NEW WORLD DISORDER

The Return of the “Old Normal”
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Once again, as before the age of the European empires, political order has become weak in much of the world.

Ever since Europeans used their superior technology to colonize virtually the entire world between the 16th and early 20th centuries, power on a more or less global scale has been concentrated in the hands of the state. Of course, large swathes of territory always remained beyond the reaches of weak states and para-states, like the feudatory domains of Indian maharajas and the lightly governed colonies in which the colonizer focused mainly on securing areas of European residency and resource exploitation. Postcolonial states were similarly weak, often only existing on paper outside capitals and key districts even if they were able to forge enough of a political settlement to sustain the fiction that they genuinely ruled everywhere. Still, non-state actors have usually been limited in their ability to directly, let alone successfully, challenge national or colonial authority—which is why the occasional exception, like the Mahdi rebellion in the Sudan in the 1880s and 1890s, and the Pashtun tribes in parts of Pakistan, stand out so much.

But today non-state groups from ISIS to transnational crime syndicates—aided to some extent unwittingly by a de-nationalized Davoisie jet-set of wealthy individuals and their assorted court jesters—deploy an assortment of tactics and new technologies that strengthen their power to organize, mobilize, fight, and wield influence. As a variety non-state actors grows stronger, more states are either failing or losing the capacity to fully control their territory.

All this is by now well known, not least because scores of scholars, secular prophets, and lesser pundits have been predicting the decline or demise of the state in one form or another for more than a century. Such predictions have repeatedly come up short, with the state demonstrating more staying power than expected. But four trends have picked up steam in recent years, suggesting that such predictions were not wrong, just premature and to a certain extent focused too narrowly on certain parts of the world.

Although all countries are affected, the trends undermining the capacities of states are most devastating to those that are already weak for structural reasons. Clearly, weak states getting weaker have contributed to the rise in violent conflict in recent years, especially in the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and parts of Asia, as militias, ethnic groups, tribes, terrorists, and warlords control increasingly large swaths of territory, or
at least deny control to central authorities. In many places, governments simply lack the capacity to counter ever more powerful non-state actors, especially when they arise in outlying areas. More than a third of the African continent, for instance, lies beyond the control of central governments. In all, close to twenty countries are now divided into pockets of weak public authority, some form of local governance, instability, chronic low-level conflict, extremist control, and lawlessness.

What is not so well known is that the world has looked a lot like this before. Conditions in many non-Western countries today resemble those that existed before the rise of colonial empires—the “old normal,” we might call it. Before the spread of British, French, Spanish, Dutch, and Portuguese rule, states and proto-states around the world often lacked firm boundaries. Large areas lay beyond their de facto grasp, tending to make power and territory more contested from within and across notional boundaries, and hence violence more common.

Nevertheless, the U.S. and most other Western governments act as if the rise of failing or partly failing states is an aberration, the implicit conclusion being that such countries can be put back together again, Humpty-Dumpty-style, with outside assistance. To a considerable extent, that is what the U.S. government’s foreign policy/national security sectors have tried to do since the end of the Cold War, believing that transforming other states into imitations of our own will conduce to greater international security and thus ultimately serve U.S. interests as the major status quo global power. But peace talks, national unity governments, peacekeeping troops, military-security training, technical advice, and elections are insufficient to build a legitimate state where none exists—and all have proved futile in places like Somalia, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Libya, Central Africa, and several other countries in the Sahel.

There is no little irony in this assumption that sovereignty can be re-strengthened from without, since the deepening Western commercial and cultural penetration of non-Western regions over the past several decades is an unintended source of much state destabilization in the first place. But that inadvertence aside, the new “old normal” isn’t going to disappear; governance and peace-building arrangements that depend on a reasonably strong central state are no longer viable in many places. A hoary assumption—that the new states that emerged out of European colonial empires in the late 1950s and 1960s would eventually find their way to legitimacy and institutional competence—has proved largely untrue. In many cases, even if capacities have gradually improved, they have not kept up with social change and the growing might of non-state actors, whose capacities have increased substantially.

The time has come to admit the unpleasant. Some non-Western sovereignties cannot be “restored” because these sovereignties never built the institutions of a Weberian state in the first place, remaining instead locked in patrimonial politics that have mitigated against the expansion of their formal state institutions. Instead, we must be willing to build on a territory’s social fabric and indigenous capacities and to develop hybrid forms of sovereignty if we are to assist these places’ return to anything like stability given current global political-technological circumstances. No other
arrangement is sustainable—especially in places like Libya where there is little appetite for foreign troops, and where the so-called international community has little desire to intervene in any meaningful way. The return of the “old normal” won’t be pretty or pleasant. But it’s inevitable, and in our own security interests we need to tackle it head on.

