



*Untangling the Complexity of
Fragile States*

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Her current research focuses on the intersection of constitutional order and conflict, the role of constitutional courts in securing stability in new democracies, and the effectiveness of foreign aid in promoting good governance. She holds a MALD in comparative law and development economics from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, and she is pursuing a PhD in comparative constitutional law at the University of Texas at Austin.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Fragile states present one of the thorniest challenges of our time. Threats to U.S. national security—from terrorism and the spread of violence to pandemics and narco-trafficking—increasingly emanate from fragile states, making the effort to address state fragility a critical policy challenge. A growing portion of U.S. assistance and military resources are now spent responding to conflicts and atrocities after they occur—an approach that is both costly and ineffective.¹ A strategic approach is needed to address this challenge.

Critics of more proactive measures argue that state fragility is too complex to assess—let alone to respond to—in a comprehensive way. In part, this is because scholars and policymakers have often approached the concept of fragility in competing ways and with disparate goals in mind. A first step toward a new strategic approach to fragile states will be a unified definition of fragility and a comprehensive assessment framework focused on preventing the onset of crises.

Over the past fifteen years, scholars have made significant advances in understanding fragility and the conditions that contribute to state crises. Underlying conditions—geographic, economic, institutional, and social—contribute directly to state fragility and interact with one another, creating fragility traps. Other more immediate triggering factors can tip the balance of these conditions into crisis. These triggers vary widely but can include sudden political transitions, economic shocks such as rapid shifts in commodity prices, or environmental shocks such as droughts and other natural disasters. Some countries face higher risks that such triggers will occur and, having occurred, that they will lead to a full-blown crisis.

The new administration should establish a streamlined U.S. government-wide approach to assess priority fragile states, identify local conditions and potential triggers empirically linked to the onset of state crises, and use this analysis to design and coordinate preventive action. The U.S. intelligence community produces a number of predictive early warning products, but more is needed to leverage such predictive products to spur and inform preventive action. Assessments should be completed as bilateral processes, leading toward joint action plans with well-defined target results. In addition to engaging host government policymakers, country assessments should engage other local stakeholders to the maximum extent possible.

The United States cannot provide all countries with the sustained support needed to fully address the conditions of fragility. For this reason, a new U.S. strategy toward fragile states should focus first on aiding fragile U.S. security partners.

DEFINING FRAGILITY

The proliferation of policy and research initiatives around fragile states has done much to illuminate the challenges faced by fragile states, but the varied definitions, goals, and approaches of these initiatives have also generated a certain amount of conceptual confusion.

This conceptual confusion is seen first in policy documents that define fragility in very different ways, with disparate goals in mind.ⁱⁱ On the one hand, U.S. strategic policy documents—including the National Security Strategy and the Quadrennial Defense Review—tend to define fragility in terms of the *consequences* of fragile states, such as exploitation of ungoverned territory by extremist organizations.ⁱⁱⁱ By contrast, operational documents—including U.S. military field manuals and USAID assessment frameworks^{iv} as well as some international development plans^v—tend to define state fragility primarily in terms of its *conditions*, such as illegitimate governance and an inability to deliver basic services, and its precipitating *causes* or triggers, such as economic shocks and inter-communal violence. This is telling: the strategic implications of fragile states may have driven the high-level,

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strategic policy focus on fragile states over the last fifteen years, but as the U.S. government seeks to operationalize a more proactive policy, it must also focus on the conditions and causes of fragility itself. Moving forward, the U.S. government would benefit from adopting a unified definition of fragility across agencies and policy levels to guide action.

Policy and research initiatives also vary in terms of their outcomes of concern. Studies focus on states that are “fragile,” “weak,” “failing,” or “failed” and often use these terms interchangeably.^{vi} Further, among actors primarily interested in conflict prevention, indices often conflate two types of fragile states—those at risk of conflict and those currently involved in conflict. Yet these distinctions—between fragile and already-failed states, and between states in conflict and at risk of conflict—are important for any policy that seeks to *prevent* conflict and state failure.

Finally, many academic definitions of fragility—and thus the policy definitions based on them—are descriptive rather than predictive. The Fragile States Index, for example, describes fragile states by 12 attributes that include over 100 sub-components reflecting both fragility dynamics and follow-on state-failure events such as coups and internal conflict,^{vii} meaning the index already captures and describes state-failure events and thus cannot be used to predict them. This is key: without a definition and analytical framework focused on *predicting* state crises, policy interventions cannot be systematically designed to *prevent* them.

