

The Failed States Index 2007
By The Fund for Peace and FOREIGN POLICY magazine

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The world's weakest states aren't just a danger to themselves. They can threaten the progress and stability of countries half a world away. In the third annual Failed States Index, FOREIGN POLICY and The Fund for Peace rank the countries where the risk of failure is running high.

It is an accepted axiom of the modern age that distance no longer matters. Sectarian carnage can sway stock markets on the other side of the planet. Anarchic cities that host open-air arms bazaars imperil the security of the world's superpower. A hermit leader's erratic behavior not only makes life miserable for the impoverished millions he rules but also upends the world's nuclear nonproliferation regime. The threats of weak states, in other words, ripple far beyond their borders and endanger the development and security of nations that are their political and economic opposites.

Few encouraging signs emerged in 2006 to suggest the world is on a path to greater peace and stability. The year began with violent protests that erupted from Indonesia to Nigeria over the publication of cartoons depicting the Prophet Mohammed. February brought the destruction of Samarra's golden-domed mosque, one of Shiite Islam's holiest shrines, unleashing a convulsion of violence across Iraq that continues unabated. After Hezbollah kidnapped two Israeli soldiers last July, southern Lebanon was bombarded for a month by air strikes, sending hundreds of thousands of refugees fleeing into neighboring states. And in October, the repressive North Korean regime stormed its way into the world's nuclear club. What makes these alarming headlines all the more troubling is that their origins lie in weak and failing states. World leaders and the heads of multilateral institutions routinely take to lecterns to reiterate their commitment to pulling vulnerable states back from the brink, but it can be difficult to translate damage control into viable, long-term solutions that correct state weaknesses. Aid is often misspent. Reforms are too many or too few. Security needs overwhelm international peacekeepers, or chaos reigns in their absence.

The complex phenomenon of state failure may be much discussed, but it remains little understood. The problems that plague failing states are generally all too similar: rampant corruption, predatory elites who have long monopolized power, an absence of the rule of law, and severe ethnic or religious divisions. But that does not mean that the responses to their problems should be cut from the same cloth. Failing states are a diverse lot. Burma and Haiti are two of the most corrupt countries in the world, according to Transparency International, and yet Burma's repressive junta persecutes ethnic minorities and subjects its population to forced resettlement, while Haiti is wracked by extreme poverty, lawlessness, and urban violence. For a decade, Equatorial Guinea has posted some of the highest economic growth in sub-Saharan Africa, yet its riches have padded the bank accounts of an elite few. And in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the inability of the government to police its borders effectively or manage its vast mineral wealth has left the country dependent on foreign aid.

To provide a clearer picture of the world's weakest states, The Fund for Peace, an independent research organization, and FOREIGN POLICY present the third annual Failed States Index. Using 12 social, economic, political, and military indicators, we ranked 177 states in order of their vulnerability to violent internal conflict and societal deterioration. The index scores are based on data from more than 12,000 publicly available sources collected from May to December 2006. The 60 most vulnerable states are listed in the rankings, and full results are available at www.ForeignPolicy.com and www.fundforpeace.org.

For the second year in a row, Sudan tops the rankings as the state most at risk of failure. The primary cause of its instability, violence in the country's western region of Darfur, is as well known as it is tragic. At least 200,000 people—and perhaps as many as 400,000—have been killed in the past four years by janjaweed militias armed by the government, and 2 to 3 million people have fled their torched villages for squalid camps as the violence has spilled into the

Central African Republic and Chad. These countries were hardly pictures of stability prior to the influx of refugees and rebels across their borders; the Central African Republic plays host to a modern-day slave trade, and rebels attacked Chad's capital in April 2006 in a failed coup attempt. But the spillover effects from Sudan have a great deal to do with the countries' tumble in the rankings, demonstrating that the dangers of failing states often bleed across borders. That is especially worrying for a few select regions. This year, eight of the world's 10 most vulnerable states are in sub-Saharan Africa, up from six last year and seven in 2005. That is not to say that all failing states suffer from international neglect. Iraq and Afghanistan, the two main fronts in the global war on terror, both suffered over the past year. Their experiences show that billions of dollars in development and security aid may be futile unless accompanied by a functioning government, trustworthy leaders, and realistic plans to keep the peace and develop the economy. Just as there are many paths to success, there are many paths to failure for states on the edge.

