

An Assessment of International Order: Liberal Major Powers and Fragile and Failing States*

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Abstract: Over the past 70 years the major powers have abandoned international anarchy for international order. International order, underwritten by major powers, has largely solved the problems of interstate war and conquest but struggles with fragile and failing states. In 2015 more than 60 million people were displaced by fragile and failing states. This raises questions about how and why major powers supply and under-supply elements of international order. When are major powers reliable agents of international order and can they provide a bulwark against fragile and failing states? This study finds that fragile and failing states are not always the result of domestic events and politics gone wrong. Fragile and failing states need to be understood as resulting, in part, from the degree to which states have or have not been integrated into the system of international order by major powers. Successful integration into the system of international order requires state building, which is facilitated by reliable access to capital, markets, and security. Importantly, major powers are key gatekeepers of these critical state building resources. This makes the absence, presence, and quality of hierarchy relationships between major and

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minor states central to the study of both state building and fragile and failing states.

Keywords: fragile states, international order, major powers, relational hierarchy, state building, state failure

The number of people compelled to flee their homes has increased alarmingly over the past decade. According to the UN Refugee Agency, 2015 saw 65.3 million people displaced, up from 37.5 million a decade ago (Edwards 2016). These massive movements of people are linked to the problem of fragile and failing states (Howard 2010; Iqbal & Starr 2008; Rotberg 2002). Fragile states lack the authoritative capacity to bureaucratically incorporate and service population and territory; failing states share these characteristics but also experience various types of instability.¹ Life in such states is frequently arbitrary and cruel, which explains the risks people have been willing to take in abandoning their homes for an uncertain future abroad.

An effective policy response to fragile and failing states continues to elude policymakers. The absence of a policy response (beyond accepting refugees, providing aid, and/or conducting military intervention) stems, in part, from an incomplete identification of what facilitates fragile and failing states. Conventionally, states become fragile or fail because state leaders cannot or will not adopt difficult economic

¹ Defining state failure is an ongoing debate beyond the scope of this study. However, many agree that failing states violate the basic responsibilities entailed in sovereignty as understood by Weber (1918), establishing a monopoly on the legitimate use of force over population in a territory. Herein, state failure is understood as deterioration in state legitimacy and capacity (economic and/or political) and the occurrence of domestic instability, like rebellions, adverse regime changes, genocide and politicide, and/or revolutionary or ethnic wars. For a critique of the state failure research effort see Call (2008), “The Fallacy of the ‘Failed State.’”

and political reforms associated with successful state building, like market economies and representative government. It follows that the solution to fragile and failing states lies mostly with better leadership and institutions in the afflicted state. In short, state fragility and failure is primarily understood as a domestic problem soluble only by independently initiated domestic reform. However, one problem that arises from this perspective is that the primary architects and stewards of international order, major powers, frequently escape scrutiny for their role in facilitating both state building and fragile and failing states. Adopting an international framework for fragile and failing states is less a departure and more an overdue return to recognizing the international sources of domestic politics and outcomes (Gourevitch 1978). International order is multifaceted but herein the focus is on relationships between major powers, state building, and fragile and failing states.

Major powers project massive economic, military, political, and (in cases) cultural power across the globe.² Major powers are also gatekeepers of capital, markets, and security and as such are uniquely placed to help, hinder, or ignore minor states in the system.³ This accounts, in part, for the irregular distribution of international order (Gilpin 2001).⁴ The presence *and* quality of bilateral relationships between major powers and minor states is frequently a determining factor in whether or not minor states have reliable access to critical state building resources: capital, markets, and security. By implication the absence of bilateral relationships between major powers and minor states

² Major powers are here understood to be the five permanent members of the UN Security Council: China, France, Russia, the UK, and USA.

³ Major powers determine most of the rules regarding global markets and security, making them highly relevant to the development prospects of young states in the global South.

⁴ For example, international order is relatively robust in East Asia, Western Europe, and North America (all anchored by major powers) but unravels in parts of the Middle East, sub-Saharan Africa, and other regions.

suggests many states are relatively isolated from international order and lack regular access to state building resources.⁵ This raises important questions. When are major powers reliable agents of international order and can they provide a bulwark against fragile and failing states? Relational hierarchy research suggests there are important differences in the quality of relationships authoritarian and liberal major powers establish with minor states and these differences bear directly on a minor states susceptibility to fragility and failure (Van Benthuisen 2015; Lake 2009).⁶ Employing a relational hierarchy framework of dominant and subordinate states leads to the hypothesis that liberal major powers are likely to cultivate relationships that are positive for subordinate viability.⁷ While liberal and authoritarian major powers are both capable of offering subordinate states greater access to state building resources, only liberal major powers are likely to provide further incentives and pressure for minor states to adopt reforms like democracy and market economies.⁸

The layout of this study is as follows. A brief overview of the state

⁵ This is not to say that state building cannot be achieved without having a hierarchy relationship with a major power, only that state building without such relationships is bound to be more difficult.

⁶ China-North Korea and Russia-Syria are prominent examples of authoritarian relational hierarchy that facilitate state fragility and failure respectively. For a case study analysis see Van Benthuisen (2015), "In-between anarchy and interdependence."

