

# **Anatomy of State Failure**

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*Case Studies in Zaire, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia*

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## *Abstract*

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In the 1990s, failed states emerged as a pernicious threat to both regional security and the wellbeing of millions of people worldwide. While this phenomenon has been well-documented, explaining why and how states fail has proved to be a complex analytical task. As most scholars have viewed state failure as an anarchic and idiosyncratic occurrence, there has been little attempt to develop theoretical explanations for state failure. This study seeks to reverse this trend. In contrast to existing research, it contends that there was an underlying causal logic to all instances of state failure in the 1990s. To this end, it proposes an analytical model for understanding the causes and the process of state failure in general theoretical terms. There are two main components to this model. First, it claims that four common factors caused state failure in the 1990s: a flawed political structure; an economic crisis; a loss of state legitimacy; and systemic pressures. Second, it argues that the process of state failure represents a profound decrease in and decentralisation of state capital and coercive power. Through a comparative study of state failure in Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, the utility of this model as a theoretical tool for understanding why and how states fail is established.

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## *List of Abbreviations*

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EU	European Union
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
LCY	League of Communists of Yugoslavia
PDPA	People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan
TDF	Territorial Defence Force
US	United States of America
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WWII	World War Two
YPA	Yugoslav People's Army
ZAF	Zairian Armed Forces

Note: All figures are quoted in US Dollars (\$USD).

# **The Puzzle of State Failure**

### **POSING THE PROBLEM**

By and large, modern states have been remarkably robust and successful organisations. Unrivalled in their ability to extract resources and monopolise the means of coercion within a clearly defined territory, states have achieved an unprecedented degree of security against internal rivals and external threats (Tilly 1990; Weber 1947). Through the provision of public goods and the perpetuation of national myths, most states have also won the allegiance of their citizens and earned legitimacy for their authority (Rotberg 2004; Holsti 1996). The vast proliferation of states during the 20<sup>th</sup> century is a testament to their effectiveness as political entities. In 1914, only 55 states existed. By the end of the century, however, their number exceeded 190 and the modern state had become recognised as the basic and inviolable unit of the international system. While many of the world's newest states have been poor and weak in their capacity to effect social change, almost all have succeeded in maintaining order within their respective sovereign territories (Migdal 1988; Zartman 1995).

Yet a small number of states have proved disastrously incapable of performing this basic task. These are widely referred to as 'failed states'. Characterised by the disintegration of centralised authority and the violent collapse of domestic order, failed states represent a curious exception to the overwhelmingly successful lineage of modern states. While state failure has occurred sporadically throughout history, since the end of the Cold War there has been a substantial increase in both the prevalence and the severity of this phenomenon



(Zartman 1995; Clapham 2004). In countries as diverse as Somalia, Zaïre,<sup>1</sup> Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Haiti and the former Yugoslavia, collapsing state structures have given rise to some of the most destructive and intractable internal conflicts in recent years. As armed groups have vied for control within the power vacuums left by defunct states, conflict and domestic chaos have left an estimated 4 to 10 million people dead since 1990 (Rubin 2002a; Rotberg 2004). Failed states have also sparked regional instability and humanitarian crises as millions of refugees spill over international borders in an effort to escape the anarchy that accompanies state failure. Shattering the post-Cold War aspirations of a ‘new world order’, state failure has emerged as a pernicious threat to both regional security and the wellbeing of millions of people worldwide.

Why do some states fail? How do they fall apart? What accounts for the proliferation of failed states in the 1990s? And is state failure an idiosyncratic event or are there certain general causes which underscore all instances of state failure? In light of the robustness of most states and the destruction wrought by their failure, these questions are of critical importance to scholars and policy-makers alike. Providing answers to the puzzle of state failure is the central purpose of this study.

#### **AVAILABLE ANSWERS**

Despite the growing scholarly interest in failed states, existing explanations for why and how states fail are unsatisfying. Crucially, few scholars have attempted to draw theoretical generalisations across multiple cases of state failure. Instead, the study of state failure has been broadly concentrated on two areas that emphasise the idiosyncrasies of the phenomenon. First, many scholars have been preoccupied with providing autopsies of specific failed states (e.g. Lemarchand 2003; McNulty 1999; Rubin 2002; Ramet 1996). While these studies have

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<sup>1</sup> Renamed the Democratic Republic of the Congo in 1997.

generated a wealth of highly-detailed empirical literature, they have added little to the theoretical understanding of the process of state failure. Second, other scholars have sought to shed light on state failure by examining a range of variables that either cause or correlate with failed states in a more general sense (e.g. Rotberg 2004; Gros 1996; Zartman 1995; Rubin 2002a). Here, however, the emphasis has been on how specific factors sap the power of weak states, rather than on explaining the process by which states fail per se. As there has been little effort to synthesise causal variables or to compare them across clearly-delineated case studies, these accounts have also stopped short of providing comprehensive models explaining state failure.

To be sure, the absence of general explanations in the study of failed states is not coincidental. Underscoring most studies is the widely-held assumption that all instances of state failure are unique. While scholars have noted common causes and recurring trends in an anecdotal way, there is broad consensus that the causes and processes of state failure are contingent upon the particular circumstances of individual states. Indeed, some scholars have specifically cautioned against generalisation, fearing that this may lead to incorrect diagnoses of failure and the implementation of poorly-adapted recovery strategies (e.g. Gros 1996; Doornbos 2002). However, neglecting to generalise or draw comparisons across cases is equally dangerous if it means that key dynamics underlying all instances of state failure are overlooked. While it is true that every failed state has its idiosyncrasies, it may nevertheless be the case that the process of state failure represents a more universal phenomenon than scholars have assumed. It is this latter view which I take over the following pages.

## **THE ARGUMENT IN BRIEF**

My central argument is straightforward. Contrary to existing research, I contend that instances of state failure in the 1990s have occurred for the same general reasons and in a broadly similar way. There are two main parts to my argument. First, I claim that four common factors caused state failure in the 1990s. Invariably, the states which failed suffered from: a flawed political structure; a profound economic crisis; a loss of state legitimacy; and, systemic pressures. Taken together, I argue that these independent variables provide a sufficient causal explanation for the erosion of state power. Second, I also identify an underlying process of state failure which has been common across cases in the 1990s. Drawing on Tilly's (1990) account of European state formation, I argue that the four aforementioned variables cumulatively reverse the concentration and accumulation of capital and coercion upon which successful states are formed. In other words, I regard the general process of state failure to be the opposite path to that of state-making. Moreover, while I claim that state failure—like state formation—may take a 'capital-intensive', 'coercion-intensive' or 'combined capital-coercion' trajectory, underscoring all instances of state failure is an overall decrease in and decentralisation of state economic and military power (Tilly 1990:30). Organising both parts of my argument into an analytical model, I propose the 'state-breaking mechanism' as a way of understanding why and how states fail in general theoretical terms.

My argument and model, if successful, have the potential to serve as a blueprint for understanding state failure in the post-Cold War world. The present study, however, is more modest in its scope. This study is based on a comparative analysis of three instances of state failure in the 1990s: Zaïre (1965-1997), Afghanistan (1978-1992) and the former Yugoslavia (1947-1991; henceforth 'Yugoslavia'). It is from a deductive inversion of Tilly's (1990) state-making theory and an inductive examination into the history of each of these cases that I have

formed my argument concerning the common causes and the general process of state failure. I demonstrate that while Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia have each taken a slightly different trajectory to failure, the underlying dynamics of state failure have been essentially the same in each case. As these states differ in many important respects—location, size, history, demographics, politics and level of development—the fact my model captures a common process of failure suggests that it succeeds over a broad spectrum of failed states. Although this study is primarily concerned with explaining state failure in Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, the model I present may thus have more a general applicability.

#### **THE ORGANISATION OF THE THESIS**

The purpose of the following study is to explain the anatomy of state failure. Chapter 1 lays the conceptual and analytical foundations for my study. It provides a clear definition of the ‘failed state’ and reviews existing explanations regarding the various causes of state failure. The chapter also presents the state-breaking mechanism as a model for understanding why and how states fail and the trajectories which states take on their path to collapse.

The following three chapters analyse each case study through the lens of the state-breaking mechanism. Chapter 2 examines state failure in Zaïre. It reveals how an economic hollowing out of state institutions caused Zaïre to fail along a ‘capital-intensive’ trajectory that was relatively conflict free. Chapter 3 describes the more violent process of state failure in Afghanistan. It explains how the fragmentation of military resources underscored Afghanistan’s ‘coercion-intensive’ trajectory to failure. Chapter 4 depicts state failure in Yugoslavia to be a middle-road between the two previous cases. It demonstrates how a simultaneous devolution of state military, economic and political power triggered a ‘combined capital-coercion’ trajectory that underscored the dismemberment of the Yugoslav

state. While chapters 2, 3 and 4 each highlight a specific trajectory to state failure, they nevertheless all explain how four common causes precipitated state failure by decreasing and decentralising state capital and coercive power.

The conclusion to this study draws comparisons across all three cases of state failure. It reflects on the arguments of the state-breaking mechanism and discusses the theoretical implications of this model for the study of failed states more generally.

## **A Model for Understanding State Failure**

### **THE CONCEPTUAL AND ANALYTICAL CHALLENGE OF FAILED STATES**

State failure is a complex and chaotic occurrence. Amidst the collapse of legitimate authority, the breakdown of socio-economic structures, the disintegration of central institutions and the rise of armed sub-state groups, it is difficult to discern any underlying logic to the seemingly anarchic process of state failure. Moreover, as states typically fail over a long period of time and across a wide range of political, economic, social and military dimensions, specifying the precise nature of the failed state is a challenging conceptual task.

Owing to the complexity of this phenomenon, most scholars have viewed state failure as a “long-term degenerative disease”; marked by “the slippery slope [and] the descending spiral” and characterised by the “absence of clear turning points, warning signals, thresholds or pressure spots” (Zartman 1995:8-9). As a result, scholars have focussed on a variety of causal factors associated with failed states, rather than attempting to impose conceptual and analytical order upon the chaotic process of state failure itself (Zartman 1995; Doornbos 2002; Rotberg 2004). There has also been a tendency to identify a myriad of different ‘types’ of failed states and to position these along a “continuum”, ranging from the strong state at one end to the defunct state at the other (Gros 1996; Wallensteen 2000; Holsti 2000). Yet, while there is some empirical validity to both of these endeavours, by emphasising the idiosyncrasies of state failure scholars have been unable to provide clear explanations for what failed states actually are and for how failed states come into existence. Accordingly, the

study of failed states requires greater conceptual clarity and more rigorous analytical insight into the causes and process of state failure.

### CONCEPTUALISING THE FAILED STATE

The most fundamental task in any study of state failure is to establish a precise definition of the failed state. Indeed, before it is possible to explain why and how states fail, we require such a definition as a yardstick for differentiating between failed and functioning states. Defining the failed state, however, remains a largely unresolved scholarly debate. On one hand, it is conceptually problematic since the term ‘state failure’ bundles two definitional debates together: that of the ‘state’ and that of the ‘failed state’ (von Einsiedel 2005:15). On the other hand, the debate has been obscured by scholars who regard the chaotic process of state failure to be antithetical to the formation of concise and universal definitions (Gros 1996; Langford 1999). Nevertheless, it is possible to provide a succinct and logical definition of the failed state by contrasting it with the minimum requirements for successful statehood.

#### *The successful state*

While modern states exist to provide a wide range of political goods to their citizens, it is broadly accepted that the most important function of the state is the maintenance of security and domestic order (Wallensteen 2000:4; Herbst 2000:254-255; Rotberg 2004:3; Clapham 2004:77). For this reason, most scholars adopt Weber’s (1947:154) classic definition of the state as “a compulsory political association...[that] successfully upholds a claim to the *monopoly* of the *legitimate* use of physical force in the enforcement of its order...within a given *territorial* area”. As no ‘higher order’ political goods can be provided without a significant level of domestic security, the state’s ability to maintain order through the monopoly of coercion represents the most basic criteria for successful statehood. Indeed, as historical accounts of state formation confirm, the capacity to monopolise coercive power is

the foundation upon which all other state functions ultimately depend (Tilly 1985; Porter 1994; Gat 2006).

Nevertheless, many scholars have rejected this minimalist conception of the state and have instead forwarded a variety of broader definitions. Emphasising the normative aspect of successful statehood, Holsti (1996:83) argues that the “idea of the state”, its “physical basis” and its “institutional expression” are “[all] interconnected and...necessary...for a state to cohere and sustain its basic functions”. In this view, successful states are as dependent upon “legitimacy” as they are upon coercive power (Holsti 1996:97). Alternatively, both Mann (1984:189) and Migdal (1988:4-5) contend that the power of successful states is predicated upon their capacity to “penetrate civil society”, “regulate social relationships” and “implement...political decisions”. Employing Mann’s (1984:189) terminology, it is this “infrastructural power”—rather than purely coercive power—that ensures the robustness and sustainability of states. Finally, other scholars point to states’ bureaucratic, representative and welfare functions as alternate indicators of success (Meierhenrich 2004:157; Gros 1996:456; Milliken & Krause 2003:4).

However, by failing to note the hierarchy in state functions these definitions confuse the successful state with the more robust state. While the maintenance of popular legitimacy, the capacity to penetrate civil society and the provision of desirable political goods all strengthen the rule of the state; without the pre-existing ability to enforce domestic order, these tasks cannot be performed and the state itself cannot function. Moreover, as many weak states fail to meet these criteria but do not disintegrate into internal chaos,<sup>2</sup> it is evident that these broader definitions are poor conceptual tools for differentiating between failed states and states which survive but are only moderately successful. Consequently, a Weberian definition



of the state provides a more logical account of the minimum requirements for successful statehood.

### *The failed state*

Building on this conception of state success, the failed state may thus be defined as one in which the central authority has lost its capacity to uphold the monopoly over the means of coercion within a clearly defined territory. This definition establishes a precise and relatively conservative benchmark for identifying failed states and for distinguishing them from weak—albeit functioning—states.

While scholars adopting a Weberian view of the state have generally accepted this definition, many others contend that it does not capture important differences in the nature and severity of state failure (Gros 1996; Wallensteen 1999). Accordingly—and consistent with the assumption that all instances of state failure are unique—scholars have defined a myriad of different ‘types’ of failed states, all of which vary in scope. For example, Young (1994) describes “hollowed-out states”; Reno (2000) discusses “shadow-states”; and Gros (1996) categorises “anarchic”, “phantom”, “anaemic”, “captured” and “aborted” states. While it is empirically plausible that each ‘type’ of failed state represents a unique stage in what Zartman (1995:9) calls the “slippery slope” towards failure, these definitions are conceptually problematic as they provide no yardstick for differentiating between failed and functioning states. Moreover, by emphasising the idiosyncrasies of failed states, these definitions overlook the underlying relationship that exists between coercive power and state failure. That is, whatever the particularities of the crises that different states face, a state which has eroded to the point where it can no longer maintain its authority through force has lost its most fundamental criterion for existence—as well as its last line of defence against challenges from

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<sup>2</sup> Examples include: Bolivia, Burma, Laos, Mali and Ghana.

rival sub-state groups. For this reason, the loss of the monopoly of coercion provides a more accurate definition of the failed state.

Of course, this definition also has its limitations. On one hand, it is difficult to evaluate whether certain weak states have lost their monopoly of coercion in a minority of borderline cases. In some civil wars, for example, the central authority may lose control over pockets of territory, but nevertheless maintain order across the vast majority of the state (Jenne 2003:222).<sup>3</sup> On the other hand, states may lose their monopoly of force as a result of interstate war or hostile takeover—neither of which indicate that the state itself has failed. Nevertheless, by adding the caveat that state failure is the result of a process of state-capacity erosion that is more extensive than civil war and distinct from external conquest, the loss of the monopoly of coercion serves as an effective yardstick for identifying failed states in the overwhelming majority of cases. The important question thus becomes why and how do certain states lose the monopoly of coercion and descend into failure?

#### **EXISTING EXPLANATIONS FOR STATE FAILURE**

By and large, the literature on state failure has been dominated by case- and issue-specific explanations. While these studies have not explicitly examined how states lose the monopoly of coercion, they have identified a wide range of causal variables which undermine the power of weak states. Owing to the widespread assumption that all instances of state failure are unique, there has been little effort to synthesise these explanations into more general theories of state failure. Nevertheless, they provide a useful account of many of the main factors responsible for the erosion of coercive power and the precipitation of state failure. Viewed according to their causal nature, these may be organised into agential, structural and synthetic explanations.

