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Failed Cities and Failed States: Lawlessness, Self-Help and Informal Order in Africa and the West

Some scholars of state 'collapse' and state 'failure' in the developing world have shifted their attention (away from questions of formal institutional collapse) toward questions of the micro-level survival strategies that individuals, households, and local communities employ in order to maintain the highest possible standard of living in the face of political and economic instability, and fundamental existential insecurity.[1] Subject to regional constraints, people employ self-help strategies intended to compensate for the withdrawal of dependable government authority from their everyday lives.

These studies of "governance without government" are still largely descriptive in nature, answering basic conceptual and typological questions about what sorts of strategies people employ, along with some preliminary causal investigations about how variations in environments produce variations in coping strategies. Focused almost exclusively on the dramatically "collapsed" states of sub-Saharan Africa, studies in this vein have neglected the potential to engage in broader comparisons of coping behaviors within non-African contexts.[2] All research within the failed states literature, has failed to consider the forms of localized governmental failure that occur in "brown areas" – Guillermo O'Donnell's term – or (what I will call) "failed cities" nested within some of the world's most infrastructurally powerful states, including the United States of America. [3] Many of America's largest cities, and some American regions (e.g.

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[1] Victor Azarya and Naomi Chazan, "Disengagement from the State in Africa: Reflections on the Experience of Ghana and Guinea," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 29, no. 1 (1987), Timothy Raeymaekers, "Collapse or Order? Questioning State Collapse in Africa," (Working Paper, Conflict Research Group, Ghent: University of Ghent, 2005).

[2] Timothy Raeymaekers, "Governance without Government in 'Collapsed' African States: Project Outline," Project Prospectus, University of Ghent, www.psw.ugent.be/crg/projects/governance%20without%20government.pdf.

[3] See Guillermo A. O'Donnell, "On the State, Democratization and Some Conceptual Problems: A Latin American View with Glances at Some Postcommunist Countries," *World Development* 21, no. 8 (1993), ———, "Why the Rule of Law Matters," *Journal of Democracy* 15, no. 4 (2004).

parts of the South) host areas in which the application of formal governmental authority is rare or nonexistent.

In this paper, I place micro-level self-help strategies in the broadest possible conceptual and theoretical perspective. Exploring the underlying concepts of self-help and informal order, I focus on behaviors at the individual, household and local-community level, comparing the behaviors of people living in failed states with the behaviors of people living in under-governed, high-crime neighborhoods within “successful” states. I offer some preliminary comparisons, based on selected histories, ethnographies and behavioral studies, to sketch key similarities that will motivate my subsequent theoretical discussion. Based on these comparisons, I offer the hypothesis: Similar behaviors observed in both failed states and failed cities are the products of similar strategic environments that encourage *self-help* behaviors intended to compensate for the absence or intermittence of governmental authority.

Moving from concepts to causal theory, I suggest that the similar micro-level coping strategies, employed by people in failed states and failed cities, intervene between classes of macro-level phenomena that are of substantive interest to scholars of state failure. I proceed on the basic intuition that similar micro-level strategies might be explicable in terms of similar macro-level stimuli; in turn, those individual and small-group behaviors may aggregate in such a way as to produce similar macro-level effects.

What emerges from this conceptual and theoretical exercise is a framework for analyzing state failure as a complex socio-spatial process consisting of multiple theoretical explicanda – beginning with the need to explain the recession of governmental authority from certain locales, and continuing on to explain short and middle-term behavioral reactions, as well as any long-term macro-social consequences of aggregated individual-level behaviors. Timothy

Raeymaekers has called upon scholars to "look at what lies *beyond* state collapse: this analysis would not only include an identification of the forces that are arising out of the depths of public authority crisis generated by state implosion, but also how these forces are competing to establish a society-wide domination."[4] This paper explores some of the conceptual and theoretical issues that such a study might entail.

I. A Case for Conceptual Equivalence: Failed Cities and Failed States

To make the case for conceptual equivalence, I place the behaviors of people living in high-crime, (mostly) urban areas within successful states alongside the behaviors of people living in failed or collapsed states. At this point, I am not concerned with carving out technical, operational definitions of failed cities and failed states. This terminological sloppiness (which will be resolved in the next section) stems from my desire to avoid assuming too much about why people are engaging in certain behaviors. Admittedly, I am already operating under some very basic assumptions about when and where the behaviors of interest are most likely to occur: where people are poor and insecure. When drawing from the political scientific literature on state failure, I take authors at their word that the states they are describing all have some common features characterizing their failure. Similarly, when drawing from sociological and economic literature on criminality, I take it that the "bad neighborhoods" all have some common features that make them "bad."

Beyond merely highlighting behavioral similarities, I am interested in the degree to which the proximate, environmental causes of those behaviors overlap from one setting to the next (assuming that people's behaviors are intentional responses to their environments). Whenever possible, I look to people's own explanations for their behaviors, because those justifications are the most theory-neutral evidence of individual decision-making processes that I can hope to offer. Such reports will, undoubtedly, be biased by the reporter, but they will (at least) not be biased by the analyst.

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[4] Raeymaekers, "Collapse or Order? Questioning State Collapse in Africa," 12.

The behaviors of interest fall roughly into two categories – legitimate versus criminal – depending on the legal status of such activities as delineated by the formal law of the state in question. Legitimate activities typically include individuals and/or households procuring weapons, building fences, placing bars on windows and, in general, taking actions to make their homes and farms into increasingly defensible spaces. Normatively ambiguous activities include the (often iconoclastic) behaviors of armed youths who form age-graded peer-groups operating well outside of traditional or formal social structures. In failed states, we call gun-wielding teenagers “child soldiers;” in failed cities, we call them “gang members” – the differences in terminology are not justified by differences in behaviors.

Within the realm of unambiguously criminal activity, people engage in high levels of both transactional and confiscatory crime. Transactional crime involves the illicit exchange of goods or services (e.g. black marketeering, drug-dealing, gun-running, protection racketeering), as well as the background activities necessary to support such exchanges (e.g. smuggling, drug-farming). Confiscatory crime involves taking property by force (e.g. piracy, banditry, burglary, etc.).

All of the activities are *not* unique to failed cities or failed states; on the contrary, they occur even in the most successful of states and the best of “good” neighborhoods: people purchase electronic home security systems; affluent gated communities hire armed private security guards; high school cliques pick fights after school; white-collar workers cook and sell methamphetamine out of their basements; and during the course of their life, everyone steals something from someone. What makes failed states and failed cities unique and analytically interesting phenomena is the fact that, within the locality of failed areas, all of the activities described above are prevalent *in the extreme*. These levels of extreme prevalence tend to endure over time and are not explicable in terms of mere random variation.