⁷ State viability can rest on positive or negative foundations. Positively, it can rest on the ability of the state to work in the interest of society. Negatively, it can rest on the ability of state leaders to survive in power.

⁸ Authoritarian major powers are likely to be ambivalent or hostile to subordinates that adopt political and economic reforms that deviate too far from their own preferred economic and political models, like state control of the economy and authoritarian rule. Consequently, leaders of states subordinated to authoritarian major powers are more likely to face a negative incentive structure favoring regime survival and self-aggrandizement, not liberal state building.

fragility and failure literature will identify its focus on the internal workings of states as problematic, underlining the need for adopting an international framework for this topic. Next comes a discussion on why an international framework based on major power relational hierarchy not only provides a better understanding of fragile and failing states but also better policy ideas on how to address the problem. The interventionist ideologies that provide rationales for establishing major power hierarchy relationships will also be discussed. Finally, two illustrative case studies (France–Senegal and UK–Sierra Leone) will explore the quality of state viability under liberal relational hierarchy. The purpose of the case studies is threefold: to correct for the lack of non-US relational hierarchy examples in the literature, establish a basis for comparison with authoritarian relational hierarchy, and explore the potential for variation within liberal relational hierarchy outcomes.

One Framework to Rule them All

For many researchers, to study state fragility and failure is to study the Gordian knot of domestic events and politics of younger states in the global South. Institutions, leaders, and the various efforts and events that thwart them, together, comprise the guts of the fragile and failing states research effort. Domestic frameworks provide important insights into fragile and failing states but they downplay or ignore the international context of these states, like the fact that major powers have established an international order that creates specific conditions of possibility for state building.⁹ This common oversight is perplexing as we know fragile and failing states have multiple motivating factors at *all* levels of analysis (Rotberg 2004; Carment 2003).¹⁰

⁹ Omitted variable bias is unavoidable if one treats international interactions (like major power hierarchy relationships) as merely intervening variables outside the domestic logic of fragile and failing states.

¹⁰ Carment (2003: 410) identifies three levels of state failure in need of exploration: micro (internal violent interactions and events), intermediate

The literature on fragile and failing states is much too large for a full accounting here.¹¹ Nevertheless, key findings can be highlighted that, together, provide a representative narrative of why some states struggle with fragility and failure. Domestic frameworks envision the state as a predator and society as its prey (Thies & Sorbek 2010). Three obstacles to state building help establish this predator-prey scenario. First, vulnerable states have little sense of national or civic identity to work with due to ethnic, regional, religious, and various other group divisions (Migdal 1988; Anderson 1983).¹² In the absence of a broadly shared national or civic identity social trust and popular support for state-society building projects spearheaded by elites is, frequently, limited (Goldstone 2008; Lichbach 1995; Zartman 1995). Societal divisions, in turn, create powerful incentives for political leaders to over rely on narrow but loyal bases of support. Kleptocratic and patrimonial political strategies make it possible for unpopular leaders to survive on such narrow bases of support (Bates 2008; Bueno De Mesquita et al. 2003; Clapham 2002). Finally, under these conditions the political will and institutional capacity to provide public goods like security or public health on an equitable basis can quickly vanish (Acemoglu & Robinson 2012). Confronting an alienated mass society, leaders frequently abandon state-society building and focus instead on how to survive in power. According to domestic frameworks, states become fragile and fail

(state-society relations), and macro (systemic interactions and transformations). We have little understanding of how current systemic interactions (like major power relational hierarchies) influence fragile and failing states.

¹¹ For reviews of the state fragility and failure literature see Iqbal and Starr (2015), *State Failure in the Modern World* and Di John (2008), *Conceptualizing the Causes and Consequences of Failed States*.

¹² The states most vulnerable to fragility and failure have been former colonies in the global South with borders imposed by foreign administrators focused on controlling subject populations and resources not correspondence between borders and local communities.

mostly because leaders find little incentive in making hard reforms and compromises with mass society that would curtail or end their hold on power. Such socio-political scenarios have a corrosive effect on both the quality and supply of state institutions in many younger states throughout the global South. Instead of leaders viewing institutions and institution building as mechanisms to incorporate and service population, territory, and markets they become merely a means to extract wealth and perpetuate their rule (Acemoglu & Robinson 2012). Properly functioning state institutions can even be perceived as threatening by leaders since they may ultimately facilitate the eventual establishment of alternative and more legitimate sources of state authority and power (Migdal 1988). In short, forging state society in the global South has been and remains an Augean task.