### *Agential explanations*

Two main agency-centred explanations for state failure merit attention. First, several scholars have viewed the actions of individuals and social groups as triggers of state failure (Maley & Saikal 1992:15-17; Holsti 2000:255-56). Most notably, Kasfir (2004:59) argues that when “the prospect of state failure” looms large, “fear” and “greed” motivate agents’ behaviour to produce domestic “security dilemmas” and acts of “violent predation”. In turn, these phenomena serve as “tipping points” which create “the conditions for the chain reaction that causes public authority to break down and violence to rapidly escalate during and after state failure” (Kasfir 2004:71). However, as this degenerative behaviour is most likely caused by a pre-existing situation of domestic anarchy, Kasfir’s argument appears better suited to explaining the origins of violence within failed states, rather than the origins of failed states per se.

Second, a more convincing agential explanation charges poor or oppressive leadership practices with causing state failure. Exemplifying this position, Rotberg (2004:27) argues that “[w]herever there has been state failure...human agency has engineered the slide from strength to weakness, and wilfully presided over profound and destabilizing resource shifts from the state to the ruling few”. Furthermore, Rotberg (2004:25-27) notes that corruption and “kleptocratic rule” backed by violence and human rights abuses have seen the “hand of man” precipitate state failure in a variety of cases. Extending this idea, Stewart (2000:6-15, 22-23), Holsti (2000:250-52) and van de Walle (2004:104-112) each describe how neopatrimonial leaders employ predation and clientelism to mobilise inter-group hostility for economic and political gains—undermining order, legitimacy and the state in the process. Finally, Reno’s (1999:218) account of “warlord politics” explains how internal disorder serves the economic and political interests of leaders in weak African states. For this

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<sup>3</sup> Examples include: Sri Lanka, Colombia and Indonesia.

reason—and to protect themselves from internal challengers—some leaders purposefully undermine bureaucratic and coercive institutions (Reno 2003:85; Reno 1999:19; Atzili 2007:150). However, while Reno (1999:18-24) and Lemarchand (2003:32-35) view these leadership decisions as the decisive “triggering events” of state failure, both also note the role of structural pressures.

### *Structural explanations*

Structural explanations for state failure can be arranged into two groups. First, the internal structures of weak states are widely regarded as having established conditions conducive to state failure. Focussing on acutely impoverished states, Englebert (2006), van de Walle (2004:98-104) and Cramer and Goodhand (2002:894-900) explain how underdeveloped economic structures leave certain states particularly vulnerable to failure. Alternatively, other scholars have discussed political structures as causes of state failure. For example, Ramet (1996:ch.1) details how an increasingly decentralised confederal system was instrumental in the break-up of the Yugoslav state. Moreover, van de Walle (2001:118-128) notes the debilitating effects of African neopatrimonial systems; while Clapham (2004:84-92) contends that the absence of “political cultures” that respect central authority makes state failure an endemic problem for Africa. Finally, Migdal (1988) provides a sophisticated account of the fragmented social structure of many Third World states (cf. Saikal 2005). He argues that as societies accord the “right to make rules” to various strong social institutions, the state is weakened vis-à-vis society. In turn, as this compels the state to rely upon “strongmen” for survival, both power and social control become increasingly fragmented—pushing weak states towards failure (Migdal 1988:ch.7).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> While Migdal (1988) does not discuss failed states per se, he outlines a degenerative process of state capacity erosion which resembles the phenomenon of state failure.

The second type of structural explanation emphasises the role of systemic pressures. Above all, many scholars regard the end of the Cold War to have been a primary cause of state failure in the 1990s (Clapham 1996:ch.6; Woodward 1996:16; Rubin 1995:236; Rubin 2002:179-183). Epitomising this perspective, Goodson (2001:6-8) explains that as the global bipolar system collapsed and undermined the geopolitical significance of many weak states, the superpower assistance that had previously sustained these states dried-up—leaving many of them vulnerable to state failure. Adopting a more historical focus, other scholars view colonialism and premature self-determination as having established weak states with arbitrary borders, poor state-society relations and a precarious underdevelopment of governance institutions (Herbst 1996; Holsti 1996; Hironaka 2005:ch.3; Myall 2005). While not triggering failure, these scholars regard the legacy of “ruptured...social development, arrested...political development, and retarded...economic growth” as having established the structural foundations for state failure (Chesterman, Ignatieff and Thakur 2004:1).

Alternatively, Duffield (2005:7) and other dependency theorists argue that international politico-economic relations are characterised by a systemic “logic of exclusion”, whereby peripheral states are disadvantaged by global capitalism and financial institutions—failing under overwhelming structural-economic pressure (cf. Holsti 1996:136-40). Finally, several scholars have built on Jackson’s (1990) account of “quasi-states” to demonstrate how the international “sovereignty regime” perpetuates state weakness by ‘trapping’ weak states within “defective” borders (Clapham 1996:ch.1; Atzili 2007). As Jackson (1990:23) notes, “[quasi-states] are not allowed to disappear juridically—even if for all intents and purposes they have already fallen...down”. Consequently, as the leaders of such states do not face threats to their external sovereignty, they have no incentive to establish the strong institutions

that are necessary for durable statehood and the prevention of state failure (Krasner 2005:69; Atzili 2007).

### *Synthetic explanations*

Both agential and structural explanations are relevant to the analysis of state failure. Broadly, agential variables explain how the actions of leaders push weak states into failure, whereas structural variables reveal why certain states are predisposed to failure in the first place (van de Walle 2004:98). However, while all of the above explanations expose part of the overall picture of state failure, individually these accounts are unable to bring sufficient analytical clarity to the common causes and general process of state failure. For this reason, it is imperative to synthesise causal variables into more comprehensive explanations.

Only a few scholars have attempted this task and have done so with very limited success. Most synthetic explanations have taken the form of multi-variable analyses into individual cases of state failure. For example, McNulty (1999:71-80) discusses the interaction between the “external”, “internal” and “regional” factors which led to the failure of Zaïre. Cramer and Goodhand (2002:898-904) analyse Afghanistan’s failure according to a three-tiered erosion in “the means of violence”, “wealth and welfare” and “legitimacy and representation”. Finally, Ramet (1996:38-39) considers economic decline, state illegitimacy, social unrest and oppressive leadership practices to have been the cumulative causes of Yugoslav state failure. While such explanations have had mild success articulating the synthetic causal makeup of specific state failures, none have attempted to identify any underlying logic or process to state failure. Moreover, as there has been no effort to synthesise causal variables across multiple cases of failed states, these explanations have failed to develop into analytical models for understanding state failure in general theoretical terms.

Indeed, there have been only two notable attempts to provide theoretical models for analysing multiple cases of state failure. First, the *State Failure Task Force* developed a detailed explanatory model based on the quantitative analysis of over 600 variables across all instances of state failure since 1955 (Esty et al. 1995). However, while the *Task Force* found that just three variables—“high infant mortality rates”, “low trade openness” and “low levels of democracy”—provide an accurate model for predicting state failure, these correlations “cannot [prove]...cause and effect relationship[s]” and are thus inadequate for explaining why and how states fail (Esty et al. 1995:vii-ix). Second, Holsti (1996:116-122) devised the “state-strength dilemma” as a rudimentary model for explaining the underlying process of state failure. He argues that when a structurally weak state is forced to increase its capacity through predatory policies, it undermines its legitimacy and provokes challenges to its authority. As this cyclical process generates increasingly greater resistance, the state is gradually weakened and its armed forces eventually disintegrate. Despite this seemingly plausible argument, Holsti’s model is also marred by a lack of analytical clarity. Crucially, it does not explain how sub-state groups acquire the sufficient coercive power to challenge state authorities, nor does it explain why the collapse of the army is a necessary corollary of the loss of state legitimacy. Moreover, in the absence of clearly-delineated causal variables, Holsti’s model is ill-equipped to identify the main factors underscoring both state weakness and the erosion of coercive power. In short, as neither model provides sufficient analytical insight into the causes and process of state failure, a more detailed theoretical model is required.

#### **MODELING STATE FAILURE: THE STATE-BREAKING MECHANISM**

To this end, I propose the ‘state-breaking mechanism’ as a comprehensive analytical model for understanding why and how states fail in general theoretical terms. This model depicts state failure as a general empirical phenomenon, underscored by four common factors and a

single causal logic. Its central analytical claim is that states fail as a result of a profound decrease in and decentralisation of state capital and coercive power. Considering ‘capital’ to be economic and financial resources and ‘coercive power’ as both weapons and the personnel who bear arms, it is at the level of these two critical resources that states ultimately lose the monopoly of coercion. Comprising of two parts, the state-breaking mechanism thus explains the common causes and general process of state failure.

### *The causes of state failure*

Based on an inductive examination into state failure in Zaire, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, the state-breaking mechanism suggests that four recurring factors have been responsible for state failure in the 1990s: a flawed political structure; an economic crisis; a loss of state legitimacy; and, systemic pressures. While each of these individually erodes state capital and/or coercive power, all are interactive and their combined effect is synergetic. Moreover, as these variables capture both agential and structural aspects of state failure, collectively they represent a synthetic explanatory approach. In this model, however, variables are organised by ‘type’—rather than by their agential or structural ‘quality’—in order to emphasise the main thematic components that are linked to the erosion of state power. Taken together, these four independent variables provide a sufficient causal explanation for why states lose the monopoly of coercion.

I. FLAWED POLITICAL STRUCTURE. Central to all instances of state failure is a domestic political structure that undermines the capacity of state authorities to maintain centralised control over political, economic and military power. As the literature on state failure demonstrates, a wide range of political structures may erode state power in various different ways. Nevertheless, underscoring these seemingly idiosyncratic political systems is a broadly similar defect: all directly or indirectly sap the capital and coercive power of the state and



decentralise these powers at a sub-state level. This variable concentrates on the internal structural aspect of state failure. However, to the extent that poor leadership decisions have instigated flawed political structures, this variable is also able to capture the role of agency in state failure.

II. ECONOMIC CRISIS. While many states suffer from deteriorating economic circumstances but do not fail, the acute impoverishment and virtual bankruptcy of failing states distinguish their financial crises from more ordinary cases of economic malaise. Synthesising agential and structural factors, this variable incorporates both systemic causes of economic decline and a wide range of policies and decisions which undermine state finances. While the reasons for economic crisis may vary across cases, its negative effects are constant: the decrease in state capital invariably erodes the capacity of the central authority to sustain its rule and maintain its coercive power.

III. LOSS OF STATE LEGITIMACY. As failing states are unable or unwilling to meet the material and/or ideational needs of their populations, citizens and soldiers withdraw their allegiance from the state and socio-political power devolves to one or more sub-state groups. To be sure, anger and disillusionment do not directly decrease or decentralise state capital and coercive power. Nevertheless, the loss of legitimacy provides: the motivation for sub-state groups to challenge state authority; and, in many cases, establishes the organisational basis for the centrifugal accumulation economic and military resources. As poor or oppressive leadership practices are the primary causes of popular dissent in failing states, the role of agency is central to this variable. At the same time, however, the process of failure itself— involving institutional collapse, economic disintegration and the rise of domestic insecurity— is an equally important cause of the erosion of state legitimacy.

IV. SYSTEMIC PRESSURES. As states are embedded in their wider regional and international systems, all are susceptible to pressures that emanate from outside their borders. Crucially, structural changes in the external balance of power have a debilitating effect on the viability of weak states. In this way, both the global bipolar system and collapse of this system at the end of the Cold War were fundamental systemic causes of state failure in the 1990s. These systemic pressures affected states in two ways. First, as many states lost their geopolitical significance to the world's superpowers, the reduction or denial of external assistance to weak states eroded their capital and coercive power. Second, the direct provision of external support to rival sub-state groups undermined states' coercive power by decentralising military and economic resources. While this variable focuses on the global structural causes of state failure, it also incorporates the more agency-based decisions by external actors to interfere in weak or failing states.

#### *The process of state failure*

From a deductive inversion of Tilly's (1990:ch.1) theory of European state formation, the state-breaking mechanism depicts the underlying process of state failure to represent a decrease in and decentralisation of state capital and coercive power. Central to this argument is the observation that capital and coercive resources are fundamental to the maintenance of a state's monopoly of coercion. Regarding 'capital', its relationship to state coercive power is indirect; that is, state authorities require a significant accumulation of financial resources so that they may fund and sustain the state's coercive apparatus. Regarding 'coercion', the relationship is more direct; namely "[w]hen the accumulation and concentration of coercive means grow together, they produce states...that control the chief concentrated means of coercion" (Tilly 1990:19). Taken together, the concentration and accumulation of capital and coercion are both necessary and sufficient conditions for the maintenance of the monopoly of coercion. It follows that a decrease in these critical resources will erode the coercive power of

state authorities; while the decentralisation of these resources will enhance the capacity of centrifugal forces and rival sub-state groups. Crucially, it is the severity of this reverse state-making process which explains how states lose the monopoly of coercion.

The state-breaking mechanism thus establishes one general theoretical framework for understanding the process of state failure. Within this broad framework, however, it is also able to distinguish three slight variations in the trajectories that states take on their path to collapse. Inverting Tilly's (1990) state-making argument once more, the state-breaking mechanism demonstrates that failure may take a 'capital-intensive', 'coercion-intensive', or 'combined capital-coercion' trajectory. Yet, while each trajectory differs in the order and emphasis that it places on either capital or coercive factors, all are underscored by the same general dynamics of state failure.

I. THE 'CAPITAL-INTENSIVE' TRAJECTORY. In some cases of state failure, the state is gradually withered away by a profound erosion or devolution of its economic resources. Indeed, van de Walle (2004:95) has identified this trajectory as the "hollowing out" of the state. Although coercive power also decreases and becomes decentralised, this typically occurs as a consequence of the state's financial collapse. For this reason, and as the case study on Zaïre will demonstrate, 'capital-intensive' state failures are relatively conflict free.

II. THE 'COERCION-INTENSIVE' TRAJECTORY. In other instances of state failure, violence and coercion play a more central role. As coercive power wanes at the centre and/or becomes decentralised at the level of various sub-state groups, state authorities quickly lose the monopoly of coercion amidst a situation of internal war. While this situation is typically compounded by fiscal collapse and the centrifugal accumulation of economic resources, these

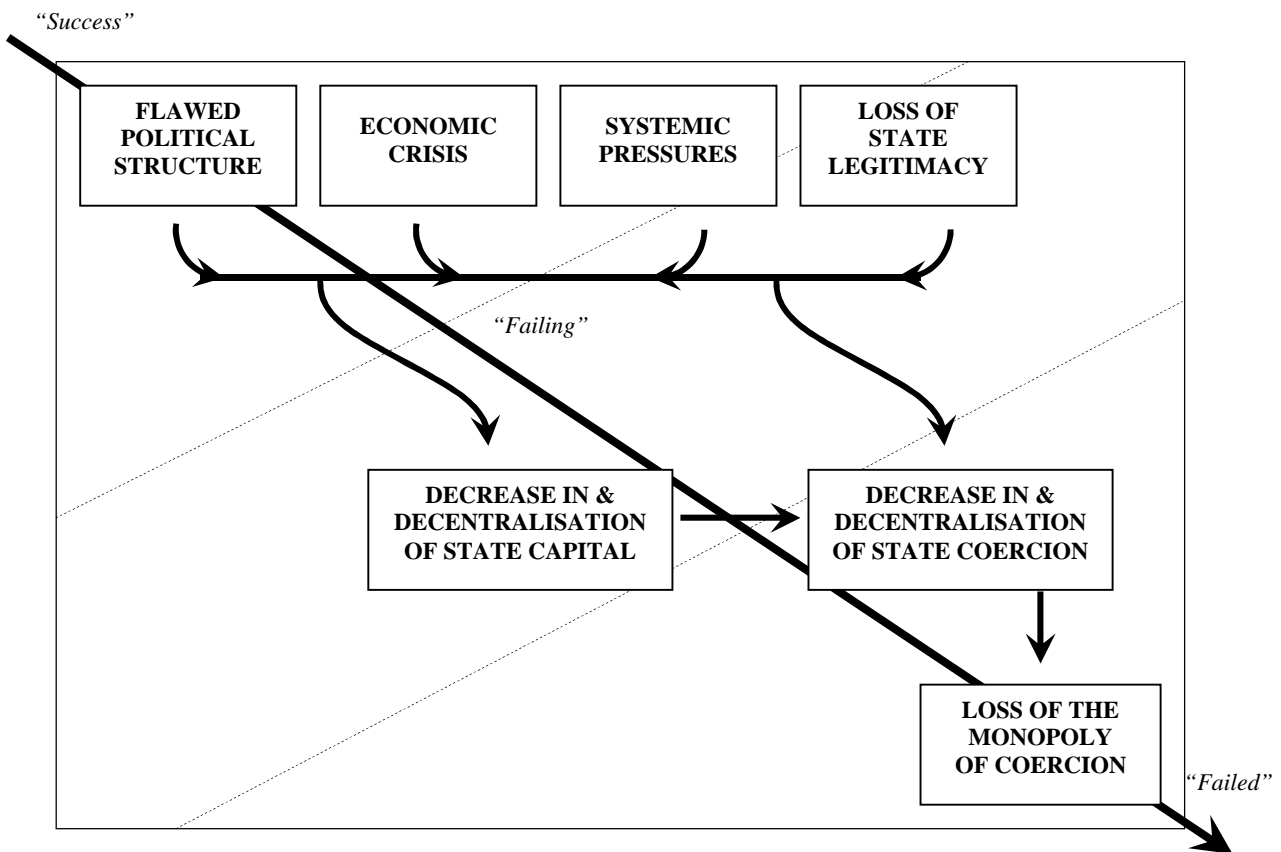
capital-based factors play a more secondary role. The case study on Afghanistan exemplifies this trajectory towards state failure.

