

During the 1990s, the United States gradually came to recognize that failed states emerged as a new threat to international security as they could become safe havens for terrorist or criminal groups, destabilize entire regions, and also provoke humanitarian crises. This thesis starts with an analysis of the general trends in the U.S. security policy towards these states since the early 1990s. Subsequently, it focuses on the concrete case of the U.S. policy towards Somalia, probably the most typical example of a failed state. Somalia has lacked a viable central government since 1991 and is internally fragmented as a result of a struggle between various clans. In the aftermath of negative experience from a humanitarian intervention in the midst of Somali civil war, the United States disengaged from Somalia and reevaluated its approach to such interventions in general. However, with regard to the War on Terror, the U.S. focused on this country once again and supported a newly created central government in hopes that it could restore order and prevent Somalia from becoming a breeding ground for terrorists. However, the government turned unable to govern, as it was challenged by an armed resistance. The aim of this thesis is to assess the most suitable approach toward Somalia the United States should implement in order to stabilize the country, and consequently remove the threat of both terrorism and piracy.