

NATION-BUILDING

Chronological quotes

"The developing world ... is now being haunted by a new specter: failing nations. According to a recent U.N. report, several dozen countries are now on the verge of national collapse -- if they haven't already disintegrated.

The human cost of the breakdown has been staggering. In the past five years, the number of refugees worldwide has surged by more than 9 million people as a result of famine, poverty, environmental disasters and armed conflicts. Since 1989 there have been 82 major conflicts around the world, resulting in hundreds of thousands, if not millions, of casualties.

Not since the end of World War II have there been so many shattered countries in need of repair and reconstruction.

There are precious few mechanisms in place to repair the failing nations ... and some powerful inhibitions against doing so. Yet intervention by the rich nations to help the poor ones -- to provide aid, stability, and guidance -- seems increasingly necessary in the 'new world disorder.'"

Brook Larmer, "The new colonialism", Newsweek, **August 1, 1994**, pp. 12-15 [13].

"[Jiri Dienstbier] the special rapporteur of the U.N. Commission on Human Rights, [has bluntly declared] that the peacekeeping mission [in Kosovo] has failed 'to achieve a single goal; neither security for people nor freedom of movement, not to mention creating conditions for the develop of democratic institutions in a multiethnic society.' This is a message Western leaders don't want to hear -- and strenuously seek to refute.

Just how bad is the situation on the ground? Crime, gangs, and the heroin trade are all flourishing.

Bernard Kouchner, the head of the U.N. administration in Kosovo, has few resources at his disposal so far.

Today, NATO still insists on the fiction that Kosovo is a multiethnic autonomous province within Yugoslavia.

But it's time to get real Peacekeeping missions are proliferating in remote areas -- East Timor, Sierra Leone, Georgia. 'If we can't turn the situation around in a tiny area with 1.7 million people who are mostly on our side, it's the end of humanitarian interventionism everywhere' argues NATO spokesman Jamie Shea. An overblown prediction, perhaps -- but only a tad, I'd say."

Andrew Nagorski, "The perils of peacekeeping" A year after the NATO air war, the result of NATO's efforts is a highly volatile mess", Newsweek, **April 17, 2000**, p. 2.

"[It is very hard for the UN to assemble] the judges, policemen, customs officials and other civilian professionals who are needed for the two huge, unprecedented jobs [of] running Kosovo and East Timor.

The UN runs all Kosovo's civilian affairs [and in] East Timor, the UN is in complete control. Although it had a big supervisory role in Cambodia, the UN has never done anything remotely like this before. It is not only training locals to do the job; it is doing the job itself.

Moreover, it is doing it on a wing and a prayer, without any new administrative or institutional provision. The Peacekeeping Department is in charge, [and] although there are still useless people around the capable are working full-out, under strain.

Should the Trusteeship Council be resurrected to run disabled countries? The counter-argument is that the UN has had only [these two] running-a-country jobs and may not be landed with any more. Besides, with its limited resources, it should concentrate on bread and butter stuff. It is a hard choice, which the UN may face in its usual way by ignoring it."

"The UN's missions impossible: After a year or two in retreat, the United Nations is again in action It should not take on what it cannot do", The Economist, **August 5, 2000**, pp. 22-23, 26.

"Poor countries are clamoring for more funds to fix domestic economic problems often of their own leaders' making. High-level corruption, plundering of state treasuries and the disintegration of institutions of law and order have disabled growth mechanisms in almost half of the world's 189 nations.

Compounding the problem is the fact that the number of 'failed states' -- those with collapsing internal political and social systems, and with no hope whatsoever of attracting any fresh aid or investment -- has remained at around 40 ... This despite the emphasis these past few years on democratization, free markets and good governance.

'The prospects are for more terrorism stemming from economic desperation, hordes of new illegal migrants and other radical measures aimed at extorting financial lifeblood from the rich countries.'

Failed states are ticking time bombs, where Osama bin Laden clones are mobilizing frustrated masses

Some steps that the Davos [Forum] crowd would do well to consider:

Peacekeeping . Renewed attention to reducing conflicts that lead to violence ...

Credit ...

Social services ...

Improved access to markets ...

A new global agency for better governance. ... a sore need for a global corps for leadership training ..."

Pranay Gupte, "How to save 'failed states': Rich nations need to find ways to do more for the world's hopelessly poorest people," Newsweek, **January 20, 2001**, p. 2.