Individual Weapon Ownership

Both aggregate statistical analyses and micro-level observations support the idea that people purchase weapons for defensive purposes when they perceive their environment as increasingly unsafe. Within the United States, criminologists have presented strong evidence of a causal relationship between subjective insecurity and defensive gun ownership. Major spikes in crime lead to arms-racing dynamics as individuals attempt to compensate for rising levels of insecurity. Anecdotal evidence from accounts of failed states and civil/ethnic wars supports the idea that civil conflict places citizens in a domestic security dilemma, producing strong incentives for individuals to arm themselves to prevent victimization by both governmental and insurgent forces.

Looking first at some of the failed cities of America, time series data collected across the U.S. indicates that handgun production and homicide rates closely parallel one another over time.[5] While the direction of causality is still under dispute, there is mounting evidence supporting the hypothesis that spikes in violent crime lead non-criminals (in addition to would-be criminals) to purchase guns for self-defense.

In one of the more well-documented cases of city-failure, Detroit, Michigan saw a sixfold increase in the number of homicides between 1964 and 1974, which corresponded to a similarly unprecedented rise in handgun ownership.[6] Loftin, the author of the study, explains this phenomena as a "mini arms race" in which would-be criminals and non-criminals all armed themselves in the face of increasing insecurity. The spiral of violent crime and weapon ownership eventually led to a city full of well-armed citizens who responded to threats of force with force: "For a brief period in 1974, store keepers in Detroit actually killed more robbers than robbers killed keepers."[7] This arms-racing dynamic has been observed in a number of similar cases involving major spikes in violent crime, including during the 1992 Los Angeles riots in California.[8]

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[5] David McDowall, "Firearms and Self-Defense," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 539 (1995): 135.

Survey data strongly suggest that people's subjective assessments of their levels of insecurity play an important role in decisions to acquire weapons for self-defense. Based on data from 9,021 interviews from randomly sampled neighborhoods in New York, Florida and Missouri, Smith and Uchida estimated the effects of various objective and subjective indicators on levels of *defensive weapon ownership* at the household level. [9] The authors' regression results report strong, statistically significant correlations between people's subjective assessments of their own existential security and their decision to purchase a weapon for self-defense. The strongest predictors of defensive weapon ownership are past victimization, high expectation of future victimization, and low ratings of the efficacy of local police enforcement.[10] While objective indicators such as neighborhood crime rates and the racial composition of communities are significant predictors of defensive weapon ownership, the effects of these objective indicators are swamped by the effects of the subjective indicators derived from interview data.[11] In addition, some related studies have provided evidence suggesting that basic indicators of social disorder – "public drinking, corner gangs, and the like" – may also contribute to higher gun ownership by influencing individuals' estimates of the probability of criminality and victimization.[12]

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[6] Colin Loftin, "Assaultive Violence as a Contagious Social Process," *Bull N.Y. Academy of Medicine* 62, no. 5 (1986): 552-4.

[7] Ibid.: 552.

[8] McDowall, "Firearms and Self-Defense," 135. See also, Baker Mary Holland et al., "The Impact of a Crime Wave: Perceptions, Fear, and Confidence in the Police," *Law & Society Review* 17, no. 2 (1983).

[9] The researchers were careful to make certain that their measurements of the dependent variable clearly delineated between households with members who purchased weapons for the explicit purpose of self-defense versus those who purchased guns for other non-defensive reasons. The authors prefaced each interview with the following statement: "People nowadays are taking precautions to protect their home and families from crime. For the next few questions please tell me whether you or any member of your household have done the following things to increase your safety from crime." The question that formed the basis for their coding of the binary dependent variable was: "Have you purchased a gun or other weapon for your protection?" See Douglas A. Smith and Craig D. Uchida, "The Social Organization of Self-Help: A Study of Defensive Weapon Ownership," *American Sociological Review* 53, no. 1 (1988): 97.

Turning to examples of failed states, the "security dilemma" – involving spirals of mistrust and mutual armament – is a now classic explanation for the kind of ethnic/civil conflict that frequently plagues failed states.[13] The basic dynamic that has been repeatedly documented in failed and collapsed states involves a precipitous rise in violence and insecurity, and an accompanying rise in demand for small arms – demand that, especially since the end of the Cold War, is rapidly satisfied by highly efficient international black and grey markets. Demand for arms feeds upon itself as a result of mistrust among local individuals: when one community member arms himself for self-defense, he provokes his distrustful neighbors to take similar precautions.

Researchers from the United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research (UNIDIR) conducted two extensive micro-level studies based on post-conflict surveys, focus-groups and interviews in the formerly war-torn states of Mali and Cambodia.[14] In each of the states, local people reportedly found themselves entangled in a domestic security dilemma, linking increases in armed violence within communities to perceptions of deteriorating individual security, which in turn led to the felt need to acquire weapons. Local people conceptualized “insecurity” – for which they provided a number of individualized, subjective definitions – as relating to both an increase in physical (frequently gun-related) violence in their communities and the failure of local economic institutions.[15] People described how violence and insecurity seemed to follow from the “inability to satisfy basic needs such as [acquiring] food, remaining [persisting?] poverty and shortage of farming tools….”[16] Poverty and the basic struggle to subsist begat violence, prompting people to steal or kill one-another’s livestock, or to plunder one-another’s homes.[17] In this environment, weapons provided both a needed defense against potential victimization and a potential tool for stealing from others if necessary.

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[10] For regression table, see Ibid.: 99.

[11] Ibid.: 101.

[12] See McDowall, "Firearms and Self-Defense.", Wesley G. Skogan, *Disorder and Decline : Crime and the Spiral of Decay in American Neighborhoods* (New York
Toronto: Free Press ;
Colleir Macmillan Canada, 1990).

[13] See Nelson Kasfir, "Domestic Anarchy, Security Dilemmas, and Violent Predation: Causes of Failure," in *When States Fail : Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), Barry R. Posen, "The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict," in *Ethnic Conflict and International Security*, ed. Michael E. Brown (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993).

In both failed cities and failed states, individuals’ perceptions of rising insecurity cause them to take similar actions to guard themselves against predation by others. As it becomes clear that the government is not a dependable source of security, fear may lead people to see their neighbors’ acquisition of weapons as a potentially threatening practice. When asked why he refused to disarm, a Liberian fighter explained, “We are afraid of each other because of the war. We are all Liberians but the war make[s] us to feel like that.”[18] Because predatory intent is nearly impossible to distinguish from defensive intent, people err on the side of treating all armed individuals as potential aggressors.

