

Forum: Reform Security Council

Student Officers: Andy Choi, Minh Khai Hoang, Gia Minh Vo

Be sure to consult the [UNIS MUN LibGuide](#) for additional resources.

TOPIC 2: The issue of the federalization of fragile and failed states

I. Introduction to the Topic

Failed states, described as political bodies that have disintegrated to an extent where basic conditions and responsibilities of a sovereign government no longer operate at a reasonable level, have been increasing in recent years following certain sources of instability across the world, such as internal violence and coups. The impact of failed states have remained pervasive, resulting in a wide range of detrimental effects. In response to such effects, one of the most commonly suggested solutions is federalization, the idea of decentralizing authority to give legitimacy to regional autonomy while still maintaining the unity of the nation.

State fragility is a pressing issue for people of all different scales. At a local level, the effects of fragile states on citizens are highly conspicuous. Due to their inability to provide sufficient and fundamental service and protection to its citizens, individuals within failed states are often faced with poverty and the dearth of access to essential services and infrastructure. Subsequently, mortality rate is often very high in countries with high levels of fragility.

Aside from its impact on its citizens, state fragility poses a tremendous threat to the wider international community. Fragile states may lead to massive refugee outflows to neighboring countries, as was the case in Somalia, subsequently leading to the entire region being destabilized. The refugee outflows may also exacerbate existing tensions between groups within a nation and can even lead to the rise in the spread of infectious diseases such as HIV. Given that many countries also do not have the adequate infrastructure necessary to sufficiently support such a large number of refugees, fragile states can also lead to tremendous strains on those nations.

Moreover, fragile states can directly lead to an increase in extremist groups due to the low governance and legitimacy of governments in such nations. The most notorious example of this

is Iraq and the subsequent effects of 9/11. Evidently, failed states are not just a threat to its own citizens but rather to the entire international community. To prevent extremist attacks at an international scale, fragile states must be addressed preemptively and effectively.

However, federalization remains rejected by a myriad of fragile states across the globe due to the potential to lead to the secession of the nation, the disintegration of a national identity, and the dichotomy in access to opportunities amongst other factors. Syria, for instance, has been a nation that has constantly refused to transition into a federal system time and time again with fears that a similar situation as Iraq may occur where a certain region acts almost exclusively on its own, undermining the sovereignty of the nation.

II. Definition of Key Terms & Concepts

Definition of Key Terms

Failed states: A failed state refers to a political body that has disintegrated to a point where it is unable to fulfill the responsibilities and basic conditions of a sovereign government to properly function and serve its citizens. A state is also considered a failure if the government loses its legitimacy even if it is performing its functions properly. The Fund for Peace characterizes a failed state through the following characteristics: the loss of control of its territories, or of the monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force; erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions; inability to provide public services to citizens; and the inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community. Given that the second topic places emphasis on using federalization as a form of solution to failed or otherwise fragile states,

Federalization: Federalism is a type of political organization that brings together separate states or political entities within a single political system in a way that allows each to maintain its own integrity. Federal systems are generally able to achieve this by requiring basic policies to be made and implemented through negotiations of some sorts, in order to ensure that all members are able to share and contribute during the decision-making process. Federalism is guided by political principles that emphasize the primacy of bargaining and negotiation coordination among

several power centers, and principles that accentuate the virtues of dispersed power centers as a means of safeguarding individual and local liberties.

Fragile States Index: The Fragile States Index refers to a tool developed by Fund for Peace (FFP), which plays a crucial role in highlighting the pressures that all states experience, in addition to identifying when those pressures are outweighing a states' capacity to manage those pressures. The list aims to assess states' vulnerability to conflict or collapse, ranking all sovereign states when there is adequate data. Rankings on the list are based on the sum of scores for 12 indicators, ranging from public services to group grievance to external intervention. Such indicators are scored on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest intensity, otherwise meaning most stable, and 10 being the highest intensity. Given the credibility of the list and its prevalent usage when discussing state fragility, the Fragile States Index will be significant in establishing the sources and indicators of state fragility, while also serving as a tool of comparison.