The year wasn't all bad news, though. Two vulnerable giants, China and Russia, improved their scores sufficiently to move out of the 60 worst states. That is in part due to the fact that 31 additional countries were assessed this year. But some credit must be paid to the countries themselves. China's economic engine continues to propel the country forward at a breakneck pace, but the growing divide between urban and rural, as well as continued protests in the countryside, reveals pockets of frailty that the central government is only just beginning to address. Russia's growing economy and a lull in the violence in Chechnya have had stabilizing effects, despite fresh concerns about the country's democratic future.

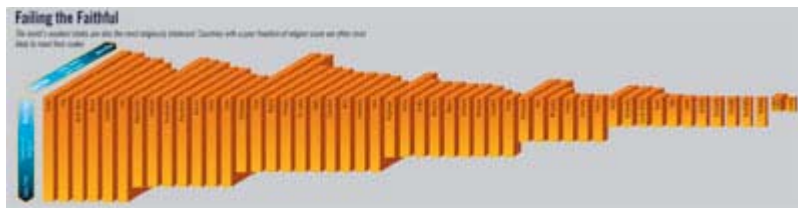
The vast majority of the states listed in the index have not yet failed; they exhibit severe weaknesses that leave them vulnerable, especially to shocks such as natural disasters, war, and economic deprivation. The power of such events should not be underestimated. The war in Lebanon last summer helped undo nearly two decades of economic and political progress. But Lebanon was vulnerable because its political and security structures lacked integrity and remained tensely divided by factionalized elites. Those vulnerabilities not only helped turn the clock back on the country's development, but they reverberated across the region—into Israel, Jordan, and Syria. It shows again that a country's problems are never simply its own. That conclusion becomes especially worrisome when the weak states in question possess nuclear weapons. Today, two countries among the world's 15 most vulnerable, North Korea and Pakistan, are members of the nuclear club. Their profiles could hardly be less similar: The former faces the very real prospect of economic collapse, followed by massive human flight, while the latter presides over a lawless frontier country and a disenchanting Islamist opposition whose ranks grow by the day.

But while these states' failings may be frequent fodder for headlines around the world, it is obvious that there are few easy answers to their troubles. In highlighting which states are at the greatest risk of failure, we can only hope that more effective and long-term solutions emerge over time as we compare the index from year to year. In that way, positive reversals of fortune can occur for the world's most vulnerable nations and, in the process, improve the security and prosperity of everyone.

Failing the Faithful

The world's weakest states are also the most religiously intolerant. Countries with a poor freedom of religion score are often most likely to meet their maker.

Freedom of worship may be a cornerstone of democracy, but it may also be a key indicator of stability. Vulnerable states display a greater degree of religious intolerance, according to scores calculated by the Hudson Institute's Center for Religious Freedom. Persecution of religious minorities in Bangladesh, Burma, Iran, and Uzbekistan has deprived millions of faithful of the freedom to follow their beliefs. But religious repression is often nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to muzzle the country's civil society. In Zimbabwe, religious leaders were targeted recently as some of the last remaining outspoken voices of opposition in the country. And in Belarus, President Aleksandr Lukashenko has severely curtailed religious freedom in order to quash movements he deems bearers of foreign political influence. It seems the leaders of many failing states distrust any higher power that may be greater than their own.



[View the full chart](#)

The Best and the Worst

This year, several vulnerable states took a step back from the brink.

No question, 2006 was a lousy year for Iraq.” It was an odd statement to come from a normally upbeat U.S. President George W. Bush, but few would disagree. An ever worsening spiral of violence in Iraq, and bloody conflicts in Afghanistan, East Timor, and Somalia ensured that 2006 could understandably go down in the history books as a lousy year for many countries, not least Iraq.

But amid these poor performers, a few bright spots emerged. Several failing states made impressive gains, often thanks to historic turns at the ballot box. The first direct elections were held in December in Indonesia’s Aceh Province, host to a three-decade-long separatist war that ended in a truce in 2005. Former rebel leader Irwandi Yusuf, who escaped from jail after his prison was destroyed by the December 2004 tsunami, was elected governor, sidelining former elites who had long monopolized power. And in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the first multiparty elections in more than 40 years helped improve the state’s legitimacy in the eyes of its impoverished populace, though the country remains vulnerable to militia violence.