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[14] Geofrey Mugumya, *Exchanging Weapons for Development in Cambodia: An Assessment of Different Weapon Collection Strategies by Local People*, (Geneva, Switzerland: UNIDIR, 2005) 7.

[15] Mugumya, *Exchanging* (Cambodia) 44-5. See also

[16] Mugumya *Exchanging* (Cambodia) 45.

[17] Geofrey Mugumya, *Exchanging Weapons for Development in Mali: Weapon Collection Programmes Assessed by Local People*, (Geneva, Switzerland: UNIDIR, 2004) 63.

[18] As quoted in Stephen Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy : The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War* (New York: New York University Press, 1999), 132.

Militarized Youth: Gang Banging and Child Soldiering

Every society hosts some population of armed youths whose antisocial collective behaviors represent desperate, angry responses to insecurity, social marginalization and the unfulfilled promises of modern materialism. Gang members and child soldiers are differentiated by nothing more than their location: militarized youths in successful states are called "gang members"; the same youths in failed states are called "child soldiers." Their underlying motivations for joining armed, violent organizations vary across the range of individual participants, yet are remarkably similar across the conceptual gangster-soldier divide. The similarities extend into the violent initiation techniques employed, and the central role of drugs in those organizations.

Militarized youths are generally angry, socially marginalized young men to whom traditional/legitimate society has little to offer. Ethnographic studies suggest that gangs (past and present) are primarily groups of "male adolescents and youths who have grown up together as children, usually as cohorts in a low-income neighborhood of a city."[19] These culturally marginalized individuals – usually members of ethnic/racial minority groups – face dim prospects for material and social advancement both because of *who* they are (race, family background) and *where* they live (human ecology): "they live on the other side of the tracks; have limited access to entry-level jobs; receive harsh, uneven treatment from authorities, including and especially law enforcement; and are faulted for their own problems."[20] Dr Edward Snoh Grant, a psychiatrist who has treated hundreds of demobilized Africa fighters, describes the average (usually male) soldier in a failed state: "He is someone usually between 16 and 35 years of age, who may have decided to become a combatant for several reasons: to get food for survival, to stop other fighters killing his family and friends, was forced to become a combatant of be killed, sheer adventurism, etc. … He is rag-tagged semi-illiterate or illiterate, comes from the lowest socio-economic class of society, impoverished and disadvantaged."[21] Some child soldiers turned to the military in order to escape from abusive, dysfunctional home lives.[22]

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[19] James Diego Vigil, "Urban Violence and Street Gangs," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 32 (2003): 226.

[20] Ibid.: 233.

Coming from similarly disadvantaged backgrounds and challenging ecologies, youths gravitate to violent organizations for similar reasons. Security ranks among the most frequently cited motives for joining gangs. In the words of one gang member, the chief benefit of member ship is, "You don't got to worry about nobody jumping you. You don't got to worry about getting beat up."[23] Decker's behavioral study of gang formation focuses on the generative role of *threat* – i.e. real or perceived potential for rival groups to harm gang members – in gang formation. According to Decker, threats from rival groups lead to the growth of gangs through two mechanisms: cohesion and "contagion."[24] Threats lead to gang formation through cohesion as violence between in-groups and out-groups reinforces existing in-group solidarity, along with the fear of victimization and the felt need for collective defense.[25] Threats may also lead to gang formation through contagion when retaliatory violence takes on a spiral dynamic of escalating insecurity. Responding to spirals of increasing violence and fear, competing gangs have been known to engage in arms-racing behavior, to avoid being out-gunned by their rivals.[26]

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[21] Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy : The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, 127.

[22] See Rachel Brett and Irma Specht, *Young Soldiers : Why They Choose to Fight* (Boulder, Colo.: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2004), 88-9.

[23] Scott Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," *Justice Quarterly* 13, no. 2 (1996): 253.

[24] Ibid.: 244.

[25] Yablonsky's interview-based study was among the first to observe the strong connection between violence, insecurity and gang membership. See Lewis Yablonsky, "The Delinquent Gang as a near-Group," *Social Problems* 7, no. 2 (1959): 115.

[26] Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," 245.

General estimates suggest that roughly two-thirds of child soldiers enter voluntarily into military service.[27] These high levels of voluntarism are explicable in terms of the many benefits – security being chief among these – that adolescents derive from attaching themselves to a military organization. A large group of Sudanese boys, who were recruited at a very young age into the *Sudanese Peoples Liberation Army*, were reported to "have become their own substitute family, providing a sense of security and belonging."[28] This same security-motive has also surfaced in studies of child soldiers in Uganda and El Salvador.[29] In Liberia, fighters commonly reported that they would join local military factions because they felt that they would be safer as fighters than as civilians.[30]

Beyond the incentives of collective security, violent organizations provide youths with scarce and coveted opportunities for material gain and social advancement. Though they are loosely structured, gangs accord their members status based on characteristic masculine virtues and solidarity to the group.[31] Individuals who do not expect to be able to make a living in the conventional economy may take up drug-dealing and involve themselves in black market transactions that form the basis for gang economies.[32] As a young Colombian gangster explained, violent crime under drug-lord tutelage can become a highly lucrative enterprise: "Killing for drug traffickers made me complete. All of a sudden I had everything that I always wanted, and it was fast and easy. Once I tasted that kind of money, I would do anything for more. I mean, I would murder people in front of their mothers so I could keep on living like a big person."[33] In opportunity-deficient environments, teenagers may be easily enticed by promises of social promotion and material enrichment through gang membership.

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[27] P. W. Singer, *Children at War* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 61.

[28] Ilene Cohn and Guy S. Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers : The Role of Children in Armed Conflict* (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 29.

[29] Ibid., 97.

[30] Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy : The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, 130.

[31] See Yablonsky, "The Delinquent Gang as a near-Group," 115.

[32] Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," 251.

In failed states, youngsters often come to associate the soldier's life with levels of stability that cannot be found in civilian life. Observers of Liberia's civil war during the 1990s concluded that the incentives for military participation were obvious: "'those with guns could eat,' and the promise of loot was irresistible."[34] A Congolese child explained that, "I heard that the rebels at least were eating. So, I joined them." [35] Poor children, often orphans, would frequently see military service as the "only way to guarantee regular meals, clothing, or medical attention."[36]

Children may also associate military service with opportunities to pursue material gain and social power, and to escape from traditional hierarchical power structures within their home-communities.[37] Adolescents are often lured into military service by fantastic (often false) promises of wealth from looting and diamonds.[38] Being a soldier also means having the awesome power of a gun, implying freedom from the will of parents and local elders. To complete the image of empowerment, 16 year olds are made into "generals" by older commanding officers.[39]

Commonly, gang members rationalize violence in terms of self-defense, retaliation and revenge, implying the legitimacy of said violence, in contrast with unprovoked aggression, of which gang members generally disapprove. When asked about situations in which they used violence, members' justifications are often similar:

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[33] Alejandro Gaviria, "Increasing Returns and the Evolution of Violent Crime: The Case of Columbia," in *University of California at San Diego, Economics Working Paper Series* (Department of Economics, UC San Diego: May 1998), 18.

