subject, and commissioning nine working papers<sup>3</sup> over the four and a half years of the grant was demanding, I admit, but I will be forever grateful and in debt to Aguirre for a rich, rewarding, and incomparable opportunity.

There is some irony in Aguirre’s choice of me for this project, and particularly in my own pushing the envelope of criticism of the concept of state failure as far as I have in this book, because it was the collapse of the Yugoslav state in 1991 and the subsequent wars in Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, and Kosovo that were a prime instigator of the concept of failed states and the subsequent ideology of an international security threat in 1992/4. It was my analysis of that story, in *Balkan Tragedy*, that brought me to Aguirre’s attention. I also contributed to the drumbeat that I criticize here in speeches and articles for the US military during the 1990s (primarily the Marines whose Marine Expeditionary Unit makes them often the first responders to the armed conflicts perceived as international crises).

Of that special circle, I wish to single out particular thanks – and give recognition for how much they taught me – to Alejandro Bendana, Monica Hirst, Roland Marchal, Jose Pureza, David Sogge, Juan Gabriel Tokatlian, and Achin Vanaik. For the assistance given to me by the Ford Foundation, I am forever grateful to officers Andrew Watson and his assistant Chen Yimei in Beijing, Gary Hawes in Johannesburg, and Mike Edwards and Bonnie Jenkins in New York. For invitations to participate in workshops and present papers on the topic and early chapters, thank you: Amitav Acharya and Hiro Katsumata at the Institute of Defence and Strategic Studies, Nanyang Technological University in Singapore; Stephen Baranyi in Ottawa (for Vilanculos); Mark Beissinger at the Comparative Politics Colloquium, Department of Politics, Princeton University; Kevin Clements, Anne Brown, and Volker Boege at the (then) Australian Centre for Peace and Conflict Studies (ACPACS) at Queensland University; Cedric de Coning at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) in Oslo; Biswajit Das at Jamia Milia Islamia University and Namrata Goswami at the Institute for Defence Studies and Analyses, both in New Delhi; Monica Hirst again for Buenos Aires at Universidad Torcuato di Tella; Jim Jasper and John Krinsky at the Politics and Protest Workshop of the CUNY Graduate Center; Robin Luckham for

<sup>3</sup> The full list with details is available from the author.

exquisite Kandalama and its inaugural North–South consortium; Zoilamerica Narvaez and Megan Burke at the Center for International Studies (CES) in Managua; Jose Pureza with his Peace Studies group, University of Coimbra, Portugal; Ren Xiao at the Shanghai Institute for International Studies, Professor Xiaofeng Yu at Zhejiang University in Hangzhou, Wanli Yu at the Institute of American Studies of the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences in Beijing, and Pang Zhongying for the China Reform Forum in Beijing; and above all, Mariano Aguirre for multiple workshops in Madrid and Oslo. Vince Boudreau, Antonia Chayes, and Roy Licklider gave me particular encouragement and very helpful advice on this manuscript. My graduate student research assistants Helen Chang, Jose LaGuarta Ramirez, Bree Zuckerman, and Lindsay Green-Barber, and my graduate student administrative assistants, especially Lisa Rickmers, Deniz Senol Sert, and Patricia Stapleton, were all that someone could hope for and more – I was very lucky. For special friendship, both personal and intellectual on this project and others, I thank John Bevan, Graciana del Castillo, and Astri Suhrke. For finding the cover image, Drake Logan deserves very special praise and appreciation. And no one could be luckier than to have John Berger as one’s accession editor at Cambridge University Press in New York; he is a marvel.

The material and experiences in this book are also a result of three Carnegie Corporation of New York grants under the program “states-at-risk” for a project on the relation between academic knowledge and policymakers/practitioners in peacebuilding operations. The ever patient and supportive, in so many ways, Stephen del Rosso, Jr., knowingly complemented the Ford project with these grants for their multiplier effect, on top of its separate agenda of ways to improve the success of internationally assisted peacebuilding and post-conflict-state-building processes through greater access to academic research. It, too, provided a community of scholars, advocates, and practitioners through its network of grantees and meetings. The Carnegie grants enabled research trips to Beirut, Addis Ababa (including the African Union), Timor-Leste, Bangkok, Phnom Penh, and Vientiane, and four workshops (two with younger scholars on their field research in peacebuilding contexts and practitioners; one with researcher activists from Liberia, Sierra Leone, Macedonia, Mozambique, Sri Lanka, and Timor-Leste; and one with researchers and practitioners critically analyzing the arguments in the World Bank Development Report, 2011, on *Conflict, Security, and Development*). Here again, Patricia Stapleton’s administrative skills and dedication were invaluable, and the organizational and rapporteur support by Jason Harle and Jenny Mueller essential.

I cannot end without doing homage to Andrea Loi at MINUSTAH who made my research trip to Haiti in June 2009, the year before the earthquake, so

productive and memorable, and also to Andrew Grene, both of whom died in the collapse of the UN headquarters building. We often forget how dangerous and dedicated peace work is; my organizational critique in this volume should not in any way reflect negatively on the immensely dedicated and indefatigable staff in UN peace missions, many of whom in Dili, Kathmandu, Kinshasa and Goma, Monrovia, Nairobi, Port au Prince, Pristina and Mitrovica, and Vukovar went out of their way to provide logistics and informed, insightful, and very helpful conversations. I am forever in their debt.