Country	Change*
Better	
Liberia	+6.1
Indonesia	+4.8
Dem. Rep. of the Congo	+4.6
Bosnia	+4.0
Worse	
Lebanon	-11.9
Somalia	-5.2
Equatorial Guinea	-4.2
Niger	-4.2

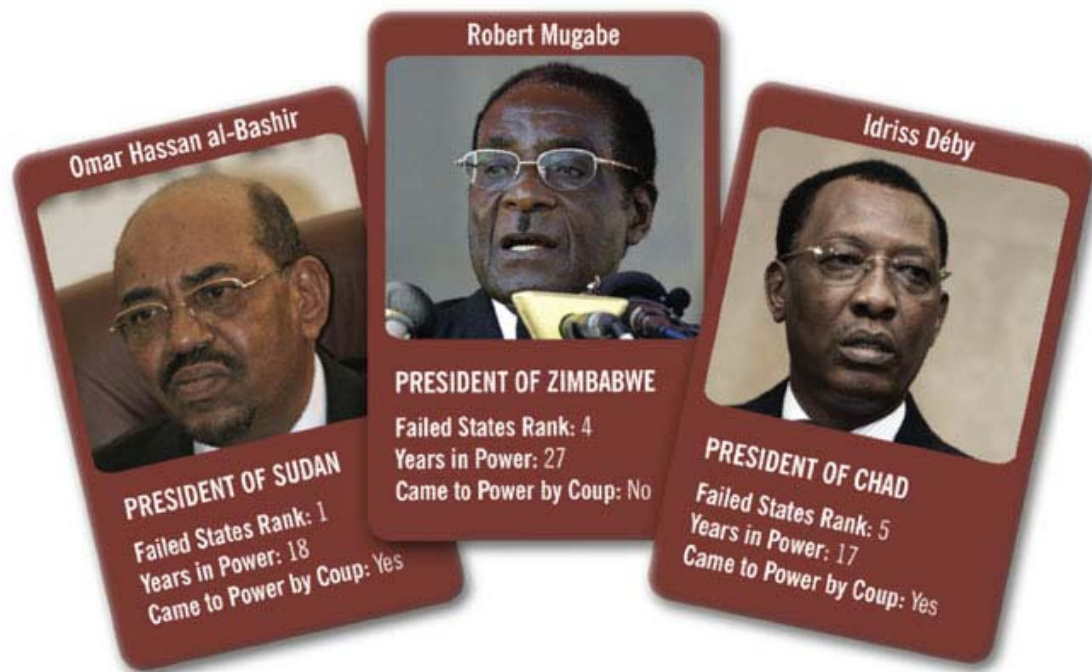
*As measured in index points

But Liberia wins the honor of the year’s most improved, gaining six points over last year’s index score. There, too, a November 2005 election, held after more than a decade of civil war, can be credited with bringing much-needed stability to the country and laying the ground for last year’s notable progress. Although 14,000 U.N. peacekeepers remain in Liberia, its economy is growing at 7 percent, militias have been demobilized, and President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf has led efforts to combat endemic corruption, including the arrests of high-ranking government officials for graft.

Liberia’s neighbor in the rankings, however, took this year’s largest tumble. Lebanon dropped nearly 12 points in the index, giving it a total score just a hair shy of Liberia’s. The war in Lebanon last year reversed much of the progress made since the end of its own civil war in 1990. Israeli air strikes drove more than 700,000 Lebanese from their homes and did an estimated \$2.8 billion in damage to the country’s infrastructure. A political crisis has the current government deadlocked and the country’s economy remains weak. It shows that two states with similar ratings can be on vastly different trajectories, one headed toward stability and one backsliding toward failure.

Leading the Way to the Bottom

Many states must endure poverty, corruption, and natural disasters. But, for the weak, there is nothing more costly than a strongman calling the shots.



History is full of brutal leaders who have plunged their lands into poverty and war through greed, corruption, and violence. And though many events—natural disasters, economic shocks, an influx of refugees from a neighboring country—can lead to state failure, few are as decisive or as deadly as bad leadership.

This year's index reveals that while failing states like Iraq and Somalia may suffer from poor governance, they are kept company by a number of countries ruled by long-serving strongmen who have presided over their nations' collapse. Three of the five worst performing states—Chad, Sudan, and Zimbabwe—have leaders who have been in power for more than 15 years.

But the problem is not restricted to sub-Saharan Africa. Uzbekistan's President Islam Karimov, who has continued a brutal crackdown on dissent since the massacre of hundreds of unarmed protesters in May 2005, has been in power since 1991. Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak, who has clung to power for the past quarter century, is now orchestrating his own succession, with his son as the heir apparent. And Yemen's President Ali Abdullah Saleh, who has ruled since 1978, was overwhelmingly reelected to another seven-year term last September in an election roundly condemned by the opposition as fraudulent.