[34] Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers : The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, 33.

[35] Singer, *Children at War*, 63.

[36] Ibid., 62.

[37] Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy : The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, 123.

[38] See Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers : The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*.

[39] Ibid.

> INT: When do members of the gang use violence?
> 037: When somebody approaches us. We don't go out looking for trouble. We let trouble come to us.
> INT: When do you guys use violence?
> 042: Only when it's called for. We don't start trouble. That's the secret of our success.[40]

Child soldiers frequently offer similar justifications for violence, with the desire for revenge originating "in personal experiences of physical abuse, torture, killing disenfranchisement, deprivation, and humiliation."[41] In one child soldier's story: "My father, mother, and brothers were killed by the enemy, I became angry. I didn't have any other way to do, unless I have to revenge. And to revenge is only to have a gun. … I can fight and avenge my mother, father and brothers."[42]

In organizations in which violence plays a central role, initiation rituals are often brutal, involving both violence against the new initiate and the encouragement of the initiate to commit acts of violence against others. In failed cities, gang initiations often involve the "beating in" of new members (by existing members), and sometimes require prospective members to start a fight with, or kill, a member of a rival gang.[43] In one account of an American gang initiation:

> To be a Crip, you have to put your blue rag on your head and wear all blue and go in a Blood neighborhood…and fight Bloods. If you come out without getting killed, that's the way you get initiated.[44]

In failed states, military organizations require similarly brutal rituals. A Mozambican child soldier recalled the violent process of his induction into a rebel organization (RENAMO – Resistencia Nacional Mocambicana): "The bandits killed my mother, and my brothers too. They took me to their base camp. … I had a gun. The chief taught me to use it. He beat me up."[45] Sometimes new recruits were required to return to their home communities and kill someone who they knew; in other cases, recruits were encouraged to execute captured combatants.

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[40] Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," 256.
[41] Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers : The Role of Children in Armed Conflict*, 42. For description of "survivor's guilt" and desire for revenge, see Singer, *Children at War*, 64.
[42] Singer, *Children at War*, 65.
[43] Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," 252.
[44] Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," 252.

Membership in violent organizations is an outlet for vengeful anger, but also becomes a gateway for other types of criminal activity, including the production, consumption and sale of drugs and the fencing of stolen goods. One criminologist has observed that, "The threats that gang members face and pose isolate them from legitimate social institutions such as schools, families and the labor market."[46] The connections between drugs and gang-life have been well documented.[47] Drugs, diamonds and charcoal fund the war economies in which child soldiers are typically involved. Commanders often encourage their troops to smoke marijuana and take amphetamines so that they will be fearless in battle.[48]

The parallels here suggest that militarized youths are a global phenomenon inspired by environments that are deficient in both security and opportunity. Especially for adolescent males, security and status come from group identification and weapon ownership. Violence emerges as groups fight over scarce resources and engage in ceremonial acts of brutality designed to indoctrinate newcomers into lifestyles centered on constant warfare.

Transactional Crime: Drug-lords and Warlords

Drug dealing, gun running, and protection racketeering, are common to bad neighborhoods and failed states. These lucrative forms of criminality require relatively high levels of organization on the part of the participants. Contraband goods and services flow through established networks of producers, buyers and sellers, typically intersecting with war-economies in failed states or gang-economies in failed cities. Members of criminal organizations benefit from the inefficacy of state policing and justice systems; yet, drug lords and warlords also require some modicum of security in order to operate successfully – knowing that their infrastructure and transactions will not be threatened by other criminal individuals or organizations.

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[45] Cohn and Goodwin-Gill, *Child Soldiers : The Role of Children in Armed Conflict.*
[46] Decker, "Collective and Normative Features of Gang Violence," 246.
[47] Ibid.
[48] Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy : The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, 120-1.

In Africa, warlords have often tried to – and sometimes succeeded in – capturing the "state" (i.e. the offices of the national capital) in order to lend their violent profiteering a façade of legitimacy.[49] The Nigerian drug trade provides an example of a particularly successful operation that has been aided by governmental weakness and (suspected) cooptation by international drug-lords. William Reno estimates that, as of 1998, "Nigerians supply 70 to 80 percent of Burmese heroin imports into the United States and 35 to 40 percent of the U.S. heroin market from other sources."[50] In larger and stronger American states, where capturing the national state is infeasible, drug-lords may try to infiltrate national or local governments through corrupt politicians, or may try to monopolize force within small enclaves by overpowering local law enforcement. Yet, the recent case of Mexican drug cartels suggests that such international crime syndicates may have the power to intimidate even governments in successful states.[51]

Because the members of these internationally networked drug syndicates are well armed and well organized, they often have firepower that can easily rival that of a state government. Remarkably efficient post-Cold War arms markets, run by notorious personalities such as Viktor Bout (former KGB operative and global arms-trafficker), created opportunities for military leaders in Sierra Leone to rapidly convert diamond wealth into weapons.[52] Both the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) and government forces traded diamonds for guns (and sometimes hired mercenaries) through legitimate and "black" markets. For Mexican drug cartels in the 21st Century, arms flows from gun dealers and smugglers in the United States are a crucial source of coercive power against rival cartels and against the Mexican state.[53]

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[49] See William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998).
[50] Ibid., 49.
[51] See Marc Lacey, "With Force, Mexican Drug Cartels Get Their Way," *New York Times* (February 28, 2009), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/01/world/americas/01juarez.html#.

As criminal capitalists with an interest in establishing their own forms of informal social control, the behaviors of warlord and drug-lords are almost indistinguishable. As William Reno has observed, based on his extensive study of African warlords: "The joining of political struggle and accumulation—even as a violent Kalashnikov lifestyle of protection rackets, forced labor, and fencing of stolen goods—is as much a candidate for a Weberian capitalist style of life as is a Protestant ethic or a Japanese way of doing business."[54] Because such organized criminals operate outside (and sometimes above) the law, they do not have recourse to the "deterrent, compensatory and retributive benefits of formal justice."[55] Yet, drug-lords and warlords often refuse to tolerate situations in which their orderly operations are disrupted by rivals or by individual criminals. As a result, when transactional criminals are the victims of robbery, they feel compelled to take justice into their own hands, frequently engaging in retaliatory violence that ultimately serves as a substitute for the functions normally filled by a formal justice system.

