The National Security Implications of Global Poverty

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On a deserted, dusty patch of dirt outside Gulu, in northern Uganda, U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright held Charity, an angelic baby girl barely one month old. Charity had been left for dead in a ditch beside a rural road, trapped in the arms of her murdered mother and wedged between deceased family members. The brutal rebels of the Sudanese-backed Ugandan Lord's Resistance Army (LRA) had raided Charity's village and slaughtered as many as they could. Miraculously, one of Charity's siblings, her five-year-old brother, survived the assault. He had been shielded by his mother, who threw him to the ground when the shooting started and covered his little body with her own. The boy played dead until the killers moved on and then wriggled free. Hearing his infant sister crying, he pried her loose from his mother's arms and, cradling her carefully, walked for miles to the safety of a World Vision compound in Gulu.[1]

That was December 1997, when Gulu was ground zero for the LRA's reign of terror. As recently as 2006, children known as night commuters fled regularly every evening into Gulu from the bush to take refuge in ramshackle schools or hospitals. They sought safety in numbers and at least minimal protection from the Ugandan People's Defense Forces against marauding LRA rebels, who kidnapped children for conscripts and threatened them with death if they refused to kill their own.[2] Today,

millions who were displaced by the conflict remain haunted by the LRA's atrocities and vulnerable to yet more rounds of brutal violence.[3]

Despite multiple failed efforts to achieve military and negotiated solutions over the past two decades, the ongoing conflict rooted in northern Uganda has claimed at least 100,000 lives and displaced more than 1 million people.[4] Charity and her brother were victims of senseless but routine atrocities committed by and against the Acholi people, an ethnic group based in northern Uganda. The LRA's campaign of indiscriminate killing began shortly after President Yoweri Museveni took power in 1986.[5] To date, the government of Uganda has been unable to decisively defeat the LRA or negotiate an end to its insurgency of more than twenty years.[6]

Though war-torn and landlocked between East and Central Africa, Uganda is no basket case. At times it has been heralded by the World Bank as a model of economic growth and proof of the potential for economic transformation even in the toughest parts of Africa. Under President Museveni, Uganda achieved not only impressive economic growth rates but also unusual success in slowing the tide of HIV/AIDS and luring foreign investors. It remains a large and favored recipient of U.S. and European foreign assistance and a reliable regional security partner of the United States.

Uganda illustrates the potential consequences for U.S. national security of states affected by poverty, corruption, and weak institutional capacity. In Uganda, as elsewhere, poverty has helped fuel civil conflicts like those that devastated the young lives of Charity and her brother. Uganda's gross national income (GNI) per capita in 2008 was just $420, the world's fifteenth lowest.[7] The northern region, the epicenter of Uganda's civil war, has the country's highest poverty rate, highest population growth, and highest fertility levels.[8]

Uganda's internal strife has spilled over its borders, drawing in the forces of neighboring countries and contributing to the destabilization of an entire resource-rich region. Ugandan government forces have frequently raided neighboring southern Sudan in hot pursuit of the LRA, which has operated freely there and received military backing and material support from the Sudanese government in Khartoum.[9] For years, until the war in southern Sudan was halted in 2005 with the signing of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement, Uganda provided military support to Sudanese People's Liberation Army/Movement forces in their

generation-long battle for self-determination and against the religious and racial oppression of the Arab Islamist regime in the Sudanese capital of Khartoum. Meanwhile, the LRA remains active in Sudan as well as the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the Central African Republic where it is regularly responsible for mass atrocities and has joined in illegal exploitation and trade of gems, gold, and ivory.[10]

In 1998 Uganda joined neighboring Rwanda in invading the DRC, purportedly to halt uprisings from the Rwandan Hutu rebels in Congo who took refuge there after the 1994 Rwandan genocide, and from the LRA and Allied Democratic Forces (ADF), another Ugandan rebel group that was active from 1996 to 1999 and terrorized foreign tourists and Ugandans. These rebels benefited from the acquiescence, if not the active backing, of the Kinshasa government in the DRC. Once in the DRC, Uganda, like Rwanda, found the lure of lucrative minerals too great to abandon and occupied a substantial swath of that vast country for five years.[11] In 2007 oil was discovered in the Lake Albert Basin along the border between Uganda and the DRC, which further strained ties between the two countries.[12] Since early 2009, relations have begun to improve between Congo and both Uganda and Rwanda.