"Finally, everyone seems to agree on Iraq. The Governing Council should become the government of Iraq and elections should be held by the end of the year.

There is only one problem. The notion of a quick transfer of power to Iraqis is impractical, unwise, and dangerous.

It is strange that U.N. officials argue that we must quickly move, in Kofi Annan's phrase, from 'the logic of occupation' to that of Iraqi sovereignty. Does Kofi Annan really think that what took seven years in Bosnia [and four and counting of occupation in Kosovo, and two years in tiny East Timor] can take one year in Iraq, with six times as many people [as Bosnia]?

The Governing Council is a vital part of the new Iraq. But it is a group of 25 disparate people, chosen to fulfill ethnic, religious and other quotas, that has never worked together.

Even if it functions well, [it] will function best as a legislative body, not as an executive. You cannot have Iraq run by 25 coequal chiefs.

Popular sovereignty is a great thing, but a constitutional process is greater still. "

Fareed Zakaria, "Don't rush to disaster", Newsweek International, **September 22, 2003**, p. 21.

"Bombs, political murders and the imposition of curfews have stunned Nepal, A civil war between the security forces and Maoist insurgents has resumed after the rebels withdrew from six months of peace talks with the government at the end of August.

The country is in political turmoil too. Nepal's political parties, dismissed from power last October by the king, have added to the chaos with ever-swelling protests calling for the return of parliamentary democracy. ...

The Maoists blame the king and his hand-picked cabinet for the failure of the latest round of negotiations. They are demanding sweeping constitutional change, including a referendum that could end the monarchy.

All this is doing inestimable damage to an already impoverished economy. Tourism ... is now sure to decline again. Foreign investment has all but ceased. More Nepalis than ever are leaving the country to find jobs. There's a real risk of a failed state here' said [a diplomat]. The time to act is now."

"Sinking fast: Nepal is fast becoming a failed state", The Economist, **September 13, 2003**, p. 54.

[Note: Where is the UN, and the "international community"?)

"The image of corpses piled up before the U.S. Embassy in Monrovia in July shocked Americans' conscience.

If people knew more about how those Liberianswere killed, they might also understand that peacekeepers alone won't solve the problem.

The LURD [rebel group] mortars very likely came through neighboring Guinea

But Guinea has thus far evaded international condemnation for its record in fuelling the Liberia conflict.

Cote d'Ivoire has played a similar role, arming the other Liberian rebel group (MODEL).

Charles Taylor's government in Liberia relied on help from across the border, too. [It] is under UN sanctions, but counted on regional allies such as Burkina Faso to help cover up its illegal arms imports.

The West African intervention has brought some stability to Monrovia, but the regional force remains too small to deploy outside the capital in significant numbers.

Liberia urgently needs more peacekeepers. But West Africa as a whole needs sustained and skillful diplomacy just as badly. The continuing war in Liberia is a regional war, and the United States has lost many opportunities to engage West African governments in ways that might have lessened the suffering this war has caused."

Peter Takirambudde, "Liberia: Where the arms come from", International Herald Tribune, **September 17, 2003**.

[Note: The writer is executive director of the Africa division of Human Rights Watch.

Note: Where is the UN, and where is the "international community," in this urgent situation?]

"[Zimbabwe] was once one of Africa's most prosperous states. But it is prostrate today, its vital signs flickering, asphyxiated by ever-tighter governmental curbs on the economy and

basic freedoms.

Driven by desperation, greed, or simply a sense that the end is nearing, its rulers and citizens are methodically stripping the country of its assets.

.... foreign journalists [have been banned] since February ... But a low-profile tour of the country for 11 days this month found an outright glut of human misery.

Desperate citizens here have become dark-of-night scavengers of coffins, copper electrical cable and even aluminum street signs.

If the nights are black, the days often exude an eerie surface calm.

But much of the calm is government-enforced, courtesy of a domestic intelligence organization and a rural youth militia widely feared for its brutality.

The ravages of inflation, 455 percent a year and rising fast, are evident everywhere.

'This country is truly in a crisis' said Collen Gwiyo, [head of an opposition group to] President Robert Mugabe's government. 'It's a political crisis, leading to an economic crisis, feeding a humanitarian disaster.'

Michael Wines, "Zimbabwe's dismal economy produces a glut of human misery", International Herald Tribune, **October 20, 2003**.