Four Trends

Although some countries are more vulnerable than others to shocks or stresses, most fragile states have been able to maintain “good enough” stability for extended periods since independence using a combination of patronage and repression. Regimes might come and go and not be particularly inclusive, effective, or just, but at least they kept the peace and delivered some services. With power concentrated at the center, the government had by far the strongest coercive force and a near-monopoly on media and communications. Governments may have been weak in many ways, but their opponents were generally even weaker (think northern Mali before 2012 or Nepal before the 1990s if you need examples). The latter had limited capacity to organize, arm, communicate with the general population, and contest the status quo.

But several trends are changing the balance of forces, making the more fragile states less sustainable in their current form, and more likely to tip over into instability than before. Four such trends are key, one each having to do with ideology, technology, weapons proliferation, and the larger structure of global power distribution.

New ideologies are increasing the centrifugal forces acting on states. Whereas once it was thought (at least in the West) that liberal democracy would triumph everywhere, it is now clear that other ideas are more attractive to many. Indeed, democracy and capitalism have often failed to fulfill their promises in many developing countries, at least partly because they require greater cohesion and better institutions than these states can muster. Meanwhile, new (or resurgent) ideas about identity and faith have proliferated in response to the pressures of globalization.

The backlash takes different forms in different places, but it has been highly destabilizing in countries already plagued by high levels of social fragmentation. Muslim countries are especially vulnerable because Islam often provides a transnational identity that is relatively easily to mobilize across borders. Indeed, the global spike in violent conflict is concentrated in the Middle East and surrounding territory (the Sahel, Somalia, Afghanistan) where allegiance to the state, generally weak in patrimonial societies anyway, is being supplanted by more enduring ethnic, religious, and tribal loyalties. Jihadism has spread worldwide, attracting groups (including youth) that have historically been marginalized by the exclusionary style of governance common in fragile states. Most Arab states in the post-World War II era have thus been caught in a double bind: Loyalty to the state (wataniya) has been challenged from without in the form of pan-Arabism (qawmiya) or pan-Islamism, and from within by the strong pull of primordial tribal and sometimes, in multiethnic states like Iraq, ethnic affinities.
New communications technology is empowering non-state actors and weakening national cohesion. Whereas once the state had a monopoly on media and communications, now it controls neither. The proliferation of cell phones, smartphones, new television channels, the Internet, and social media has weakened the legitimacy of many governments while promoting societal fragmentation along ideological or identity lines. Different narratives about the past, present, and future now compete with what the government says. Different loyalties—some subnational, other supranational—now compete with loyalty to the country itself. Individuals have more power to challenge ineffective governments, but weak institutions have rarely become more effective as a result; in some cases, they have actually become worse. Groups have far greater capacity to organize around a common cause and challenge authority. Whereas before they could only organize in quiet and through trusted contacts, now they can employ cellular networks and mobilize people with agility, on a scale previously unimaginable. The efficiency of non-state actors have climbed dramatically, with no discernable increase in the power of weak states.

The proliferation of weapons is weakening the state’s significant edge in using violence. Non-state actors have access to more sophisticated weapons than ever before. Some of this is due to technological change—individuals and small groups can buy cheaper weapons or even develop their own. The failure of countries such as Libya has increased supply (storage depots were pillaged), as has the entry into the weapons market of new small-arms exporters such as China. The expansion of international criminal networks has also played a role, opening new channels of supply.

The result is that non-state actors from the Levant to the Sinai to the Kivus only need cash in order to buy everything from machine guns to grenade launchers to mortars to explosives. Larger sources of income—from, among other things, illicit mining, smuggling, kidnapping, selling drugs, and taxing local people under their control—has increased their ability to pay (as well as pay off officials in their way). In addition, rising anxiety about extremist Islamist groups operating in countries with weak states has led global and regional powers to directly supply other non-state actors with weapons in places such as Syria, Iraq, and Libya in order to better fight terrorism. This could easily sire counterproductive outcomes.