The primary goal of a new comprehensive U.S. strategy for fragile states should be to prevent state-related crises before they occur. As a first step, policymakers need a definition of fragility that is predictive of those crises: states are fragile to the extent they are at higher risk of experiencing state-related crises. We recommend that interagency efforts to define fragility draw

on the work of the U.S. government-funded Political Instability Task Force, which gauges fragility in terms of the probability of experiencing three broad types of state crises: adverse regime changes (such as coups), civil wars, and mass atrocities.^{viii}

By adopting a shared, predictive definition of fragility, the U.S. government can create a common foundation for understanding the drivers of fragility in a country and developing a coordinated response.

UNDERSTANDING FRAGILITY

There is a growing body of empirical research and emerging consensus on the conditions that increase the fragility of states.^{ix} Jeremy Weinstein and Milan Vaishnav provide an excellent overview of this research in their chapter in the Center for Global Development book, *Short of the Goal*, identifying three categories of conditions that impact state fragility—geography, economic welfare, and institutions—to which we add a fourth category: social divisions. We summarize these as well as research from more recent sources below.^x

Geography: Mountainous terrain, which increases the feasibility of insurgency, can make states more vulnerable to crises.^{xi} Natural resource deposits, which enhance the rewards of capturing territory or control of the government, can provide incentives for non-state actors to challenge the state.^{xii} Research has found that, in recent decades, oil-producing states have been 50 percent more likely than other states to experience civil wars.^{xiii} Having neighboring states that are unstable and suffer conflicts appears to play an even greater role in increasing fragility.^{xiv} Poorly governed neighboring states provide insurgent groups a safe haven from which to operate and can lead to spillover effects such as the diffusion of violence and paramilitary groups.^{xv}

Economic Welfare: Poverty, income inequality, and sharp declines in income can increase the risk of internal conflicts.^{xvi} Pockets of poverty within countries may make individuals more vulnerable to recruitment by insurgents. The governments of poor countries may also have difficulty amassing the resources to effectively deter insurgencies.^{xvii} Relatively low integration in the global economy also has a negative effect, as this too tends to lower economic opportunities and also reduce the financial options available to states seeking to avert or manage crises.^{xviii}

Institutions: Research has demonstrated that partial democracies—which formally adopt competitive executive selection and free political competition but have deficiencies in the execution of these functions—and transitioning states undergoing substantial or rapid reforms are the most fragile states—far more so than rigid dictatorships.^{xix} Fragility can be further assessed in terms of institutional deficiencies or malfeasant political leadership that weaken the legitimacy and performance of governments.^{xx} Similarly, criminal-state collusion distorts government policies and undermines the rule of law.^{xxi} Corruption can have a particularly devastating role in undermining institutional effectiveness and legitimacy over time. Patronage-based and rent-seeking economic policies create challenges for the equitable provision of public goods and services.^{xxii}

Societal Divisions: Recent studies show that while ethnic diversity is not itself a fragility risk factor, deficits in social cohesion can become expressed dangerously in institutions that cut off

certain groups from power and resources. States that are dominated by a particular ethnic group to the exclusion and detriment of others have increased odds of state crises.^{xxiii}

In addition to directly contributing to fragility, these conditions can also interact with one another, creating fragility traps. Geographic factors—such as access to the ocean, climate for agriculture, and exposure to diseases—substantially influence incomes and opportunities for trade.^{xxiv} Geography has also influenced institutional development: colonial-era extractive institutions, some of which endure, weaken checks on state power and can undermine perceptions of legitimacy,^{xxv} and natural resource wealth can bolster and sustain authoritarian institutions in states dependent on resource rents.^{xxvi} Poverty can weaken the institutional development and effectiveness of the state. By fostering incentives for neo-patrimonial rule, poverty can also set the stage for entrenched patterns of corruption and ethnic bias.^{xxvii} A wide body of research has demonstrated the powerful and varied role of institutions in shaping economic outcomes.^{xxviii} Ethnic divisions can shape both the development of institutions and the perception of those institutions as effective and legitimate.