Like its neighbors, Uganda must contend with terrorism by Islamic extremists. On August 7, 1998, when nearly simultaneous bombs destroyed the U.S. embassies in Nairobi and Dar es Salaam, al Qaeda intended to hit a third target—the U.S. embassy in Kampala.[13] Only good luck in the form of alert border guards prevented another explosive-laden vehicle from reaching its target.

In addition, Uganda's poverty exacerbates its vulnerability to climate change and deadly disease. Although Uganda is not a significant source of greenhouse gas emissions, the effects of global climate change could increase the risk of future instability. Climatic changes that are consistent with scientific predictions of global warming—including rising temperatures, more intense rains and storms, more frequent droughts, and more erratic rainfall patterns—are already apparent in Uganda.[14] In 2007 severe floods and water logging destroyed up to 90 percent of crops in some parts of the country, leading to widespread food insecurity. Coffee, a major Ugandan export crop that employs over 500,000, is especially vulnerable to climate variations. Coffee beans could become unsuitable for export from Uganda if average annual temperatures rise by as little as 2 degrees, causing massive unemployment and intense hardship among

Uganda's small-scale coffee producers. A sharp reduction in coffee production could also intensify latent tensions in Uganda and stoke further conflict as well as extremism.

The 2007 rainfalls not only felled the coffee crop; they also contaminated protected water sources and destroyed latrines, posing a significant health risk. The World Health Organization (WHO) reported a massive increase in malaria and dysentery that year, while a new strain of the deadly Ebola virus was also discovered in December 2007.[15]

In short, the experiences of Uganda reflect the deadly consequences of poverty and strife in the world's poorest and most fragile states. They also emphasize that poverty and state weakness in faraway countries can ultimately have implications for the security of Americans.

A CHANGED SECURITY PARADIGM

Throughout the cold war period, successive U.S. administrations defined the vital national security interests of the United States in narrow strategic and geographic terms. Their aim was clear: to avert the existential threat of nuclear annihilation through deterrence and containment, and to counter Soviet and communist influences in key regions—chiefly Europe, the Middle East, and Asia. Only to the extent that superpower competition spread to more distant battlefields did the United States evince much strategic interest in parts of Africa and Latin America. Major threats were those that risked the very survival of the country, and such threats emanated almost exclusively from other states: the Soviet Union and its communist proxies. The post–cold war world is fundamentally different, and so is the nature of the threats Americans face. The Soviet Union is gone. The cold war proxy wars fought across the globe have ended. The risk of nuclear annihilation is reduced, though by no means eliminated. The world is in this regard a much safer place.

Yet it is still a dangerous world. It is more complex and less predictable. Real threats persist, but their origins and consequences are more diffuse. Fewer of the principal threats to U.S. national security today are existential in the cold war sense, with the crucial exception of nuclear terrorism. Furthermore, fewer derive primarily from nation-states.

In today's world, risks to U.S. national security extend well beyond a handful of hostile states. Foremost among them are transnational security threats that, by definition, are not limited to any individual state.

They include terrorism, weapons proliferation, the global economic crisis, conflict, infectious disease, international crime and narcotics flows, climate change, and environmental degradation. These transnational phenomena can threaten U.S. national security because they have the potential to kill significant numbers of Americans—whether swiftly or over an extended period of time.

With the advent of globalization and the rapid international movement of people, goods, funds, and information, transnational security threats can arise from and spread with dangerous speed to any part of the planet. They can emerge from remote regions and poor, weak states, turning them into potentially high-risk zones that may eventually, often indirectly, pose significant risks to distant peoples. In 2008 alone, more than 900 million travelers crossed an international border each day.[16] Over the past four decades, total seaborne trade more than quadrupled, reaching in excess of 8 billion tons in 2007.[17] The risk that weak states will inadvertently function as incubators of transnational security threats to their own people as well as to others becomes exponentially magnified in a highly interconnected world.