Based on interviews with 20 recently robbed drug dealers in St Louis, Missouri, a team of criminologists investigated the motives behind retaliatory violence within criminal subcultures: "(1) retribution, in the form of *vengeance*, (2) deterrence, in the form of *reputation maintenance*, and; (3) compensation, in the form of *loss recovery*."[56] An interviewee named Stub testified to the high value of reputation maintenance: "See, you have to realize if I didn't get back at him, you and him could say [Stub]'s a punk. Everybody can go take [Stub's] s—t. So if he [gets] hurt, everybody knew who hurt him. … So that gonna give them the fear right there not to f—k with you…That's very important if you gonna live that lifestyle."[57] Another interviewee described the necessity to utilize violence in order to recuperate losses inflicted by victimization: "I need to get [back] on my feet. Where the f—k am I gonna find $1200 cash and a bag of rocks? From some other motherf—ker just like me, that's where."[58]

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[52] Jimmy D. Kandeh, "The Criminalization of the Ruf Insurgency in Sierra Leone," in *Rethinking the Economics of War: The Intersection of Need, Creed, and Greed*, ed. Cynthia J. Arnson and I. William Zartman (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson Center Press, 2005), 101.

[53] See James C. Jr. McKinley, "U.S. Is Arms Bazaar for Mexican Cartels," *The New York Times* (February 25, 2009), http://www.nytimes.com/2009/02/26/us/26borders.html?_r=1&ref=americas.

[54] Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States*, 30..

[55] Volkan Topalli, Richard Wright, and Robert Fornango, "Drug Dealers, Robbery and Retaliation: Vulnerability, Deterrence and the Contagion of Violence," *The British Journal of Criminology* 42, no. 2 (2002): 337.

A study of warlord behavior in the world's most collapsed state – Somalia – has suggested that "Vigilante justice is not unknown against both individual criminals and gangs – often by their own kinsmen."[59] Warlords who once looted villages have become "stationary bandits," carving out territorial niches that they exploit; businessmen who initially profited from the war economy have developed enough in the way of fixed assets that they value some degree of social order (even if they continue to engage in illicit commerce).[60] These mafia-like organizations have "moved into a curious gray area between extortion and taxation, between protection racket and nascent police force."[61]

Organized criminals play a fascinating role in failed areas because their actions are, on one hand, subversive of formal governmental authority, and on the other hand, constitutive of localized, informal authority. Warlords and drug-lords are fiercely territorial – defending markets where they sell their drugs, guarding sources of natural resource wealth (e.g. diamonds), or protecting populations from which they extract surplus wealth (through "taxation"). This territoriality stems from a narrow interest in controlling various potential sources of material wealth; yet, the transactional nature of such criminal capitalism often prompts warlords and drug-lords to take an active interest in maintaining a modicum of social order.

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[56] Ibid.: 340.
[57] Ibid.: 343.
[58] Ibid.: 346.
[59] Ken Menkhaus, "State Collapse in Somalia: Second Thoughts," *Review of African Political Economy* 30, no. 97 (2003): 412.
[60] Happenings in Somalia appear to comport nicely with Olson's theory of the natural transition from "roving" to "stationary" banditry. See Mancur Olson, *Power and Prosperity : Outgrowing Communist and Capitalist Dictatorships* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).
[61] Menkhaus, "State Collapse in Somalia: Second Thoughts," 412.

Confiscatory Crime: Robbers and Rebels

Individual acts of confiscatory crime (violent or otherwise) are common to all social and political settings, but are pervasive in failed cities and failed states. Gang members, child soldiers, warlords and drug-lords are all commonly perpetrators of violent confiscatory crimes linked to their organizational imperatives or to individual opportunities that arise as a result of membership; however, average citizens are also responsible for a large share of confiscatory criminality within failed areas.

The violent chaos of insurgencies, riots and crime-waves elicit fear, but they also engender opportunity. Given suitable (i.e. vulnerable, valuable) targets and an environment in which a contemplated criminal act is likely to go unpunished, every member of society has some criminal potential.[62] People's perceptions that criminality is likely to go unpunished may lead them to take defensive precautions against predation (as described in the section on defensive weapon ownership above), but perceptions of the absence of governmental guardianship may also lead people to engage in forms of criminal predation that would not ordinarily be a part of their repertoire of actionable behaviors.

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[62] This idea is loosely consistent with rationalist, "routine activities" approaches to criminality in the sociological literature. See Lawrence E. Cohen and Marcus Felson, "Social Change and Crime Rate Trends: A Routine Activity Approach," *American Sociological Review* 44, no. 4 (1979).

Observations of a major Colombian “crime epidemic”, beginning in the late 1970s and continuing into the 1990s, suggest that crime begets crime within failed cities.[63] The more crime committed, the more crime seems to pay: people respond to opportunities presented by congested law enforcement systems, and respond to lessons learned (through observing the successes of others) about how to carry out confiscatory crimes and about the potential rewards of such behaviors. Precipitous increases in homicides in the 1980s – caused by violent power struggles among competing drug cartels – overwhelmed justice systems in areas of concentrated cartel activity.[64] Lagging slightly behind homicide rates, confiscatory crimes – “kidnappings, car thefts, bank robberies and even petty crimes” – also increased rapidly during the same period.[65]

In a classic case of warlordism translating into confiscatory crime within a failed state, Charles Taylor – the notorious Liberian warlord – is reported to have led his forces on a military offensive, aptly named “Operation Pay Yourself.” The goal of the ‘operation’ – essentially a decentralized rampage of looting and killing throughout the Liberian capital, Monrovia – was the ‘payment’ of fighters who had fought for several years without any compensation.[66]

In a similar case, irregular civilian defense forces (CDFs) fighting on the side of the Sierra Leonean government often (d)evolved into predatory groups once they had secured a given area against rebel incursions. Especially during the mid 1990s when the military tide had turned against the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), government-backed counterinsurgency units attempted to enrich themselves using violent (illegal) methods similar to those employed by RUF forces. At the height of CDF looting, a disillusioned commander complained that “genuine soldiers do not exit a battle zone carrying television sets."[67] As military discipline deteriorated within government-backed units, underpaid soldiers became 'soldiers' by day and 'rebels' (looters/kidnappers) by night. These groups of armed men played ambiguous roles in the lives of local peoples; so-called "sobels" were sometimes a source of security and sometimes a source of exploitation and terror.[68]

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[63] Colombia is debatably a “failed” or “weak” state, but certainly host to several failed cities. The author of the study does not refer to Colombia as a failed state, and emphasizes the localized nature of lawlessness within the state. See Gaviria, "Increasing Returns and the Evolution of Violent Crime: The Case of Columbia."