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Further, the potential consequences of fragility—conflict and other crises—create feedback loops that in turn negatively affect poverty, institutions, and divisions. Prolonged violent conflict tends to reduce the caliber of leadership and institutions that will shape a post-conflict setting. The entrance of weapons, destruction of livelihoods and opportunities, and hardening of grievances all increase the odds that countries will suffer new crises in the years immediately following peace.^{xxix} Coups, mass atrocities, and other political violence have equally negative effects on institutional development, leadership, and investments in human development.^{xxx}

In addition to national dynamics, it is also important to examine sub-national variations in poverty, institutions, and social divisions that can drive local conflicts, as in, for example, the persistent insurgency in the Southern Philippines and ongoing violence in Northern Nigeria. Violence spreads like an epidemic, particularly in the context of broader institutional weakness and societal fragmentation. Fortunately, recent scholarship has improved our understanding of the drivers of violence at a local level.^{xxxi}

While these longer-term, often slow-moving conditions represent the dry tinder of state fragility, other more immediate factors provide the sparks that ignite crises. Potential sparks—or triggers—vary widely but can include the death of a ruler and other sudden political transitions, contested elections, economic shocks such as rapid shifts in commodity prices, environmental shocks such as droughts and other natural disasters, crises in neighboring states, and military or governance catastrophes. While there is less empirical evidence linking specific triggers to fragility, it is clear they play a role. Triggering dynamics shift perceptions and incentives, and they can provide

openings for local actors to contest the nature and control of domestic institutions, undermining the stability of states. Because of their economic composition, political systems, or geography, some countries face higher risks that such triggers will occur and, having occurred, that they will lead to a full-blown crisis.^{xxxii}

ASSESSING FRAGILITY

The U.S. intelligence community produces a number of early warning products that assess both the long-term conditions and triggering dynamics described above. Three systems for predicting the onset of crises—the U.S. Army’s Fuzzy Analysis of Statistical Evidence, the U.S. military’s Integrated Crisis Early Warning System, and the USG-funded academic consortium now called the Political Instability Task Force—assign precise, regularly updated risk scores with a high degree of predictive accuracy. The National Intelligence Council produces a biannual Internal Instability Watchlist and an Atrocity Watchlist. Qualitative tools, including the intelligence community’s indicators assessments, examine underlying conditions and potential triggers to offer a more nuanced picture of not only the risk levels but also the specific drivers of fragility that could be addressed.^{xxxiii} While these tools can and are being used in combination to understand instability phenomena around the world, more is needed to integrate such predictive tools into a U.S. government-wide assessment framework for specific countries and to leverage these collectively to spur and inform preventive action.

A revised process for assessing the fragility of partner states will be integral to a new strategic approach. To prioritize crisis prevention in fragile states, the new administration would need to establish a streamlined analytical effort to ensure a cohesive U.S. government-wide approach to fragility.

A unified assessment process, focused on prevention, should have three core components. First, as discussed above, it should be grounded in a unified, predictive definition of fragility.

Second, country assessments should evaluate states’ fragility in terms of the conditions and potential triggers *empirically linked* to the onset of state crises.^{xxxiv} As they evaluate the quality of a country’s institutions, assessments need to carefully unpack the specific weaknesses in the country’s security, political, economic, and social institutions, as suggested by USAID’s Fragile States Strategy, distinguishing between capacity deficits and deficits in legitimacy or political will, as well as the societal underpinnings of relevant institutions.^{xxxv} These assessments should feed directly into Integrated Country Strategies, which coordinate development, diplomatic, and security engagement tools to respond to USG-wide priorities. Classified annexes of assessments should also describe risks to U.S. interests posed by the state’s fragility, ongoing U.S. efforts that could impact fragility for better or worse, and similar assessments of the engagement of other states.^{xxxvi}

Third, rather than being completed only by U.S. policymakers, country assessments should be completed as bilateral processes that fully engage local stakeholders, beginning with government counterparts but also, to the extent possible, representatives of civil society and other sectors. Ultimately, the challenge will be to partner with states to design and implement plans to reduce their fragility. For this, country ownership will be paramount. A first step toward this goal will be

to arrive at a shared assessment of the problem—both within the U.S. government and with our partners.

PRIORITIZING U.S. FRAGILE STATES ASSISTANCE

The United States cannot and should not address fragility everywhere. In some countries, the United States lacks compelling interests. In others, it lacks influence. Instead, a U.S. strategy should target fragile security partners: countries that receive significant security assistance,^{xxxvii} exhibit significant levels of fragility, and are not actively engaged in major internal conflict. In these countries, crisis prevention should be a core goal of U.S. foreign policy.