Colonial Imposition: Colonial imposition refers to the process of colonizers imposing their religion, language, economics, and other cultural practices. The impact colonial imposition had on the world remains as prevalent as ever in contemporary society. Across the globe, European powers attempted to assimilate countries into their own, exploiting and victimizing their people, culture, and resources. According to a study conducted by Arkansas State University, state failure is largely a function of variations in the type of colonial rule and the duration of colonial control, and there was a correlation between the unique history of fragile states and their fragile state.

Decentralization: Decentralization refers to the transfer of responsibilities, resources and political decision-making authority to intermediate or local levels of government. Decentralization remains significant in the issue of the federalization of fragile states due to their capacity to mitigate state fragility. For some, decentralization can propagate democratization, political participation and the strengthening of civil society. On the other hand, others value decentralization due to its ability to improve public services and thereby foster economic growth and social development. In the perspective of international financial organizations, decentralization also offers an opportunity for more efficient government, expending less public funds and resources. However, decentralization remains a challenge due to a myriad of factors.

Federalism: Federalism refers to a type of governance and strategy of state-building and statecraft that is adopted either at the inception of the state, or later, when the need for such a system arises. Inception-state federal systems are best exemplified by countries such as the US, Switzerland and other old and mature federations which were established through the aggregation of autonomous political units, which desired to have a common government for some form of a shared purpose. On the other hand, later-state federal systems that fall under Horowitz's (2007) category and description of devolution federalism began as unitary states, which were subsequently disaggregated at some point to give individual components greater measures and degrees of autonomy and shared rule for the purposes of maintaining the state as a single entity. The majority of such federal systems are fledgling, unstable and contested states, especially states that were forcibly mulled by colonial acts of creation. Countries with such systems include Liberia, Sierra Leone, Benin, Togo and Guinea-Bissau, which have all found varying levels of success based on the strategy of power-sharing and decentralization.

III. Key Stakeholders

Fragile states: Acting as the centerpiece of the entire topic, fragile states are an important stakeholder in the issue of establishing federalization. As the stakeholder that has the greatest impact on the issue, it is essential that the fragile states themselves are able to consider a myriad of potential solutions to help mitigate the state fragility that is being faced by such nations.

Donor organizations: Donor organizations are an important stakeholder due to their role in combating state fragility and increasing the legitimacy of states. Donor organizations have a paramount role in keeping states accountable for their actions, ensuring that they are able to fulfill their responsibilities and services for their citizens. Through assessments to evaluate the fragility of a state, donor organizations offer financial support to states, whether that be through de-risk investments,

NGOs: Similar to donor organizations, NGOs are significant to this issue due to their potential to help strengthen state legitimacy. NGOs have recently been partnering with local and regional businesses to amplify their reach and social impact. Given the

Businesses: Businesses are also a massive stakeholder in the issue of the federalization of fragile states due to how they are able to contribute to the stability of a state. Using businesses to address the issue of fragile states is a method of introducing a form of an accountability system that pressures the government to be more responsible and legitimate. Although often overlooked, local and regional businesses can contribute just as much to domestic growth and stability compared to their global counterparts.

Stable states: Stable states have great stakes in this issue due to the impact of fragile states on the international community. In many cases, the rise in failed states can also directly result in the rise in terrorism which can threaten the international security of nations across the world. Such extremist groups often find it easiest to take over a nation that has very limited governance, making failed states a hotspot for terrorism. This may also consequently have the collateral effect of making the people of a deteriorating state leave the country, resulting in massive refugee flows that destabilize neighboring countries. For instance, since 1990, over 100,000 citizens left Somalia and moved to bordering Kenya with the side-effect of exacerbating inter-ethnic strains already pre-existing in the region itself. Aside from the destabilizing effects on the overall region, the increase in refugee flows can create tremendous strains on other nations' infrastructures and lead to a potential increase in the spread of infectious diseases such as AIDS. Hence, stable states, especially those that are close in proximity to fragile states, need to help mitigate the issue to maintain stability in their own nation.