Such threats can potentially take various forms: a mutated, highly contagious and deadly flu virus that jumps from animals to humans, and from human to human, in Cambodia or Cameroon; a case of deadly hemorrhagic Marburg fever unwittingly contracted by a U.S. expatriate in Angola who returns to Houston on an oil company charter; terrorist cell attacks on a U.S. navy vessel in Yemen or Djibouti; the theft of biological or nuclear materials from poorly secured facilities in some forty countries around the world;[18] narcotics traffickers in Tajikistan and criminal syndicates from Nigeria; or flooding and other effects of global warming, exacerbated by extensive deforestation, in the Amazon and Congo River basins. Dangerous spillovers from fragile states could result in major damage to the global economy. In a worst-case scenario, millions of lives could be lost.

THE THREAT OF GLOBAL POVERTY

When Americans see televised images of bone-thin children with distended bellies, typically their humanitarian instincts take over. Few look at such footage and perceive a threat that could destroy their way of life. Yet global poverty is not solely a humanitarian concern. Over

the long term, it can threaten U.S. national security. Poverty erodes a state's capacity to prevent the spread of disease and protect forests and watersheds. It creates conditions conducive to transnational criminal and terrorist activity, luring desperate individuals into recruitment and, more significant, undermining the state's ability to prevent and counter those violent threats. Poverty can also give rise to tensions that can erupt into full-blown civil conflict, further taxing the state and allowing transnational predators greater freedom of action. In the twenty-first century, poverty is an important driver of transnational threats.

Americans can no longer realistically hope to erect the proverbial glass dome over their homeland and live safely isolated from the killers—human or otherwise—that plague poorer countries. Al Qaeda has had training camps in conflict-ridden Sudan, Somalia, and Afghanistan and a presence in the diamond markets of Sierra Leone and Liberia.[19] A global pandemic or a mutated, deadly virus causing human-to-human contagion could also have an alarming impact.[20]

Low-income states tend to be fragile and in poor control of their territory and resources. Ill-equipped and poorly trained immigration and customs officials along with weak police, military, judiciary, and financial systems create vacuums readily invaded by transnational predators. Conflict, difficult terrain, and corruption render such states even more vulnerable. Terrorist groups are able to raise funds through tactical alliances with transnational criminal syndicates, smugglers, and pirates operating in lawless zones, from the Somali coast and Central Asia to the triborder region of South America. Not surprisingly, the human pawns drawn into global criminal enterprises—the narcotics couriers, sex slaves, and petty thieves—frequently come from the ranks of the unemployed or desperately poor. Transnational crime syndicates reap billions each year from illicit trafficking in humans, drugs, weapons, hazardous waste, and endangered species—all of which reach American shores.

Conflict

Among the most significant consequences of country-level poverty is a heightened risk of conflict. Poor countries are much more likely than rich ones to experience civil war. Their average gross domestic product (GDP) per capita is usually less than half that of countries free of conflict.[21] Indeed, per capita GDP is known to have a statistically significant relationship to the likelihood of civil war.[22] Economic decline heightens

the risk even further.[23] The link between poverty and conflict, an area of rare scholarly consensus, is probably the most robust finding in the econometric literature on conflict.[24]

Put simply, increasing a country's GDP—without changing other important factors such as the degree of democratization or number of ethnic groups—reduces the chance of civil war in that country. An otherwise "average" country with $250 GDP per capita has a 15 percent risk of experiencing a civil war in the next five years, whereas for a country with per capita GDP of $5,000, the risk of civil war drops to less than 1 percent over the same period.[25] Other poverty-related factors that foment conflict include shrinking economic growth, low levels of education, and high child mortality rates.

Poverty also helps perpetuate the fighting and once a conflict has ended may increase the likelihood that war will recur.[26] This was the case in East Timor, where violence resumed in 2006, displacing an estimated 150,000 and necessitating the redeployment of UN forces, and in 2008 when an attempt was made on President José Ramos-Horta's life.[27] Since then, the security situation has improved. Ten years into the postconflict period, however, poverty remains high, unemployment is still rampant, and GDP growth has languished.[28] In 2009 half the country's population lived below the poverty line, compared with 36 percent in 2001.[29] Despite substantial inflows of international aid, East Timor's child mortality rate remains among the highest in the world, and unemployment hits nearly half the young people in urban areas, now a cauldron of disaffected youth.[30] Unless East Timor's economy improves and poverty is reduced, peace and stability will be difficult to sustain.