The usual suspects identified by domestic frameworks of fragile and failing states are primarily bad leaders and broken or absent state institutions. Some analysts caution major powers and other international actors against intervening in fragile and failing states as such efforts are frequently baffled by local resistance or worse, stifle local efforts to solve their own problems (Pritchett, Woolcock & Andrews 2012; Englebert & Tull 2008). It follows that the solution to the leadership and institutional deficits common in fragile and failing states lies with domestically initiated and implemented reforms that facilitate democracy and state institutions capable of overseeing markets, population, and territory. After all, consolidated democracies tend to enjoy higher levels of popular legitimacy relative to autocracies and have been less likely to struggle with state fragility and failure (Goldstone et al. 2010). Regarding institutions, states that successfully provide public goods, like health systems that reduce infant mortality rates, have also been less likely to struggle with fragility and failure (Carment, Samy & Prest 2008). The policy implications of these findings are clear: the antidote for fragile and failing states involves, at minimum, mustering the political will for liberal state building reforms. Unfortunately there are many obstacles to mustering effective political will for liberal reforms in younger states.

In principle, electoral competition and constitutional rules provide peaceful means for removing bad leaders from office, diminishing the rationale for violence in politics. Likewise, a market-based economy regulated by capable state institutions can efficiently allocate resources to society. In *practice*, building a democratic and market-based state-society are major challenges that call for nothing less than the transformation of the society in question (Fukuyama 2004; Stiglitz 2002). Unsurprisingly, such reforms are prone to push-back from various groups in society and in response half-starts, setbacks, or renegeing by leaders (Scott 1998). Recent history of democratic revolutions reinforces the idea that liberal reforms are no panacea for younger states. The Arab Spring movements against corrupt autocratic regimes helped topple Ben Ali, Qaddafi, Mubarak, and Saleh. Nevertheless, while the removal of these autocrats provided openings for democracy and markets, only one country (Tunisia) has thus far staved off state failure or a return to the illiberal (and fragile) status quo.

If the history of European state building has any insight for younger states it is that state building is a highly contingent process. In Europe state building took centuries, required political and economic centralization, and frequently fomented resistance, before mass societies began to conform to national and civil state-society (Spruyt 1994; Tilly 1992; Huntington 1968). The impetus for projects of European state building was primarily security, hence its focus on bureaucratically incorporating population for military conscription and pursuing industrial development for an independent arms industry (Gellner 1983). The significant role of security in galvanizing European state building renders the West a mostly irrelevant model for younger states (Sorenson 2001; Herbst 2000).¹³

This is a problem since it is the European state building experience

¹³ The European model of state building, spurred by rivalry and war, lacks relevance for younger states secure in their juridical and territorial sovereignty; this is especially the case for states in sub-Saharan Africa.

that has long been presented as a model for younger states to emulate. However, because early European states existed under conditions approximating international anarchy, not international order, the challenges they confronted were fundamentally different. For example, under conditions of anarchy early European states faced the prospect of foreign conquest *and* internal revolts. In this context state building was essentially a survival strategy for elites. Today, the international system can no longer accurately be described as anarchic. Declining conflict (Pinker 2011; Goldstein 2011; Mueller 2009) and growing globalism (Keohane & Nye 2000) indicate the presence of international order not anarchy. In short, the world is more peaceful than previous centuries, which means states face weaker incentives to forge state-society to survive.

Under conditions of international order, fragile and failing states are no longer tempting targets for conquest (Atzili 2011; Zacher 2001).¹⁴ On the contrary, fragile and failing states are largely secure in their juridical sovereignty even if they cannot control population and territory (Krasner 1999; Jackson 1990; Jackson & Rosberg 1982). The impetus for adopting difficult state building reforms in an environment of international order is correspondingly diminished since state survival is no longer at stake. Lacking an existential rationale for state-society building some leaders only look after themselves, institutions become extractive, and the people suffer. Thus pervasive international respect for “border fixity” helps facilitate the survival, but not development, of fragile and failing states (Atzili 2011). Such an observation suggests that fragile and failing states should be approached not as aberrations of international order but regular (if not anticipated) features of it. Nevertheless, some states overcome this negative incentive structure and

¹⁴ Fragile and failing states are, mostly, secure in their territorial borders, in part, due to the growth of a territorial integrity norm (border fixity) backed by major powers, which has made even small territorial revisions highly controversial.

embark on the uncertain task of state building. But how and why they do so is often at variance with the narrative of heroic leaders independently stitching state-society together.¹⁵ This brings us to international order, major powers, and the relational hierarchy framework.

Hierarchy and Ideology in International Order

Over the past 70 years the major powers have abandoned international anarchy for international order. Major power war, foreign conquest, and state death have all lost saliency relative to earlier eras of international relations. Instead the majority of states persistently recognize a basic set of norms regarding balance of power, diplomacy, international law, sovereignty, trade, and war (Bull 1977). Backed by major powers these (embedded) norms help instantiate international order (Ruggie 1982). Nevertheless, the transition to international order has not been without its own challenges, one of which is fragile and failing states.

In part, international order exists to the extent that the major powers want it to. In practice, international order operates somewhere in-between the extremes of anarchy and interdependence. Thus, hierarchy plays an important role in the quality and reach of international order. Unfortunately international relations theory tends towards a limited understanding of hierarchy. Indeed, hierarchy is commonly understood as merely reflecting the distribution of capabilities among major states (Mearsheimer 2001; Waltz 1979).¹⁶ However, hierarchy in international order is better understood as the number and quality of

¹⁵ A popular (but rare) example of a “heroic” leader forging state-society along (roughly) Western lines is the late Lee Kuan Yew of Singapore.

