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# Transitioning Fragile States: A Sequencing Approach

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Fragile states are a broadly understood concept, within which one may include a variety of related terms including, but not limited to: weak states, failing and failed states, collapsed states, difficult partners, difficult environments, and Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS).<sup>1</sup> Fragile states lack the functional authority to provide basic security within their borders, the institutional capacity to provide basic social needs for their populations, and/or the political legitimacy to effectively represent their citizens at home and abroad. Although considerable research and resources have been devoted to fragile states in the last two decades, a lack of time series data on state fragility has prevented researchers from examining why certain countries remain trapped in fragility for extended periods of time, while others move in and out of fragility, or yet still, why some countries exit fragility and are now emergent or stabilized. This article will tackle this issue by examining case studies of three types of fragile states. In evaluating

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our data over more than a thirty-year period, we find that several countries are part of a group of failed and fragile states that are perpetually stuck in a “fragility trap.” These countries show little indication of lifting themselves out of their political, economic, and social malaise; they are some of the biggest recipients of Western aid dollars and, despite being resource rich in some cases, have the lowest per capita incomes in the world. Given that some of the worst performers have experienced protracted conflict, the real costs associated with these countries is much higher than simply tallying aid figures—instead, conflict management, regional instability, and loss of life and infrastructure must be factored in.

Fragile states, including those that are trapped, represent an unmet challenge to social science and policy; dominant frameworks and projects do not satisfactorily explain their dynamics and changes over time.<sup>2</sup> These states are a compelling area of study for several policy-relevant reasons. First, they are by definition characterized by unstable policy environments, which make engagement a long-term challenge. Second, they are defined by their level of structural complexity, making policy intervention difficult. Third, neglecting fragile states can be extremely costly in terms of poverty, the spread of disease and crime, and in terms of their impact on neighboring countries. Fourth, populations living in fragile states are further from achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) than any others on the planet.<sup>3</sup>

In this paper, state fragility can be understood as a composite measure of all aspects of state performance, producing a ranking that would be most closely associated with those countries that have typically “failed” at the top of the list. This would be a list that most policymakers and academics would recognize, and indeed if one surveys the vast literature on fragility and the various rankings available it is clear that such lists do not vary considerably in terms of which countries appear at the top.<sup>4</sup> Cases such as Somalia, Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and Sudan are perpetually present regardless of which index is consulted. Most of the thirty to fifty so-called “fragile” states are experiencing or have experienced large-scale violence, and most suffer from internal challenges to their authority structures. The result to date has been a number of studies that limit themselves mostly to a specific case study approach. Though clearly valuable, this methodological choice has limited our understanding of the broader context of fragile state processes. Without a suitable integrative and comparative framework, research conducted from a theoretical perspective on fragile states cannot provide the proper context for sound resource allocation.<sup>5</sup>

Our program of research is premised on the idea that state fragility is a convergence of structural changes and events that might include large-scale conflict, disengaged leadership, failure to provide long-term service delivery, or the loss of legitimacy leading to political collapse. At the heart of our analysis is the assumption that effective policies on fragile states will arise from long-term investment in the early warning, monitoring, and evaluation of these processes, coupled with integrated and targeted resource allocation. As noted above, our research objective is to find out why, over the past three decades, some countries previously considered fragile have successfully recovered and become resilient, functional, and effective while others have been less successful in doing so.

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Existing research has not adequately addressed the sequencing of fragile state transitions or the timing of associated interventions that seek to strengthen those transitions. For our purposes, the term “sequencing” means the order in which authority, legitimacy, and capacity—defined further below—change over time. “Timing,” on the other hand, refers to the engagement by a third party—a donor or intervening force for example—to respond to these changes.

Therefore, strategic timing is a response to a sequence of changes within a fragile state in which a decision is made to allocate resources with the full understanding of the consequences of that resource allocation. Although successful transitions are primarily domestic processes involving local actors, the role of international actors, while limited, remains very important. In addition to aid, the donor community can contribute to supporting and facilitating political and institutional processes in order to strengthen the basis for resilience. This could include making political settlements, working to underpin the state’s responsiveness to effectively provide key services, and supporting legitimate forms of societal and political pressures that will determine how a state should function.

The rest of the article proceeds as follows. First, we discuss how we conceptualize fragility and present some basic findings from our newly-revised dataset. Second, we describe the methodology for the selection of cases by building on a general theory of fragility and marshalling macro-level evidence

in support of its arguments for the different cases examined. In particular, we focus on three types of countries: those that are stuck in a fragility trap, those that have exited fragility and are now emergent and stabilized, and those that have moved in and out of fragility—all between 1980 and 2010. Third, we examine the evolution of performance indicators for a few of these states. Finally, we conclude with policy implications and directions for future research.

### CONCEPTUALIZING FRAGILITY

Although there is no consensus regarding the use of the term, “state fragility” is now widely discussed in both academic and policy circles as a result of the interrelated aspects of poverty, conflict, and stability—to be examined below. Each existing definition of fragility tends to emphasize certain aspects more than others, yet produce highly correlated rankings. As used in this paper, state fragility is the product or convergence of three interconnected, and sometimes contradictory, policy-inspired research streams: development-oriented, conflict-oriented, and stability-oriented.