IV. Key Issues including Background Information

Colonialism: Colonialism is often the underlying cause of state fragility in many cases. As identified by the study conducted by the Arkansas State University, which used its extensive datasets of nation-states in the developing world in order to conduct panel regression analyses, state failure has been found to be largely a function of variations in the type of colonial rule and the duration of colonial control. British or Spanish rule, and the relative absence of European intervention into the polity, has been shown to have a correlation with a lower risk of state failure, while French or Portuguese rule is associated with a higher risk. This can be accredited to the fractionalization and marginalization of certain minority groups and the

subsequent tension that can be observed between people of different ethnicities, race, religion, etc. Given the complex colonial history of most fragile states, it is essential that perspectives of all regional groups and the nation's historical context are considered when distributing power and employing federal solutions.

Service failures: Service failures as a consequence of state fragility remains a prevalent issue in many failing states, where the government is unable to offer adequate or appropriate service to its citizens. This subsequently means that failed states may be incapable of ensuring that citizens have access to key services, such as basic education, energy and transport infrastructure, health services and water, and sufficient income to avoid destitution. Hence, civilians living in failed states may struggle with issues such as poverty and access to fundamental facilities, subsequently leading to great mortality rates.

Secession of dissolution of nation: Although federalism is generally positively viewed in the context of international negotiation, being capable of integrating and unifying diverse nations, ethnic groups, or combatant groups without cause to fear control by an overly powerful center, many fragile states have rejected federalization proposals in the past due to fears over the secession of the nation. Skeptics fear that legitimizing and increasing the autonomy of regional federal units can lead to full-blown secession rather than helping bring a country back together. For instance, in the case of Syria, both the government and opposition negotiators have rejected the idea of employing federalism due to diplomatic complications. Turkey has also voiced concerns over the federalization of Syria, fearing a similar repetition of the experience in Iraq, whose Kurdish region largely governs itself despite being a mere unit of the overall federalist system.

Applying Federalization: The process of federalization is one that is highly challenging and potentially destructive due to two main rationales: the process of negotiating with all relevant parties to create a nationally accepted constitution and the inherently politically and emotionally charged connotations of federalization. During negotiations when drafting a constitution, especially in a country with high fragility, can be an incredibly arduous process that can also engender hostility. Since different regions may have different policies on stances on certain matters and rights, federalization can prove highly controversial, such as in the case of Libya when political groupings identified themselves as federalists or anti-federalists following the fall

of Muammar al-Quaddafi, making their constitution-making process unnecessarily difficult. In a similar vein, talks of federalism have been faced with stern resistance due to how emotionally charged and politically sensitive the term can be. In Ukraine for instance, talks of federalization are immediately rejected due to Russia's annexation of a myriad of its states. The fact that Russia now demands the complete federalization of the rest of Ukraine has completely discredited the idea, which also demonstrates how the federalization of a state can be exploited by other nations.

Moreover, federalization often meets resistance from nations, such as Syria, due to the process of drawing borders on the map to create federal units. In the case of potentially federalizing Syria, its citizens have expressed fears that such borders can turn out to completely discredit the ones that the fighting parties have currently carved out. While this may not be the intention of the countries assisting in the federalization process, the idea of global superpowers such as the US and Russia drawing borders has negative connotations, especially due to the historical context of the Sykes-Picot line in 1916 that created the new Middle East. Such borders may also distinguish territories among ethnic or religious lines, potentially creating a form of sectarian state that most Syrians do not wish to live in. Subsequently, drawing borders can easily lead to a cycle of violence in fragile states with already high tensions. Groups that are considered the minority will likely fight back in a desperate attempt to avoid having their authority be minimized as a new federal unit, while a dominant group may try to clean its region of minorities using federalization.