III. THE 'COMBINED CAPITAL-COERCION' TRAJECTORY. There is also a middle-road to state failure. When both capital and coercive resources are decreased and decentralised in an essentially simultaneous process, the characteristics of the two previous trajectories are apparent all at once. This trajectory towards state failure may be either violent or conflict-free, and is discussed in the case study on Yugoslavia.

#### *Visualising state failure*

To provide a schematic representation of the relationships between the causes and the process of state failure, the state-breaking mechanism is represented in Figure 1.1. This diagram illustrates how the synergy of four independent variables decreases and decentralises state capital and coercive power, causing states to lose the monopoly of coercion. For each trajectory of state failure, a variation of this diagram will be presented. Through the different configurations of arrows connecting the causes of failure to the two-tiered process of failure, the emphasis of each trajectory will be visually represented. Moreover, in order to provide an approximate indication of the order in which the four independent variables become relevant, the position of the causes of failure will alter in relation to the diagonal axis.

**Figure 1.1** *The State-Breaking Mechanism*



## METHODOLOGY AND CASE SELECTION

This study takes the form of a comparative analysis into state failure in Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia. It is from a detailed investigation into the histories of each of these cases that I have tested the arguments of the state-breaking mechanism. This has involved a range of secondary sources of a predominantly qualitative nature. These include: historical, economic, political science- and social science-based analyses of each case study; accounts of state failure pertaining to each case study; and the literature on failed states more generally. Where available, I have also drawn on economic and military data in order to illustrate certain key points. While the relatively abundant literature on Zaïre and Yugoslavia posed no problems for my research, the literature on Afghanistan was generally less prolific.

The rationale behind my selection of Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia is twofold. First, since all are regarded as classic examples of failed states, any successful model of state failure must—at a minimum—be able to explain these three cases. Second, I also selected these states because of their diversity in a number of important respects. To paraphrase Migdal (1988:xix), “[a]s in a ‘most different systems’ research design, I sought cases different enough in certain key regards so that I could eliminate these differences as possible explanations of [state failure]”. In this way, my case selection represents state failure across three different continents and a range of political and socio-economic systems. It includes states with small populations, Afghanistan (14 million) and Yugoslavia (23 million), and one of significantly greater size, Zaïre (47 million). It involves states with extremely fragmented social structures, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, and another, Zaïre, where national identity was relatively coherent. The states selected also vary in their levels of wealth and development, ranging from the exceedingly impoverished Afghan state and the only modestly ‘developing’ Zaïrian state, to a European state, Yugoslavia, with a far more sophisticated economic and infrastructural base. Finally, these states also differed in their relationship to the global bipolar system: Zaïre as a client of the West, Afghanistan as a client of the Soviets, and Yugoslavia as a leader of the non-aligned movement. Consequently, as the state-breaking mechanism captures a common process of failure across all three of these relatively diverse states, this suggests—though by no means proves—that my analytical model may have a more general applicability.

Over the following three chapters, I examine the failure of Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia through the lens of the state-breaking mechanism. For each, I reveal how four common factors and a single underlying logic have caused these states to fail. In this way, I depict state failure as a clearly-identifiable empirical phenomenon, rather than as an anarchic

and inherently idiosyncratic occurrence, as almost all existing studies have contended. To be sure, my purpose is not to provide an exhaustive account of any one case of state failure. Rather, the focus of this study is the theoretical understanding of state failure in general terms. To this end, I aim “to get the main connections right” by demonstrating how four recurring variables and an unifying causal process provide a sufficient explanation for state failure in Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia (Tilly 1990:36-37). Criticism of the state-breaking mechanism must thus show either: that it overlooks a necessary causal variable; that some neglected variable disrupts the relationship between the variables which have been outlined (Tilly 1990:36); that the process of state failure is wholly different to that which my model describes; or, that this analytical model fails to sufficiently explain at least one instance of state failure examined in this study.

## **State Failure in Zaïre 1965-1997: the ‘Capital-Intensive’ Trajectory and the Hollowing Out of a State**

### **THE HISTORY OF ZAÏRIAN STATE FAILURE**

In the early 1970s, Zaïre was emerging as a relatively robust authoritarian state. After seizing power in 1965, President Mobutu Sese Seko extinguished five years of secessionist violence and centralised politico-military power within a vast one-party state bureaucracy. Using the Zaïrian Armed Forces (ZAF) to suppress internal dissent and coerce Zaïre’s population into submission, the state maintained a kind of ‘absolutist’ rule over civil society. At its helm, the “arch-dictator” Mobutu unilaterally controlled all aspects of both government and state (Reno 2006:43). A relatively prosperous economy further buttressed Zaïrian state power. Fuelled by mineral resource wealth and Western financial aid, between 1965 and 1974 Zaïre experienced rapid modernisation and GDP growth averaged an impressive 6.9 percent per annum (Englebert 2006). Although Zaïre remained weak by international standards, from the perspective of its citizens the state was “monolithic” and its coercive power unchallenged (Young 1994:248).

By the early 1990s, however, this temporarily successful state was nothing more than a “Zaïre-shaped hole in the middle of Africa” (The Economist 1995). Zaïre’s economy was defunct, Western aid had dried-up and Mobutu’s kleptocratic rule had “cannibalized” the state—eroding the capital and coercive power of Zaïrian institutions (Young 1997). Crucially, this disintegrative process reduced the ZAF to an undisciplined and incompetent force incapable of monopolising the means of coercion (Emizet 2000:222). Thus, by the time



Laurent Kabila's rebel army marched unopposed into Kinshasa on 17 May 1997, the Zaïrian state had already ceased to exist (Lemarchand 2003). Confronted with the absence of functioning state institutions, Kabila proved unable to maintain domestic order. The following year Zaïre descended into a devastating internal conflict which by 2006 had left almost 4 million casualties as the tragic legacy of Zaïrian state failure.

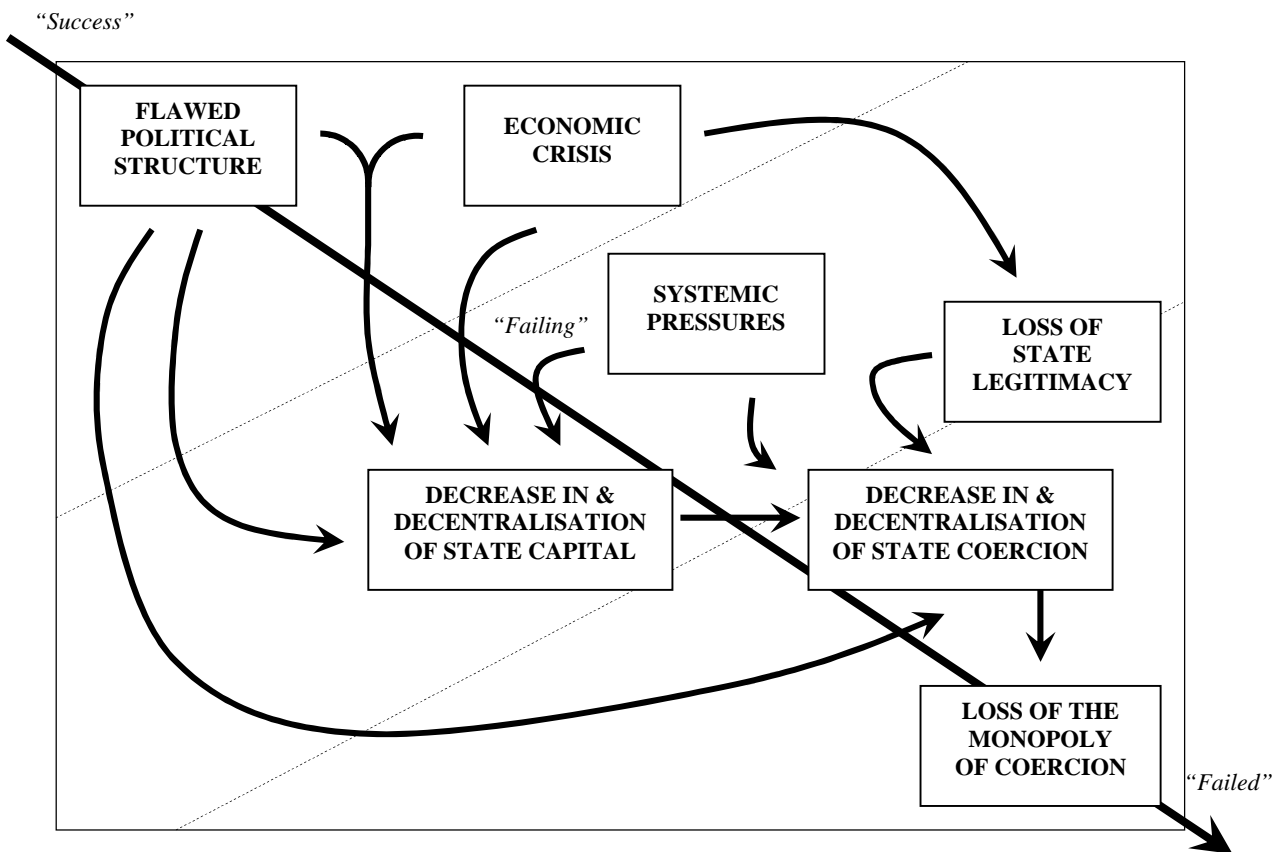
#### **UNDERSTANDING STATE FAILURE IN ZAÏRE**

The failure of Zaïre represents a paradigmatic example of the "hollowing out" of a state (van de Walle 2004:107). As Zaïrian institutions were gradually deprived of the financial resources they needed to exist, the state literally withered away while its armed forces were bled into dysfunction. In an attempt to explain the reasons for this implosion of the state, most scholars have focussed on the role Mobutu played in undermining Zaïrian capital (Callaghy 1984; Emizet 2000; Reno 1999; Reno 2006). Epitomising this perspective, Lemarchand (2003:31) views "Mobutu's brutally exploitative dictatorship" and his "kleptocratic" neopatrimonial rule as the "determining agent[s]" behind Zaïrian state failure. It is argued that Mobutu and his cronies single-handedly 'cannibalised' the state through corruption and nepotism; presiding over such an extensive erosion of capital that the state could no longer sustain either its institutions or its army. Yet, while the agency of Mobutu is central to the understanding of Zaïrian state failure, this explanation alone does not capture the complexity of the phenomenon.

The state-breaking mechanism offers a more nuanced account of state failure in Zaïre. Consistent with the observation that Zaïre failed due to the extreme hollowing out of its financial resources, this first inversion of my analytical model portrays the decrease in and decentralisation of state capital to have been the primary dynamic underscoring Zaïrian state

failure (Figure 2.1). Beginning with Mobutu's neopatrimonial political system, the state-breaking mechanism reveals how corruption and kleptocratic rule siphoned vast amounts of capital out of Zaïrian institutions—incorporating the dominant explanation for Zaïrian state failure into its theoretical framework. However, the erosion of state capital was compounded by two factors that were at least partially outside of Mobutu's control: a deepening economic crisis and a systemically-induced decline in the provision of foreign aid. As this hollowed out state was increasingly unable to sustain its coercive apparatus, Zaïre edged ever-closer towards failure. Nevertheless, it was the influence of systemic pressures which ultimately undermined the coercive power of the state and decentralised military resources within Zaïre. Finally, the loss of state legitimacy provided the ideological motivation for armed domestic groups to challenge Mobutu's crumbling state. Consequently, while the process of Zaïrian state failure followed a predominantly 'capital-intensive' trajectory, the role of coercion was instrumental to the final collapse of the state. Zaïre's path to state failure may be explained in greater detail through the four causal variables of the state-breaking mechanism.

**Figure 2.1** *The State-Breaking Mechanism in Zaïre*



**I. FLAWED POLITICAL STRUCTURE: NEOPATRIMONIALISM, THE ‘CANNIBALISATION’ OF THE STATE AND THE EROSION OF THE ARMED FORCES (PART I)**

Beginning in 1965, Mobutu’s highly-personalised authoritarian rule depended on the political structure of neopatrimonialism. As a political system founded upon corruption, neopatrimonialism has three main characteristics.<sup>5</sup> First, state leaders seek to monopolise political control by establishing clientistic networks and appointing loyal personnel to all significant posts in the state’s *nomenklatura* (Reno 2006:51). Invariably, this involves nepotism and the promotion of certain ethno-regional or kinship groups over others. Second, in return for “faithful” and “effective” service, state clients are permitted to exploit their office for personal gain (Young & Turner 1985:165). Indeed, both the provision of patronage and the ‘right’ to exploit state resources ‘lubricate’ the neopatrimonial system by providing the

incentives for political loyalty (Lemarchand 2003:37). Finally, to ensure their ability to continually provide patronage, state leaders attempt to accumulate, centralise and privatise politico-economic power within a small and highly personalised “coterie” at the top of the state bureaucracy (van de Walle 2001:126).

While neopatrimonialism has functioned elsewhere in Africa, the excesses of the Zaïrian system led to the “self-cannibalization” of the state (Young 1997:2). First, as Mobutu sought the ever-increasing privatisation of economic resources to fund his extensive patron-client network, control over Zaïrian capital was gradually transferred from the state bureaucracy to the President and his cronies. The scope of this redistribution was astronomical. As Reno (1999:154) has documented, presidential control over the state’s economic resources grew from 28 percent in 1972, to 95 percent in 1992 (see Table 2.1), while in 1990 alone, Mobutu personally controlled over \$3 billion of foreign trade revenue. Second, as this privatised capital was consumed by Mobutu and his political clients rather than being used to fund Zaïrian institutions, government finances were siphoned out of the state on a massive and debilitating scale. In the most audacious example, the 1973 ‘Zaïrianisation’ economic measures saw Mobutu expropriate 1,500-2,000 mainly foreign-owned agricultural and commercial enterprises, which he subsequently reallocated to senior associates as a form of political patronage (Callaghy 1984:191). As these individuals typically lacked managerial expertise, between 1973 and 1978 Mobutu’s “economically destructive policy” had halved the domestic tax revenue emanating from agricultural trade and, by 1990, had reduced the value of agricultural exports by 75 percent (Reno 1999:152). Moreover, as all lower-level government personnel—from magistrates and administrative officials, to teachers, nurses and postal workers—also exploited their offices for personal gain, the maintenance of state

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<sup>5</sup> These are derived from van de Walle’s (2001:118-128) four characteristics: “clientism”, “access to state resources”, “the centralization of power” and “hybrid regimes”.

institutions had become virtually impossible by the early 1990s. Since the exigencies of Zaïrian neopatrimonialism had “institutionalize[d] kleptocracy at every level of the social pyramid”, it was the political system itself which initiated a gradual hollowing out of the state (Lemarchand 2003:31).

**Table 2.1** *Privatisation of Government Expenditure in Zaïre, 1972-1992 (percent of total budget)*

<i>Year</i>	<i>President</i>	<i>Agriculture</i>	<i>Social Services</i>
1972	28.0	29.3	17.5
1974	26.0	32.1	12.4
1976	29.0	30.9	13.2
1978	29.0	41.0	11.0
1980	33.0	42.0	11.0
1982	35.0	32.0	10.0
1984	39.0	30.0	9.0
1986	39.0	29.0	7.0
1988	49.0	18.0	4.0
1990	80.0	11.0	2.0
1992	95.0	4.0	0.0

*Source:* Reno (1998:154).

The impact of neopatrimonialism on Zaïre’s armed forces demonstrates how this flawed political system also began the erosion of state coercive power. Beginning in the mid-1970s, nepotism rapidly undermined the quality of the ZAF. Fearing military insubordination, Mobutu promoted officers on the basis of ethno-regional loyalties rather than military expertise; and in 1978, a series of purges saw many experienced officers replaced by unqualified kinsmen of Mobutu’s *Ngbandi* ethnicity and from his native province of Equateur (Emizet 2000). Indeed, by 1980 approximately 90 percent of Defence Ministry personnel were of these origins (Callaghy 1984:209). Although ethno-centric clientism increased Mobutu’s control over the upper echelons of the ZAF, it also caused a severe de-professionalisation of the armed forces. Widespread purges had reduced the ZAF by 25 percent and poorly-trained soldiers lost respect for their inexperienced officers. Moreover, as these client-officers embezzled the salaries, arms and supplies that were intended for the

soldiers—a function of their neopatrimonial position—indiscipline and desertion became endemic (Lemarchand 2003:40). According to Reno (1998:159), these factors further reduced size of the army from 70,000 soldiers in the mid-1980s, to approximately 20,000 in the early 1990s. The result was an overall “erosion of the military’s fighting effectiveness” (Emizet 2000:216). Illustrating this decline in coercive capacity, the enfeebled ZAF had to rely upon foreign intervention to repel insurgencies by 2,000 exiled separatists who attacked Katanga province twice between 1977 and 1978, the more powerful insurgents.<sup>6</sup> In another indication of the army’s impending collapse, Mobutu’s largely unpaid soldiers habitually murdered, raped and pillaged from the Zaïrian population—showing the ZAF to be more of a domestic security liability than an effective national army (Schatzberg 1988:ch.4). In short, as the neopatrimonial system eroded the human and material capacity of the armed forces, it gradually transformed the ZAF into a weak and undisciplined military apparatus that was unable to wield any significant coercive power.