Civil wars tend to be long, averaging sixteen years by one estimate.[31] Their resolution often falters: one-third later reignite.[32] The ensuing vicious cycle is termed a "conflict trap."[33] Further conflict cannot be avoided unless economic performance improves, as occurred in Mozambique, one of the world's poorest nations. After civil war ended there in 1994, GDP increased by nearly 8 percent.[34] Furthermore, gross primary school enrollment jumped from 60 percent at the end of the war to roughly full enrollment in 2005.[35] In the wake of sustained economic growth and investments in social services, rural poverty declined 16 percent from 1997 to 2003.[36] Once an epicenter of subregional conflict, Mozambique is now among the more stable societies in southern Africa.

When conflicts ignite, they function as the ultimate killer of innocents, and can destabilize entire regions (as Liberia did in West Africa, the DRC

and Darfur in Sudan), requiring costly international peacekeeping and humanitarian interventions. At the same time, conflict zones provide the optimal anarchic environment for transnational predators: Haiti and West Africa now host international criminals and drug traffickers; Afghanistan, Tajikistan, and Colombia, drug producers and smugglers; West Africa and Chechnya, weapons traffickers; and Congo, Angola, and Uganda, deadly pathogens. As conflicts in Bosnia, the Philippines, Kashmir, Afghanistan, Somalia, and Sudan have shown, war zones can provide fertile operating environments for international terrorist networks.

Terrorism

Most dangerous are conflict zones that collapse into failed states with no control over much of their territory, a classic example being Somalia. Anarchy has facilitated the operation of transnational terrorist networks, allowed Islamic extremists to grow powerful, and fueled the rise of piracy. Al Qaeda leaders have long believed Somalia could be "another Afghanistan . . . , a low-cost recruiting ground where disaffected people in a failed state would readily join its ranks."[37] Foreign jihadis operate terrorist training camps in Somalia.[38] Al Qaeda's cells in Somalia provided essential support to the perpetrators of the 1998 U.S. embassy bombings in the capitals of Kenya and Tanzania.[39] With the collapse of Siad Barre's government in 1991 and ensuing endemic violence, local militants also emerged. By December 2006, the Islamic Courts had gained control of large parts of the former Somali Republic. Although Ethiopian troops subsequently helped Somalia's Transitional Federal Government to reestablish control, the al Qaeda–linked al Shabaab movement maintains control over large swaths of southern Somalia, where al Qaeda leaders operate training bases and al Shabaab consistently threatens the fledgling transitional government in Mogadishu. Somalia's long-standing poverty and instability have also fostered piracy, now well established in the major shipping routes off the Horn of Africa.

Yet weak states need not collapse and fail before they can be exploited by terrorists. Al Qaeda has preyed on the territory, cash crops, natural resources, and financial institutions of low-income but somewhat more stable states, from Senegal to Yemen. Militants have exploited poor immigration, security, and financial controls to plan and carry out terrorist operations in Kenya, Tanzania, and Indonesia. Al Qaeda operatives have been detained in more than 100 countries worldwide.[40]

One such state is Mali. Ninety percent Muslim and a multiparty democracy since 1992, Mali remains an extremely poor state with a per capita GNI of approximately $500.[41] An estimated 36 percent of its 12 million people live on less than $2 a day, and income inequality remains high.[42] Mali's human development score is the eleventh lowest in the world.[43] Land-locked and bordering seven states—Mauritania, Algeria, Côte D'Ivoire, Guinea, Senegal, Burkina Faso, and Niger—Mali is roughly the size of Texas plus California. Malian authorities face an invigorated nomadic Tuareg rebellion in the north and have failed to expel terrorists associated with al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), formerly the Algerian-based Salafist Group for Preaching and Combat (GSPC).[44] The GSPC's leader, Amari Saifi (known as Al Para), and his associates evaded capture in the northern Malian desert for six months in 2003 before releasing thirty-two European hostages seized in southern Algeria.[45] Al Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb has been involved in numerous instances of kidnapping and killing foreign nationals in Mali and the region and utilizes Mali's centuries-old, trans-Saharan Tuareg trading routes to smuggle cigarettes and other contraband to raise cash for its terrorist operations.[46]

Mali's poverty renders it vulnerable to terrorist infiltration in another critical way. Like several poor states, Mali's government lacks the resources and institutional capacity to provide adequately for its citizens. Large numbers do not have enough to eat or access to potable water, basic medical care, or educational opportunities for their children. To fill the social services gap in Mali and elsewhere, it relies on outsiders, including extremist Wahhabist charities and mosques funded by groups in Gulf states. Wahhabists are setting up mosques across northern Mali, often right next door to the indigenous Sufi mosques, and offering what the Sufi cannot: food, clothing, medical care, schools, and the opportunity to send young men to Saudi Arabia for religious training. When those newly minted Wahhabist clerics return, they draw additional adherents to their extremist ideology.