Likewise, effective leadership can pull a state back from the brink. Indonesia's first directly elected president, Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono, has helped steer the country, long marred by endemic corruption and devastated by the 2004 tsunami, toward greater stability since coming into office three years ago. He has initiated reform of the country's crooked security sector, negotiated a peace agreement with rebels in Aceh Province, and made moderate improvements in government services. These efforts haven't necessarily made him popular. But then, such leadership is exactly what more failing states need: a head of state who chooses continued reforms over his own power and recognition.

Nature vs. Nurture

As the world warms, states at risk face severe threats to their groundwater, agriculture, and ecosystems, factors that can rapidly undo political and economic gains. This year's index found a strong correlation between stability and environmental sustainability, a country's ability to avoid environmental disaster and deterioration. That means that in poorly performing states on the edge, including Bangladesh, Egypt, and Indonesia, the risks of flooding, drought, and deforestation have little chance of being properly managed. And that suggests storms are brewing on the horizon for the world's most vulnerable.



There Goes the Neighborhood

In some of the world's most dangerous regions, failure doesn't stop at the border's edge. It's contagious.

It is no coincidence that many of the world's failing states tend to cluster together. Porous borders, cultural affinity, and widespread underdevelopment often bind populations. And when some live in a failing state, their woes can quickly spill over into a neighbor's backyard.

Nowhere to Run

The violence in Darfur has created the most extreme ripple effect. The Sudanese government has been accused of backing rebel groups in both Chad and the Central African Republic, creating hundreds of thousands of additional refugees. Vast camps throughout the region are vulnerable to the violent, marauding militias that have terrorized Darfur for the past four years.



States of Disorder

Somalia, hostage to factional fighting between warlords for more than 15 years, convulsed with violence in 2006, when short-lived stability installed by the Union of Islamic Courts was upended by the invasion of Ethiopian troops in favor of an interim government. Over the years, refugees from the fighting have spilled into Ethiopia, Eritrea, and Kenya, destabilizing a large portion of the Horn of Africa.

Sowing Instability

Fighting by a resurgent Taliban in Afghanistan and in the lawless Northwest Frontier Province of Pakistan has the potential to spread instability across Central Asia. Pakistan and Uzbekistan have shown only marginal gains in their index scores during the past year and are at risk not only from spillover but from growing internal dissent. But it is Afghanistan's record poppy yield that has neighboring states most concerned. Drug trafficking routes, fueled by underground heroin factories, cut swaths through the former Soviet republics to the north, bringing crime, addiction, and HIV/AIDS in their wake.



Long Division

What holds back many of the world's most fragile regimes is that they were never truly in charge in the first place.

When it comes to assessing state failure, some countries emerge with split personalities. That is, states may be the picture of stability, peace, and economic growth in some areas, yet no-go zones in others. A dozen countries among the 60 most vulnerable contain "virtual states," areas that are essentially self-governing, but claimed by the central government.

In the former Soviet republic of Georgia, the two breakaway regions of Abkhazia and South Ossetia have built parallel governing structures. Both regions, heavily supported by Russian security forces and economic aid, continue to reject Tbilisi's authority. In Colombia, the narcoterrorist insurgency movement FARC controls a large swath of territory and is known to provide both basic social services and security to the people living outside of Bogotá's reach. And the former British protectorate of Somaliland declared independence from Mogadishu in 1991, despite falling within the internationally recognized borders of the Somali state.

Governments will often go to great lengths to regain such breakaway regions, and their efforts can be tremendously costly. A brutal 2002 civil war aimed at retaking the rebel-held northern half of the Ivory Coast split the country in two, blunting its otherwise impressive economic growth and leaving thousands of U.N. forces to keep the peace. In Pakistan, government efforts to crack down on suspected al Qaeda operatives in the restive border regions have led to violent protests. And attempts by the Sri Lankan government to regain territory from the Tamil Tigers last year sparked some of the worst violence in the country in years.

Ultimately, some countries, such as Slovakia and the Czech Republic, have found greater stability and prosperity as separate entities. Serbia and Montenegro split peacefully in June 2006, unusual in a region where separation usually comes at the cost of bloodshed. But for the split-personality states that appear on this year's index, the decision to go separate ways seems remote. And that may make their hopes for stability equally unlikely.

The Rankings

The columns highlight the 12 political, economic, military, and social indicators of instability. For each indicator, the highest score (greater instability) is in black; the lowest score (less instability) is in white.