Table 1 presents an illustrative list of 15 potential target countries, though more could be added.^{xxxviii} Most of these countries have not qualified for Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) compacts due to corruption, deficits in governance, or, in a few cases, income levels that exceed the MCC qualifying thresholds. Several of those that have qualified, particularly those receiving higher levels of security assistance like Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, did not move beyond the threshold country phase as they were unable or unwilling to undertake necessary reforms.

We recognize that most countries will not wish to self-identify as fragile. However, the United States has historically overcome that obstacle by creating new communities of partnership, including most recently the Alliance for Prosperity in Central America. A similar model might be possible in this case: an Alliance for Peace and Security.

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Table 1. Prospective Partner Countries under a New Comprehensive Strategy for Fragile States

Country	Total Estimated Security Engagement^{xxxix}	Fragility^{xl}
Pakistan	\$3,051,575,746	High
Egypt	\$2,818,661,777	Medium-High
Algeria	\$1,043,872,806	Medium-High
Colombia	\$813,643,094	Medium-Low
Ukraine	\$304,334,187	Medium-Low
Haiti	\$296,379,044	Medium-High
Kyrgyzstan	\$292,190,664	Medium-High
Kazakhstan	\$270,188,048	Medium-Low
Tajikistan	\$221,377,474	Medium-Low
Uzbekistan	\$190,547,247	Medium-High
Mauritania	\$177,136,923	High
Turkmenistan	\$175,863,381	Medium-Low
Nigeria	\$170,236,784	High
Ecuador	\$152,072,213	Medium-Low
Burundi	\$149,541,898	High

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

As a first step toward developing a new strategy toward fragile states, policymakers must adopt a common definition of fragility. Fragility should be understood as a predictive concept: fragile states are those more likely to experience specific kinds of state-related crises.

Second, policymakers must develop a shared analytical framework for understanding the risk factors that make states more fragile and therefore more susceptible to such crises. Fragility risk factors have been identified across four categories: geography, economic welfare, institutions, and social divisions. These can contribute independently to fragility and collectively in a vicious cycle that is difficult to escape. Such an understanding should guide the development of a fragility assessment process, similar to existing frameworks for democracy, rights, and governance assessments and conflict assessments.

To establish a unified and coherent process for assessing the various drivers of fragility, we recommend the following:

- **Define Fragility in Predictive Terms:** The U.S. government should adopt a common definition of fragility across agencies. Fragile states should be understood as those more likely to experience state-related crises—specifically adverse regime changes, conflicts, and atrocities.
- **Develop an Empirically Rooted Assessment Framework:** Country assessments should evaluate states' fragility in terms of the conditions and potential triggers empirically linked to the onset of state crises. This should include but not be limited to a careful examination of the country's security, political, economic, and social institutions, as suggested by USAID's Fragile States Strategy, distinguishing between capacity deficits and deficits in legitimacy or political will.
- **Conduct Bilateral Country Assessments:** Assessments should be completed in full partnership with government counterparts in the fragile states to promote country ownership. They should also engage civil society leaders and organizations to the extent possible.
- **Focus First on U.S. Security Partners:** The United States lacks the capacity to provide comprehensive, sustained support to address the conditions of fragility in every country. Instead, Washington should focus first on fragile U.S. security partners.

The challenges that the United States faces vis-à-vis fragile states are not new. What has changed is that the costs of inaction have grown unacceptably high. The United States and its allies need a new approach that leverages the full range of our diplomacy, development, democracy, and defense tools to bolster the resilience of fragile states and their people. The start of a new administration provides a valuable opportunity to reappraise U.S. efforts in fragile states and implement a comprehensive new strategy.

APPENDIX

Below is a sampling of varied ways that U.S. government agencies have defined fragile states in recent years.