Based on past peace negotiations in South Africa and Spain, it may be best to avoid giving labels to the territorial arrangements laid out in the texts. The peace deal between North and South Sudan in 2005 also didn't use any formal word in the entire peace agreement to describe the type of governance that was being negotiated, given the politically sensitive nature of such terms.

V. Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Timeline of Resolutions, Treaties, and Events

Date	Description of event

	1787	Federalism as a form of governing was conceived by delegates who met at the Constitutional Convention in the Philadelphia State House. Delegates debated the structure, provisions, and limitations of Federalism in the Constitution of the US, which led to significant developments in its political theory.
	1916	The Sykes-Picot Agreement, a secret convention between Great Britain and France, led to the dismemberment of the Ottoman Empire, leading to the division of Turkish-held Syria, Iraq, Lebanon, and Palestine into various French- and British-administered regions.
	1991	Ethiopia successfully adopted federalism that gave full recognition to ethnic autonomy, while keeping the nation together. Its new constitution created a federal system largely based on ethnic territorial units in an attempt to achieve ethnic autonomy and equality. The federal system is considered significant due to its constitution providing for secession of any ethnic unit.
	1999	The Government of Canada established the Forum of Federations as an international network for communication and exchange of best practices among federal and federalizing countries. Examples of partner governments of the forum include Australia, Brazil, Ethiopia, Germany, India, Mexico, Nigeria, Pakistan and Switzerland.
	2003	Following the American-led invasion of Iraq in 2003, the Transitional Administrative Law briefly recognized the existing Kurdish regional government and defined Iraq as a federal country.
	2005	The Fragile States Index was first conceived
	2019	The FSI was passed to The New Humanitarian, which is a project of the United Nations Office for Coordinations for Human Affairs

VI. Possible Challenges & Solutions

Partnership between NGOs and businesses: Through the assistance and coordination of NGOs, NGOs that can engage the current private sector in Romania, can help address the current challenges that are arising due to instability. For instance, in Wajir in the northern region of

Kenya, there was a dire need for livestock medicine for the herds that sustain people living in the region. Although national supply companies had sufficient medications, the remote nature of the Wajir region meant it was never on the businesses' radar. However, in partnership with Mercy Corps, they examined the value chain and helped create a livestock medicine supply business that activates commission-based local agents to sell the medication products in the region. Subsequently, the local businesses were able to increase the profits, Wajir pastoralists gained access to the medicine they needed, and Mercy Corps was able to accomplish their goal in providing humanitarian relief.

State-building: To find an efficacious and sustainable solution to fragile states, governments need to address the primary cause of fragility, which, in most cases, comes down to weak governance. Hence, state-building, the process whereby strengthening or establishing states where these have been eroded or are missing, is paramount to building peace and preventing the recurrence of violence. However, state-building can often be a highly challenging and multifaceted process due to its inherent nature of being a deep political endeavor. State-building cannot rely solely on technocratic approaches or narrowly focus on state institutions alone, as the ultimate aim is to ensure that the state is accountable for being responsive to the needs and wants of its citizens. Therefore, establishing legitimacy of the state is conducive to success, which depends on the state's ability and willingness to meet the rights and needs of its citizens, whether that be basic services or more complex processes such as providing representative political processes. Subsequently, there must be clear and concrete commitments and incentives for accountability, check and balances and oversight mechanisms to ensure that citizens are able to hold states accountable in a meaningful and significant way. In particular, donors and other external stakeholders can place greater emphasis on establishing concrete accountability systems and mechanisms, given that recent ODI research has found that there is often a dearth of focus in such areas. Domestic accountability systems can include judicial oversight institutions and ombudsmen, which constitute the basis for how the law operates; multi-stakeholder public finance and budget monitoring bodies that strengthen fiscal accountability; and parliamentary oversight and elections in order to ensure that citizens have equal access to political opportunities.

Costs of Federalism: Federalism can be highly costly to implement, especially given the amount of resources and expenditures necessary to build sustainable infrastructures in fragile states.