## **II. ECONOMIC CRISIS: THE DECLINE IN STATE CAPITAL AND THE EROSION OF THE ARMED FORCES (PART II)**

By 1975, after fifteen years of post-independence prosperity, the Zaïrian economy had begun a gradual descent into chaos. To a certain extent this was triggered by an economic downturn in the global economy. As Zaïre’s economic growth depended upon lucrative copper exports which accounted for approximately two thirds of its foreign trade revenue, the sudden halving of world copper prices between 1974 and 1976 dealt a significant blow to the Zaïrian economy (Callaghy 1984:196). Furthermore, as Mobutu was forced to borrow increasingly large amounts of foreign capital to replace declining export revenue (Table 2.2), Zaïre’s foreign debt surged dangerously from \$1.5 billion in 1973 to peak at almost \$14 billion in 1993 (Collins 1997). In addition to structural factors, Mobutu’s extensive corruption and

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<sup>6</sup> Between 1971 and 1997 Katanga was officially renamed Shaba.

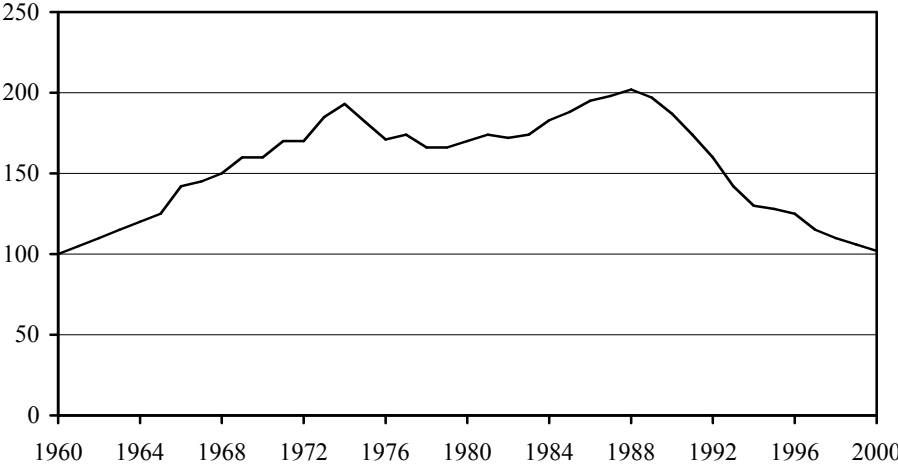
economic mismanagement further exacerbated Zaïre’s financial catastrophe (Lemarchand 2003:31). While neopatrimonial rule siphoned desperately needed state funds into the hands of private individuals, the insatiable demand for patronage necessitated unsustainable levels of foreign borrowing. Moreover, as Mobutu printed new currency in an attempt to offset Zaïre’s burgeoning economic crisis, this ill-conceived monetary policy drove inflation to 23,000 percent in 1993 (Englebert 2006:55). Consequently, by the early 1990s real GDP had reached a 40 year low and the Zaïrian economy had essentially collapsed (Figure 2.2).

**Table 2.2** Recorded Trade Originating from Zaïre, 1989-1995 (\$ millions)

Type	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995
Oil	167.0	148.0	165.0	40.0	130.0	156.0	160.0
Tin	16.4	14.2	8.2	5.3	3.9	5.0	5.5
Diamonds	400.0	320.0	220.0	200.0	289.0	296.0	376.0
Coffee	692.0	548.0	483.0	487.0	330.0	432.0	450.0
Copper	813.0	892.0	525.0	302.0	136.0	120.0	150.0
Cobalt	404.0	418.0	218.0	125.0	54.0	120.0	160.0
Zinc	82.0	79.0	59.0	28.0	0.0	0.0	12.0
Overseas Development Assistance	634.0	823.0	494.0	262.0	178.0	235.0	—
<b>Total</b>	<b>3,208.4</b>	<b>3,242.2</b>	<b>2,172.2</b>	<b>1,449.3</b>	<b>1,121.9</b>	<b>1,364.0</b>	<b>1,313.5</b>

Source: Reno (1998:156).

**Figure 2.2** Real GDP Index in Zaïre, 1960-2000



Source: Englebert (2006:55).

The interaction between Zaïre's economic crisis and its neopatrimonial system had a profoundly destabilising effect on the maintenance of state capital and coercive power. While it is partially true that Zaïrian neopatrimonialism consumed the economic resources that it required to exist, it was the severity of Zaïre's economic decline which ultimately undermined this flawed political system (Englebert 2006; Lemarchand 2003). Beginning in the late 1970s, the deepening economic crisis gradually eroded Mobutu's capacity to provide patronage to his extensive network of clients. As Mobutu concentrated his dwindling finances in the hands of those individuals most crucial to regime survival—military officials and the politico-capitalist élite—less important clients and state institutions were increasingly starved patrimonial resources. In turn, this had the effect of transforming Zaïrian institutions into instruments of exclusively private predation (Englebert 2006:59). As salaries went unpaid and as funding-cuts deprived clients of the opportunity to exploit state resources, employees of the state used their quasi-official positions as vehicles for the personal accumulation of wealth. Most notably, the bribery of customs officials permitted approximately 40 percent of all coffee exports to be smuggled out of Zaïre, costing the state an estimated \$350 million in lost revenue between 1975 and 1979 (MacGaffey 1987:113). In less striking examples, transport authorities accepted bribes in lieu of vehicle registration fees, while judges decided cases on the basis of financial payoffs rather than evidence (Emizet 1998; Englebert 2006). As many of these predatory activities further deprived the state of income, they compounded Zaïre's economic crisis and exacerbated the hollowing out of the state.

Similarly, Zaïre's economic catastrophe further eroded the already declining coercive power of the ZAF. While Mobutu had previously taken care to lubricate patronage networks within the armed forces, by the early 1990s the state's near-total economic collapse seriously undermined his ability to maintain neopatrimonial rule within the ZAF. Consequently, as



Mobutu “lost [the] capacity to match his old rate of payouts”, he gave his generals “substantial new latitude of action to profit from clandestine trade” (Reno 1998:159). The effects of this were twofold. First, when generals assumed control over lucrative gold, diamond and cobalt mining operations which they pursued for personal profit, both the ZAF and the Zaïrian state were further deprived of capital. Second, as a significant decline in military funding drove ZAF officers to embezzle military supplies on an unprecedented scale, ordinary soldiers were left to ‘live off the land’ through a combination of theft, ransom and pillage (Lemarchand 2003:41). Accordingly, between 1991 and 1993 a series of violent uprisings erupted throughout Zaïre as unpaid and poorly-led soldiers rampaged in anger at their downtrodden position. These incidents destroyed millions of dollars worth of infrastructure and in 1993 they culminated in intra-army skirmishes that killed approximately 1,200 people in Kinshasa alone (Lemarchand 2003:41; Emizet 2000:222). Indeed, it was in this state of internal disarray that Kabila’s rebel army found the ZAF in 1996. The inter-relationship between Mobutu’s neopatrimonial rule and a severe economic crisis had gutted the state of its coercive power. Consequently, when Kabila launched his military assault, “all that Mobutu could summon was a band of armed thugs masquerading as an army” (Lemarchand 2003:41).

### **III. SYSTEMIC PRESSURES: THE END OF THE COLD WAR, REGIONAL SECURITY AND THE SHIFT IN THE INTERNAL BALANCE OF POWER**

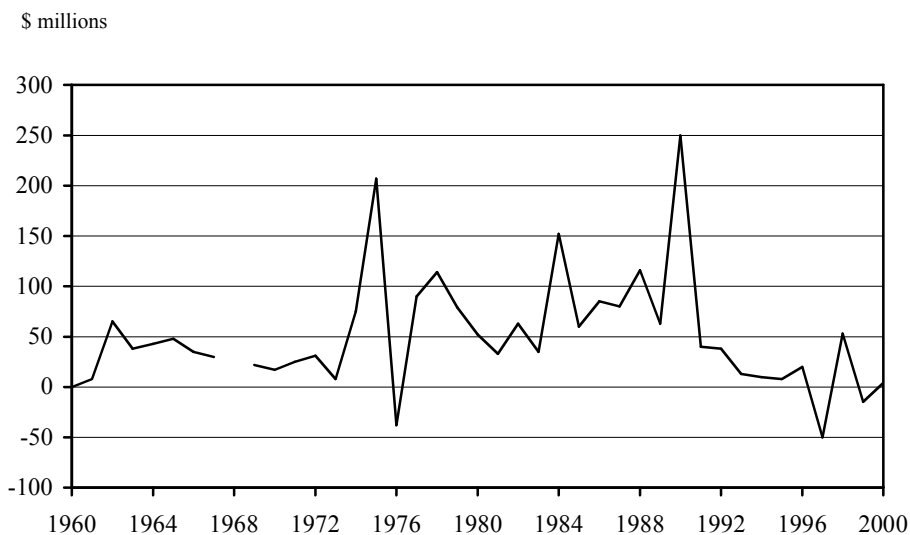
While neopatrimonialism and economic crisis reveal much about the erosion of Zaïrian capital and coercive power, alone they do not provide a sufficient explanation for state failure. By the early 1980s these factors had already rendered Zaïre a “lame Leviathan” (Callaghy 1984:409). Yet the state, for all its flaws, survived until 1997. In order to explain Zaïre’s durability and its subsequent collapse, attention must be paid to the changing systemic circumstances in which Zaïre was embedded.

Until the 1990s, the success of the Zaïrian state depended, in large part, upon the global bipolar structure of the Cold War. As a client of the West, Zaïre's strategic location beside Soviet-backed Angola and Congo-Brazzaville made it a vital bulwark against communism in Africa (Clapham 1996:155). Accordingly, between 1965 and 1991 considerable external support buttressed Zaïre's monopoly of coercion. Most notably, foreign military intervention rescued the Zaïrian state from armed challenges by rival sub-state groups. For example, during the Katangan secessionist uprisings of 1977 and 1978, Moroccan, French, Belgian and US forces intervened to assist the incompetent ZAF in suppressing Angolan-backed separatists (McNulty 1999:63). In addition, massive Western military aid sustained the ZAF in the face of dwindling domestic capital. This aid comprised of military hardware, resources for neopatrimonial exploitation and, during the 1980s, the financial and technical assistance necessary for the creation of paramilitary units designed for the internal defence of the regime (Emizet 2000:218). Overall, a combination of Cold War and 'francophone' interests saw extensive Belgian, French and US aid offset the worst effects of Zaïre's economic crisis in order to keep the anti-communist state afloat.

With the end of the Cold War, however, a new international system undermined the durability of the Zaïrian state. Almost overnight, Zaïre lost its geopolitical significance to the West; while the West, freed from the exigencies of bipolarity, developed a greater interest in human rights. Owing to these factors, when Mobutu's increasingly oppressive rule resulted in over 200 civilian casualties at an opposition rally in 1990, the US, Belgium and France immediately suspended or drastically reduced military and economic aid (Emizet 2000:220). Most strikingly, US aid plummeted from \$250 million in 1990 to just \$35 million in 1991 (Figure 2.3); while Zaïre's total overseas development assistance fell from approximately \$3 billion in 1989 to just over \$1 billion in 1995 (Table 2.2). By 1996 Western support for

Mobutu had become entirely unnecessary in the post-Cold War strategic environment, and Zaïre's foreign patrons had deserted it completely (McNulty 1999). As both the armed forces and the Zaïrian state depended on foreign aid for survival, these dramatic reductions signalled the final stages of Zaïre's 'capital-intensive' trajectory towards failure. Consequently, when Kabila's rebel army began its advance on Kinshasa, there was no repeat of the external intervention that had rescued the state in the 1970s. In short, changes in the international system had left Zaïre bereft of the proxy capital and coercive power it needed to exist.

**Figure 2.3** Net Flow of US Aid to Zaïre, 1960-2000



Source: Englebert (2006:67). Data unavailable for the years 1967-1969.

While these systemic factors completed the hollowing out of the Zaïrian state, it was the exigencies of regional security that triggered a shift in the internal balance of coercive power (Armstrong & Rubin 2005:85). Since the early 1980s, Mobutu had fuelled regional insecurity by providing refuge and support to insurgent groups in neighbouring Angola and Uganda. Moreover, following the Rwandan genocide of 1994, Zaïre's Kivu provinces became home to 1.2 million Hutu refugees, including some 100,000 *génocidaires* who used Zaïre as a base to launch cross-border raids against Rwandan and Ugandan Tutsis. Accordingly, when Zaïre lost its European and US support following the end of Cold War, its neighbours took the

opportunity to overthrow Mobutu in the interests of regional security (McNulty 1999:56). In October 1996, Rwanda, Uganda, Angola, Burundi and Zambia injected considerable military resources into the previously weak and fragmented militias in eastern Zaïre. Under Kabila's leadership, these were formed into a united rebel alliance. Indeed, with the aid of externally-supplied weapons and several thousand well-trained foreign—mainly Rwandan—soldiers, this rebel army easily overpowered the dilapidated ZAF in 1997 (Emizet 2000:222). In this way, both global and regional systemic pressures converged to facilitate the sub-state accumulation of coercive power. In the form of Kabila's military insurrection, these pressures had created the “triggering event” that dealt the decisive blow to Zaïre's already enfeebled monopoly of coercion (Lemarchand 2003:35).

#### **IV. LOSS OF STATE LEGITIMACY: THE ORIGINS OF INSURGENCY AND THE CONDITIONS FOR STATE FAILURE**

Beginning in the mid 1970s, the oppressive Zaïrian state gradually lost all legitimacy in the eyes of its citizens. Yet, as Mobutu's domestic rivals did not possess sufficient coercive power to effectively challenge the state, Zaïre endured for almost 30 years despite this widespread discontent. This situation altered in the early 1990s. As the state's hollowing out process reached its nadir and as centrifugal forces grew in strength, the increasingly severe decline in state legitimacy became an important precursor to state failure. Indeed, it was a profound sense of hostility towards both Mobutu and the Zaïrian state that provided the motivation for Kabila's insurrection and the conditions for its short-lived success.

Mobutu's exclusion and exploitation of certain ethno-regional groups provided the direct ideological impetus for Kabila's insurgency. The most aggrieved of these groups was Zaïre's widely unpopular Tutsi population—the Kivu-based Banyamulenge and Banyarwanda—who had been stripped of citizenship rights in 1981. Unable to vote or procure land, their long-

standing opposition to Mobutu's regime escalated in 1993 when Zaïrian authorities openly incited violence against these so-called Tutsi outsiders (Lemarchand 2003). As the Zaïrian state threatened the survival of the Banyamlunge and Banyarwanda, they no longer considered its authority to be legitimate. Accordingly, this victimised people established a relatively modest militia force (Callaghy 2001). Crucially, when Zaïrian authorities ordered ethnic Tutsis to leave the Kivu provinces in late 1996, it was a small-scale rebellion by this Tutsi militia that attracted Rwandan and Ugandan backing and initiated the formation of Kabila's rebel army. Elsewhere in Zaïre, opposition forces within the mineral rich provinces of Katanga and Kasai also considered themselves to have been economically-exploited by the state. Moreover, Mobutu's violent repression of Katangan secessionism since the 1970s and the ethnic-cleansing of Kasai in 1993 had served to exacerbate the state's loss of legitimacy in the eyes of these citizens. Consequently, when the Kivu rebellion began in October 1996, this simmering pool of discontent provided the ideological foundation for Kabila's insurrection.

In addition, general disillusionment amongst ordinary citizens assisted Kabila's rapid victory over the crumbling Zaïrian state. Following more than 30 years of economic disintegration, institutional collapse and domestic insecurity, the Zaïrian populace was demoralised and eager for change. As a result, when Kabila's rebel forces advanced across Zaïre they met no popular resistance and were instead joined by thousands of new recruits from a population that greeted them as "liberators" (McNulty 1999:75). Moreover, as the feeble and undisciplined Zaïrian army had also lost confidence in the state, soldiers either defected to the rebels or fled in the wake of their unhindered advance (Weiss & Carayannis 2005:148). In this way, Zaïre's unqualified lack of legitimacy left the state defenceless and its coercive apparatus in tatters.