			Indicators of Instability											
Rank	Total	Country	Demographic Pressures	Refugees and Displaced Persons	Group Grievance	Human Flight	Uneven Development	Economy	Delegitimation of State	Public Services	Human Rights	Security Apparatus	Factionalized Elites	External Intervention
1	113.7	Sudan	9.2	9.8	10.0	9.0	9.1	7.7	10.0	9.5	10.0	9.9	9.7	9.8
2	111.4	Iraq	9.0	9.0	10.0	9.5	8.5	8.0	9.4	8.5	9.7	10.0	9.8	10.0
3	111.1	Somalia	9.2	9.0	8.5	8.0	7.5	9.2	10.0	10.0	9.7	10.0	10.0	10.0
4	110.1	Zimbabwe	9.7	8.7	8.8	9.1	9.5	10.0	9.5	9.6	9.7	9.5	9.0	7.0
5	108.8	Chad	9.1	8.9	9.5	7.9	9.0	8.3	9.5	9.1	9.2	9.6	9.7	9.0
6	107.3	Ivory Coast	8.6	8.3	9.8	8.4	8.0	8.9	9.5	7.9	9.2	9.6	9.3	9.8
7	105.5	Dem. Rep. of the Congo	9.4	8.9	8.8	7.6	9.1	8.0	8.3	8.7	8.9	9.6	8.6	9.6
8	102.3	Afghanistan	8.5	8.9	9.1	7.0	8.0	8.3	8.8	8.0	8.2	9.0	8.5	10.0
9	101.3	Guinea	7.8	7.4	8.1	8.3	8.5	8.5	9.6	8.9	8.6	8.1	9.0	8.5
10	101.0	Central African Republic	8.9	8.4	8.8	5.5	8.6	8.4	9.0	8.0	8.2	8.9	9.3	9.0
11	100.9	Haiti	8.6	4.2	8.0	8.0	8.2	8.4	9.2	9.0	9.1	9.3	9.3	9.6
12	100.1	Pakistan	8.2	8.5	9.0	8.1	8.5	5.8	8.7	7.1	8.7	9.5	9.5	8.5
13	97.7	North Korea	8.0	6.0	7.2	5.0	8.8	9.6	9.8	9.5	9.7	8.3	7.9	7.9
14	97.0	Burma	8.5	8.5	9.1	6.0	8.9	7.6	9.1	8.3	9.8	9.0	8.2	4.0
15	96.4	Uganda	8.1	9.4	8.5	6.0	8.5	7.5	8.5	8.2	8.2	8.3	7.8	7.4
16	95.9	Bangladesh	8.6	5.8	9.6	8.4	9.0	6.9	9.0	7.4	7.8	8.0	9.5	5.9
17	95.6	Nigeria	8.2	5.6	9.5	8.5	9.1	5.4	9.1	8.7	7.1	9.2	9.5	5.7
18	95.3	Ethiopia	9.0	7.9	7.8	7.5	8.6	8.0	7.9	7.0	8.5	7.5	8.9	6.7
19	95.2	Burundi	9.1	8.9	6.7	6.7	8.8	8.2	7.1	8.9	7.5	6.8	7.5	9.0
20	94.9	Timor-Leste	8.1	8.5	7.1	5.3	6.5	8.5	9.5	7.9	6.9	9.0	8.8	8.8
21	93.6	Nepal	8.1	5.2	8.9	6.1	9.2	8.2	8.5	6.6	8.8	8.3	8.5	7.2
22	93.5	Uzbekistan	7.7	5.4	7.1	7.1	8.6	7.5	9.2	6.8	9.0	8.9	9.2	7.0
23	93.4	Sierra Leone	8.6	7.4	7.1	8.7	8.7	8.7	8.0	8.0	7.0	6.5	7.7	7.0
24	93.2	Yemen	8.0	6.7	7.3	7.2	8.7	8.0	7.8	8.1	7.2	8.0	9.0	7.2
25	93.1	Sri Lanka	7.0	8.6	9.5	6.9	8.2	6.0	8.9	6.5	7.5	8.7	9.2	6.1
26	93.0	Republic of the Congo	8.7	7.3	6.8	6.1	8.1	8.3	8.5	8.8	7.9	7.9	7.2	7.4
27	92.9	Liberia	8.1	8.5	6.5	6.8	8.3	8.4	7.0	8.6	6.7	6.9	8.1	9.0
28	92.4	Lebanon	6.9	8.6	9.0	7.0	7.1	6.3	7.3	6.4	7.0	9.0	8.8	9.0