[Note: Where is the UN, and where is the "international community," in this urgent situation?

Well, in this case that community was sort of "on the scene": An *Associated Press* story of **October 28th, 2003**, "Government doctors replace those on strike", commenting on President Mugabe's possible ill health, reported that "[he did make] a public appearance to welcome delegates from 69 international organizations to the resort town of Victoria Falls for a conference on monuments and heritage sites." This does not contribute much to rescuing a severely failing state.]

"While much U. S. political debate is focused on reconstruction in Iraq and Afghanistan [Sudan seems destined to get nothing although] it is on the brink of a historic peace agreement that could end the world's longest and most destructive civil conflict.

.... More than 2 million have perished [in Sudan's 20-year civil war] 5 million have been internally displaced and in southern Sudan there is a total lack of economic transport or communications infrastructure. If peace finally arrives, the need for transitional aid will become extremely urgent.

These people will have no chance of resuming productive lives without very significant assistance

.... A peacekeeping force, which should be deployed under UN auspices, may be the most important element in any sustainable peace for Sudan.[and] Given the high levels of humanitarian assistance that the United States has provided for well over a decade, this seems the most ill-considered of times to withhold promised funding.

Sudan has suffered decades of invisibility on the global stage, and Sudanese lives have suffered a deeply disgraceful moral discounting. At its moment of greatest hope this broken nation must not be betrayed once again."

Eric Reeves, "A promise the U. S. must keep", International Herald Tribune, **October 28, 2003**.

[Note: Once again (and in addition to the United States), where is the UN, and where is the "international community," in this urgent situation?]

" [Two months ago] President Jean-Bertrand Aristide ... was forced from power by an armed rebellion. ...

Difficult as it may be to believe, people here say, life has become worse in the past two months.

Mounds of garbage choke the streets. Electricity in the capital has been scarce for

weeks. The police force has fallen deeper into disarray and crime has spiked ...

'The international community needs to help this government, we need to get monetary support to them yesterday' [a senior] diplomat said. 'If this government does not survive, it is not clear what comes after them.'

But international help has been slow to arrive. American troops are scheduled to hand over the [stabilization] job in June to a United Nations force of about 8,000 troops led by Brazil. The brevity of the U.S. commitment and the molasses-slow trickle of aid have led many people here to conclude that this decade's effort to rebuild Haiti will be even less successful than the U.S.-led effort in the 1990s. ...

Haitians who have suffered through decades of misrule say their patience with the interim government is wearing thin ... [One] warned darkly that dissatisfaction could turn violent quickly."

Lydia Polgreen, "Situation 'impossible' as Haiti's woes deepen," International Herald Tribune, **May 6, 2004**.

"Wanted: a diplomat from a serious European state with leadership skills, strong nerves, and proven ability to resist manipulation. ... The hunt is on for a new head of the UN mission ... Harry Holkeri, an ex-prime minister of Finland who took the job last August, left this week to consult doctors; many say he will not return.

Two months ago Kosovo, ... under a UN protectorate, exploded in an orgy of violence. Some 4,100 people - mostly Serbs - fled, and 19 people were killed, as Albanian extremists ran amok. On May 11th Mr. Holkeri told the UN Security Council that these events had shaken his mission, known as UNMIK, "to its foundations". The next day he collapsed, suffering from fatigue. ... Everybody agrees that the UN mission in Kosovo needs a shake-up. Morale and communication are poor. Worse, Amnesty International alleges that the presence of UN and foreign troops in Kosovo has increased prostitution and people trafficking.

Kosovo has been left leaderless just when firm leadership is sorely needed. ...

... A task force consisting of envoys has [attempted] to set up a working group. Tortuous as [that] sounds, it may ... [bring] some trade-offs."

"Thick skin required: The UN needs a new head, and new ideas, for its mission in Kosovo", The Economist, **May 22d, 2004**, p. 28.

"The gap between [the claims of nation-builders] and the reality on the ground was vividly illustrated by a British patrol last month that stopped to talk to the chief of a mud-walled settlement on the edge of Kabul. The chief assured the patrol that 'life is much better than it was under the Taliban.' When asked how, he had to think hard. 'We can watch videos,' he said finally. Then he added: 'at least we could if we had television. Or electricity.'