[64] Ibid., 12.

[65] Ibid., 4.

[66] Ellis, *The Mask of Anarchy : The Destruction of Liberia and the Religious Dimension of an African Civil War*, 108.

Given the asymmetries of power that emerge between those who have guns and those who do not, the temptation for the armed to exploit their advantage is ever present. Military and social discipline both frown on the exploitation of this relationship for personal gain; but in a context in which theft is unlikely to be punished by authorities, irresistible opportunities for looting and pillaging may arise.

Working Backwards: Explaining Behaviors as Self-Help

All of the described behaviors appear to stem from similar environmental circumstances characterized by persistently low levels of personal and proprietary security, suggesting that people's actions are directed at coping with (and capitalizing on) real or perceived insecurity in their environments. The testimonies of actors along with the hypotheses of informed scholars seem to comport with a theory of rational, self-interested behaviors involving the implementation of coping or self-help strategies.

Self-help strategies are distinct from other possible lifestyle choices because of the socially suboptimal (Pareto-inferior) character of self-help: all individuals would be better off if, either they did not have to engage in such activities at all, or (in the case of transactional criminals) they could engage in such activities within legitimate market channels and with the benefits of recourse to a formal justice system. In other words, people would be better off if their government provided *adequate* levels of security as a public good, since governments generally enjoy economies of scale in the provision of such goods.

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[67] Paul Richards, "Militia Conscription in Sierra Leone: Recruitment of Young Fighters in an African War," in *The Comparative Study of Conscription in the Armed Forces*, ed. Lars Mjøset and Stephen Van Holde (Amsterdam ; New York: JAI, 2002), 267.

[68] Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States,* 125.

Obviously the definition of “adequate” varies among individuals: for any level of security provision, there will always be some individuals who take additional (possibly wasteful) defensive precautions and individuals who engage in (socially wasteful) transactional or confiscatory criminality instead of, or in addition to, legitimate commerce/labor. In this same vein, a theory explaining self-help as a response to insecurity cannot explain why individual and collective responses to government inadequacy take a variety of forms (both legitimate and illicit) despite similar general circumstances. Explaining these individual level variations would require a theory of the distribution of tastes within society – something that I will set aside here, in favor of a more general theoretical overview.

Over all, the varieties of self-help behaviors correspond to several possible motives or mental/psychological states – fear, opportunity, and revenge – each of which, I have attempted to show above, may be elicited by perceived changes in levels of state-provided guardianship. Each motive represents a separate causal mechanism that, in isolation or in combination, will typify explanations of people’s responses to rising insecurity. Leaving aside the issue of why a perceived drop in security motivates fear in one person and opportunism in another, I suggest that self-help behaviors (of all sorts) are most prevalent in locales where insecurity is the greatest, and that insecurity is linked to the *perception* that formal governmental authority is no longer availing within a given locale.

To summarize the causal-theoretical argument that follows: failed cities and failed states bear a threefold resemblance beginning with a common macro-level stimulus of *lawlessness*, causing similar micro-level behavioral responses of self-help, which can aggregate to produce macro-level effects of ambivalence and even antipathy towards state authority. First, failed cities and failed states are defined by a common macro-social context, lawlessness, characterized by either the intermittent/nonexistent application of government authority or the perverse/selective application of government authority. Second, (as suggested above) people's micro-level behavioral responses to the recession of governmental authority involve diverse forms of self-help, many of which contribute to mounting perceptions of insecurity and the spread of violence and disorder. The types of self-help strategies that people employ are remarkably similar, if not identical, across cases of failed states and failed cities. Third, some micro-level coping behaviors lead to emergent forms of informal order/justice at the macro-level (i.e. the urban locality or state territory); such informal orders may have path-dependent consequences in the form of increasingly widespread antipathy towards formal governmental authority.

II. Macro-Level Stimulus – Lawlessness:

Normative, performance-based definitions of failure are generally accepted among scholars of failed/collapsed states. [69] At the level of sovereign, territorial units, states are often said to "fail" or "collapse" to the extent that they deviate from Weberian norms regarding the idealized role that the governments *ought* to play vis-à-vis their societies.[70] In his (2003 and

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[69] William Zartman's oft cited definition of "state collapse" is: "a situation where the structure, authority (legitimate power), law, and political order have fallen apart and must be reconstituted in some form, old or new." See I. William Zartman, *Collapsed States : The Disintegration and Restoration of Legitimate Authority* (Boulder: L. Rienner Publishers, 1995), 1.

[70] The "successful" (typically democratic) governments of the "developed world" define the normative baseline against which the governments of developing nations are measured. Since international standards delineating appropriate/inappropriate government policies have evolved (and will continue to evolve) over time, the

2004) edited volumes, Robert Rotberg proposes that "it is according to their performance—according to the levels of their effective delivery of the most crucial political goods—that strong states may be distinguished from weak ones, and weak states from failed or collapsed states."[71] Accordingly, Rotberg categorizes states as weak, failed, or collapsed in relation to a rough hierarchy of political goods (with physical security ranking as the most fundamental good) that states might be expected to provide: the fewer political goods provided, the weaker the state.[72] If a state ceases to provide even the most basic good of physical security to its citizens, it loses its legitimacy and has "failed;" in the extreme (and historically exceptional) case that state institutions have literally ceased to exist, the state is said to have "collapsed."[73]

I accept Rotberg's performance-based definition of *failure* in terms of the non-provision of security, which I will call *lawlessness*; and I argue that, if security provision is the relevant definitional criterion, then *all* states are "failures" to some degree, since all states contain some areas in which governmental authority is somewhat or entirely unavailing.[74] Thus, the principal distinction between failed cities and failed states corresponds to the *geographical extent* of lawlessness. This context of lawlessness is the macro-level stimulus that can provoke self-help behaviors at the individual level; lawlessness is *not* equivalent to those self-help behaviors, although the frequency of self-help behaviors can be a useful indicator of lawlessness. To understand how lawlessness is causally related to self-help behavior, we need a theory of how

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performance threshold dividing conceptually "successful" from conceptually "failed" states has the potential to change with the passage of time. The precise definitional cut-point separating failure from success is thus a moving target, which I will not attempt to hit.

[71] Robert I. Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror* (Cambridge, Mass.
Washington, D.C.: World Peace Foundation ;
Brookings Institution Press, 2003), 2, ———, *When States Fail : Causes and Consequences* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2004), 2.

[72] See Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, ———, *When States Fail : Causes and Consequences*.

[73] Rotberg, *When States Fail : Causes and Consequences*, 9.