Given that decentralization and the redistribution of powers may require new infrastructure to be constructed, the costs to propitiously transition may be overwhelming for such states. Especially considering the highly fragile and volatile nature of such failed states, their GDP may already be a problem that will only be further exacerbated through the federalization of the state. However, this can potentially be addressed through donor organizations, NGOs, businesses, and partnerships between the three. In particular, donor organizations have an important role in identifying the costs that would be needed to propitiously transition into a federal system.

Discrimination in access to political and economic opportunities: The greatest challenge when employing federalism is ensuring that states are able to provide equal access to political and economic opportunities, regardless of prejudice of race, ethnicity, religion, etc. With different authority in different regions, this ultimately means that there is also disparity in the amount of rights a citizen is entitled to depending on where they are residing. Certain federal units may give longer sentences to people who commit a certain crime compared to other units within the same nation. People may also be disproportionately affected by issues such as poverty based on how the federal states invest their money. Hence, there needs to be clear, more universal agreements within the constitution in an attempt to reduce the dichotomy between federal states.

VII. Recommendations for Resolution Writing including Research

Delegates should prioritize creating a solution that fully addresses and realizes the sources of state fragility, rather than merely mitigating its effects to create a long-term solution. While there are many potential benefits to federalization, delegates should also consider case studies of how federalization has failed in certain post-colonial African countries. From Libya to Iraq to Ukraine, federalism remains highly controversial and poses many issues for such nations. Despite its promise to unite federal states, from the perspective of failed states, federalization is often a solution that is rejected due to its potential to lead to a full-blown secession that completely undermines the authority of the rest of the state while potentially empowering an

extremist regional power. However, from the context of global powers such as the US, federalization is the most rational solution to effectively preventing the rise in extremist groups. Therefore, delegates should do extensive research to evaluate their nation's specific stance on federalization and what they have done in the past.

VIII. Bibliography

Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia. "Sykes-Picot Agreement." Encyclopedia Britannica,

16 Dec. 2022, <https://www.britannica.com/event/Sykes-Picot-Agreement>. Accessed 18 January 2023.

Ceccon, Francesco. "International Security and 'Failed States': A Cause for Concern?"

E-International Relations, 25 July 2014,
www.e-ir.info/2014/07/25/international-security-and-failed-states-a-cause-for-concern/.
Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

De Ferranti, David, et al. *How to Improve Governance*. Brookings Institution Press, 2009. *JSTOR*,
www.jstor.org/stable/10.7864/j.ctt1262vg. Accessed 18 Jan. 2023.

Dorff, Robert H. "Failed States after 9/11: What Did We Know and What Have We Learned?"
International Studies Perspectives, vol. 6, no. 1, 2005, pp. 20-34. *JSTOR*,
www.jstor.org/stable/44218350. Accessed 18 Jan. 2023.

Habtu, Alem. "Ethnic Federalism in Ethiopia: Background, Present Conditions and Future Prospects." *Scholar Works @ WMU*, Western Michigan University, July 2003,
scholarworks.wmich.edu/africancenter_icad_archive/57/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

Hopps, Jason. "Seven Keys for Success in Fragile States." *International Finance Corporation*, 8 Feb. 2017,
www.ifc.org/wps/wcm/connect/news_ext_content/ifc_external_corporate_site/news+and+events/news/seven+keys+for+success+in+fragile+states. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

Ingram, George, and Jonathan Papoulidis. "Rethinking how to reduce state fragility." *Brookings*, 29 Mar. 2017,

[www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/29/rethinking-how-to-reduce-state-fragility/.](http://www.brookings.edu/blog/up-front/2017/03/29/rethinking-how-to-reduce-state-fragility/)

Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

Iqbal, Zaryab, and Harvey Starr. "Bad Neighbors: Failed States and Their Consequences."

Conflict Management and Peace Science, vol. 25, no. 4, 2008, pp. 315–31. JSTOR,

<http://www.jstor.org/stable/26275150>. Accessed 18 Jan. 2023.