Strategic policy documents tend to focus on <i>consequences</i> of fragility		
Policy Document	Term	Description
National Security Strategy, 2002 ^{xli}	Weak states	“vulnerability to terrorist networks and drug cartels”
National Security Strategy, 2006 ^{xlii}	Weak states	“susceptible to <i>exploitation by terrorists</i> , tyrants, and international criminals”; “ <i>threat to their people</i> and a burden on regional economies”
National Security Strategy, 2010 ^{xliii}	Failing states	“endanger <i>regional and global security</i> ”
National Security Strategy, 2015 ^{xliv}	Fragile states	“ <i>governance is weak</i> or has broken down,” making them “ <i>vulnerable hosts for extremism and terrorism</i> ”
National Security Presidential Directive, 2005 ^{xlv}	Failed states	vulnerable to territory being used as “ <i>base...or safe haven for extremists, terrorists</i> , organized crime groups”
Quadrennial Defense Review, 2006 ^{xlvi}	Failed states	“terrorist extremists can more easily operate or take shelter”
Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, 2015 ^{xlvii}	Fragile states	“ <i>sanctuaries for illicit activity</i> ”; “poor governance.... increases the risk of <i>pandemics and violent conflict</i> ”; “imperil regional and international security”
Operational policy documents tend to focus on <i>conditions and causes</i> of fragility		
Policy Document	Term	Description
U.S. Agency for International Development, 2005 ^{xlviii}	Fragile states	“ <i>ineffective and illegitimate governance</i> ” institutions; <i>triggered by</i> succession crises, contested elections, external shocks, corruption, conflict, economic collapse; <i>result in</i> economic instability, food insecurity, violent conflict
U.S. Army Field Manual, 2008 ^{xlix}	Fragile states	<i>institutional weakness</i> and government instability; <i>driven by</i> criminalization of state, economic failure, external aggression, internal strife due to disenfranchisement; <i>result in</i> human suffering, conflict, regional security challenges, “ungoverned areas that can become safe havens for terrorists and criminal” organizations

ⁱ In a prior paper, the authors argue that the changing national security landscape requires a comprehensive, strategic approach to fragile states—one that prioritizes fragile states and invests in the prevention of state crises. See Andrew Albertson and Ashley Moran, *A Call for a New Strategic Approach to Fragile States* (Washington: Truman Center, 2016).

ⁱⁱ See the Appendix for a sampling of recent U.S. government agency definitions of fragility.

ⁱⁱⁱ The U.S. National Security Strategies from 2002 to 2010 were gradually more expansive, yet all focused on the *consequences* of fragility, defining “weak states” as those with “vulnerability to terrorist networks and drug cartels” (2002) and those “susceptible to exploitation by terrorists, tyrants, and international criminals” and a “threat to their people and a burden on regional economies” (2006) and defining “failing states” as those that “breed conflict and endanger regional and global security” (2010). Likewise, National Security Presidential Directive 44, issued in 2005, defined failed states as providing “a base of operations or safe haven for extremists, terrorists, [and] organized crime groups,” and the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review defined “failed states” as areas where “terrorist extremists can more easily operate or take shelter.” The 2015 National Security Strategy (NSS) and 2015 Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) noted the governance failings that can lead to these consequences, though the strategic and definitional focus remained on the *consequences* of fragility that pose security risks for the United States or global community, with the 2015 NSS defining fragile states as those where “governance is weak or has broken down” making them “vulnerable hosts for extremism and terrorism,” and the 2015 QDDR defining fragile states as “sanctuaries for illicit activity” that “imperil regional and international security” and where “poor governance...increases the risk of pandemics and violent conflict.” See The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: The White House, 2002), v; The White House, *The National Security Strategy of the United States of America* (Washington: The White House, 2006), 33; The White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington: The White House, 2010), 8; The White House, *National Security Presidential Directive 44, Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization* (Washington: The White House, 2005), 2; U.S. Department of Defense (DoD), *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (Washington: DoD, 2006), 12; The White House, *National Security Strategy* (Washington: The White House, 2015), 4, 11; and U.S. Department of State (DoS) and U.S. Agency for International Development, *Enduring Leadership in a Dynamic World: Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (Washington: DoS and USAID, 2015), 8, 21-2.

^{iv} USAID’s fragility framework describes the instability in fragile states as the product of “ineffective and illegitimate governance,” noting that fragility can be triggered by succession crises, contested elections, external shocks, corruption, conflict, economic collapse, and a range of other events. The U.S. Army’s field manual for stability operations likewise describes fragile states as having institutional weakness and government instability, driven by the criminalization of the state, economic failure, external aggression, internal strife due to disenfranchisement, and other factors. While both documents also discuss the consequences of fragility, they focus most pointedly on the *causes* and *conditions* of fragility itself. See USAID, *Fragile States Strategy* (Washington: USAID, 2005), 3-4; and U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-07: Stability Operations* (Washington: U.S. Army, 2008), 1-10.

^v Enrique Gelbard et al., *Building Resilience in Sub-Saharan Africa’s Fragile States* (Washington: International Monetary Fund, 2015); and Department for International Development (DfID), *Reducing Poverty by Tackling Social Exclusion*, DFID Policy Paper (London: DfID, 2005).