## Abbreviations

AFRICOM	US Africa Command
AISS	Afghan Institute for Strategic Affairs
AIV	Dutch Advisory Committee to the Government on Issues of Public International Law
AOR	area of responsibility
AQAP	Al Q'aeda, Arabian Peninsula
AU	African Union
AUSAID	Australian Agency for International Development
BCPR	Bureau for Crisis Prevention and Recovery, UNDP
CAP	Consolidated Action Plan
CAR	Central African Republic
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CDD	community-driven development
CDD/R	community-driven development or reconstruction
CDR	Coalition for the Defence of the Republic
CEP	Community Empowerment and Local Governance Project
CERP	Commander's Emergency Response Program (US)
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy (EU)
CHAD	Conflict and Humanitarian Affairs Department, DFID
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency (US)
CIC-IPA	Center on International Cooperation of New York University and the International Peace Academy
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CIMIC	civil-military corps
CIVPOL	United Nations civilian police
CJTF-HOA	Combined Joint Task Force-Horn of Africa

CPA	country programmable aid
CPF	Country Partnership Framework
COESPU	Center of Excellence for Stability Police Units
CPIA	Country Policy and Institutional Assessment
CSDP	Common Security and Defence Policy (EU)
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DAC	Development Assistance Committee, OECD
DDR	disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration
DFID	Department for International Development (UK)
DoD	Department of Defense (US)
DoS	Department of State (US)
DPA	Department of Political Affairs (UN)
DPKO	Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN)
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
EBRD	European Bank for Reconstruction and Development
EC	European Commission
ETF	Economic Task Force (Bosnia)
EU	European Union
EUCOM	Europe Central Command (US)
EULEX	EU Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo
FCO	Foreign and Commonwealth Office (UK)
FRIDE	Fundación para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Diálogo Exterior
FTO	Foreign Terrorist Organization
g7+	group of seven plus countries
G8	Group of Eight
GEMAP	Governance and Economic Management Assistance Programme
GTZ	German technical cooperation agency (1975–January 2011)
HDI	Human Development Index
HIPC	Heavily Indebted Poor Countries
ICISS	International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty
ICITAP	International Criminal Investigative Training Assistance Program (US)
ICO	International Civilian Office
ICR	International Civilian Representative
IcSP	Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace
ICTY	International Criminal Tribunal for former Yugoslavia

IEG	International Evaluation Group (World Bank)
IFIs	international financial institutions (World Bank and IMF mainly)
IFOR	Implementation Force (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
IFS	Instrument for Stability
INGOs	international NGOs
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INCAF	International Network on Conflict and Fragile States
JAM	joint assessment mission
KFOR	Kosovo Force
LICUS	Low-Income Countries Under Stress
MCA	Millennium Challenge Account
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals (UN)
MEU	Marine Expeditionary Unit
MINUSCA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic
MINUSMA	United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali
MINUSTAH	United Nations Stabilization Mission to Haiti
MOD	Ministry of Defence (UK)
MONUC	United Nations Mission to Congo
MONUSCO	United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo
MOU	memorandum of understanding
MSF	<i>Médecins sans Frontières</i>
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
NGO	non-governmental organization
Norad	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
NOREF	Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre
NSP	National Solidarity Program (Afghanistan)
OCHA	Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN)
O/CRS	Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization
ODA	official development assistance
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OECD DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OED	Operations Evaluation Division (World Bank)

OHR	Office of the High Representative
OSCE	Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PBC	Peacebuilding Commission (UN)
PCRU	Post-Conflict Reconstruction Unit (World Bank)
PDD	Presidential Decision Directive
PIC	Peace Implementation Council (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
PITF	Political Instability Task Force
PIU	project implementation units
PRSPs	Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers
PRT	provincial reconstruction team
QIP	quick impact projects
R <sub>2</sub> P	responsibility to protect
SAIS	Johns Hopkins School for Advanced International Studies
SCD	Systematic Country Diagnostic
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFOR	Stabilization Force (Bosnia-Herzegovina)
SIDA	Swedish International Development Agency
SRSG	Special Representative of the Secretary-General
TCC	troop contributing countries (to UN missions)
TFET	Trust Fund for East Timor
UN	United Nations
UNAMA	United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNCTAD	United Nations Conference on Trade and Development
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDPA	United Nations Department of Political Affairs
UNHCHR	United Nations High Commission for Human Rights
UNHCR	United Nations High Commission for Refugees
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
UNITAF	Unified Task Force for Somalia
UNMIK	United Nations Mission in Kosovo
UNMIL	United Nations Mission to Liberia
UNOPS	United Nations Office of Project Services
UNOSOM	United Nations Operation in Somalia (I and II)
UNPROFOR	United Nations Protection Force
UNPTF	United Nations Police Task Force
UNSCR	United Nations Security Council Resolution

UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Administration in Cambodia
UNTAES	United Nations Transitional Administration in Eastern Slavonia
UNTAET	United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USIP	United States Institute of Peace
WGIs	Worldwide Governance Indicators
WHO	World Health Organization
WMD	weapons of mass destruction