While Kabila's insurgency was fuelled by a profound hostility towards Mobutu's Zaïre, his victory did little to reverse this sentiment. Faced with a deepening economic crisis and the institutional remnants of a failed state, Kabila could neither improve the population's socio-economic standing nor rekindle a sense of state legitimacy (Reno 1998). Most importantly, as his nascent armed forces—still ostensibly a rebel army—were dominated by Rwandans and ethnic-Tutsis, Kabila was increasingly seen as a Rwandan stooge who had been brought to power through foreign invasion (Callaghy 2001:125). Thus, when massive anti-Tutsi riots erupted in 1998, Kabila—seeking domestic political legitimacy—sided with the Zaïrian population and ordered foreign soldiers to leave (Lemarchand 2003:45). Instead, the army fragmented into competing native, foreign, and ethnic-Tutsi factions, while a second Tutsi rebellion began in the Kivu provinces. Finally, as neighbouring states intervened in support of various armed factions, the failed Zaïrian state descended into anarchy.

## **CONCLUSION**

From this analysis, it is evident that the state-breaking mechanism provides a comprehensive account of the 'capital-intensive' process underscoring Zaïrian state failure. By examining the relationship between Zaïre's flawed political structure and its severe economic crisis, the causal factors responsible for hollowing out state capital and coercive power are revealed. These factors capture the role of Mobutu as the architect of Zaïrian neopatrimonialism, the deficiencies of the neopatrimonial system itself, and the agential and structural causes of Zaïre's economic catastrophe. In order to explain how this imploding state graduated from weakness into failure, the two other variables of the state-breaking mechanism are also relevant. While global systemic pressures accompanying the end of the Cold War were responsible for the final erosion of the Zaïrian Armed Forces, systemic pressures at the level of regional security increased the coercive capacity of rival sub-state groups. Once this shift in

the internal balance of power was complete, the underlying loss of state legitimacy became an important motivating factor behind the insurrection that ultimately toppled Mobutu's decrepit state. Overall, the erosion of state capital profoundly emaciated the Zairian state and armed forces; and when external actors redirected military resources from the state to its domestic challengers, the 'hollow' Zairian state lost its monopoly of coercion.

# **State Failure in Afghanistan 1978-1992: the ‘Coercion-Intensive’ Trajectory and the Fragmentation of a State**

### **THE HISTORY OF AFGHAN STATE FAILURE**

Throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century Afghanistan has been an exceedingly weak state. Characterised by a deeply fragmented social structure, the Kabul-based central authority has traditionally been unable to penetrate Afghanistan’s complex network of resilient and often antagonistic “micro-societies” (Saikal 2005). Moreover, its poor and largely rural subsistence economy has continually deprived the state of the domestic recourses necessary to build powerful institutions of extraction and coercion. Nevertheless, between 1929 and 1978 a combination of foreign rentier income and cooperative state-society relations facilitated the longest period of state stability and social harmony in modern Afghan history. While Afghanistan remained a fragile and impoverished state, in the early 1970s its population enjoyed substantial security and material well-being (Rubin 2000:29).

By mid-1992, however, the Afghan state had been devastated by over a decade of bloody internal war. Following the communist coup of April 1978, the collapsing socio-political foundations of the Afghan state sparked widespread revolt against the central regime. In subsequent years, Afghanistan was gradually pried apart by an unstructured *mujahideen* insurgency and the imposition of Cold War rivalries, which fuelled the conflict by arming both the state and the centrifugal forces of the resistance. As capital and coercive resources became increasingly decentralised, the central authority lost its hold on power and eventually collapsed—thrusting Afghanistan into even greater chaos as armed groups fought each other



over the remnants of the failed Afghan state. The human cost of Afghanistan's violent decline into state fragmentation was staggering, leaving approximately 6 million refugees and 1 million Afghans dead by 1992 (Goodson 2001:93,149).

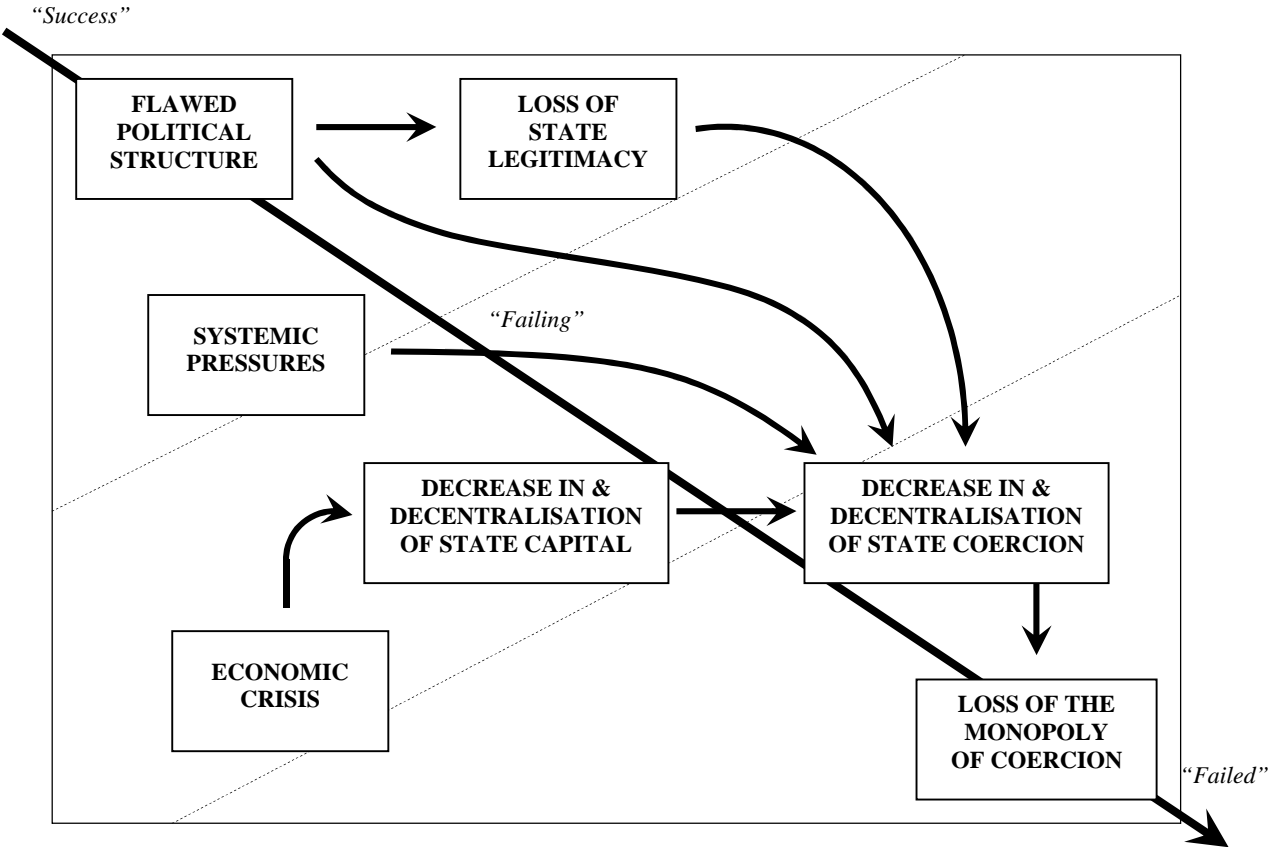
#### **UNDERSTANDING STATE FAILURE IN AFGHANISTAN**

Afghanistan exemplifies how the fragmentation of social control and coercive power can cause state failure by literally tearing a state apart. While it is widely accepted that the extreme decentralisation of power shattered Afghanistan's monopoly of coercion, scholars have tended to emphasise one of two main factors responsible for this process. Some scholars view the attempt to impose a communist political system upon Afghanistan's defiant society as the primary factor responsible for the armed revolt that undermined state coercive power in 1979 (Maley and Saikal 1992; Saikal 2005). According to this argument, the Afghan state failed before the Soviet army intervened and before the *mujahideen* resistance was armed by Western powers (Maley 2006:17). Other scholars have contended that it was the conflicting patterns of Cold War military aid which ultimately pulled Afghanistan apart—decentralising coercive power amongst a disorganised array of *mujahideen* forces (Goodson 2001; Cramer & Goodhand 2002). However, while these two explanations stress different aspects underscoring the causes of fragmentation, both are required for a comprehensive understanding of Afghan state failure (Rubin 2002b).

The state-breaking mechanism incorporates these dominant arguments and places them into sharper theoretical focus within its analytical framework. This is reflected in the second inversion of my model (Figure 3.1). By examining Afghanistan's flawed political structure and the effect this had on state legitimacy, the state-breaking mechanism accounts for the initial fragmentation of socio-political power. As these factors provoked an armed revolt

against the state and caused the near-total collapse of the armed forces, together they explain the substantial decrease in state coercive power. To account for the decentralisation of coercive power, the state-breaking mechanism turns to the role of systemic pressures. Owing to the exigencies of the global bipolar system, the military strength of both state and sub-state forces increased until the end of the Cold War. Once external assistance declined with the changing international system, the Afghan state was left without the military resources it needed to withstand the centrifugal forces of the resistance. Finally, while this violent process of fragmentation represents a predominantly ‘coercion-intensive’ trajectory to state failure, a profound economic crisis also served to decrease and decentralise the financial resources that the Afghan state required for its monopoly of coercion. Through the lens of the state-making mechanism, the disintegrative process of Afghan state failure may be clearly understood.

**Figure 3.1** *The State-Breaking Mechanism in Afghanistan*



## **I. FLAWED POLITICAL STRUCTURE: THE IMPOSED STATE, A STRONG SOCIETY AND THE ORIGINS OF FRAGMENTATION**

The fragmentation of Afghanistan began with an attempt to impose on Afghan society a highly centralised political system that was antithetical to its traditional structures of social authority. After seizing power in April 1978, the People's Democratic Party of Afghanistan (PDPA) established a one-party communist regime that sought unprecedented control over all aspects of both state and society (Newell & Newell 1981). In contrast to Zaïre, the flaw in this system was not that it directly hollowed out the state, but that it undermined state cohesion by destroying the fragile link between Afghan society and the central authority. In this way, Afghanistan's imposed political structure established the preconditions for the eventual loss of state legitimacy.

To understand why a highly centralised political system fractured the cohesion of the state, it is necessary to examine Afghan society and the traditional foundations for state stability. As Saikal (2005:196) explains, pre-war Afghanistan represented a mosaic of "micro-societies" based upon various family, tribal, ethnic, linguistic and sectarian affiliations. Throughout history these groups displayed considerable autonomy from the state. They presided over regional micro-economies and were independently-led by religious figures or large landowners who provided security and material goods on a patrimonial basis (Maley 1995:3; Saikal 2005:196). Many also possessed rudimentary militias which periodically opposed unpopular laws that the central regime sought to impose (Rubin 2000:29). To use Migdal's (1988) terminology, these social organisations were robust while the state was weak and unable to penetrate its strong society. Nevertheless, between 1929 and 1978, by forging an alliance with civil society, Afghanistan's central regime managed to incorporate these disparate micro-societies into a relatively stable and coherent state (Saikal 2005:198). In a complex balancing act, the state co-opted, coerced, compromised and negotiated with social

leaders, while carefully avoiding policies likely to spark social resentment (Saikal 2005:198). These measures enabled the central regime to maintain order, a national army and a nascent taxation system (Maley 2006:16). In short, it was a web of largely cooperative relations between the state and its micro-societies which facilitated Afghan state success (Saikal 2005:196).

The attempt by the PDPA regime to impose a centralised Soviet-style system over Afghanistan's multifarious society destroyed this fragile basis of state stability, legitimacy and political cohesion (Maley & Saikal 1992:15). As the communists—largely urban intellectuals and military officers—assumed power through a coup in the capital Kabul, the new regime was immediately isolated from Afghanistan's predominantly rural micro-societies. Moreover, instead of bargaining with the numerous social leaders and involving them in a coalition with the state, the regime sought to rule autonomously from Kabul and, later, to consolidate its authority through coercion. In 1978 the communist regime arrested or executed many powerful social leaders in an effort to suppress opposition to centralised rule (Newell & Newell 1981:77). However, while Afghanistan's micro-societies both feared and resented this affront to their traditional authority they were not intimidated into submission. Civil disobedience became endemic and citizens recoiled further into their peripheral groupings, withdrawing their allegiances from the state. Consequently, even before the regime embarked upon widely unpopular reforms, its effort to dominate Afghan society through an oppressive political structure had seriously eroded state legitimacy and the political foundations of state cohesion.

The process of implementing the PDPA's essentially authoritarian system also involved self-destructive methods which initiated the erosion of state coercive power. As the Khalq

faction of the PDPA regime sought total control over the emerging one-party state, it viciously eliminated its potential opponents within the state bureaucracy. Crucially, in 1978 Khalq authorities undertook a series of massive purges to rid the Afghan army of personnel from the old regime, as well as members of the rival Parcham faction of the communist administration. Approximately 800 senior military officers and 60 out of 62 generals appointed by the old regime were killed or removed, followed by the elimination of all middle- and upper-ranking Parchami personnel (Newell & Newell 1981:77-75; Rubin 2002*b*:114). As was the case in Zaïre, these purges saw inexperienced members of the new regime assume important positions within the armed forces which rapidly contributed to a qualitative decline in the coercive power of the state. While purges did not significantly reduce the size of the Afghan army in 1978, they caused serious disruptions to its command structure. With the onset of armed resistance in 1979, this proved critical to the fragmentation of state coercive power (Rubin 2002*b*:114). In its effort to dominate Afghanistan, the PDPA had undermined both the socio-political basis and the military foundations of Afghan state success.

## **II. LOSS OF STATE LEGITIMACY: THE ORIGINS OF REVOLUTION AND THE DISINTEGRATION OF COERCIVE POWER**

While Afghanistan's flawed political structure began the erosion of state legitimacy, it was a set of vastly unpopular political reforms that ultimately provoked violent resistance against the central authority. The PDPA's attempt to radically transform Afghan society through an oppressive "revolution from above" fundamentally undermined the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its already alienated citizens (Rasanayagam 2003:74).

The communist reforms introduced in mid-1978 explicitly targeted the conventions and socio-economic practices of Afghan micro-societies (Goodson 2001:56). Amounting to an

“overambitious program of social transformation”, these revolutionary policies involved major changes to land tenure, rural credit practices, gender relations and the traditional education system (Maley & Saikal 1992:15). While the regime had anticipated that 98 percent of the population would benefit from these reforms, they were almost universally rejected by resilient micro-societies that jealously guarded their autonomy and the practices which they held to be legitimate (Newell & Newell 1981:76-85). Moreover, as these reforms were accompanied by a blatant assault on Islam—symbolised by a new Afghan flag that replaced the traditional Islamic green with communist red—this further outraged Afghanistan’s predominantly Muslim society (Goodson 2001:56). Confronted by an increasingly uncooperative and hostile population, the state became aggressive, and in late 1978 communist soldiers and police descended on rural Afghanistan in a largely unsuccessful effort to coerce the population into implementing the PDPA’s reforms. Thrust into conflict with many of its citizens, the Afghan state had become an illegitimate organisation rejected by most of society.

It was this profound loss of state legitimacy that triggered a popular albeit fragmented revolt against the central authority. Beginning in late 1978, this occurred on three major levels. First, armed rebellions erupted across Afghanistan as its aggrieved micro-societies sought to defend themselves against state oppression. Deploying rudimentary militias, these groups attacked government officials, soldiers, police and Soviet residents. In many cases, they evolved into *mujahideen* resistance forces which later fought the Soviet army following its 1979 intervention. Second, as violence became more widespread, ex-officers from the pre-communist military formed separate *mujahideen* forces which drew on Islam and anti-communist rhetoric to attract grass-roots support from Afghanistan’s alienated population (Maley & Saikal 1992:17; Rais 1994:84). Finally, Afghan Islamist parties—exiled in Pakistan

since 1973—declared *jihad* against the atheistic communist regime and began channelling military aid to loosely-affiliated *mujahideen* forces within Afghanistan (Rubin 1995:218-219). Although the revolts of 1978 occurred sporadically and without any overarching organisation, taken together they mounted a powerful challenge to the state. By mid-1979, at least 24 of Afghanistan's 28 provinces were in the midst of violent revolt (Goodson 2001:56).