^{vi} The 2010 QDDR, for example, asserts that it is “more important than ever to address the problems of fragile states,” elaborating with a discussion of the challenges of “[w]eak governments and failing states.” USAID notes explicitly that it uses “the term fragile states to refer generally to a broad range of failing, failed, and recovering states.” Likewise, the Fragile States Index uses all of these terms—fragile state, weak state, and failing state—interchangeably in describing its methodology. See DoS and USAID, *Leading through Civilian Power: The First Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* (Washington: DoS and USAID, 2010), xiii; USAID, *Fragile States Strategy*, 1; and J.J. Messner et al., *Fragile States Index 2016* (Washington: The Fund for Peace, 2016), 12.

^{vii} Messner et al., *Fragile States Index 2016*, 12-13.

^{viii} The Political Instability Task Force (PITF) defines these terms in detail in Jack Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability,” *American Journal of Political Science* 54, 1 (2010): 190-208; and Monty G.

Marshall, Ted Robert Gurr, and Barbara Harff, *PITF - State Failure Problem Set: Internal Wars and Failures Governance, Dataset and Coding Guidelines, Revision: 6 May 2015* (Vienna: Societal-Systems Research Inc., 2015). Adverse regime changes are defined as “major, adverse shifts in patterns of governance, including major and abrupt shifts away from more open, electoral systems to more closed, authoritarian systems; revolutionary changes in political elites and the mode of governance; contested dissolution of federated states or secession of a substantial area of a state by extrajudicial means; and or near-total collapse of central state authority and the ability to govern.” Civil wars, which they label more precisely as revolutionary and ethnic wars, are respectively, “episodes of violent conflict between governments and politically organized groups (political challengers) that seek to overthrow the central government, to replace its leaders, or to seize power in one region”; and “episodes of violent conflict between governments and national, ethnic, religious, or other communal minorities (ethnic challengers) in which the challengers seek major changes in their status.” To qualify, revolutionary and ethnic wars must reach a mobilization threshold and conflict intensity threshold. Mass atrocities, which they further categorize as genocides and politicides, “involve the promotion, execution, and/or implied consent of sustained policies by governing elites or their agents—or in the case of civil war, either of the contending authorities—that result in the deaths of a substantial portion of a communal group or politicized non-communal group.”

^{ix} For example, see the summary and typology provided by Jeremy M. Weinstein and Milan Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences: U.S. Foreign Policy and the Security-Development Nexus,” in *Short of the Goal: U.S. Policy and Poorly Performing States*, eds. Nancy Birdsall, Milan Vaishnav, and Robert L. Ayres (Washington: Center for Global Development, 2006), 18-24; and the determinants discussed in Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability.”

^x These conditions, in turn, have their own causes—some of which also contribute to fragility. We discuss these interaction effects more later in this section.

^{xi} Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 19, citing James D. Fearon and David D. Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” *American Political Science Review* 97, 1 (2003), 85.

^{xii} Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 19, citing Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” 85; and Paul Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap: Civil War and Development Policy* (Washington: The World Bank, 2003), 60.

^{xiii} Michael L. Ross, *The Oil Curse: How Petroleum Wealth Shapes the Development of Nations* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2012), 145.

^{xiv} Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability.”

^{xv} Klare discusses the critical role that small arms diffusion and the growth of paramilitary groups can play in contributing to state crises. Michael T. Klare, “The Deadly Connection: Paramilitary Bands, Small Arms Diffusion, and State Failure,” in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 117.

^{xvi} Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 20, citing Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 5; and Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” 83.

^{xvii} Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for forecasting Political Instability”; Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap*; and Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War.”

^{xviii} Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 21, citing Dani Rodrik, *In Search of Prosperity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003); and Jack A. Goldstone et al., *State Failure Task Force Report: Phase III Findings* (McLean: Science Applications International Corporation, 2000).

^{xix} Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability,” 196-7; and Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 22, citing Marina Ottaway, *Democracy Challenged: The Rise of Semi-Authoritarianism* (Washington: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003); Fearon and Laitin, “Ethnicity, Insurgency, and Civil War,” 85; Havard Hegre et al., “Toward a Democratic Civil Peace? Democracy, Political

Change, and Civil War, 1816-1992,” *American Political Science Review* 95, 1 (2001), 42; and Jack Snyder, *From Voting to Violence: Democratization and Nationalist Conflict* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2000).