Evidence that al Qaeda strategists deliberately target weak, poor states appears in a work titled *The Management of Savagery: The Most Critical Stage through Which the Umma Will Pass,* which the Combating Terrorism Center of the U.S. Military Academy at West Point calls "one of the most recent and significant" extremist strategic texts.[47] In it, author Abu Bakr Naji outlines the successive stages in establishing an Islamic caliphate. A key stage, what he calls "the management of savagery,"

consists of laying the foundation, which entails bringing order, security, and Islamic sharia rule to formerly chaotic states—those of first "priority" being "Jordan, the countries of the Maghrib, Nigeria, Pakistan, and the countries of the Haramayn and the Yemen." The "common links between states in which the regions of savagery can come into being" include "the weakness of the ruling regime and the weakness of the centralization of its power in the peripheries of the borders of its state and sometimes in internal regions, particularly those that are over-crowded" and "the presence of jihadi, Islamic expansion being propagated in these regions."[48] Similarly, an article in *Sada al-Jihad*, an online extremist magazine, cites the weakness of Africa's states and pervasive corruption as an advantage, making them an easier place to operate than "in other countries which have effective security, intelligence and military capacities."[49] Africa's poverty and social conditions, it states, "will enable the mujahadeen to provide some finance and welfare, thus, posting there some of their influential operatives."

Disease

Compounding their vulnerability to terrorism, poor weak states typically lack a substantial capacity to monitor and control emerging disease pandemics. Poverty not only increases the risk of human exposure to deadly pathogens but also severely constrains a state's capacity to prevent, detect, and treat disease outbreaks or to contain them before they spread abroad. The WHO notes that although the world has made great strides in reducing child mortality since 1975, "the rate of decline in under-five mortality rates has been much slower in low-income countries as a whole than in the richer countries." The challenges to improving health standards and life expectancy are greatest in the poorest countries, which "were among those with the lowest life expectancy at birth in 1975 and have experienced minimal increases since then."[50] Of the roughly thirty new infectious diseases that have emerged globally over the past three decades, many (such as SARS, West Nile virus, HIV/AIDS, Hepatitis C, and H5N1 avian flu virus) originated in poor countries that had a rudimentary disease-surveillance capability. In the United States, the incidence of some infectious diseases has been on the rise since 1990, and influenza and pneumonia remain major causes of death.[51]

Population pressure impels poor people seeking arable land, firewood, and water to move deeper into previously uninhabited areas, increasing

the risk of exposure to animal-borne or zoonotic diseases. Moreover, many live in close proximity to their livestock, at times a dangerous source of sustenance and income. Some deadly diseases of chickens and pigs, including pandemic influenza, are known to jump from animal to human. With the mortality rates of current strains exceeding 50 percent, a mutated avian flu (H5N1) virus of equal virulence that becomes readily transmissible from human to human could kill tens of millions worldwide. Since 2003 the H5N1 virus has been confirmed in 417 humans and has resulted in 257 deaths in some of the most impoverished, remote, and poorly governed parts of Asia and Africa (notably Nigeria, Sudan, Côte D'Ivoire, Niger, Burkina Faso, Myanmar, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam, and Indonesia), adding to the fear of possible mutation following contact between animals and humans.[52] If a deadly mutation first occurs in a country with weak health care infrastructure, the odds of detecting and swiftly containing the outbreak are reduced.