[74] Rotberg might agree: he suggests, in passing, that the extent of state failure might plausibly be measured by "how much of its geographical expanse is genuinely controlled (especially after dark) by the official government." See ———, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, 5-6.

people learn about and react to the recession of state authority – i.e. a theory of how macro-level stimuli affect individual beliefs and behaviors.[75] To my knowledge, analysts of state failure have yet to recognize the need for such a theory (let alone propose one).[76]

Lawlessness does not lead directly to high incidences of violent criminality or other forms of self-help because average citizens do not have ways of directly observing changes in the government's will or capacity to provide security as a public good. Individuals must estimate levels of lawlessness based on an assessment of their immediate environment. The decision to engage in self-help behaviors is complicated by two factors: 1) citizens must estimate the likelihood of lawlessness based on noisy indicators of a government's future performance – e.g. crime rates, gun ownership, level of maintenance of public infrastructure; 2) investment in non-productive goods and activities – e.g. guns, smuggling – involves significant opportunity costs that will dissuade the average citizen from engaging in self-help *unless* she believes that current failures of state authority are highly likely to compound into the future.

In most cases, each citizen will view the self-help behaviors of others (whether legitimate or criminal) as evidence of the inefficacy of formal governmental institutions, since none of the self-help behaviors (characterized above) are *prima facie* benign; the result of this perception is a positive feedback loop between behaviors and beliefs about government guardianship. For example, an individual who observes increased crime or increased gun ownership in her neighborhood will downgrade her assessment of government efficacy, hence increasing her estimate of the potential payoffs from self-help. Furthermore, individual acts of self-help may prompt violent reactions: increased weapon ownership, combined with mistrust, may lead to preemptive or accidental violence of neighbor against neighbor; criminal acts may lead to violent vigilante reprisals against perpetrators. All such violence stokes the existing anticipation that government authority may no longer be availing.

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[75] Some readers may note that I have left *desires* out of the equation. At this point, I am content to treat desires as an analogue to "tastes" in economics. Tastes regarding things like levels of personal safety and levels of material gain are probably best treated as exogenous and as normally distributed within a given social unit.

[76] The closest that scholars have come to a theorization of the macro-micro connection between lawlessness and self-help is the rationalist literature on civil wars and insurgencies which models aggregate level determinants of the likelihood that groups in society will engage in violent collective action. See Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "Greed and Grievance in Civil War," *Oxford Economic Papers, New Series* 56, no. 4 (2004), James D. Fearon, "Why Do Some Civil Wars Last So Much Longer Than Others?," *Journal of Peace Research* 41, no. 3 (2004), James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, "Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War," *The American Political Science Review* 97, no. 1 (2003).

If the average citizen expects others to remain law-abiding, then she will avoid engaging in socially wasteful forms of self-help; conversely, if a citizen believes that lawlessness is impending – i.e. that a sufficient number of other citizens are likely to engage in self-help – then that citizen will also do best if she engages in self-help. Past some threshold, the *anticipation* of widespread lawlessness produces behaviors that further undermine perceptions of government efficacy, eventually leading to mass shifts into self-help behavior.[77] These dynamics imply that, with respect to self-help versus more socially optimal behaviors, societies will exhibit two possible self-enforcing equilibria: one involving general adherence to an optimal, law-abiding status-quo associated with "successful" regions, and one involving a sort of mutual defection to a sub-optimal, self-helping status-quo associated with "failed" regions.

When an exogenous shock upsets the law-abiding equilibrium, the transition to a self-helping equilibrium has both a temporal and a spatial dimension. While I have little, at this point, to say about the timing of the self-help spiral, my examination of failed cities suggests an interesting observation about state failure as a complex socio-spatial process: every state failure begins with the failure of one or two cities (perhaps as the result of spontaneous rioting or planned insurgency). In those states that truly fail, self-help behavior spreads beyond initial hot-spots and infects every major polity, sometimes even spilling over international borders (as in the case of Liberia and Sierra Leone). Yet the contagious spread of self-help is not inevitable – evidenced by the many failed cities that reside within successful states. By studying failed cities side-by-side with failed states, we may be able to gain a better understanding of why lawlessness initially emerges in some areas and not others, and why the micro-level reactions to lawlessness will spread rapidly in some settings, but remain localized in others. The more we understand about how self-help spreads, the more we can hope to say about critical points where interventions may be successful in halting the spread of socially wasteful behaviors.

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[77] In the literature, explanations for state failure, founded on the mechanism of the security dilemma, explain collapse as the result of the members of society collectively crossing a crucial "tipping point," beyond which they no longer expect others to behave in accordance with legal and social norms: "The first individuals to flout state authority lead to the prospect of an ever-accelerating self-fulfilling prophecy." In the tipping point model, it appears that individuals in society engage in Bayesian-style updating, using environmental observations to continuously re-estimate the probability that others in society will adhere to, or violate state laws and social norms. See Kasfir, "Domestic Anarchy, Security Dilemmas, and Violent Predation: Causes of Failure," 60.

One might object that I am making a mountain out of a mole hill – that self-help spreads in some states and not in others simply because some states have more infrastructural power than others. When considering the infrastructural power of governments, failed cities and failed states appear to have little in common. On the face of it, there seem to be two different kinds of "failure" at work – failures of will and failures of capacity. Failures of will are defined by leaders' conscious decisions to not utilize available government resources in a specific way at a specific time. Failures of capacity are defined by objective shortfalls of infrastructural power (in a broad, Mannean sense), referring to the government's "capacity to actually penetrate society and to implement logistically political decisions."[78] In failed cities, the presumption is that governments have the capacity to enforce order in a given locale, but lack a decisive interest in doing so (excepting a major crisis); in failed states, the presumption is that governments have an interest in enforcing order, but lack the capacity to do so.

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[78] Michael Mann, *The Sources of Social Power* (Cambridge [Cambridgeshire] ; New York: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 169-70.