Keen to please his visitors, he thought again. 'Our girls can go to school,' he said, then once more frowned. 'Only there is no school.'"

Christina Lamb, "Afghanistan: Sipping margaritas in the rubble of Kabul", International Herald Tribune, **July 10, 2004**.

[Note: Ms. Lamb is also the author of The sewing circles of Herat: A personal voyage through Afghanistan.

"The rampage of thousands of ethnic Albanians through Kosovo last March was the worst violence since NATO took charge of the province in 1999. One might have expected 18,000 NATO peacekeepers, plus 3,500 UN policemen, to be able to stop it. Yet three days of ethnic cleansing ensued. ...

The peacekeepers and policemen had five years' experience of ethnic-Albanian and Serb violence in Kosovo, and were [very well] ... equipped. Even so, many peacekeepers,

notably the French, Germans and Italians, proved woefully incompetent. (The American, Norwegian and Irish troops all excelled.) Human Rights Watch ... concluded in July that NATO's mission, known as K-FOR, had failed to protect ethnic minorities. ...

An internal report by the UN ... details its findings in similar terms. The report says many feared the [missions] ... would collapse if the riots had gone on for another day or two ... UNMIK people were seen as aloof strangers in the society they governed. ...

Kosovo is entering a period of maximum risk ...

A more recent report for the UN ... concludes that if [final status talks begin] ,, the UN should aim to end its mission and hand over to others ... "

"The audit of war: An inquiry criticizes international peacekeepers and the UN",
The Economist, **September 11th, 2004**, p. 29.

"The most ominous threat to security, democracy and rule of law [in Afghanistan before the presidential election on October 9 and parliamentary elections next April] comes not from Taliban remnants but from the warlords and armed factions that rule most regions of the country ...

... This week [UN head of peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guehenno] said warlords and local leaders 'have been requested to both provide security and work with local councils to ensure that those attempting to disrupt the process are deterred.' ...

[Yet] Afghans [seeking] ... to hold the powerful accountable are being intimidated, discouraged or silenced by warlords and their proxies.

This is the sobering picture drawn by a recent Human Rights Watch report on political repression in Afghanistan aptly titled 'The Rule of the Gun.' ... The report describes patterns of mafia-like power exercised nearly everywhere outside Kabul, the capital. ... Women in particular are threatened or attacked for trying to promote their rights.

A tribal radio announcement says 'All Terezai tribespeople should vote for Hamid Karzai ... If any Terezai people vote for other candidates, the tribe will burn their houses.'

There is no basis ... to claim that Afghanistan is approaching true democracy."

"Collaborating with warlords", *The Boston Globe*, in the International Herald Tribune, **October 5, 2004**.

"Francis Fukuyama ... remarks in a brilliant new book: 'How to promote governance of weak states, improve their democratic legitimacy, and strengthen self-sustaining institutions' has become 'the central project of contemporary international politics.'

[He] shows that the task is as essential as it is intractable. It is essential because global security, let alone economic development, depends on the existence of effective states. It is intractable because making states work is so complex. ...

Milton Friedman's advice to countries exiting from communism was 'privatise, privatise, privatise'. Now he says, 'I was wrong. It turns out that the rule of law is probably more basic than privatization.'

... In the absence of effective institutions, a working political system and supportive values, a democratic election offers nothing more than legitimate impotence. ...

Yet external pressure also has a very mixed record in state-building. ...

... Power is necessary, notes Professor Fukuyama, to enforce the rule of law domestically and to preserve world order internationally. If outside powers enter where local powers have failed, we finish up with the challenges of empire. If they fail to enter, we live with the horrors of anarchy. This is the cruellest dilemma facing contemporary statesmen."

Martin Wolf, "Why a president's greatest challenge is state building", Financial Times (UK), **November 3, 2004**.

[Note: The book is Francis Fukuyama, State building: Governance and world order in the 21st century, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (USA), **2004**.

"It has been a little over a year since [Monrovia, Liberia] was in flames and on television screens around the world.

Since then, Liberia has gained the world's largest peacekeeping force, which has been disarming the former fighters. But the latest violence underscores the fragility of Liberia's peace – and the risks for the international community of taking its eye off the ball.

The United Nations may have demobilized 80,000 fighters, but there is little money left to pay for longer-term ... [reintegration] into their communities ... The result is plain to see: gangs of restless youths loitering in the ruins of Monrovia, a tinderbox waiting for a spark.