¹⁶ In realist theory, hierarchy is represented by system polarity, which envisions unipolar, bipolar, and multipolar state systems. This conception of hierarchy renders most other states incidental to the spectacle of great power politics.

relationships major states are able to cultivate with minor states in the system; not the pecking order of major powers. In this sense international order derives from the mix of coercive capabilities *and* legitimate authority necessary for major powers to establish and maintain hierarchy relationships (Phillips 2011). Adopting a relational hierarchy framework leads to the idea that major power capabilities are, by themselves, less important (and less interesting) than the quality and extent of their relationships with minor states (Lake 2009). By focusing on major–minor relationships one can better understand the nuanced role of hierarchy in international relations generally and how it connects with processes of state building and fragile and failing states in particular.

A relational hierarchy framework of international order depicts order as an incomplete and sometimes tattered tapestry of bilateral relationships. International order is incomplete insofar as not all states are engaged in hierarchy relationships with major powers. The conditions for major powers establishing hierarchy relationships with minor states can vary substantially.¹⁷ However, there are some basic conditions that make the establishment of a relational hierarchy more likely. On the demand side, there typically will be a minor state that desires to secure itself against some internal and/or external threat but struggles to do so on its own (Lake 2009: 7). On the supply side, there typically will be a major power with the desire and capability to gain influence over the economic and/or security policy of the subordinate state in question (Lake 2009: 9). Without these basic conditions the establishment of a relational hierarchy is unlikely.¹⁸

¹⁷ As the UK–Sierra Leone case study will illustrate, relational hierarchies can be established quite by accident.

¹⁸ There are, of course, likely to be many other important conditions that mitigate for and against the establishment of a relational hierarchy, like whether or not the subordinate state in question lies within the sphere of influence of a major power or is otherwise perceived to be strategically significant. However, due to the subjective nature of these conditions and for parsimony of theory I leave such elaboration to future studies.

Relational hierarchies can vary in intensity due to the relative power between dominant and subordinate states. Thus a dominant state can have a high or low capacity to influence subordinates. The relative dominance of the dominant state and autonomy of the subordinate state depends on the perceived legitimacy of the relationship as well as the ability of the dominant state to reward and punish subordinates. From the perspective of the subordinate state the prospect of lower defense burdens is typically the key benefit and rationale for ceding authority to a dominant state (Lake 2009: 11). From the dominant states perspective the benefits and rationales for providing security may range from gaining influence over subordinate policy to gaining greater regional and/or international influence and prestige. In short, perceptions of legitimacy and reciprocity, in addition to actual leverage, form much of the basis for the establishment and maintenance of hierarchy relationships.¹⁹ However, there are other possible drivers for major powers seeking hierarchy relationships that need to be explored. Simply invoking the logic of *quid pro quo* and national interest does not fully illuminate the rationale for such behavior. Instead the interventionist ideologies of the liberal major powers must be held to some account.

In the early decades of the Cold War the interventionist ideologies of the liberal major powers were in clear conflict.²⁰ France and the UK initially tried (and failed) to maintain an imperialist ideology of intervention rationalized as a mission of civilization. In contrast the USA adopted an interventionist ideology premised on “liberty” understood as making the world safe for (semi) sovereign states with open economies

¹⁹ A relational hierarchy’s reliance on legitimacy distinguishes it from bandwagoning, which relies purely on power disparities and calculations of state interest.

²⁰ In the early decades of the Cold War communist major powers also split on intervention. Initially, Russia was hesitant to intervene in Third World states, believing they had not advanced to the stage required for socialist development; China complained Russia was ceding the initiative to capitalist states (Westad 2007).

(Westad 2007).²¹ The rationale for supporting sovereign states with open economies had a lot to do with the post-WWII desire by the USA to revitalize a system of global trade in which it was well placed to dominate.²² By the end of the Cold War the interventionist ideologies of the liberal major powers had, mostly, converged on the Washington Consensus for liberal state building and ever-greater economic globalism (Harvey 2005).²³ However, the poor track record of Washington Consensus policies in younger states has not inspired strong support or emulation (Rodrik 2012; Chang 2007). Indeed Washington Consensus policies have exacerbated financial crises, inequality, unemployment, and social alienation in young countries that adopt them without modification (Stiglitz 2002).²⁴ Nevertheless, states that adopt such policies tend to have better access to critical state building resources, like capital and markets. With established trade and investment ties such

²¹ The USA is, of course, inconsistent in its support of sovereignty, particularly when used by minor states to justify economic nationalism; Iran (1953), Guatemala (1954), and Chile (1973) are prominent Cold War era examples (Forsythe 1992).

²² Global markets rely heavily on the presence of sovereign states “to render coherent (by force if necessary) the institutional and administrative arrangements (such as property rights and market laws) that underpin its functioning” (Harvey 2010: 198). In this context, maintaining colonialism meant keeping new investment outlets for excess capital (profits) closed, potentially dooming the global economy to stagnation, recession or depression.