At the same time, a similar sense of disillusionment amongst Afghan soldiers triggered the virtual collapse of the armed forces—a factor which both strengthened the revolution and undermined the coercive power of the state. Again, this antagonism may be traced to a loss of state legitimacy. When soldiers were ordered to attack their own ethno-regional communities and undertake operations against their religious and social convictions, they too became hostile towards the communist regime. As a result, soldiers disobeyed their communist officers and, in early 1979, violent mutinies broke out in every major garrison within Afghanistan. While this unrest was eventually suppressed by Soviet-backed government forces, these insurrections took a heavy toll on state coercive power. As soldiers deserted the army its size decreased sharply from approximately 100,000 soldiers in 1978 to just 30,000 in late 1980 (Rasanayagam 2003:81; Goodson 2001:57). The *mujahideen* resistance was strengthened by the defection of many of these relatively well-armed soldiers. By altering the domestic balance of power, this severely undermined the regime's capacity to monopolise the means of coercion. As such, the regime was unable to launch an effective counter-insurgency war against the growing rural rebellion.

### **III. SYSTEMIC PRESSURES: THE RISE AND FALL OF THE COLD WAR AND THE FRAGMENTATION OF COERCIVE POWER**

By the end of 1979, Afghanistan was already on the verge of becoming a failed state. Armed social groups had withdrawn their allegiances from the central authority; socio-political

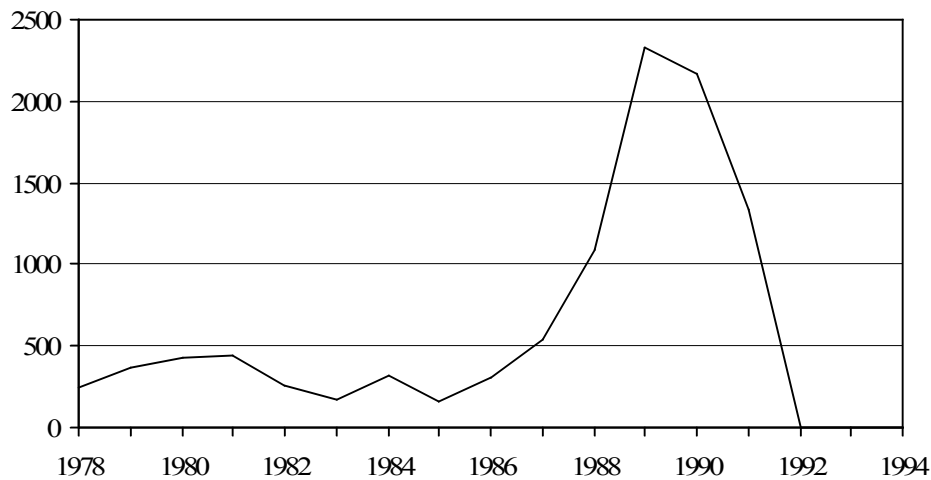
reforms had sparked a violent revolt against the state; and the disintegration of the army both empowered the rebellion and left the communist regime increasingly bereft of coercive power. Accordingly, Maley (2006:17) has argued that a “crisis of both capacity and legitimacy...effectively broke down [the state] at the end of the 1970s”. Nevertheless, the state did not complete its descent into failure until the PDPA regime collapsed in 1992. In the intervening period the conflicting interests of the Cold War superpowers resulted in the arming of both Afghanistan’s central authority and the *mujahideen* resistance. While this kept the regime afloat until 1992, it also fuelled the gradual and violent fragmentation of the state.

Between 1978 and 1991 the failing Afghan state was sustained by its position in the global bipolar system. Strategically located between the USSR and US-backed Pakistan, Afghanistan was a communist ally and a vital Soviet buffer-state during the Cold War (Cramer & Goodhand 2002:895; Roy 1991:13). For these reasons, Soviet forces intervened in December 1979 in order to save the fledgling PDPA regime from collapse. In an effort to fortify the coercive power of the state, the Soviets began supplying military assistance on an immense scale. By 1983, the Soviet army had bases in every Afghan province and had deployed some 105,000 soldiers in a brutal counter-insurgency war against the *mujahideen* (Goodson 2001:60; Rubin 2002b:125). Moreover, the provision of sophisticated military hardware to the Afghan army grew enormously during the 1980s (Figure 3.2), peaking in 1990 when the Soviets supplied at least 54 aircraft, 380 tanks, 865 armoured personnel carriers, 680 anti-aircraft guns and 150 surface-to-air rocket-launchers (Rubin 2000:36). While Soviet assistance never enabled the Afghan state to control the countryside—comprising over 75 percent of Afghanistan—it maintained the coercive power of the central regime and facilitated its control over Afghan cities, military outposts, major roads and other strategic locations (Goodson 2001:60).



**Figure 3.2** *Flow of Soviet Military Hardware\* to Afghanistan, 1978-1994*

Volume of arms transfers based on the military value of the hardware (SIPRI unit of analysis)

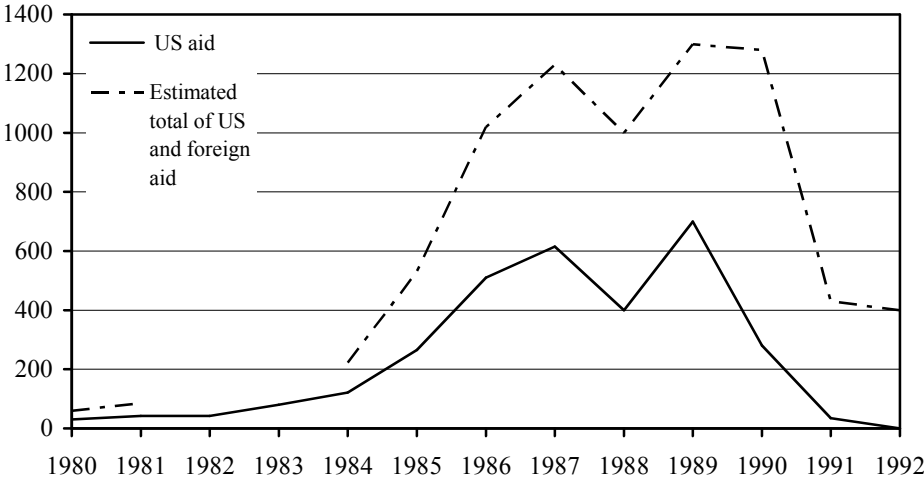


*Source:* Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (2007). \* 'Hardware' refers to aircraft, armoured vehicles, tanks, artillery, engines, missiles and sensors.

Conversely, the anti-communist forces of the bipolar system strengthened the *mujahideen* resistance—perpetuating the decentralisation of coercive power by arming centrifugal forces within Afghanistan. In response to the Soviet intervention, the US and its allies began to funnel military aid and hardware to the *mujahideen* in what had ostensibly become a 'proxy war' against their superpower rival. While this covert programme was initially modest, by the late 1980s US aid averaged approximately \$500 million per year and was almost doubled by other sources of foreign—mainly Saudi—assistance (Figure 3.3). In terms of resources, this aid consisted not only of millions of Kalashnikovs; but, beginning in 1986 it included a variety of *Stinger* and other anti-aircraft missiles, rockets and artillery which vastly increased *mujahideen* fighting effectiveness vis-à-vis the state (Goodson 2001:64-69). Most importantly, however, it was the unstructured distribution of these military resources which ultimately decentralised coercive power within Afghanistan (Rubin 2000:37). Through a Pakistan-based 'arms pipeline', the US delivered military aid to Pakistani intelligence services which, in turn, distributed it amongst seven different—and frequently antagonistic—Afghan Islamist parties exiled in Peshawar. Next, the Islamist parties siphoned US arms to a host of

loosely-affiliated and competing *mujahideen* commanders within Afghanistan (Rubin 2000:37). The Saudis funnelled their aid to a similar range of groups. In short, the disorganised provision of foreign military aid created many regional accumulations of military strength—decentralising coercive power and establishing the foundations for Afghan state failure.

**Figure 3.3** *Flow of US and Foreign\* Military Aid to the Mujahideen, 1980-1992*  
 Value of military aid in \$ millions



Sources: Goodson (2001:145-146) and Rubin (2002:179-183). \* 'Foreign' military aid refers to aid from Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and various private Arab financiers.

While it is undoubtedly true that the *mujahideen* insurgency prevented the state from monopolising territorial control, the continued provision of Soviet military assistance gave the PDPA regime a substantial military advantage and rendered it by far the most coercively-powerful entity within Afghanistan (Rubin 2000:36; Rubin 1989:162). However, this situation was dramatically reversed by the events accompanying the end of the Cold War.

As Soviet-American rapprochement decreased Afghanistan's strategic significance to the superpowers, the USSR ended its support of the Afghan regime—leaving the state defenceless in the face of a fragmented and well-armed insurgency (Rubin 2002b:264).

Between 1988 and 1989, the USSR withdrew all its combat forces from Afghanistan. Since the size of the Afghan army had been only minimally increased during the 1980s, this left the PDPA regime with a vastly depleted coercive apparatus. As a result, between 1989 and 1991 the survival of the regime increasingly depended upon its ability to co-opt various tribal militias from northern Afghanistan—supplying them with cash and Soviet military hardware in return for security from the *mujahideen* (Bradsher 1999:344-345). However, by 1992 the collapse of the USSR saw the sudden and complete discontinuation of Soviet military aid (Figure 3.2). This left the regime unable to provide the military resources necessary to maintain the loyalty of its militias and the capability of the Afghan army (Maley & Saikal 1992:28). Consequently, when opportunistic government militias revolted against the virtually defenceless communist regime in April 1992, the remnants of the armed forces disintegrated and joined the *mujahideen* resistance (Bradsher 1999:378-379). As the central authority lost its monopoly over the means of coercion the Afghan state fragmented; and in the ensuing power vacuum, violent conflict erupted between the many competing factions of the *mujahideen*.

#### **IV. ECONOMIC CRISIS: FISCAL COLLAPSE, THE DECENTRALISATION OF CAPITAL AND THE CONDITIONS FOR STATE FAILURE**

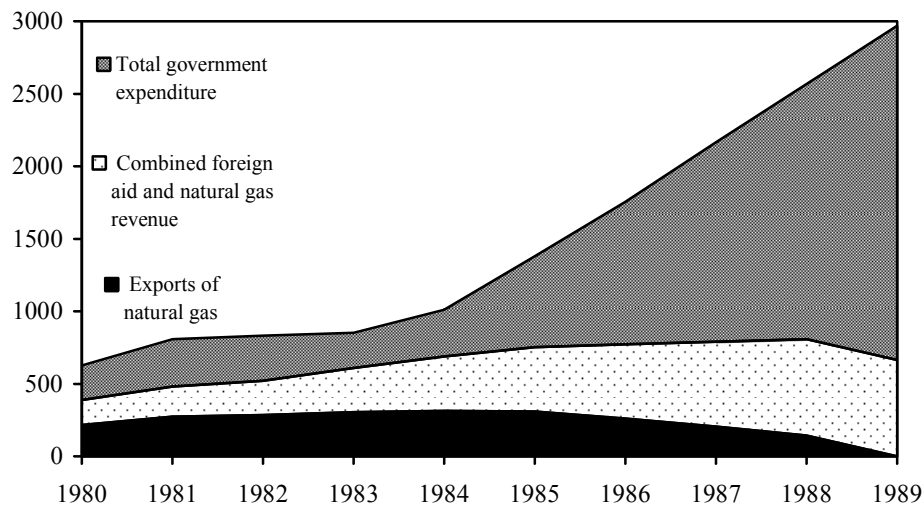
In contrast with Zaïre, economic factors were not at the forefront of Afghan state failure. Indeed, throughout Afghanistan's 'coercive-intensive' decline, changes in the economy were overshadowed by the collapse of socio-political structures, the outbreak of rural revolt, and the hyper-arming of both central and peripheral forces. Nevertheless, a severe economic crisis simmered beneath this process of violent fragmentation. To be sure, Afghanistan had always been a desperately poor rentier state, entirely dependant upon foreign aid, import duties and favourable-trading relationships with external powers (Cramer & Goodhand 2002:894-900).

However, it was the collapse of this precarious fiscal base and the simultaneous decentralisation of capital that provided the economic conditions for state failure.

In the late 1980s, Afghanistan descended into a fiscal crisis which ultimately helped to deprive the PDPA regime of the capital it needed to maintain its monopoly of coercion (Figure 3.4). There were three main components to this crisis. First, from 1985, natural gas exports decreased and then ended in 1989, as the technicians who ran Afghanistan's gas fields left during the Soviet withdrawal (Rubin 2000:43). Second, although foreign aid rose in the early part of the decade, by the late 1980s it had stagnated and fallen as a percentage of total income (Rubin 2002*b*:162-163). Crucially, as these two principal sources of rentier income declined in relative terms to the state's rapidly growing expenditure, the regime fell increasingly into deficit. Third, to offset its growing lack of revenue, the state was compelled to print vast quantities of new currency. Inevitably, this led to a rampant inflationary cycle, spiralling consumer prices and a sharp devaluation of the Afghan currency (Rubin 2002*b*:164). Consequently, by early 1992 this serious fiscal crisis left the central regime bereft of the economic resources needed to both "buy off resistance commanders and pay [government] militias" (Rubin 2002*b*:160). Combined with the discontinuation of Soviet military aid, this provided the motivation for government militias to turn on the regime and bring about the collapse of the bankrupt state.

**Figure 3.4** *Components of State Fiscal Crisis in Afghanistan, 1980-1989*

\$ millions



Source: Rubin (2002:164). For several years, estimates have been made on the basis of statistical trends. These are: ‘Total Government Expenditure’ 1985, 1987 and 1989; and ‘Combined Foreign Aid and Natural Gas Revenue’ 1984, 1984, 1985 and 1989.

While Afghanistan’s central authority was starved of economic resources, various *mujahideen* groups were able to establish significant regional concentrations of capital. As Cramer and Goodhand (2002:900) explain, it was the development of a “‘war economy’...[which] led to the violent redistribution of wealth and assets” in Afghanistan. When the government lost control over the countryside, *mujahideen* commanders built a series of cross-border trading networks, which provided them with a steady flow of capital through the smuggling of precious stones, agricultural goods and various other items (Armstrong & Rubin 2005:89). In turn, this further deprived the state of revenue from import and export taxes. Above all, the production, refining and trafficking of opium to Pakistani-based drug syndicates was a lucrative endeavour for certain *mujahideen* groups (Rubin 2002b:183).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, economic aid from Pakistan, Saudi Arabia and private Arab financiers also provided the *mujahideen* with capital even after the 1992 suspension of US military aid (Figure 3.3). Owing to these factors, during the early 1990s *mujahideen* commanders—unlike the state—continued to receive the economic resources necessary to

recruit local combatants and establish sub-state strongholds of military power. Consequently, the decentralisation of capital, coupled with the weapons the *mujahideen* received from neighbouring states, enabled the resistance to sustain the insurgency that eventually fragmented the Afghan state.

## CONCLUSION

The ‘coercion-intensive’ trajectory to Afghan state failure is clearly articulated across the four causal variables of the state-breaking mechanism. Beginning with Afghanistan’s flawed political structure, it is evident that the attempt to impose a centralised political system on a strong and resilient society profoundly undermined the legitimacy of the Afghan state. As this triggered an armed revolt against the communist administration and precipitated the near-total collapse of the armed forces, coercive power waned at the centre. While systemic pressures maintained the state’s monopoly of coercion between 1979 and 1992, they also decentralised coercive power in the hands of an unstructured *mujahideen* resistance. As the end of the Cold War removed the external military and economic support that had buttressed the Afghan state, the central administration became increasingly unable to suppress the centrifugal forces of the resistance. Empowered by a growing regional accumulation of capital and coercive resources, these competing sub-state groups eventually destroyed the central authority. Amidst the prevailing vacuum of state power, Afghanistan descended even further into domestic anarchy. In contrast to Zaïre, this violent process of state failure was predominantly ‘coercion-intensive’. Nevertheless, underlying the fragmentation of Afghanistan were the same general dynamics of decreasing and decentralising capital and coercive power.

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<sup>7</sup> It is unclear how many *mujahideen* groups participated in the opium trade before 1994 (Rubin 2002:257).

## **State Failure in Yugoslavia 1947-1991: the ‘Combined Capital-Coercion’ Trajectory and the Dismembering of a State**

### **THE HISTORY OF YUGOSLAV STATE FAILURE**

Until the 1970s, Yugoslavia was considered a rare example of state success among the crisis-ridden communist countries of Eastern Europe (Lendvai 1991:251). Between 1950 and 1979 its economy was strong, with its real social product growing at the impressive average rate of 6.3 percent per annum and fostering widespread socio-economic prosperity (Lydall 1989:24). Steps towards political reform and market liberalisation earned Yugoslavia international prestige and accorded its citizens greater freedom to manage their own economic affairs, travel and work abroad (Woodward 1995:1). Above all, Yugoslavia’s historically conflictual multi-ethnic polity experienced a period of relative—albeit forced—stability and social harmony. While the ‘authoritarian-charismatic’ rule of President Josip Broz Tito was one source of cohesion, his absolute control over the powerful Yugoslav People’s Army (YPA) enabled the federal state to suppress intermittent ethno-nationalist uprisings and safeguard its monopoly of coercion.