The DRC is one of several epicenters of disease. In 1976 Congo experienced its first known outbreak of hemorrhagic Ebola fever, which the WHO characterizes as "one of the most virulent diseases known to mankind." The fatality rate was roughly 90 percent. Outbreaks continue to occur periodically, the most recent in 2009 resulting in fifteen documented fatalities.[53] An Ebola strain that first emerged in the DRC spread to Gabon, Uganda, and South Africa. Ebola has the potential to travel anywhere in the world because it is highly transmissible by contact with bodily fluids (including blood, sweat, and saliva) and has an incubation period of two to twenty-one days.[54]

The DRC is ill equipped to detect, treat, and contain disease. Its population is extremely vulnerable (nearly one-third of children are underweight, almost half of deaths among children under age five are caused by malnutrition, and children under five suffer a 13 percent mortality rate).[55] The DRC's per capita expenditure on the health sector is the one of the lowest in the world ($26 per person).[56] The continuing conflict in eastern Congo and the presence of over 18,000 UN peacekeepers increases the possibility that foreign military, police, or aid workers could contract infectious agents and transport them abroad.[57] A June 2006 outbreak of pneumonic plague in the violent Ituri region sickened 144 people and killed 22.[58] If detected early enough, antibiotics can treat the disease, which is contracted through contact with infected rodents or fleas or transmitted by airborne bacteria. However, DRC's

poor surveillance and control mechanisms make early treatment less likely, particularly since violence impedes the access of international health workers.

While Ebola and the similar Marburg virus have not spread beyond Africa, other new or reemergent infectious diseases have. These include polio, which was almost eradicated until it spread from northern Nigeria to Indonesia in 2004–05. The West Nile virus, a potentially deadly mosquito-borne disease that originated in Uganda, reached New York City in 1999 (presumably by aircraft) and is now found throughout the continental United States. Rift Valley fever, which can cause blindness and, rarely, death, spread from East Africa to Yemen and Saudi Arabia in 2000, infecting hundreds. Lassa hemorrhagic fever, endemic in West Africa, particularly in the Mano River region, infects an estimated 300,000–500,000 people each year with flu-like symptoms and results in 5,000 deaths.[59] Fatality rates can reach 15–20 percent, especially among hospital patients, where human-to-human transmission can occur via blood or human secretions. Several fatal cases have occurred among UN peacekeepers deployed to Liberia and Sierra Leone.[60] An estimated twenty cases of Lassa fever have been reported outside of Africa, one victim being an American businessman who perished upon return to the United States. Before he died, he came into direct contact with 188 people in this country during the time his fever was believed to be contagious. Although none of them died, this demonstrates how quickly diseases can spread from remote regions to the United States.[61]

Inadequate health care infrastructure hampers disease detection and containment not only in Africa but also in the poorest states around the world. Among these, Bangladesh has made important gains in some aspects of its social infrastructure but still spends relatively little per capita on health (about $12 in 2006, less than half of Burkina Faso's expenditure).[62] The health sector's lack of capacity may have hampered the investigation of five outbreaks of the Nipah virus in Bangladesh in 2004, which first appeared in Malaysia in 1999 and has resulted in fatality rates as high as 50 percent.[63] The virus is not known to have spread from Bangladesh, though it is fairly contagious and has a relatively long incubation period.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, mosquito-borne dengue fever, including the deadly hemorrhagic variety, is resurgent, afflicting locals and foreign travelers in growing numbers. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention now deems dengue's global distribution and impact

on humans to be comparable to malaria, except in Africa. Dengue is believed to have first appeared in the Western Hemisphere in Brazil, arriving via mosquito-infested ships from Southeast Asia in the 1990s. Urbanization, population growth, and deteriorating public health infrastructure have increased the prevalence of dengue in Central and South America.[64] The Aedes mosquito, which carries the virus, is now common in parts of the U.S. South and Southwest. And as the U.S. climate warms, dengue will likely spread further within the United States.[65]

Global Climate Change

The relationship between poverty, state weakness, and global climate change is complex and mutually reinforcing. In its 2007 report, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that as sea surface temperatures continue to rise, the odds are "better than 2 to 1" that hurricanes and tropical storms "will become more intense, with larger peaks and wind speeds and more heavy precipitation."[66] In poor countries, tropical storms and hurricanes can wreak devastation on a massive scale. In May of 2008, cyclone Nargis reached peak winds of 135 miles an hour as it approached the coast of Burma, causing widespread death and destruction. The autocratic government's negligent response to the storm increased the number of deaths and injuries exponentially, and the damage from the storm was estimated at over $10 billion, an astronomical amount for a country that ranks among the world's poorest. In some towns, up to 95 percent of buildings were destroyed by the wind, rain, and storm surge, leaving broad swaths of the country looking like a "war zone."[67] The UN Food and Agriculture Organization estimates that 65 percent of the country's rice paddies were impacted and that this may have caused long-term food shortages in Burma and neighboring countries. These and other recent natural disasters are a stark reminder of the staggering loss and destruction that can befall countries lacking the will, capacity, and resources to prepare for and respond to severe climate events.