²³ The Washington Consensus represents a package of neoliberal economic policies centered on deregulation, financial liberalization, fiscal austerity, and privatization. Such policies are conditional for states seeking access to state building resources (capital and markets) from the IMF and World Bank.

²⁴ The 1997 East Asian Financial crisis in particular saw Washington Consensus policies worsen an already serious crisis and fueled greater criticism of such policies in both the global South and North.

states frequently become attractive candidates for security ties as well, not least because liberal major powers can face domestic pressures to protect foreign investments.²⁵ Highlighting the USA as an example, Lake (2009) argues access to capital and markets is not the only advantage of relational hierarchy with a liberal major power. Such states can also benefit from sheltering under the security umbrella provided by liberal major powers. The resulting reduction in defense burdens can, potentially, free up resources for state-society building.²⁶ Furthermore, states engaged in a liberal relational hierarchy are more likely to face pressure to adopt political and economic reforms associated with greater state viability. In short, liberal major powers sometimes choose to act not only as conduits for state building resources but also as sources of pressure for democratic and market reforms. However, in the wake of the global war on terror, the interventionist ideologies of the liberal major powers have become less focused on liberal state building and economic globalism. Instead, national security has taken priority.

The end of the Cold War and the ideological competition between communist and liberal major powers erased much of the rationale for major power support for younger states. The resulting curtailment of economic and security aid from major powers was a systemic transformation that created conditions for some of today's fragile and failing states (van de Walle 2004; Ayoob 1996). In a similar fashion, the advent of the global war on terror has also had negative consequences for the viability of younger states. Since the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks fragile and failing states are not always viewed as challenges requiring state building (Tierney 2015).²⁷ On the contrary, fragile and

²⁵ This is not to suggest that security ties always follow trade and investment, security ties frequently create the conditions for trade and investment to begin.

²⁶ More pessimistically, the reduction of defense burdens that accompanies liberal relational hierarchy can also free up resources for leaders to entrench themselves in power.

failing states are frequently viewed as security threats linked to incompetent and corrupt local leaders, ideally addressed by regime change (Patrick 2011). In an academic and security environment that stresses the threat posed by fragile and failing states the idea that liberal major powers are a reliable source for resources and pressure for reforms that facilitate liberal state building cannot be accepted uncritically. The interventions of liberal major powers in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Libya warrant skepticism.

The following section explores case studies of non-US relational hierarchy, focusing on France–Senegal and UK–Sierra Leone. Relational hierarchy research is in its early stages and still focuses, almost exclusively, on US hierarchy relationships. While the US-centrism of relational hierarchy research is understandable, to the extent the USA remains the most dominant state in the system with diverse hierarchy relationships, scholars cannot ignore other hierarchy relationships indefinitely. The following case studies are exploratory and designed to bring attention to and encourage further research into other major power hierarchy relationships as they relate to state building and fragile and failing states. Focusing on France–Senegal and UK–Sierra Leone will provide a better understanding of the potential for variation within liberal relational hierarchy outcomes, establish a basis for comparison with authoritarian hierarchy relationships, and ultimately suggest alternative policy responses to fragile and failing states.

France–Senegal

The France–Senegal relational hierarchy demonstrates that it is possible to overcome a negative colonial legacy and craft a more mutual relationship. France–Senegal relations date back to the seventeenth century and are rooted in an experience of conquest and economic

²⁷ US leaders in particular have frequently expressed an aversion to nation building despite regular interventions abroad in states that could benefit from nation building.

exploitation. Nevertheless, after Senegal peacefully gained independence from France in 1960 they did not part ways. Instead France and Senegal renewed their relationship. The legitimacy of French authority in Senegal rests on enduring cultural, economic, and security ties. Culturally, Senegal remains officially French speaking, which helps unite a society comprised of multiple ethnic and linguistic groups. Economically, France remains one of Senegal's most important trading partners, largest aid donor, and foreign investor. Regarding security, France has slowly reduced its military footprint in Senegal but still provides equipment, training, troops, and planning for regional security efforts (Chafer 2013). France also benefits from the relationship. French trade and investment in Senegal is worth hundreds of millions of Euros annually and the relationship helps accentuate French influence in West Africa generally. But has the France–Senegal relational hierarchy facilitated liberal state building and greater state viability?

Despite being engaged in a relational hierarchy with a liberal major power like France, Senegal has periodically struggled with state fragility and failure. The first 20 years of Senegalese independence were highlighted by the political dominance of its first president, Leopold Sedar Senghar and his Socialist Party of Senegal (PSS).²⁸ Such a long tenure in office does not typically herald liberalization. Nevertheless, President Senghar enjoyed popular support during his two decades in power and in 1980 became the first African president to leave office voluntarily. Power transitions are frequently moments of vulnerability for younger states, where disaffected elements of society may be tempted to take advantage of an untried leadership transition process (Olsen 1993). At such switch points the presence of major power political advisors and security forces can be the difference between a peaceful

²⁸ Importantly, President Senghar and the PSS did not look to the Soviet Union for models of state building and, instead, maintained good relations with the West ensuring access to capital and markets. Also, President Senghar was not opposed to democratic development and supported the operation of a small number of opposition political parties.

transition and coup d'état. Indeed, during this time period the French military presence in Senegal was premised on its capacity to intervene in Senegal's domestic affairs, a reality all Senegalese were aware of (Chafer 2013). In this instance, Senegal's hierarchy relationship with France, arguably, contributed to stabilizing an untested leadership transition process.