Liberia's transitional president, Gyude Bryant, has called for an extra \$44 million to pay for education and skills training for the former fighters ... [Critical funding is also] ... necessary to help hundreds of thousands of Liberian refugees and internally displaced people return home, a process expected to start soon.

... Without a real investment in peace by the international community, the people of Liberia and her neighbors may be doomed to repeat their vicious cycle of suffering."

Josephine Hutton, "Winning peace in Liberia", Letters, International Herald Tribune, **November 4, 2004**.

[Note: Ms. Hutton is Oxfam program manager, Liberia.]

"Three years after US-led forces ousted the Taliban, opium is the mainstay of the Afghan economy, accounting for more than 60 per cent of gross domestic product. ...

Britain, [leading] ... the anti-narcotics drive in Afghanistan, admitted there was a risk of the opium boom re-creating the conditions that the 'war against terror' was supposed to eliminate.

The UN's drugs and crime office suggested the lucrative poppy crop was one of the few things keeping the lawless country from falling further into anarchy and poverty. ...

... The crop is now grown in all 32 Afghan provinces.

Afghanistan's opium economy is put at \$2.8 billion, producing 87 percent of the world's total supply.

The UN estimates that 10,000 people a year die from heroin overdoses and a further 100,000 from [related] ... illnesses. ...

'The fear that Afghanistan might degenerate into a narco-state is slowly becoming a reality, as corruption in the public sector, the die-hard ambition of local warlords and the complicity of local investors are becoming a factor in Afghan life', [said a UN official.]

The UN has urged the Afghan government to pursue next year an opium eradication campaign, prosecute larger traffickers and tackle government corruption."

George Parker and Vicky Burnett, "Opium economy makes Afghanistan 'likely breeding ground' for terrorists", Financial Times (UK), **November 19, 2004**.

"The people of Congo -- arguably, the world's biggest disaster zone -- are used to being betrayed, but they are not yet beaten. On January 7th, the head of the country's electoral commission hinted that elections scheduled for June would be postponed. ...

That the protestors might want a chance to elect new leaders is understandable. The current government, largely a coalition of rebels spawned by nearly a decade of on-off war, was formed 18 months ago to guide the Democratic Republic of Congo to peace and, indeed, democracy. ... It has done nothing of the sort. ... On January 3d, six ministers were sacked for corruption after an audit of state-run firms.

This sparked a row between the country's president, Joseph Kabila, a 34 year-old former taxi driver, and one of his four vice-presidents ... [If the latter quits] ..., the government might be considered to have collapsed. ... As Congo's war continues, new rebel leaders in the bush have replaced other former rebels in government.

This week, the UN reported that 20,000 refugees had fled north-eastern Congo into

Uganda ...

Even if Mr. Kabila's government holds together, it will not be able to end this warring."

"Congo: An almost hopeless case: The world's bloodiest war goes on and on",
The Economist, **January 22d, 2005**, p. 41.

"George W. Bush's second Inaugural Address [emphasized] ... that the purpose of American foreign policy must be the expansion of liberty. ...

While Bush has been visionary in his goals, he has not provided much practical wisdom on how to attain them in a complex world. ...

... Is the problem of tyranny the 'calling of our time'? Is it the dominating issue for the world today?

We live in a democratic age. Many countries that are not liberal democracies are often strange mixtures of freedom and unfreedom ...

For much of the world, the problem is not the will for democracy, but the capacity to build and sustain a stable, effective, and decent government.

The author of American liberty, James Madison, wrote in The Federalist papers that 'in framing a government which is to be administered by men over men, the great difficulty lies in this: you must first enable the government to control the governed; and in the next place oblige it to control itself.' ...

The president is wise to articulate the path ahead. But we should also note the trends toward chaos, plague and poverty, which consume the attentions of much of the world. ..."

Fareed Zakaria, "High hopes, hard facts", Newsweek International, **January 31, 2005**, pp. 18-21.

Note: This subsection, and the other five "UN performance problems" subsections that precede "Anecdotes and Observations", are very much still in the "start-up" stage, due to the priority need to establish all the parts of this archive. Material from the sources cited in the "useful sources" for each of them, and other material, will be added as soon as possible.

Useful Sources

(Note: informally assembled by IO Watch, roughly ranked from "most useful" on down, and subject to change as new sources are added)

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