
COMBATING STATE FRAGILITY REDUCES GLOBAL THREATS

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By 2030, an estimated 80% of the world's poor will live in fragile states – countries that lack the ability and resources to effectively govern their own territory. State fragility often leads to greater poverty, food insecurity, and lack of economic opportunity and can multiply the risks of global threats like violent extremism, pandemics and infectious disease, and conflict. Fragile states are also often the arena for great power competition from countries like Russia and China.

FRAGILITY MULTIPLIES THE RISKS OF GLOBAL THREATS

- **Violent Extremism.** Fragile states are often unable to provide citizens with basic security, economic opportunity, and necessities like food and water, leaving a void for extremist networks to recruit new members, especially in countries with growing youth populations.
 - Globally, terrorist attacks have increased fivefold since 2001, and fragility has enabled extremist groups to gain footholds in 19 countries across Africa and the Middle East.
- **Global Pandemics.** Fragile states can accelerate the spread of infectious diseases by increasing transmission rates and limiting effective response and prevention, worsening the already staggering cost of humanitarian disasters.
 - As of February 18, 2020, the recent Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo has killed more than 2,250 people – at the same time parts of the country are struggling with violence which is preventing health care workers from operating in places where the virus is spreading.
- **Conflict and Violence.** Conflict and violence in fragile states have contributed to a dramatic rise in displaced persons and refugees worldwide – now an unprecedented 70.8 million people – and have led to growing humanitarian crises.
 - Studies show that for every 10 murders in the Central American countries of Guatemala, Honduras, and El Salvador, six children sought safety in the United States. More than 4 million Venezuelans have fled to neighboring countries since 2014, and nearly 6 million Syrians have been forced from their homes since 2011.

AMERICAN LEADERSHIP ON STRENGTHENING FRAGILE STATES

For every \$1 the United States spends to prevent conflict, it is estimated that we save \$16 in response costs. The U.S. was the largest donor to fragile states in 2016, and more than 78% of American foreign assistance in the most fragile states is spent on development or humanitarian programs, more than half of which addresses global health and hunger.

- **Investments that Deliver Results.** America's strategic investments in development and diplomacy tackle the drivers of fragility by strengthening governance, preventing food insecurity, and generating economic opportunity. USAID's signature food security initiative, Feed the Future, has lifted 23.4 million people out of poverty and the President's Emergency Plan for Aids Relief (PEPFAR) has saved more than 18 million lives.
- **Promoting Better Coordination.** The United States has developed a strategy – the Stabilization Assistance Review – to better leverage diplomacy and foreign assistance among the State Department, Department of Defense, and USAID in conflict and post-conflict zones, prevent policy duplication and ensure taxpayer dollars are spent efficiently.
- **Leveraging Multilateral Institutions.** U.S. leadership in multilateral institutions like the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation (OECD) enables the United States to leverage the resources and expertise of allies to solve complex challenges by drawing on their data expertise, convening power, and abilities as on-the-ground implementers.

ENGAGING CONGRESS

- ***Bipartisan Legislation.*** In December 2020, Congress adopted the Global Fragility Act, which mandates the creation of a 10-year Global Fragility Strategy that will “contribute to the stabilization of conflict-affected areas, address global fragility, and strengthen the capacity of the United States to be an effective leader of international efforts to prevent extremism and violent conflict.” Within the next year, the Executive Branch must outline the responsibilities for each agency (State, USAID, and DOD) and select at least 5 priority countries, including two “prevention countries” where this is no ongoing conflict.
 - To fund this new initiative, the legislation authorizes \$200 million per year for 5 years for a Prevention and Stabilization Fund and \$30 million per year for 5 years for a Complex Crisis Fund to “prevent or respond to emerging or unforeseen foreign challenges and complex crises.”
- ***A New Approach to Preventing Fragility.*** The Global Fragility Act incorporates some of the recommendations suggested by the bipartisan Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States, which released a report outlining a framework for fragility prevention in February 2019. In addition, the task force also recommended the U.S. establish a new Partnership Development Fund that would serve as a coordination platform for donors and the private sector.

BIPARTISAN AGREEMENT ON THE NEED TO ADDRESS FRAGILE STATES

- “In most cases, the breeding ground for [extremism] is not something that can be addressed by the military. Our general view is that the State Department has the lead with USAID, and we lead with ideas, we lead with the example of our own country and we work with likeminded nations in this regard.”
– **Former Secretary of Defense James Mattis**
- “It is both moral and in our national security interest to promote stable and prosperous countries that can one day be reliable allies and partners.”
– **Senator Marco Rubio (R-FL)**
- “You literally cannot kill your way into winning this battle against extremism. We have to offer a hopeful life to compete with a glorious death, and we’re not talking about nation building here, we’re talking about deterrence and prevention.”
– **Senator Lindsey Graham (R-SC)**
- “Fragile, unstable states are breeding grounds for criminals, terrorists, and radicalism. There’s a significant economic toll as well: violence and instability undercut American investment and cost the global economy nearly \$15 trillion a year. But worst of all, this violence and instability have created a humanitarian catastrophe, so we need new ideas and approaches to ending this violence and instability and prevent it from happening in the first place.”
– **Rep. Eliot Engel (D-NY), Chairman, House Foreign Affairs Committee**
- “Instability across the world continues to lead to the displacement of millions. The Global Fragility and Violence Reduction Act is a significant step in bringing together defense, diplomatic & development stakeholders to better address the root causes of violence and fragility.”
– **Rep. Adam Smith (D-WA)**