An increasingly multipolar power dynamic is weakening the international response. The rise or reemergence of China, India, Russia, and regional powers such as Turkey, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and Ethiopia has produced a fragmented, divided international order with less capacity to impose its will than was the case even ten or 15 years ago. (The so-called international community was similarly divided during the Cold War, but between only two protagonists.) These new powers have their own ideas about how the international system should be run and their own interests to protect. In some cases, they directly oppose Western ideas and interests, as in Syria and Ukraine. In others, they compete with each other—and the West—to advance their aims, as in Yemen and increasingly in Africa.
At the same time, the U.S. government, and the rest of the West alongside it, has shown a growing reluctance to project force and defend the international order it created due to changing ideas at home about its role in the world coupled with perceived economic and financial weakness. European leaders have, generally speaking, been reactive bystanders as all this has happened. Even in those situations perceived to be of direct concern to them, as in Libya, they have failed to act decisively on behalf of their own security and broader interests. These dynamics are obvious as well in Syria, where the West has played a subordinate role as an array of international actors (Russia, Turkey, Saudi Arabia, Iran, and others) have aided both sides of the conflict and are collectively too divided to end it.

Although religion, ethnicity, clan, and other forms of identity play a major role in the disruption taking place, not all non-state actors are organized this way: Among the biggest beneficiaries of these trends are criminal networks that often have as much as or even more power than weak states. They are better financed, better able to leverage globalization, and not restrained by the need to uphold certain standards of governance. Drug cartels, human traffickers, computer hackers, counterfeitors, arms dealers, and others not only benefit from these trends but also actively undermining fragile state capacity around the world.

Many weak states may be gradually getting more capable as their education levels climb and organizational capacities grow, but such progress has been painfully slow in many places and nonexistent in others. Non-state actors are gaining ground faster because the above trends have augmented their ability to organize, challenge, and disrupt existing political orders. The violence that increasingly occurs as a result is thus less a reflection on changes in the states than in the non-state actors: The latter are simply shredding the illusions of power that governments have long sought to broadcast at home and abroad.

Whereas some fragile states have formal institutions that could play some sort of constructive role (for example, Colombia and Sri Lanka), others have such weak writs that non-state actors have already become nearly as or even more relevant than the state (Lebanon, Libya, Somalia). While the former group can use a differentiated form of traditional tools to promote accountability and development, the latter, most vulnerable group needs something new.

The states most at risk of partial or complete dissolution are concentrated along an arc from Central Africa to Central Asia. They include Libya, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), the Central African Republic, and many of the countries in the Levant, the Sahel, and the Greater Horn of Africa (including Yemen). Most of these places experienced colonization on the cheap for relatively short periods of time and ever since have consistently underinvested in the ingredients of state capacity—including higher education, social cohesion, and managerial skills. Colonizers made little attempt to align borders with sociopolitical realities, or to invest in state institutions except in places where they held sway for very long periods and had ambitions beyond resource extraction, as in India. Post-colonization elites and donors have rarely taken effective steps to counter the challenges such conditions brought.
The political map of the world is becoming more complex and dynamic than it has been in recent decades. Instead of being populated by countries that are easy to identify and that measure up against each other, ending with recognizable (if not always agreed upon) boundaries, it will consist of an assortment of states, non-state forms of public authority, and areas with no public authority. Some areas will have strong government, other areas weak government, and yet others no government at all save some form of local arrangement. Boundaries between these different zones are likely to be unstable in a way that recent-century mapmakers will not recognize, sometimes changing regularly as the balance of power between states or between states and non-state actors changes.

**Creative Governance Solutions from the Past**

Winston Churchill said: “The longer you can look back, the further you can see forward.” Or to put it differently: The better we understand the world before the Age of Imperialism, the better we will be able to address the challenges of fragile states in the future.

Before the expansion of European empires starting around 1700, large segments of Southeast Asia, Africa, Central Asia, and the Arabian Peninsula (and everywhere else at one time, for the history of robust government is relatively thin) were occupied either by weak states or had no states. This was the case for much the same reason that large parts of the world have fragile states today: They lacked the capacity to effectively govern much of the territory they claimed to control, or concluded that the cost of asserting control over peripheries was not worth the benefits. Incentives encouraged leaders to rule exclusively and to minimize investments in outlying areas that yielded few material advantages. Social divisions and harsh conditions meant that populations had little loyalty to the states they inhabited, especially as migration was common in many places. People moving around the globe isn’t new either.