Keny-Guyer, Neal. "4 ways business can strengthen fragile states." *World Economic Forum*, 14

Dec. 2015,

www.weforum.org/agenda/2015/12/4-ways-business-can-strengthen-fragile-states/.

Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

Meyer-Resende, Michael. "Why Talk of Federalism Won't Help Peace in Syria." *Foreign Policy*,

18 Mar. 2016,

foreignpolicy.com/2016/03/18/why-talk-of-federalism-wont-help-peace-in-syria-assad/.

Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

"An operational definition of 'fragile states.'" *Centre for Research on Inequality, Human Security*

and Ethnicity, Oxford,

assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/57a08b1ee5274a31e00009a0/CRISE-InBrief-05.pdf.

Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

Osaghae, Eghosa E. "Federal Solutions to State Failure in Africa." *Claude Ake Memorial Papers*

No. 12, The Nordic Africa Institute, 2020,

www.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2:1464148/FULLTEXT01.pdf. Accessed 19 Jan.

2023.

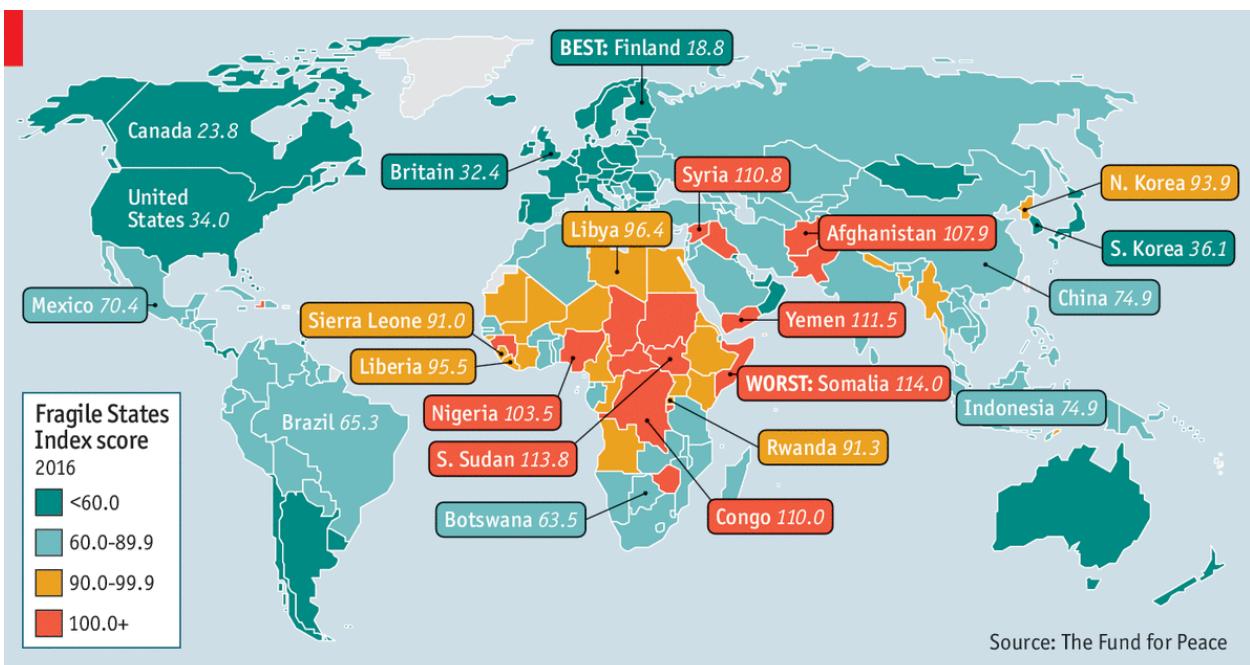
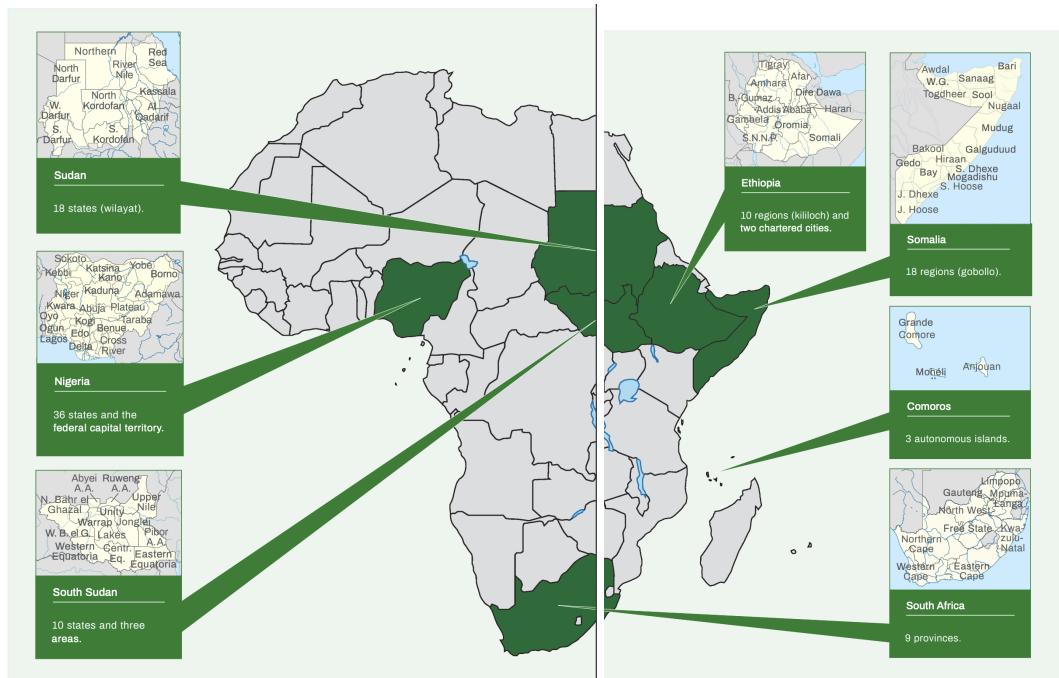
---. "Fragile States." *Development in Practice*, vol. 17, no. 4/5, 2007, pp. 691-99. JSTOR,