29	92.2	Malawi	9.0	6.0	6.0	8.0	8.8	9.2	7.9	9.0	8.0	5.4	7.5	7.4
30	92.0	Solomon Islands	8.5	4.8	8.0	5.1	8.0	8.0	8.5	8.5	7.1	7.7	8.8	9.0
31	91.3	Kenya	8.4	8.0	6.9	8.0	8.1	7.0	8.0	7.4	7.0	7.1	8.2	7.2
32	91.2	Niger	9.2	5.9	8.9	6.0	7.2	9.2	8.2	8.8	7.1	6.7	6.0	8.0
33	89.7	Colombia	6.8	9.5	7.4	8.4	8.4	3.8	8.2	6.0	7.4	8.3	8.5	7.0
33	89.7	Burkina Faso	8.6	5.6	6.4	6.6	8.9	8.2	7.6	8.9	6.6	7.6	7.7	7.0
35	89.4	Cameroon	7.0	6.8	7.0	7.9	8.7	6.1	8.5	7.5	7.2	7.7	8.0	7.0
36	89.2	Egypt	7.7	6.5	7.8	6.2	7.8	7.0	9.0	6.7	8.5	6.1	8.3	7.6
36	89.2	Rwanda	9.1	7.0	8.7	7.6	7.1	7.5	8.5	6.9	7.4	4.6	8.2	6.6
38	88.8	Guinea-Bissau	7.6	6.5	5.4	7.0	8.6	8.0	7.2	8.5	8.0	8.0	6.8	7.2
39	88.7	Tajikistan	7.7	6.1	6.3	6.4	7.3	7.3	9.0	7.3	8.6	7.8	8.8	6.1
40	88.6	Syria	6.5	8.9	8.0	6.8	8.1	6.8	8.5	5.3	8.5	7.4	7.5	6.3
41	88.2	Equatorial Guinea	8.0	2.0	7.0	7.4	9.0	4.0	9.4	8.6	9.4	8.9	8.5	6.0
41	88.2	Kirgizstan	7.5	6.2	6.8	7.4	8.0	7.5	8.2	6.3	7.9	7.9	7.5	7.0
43	87.5	Turkmenistan	7.0	4.5	6.2	5.6	7.3	7.4	9.0	7.7	9.6	8.5	8.2	6.5
44	87.2	Laos	8.0	5.5	6.5	6.6	5.7	7.1	7.9	8.0	8.5	8.2	8.6	6.6
45	86.7	Mauritania	8.7	6.2	8.0	5.0	7.0	7.8	6.8	8.1	7.1	7.4	7.9	6.7
46	86.6	Togo	7.5	5.4	6.0	6.5	7.5	8.2	7.7	8.0	7.8	7.8	7.6	6.6
47	86.4	Bhutan	6.5	7.5	7.0	6.7	8.7	7.9	8.0	6.5	8.5	4.6	8.0	6.5
48	85.7	Cambodia	7.6	5.9	7.3	8.0	7.2	6.4	8.5	7.6	7.1	6.2	7.5	6.4
48	85.7	Moldova	7.0	4.7	7.3	8.4	7.5	7.5	7.9	7.1	6.8	6.3	7.5	7.7
50	85.5	Eritrea	8.1	7.1	5.4	6.0	5.9	8.4	8.3	7.7	7.4	7.5	7.2	6.5
51	85.2	Belarus	8.0	4.6	6.5	5.0	7.5	6.8	9.1	6.9	8.5	6.7	8.5	7.1
52	85.1	Papua New Guinea	7.5	3.5	8.0	7.9	9.0	7.3	7.8	7.8	6.1	7.0	6.7	6.5
53	84.9	Angola	8.5	7.5	5.9	5.0	8.7	4.2	8.6	7.7	7.5	6.2	7.5	7.6
54	84.5	Bosnia	6.1	8.0	8.3	6.0	7.2	6.0	7.6	5.6	5.3	7.3	8.3	8.8
55	84.4	Indonesia	7.0	7.5	6.0	7.5	8.0	6.5	6.5	7.0	7.0	7.3	7.2	6.9
56	83.2	Philippines	7.0	5.7	7.2	6.7	7.6	5.8	8.2	5.9	6.8	7.6	7.8	6.9
57	82.8	Iran	6.2	8.6	7.1	5.0	7.2	3.3	7.8	5.7	8.7	8.3	8.9	6.0
58	82.3	Georgia	6.3	6.8	7.6	5.7	7.0	5.7	7.9	6.1	5.4	7.8	7.8	8.2
59	82.0	Bolivia	7.4	3.7	7.0	7.0	8.5	6.4	7.2	7.4	7.0	6.2	8.3	5.9
60	81.4	Guatemala	7.0	6.0	7.1	6.7	8.0	7.0	7.4	6.6	7.1	7.3	5.9	5.3