^{xx} Jack Goldstone, Jonathan Haughton, Karol Soltan, and Clifford Zinnes, *Strategy Framework for the Assessment and Treatment of Fragile States* (Washington: USAID and IRIS Center, 2003); and Robert I. Rotberg, “The Failure and Collapse of Nation-States: Breakdown, Prevention, and Repair,” in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 25-26.

^{xxi} Ivan Briscoe, *The Proliferation of the “Parallel State,”* Working Paper No. 71 (Madrid: Fundacion para las Relaciones Internacionales y el Dialogo Exterior, 2008), 2.

^{xxii} Nicolas van de Walle, “The Economic Correlates of State Failure,” in *When States Fail: Causes and Consequences*, ed. Robert I. Rotberg (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 105.

^{xxiii} Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap*, 57; Seth D. Kaplan, *Fixing Fragile States: A New Paradigm for Development* (Westport: Praeger Security International, 2008), 18; Goldstone et al., “A Global Model for Forecasting Political Instability”; William Easterly, Jozef Ritzan, and Michael Woolcock, *Social Cohesion, Institutions, and Growth*, Working Paper Number 94 (Washington: Center for Global Development, 2006).

^{xxiv} Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 19-20. Two persuasive arguments about the role of geographical factors come from Jared Diamond and Jeffrey Sachs: Jared Diamond, *Guns, Germs, and Steel: The Fates of Human Societies* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1997); John Luke Gallup, Jeffrey D. Sachs, and Andrew D. Mellinger, “Geography and Economic Development,” *International Regional Science Review* 22, 2 (1999): 179-232; Jeffrey D. Sachs, *Institutions Don’t Rule: Direct Effects of Geography on Per Capita Income*, No. 9490 (Cambridge: National Bureau of Economic Research, 2003); and Jeffrey D. Sachs and Andrew M. Warner, “The Curse of Natural Resources,” *European Economic Review* 45, 4 (2001): 827-838.

^{xxv} Weinstein and Vaishnav, “A Mismatch with Consequences,” 20, citing Daron Acemoglu, James A. Robinson, and Simon Johnson, “The Colonial Origins of Comparative Development: An Empirical Investigation,” *American Economic Review* 91 (2001): 1369-1401; Terry Karl, *The Paradox of Plenty: Oil Booms and Petro-States* (University of California Press, 1997); Michael Ross, *Timber Booms and Institutional Breakdown in Southeast Asia* (Cambridge University Press, 2001); and Nancy Birdsall and Arvind Subramanian, “Saving Iraq from Its Oil,” *Foreign Affairs* 83 (2004): 77-89. See also Daron Acemoglu and James A. Robinson, *Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty* (New York: Crown Publishers, 2012).

^{xxvi} Thad Dunning, *Crude Democracy: Natural Resource Wealth and Political Regimes* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008); Michael Ross, “Oil and Democracy Revisited,” unpublished manuscript, 2009; and Ross, *The Oil Curse*. In assessing the interaction between natural resources and democracy, it is important to note that parts of this relationship are contested. Nuanced parts of this relationship, however, have been confirmed yet this requires distinguishing between resource effects in autocracies and democracies (since resources can sustain both, but under different conditions) and distinguishing between resource wealth and resource dependence, as the scholars cited here do.

^{xxvii} Michael Bratton and Nicolas van de Walle, *Democratic Experiments in Africa: Regime Transitions in Comparative Perspective* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

^{xxviii} See for example Acemoglu and Robinson, *Why Nations Fail*; Adam Przeworski et al., *Democracy and Development: Political Institutions and Well-Being in the World, 1950-1990* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Kristian Skrede Gleditsch and Michael D. Ward, “Diffusion and the International Context of Democratization,” *International Organization* 60, 4 (2006): 911-933; and Morton H. Halperin, Joseph T. Siegle, and Michael M. Weinstein, *The Democracy Advantage: How Democracies Promote Prosperity and Peace* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

^{xxix} Collier et al., *Breaking the Conflict Trap*.

^{xxx} Ibid. Regarding investments in human development, see Augustin Kwasi Fosu, “Mapping Growth into Economic Development: Has Elite Political Instability Mattered in Sub-Saharan Africa?” *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 63, 5 (2004): 1173-1192.