Given the objection above, I would counter that the distinction between the two possible macro-level causes of “failure” – i.e. of will and of capacity – is not as strong or clear-cut as it appears in the simple exposition above. On one hand, state failure often results from complex interactions between a government’s interests and its infrastructural power: governments lacking the will to enforce order may gradually surrender the capacity to do so; governments lacking adequate capacity to enforce order may lose the will to do so following failed attempts. On the other hand, while little is known about the causes of city failure, we should not assume that bad neighborhoods are geographically limited in scope because governments actively keep them that way. Presumably governments would entirely eliminate such lawless areas if they could. At the neighborhood level, failures of government will and failures of government capacity produce observationally equivalent results in terms of apparent lawlessness – we cannot jump to conclusions about the role of state infrastructural power.[79]

III. Macro-Level Effects – Informal Order and Anti-Statism

In the short term, the process of unraveling order is self-exacerbating as individuals’ behaviors produce positive feedback loops, undermining perceived government efficacy; however, in the middle or long term, Hobbesian chaos is not a stable outcome. The well-armed and well-organized members of society use their power to promulgate and enforce informal justice. Doornbos, and Milliken and Krauss have suggested that the processes typically characterized as state “failure” might be better understood as crucial steps toward state (re)formation; given the political space created by the recession of formal governmental authority, informal social order arises spontaneously, generating new forms of potentially legitimate political order.[80] Menkhaus cites Somalia as a prime example of the fact that "in some places and at some times communities, towns, and regions can enjoy relatively high levels of peace, reconciliation, security and lawfulness despite the absence of central authority."[81]

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[79] Richard Curtis’s work suggests that variations in inner-city lawlessness cannot be explained with reference to variations in law enforcement techniques and other indicators of state infrastructural power. See Richard Curtis, "The Improbable Transformation of Inner-City Neighborhoods: Crime, Violence, Drugs, and Youth in the 1990s," *The Journal of Criminal Law and Criminology (1973-)* 88, no. 4 (1998).

Menkhaus's observations suggest that the presence of formal state authority is neither a necessary nor a sufficient condition to guarantee socially optimal behaviors at the individual level. In Somalia, since the early 1990s, people have responded to long-term collapse by foregoing wasteful self-help behaviors in favor of reliance on the authority of traditional elders and the justice of Muslim *sharia* courts.[82] In the 21st Century, the greatest sources of disorder in Somalia have been attempts by the international community to reinstall a central state apparatus. Menkhaus explains: "For Somalis, the state is an instrument of accumulation and domination, enriching and empowering those who control it and exploiting and oppressing the rest."[83]

Antipathy toward the state apparatus becomes the dominant feature of such locally ordered systems of authority. Both average 'citizens' (more like vassals) and the warlords or clan-leaders who govern territorial fiefdoms enjoy the peaceful, relatively efficient status-quo that results from grass-roots governance. These individuals may oppose the re-imposition of state authority either because they are simply risk-averse or because they make their living through transactions that a central government would deem illegal and would be likely to prosecute.[84] My sampling of the literature on gangs and drug-lords suggests that, within failed cities, many key actors are antipathetic towards state authority. Guillermo O'Donnell has investigated numerous “brown areas” that host “subnational systems of power,” where warlords, mafias and gangs create territorial fiefdoms, and promulgate and enforce informal rules that form the basis for ordered, yet un*governed* social interactions.[85] In the Latin American context (O’Donnell’s focus), evidence in some cases suggests that local politicians have generated, or at least perpetuated, brown areas through rent-generating policies aimed at manipulating national political outcomes. For example, “in Argentina and Brazil, legislators from these ‘brown’ areas have shown a keen interest…in dominating the legislative committees that appoint federal judges in those same regions—surely an effective way of removing their fiefs from the reach of the legal state.”[86]

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[80] See Martin Doornbos, "State Collapse and Fresh Starts: Some Critical Reflections," *Development and Change* 33, no. 5 (2002), Jennifer Milliken and Keith Krause, "State Failure, State Collapse, and State Reconstruction: Concepts, Lessons and Strategies," *Development and Change* 33, no. 5 (2002).
[81] Menkhaus, "State Collapse in Somalia: Second Thoughts," 407.
[82] See Ibid.: 409.
[83] Ibid.
[84] See Ibid.: 417.

The long-term macro-level consequences of self-help behaviors are only beginning to be systematically observed and explained.[87] Data and theoretical foundations are both difficult to come by. The recognition that criminologists and analysts of state failure are often studying analogous social processes presents the opportunity for theoretical knowledge and data to flow between the two hitherto estranged disciplines.

Preliminary Conclusions: Why We Care About Failed Cities and Failed States

Violence and criminality are the inefficient, tragic outcomes that draw the attention of social scientists to both failed cities and failed states; yet, the relationship between socially wasteful behaviors and government institutions deemed “failed” is not clear-cut. Making unwarranted assumptions about deterministic links between state capacity and violence in society, theorists of state failure generally jump from macro-level explanations for (or descriptions of) levels of public goods provision to conclusions about the socially inefficient micro-level behaviors that must follow.[88] These theorists fail to posit a causal process that can plausibly link macro-level changes in governance with micro-level changes in behavior. A consideration of the failed cities of the world suggests that strong central governments do not necessarily guarantee local tranquility; at the same time, evidence from collapsed states suggests that the absence of central government does not necessarily guarantee violent chaos. The relationship between the state infrastructural power, the governmental provision of public goods and actual levels of societal order is complicated; when we observe violence and criminality in society, it seldom clear, on the face of it, what exactly is "failing" or where/when exactly that failure is likely to halt.

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[85] O'Donnell, "Why the Rule of Law Matters," 41.

[86] Ibid.: 42.

[87] Timothy Raeymaekers and his Conflict Research Group at the University of Ghent are working cooperatively with international collaborators to produce the first sets of observational and theoretical studies on these topics. See Raeymaekers, "Governance without Government in 'Collapsed' African States: Project Outline."

Treated as complex social processes, "failures" can be broken into a number of smaller theoretical explicanda: 1) explaining geographical variations in state provision of public goods; 2) explaining if and when spatial variations in public goods provision induce changes in equilibrium behaviors at the individual/local level; 3) explaining how people choose among different possible self-help behaviors; 4) explaining the long-term consequences of those aggregated behaviors. At the very least, the construction of more satisfying explanations for "failures" will call us to look well beyond what central governments are or are not doing – ideally placing greater analytical emphasis spatial variations in failure and on the ways that micro-level behaviors of citizens ultimately affect the prospects of maintaining social order in neighborhoods and states.

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[88] Robert Bates recent work on state failure presents a macro-level or top-down model, explaining political disorder as a result of bad (i.e. predatory) governance. He points to three independent variables – "*level of public revenues, the rewards from predation, and the specialist's* [i.e. national leaders'] *rate of discount*" – that affect government strategies for revenue extraction which in turn affect the degree of political order (quality of governance) that a government is willing to provide. See Robert H. Bates, *When Things Fell Apart : State Failure in Late-Century Africa*, Cambridge Studies in Comparative Politics (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 20. In a similar vein, Rotberg suggests that state failure is often (always?) a result of bad governance: "leadership errors across history have destroyed states for personal gain." See Rotberg, *State Failure and State Weakness in a Time of Terror*, 22. It is clear that both authors want to explain violence and criminality as outcomes of interest, but the authors fail to posit a process connecting macro-level changes in government with micro-level changes in behavior.

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