There is perhaps no better illustration of vulnerability to climate change than the small island nation of Haiti. With more than two-thirds of the labor force unemployed and an estimated 78 percent of its population living on less than $2 per day, Haiti is the poorest country in the Western Hemisphere (GNI per capita is $520, almost half of the next poorest country, Nicaragua).[68] It may also be the most vulnerable to severe storms and weather events. Lacking an alternative source of

energy, Haiti's farmers continue to cut down trees to provide fuel and to sell as charcoal; as a result, Haiti has lost more than 90 percent of its forest cover. The ground is largely incapable of absorbing rain, which triggers frequent deadly floods. In Haiti's vast slums, houses are pieced together out of corrugated tin, oil drums, wood, and cardboard and lack a foundation. These houses, so the local saying goes, "can fool the sun but they cannot fool the rain."[69] Whole communities are often washed away in the aftermath of a storm. Yet there are no regulations to prevent people—mainly the poor—from settling in precarious, low-lying areas and few efforts to prepare the population for looming storms, or to provide government relief in their aftermath. Haiti lacks even a minimal capacity to account adequately for the dead and injured.

Haiti lies just 100 miles east of Puerto Rico in an area exposed to frequent severe weather events because of weather patterns of the North Atlantic Basin. Its topography—especially its mountainous landscape—makes it especially prone to flooding and landslides. Yet in stark contrast to wealthier neighboring countries, the government in Haiti has taken few steps to protect its citizens from severe storms. When Hurricane Jeanne barreled across the Caribbean in 2004, making landfall in Puerto Rico, the Bahamas, and Florida and just skimming the eastern tip of the Dominican Republic, it caused relatively few fatalities: two dozen in the Dominican Republic, eight in Puerto Rico, and three in Florida, all of which experienced severe winds, torrential rains, and flooding. Haiti, by contrast, was never struck directly by the storm yet the peripheral heavy rain, flooding, and mudslides left over 3,000 people dead.

Poor states are also less able to cope with other likely impacts of climate change and environmental degradation. According to scientific projections, as the earth's surface temperature continues to rise, not only will storm activity increase, but some regions of the world will probably experience more severe droughts, rainfall variability, and a rise in sea level. A 2005 study by the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) suggests that the Sahel drought of the late twentieth century—which affected countries from Mauritania to Sudan—was at least in part a consequence of warming sea temperatures and climate change.[70] Current studies show that sea level is already rising, with impacts particularly severe in countries that have coastal deltas, such as Bangladesh, although the extent and rate of sea-level rise have not been precisely determined.[71] From Bangladesh to Nigeria to Tajikistan, low-income countries are no better equipped to face droughts, increased rainfall variability, or

sea-level rise than they are to cope with a tropical storm or a hurricane. Disruptive and destructive within the developing world, the consequences of such climate events are unlikely to remain confined to poor states and could have significant implications for U.S. security.

The intelligence community's 2009 annual threat assessment warns that although global warming will have severe effects on the U.S. home-land, "the most significant impact . . . will be indirect and result from climate-driven effects on many other countries."[72] Should poor states like Haiti experience more frequent or severe storms, they will be further weakened and impoverished as a result, with possible wide-scale social unrest. Humanitarian emergencies related to climate events could also prompt calls for international (including U.S.) military interventions. Severe storms, droughts, or a sudden rise in sea level because of a storm surge could create large population displacements in countries like Sudan and Bangladesh, which could in turn contribute to civil conflict and even destabilize entire regions.