In 1981 Abdou Diouf, a Senghar protégé within the PSS, took the political helm and pursued a policy of democratization. Opposition political parties were allowed to expand and contested local and national elections throughout President Diouf's 19 years in office.²⁹ However, progress towards multi-party democracy was partially eclipsed with the start of the Casamance conflict in southeast Senegal in 1982.³⁰ Indeed the low level civil war that took place between the government of Senegal and the Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance (MFDC) means that Senegal has met the criteria for state failure adopted in this study (deterioration *and* instability), despite being engaged in a hierarchy relationship with a liberal major power. While the significance of the Casamance conflict cannot be ignored, neither should it be exaggerated. Fighting was sporadic, remained limited to the isolated and sparsely populated Casamance region, and ended with a 2014 unilateral ceasefire by the MFDC. Ultimately Senegal is vulnerable to fragility and failure because it remains poor and struggles to provide basic public goods like access to clean water and education to its people. These challenges notwithstanding, Senegal has made significant liberal state building progress with French assistance.

²⁹ Under Diouf's administration the number of political parties expanded to more than a dozen, which both enhanced multiparty democracy *and* divided the opposition.

³⁰ Senegal's Casamance region is partially separated from the rest of the country by the Gambia and is home to the minority Jola community. Regional isolation, the fact that many of the inhabitants are Christian in a majority Muslim country, and perceptions that politicians in Dakar ignore the region have long alienated the Casamance population (Fall 2010).

Foremost amongst Senegal's progress has been its consistently peaceful (however long in coming) turnovers in political power.³¹ First there was the peaceful succession within the PSS party system. More significant was Senegal's presidential election of 2000, where for the first time in its history a president was selected from an opposition political party. The election victory of Abdoulaye Wade of the Senegalese Democratic Party (PDS) set an important precedent for Senegalese democracy; ballots, not bullets, would decide presidential elections. The standing of this precedent for democratic turnovers was confirmed in Senegal's 2012 presidential election, which saw another opposition political party take a turn at leadership. Macky Sall of the Alliance for the Republic (APR) took office as Senegal's fourth President during a financial crisis. Here again Senegal's hierarchy relationship with France paid dividends. In 2012 President Sall requested and was granted a French loan to shore up state finances. Later that same year, France provided approximately 100 million Euros in grants to the government of Senegal, ensuring near term financial stability (Chafer 2013). One cannot say with certainty whether or not Senegal would have experienced deteriorations in political and economic legitimacy or instability without French financial support at this time but it certainly seems plausible.

The France–Senegal relational hierarchy reinforces the idea that there are important differences between liberal and authoritarian major power hierarchy relationships. The political and security benefits provided by France to Senegal have been associated with incremental democratic reform and limited defense burdens; similar achievements are lacking in authoritarian counterparts China–North Korea and

³¹ In a region of the world where civilian leadership has been highly vulnerable to coup d'état, Senegal remains one of only a few states that have avoided such events. Besides an unsuccessful attempt in 1962 by President Senghor's Prime Minister, Mamadou Dia, Senegal has been coup free (Freedom House 2013). Incidentally, this experience probably accounts for Senegal's transition to a presidential system of government.

Russia-Syria.³² What is more, the success of the France–Senegal relational hierarchy has contributed to Senegal’s ability to play a broader stabilizing role in West Africa. Indeed, while holding the Chairmanship of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), Senegal contributed to a process that brought a peaceful resolution to a 2015 military coup in Burkina Faso. Senegal’s democratic credentials provide it legitimacy to advocate for democracy among its peers. The significance of the France–Senegal relational hierarchy is magnified when one considers that the challenges of state fragility and failure are most acute in sub-Saharan Africa. According to a popular index of state failure, the states most vulnerable to deteriorations in state legitimacy, capacity, and stability have consistently and disproportionately been in sub-Saharan Africa.³³

The France–Senegal relational hierarchy indicates that, in cases, liberal major powers can provide a bulwark against state fragility and failure. Nevertheless, France’s long imperial past means that the legitimacy and durability of its hierarchy relationships with minor states cannot be taken for granted. France walks a fine line when pressuring subordinates to adhere to democratic norms and practices. Too much pressure and France evokes its imperialist past, undermining the legitimacy and benefits of its authority.³⁴ Finally, there is also the danger

³² According to the World Bank, Senegal’s military spending has been relatively low for the past decade, approximately 1.5% of GDP. Due to the opacity of the North Korean and Syrian regimes it is difficult to identify their defense burdens. However, given North Korea’s continued pursuit of missile and nuclear weapons technology and Syria’s ongoing, as of 2016, civil war they are likely to be high.

³³ In the Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy Magazine’s 2015 Failed States rankings, half of the top 20 most vulnerable states are in sub-Saharan Africa.