Yet, by the end of 1991 Yugoslavia had ceased to exist. Amidst the fragmentation of political authority, the resurgence of ethno-nationalism and a virtual collapse of the economy, Yugoslavia’s northernmost republics—Slovenia and Croatia—seceded from the federation, dismembering the state and provoking violent reprisals from the YPA. For its part, the YPA had become an instrument of the Serbs, and in its battles with newly-formed republican armies all semblance of a state-wide monopoly of coercion was lost. Over the next four years

the remnants of Yugoslavia descended into a bloody internal conflict of an intensity not seen in Europe since WWII—leaving between 300,000 and 500,000 casualties and some 3.7 million refugees as the legacy of Yugoslav state failure.

#### **UNDERSTANDING STATE FAILURE IN YUGOSLAVIA**

The dismembering of Yugoslavia presents a more complex puzzle for the theoretical understanding of state failure. Unlike Zaïre and Afghanistan, Yugoslavia began its decline as a comparatively wealthy and institutionally-robust state. Moreover, although its failure culminated in the violent and permanent dissolution of the state, it was not accompanied by the same level of institutional collapse and domestic anarchy as were the previous two cases of state failure.

In light of these differences, a minority of scholars have viewed Yugoslavia not as a case of state failure, but as example of ethnically-based civil war (Anzulović 1999; Doder 1993; Binder 1991). Championing this perspective, Kaplan (1993:30) contends that historical animosities between Yugoslavia's disparate ethno-nationalist<sup>8</sup> groups lay at the root of the violence that erupted in early 1991. While these animosities had been held in check by Tito's authoritarianism and the rigid external structure of the Cold War, it is argued that Tito's death in 1980 and the subsequent collapse of the bipolar system created a domestic political vacuum that unleashed Yugoslavia's 'ancient hatreds'. Yet, while inter-group rivalries were indeed present in 1991, the notion that Yugoslav society was characterised by any particularly potent 'ancient hatreds' has been widely dismissed (Ramet 2005:3). Moreover, to equate emergence of inter-group conflict with the end of Cold War is to over-simplify the causes underlying the break-up of Yugoslavia. Rather, it was the gradual failure of the Yugoslav state itself which

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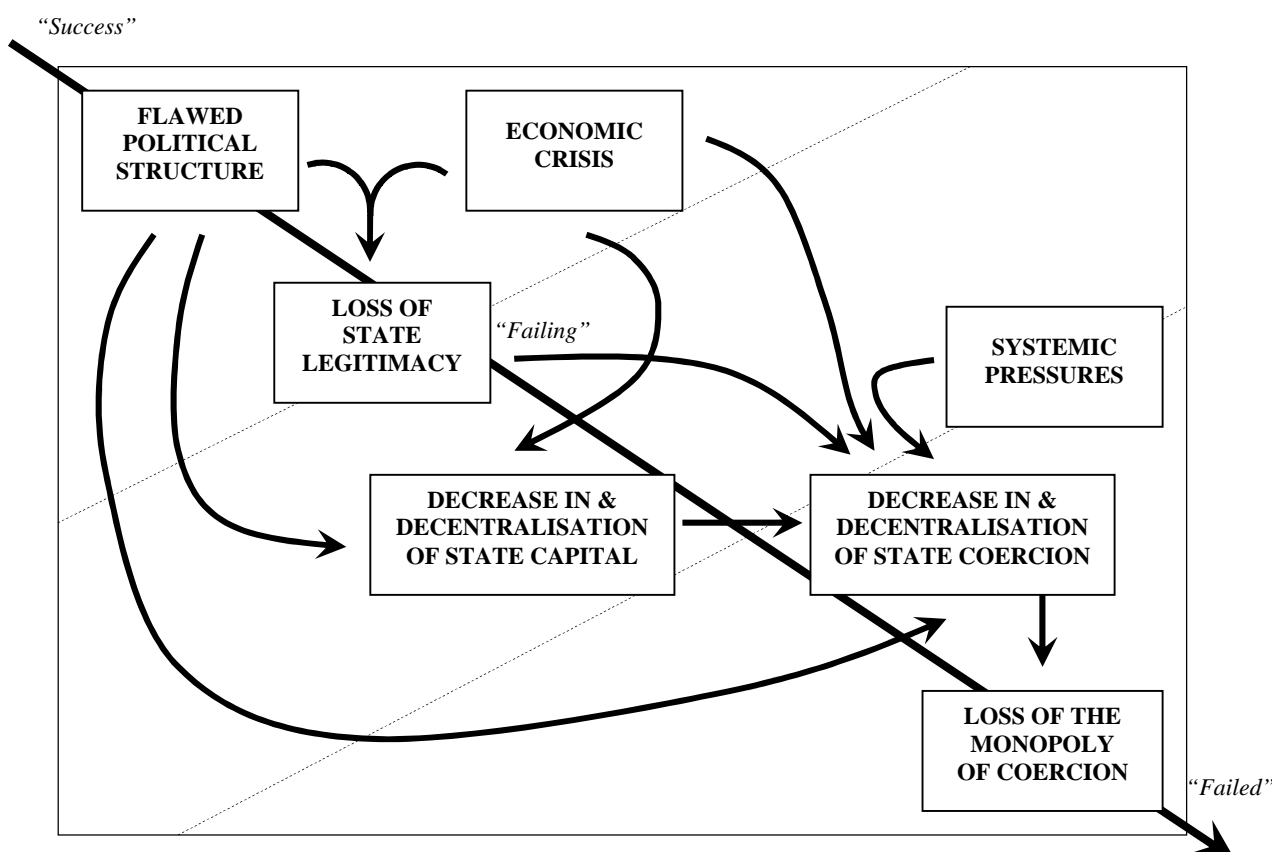
<sup>8</sup> Regarding Yugoslavia, 'nationalist' groups and 'nations' refer to the different peoples and constituent Republics of the Yugoslav state; not to Yugoslav nationalism.



both provoked inter-group hostilities and provided the conditions for the outbreak of internal violence.

The state-breaking mechanism demonstrates that Yugoslavia was not only a failed state, but that its path towards failure was underscored by the same general dynamics that accompanied state failure in both Zaïre and Afghanistan. Indeed, as Yugoslav state failure involved a simultaneous decrease in and decentralisation of state capital and coercive power, this final inversion of my analytical model presents the ‘combined capital-coercion’ trajectory to failure (Figure 4.1). Beginning with Yugoslavia’s quasi-confederal political system, the state-breaking mechanism reveals how a flawed political structure systematically devolved capital and coercive power to the various republics of the Yugoslav federation. This established the military and economic resources for republican secessionism. However, it was the interaction between this decentralised political system and a deepening economic crisis which provided the motivation for Yugoslav republics to challenge the authority of the state. Finally, the changing systemic pressures that accompanied the end of the Cold War created the structural opportunities for republican secessionism. By examining each of these variables through the lens of the state-breaking mechanism, it becomes clear how the underlying decrease in, and decentralisation of state capital and coercive power culminated in the dismembering of the Yugoslav state.

**Figure 4.1** *The State-Breaking Mechanism in Yugoslavia*



**I. FLAWED POLITICAL STRUCTURE: QUASI-CONFEDERALISM AND THE DEVOLUTION OF STATE POWER**

Just as neopatrimonialism undermined the Zaïrian state, Yugoslavia’s increasingly decentralised “ethno-federal system” laid the institutional foundations for the erosion of state political, infrastructural, capital and coercive power (Lukic & Lynch 1996:115). While this system did not directly cannibalise the economic and coercive power of the state, it entailed a similar siphoning out of state capacity—in this case, by devolving state authority to the periphery and paving the way for the sub-state accumulation of power.

Reborn in 1946,<sup>9</sup> Yugoslavia was established as a socialist federation comprising of six ‘national’ republics (Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Montenegro, Macedonia and

<sup>9</sup> While Yugoslavia first came into existence in 1918, this study concerns the so-called ‘Second Yugoslavia’ recreated after WWII.

Serbia) and two autonomous provinces (Vojvodina and Kosovo). Although administrative and ethno-nationalist borders were not entirely congruous, each federal region possessed a distinct ethno-national majority.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, while the League of Communists of Yugoslavia (LCY) initially centralised politico-economic power, to allay republican fears of uni-national domination the political system granted each republic the constitutional right to secession and considered them to be ‘sovereign’.

Although this system was designed to maintain inter-ethnic stability, the emphasis it placed upon republican autonomy led to the “[irreversible] confederalization of the Yugoslav federation” (Job 2002:57). Beginning in the 1950s, economic ‘self-management’ programmes redirected the state’s industrial-managerial powers to workers’ co-operatives and communes. The 1965 economic reforms completed the decentralisation of capital, ensuring each republic possessed “the right to direct its own economy,...formulate its own social plans,...raise its own taxes, [and]...control its own national bank” (Lydall 1989:81). A similar process occurred within the armed forces when in 1969 centralised control over Yugoslavia’s civilian militia was devolved to republican authorities. Moreover, by 1974 the LCY regime had replaced its central committee with a ‘collective’ presidential executive that positioned, by 1974, one delegate from each republic/province at the highest level of political decision-making. This effectively federalised the LCY, ensuring that ‘state’ authority became synonymous with—and undermined by—the collective and consensual will of Yugoslavia’s constituent parts (Ramet 1992:70; Lydall 1989:19). While Tito maintained the coherence of this quasi-confederal system, it became increasingly apparent that “Yugoslavia’s...republics and...provinces [had] evolved into mini-states” following his death (Bennett 1995:78).

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<sup>10</sup> Except Bosnia-Herzegovina and Vojvodina.

As this decentralised political structure created sub-state locales of politico-economic independence, it undermined the federal state's capacity to concentrate capital and respond to economic crises. This was most striking during the fiscal catastrophe between 1989 and 1991. While the federal government had some initial success in introducing state-wide austerity measures, the conflicting political interests of Yugoslavia's regions—and their power to veto federal decisions—ultimately thwarted these efforts. On one hand, Slovenia and Croatia opposed economic reforms as these favoured centralism over confederation. Consequently, in 1990 both declared the pre-eminence of republican laws over federal laws, withheld federal taxes and rescinded their responsibility for Yugoslavia's foreign debt—starving the state of desperately needed capital (Ramet 1996:ch.3). On the other hand, Serbia and Vojvodina opposed both confederation and the free-market nature of the reforms—similarly halting federal taxes and imposing tariffs against Slovene-Croat trade (Woodward 1995:130). Moreover, during the republican/provincial elections in late 1990 all regions “ignored the monetary restrictions of...[the federal government's] stabilization program in order to win votes”—ending wage freezes, spending financial reserves, and in Serbia's case, siphoning approximately \$1.6 billion out of the federal bank in order to “bribe” its constituents (Woodward 1995:129-130). While inter-regional recalcitrance was rooted in competing visions about Yugoslavia's political future, it was the quasi-confederal system itself that provided Yugoslav regions with the necessary power to undermine federal authority. Ultimately this derailed the government's reforms, eroding Yugoslavia's centralised accumulation of capital and harming state legitimacy by demonstrating its inability to reverse economic catastrophe.

Yugoslavia's quasi-confederal political structure also provided the foundation for the decentralisation and centrifugal re-accumulation of coercive power. In 1958 Yugoslavia's

armed forces comprised of two federally-controlled organisations: the YPA and a civilian militia. In 1969, however, control over the latter—reformed into a Territorial Defence Force (TDF)—was devolved to republican authorities. The effects of this were twofold. First, as TDF reservists numbered 885,000 in 1991 and were locally equipped with arms and supplies, their presence across Yugoslavia dispersed the concentration of coercive resources (Pierson 1992:45). Second, by 1991 TDF units had formed the basis of “nascent republican armies” which to varying degrees were able to monopolise coercion at the regional level (Job 2002:57).<sup>11</sup> For example, following Slovenia’s secession in June 1991, its recently ‘nationalised’ TDF mobilised 20,000-50,000 soldiers to successfully defend the republic against the YPA’s invasion (Pierson 1992:47). Similarly, while Croatia’s TDF was largely disarmed by the YPA in 1990, it provided the organisational foundation for the Croatian National Guard which also engaged the YPA in late 1991 (Bennett 1995:167; Pierson 1992:47). While it is important not to overstate the power of republican armies vis-à-vis the technologically-superior YPA, the presence of effective sub-national military organisations led to the fragmentation of Yugoslavia’s monopoly of coercion.

## **II. ECONOMIC CRISIS: DECLINING COERCIVE POWER, SOCIAL DISCONTENT AND THE ORIGIN OF CENTRIFUGAL FORCES**

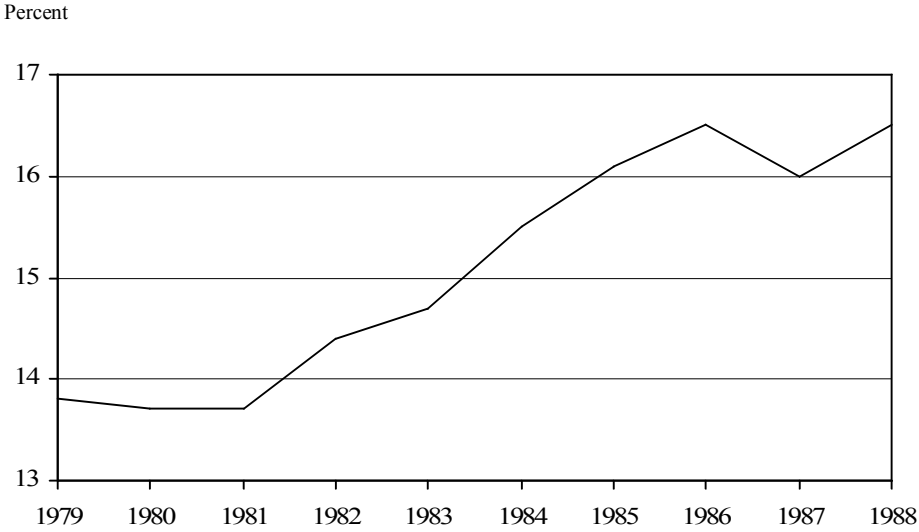
Beginning in 1979, Yugoslavia faced an increasingly dire economic predicament akin to the crises experienced by both Zaïre and Afghanistan. On one hand, this was precipitated by structural changes in the global economy. As Yugoslavia’s developing economy relied heavily upon foreign loans, the 1979 oil crisis and ensuing global recession was crippling. Exports subsided, foreign lending became scarce and the interest rates on pre-existing loans rose steeply to drive Yugoslavia’s foreign debt from \$5.75 billion in 1975 to approximately \$20 billion in 1991 (Lydall 1989:67; Woodward 1995). Moreover, as production slowed and

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<sup>11</sup> While in 1974 the YPA attempted to re-establish constitutional control over the TDF, the balance of authority was always unclear (Woodward 1995: 27). Nevertheless, the ability of Serbia and Croatia to mobilise TDF units

employment was restricted in unproductive sectors, unemployment soared to record highs (Figure 4.2). On the other hand, inter-republican economic mismanagement represented a more agential source of economic crisis. As the 1970s saw autarkic regions spend too much foreign capital on consumption and unproductive industrial projects, a sustainable domestic economy failed to develop (Lydall 1989). Whatever the main cause of economic decline, between 1979 and 1991 inflation reached an astounding 1, 200 percent and a treacherous decline in GDP created an economic catastrophe that eroded state capital and coercion—ushering in a destabilising period of inter-regional inequality and widespread social misery (Figure 4.3).

**Figure 4.2** *Rate of Unemployment in Yugoslavia, 1979-1988*



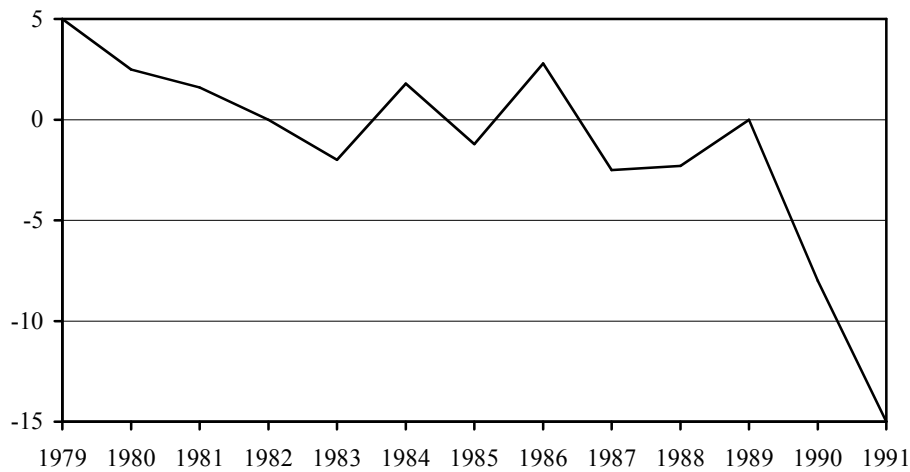
Source: Woodward (1995:37).