Governments adjusted their sovereignty to fit their ability to project power. In central or easily reached areas, they exerted a high degree of control. Farther out into “the marches of empire,” they exerted much less. In West Africa, for instance, the Ashanti, who ruled for two centuries in the area around present-day Ghana, conceived of power “as a series of concentric circles . . . rippling out from a center point,” according to scholar Jeffrey Herbst. Northern Nigeria’s Sokoto Caliphate, one of the largest and most powerful empires in sub-Saharan Africa until British conquest in 1903, exercised power similarly. So did the Ottoman Empire, which allowed broad autonomy for inner Arabia and North Africa after the 18th century. Outlying regions had much autonomy in these countries; sovereignty was often divided and plural when multiple power centers could claim some role in their affairs—as, for example, in 19th-century Tunisia, which was caught between Istanbul and Paris. A similar landscape prevailed throughout the world at one point and continued in most places until Western ascendance.
States experimented with a wide variety of models and forms to maximize their effectiveness and reach and to minimize the blowback from beyond their outer limits. Power was continuously renegotiated, especially in the hinterlands. Balance was important to prevent centrifugal forces from undermining authority.

The creative strategies that regimes were forced to adopt in response to their challenges can shed light on how the weakest states today might better manage their own limitations. These included:

- Sharing power with local leaders, whether warlords, feudal lords, chiefs, religious leaders, or elders. This allowed locals maximum flexibility to manage their own affairs with little interference as long as they declared allegiance, paid taxes, didn’t disrupt trade, and didn’t pose a threat.
- Sharing power with neighbors. Although usually not articulated as a strategy, some regimes accepted forms of plural sovereignty in which two neighbors had overlapping claims but did not fight over territory; in some cases, different rights were recognized for different regimes in the same territory, as was the case every time the United States used the Monroe Doctrine to assert its rights throughout the Western Hemisphere in order to protect its own security.
- Developing national institutions that had a much more limited role than central governments do today. This meant developing mutual defense, foreign policy, a single body of law, some form of court or arbitration system, and some form of taxation, but not much more, leaving the rest to the component parts—a kind of confederacy. Leadership was often corporate such that local representatives or regional heads directly participated or rotated participation; parliaments were assemblies of representatives, not directly elected, and had relatively limited authority. Such practices used to be much more common in Europe and continue to influence Switzerland, which has long had a different system of government than its neighbors, based on cantons, shared sovereignty, and consensus about what the limited national government should do, and not do.
- Creating different arrangements for different parts of countries (instead of using a comprehensive, one-size-fits-all arrangement), depending on their strategic importance, population density, ease of reach, ease of governance, and the local or regional balance of power. Pakistan’s Northwest Frontier area constitutes an example, though it is today a cautionary example of what “light” rule can lead to in terms of security threats.
- Cordonning off areas that were hard to control or posed threats rather than seeking to project authority into them (thus, the Chinese built the Great Wall rather than seeking to extend their realm northward into the steppes).

How can governments and their international partners adapt these strategies in today’s conditions? To be sure, applying some of them would carry risks, which ideally will be taken into account when formulating the best way forward given particular contexts. If too much power is removed from central authorities, for instance, local actors may build enough of a power base so as to threaten the center or at least make
conflict more rather than less likely. But in many cases, few if any better alternatives will exist. Local and international leaders will have to accept the conditions in these places as they are, not as they prefer them to be.

Not all countries can be built from the top down, which is the current default strategy for forging peace, rebuilding states, and strengthening governance. In many cases, a more bottom-up or horizontal approach is more likely to leverage the strongest pockets of social cohesion and capable governance that currently exist.

In Libya, for example, international attempts to bring order and stability through a top-down national unity government will continue to fail if done in isolation. The country simply lacks the social cohesion and institutional capacity to establish a robust central government that can control all of its territory in the absence of an authoritarian hand. A more prudent approach would work from the bottom up, focusing on Libya’s strongest political assets: functional local governance and effective, tribal-based conflict management mechanisms. An agreement or set of agreements among the most powerful local actors would have a better chance of success, especially if top-down efforts were recalibrated to take into account the need to complement rather than supplant such efforts, and were more modest in scope.

Ideally, the two processes should be organized in such a way as to reinforce each other in a virtuous cycle. The result would be only piecemeal progress, but it would reverse the backward momentum that exists today and encourage other parts of the country to move in a similar manner. Similar dynamics based on tribes or cohesive local identity groups exist in Somalia, Yemen, and Afghanistan—and call for similar approaches.