³⁴ For example, in the run up to Senegal’s 2012 presidential election, President Wade tried (and failed) to alter the voting system and change the constitution in order to hand power to his son. French criticism of President

that France's newfound vulnerability to extremist attacks will lead it to overemphasize security (and neglect state building) in its relationship with Senegal and others.

UK-Sierra Leone

The UK-Sierra Leone relational hierarchy developed only recently (since 2000) and more by accident than official planning despite a relationship that dates back to the late-eighteenth century.³⁵ After Sierra Leone peacefully gained independence from the UK in 1961 the two countries did not rebuild a close relationship.³⁶ On the contrary, the UK viewed its former colony as a "non-strategic country" while Sierra Leone was, understandably, eager to realize its sovereign independence (Smille & Minear 2004). With hindsight, the absence of a hierarchy relationship with a liberal major power, like the UK, and the corresponding absence of pressure for reform and access to state building resources (like capital, markets, and security) may have contributed to the deterioration and

Wade's machinations led to a brief revitalization of local anti-imperialist passions against France even though many Senegalese also condemned Wade's actions (Freedom House 2013).

³⁵ The initial objective of the 2000 UK military intervention in Sierra Leone's civil war was limited to evacuating foreign nationals. Early operational successes coupled with a British commander willing to act before receiving official warrant led to a dramatic expansion in British goals, from securing and taking over international leadership from the UN Mission in Sierra Leone to ultimately ending the civil war and establishing a hierarchy relationship (Dorman 2009).

³⁶ Sierra Leone did not cut all ties with the UK, it joined the Commonwealth, an intergovernmental organization comprised of former territories of the British Empire that espouses democracy, human rights, and the rule of law (without enforcement mechanisms beyond expulsion) but which is perhaps better known for the Commonwealth Games, an Olympics type event held every four years.

ultimate failure of Sierra Leone in 1991. After all, liberal state building for post-colonial mass societies, under conditions of international order, has frequently overwhelmed younger states in the global South. Sierra Leone was not an exception.³⁷ Indeed, democracy in Sierra Leone succumbed to a rapid succession of military coups in the 1960s followed by two decades of one party rule, culminating in a brutal civil war from 1991 to 2002. Only after the UK military intervention in 2000 was Sierra Leone's spiral of failure arrested.

The legitimacy of UK authority in Sierra Leone rests, mostly, on the goodwill generated by its major contribution in ending Sierra Leone's long civil war. Enduring security ties have been one result of this goodwill. In an effort to ensure democracy and civilian control over Sierra Leone's armed forces the UK maintains the International Military Assistance Training Team (IMATT) outside Freetown. There are cultural ties between the two countries as well. English provides the lingua franca for Sierra Leone's government and education institutions, uniting otherwise disparate ethnic and linguistic groups. The legitimacy of UK authority is further buttressed by the fact that Sierra Leone typically receives more aid, per capita, from the UK than any other African state (Pickering 2011). The UK also benefits from the relationship. Indeed, the relationship enhances UK prestige as a guardian of democracy and potentially enhances its influence in Africa. These ties notwithstanding, there is still the question of whether or not the UK-Sierra Leone relational hierarchy is facilitating liberal state building and greater state viability.

The significant role played by the UK in defeating rebels of the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) undoubtedly paved the way for Sierra Leone's first competitive elections in over 30 years.³⁸ In 2002 Ahmad

³⁷ Liberal reforms call for the dispersal of state power to entrepreneurs and civil society but for postcolonial states with mass societies such groups are frequently nascent or hostile to state authority. Such was the socioeconomic context of post-independence Sierra Leone.

Tejan Kabbah of the Sierra Leone People's Party (SLPP) won elections deemed free and fair by international monitors, becoming Sierra Leone's first post-civil war democratically elected president. More significant was Sierra Leone's following election in 2007 where Ernest Bai Koroma of the All People's Party (APC) bested a challenger from the incumbent SLPP, Solomon Berewa. This election was, again, vouched for by international monitors and, importantly, had an opposition party take a turn in office. President Koroma was peacefully reelected in 2012.³⁹ Sierra Leone is still only partially free politically but one can tentatively discern democratic norms beginning to take root. As guarantor of Sierra Leone's security the UK has also helped create conditions for economic recovery. In the years following the civil war, Sierra Leone's economy put up large growth numbers transforming its wealth in commodities (diamonds in particular) from a curse to an asset (Ross 2003).⁴⁰ However two major challenges have recently raised questions about Sierra Leone's future development and stability: a slowing global economy and the Ebola crisis.

Regarding the first challenge, Sierra Leone's economy is dependent on commodity exports, and China has been by far its largest export partner. The slowdown of the global economy in the long aftermath of the Great Recession coupled with China's attempt to transition to a more consumer and service based economy represents a Scylla and Charybdis for Sierra Leone. Unfortunately, the UK-Sierra Leone relational hierarchy lacks deep economic foundations, which might otherwise help Sierra Leone weather this period of economic slowdown and uncertainty. Indeed, UK trade and investment in Sierra Leone is relatively small

³⁸ Prior to 2002, the last competitive election in Sierra Leone was in 1967.

