

Intervention: A Failing Policy

New Delhi, 26 March 2009: Many would like to argue that weak states compel stronger neighbours or world powers to intervene in order to save it from crumbling and protect its population from severe humanitarian crisis. However, the implicit argument in such a scenario is that external intervention is the only effective solution to address state weakness. Sonali Huria challenges this premise in Special Report published recently by the Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies, New Delhi.

The report titled *Failed States & Foreign Military Intervention: The Afghanistan Imbroglia* looks at the impact of the US intervention in Afghanistan and firmly argues that America's policy towards Afghanistan has not only left it weaker and more vulnerable but is also the root cause of mass civilian casualties because of indiscriminate use of weapons like daisy cutters and cluster munitions leading to a bigger humanitarian crisis than existed earlier. Arguing against heavy handed external intervention she says, "...strengthening public institutions in weak states requires engagement with the state in question over a long period, the outcomes of which are concerned with identifying the underlying causes of conflict and setting into motion, processes of conflict resolution and peace-building to help restructure the affected state into a more stable polity."

Huria also points out that in Afghanistan's case, "state weakness" and its interplay with external intervention is not only extremely complex but ironical. "While external intervention, both overt and covert, and great power interference during the Cold War were responsible for its weakening; paradoxically, external intervention is now being touted as a 'solution' to its 'failure'," she writes.

According to Huria, Afghanistan's stability and peace depends on not only building the country's security capacity but in creating life opportunities for its people so that they may cease to be pawns in the hands of those who hunger for power and control and may become the agents of their own future. A long process, but the only way out.

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Sonali Huria's complete report - Failed States & Foreign Military Intervention: The Afghanistan Imbroglio - is available on the IPCS website www.ipcs.org.

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