Panel: “State-Building and War”

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Title: Failure in Somalia: Conditions, Decisions, and Apathy That Led to a Failed State
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Christopher A. Reilly was born in Chicago, IL in 1991 but has lived practically his entire life in Decatur, IN. Upon graduating from Bellmont High School in 2010 he went to Basic Training as a member of the Indiana Army National Guard. He spent his first semester at IPFW, in the spring of 2011, as a Criminal Justice major, but switched to Education in the fall. Over the last three years several professors have made his studies in history and political science an interesting and rewarding experience. In particular, Professor James Toole helped him grow an intense interest in the study of international relations, which is where this paper got its beginning. Upon graduating in May of 2015 Christopher will have B.S. in Education, his teaching license, and will be a commissioned officer in the National Guard. He is extremely excited to continue his journey beyond his undergraduate pursuits at IPFW and hopes to return in order to earn a Master’s Degree in Educational Administration. He can’t thank his beautiful future wife, his sister, his brothers, his father, his professors, and all of his friends and family enough for the support they’ve given him over the past couple of years.

Abstract

Twenty two years after the collapse of the Somalian government, a functioning nation state has yet to appear in the east African country. Attempts were made early on by the United Nations to end suffering and restore order to the chaotic environment, but these attempts failed to produce lasting effects. This paper discusses the sociopolitical conditions within Somalia, the inability of outside actors to operate in the complex environment, and the lack of political will in the United States to continue the humanitarian mission after setbacks as well as the effect these conditions had on the overall failure that occurred. By compiling several articles that have attempted to explain the failure of the first post-Cold War intervention attempt, as well as survey statistics and news articles, this project synthesizes components of several arguments into three significant explanations. The first argument presented is that the family based social structure of Somalia was too complex an environment for the western powers to operate in, thus the attempts to enforce a western idea of order was failed from its onset. The second argument is that the military and humanitarian forces deployed into Somalia failed to cooperate in a way that would have led to a successful mission. The third and final argument this work postulates is the effect political opinion in the US had on the continuation of attempted aid operations as certain events, particularly the October 3, 1993 Battle of Mogadishu, unfolded in Somalia. As current and future historians look back on the crisis state that is Somalia, the two decade period of statelessness will be its hallmark. Had the US led attempts by the United Nations proved successful, a vastly different history may have been written in Somalia as well as other African nations that experienced great periods of suffering in the last two decades.
Bibliographical Note

Academic journal articles were the majority of sources cited in this paper for a few reasons. The first reason is that there are not many books that attempt to shed light on the operations of the United Nations in Somalia over the entire course of the intervention attempt. Because most of the events in question occurred within a small time frame approximately twenty years ago and possibly because of the confusing nature of the situation, few over-arching and in-depth attempts have been made by scholars to discern what went wrong in Somalia. At first this seemed detrimental to my research. However, the plurality of viewpoints on the matter provided several possible answers to why intervention failed. Also, connecting the dots in the similarities between those viewpoints created a sense of understanding and provided me with helpful background knowledge as well as a well-supported thesis.