A related strategy would be to focus efforts on a set of urban areas, which often have greater social cohesion and relatively stronger institutions than weak states. This approach might offer a better pathway forward in large, sprawling countries, such as Nigeria and the DRC, as well as in deeply divided countries such as Kenya. Such an approach would strategically employ urbanization and decentralization—which could mean federalism but does not have to—in order to launch new urban-based governance (UBG) models. Greatly empowered mayors—or district governors—would be tasked with larger portfolios, handling most facets of government in their areas. This approach has already been proven to work in Lagos, which has more power than most developing-country cities because of Nigeria’s federal structure, and which is better governed than the state as a whole.12

Countries whose governance capacity is limited and that have difficulty extending their reach to distant territories (or face substantial opposition from locals in doing so) should consider either radically decentralizing—including ceding some sovereignty to locals—or working with neighbors or international actors to co-manage parts of their territory. The center would still play a supportive role by providing some financial and technical assistance, setting minimum standards for governance, and arbitrating differences between groups. This already occurs formally in Kurdistan and the aforementioned tribal areas of Pakistan, and informally in Somalia and Burma, where local statelets manage their own affairs, as well as wherever central governments cannot maintain control over their territory without international help, such as in the
DRC, Mali, and the Central African Republic. Such an approach may be the only way to stabilize the Sahel and Horn of Africa, where non-state actors have clearly shown their strength vis-à-vis the state.

In territory where decentralization alone is insufficient because the financial and administrative cost of re-establishing any sort of formal public authority is prohibitive (such as in parts of the Sahel), governments could consider whether it is in their best interests even to try to do so. Instead, their interests may be best served by eliminating their role altogether. Locals could be left to govern themselves as long as they did not disrupt the core geography of a state. Alternatively, countries could consider whether asking neighbors (for example, Algeria, arguably the strongest state abutting the Sahel) or international actors (such as France) to formally play a long-term role might be more productive, especially if they have an equal or larger stake in stabilizing the area (for example, ensuring terrorists, secessionists, or criminals don’t use it).

Countries should also consider more creative ways of unifying disparate groups behind national governments than they do today. Instead of focusing on building governments with strong, comprehensive mandates and powerful leaders in deeply divided polities with weak institutions—which creates zero-sum struggles for power and resources—they should aim to build a weaker center with a limited remit that is dependent upon consensus (or a significant majority) to make major decisions. Rotating presidencies and executive committees that combine representatives from major groups are more likely to gain traction because more major actors would have a stake in the outcome, and the risk of exclusion is lower. Indeed, it is hard to imagine countries such as Iraq surviving as states over the long term without a truncated form of central government along these lines; states will have little legitimacy among minority groups if they do not cede control of most of the functions that matter to them. Where social bonds across groups are less tenuous—in states less broken than Iraq—more effort should be invested in strengthening social cohesion and the inclusiveness of policies in order to reduce the risk of conflict or failure.

Lastly, in a select number of cases, more flexibility regarding borders may be necessary. Places such as Syria, Somalia, and the DRC may be impossible to hold together or reassemble. Although changing borders should be done reluctantly, it should not be ruled out in the most difficult cases, or where there is a long history of suppressing a particular identity group (such as the Kurds in Iraq).

A New Framework for the Old Normal

The United States and other international actors certainly need to think more creatively. Whereas international aid helped many countries transition out of authoritarianism and conflict in the 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s, it has proved much less successful over the past decade and a half because the countries involved are much more fragile—with weaker cohesion and weaker institutions. Countries like Spain, Poland, Brazil, and even South Africa transitioned relatively seamlessly, but Iraq, Yemen, the DRC, Nepal, Afghanistan, and Nigeria have struggled. More and more states are at risk of dissolution or weakening into something almost irrelevant for large
portions of their populations and territories. Yet the major Western state powers continue to approach these places with strategies based heavily on promoting democracy and strengthening state governance at the national level—neither of which can stabilize these places given their existing structural conditions.

The new era requires a framework that recognizes explicitly that the “old normal” is here to stay. Even though the world is a much different place than it was centuries ago before the era of European imperialism, the strategies outlined above can inform creative governance concepts that can help better stabilize today’s weak states.