THIS BOOK

Intuition suggests that pervasive poverty and stark disparities in income can breed resentment, hostility, and insecurity. Nevertheless, a signifi-cant amount of effort has been devoted to discrediting the notion that global poverty has any security consequence for Americans. This book explains how, and why, global poverty affects American national secu-rity, and why poverty alleviation must be part of U.S. strategies to tackle transnational security threats, including conflict, terrorism, disease, and climate change. Reducing poverty alone will not suffice to address these transnational threats, but efforts to combat these challenges that do not include significant poverty reduction components are unlikely to produce sustainable outcomes.

Some have downplayed the links between poverty and national secu-rity, arguing that poverty does not cause terrorism and noting that the 9/11 hijackers were mainly educated, middle-class Saudis. If poor people were prone to be terrorists, they add, then Africa not the Middle East would be the major hot bed of terrorism. In addition, it has been alleged, poor people are too busy just trying to survive to do anyone harm.

Suppose, for the sake of argument, that such remarks are correct, and that an individual's personal economic circumstances and the plight of others have nothing to do with his or her decision to engage in acts of

violence. Would that be a rational basis for concluding that global poverty has no security significance to the United States? Many would have the public believe so, but they would be mistaken.

Even if poverty at the household level did not make individuals more likely to take up arms against perceived government oppressors or to join terrorist groups, low national income and lack of employment opportunities are highly significant at the country level.[73] Poor states are often weak states that fail to meet the basic needs of many of their citizens—for food, clean water, health care, or education. Where human needs are great and service gaps persist, people tend to accept help from almost anyone willing to provide it. Sometimes help comes from multilateral or bilateral aid agencies. Sometimes it comes from secular NGOs. But in many parts of Africa and South Asia, food, clothing, schools, and health care are often provided by foreign-funded religious entities: NGOs, Christian missions, and Islamic charities or mosques. In many instances, as with the World Vision in Uganda or the Muslim Aga Khan Development Network, faith-based assistance is benign and well intended. In some cases, however, life-saving support comes only with religious, even extremist, strings attached, and potential recipients face the Hobson's choice of accepting it or suffering without.

The same poor states that cannot fulfill their core responsibilities to provide security or sustenance to their own people also sometimes fail to exercise effective sovereign control over their territory. Poor states often lack the legal, police, intelligence, and security sector capacity to control their borders and remote areas effectively, and to prevent the plundering of their natural resources. Indeed, such states pose the most immediate and deadly risks to their own citizens, including violence, corruption, and governmental neglect or abuse. Yet in a globalizing world that must contend increasingly with transnational security threats even more often than state-based threats, the consequences of poverty and state weakness can and do spill over borders into neighboring countries and to far-flung regions of the world, ultimately affecting Americans at home and America's interests abroad.

Chapter 2 of this book examines the world's poor and the relationship between poverty and state weakness. To understand how poverty is a threat, one must first determine how it impedes the capacity of states to fulfill their basic functions, which is to provide security for their populations, to deliver basic services, and to create conditions for economic growth and political participation. To develop and implement effective

strategies to break the links between poverty, state weakness, and transnational threats, one must understand why and how weak states are weak and adjust the strategies accordingly. The impact of poverty and state weakness on U.S. and global security is not simple, linear, or swift—nor are the solutions.

Chapters 3 through 6 provide in-depth assessments of the relationship between poverty, state weakness, and specific transnational threats: terrorism, civil conflict, global climate change, and disease. Each of these threats is complex in its own right, and to address them will require investments in people, technology, and institutional capacity. A question given close attention in these chapters is how poverty drives the threat or exacerbates other drivers and risks. Drawing on case studies, the authors illustrate how poverty and state weakness combine to heighten the spread of threats or impede the capacity to control them.

Chapter 7 returns to a core challenge identified in this analysis: if there is a downward spiral of poverty and state weakness, how can it be broken? The United States must embrace long-term strategies, in partnership with other countries, to counter transnational security threats. The overriding imperative of such strategies must be to strengthen the legitimacy of weak states and to increase their capacity to control their territory, fulfill the basic human needs of their people, and, above all, continue promoting sustainable democracy *and* development. But it is equally important to recognize the limitations of foreign assistance if weak states do not make a sustained commitment to national development and effective policies. This is perhaps the toughest challenge for policymakers: to find ways to target external support for development so as to produce results in states that show little commitment to responsible governance. Solving this puzzle and designing effective strategies to build the capacity of weak states and reduce poverty is a core U.S. national security imperative in the twenty-first century.

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