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Anthony H. Miller

Pepperdine University, [anthony.h.miller@pepperdine.edu](mailto:anthony.h.miller@pepperdine.edu)

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## **Providing Aid to Fragile or Failed States: A Short Argument for Moderation**

Anthony Miller

**P**roviding aid to fragile or failed states has become a topic of debate that has grown increasingly contentious as the total amount of aid given around the world has increased. What lies at the bottom of this debate is the question of whether or not aid should even be distributed to states that are in danger of collapsing or states without any real form of central government. It is apparent that fragile or failed states should be the recipients of aid. However, they should not be the recipient of monetary aid because of the potential for abuse with the lack of a structured central government. Thus, aid to fragile or failed states should be restricted to in-kind aid and technical assistance with the caveat being sustained security within the country. It is in this way that the citizens of defunct and ineffectively governed countries can be provided with the means of producing a stable society. Not providing aid to fragile or failing states is essentially dooming those states to flounder in squalor.

First, a fragile or failed state is defined as such by a number of factors. These factors can be divided into three groups social, economic, and political military. A failed state is one that fails to uphold the social order, provide basic civil services to all citizens, and the presence of external military intervention or internal strife. (Fund for Peace, 2011) From these issues, problems arise with providing aid, specifically in monetary form, to these countries. Most of these fragile or failed states that are unable fulfill their obligations to their citizens are incapable of fully exploiting aid as it is intended. One of the first issues with providing aid to fragile or failed states is how exactly aid should be applied. Aid should be applied in such a way that it cannot be abused by those in a position of power. This is generally achieved by providing in-kind assistance or technical assistance with the assurances of general security. By removing the possibility of corruption present with a liquid asset such as money, the issue now becomes the

proper distribution of goods and the assurance that they are reaching those who need them which is much easier to guarantee.

This guarantee can be provided in the form of an external security force. The Economist published an article in 2005 detailing the effectiveness of providing aid in-kind and through technical assistance. (Economist, 2005) The article implicitly states that United Nations [U.N.] security forces are a necessary portion of recovery programs in failed and fragile states. (Economist, 2005) The case of Liberia from 1989 to 2003 provides an excellent example of this point. Between 1989 and 2003, a civil war of massive proportion rocked the country. There were no less than seven political fronts/militias operating in the country at any one time. (Dennis, 2006) During this period of civil war, the only internal security available was provided by militias that were controlled by one gang lord or another who consistently fought over available resources. In order for assistance to become effective, pacification through a visible display of force was a necessary step on the way towards establishing a secure state. (Economist, 2005) Once a secure state was established, the local population was able to act and create a stable government with the resources provided by international aid. This environment for the creation of a stable government can be created with the introduction of a well-financed and internationally supported external security force such as the 15,000 U.N. peacekeepers currently stationed in Liberia.

The Economist mentions, in the example of Liberia, that militia members were provided \$300 for education or vocational training. (Economist, 2005) This money was provided at great risk as there are few guarantees that the money will be spent on education or vocational training. In addition to this, donors who provided monetary aid to governments considered fragile, many of which are located in sub-Saharan Africa, are considered some of the most corrupt countries at their income level in the world. (Sachs, 2006) In addition to this, another more specific example of misdirected monetary aid within a fragile country was found in Uganda. A mere 16 cents of every dollar provided to the country for the purpose of education actually reached its intended target. (Reinikka and Svensson, 2004) This illustrates clearly a primary problem with distributing monetary aid to a corrupt central government. This lost money can be later used to stifle citizen driven economic growth by the support it provides for corrupt governance. With this in mind it begs the question whether or not direct, small amounts of monetary aid are most effective way of providing aid once the situation in failing countries has deteriorated to violence?

This is not to mean that aid, specifically monetary aid should not be given to countries but rather it must be delivered intelligently and with purpose.

Another reason for providing aid to fragile or failed states is that the extension of aid provides the means for broad based economic growth. (Sachs, 2006) However, in many cases fragile states that have received monetary aid have continued to flounder and have failed to achieve any real milestones. (Reynal-Querol, 2009) Reynal-Querol states in a survey that aid distributed to fragile states, (as determined by the World Bank) is commonly abused and is ineffectual on the whole. This is attributed to the lack of security presence in many of these countries and it was determined that much of the donor resources may have been more effective in assisting sustained security in the country rather than applied towards projects or goals. (Reynal-Querol, 2009) However, while this survey found that aid provided to fragile states seemed to be largely ineffective it states that much of this aid was provided with the absence of proper security within the country. It is reasonable to use the cases of Liberia and as an example for the possible benefits of aid with the presence of sustained security. (Economist, 2005)

Providing aid to fragile or failed states is a complicated issue. This is in evidence by the distinction I have drawn between monetary aid, technical assistance, and in-kind aid. For any of these aid types to be effective in these states, though, there must be an established security presence within the country. In this way it is assured that aid provided is used according to the wills of both the donors and the people of the recipient nation. Liberia is a particularly good case for the benefits of providing aid to a failed state while it is still in governmental transition. Opponents to providing aid often cite the levels of corruption within recipient countries as reasons to not provide aid but that can be dealt with. The recipient country as a failed state has lost the ability to provide the basic social services for its citizens; thus the citizens themselves need to be addressed and taught with in-kind and technical assistance. It is in this way that aid, with proper security, can be effectively disbursed to the people of a failed state rather than to its ineffectual or non-present government.

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