This framework should begin with cooperation, both among the world’s leading states and between them and regional powers. The more international actors line up behind a single strategy, the more likely political order can be reestablished. This may require agreements not to undermine each other’s authority at home and to take into account each other’s interests in some regions abroad. The result may be much less than ideal at times—such as when it requires accepting that the Assads will stay in power in Damascus—but such actions will ultimately advance American interests by advancing a broader regional stability.

Cooperation should occur in a range of spheres. International actors should: invest in regional organizations, which in many cases are better placed to address the myriad problems of weak states, but which rarely have the capacity and resources to do so; make greater use of jointly managed or externally anchored institutions such as the CFA Franc in parts of Africa (co-managed by France and its former colonies), the International Commission Against Impunity in Guatemala (sponsored by the United Nations), and the various mechanisms used by the European Union to upgrade the institutions of prospective members; approach a number of strategically important countries (for example, Egypt, Ethiopia, and Nigeria) for long-term partnerships that aim to strengthen their stability, institutions, inclusiveness, and economic dynamism, so that they might anchor their regions and thus provide some form of positive spillover to weaker neighbors; invest heavily in assessing and understanding the structural constraints and dynamics of fragile states such that policy much better reflects context than is often the case today; and invest more in developing the human resources and organizational capacity (for example, through universities, law schools, and governance academies) within weak states.

The U.S. government will be much better positioned to navigate this new world if it can break the habit of focusing on the central state, and come to better appreciate that the disaggregation of power is sometimes essential to stability. Partnering with local leaders based on a deeper understanding of local landscapes and actors is essential. Diplomacy, development, and defense (3D) will all need to establish more realistic goals and political strategies that recognize the importance of focusing on a wide variety of actors across a landscape instead of just those jockeying for power in capitals; that tradeoffs between competing goals (for example, political order and competitive politics) is necessary; and that progress is liable to be incremental at best.
In many cases, nascent local efforts to end conflicts and establish political order will need to be better protected from outside attempts to disrupt or capture them if they are to gain traction and grow in scale.

None of this requires a return to the large-scale interventions of the past. Instead, the U.S. government should be focused on providing low-cost, low-visibility, politically astute technical and financial assistance to promote local efforts to improve governance, reconstruction, and development. Such a mission requires that Washington reconfigure American institutions in order to better respond to complexities on the ground; shift and grow 3D resources to better understand community-level contexts; establish dedicated units in embassies to apply integrated 3D under unified leadership; develop country experts dedicated to long stays in those countries; build easily deployable teams of “special force” governance and mediation experts; create flexible financing mechanisms for non-central state actors; and improve the capacity for policy to reflect feedback from the ground.

The United States and other leading international actors ought to advance reforms with great care in fragile yet stable countries (such as Jordan and Ethiopia), which are highly vulnerable to shocks. We need a greater appreciation for the institutions that do work—no matter what form they take and how imperfect they may be at times. In these places, change that preserves stability can only happen incrementally, in ways that do not undermine or disrupt whatever system exists. Syria, for instance, was highly repressive before 2011, but it provided a decent level of public services, protected minorities, and sought to improve living standards. Regime change was always far less likely to improve the lot of the country’s citizens than efforts aimed at gradually increasing inclusiveness, economic opportunity, basic human rights, and the rule of law.\textsuperscript{15} It may be better to evaluate how states perform on measures such as these than just to look at what shapes their formal institutions take.

Cooperation and incremental change will work better in some places than in others, and will depend on the ability of locals to combine efforts and attract strategic outside assistance to combat spoilers and extremist elements in their midst. Although outsider interest will often focus on limiting spillover, prioritizing security above all else in the short term does not safeguard security for the long term; in some cases, it may do the reverse. Drones and Special Forces will never be better at reducing the problems these countries face than indigenous capacities for conflict management and governance. The goal of outsiders should be to make the investments that make the latter more effective, scalable, and sustainable.

An era in which non-state actors exercise more power than weak governments—the “old normal”—is not an aberration or “growing pains” leading to a stronger Westphalian order. Indeed, the state model may never work well in some parts of the world. The new era requires a new set of strategies and institutions if we are to minimize the adverse impact on our own security and well-being and increase the security and well-being of the people in fragile states.
The “twin” attack on the state is analyzed by Nils Gilman in “The Twin Insurgency,” *The American Interest* (July/August 2014).


See, for instance, Galip Dalay, “Kurdish Nationalism Will Shape the Region’s Future,” *Al Jazeera*, July 12, 2015.


Ibid.


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