FAQ and Methodology

Q: How many countries are included in the Failed States Index?

A: There are 177 states included in the 2007 index, compared to 148 in 2006 and 75 in 2005. A small handful of countries were not included because of a lack of data. The Fund for Peace (FFP) is working to improve data collection and analysis, and its principal information provider, Thomson Dialog, is constantly adding additional sources.

Q: What methodology was used for the ratings?

A: The Fund for Peace used its Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST), an original methodology it has developed and tested over the past decade. CAST is a flexible model that has the capability to employ a four-step trend-line analysis, consisting of (1) rating 12 social, economic, and political/military indicators; (2) assessing the capabilities of five core state institutions considered essential for sustaining security; (3) identifying idiosyncratic factors and surprises; and (4) placing countries on a conflict map that shows the risk history of countries being analyzed.

For the Failed States Index, FfP focused solely on the first step, which provides snapshots of state vulnerability or risk of violence during a window in time. The CAST software indexed and scanned tens of thousands of open-source articles and reports using Boolean logic. The data are electronically gathered using Thomson Dialog, a powerful data-collection system that includes international and local media reports and other public documents, including U.S. State Department reports, independent studies, and even corporate financial filings. The data used in each index are collected from May to December of the preceding year. The software calculates the number of positive and negative “hits” for the 12 indicators. Internal and external experts then review the scores as well as the articles themselves, when necessary, to confirm the scores and ensure accuracy.

Q: What are the 12 indicators of state vulnerability?

A: [Click here](#) to obtain a full list of the 12 indicators .

Q: What do the colors in the index and on the map signify?

A: The rank order of the states is based on the total scores of the 12 indicators. For each indicator, the ratings are placed on a scale of 0 to 10, with 0 being the lowest intensity (most stable) and 10 being the highest intensity (least stable). The total score is the sum of the 12 indicators and is on a scale of 0–120.

In the article, the 60 countries in the index are divided into three equal parts for easy reference: Critical (red), In Danger (orange), and Borderline (yellow). On the index's global map, additional countries that scored higher than 60 are colored yellow. Countries with scores between 30 and 59.9 are considered Stable (light green). Countries that have scores lower than 30 are categorized as Most Stable (dark green).

This coloring scheme differs slightly from the original FfP methodology, which it still employs in its reports, such as the Iraq Reports and Country Profiles . FfP's original methodology breaks the countries into four colored zones based on their aggregate scores. A country in the “Alert” zone has an aggregate score between 90 and 120. A country that is colored orange, the “Warning” zone, scores between 60 and 89.9. A country colored yellow, the “Monitoring” zone, has an aggregate score between 30 and 59.9. A country colored green, the “Sustainable” zone, has an aggregate score of 29.9 or less.

It is important to note that these ratings do not necessarily forecast when states may experience violence or collapse. Rather, they measure vulnerability to collapse or conflict. All countries in the red, orange, or yellow categories display features that make significant parts of their societies and institutions vulnerable to failure. The pace and direction of change, either positive or negative, varies. Some in the yellow zone may be failing at a faster rate than those in the more dangerous orange or red zones, and therefore could experience violence sooner. Conversely, some in the red zone, though critical, may exhibit some positive signs of recovery or be deteriorating slowly, giving them time to adopt mitigating strategies. (Further insights will be available when the CAST methodology is applied over different time periods.)

Q: What does “state failure” mean?

A: A state that is failing has several attributes. One of the most common is the loss of physical control of its territory or a monopoly on the legitimate use of force. Other attributes of state failure include the erosion of legitimate authority to make collective decisions, an inability to

provide reasonable public services, and the inability to interact with other states as a full member of the international community. The 12 indicators cover a wide range of elements of the risk of state failure, such as extensive corruption and criminal behavior, inability to collect taxes or otherwise draw on citizen support, large-scale involuntary dislocation of the population, sharp economic decline, group-based inequality, institutionalized persecution or discrimination, severe demographic pressures, brain drain, and environmental decay. States can fail at varying rates through explosion, implosion, erosion, or invasion over different time periods.

Q: How has the methodology been critically reviewed, and how has it been applied?