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in 1991 demonstrates that de facto republican control persisted.

**Figure 4.3** *Growth of GDP in Yugoslavia, 1979-1991*

Percent change over previous year



Source: Woodward (1995:55).

To a certain extent, economic crisis directly reduced the coercive power of the Yugoslav state in the same way as it had affected the Zaïrian Armed Forces. As the economy contracted, a parallel decline in military expenditure increasingly affected the arms, equipment and living standards of the YPA. By 1988, expenditure fell beneath the lower limit required for YPA sustainability (Gow 1992:102). Accordingly, the armed forces reduced in size, falling from 252,000 soldiers in 1981 to 210,000 in 1986 and just 169,000 by 1991 (Gow 1992:104; Pierson 1992:45). Moreover, declining living standards, lower pay and poor training undermined the morale of the YPA (Woodward 1995:67). As a result, YPA fighting effectiveness was moderately reduced. For example, during its unsuccessful 1991 war in Slovenia, the YPA's reliance on just 2,000 newly trained conscripts demonstrated its depleted capacity and lack of preparation (Woodward 1995:166-167). In Croatia, the "[YPA's] dismal morale" meant that Croatian forces met little resistance when they "surrounded [YPA] barracks...[and] persuaded the soldiers within to surrender and hand over their arsenal" (Bennett 1995:167). Consequently, as economic crisis damaged the YPA it became easier for republican armies to monopolise coercive power at a regional level.

It was, however, the interaction between Yugoslavia's economic crisis and its ethno-federal system which had the most profound impact upon the disintegration of the state. As Rusinow has argued, Yugoslavia's stability depended upon inter-regional harmony and economic prosperity (1991). With the onset of economic crisis, inter-regional inequalities were vastly aggravated and triggered a resurgence of ethno-nationalism, inter-republican fears and secessionist aspirations. Beginning in Kosovo, this occurred in three stages. First, as Kosovo was most adversely affected by economic crisis, large-scale protests erupted in 1981 (Pleština 1992:128). Moreover, as Kosovo's Albanian majority linked economic backwardness to a history of Serbian exploitation, these economically-motivated protests rapidly acquired an ethno-nationalist and anti-Serbian dynamic (Pleština 1992:129). Second, in Serbia, rising unemployment, relative economic backwardness and the simmering problems in Kosovo fuelled a growing sense of social discontent. By 1988 this provided the political environment for the Serbian leader, Slobodan Milošević, to channel socio-economic grievances into a resurgent Serbian nationalism. Through political manipulation and a series of massive nationalist protests, Milošević skilfully employed this sentiment to affect the political 'conquest' and 'Serbanisation' Kosovo, Vojvodina and Montenegro (Meier 1999:ch.3). Finally, the ease and brutality of Milošević's increasingly centralist campaign instilled a fear of Serbian hegemony into Yugoslavia's other republics. In Slovenia and Croatia especially, these fears strengthened growing republican desires to pursue greater autonomy from the federation (Ramet 1996:ch.2-3). Thus, through an indirect process, Yugoslavia's economic catastrophe fuelled, in part, the ethno-nationalist and centrifugal tendencies that were to pull the state apart (Wachtel 1998:230).

### **III. LOSS OF STATE LEGITIMACY: SECESSIONISM AND THE SUB-STATE APPROPRIATION OF THE ARMED FORCES**

By 1989 Yugoslavia was already in an advanced state of decay. Politico-economic power was almost exclusively wielded by Yugoslavia's increasingly autonomous republics. Significant



coercive power—most notably the Slovene and Croat TDFs—was also regionally controlled, while the deepening economic crisis weakened the YPA, sparked Serbian nationalism and fuelled Slovenian and Croatian secessionism. While this last point reveals that “the Yugoslav idea” had eroded in Slovenia and Croatia (Rusinow 1995:32-33), it is important to examine why these republics regarded a unified Yugoslavia as illegitimate, in order to understand how the state’s loss of legitimacy contributed to its dismemberment and the sub-state appropriation of its monopoly of coercion. While the decentralisation of capital and coercive resources established the material conditions for state dissolution, it was the loss of legitimacy which pushed Yugoslavia’s disparate republics from political disagreement to state failure and internal war.

The loss of state legitimacy in Yugoslavia stemmed from the federal authority’s inability to halt economic decline. It was thus a product of the interaction between Yugoslavia’s economic crisis and its flawed political structure. As the pan-Yugoslav rhetoric of ‘Brotherhood and Unity’ declined in the 1960s, Yugoslav state legitimacy came to be based not on normative criteria, but on the state’s capacity to satisfy the economic interests of its constituent republics/provinces (Ramet 1996:23). However, as dire economic conditions in the 1980s eroded state capital, and as recalcitrant regions placed ‘their’ interests ahead of ‘Yugoslav’ interests, the federal state proved unable to rescue the economy—triggering state-wide protests of a socio-economic nature (Rusinow 1991:147).

While discontent in Serbia manifested itself in resurgent nationalism and a desire for greater centralisation, it had the opposite effect in Slovenia and Croatia. As the “richest and most efficient” republics in the federation, Slovenia and Croatia felt burdened by Yugoslavia’s economic backwardness (Ramet 1996:25). During the 1980s, Slovene and Croat

governments resented the diversion of their taxes to Yugoslavia's lesser developed regions (Pleština 1992). Moreover, as the economy declined, they "balked at the idea of increased [federal] contributions" (Woodward 1995:69), viewing the state's "failed economic policy" as a reason to avoid greater centralisation (Meier 1999:ch.2). Consequently, by the late 1980s Slovenia and Croatia became increasingly disillusioned with the Yugoslav state and sought greater independence by advocating official confederalisation. As Milošević's pursuit of state-wide Serbian hegemony was antithetical to confederal aspirations, this created a fear that only strengthened their desire for 'disassociation'. Thus, when Slovenia's proposal for an 'asymmetric federation' was not adopted at the 14<sup>th</sup> LCY Congress in 1990, the two republics lost all confidence in the state. Taking matters into their own hands, "on 25 June 1991, Slovenia and Croatia unilaterally declared their independence" in a move which signalled that the legitimacy of a unified Yugoslavia had been permanently lost (Ramet 1996:37).

Not only was this loss of legitimacy the proximate cause of Yugoslavia's political dismemberment, but it also indirectly undermined the federal state's monopoly of coercion by driving the weakened YPA into the hands of Serbian authorities. Since its creation in 1941, the YPA had been deliberately politicised to ensure its "pan-Yugoslav" identity and its adherence to LCY goals (Remington 1997:62-63; Gow 1992:73). Moreover, as the YPA relied on federal funding and was constitutionally-enshrined as the defender of the federation against external and internal enemies, both its institutional survival and its *raison d'être* depended on the integrity of the Yugoslav state (Gow 1992). Accordingly, when state legitimacy began to rapidly erode during the late 1980s, the YPA—considering its institutional survival to be threatened—found that its interests were most closely linked to Milošević's pro-Serbian centralism. This tacit alliance was strengthened by the fact that the YPA's officer corps and high command were dominated by like-minded Serbs (Table 4.1 and

4.2). Consequently, although the YPA sought a unified Yugoslavia, it increasingly acted in the interests of Serbia; arming Serbian militias, disarming republican TDFs, and deploying tanks against anti-Milošević protesters (Gow 1992; Remington 1997:70). Crucially, when the YPA intervened to prevent the secession of Slovenia and Croatia, it was no longer considered a ‘Yugoslav’ army, but was viewed as an occupying force that had been appropriated by the Serbs (Ramet 1996). Thus, as the imminent threat of republican secessionism prompted the YPA to re-concentrate its coercive power within Serbia, both a unified Yugoslavia and a state-wide monopoly of coercion ceased to exist. In the prevailing vacuum of political authority the YPA had become just another sub-state military organisation alongside the emerging republican armies.

**Table 4.1** *National Composition of the Officer Corps in the YPA, 1991*

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Officer Corps (percent)</i>	<i>Population in Yugoslavia (percent)</i>
Montenegrins	6.2	2.6
Croats	12.6	19.8
Macedonians	6.3	6.0
Muslims	2.4	8.9
Slovenes	2.8	7.8
Serbs	60.0	36.0
Albanians	0.6	7.7
Hungarians	0.7	1.9
Yugoslavs	6.7	5.4
Others	1.6	3.6

*Source:* Pierson (1992:48).

**Table 4.2** *Distribution of YPA Superior Officers by Nationality, 1991*

<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Generals</i>	<i>Colonels</i>	<i>Lieutenant-Generals</i>
Montenegrins	19	257	411
Croats	22	219	561
Macedonians	12	103	394
Muslims	3	28	109
Slovenes	12	72	142
Serbs	77	1511	3896
Albanians	1	5	15
Hungarians	0	6	15
Yugoslavs	7	123	422
Others	0	18	73

*Source:* Pierson (1992:48).

#### **IV. SYSTEMIC PRESSURES: THE END OF THE COLD WAR AND THE OPPORTINUTY FOR STATE COLLAPSE**

While an internal process of politico-economic fragmentation, economic crisis and legitimacy loss gradually eroded and dispersed Yugoslavia's centralised monopoly of coercion, external systemic pressures were also crucial to the failure of the Yugoslav state. As was the case in both Zaïre and Afghanistan, the end of the Cold War had a profound impact on the stability of the Yugoslav state. Although this systemic change played a less interventionary role in Yugoslavia than in these other states, it is an equally important factor in explaining how Yugoslavia ultimately lost its monopoly of coercion. Indeed, as Woodward (1995:16) has correctly observed, "this story [of Yugoslavia's failure]...might easily have had a different outcome...if the internal events had not been accompanied by a disintegration of the international order in which the country found its place".

The end of the Cold War provided the geopolitical and material opportunities for the secession of Slovenia and Croatia. As the break-up of the USSR saw the demise of external security threats in the Balkans, "size [became] a less important criterion for [state] viability" (Wachtel 1998:230). Moreover, although the European Union (EU) refused to endorse Yugoslavia's fragmentation, the EU's post-Cold War success and the possibility that it

“would integrate smaller and poorer states into its economic sphere” made “a large internal market seem increasingly unnecessary” (Wachtel 1991:230). Both these factors provided systemic incentives for Slovene and Croat ‘disassociation’. Most importantly, however, the end of the Cold War saw an abundance of armaments from the former Eastern Bloc clandestinely make their way to Yugoslavia’s republican armies. While 20,000-60,000 Kalashnikovs were transferred from Hungary to Croatia in early 1991 (Pierson 1992:51), an “unspecified number of tanks, antitank weapons, and other weaponry” were also imported via Germany to Slovenia and Croatia (Ramet 1996:52). In this way, changes in the international system assisted the centrifugal accumulation of coercive power that, alongside internal processes—contributed to the fragmentation of Yugoslavia.

Furthermore, the end of the Cold War meant that the integrity of the Yugoslav state became significantly less important. Since its separation from the Soviet Bloc in 1948, Yugoslavia had been regarded by Western powers as a vital strategic buffer separating East from West (Bennett 1995:153). Until the global recession of the 1980s, this position earned Yugoslavia considerable Western financial assistance. It also ensured that foreign geopolitical interests would not ‘permit’ disintegration of the state. With the end of the Cold War, however, Yugoslavia—like Zaïre and Afghanistan—lost its strategic importance. While this did not result in any dramatic loss in the external provision of capital and coercive resources, it meant that Western powers became less inclined to directly intervene in order to prevent its break-up (Bennett 1995; Rusinow 1991). To be sure, both the US and the EU preferred a unified Yugoslavia in the interest of regional stability; and this underscored policies to dissuade Slovene and Croat secession by denying these republics any promise of recognition or EU membership (Bennett 1995:154-155). Nevertheless, at the end of the Cold War external powers were not “prepared to use military force to support this position” (Woodward

1995:161). Indeed, it was the absence of any systemic obstacles to Yugoslavia's fragmentation which enabled republican secession and 'permitted' the dismembering of the state.

## **CONCLUSION**

Through the lens of the state-breaking mechanism, it is evident that the complex process of Yugoslav state failure assumed a 'combined capital-coercion' trajectory. Above all, the quasi-confederal political system was responsible for devolving economic and military power to Yugoslavia's increasingly sovereign republics. As the concomitant devolution of political power prevented the central regime from reversing Yugoslavia's economic crisis, widespread discontent erupted amidst growing socio-economic malaise. In a chain reaction, this loss of state legitimacy fuelled Slovene and Croat secessionism—triggering a resurgence in Serbian nationalism and driving the armed forces into the hands of the Serbs. It was at this point that the state's monopoly of coercion was effectively undermined. While the process of state devolution established sub-state accumulations of coercive power in Slovenia, Croatia and Serbia, it was a change in the international system which provided the opportunity for Yugoslav state failure. Finally, when Slovenia and Croatia seceded from the federation amidst violent reprisals by the YPA, the dismembering of the Yugoslav state had been completed. While the failure of Yugoslavia was not accompanied by the severe emaciation of state institutions or any significant armed conflict before 1991, it was nevertheless underscored by a profound decrease in and decentralisation of state capital and coercive power.

### **Anatomy of State Failure**

#### **UNRAVELLING THE PUZZLE OF STATE FAILURE**

State failure in the 1990s has occurred for the same general reasons and in a broadly similar way. Faced with flawed political structures, extreme economic crises, destabilising systemic pressures and an erosion of their legitimacy, certain troubled states have been unable to maintain their most basic criteria for existence. As their capital and coercive powers have decreased and decentralised to unsustainable levels, these states have lost the monopoly of coercion and have descended into failure. While the trajectories states have followed on their path to collapse have displayed slight variations, the underlying dynamics of state failure have been common across all cases. Together with the four causal variables of the state-breaking mechanism, this story of disintegrating capital and coercive power accounts for the anatomy of state failure. This is the central conclusion which may be drawn from my study.

By using the state-breaking mechanism to explain the failure of Zaïre, Afghanistan and Yugoslavia, four primary causes of state failure have been identified and brought into sharp theoretical focus. In all three cases, a flawed political structure established the foundations for the erosion of state capital and coercive power. For Zaïre, this took the form of a kleptocratic neopatrimonial system that literally hollowed out the state by consuming the capital that it required in order to exist. Yugoslavia's quasi-confederal political system had a similar effect, weakening the central authority by devolving state power to republican authorities. In a more indirect way, Afghanistan reveals how the imposition of an illegitimate state fragmented social control and led to the decentralisation of coercive power.

The role of economic crises and the loss of state legitimacy have also had similar effects across the cases examined in this study. In both Zaïre and Afghanistan, an economic catastrophe eroded state capital and left the central authority unable to sustain the armed forces. While Yugoslavia's economic crisis was less severe, it sparked the social discontent that completed the decentralisation of coercive power and led to the dismembering of the state. In all three cases the loss of state legitimacy may be seen as having provided the motivation for sub-state groups to challenge the central authority. While the origins of disillusionment in Zaïre and Yugoslavia were rooted in economic malaise and the exclusion of certain sub-state groups, dissent in Afghanistan stemmed from the illegitimacy of the political system itself.

Finally, systemic pressures linked to the end of the Cold War played a very similar role in the failure of all three states. Through their respective superpower patrons, both Zaïre and Afghanistan were directly linked to the global bipolar system. When both of these states lost their geopolitical significance following the end of the Cold War, their foreign sources of economic and military assistance dried-up—leaving them vulnerable to challenges from armed sub-state groups. Moreover, as external actors were responsible for the arming of these centrifugal forces, systemic pressures also presided over the decentralisation of coercive power. Such a direct connection to the global bipolar system was absent in Yugoslavia. Nevertheless, the same systemic changes affected the Yugoslav state by reducing the importance of its territorial integrity in the post Cold War strategic environment. In short, the end of the Cold War provides a powerful explanation for why there was a proliferation of failed states in the 1990s. However, the state-breaking mechanism demonstrates that is only one of four independent variables that are required for a sufficient causal explanation of state failure.



## **THE IMPLICATIONS OF THE STATE-BREAKING MECHANISM**

The state-breaking mechanism has important theoretical implications for the study of failed states. While scholars have generally viewed state failure as an anarchic and idiosyncratic occurrence, this study demonstrates that a set of clearly-identifiable causal variables can be discerned across three different cases of state failure in the 1990s. Moreover, through the analytical framework of the state-breaking mechanism, these four recurring variables can be configured into a comprehensive explanation of the underlying process of state failure. In this way, state failure may be understood as a general empirical phenomenon.

While it would be erroneous to make generalisations about all failed states on the basis of this study, the success of the state-breaking mechanism across three diverse cases of state failure suggests the broad applicability of my argument. Indeed, as many other failed states display similarly dysfunctional political systems, severe economic catastrophes, poor state-society affiliations and the debilitating effects of external forces, it is plausible that their descent into failure may also be explained by the model which I have developed in this study. The scholarly task ahead is to confirm the utility of the state-breaking mechanism as a theoretical tool for understanding the puzzle of state failure.

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