³⁹ This third post-civil war presidential election was especially significant as it was the first organized by Sierra Leone, the previous two elections having been organized by the UN (Freedom House 2013).

⁴⁰ During Sierra Leone's long civil war the lootable nature of its diamonds provided the RUF with a reliable source of revenue to continue hostilities.

(behind China, the USA, and India), representing an area for improvement in an otherwise robust relationship. Regarding the challenge of Ebola, the UK–Sierra Leone relational hierarchy, again, paid dividends despite criticism of a slow response. The UK played a significant role in helping the government of Sierra Leone coordinate its response to the 2014 Ebola outbreak. The UK provided additional military personnel for security and medical support, funded and oversaw the construction of treatment centers, sent National Health Service (NHS) personnel and aid workers, and provided air transport and a medical ship. This support made a substantial contribution to Sierra Leone’s successful eradication of Ebola.

The UK–Sierra Leone relational hierarchy, like its France–Senegal counterpart, again reinforces the idea that there are stark differences between liberal and authoritarian relational hierarchies. The security benefits provided by the UK to Sierra Leone have created conditions conducive to democratization and economic growth; two trends notably absent in the China–North Korea and Russia–Syria relational hierarchies. The UK–Sierra Leone relational hierarchy also bolstered Sierra Leone’s ability to successfully meet the emergency crisis presented by the Ebola outbreak, placing a lid on untold negative spillover effects that could have resulted from mass panic. Ultimately, relational hierarchy with a liberal major power has facilitated the maneuvering of Sierra Leone from the status of failed state to fragile state. This is no small accomplishment given Sierra Leone’s recent history of failure and the larger pattern of state failure in sub-Saharan Africa.

The UK–Sierra Leone relational hierarchy provides more evidence that, in cases, liberal major powers can provide a meaningful bulwark against fragile and failing states. However, like France, the UK has a long imperial past that can potentially undermine the legitimacy and durability of its hierarchy relationships with minor states. In order to maintain its legitimate authority, the UK must avoid pushing too zealously for reforms. Sierra Leone remains one of the poorest countries on Earth and will require assistance for the foreseeable future if it is to

build on recent progress. Unfortunately, economic uncertainty in the aftermath of Brexit along with calls for reigning in government spending create a danger that the UK relationship with Sierra Leone will be sacrificed on an altar of fiscal austerity. Such a scenario reinforces the idea that we cannot take international order by relational hierarchy for granted. Much like younger states, international order can be fragile.

Conclusion

The preferences of the major powers help determine the reach and scope of international order. What is more, there are important differences between the contributions made by authoritarian and liberal major powers. In some cases, France and the UK have acted as agents of international order by helping vulnerable states, like Senegal and Sierra Leone, avoid the disaster of state failure. The international framework of major power relational hierarchy illustrates that states do not always fail or succeed by themselves.

State fragility and failure cannot solely be attributed to domestic events and politics gone wrong. This finding has policy implications for liberal major powers. As gatekeepers of capital, markets, and security major powers have the ability to help, hinder or ignore minor states in the system. Unfortunately, when convention holds that fragile and failing states result mostly from the incompetence and corruption of local leaders it becomes all too easy to ignore these states. After all, why commit scarce resources to a lost cause? However, when evidence indicates state building can hinge on the presence *and* quality of hierarchy relationships with liberal major powers their responsibility (and self-interest) to better address fragile and failing states becomes more difficult to ignore.

Unfortunately, the liberal major powers are frequently disinterested or hostile to suggestions that they can and should do more to help younger states navigate state building. More frustrating is the sporadic coordination and lack of sharing lessons learned that takes place between

liberal major powers in their individual efforts to address fragile and failing states. The challenges of state fragility and failure are global and cannot be met unilaterally. If liberal major powers want to roll back the number of displaced people, end regular emergency interventions abroad, and avoid the trap of becoming permanent fortresses they should reevaluate their foreign policies with minor states. This reevaluation should, at a minimum, stress expanding engagement with vulnerable states *before* they fall into spirals of failure and also recognize the need to better pool resources and work together. One might even suggest creating new international and regional organizations comprised of liberal states dedicated to an agenda of state building. Perhaps most difficult will be accepting that three decades of unmodified Washington Consensus policies have not only failed to deliver liberal state building on a global scale, they have also seriously undermined the legitimacy of the liberal major powers in the eyes of many younger states. From the perspective of 60 plus million displaced people almost any change in policy might be considered desirable if it could arrest the apparent drift in international order regarding fragile and failing states.

The international order provided by the hierarchy relationships of liberal major powers has, with exceptions, helped make the world a more peaceful and prosperous place relative to earlier eras of state history. However, this order is both incomplete and fragile. In this sense international order is not only worth advocating for—its existence and further development requires it. Such advocacy will be difficult in a post Great Recession environment where visions of future crises haunt both the global economy and international politics. Therefore in closing it is helpful to recall the idea that anarchy is ultimately what we make of it (Wendt 1992).

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