A: During the past decade, the CAST methodology has been peer reviewed in several different environments, including by independent scholars and experts as well as educational, government, and private-sector agencies and institutions that have evaluated it for alternative uses. In each application, CAST is refined and updated. Governments use it, among other things, for early warning and to design economic assistance strategies that can reduce the potential for conflict and promote development in fragile states. The military uses it to strengthen situational awareness, enhance readiness, and apply strategic metrics to evaluate success in peace and stability operations. The private sector uses it to calculate political risk for investment opportunities. Multinational organizations and a range of other entities find it useful for modeling and gaming, management of complex organizations, and for conflict-risk assessments. Educators use it to train students in analyzing war and peace issues by blending the techniques of information technology with social science. And the countries being rated use it for self-assessment to gauge their own stability and performance on objective criteria.

Q: Who created the Failed States Index?

A: It was a team effort. In addition to outside experts who helped FfP develop the methodology during its years of testing and validation, the core FfP team consists of Pauline H. Baker (president of the FfP), Krista Hendry and Patricia Taft (senior associates), Mark Loucas, Joelle Burbank, and Nate Haken (research associates), and Shawn Rowley (senior software engineer). The article on the index in Foreign Policy was done in collaboration with its editors.

Q: What can be done to avert further weakening of states at risk and to stimulate recovery?

A: The Failed States Index presents a diagnosis of the problem, the first step in devising strategies for strengthening weak and failing states. The more reliably policymakers can anticipate, monitor, and measure problems, the more they can act to prevent violent breakdowns, protect civilians caught in the crossfire, and promote recovery. At the same time, policymakers must focus on building the institutional capacity of weak states, particularly the “core five” institutions: military, police, civil service, the system of justice, and leadership. Policies should be tailored to the needs of each state, monitored and evaluated intensively, and changed, as necessary, if recovery is not occurring as intended. Continuous monitoring of the measures, using the same assessment methodology, can inform decision making on strategies and programs.

Q: Are there examples of states that have pulled back from the brink of failure?

A: Yes. The most dramatic ones are those that did it without outside military or administrative intervention. In the 1970s, analysts predicted dire consequences, including mass famine and internal violence in India, citing rapid population growth, economic mismanagement, and extensive poverty and corruption. Today, India has turned itself around. It is the world's largest democracy, with a competitive economy and a representative political system. Similarly, South Africa appeared headed for a violent race war in the 1980s, but it pulled back from the brink in a negotiated settlement that ushered in a new era of majority rule, a liberal constitution, and the destruction of its nuclear weapons program. In the past year, since the 2006 index, several countries that were teetering on the edge improved measurably. Liberia,

after experiencing years of civil war, has made steady progress due in large part to the leadership of President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf and her efforts to combat corruption. Elections last year in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have helped bring some stability to the country after more than four decades of war. And Indonesia has made notable progress in negotiating an end to a three-decade-long separatist war in Aceh Province, which hosted its first direct elections for governor in December 2006.

Q: Some studies suggest that wars are winding down. Your index suggests that there are a lot of conflicts in the making. Which is correct?

A: Both are correct, in different senses. In essence, scholars agree that interstate wars are declining but that internal conflicts have been increasing since the end of the Cold War. The frequency, duration, and intensity of these conflicts vary. The 2005 Peace and Conflict report produced by the University of Maryland argues that there has been “a decline in the global magnitude of armed conflict,” but it also states that “half of the world’s countries have serious weaknesses that call for international scrutiny and engagement.” The 2005 Human Security Report, published by Canada’s Human Security Centre at the University of British Columbia, calculated that there has been a decline in the number of wars, genocides, and human rights abuses over the past decade due to international peace efforts since the Cold War—citing U.N. and other diplomatic initiatives, economic sanctions, peacekeeping missions, and civil society activism. The important point is that weak and failing states represent a new class of conflict, not isolated events. Approximately 2 billion people live in countries that run a significant risk of collapse. These insecure and unstable states are breeding grounds for terrorism, organized crime, weapons proliferation, humanitarian emergencies, environmental degradation, and political extremism—threats that will affect everyone.

Q: Does the public have access to the data in this index?

A: The raw data are from millions of news articles and reports. As a practical matter, it is not readily transferable without the methodology and the software. However, the index values can be downloaded for free from the Web sites of [FfP](#) and [Foreign Policy](#).

Q: What is the Fund for Peace?

A: Founded in 1957 by investment banker Randolph Compton, FfP is an independent educational, research, and advocacy organization based in Washington, D.C. Its mission is to prevent war and alleviate the conditions that cause war. Since 1996, it has specialized primarily on reducing conflict stemming from weak and failing states. For more information, FfP invites you to visit its [website](#).

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