^{xxx} Robert A. Blair, Christopher Blattman, and Alexandra Hartman, “Predicting Local Violence,” unpublished manuscript, April 15, 2015; OECD (2016), *States of Fragility 2016: Understanding Violence*, OECD Publishing, Paris.

^{xxxii} One drawback should be acknowledged regarding our focus on using only factors empirically shown to be related to state fragility: some variables that appear anecdotally to be important are excluded from our approach because they cannot be easily measured. For example, some have pointed to the capacity of societies to resolve inter-communal problems, even independently of the state, or the sincerity and capacity of political leaders, as being important factors in reducing fragility. These factors asserted anecdotally to be important are not captured by our approach. However, by publically identifying and addressing *measurable* indicators of fragility, our approach seeks to maximize transparency, accountability, and results, as well as learning over time.

^{xxxiii} Eli Margolis, “Estimating State Instability,” *Studies in Intelligence* 56, 1 (2012): 13-24.

^{xxxiv} We do not mean to imply that the U.S. government should adopt an assessment framework based solely on the four categories of factors we identify in this brief as contributing to fragility, but that it should develop an assessment framework grounded in such factors empirically linked to the onset of state crises. This assessment framework should be continually reassessed and updated to incorporate the latest research and lessons learned.

^{xxxv} USAID, *Fragile States Strategy*; Derrick W. Brinkerhoff and Jennifer M. Brinkerhoff, “Governance Reforms and Failed States: Challenges and Implications,” *International Review of Administrative Sciences* 68, 4 (2002), 524. Regarding the societal elements of relevant institutions, see also Seth Kaplan, *Fixing Fragile States: A Country-Based Framework* (Oslo: Norwegian Peacebuilding Resource Centre, 2015).

^{xxxvi} Center for Global Development (CGD) Commission on Weak States and U.S. National Security, *On the Brink, Weak States and U.S. National Security*, eds. Jeremy M. Weinstein, John Edward Porter, and Stuart E. Eizenstat (Washington: CGD, 2004), 9-10.

^{xxxvii} Security assistance may include security-related aid, security cooperation, and arms sales. Unless otherwise indicated, this paper uses “security assistance” to connote this wider range of security-related engagement.

^{xxxviii} This illustrative list includes countries in the top half of security assistance recipients that also have fragility scores equal to or greater than 8 (medium-low fragility and above) on the State Fragility Index, and are not engaged in major internal conflict. For the purposes of this illustrative list, we employ relatively simple measures to provide a basic sense of the possible list; more complex measures should be used in practice. While quantitative data should guide country selection, we suggest that an interagency policy committee make final determinations on country inclusion. Inclusion would be iteratively re-evaluated. For this list, major internal conflict is defined as internal conflict that involves 1,000 deaths or more annually and contests control of the state. By this measure, Afghanistan, Central Africa Republic, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Libya, Somalia, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen are excluded. OECD members (Mexico and Israel) and countries that receive significant assistance despite antagonism toward the United States (Russia and Cuba) are also excluded.

^{xxxix} These calculations for security engagement include security assistance, security cooperation, and foreign military sales, as defined by the Defense Security Cooperation Agency, and as available through the Security Assistance Monitor (www.securityassistance.org) for FY2014. Aid considered for each country includes both dedicated country aid and average allocations from regional funding streams for all regions within which that country falls. This calculation serves as a useful indicator for the overall security relationship with the United States.

^{xl} The fragility score used in this table is taken from the State Fragility Index for 2014. See Monty G. Marshall and Benjamin R. Cole, *Table 1: State Fragility Index and Matrix 2014* (Vienna: Center for Systemic Peace, 2014).

^{xli} The White House, *National Security Strategy* (2002), v.

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- ^{xlii} The White House, *National Security Strategy* (2006), 33. Emphasis added.
- ^{xliii} The White House, *National Security Strategy* (2010), 8. Emphasis added.
- ^{xliv} The White House, *National Security Strategy* (2015), 4, 11. Emphasis added.
- ^{xlv} The White House, *National Security Presidential Directive* (2005), 2. Emphasis added.
- ^{xlvi} DoD, *Quadrennial Defense Review Report* (2006), 12.
- ^{xlvii} DoS and USAID, *Enduring Leadership*, 8, 21-2. Emphasis added.
- ^{xlviii} USAID, *Fragile States Strategy*, 3-4. Emphasis added.
- ^{xlix} U.S. Army, *Field Manual 3-07*, 1-10. Emphasis added.

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