www.jstor.org/stable/25548271. Accessed 18 Jan. 2023.

- Patrick, Stewart. "'Failed' States and Global Security: Empirical Questions and Policy Dilemmas." *International Studies Review*, vol. 9, no. 4, 2007, pp. 644-62. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/4621865. Accessed 18 Jan. 2023.
- Rotberg, Robert I. "Failed States, Collapsed States, Weak States: Causes and Indicators." *Brookings*, www.brookings.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/statefailureandstateweaknessinatimeofterror_chapter.pdf. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.
- Sýkora, Luděk. "Post-Socialist Societal Transformations and Urban Change." *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography (Second Edition)*, 2020, www.sciencedirect.com/topics/social-sciences/decentralization-of-power. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.
- Task Force on Extremism in Fragile States. "Fragile States Fail Their Citizens and Threaten Global Security." *United States Institute of Peace*, 5 Sept. 2018, www.usip.org/blog/2018/09/fragile-states-fail-their-citizens-and-threaten-global-security. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.
- "What do fragile states really need?" *ODI*, odi.org/en/insights/what-do-fragile-states-really-need/. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.
- "Why states fail and how to rebuild them." *The Economist*, 7 Jan. 2017, www.economist.com/international/2017/01/07/why-states-fail-and-how-to-rebuild-them. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.
- Yazigi, Jihad. "No Going Back: Why Decentralization Is the Future for Syria." *European Council on Foreign Relations*, Sept. 2016,

ecfr.eu/archive/page/-/ECFR185_-_NO_GOING_BACK_-_WHY_DECENTRALISATION_IS_THE_FUTURE_FOR_SYRIA.pdf. Accessed 19 Jan. 2023.

IX: Additional Resources



Economist.com