The development-oriented is largely motivated by the poor track-record of structural adjustment and market-friendly reforms conducted in several countries, earning the latter the label of “difficult partners” or “difficult environments” and “Low Income Countries Under Stress (LICUS).” The development-stream has drawn support from the World Bank, the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID), and the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). The second stream is conflict-focused, resulting from the 1990s development of early warning and conflict prevention tools at a time where the world shifted from interstate to intrastate conflicts in the final years of the Cold War and later responded to negative experiences like Rwanda, Sierra Leone, and Somalia. This has led to rankings, such as the Failed States Index of the Fund for Peace, that focus more on the effects rather than causes of instability or failure. However, this is of little use in identifying countries that could potentially fail in the medium or long term.<sup>6</sup> Finally, the stability-oriented stream relates to threats that weak and failed states pose to their neighbors and the international system—consider, for example, support of al-Qaeda by the Taliban in Afghanistan before September 11. Formerly known as the State Failure Task Force, the Political Instability Task Force (PITF) commissioned by the Clinton administration is an example of this third stream.

In this article, we use the state fragility index developed by the

Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project, which can be found at [www.carleton.ca/cifp](http://www.carleton.ca/cifp). In this conceptualization, the state is the primary unit of analysis and needs to exhibit the three fundamental properties of authority, legitimacy, and capacity (ALC) to function properly. The state is constrained by internal and external forces that are constantly changing over time; thus, fragility measures the extent to which the actual characteristics of a state differ from their best possible scores. All states are therefore fragile to some extent, and weaknesses in one or more of the ALC dimensions will negatively impact the fragility of a particular country.<sup>7</sup> Instead of categorizing states into “fragile” and “non-fragile” groups, we conceive of fragility as a matter of degree. In that sense, we need to consider not only the extreme cases of failing, failed, and collapsed states but also the ones that have the potential to fail (fragility scores of 6.5 and higher are considered serious—more on this below). In other words, structural characteristics and measures of performance are useful for understanding state fragility only if there are appropriate reference cases from which to compare. Since these reference points are themselves evolving over time, it is important to understand that “fragility” is a relative term and has meaning only with respect to state performance at specific points in comparison with other countries. In contrast, “state failure” typically connotes an end state characterized by, among other things, the emergence and predominance of non-state militias, large-scale violence, and regime collapse.<sup>8</sup>

“Authority” captures the extent to which a state possesses the ability to enact binding legislation over its population, to exercise coercive force over its sovereign territory, to provide core public goods, and to provide a stable and secure environment to its citizens and communities. “Legitimacy” describes the extent to which a particular government commands public loyalty to the governing regime and can generate domestic support for that government’s legislation and policy. “Capacity” refers to the potential for a state to mobilize and employ resources towards productive ends. States lacking in capacity are generally unable to provide services to their citizens and cannot respond effectively to sudden shocks such as natural disasters or food shortages. This ALC approach is, in effect, a synthesis of

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different theoretical foundations and the three overarching streams described above: development (as measured through indicators of capacity), conflict (as measured through indicators of authority), and security (as measured by indicators of legitimacy), each of which are covered in greater theoretical detail elsewhere.<sup>9</sup>

In order to arrive at a composite index for authority, legitimacy, and capacity for a particular country, different indicators are converted

..... to a nine-point score based on the performance of that country relative to a global sample of countries.<sup>10</sup> In other words, since indicators come in different units of measurement, they are converted in scores ranging from one to nine based on their overall ranking across countries. The overall

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fragility index is a simple unweighted average across all available indicators. A complete description of indicator selection and the methodology is available at [www.carleton.ca/cifp](http://www.carleton.ca/cifp) because of space limitation in this paper.

In general, a higher score is an indication that a country is performing poorly relative to other countries. To avoid wide fluctuations in yearly data for country performance, averages over a five-year time frame are calculated for global rank scores. Authority includes measures such as the level of corruption and contract regulation. Legitimacy includes measures such as regime type, human rights, and gender equality. Capacity includes measures such as Gross Domestic Product per capita and foreign aid as a percentage of national income, since many of the most fragile countries are heavily dependent on aid. Again, a full list of indicators can be found at [www.carleton.ca/cifp](http://www.carleton.ca/cifp) because of space limitation.

In addition to the ALC scores, we calculate for each state a fragility score, cluster scores (for governance, economics, security and crime, human development, demography, and the environment), and a score for the cross-cutting theme of gender equality.<sup>11</sup> By profiling countries along several dimensions, we are therefore able to identify their strengths and weaknesses. In our latest global fragility ranking released in 2012 (and using 2011 data), Somalia topped the list of most fragile countries, followed closely by Afghanistan, Chad, the DRC, and Yemen.

The ALC construct described above is more helpful for discussing timing and sequencing (as will be discussed below) than the overall index of fragility because it provides evidence of its multifaceted nature. Although some countries are weak along all dimensions, the situation for most is

more complex. For example, Pakistan, which has consistently been ranked in our top twenty most fragile states, faces the most difficult challenges to authority, despite doing relatively “better” on legitimacy and capacity scores. Countries that suffer from both authority and legitimacy challenges, such as Afghanistan, are also experiencing conflict. Not surprisingly perhaps, the states with the weakest capacity scores are in Africa, while low legitimacy and authority states represent a more geographically diverse group. Of course, those that show up repeatedly at the top of our rankings are those that face challenges in all three categories.

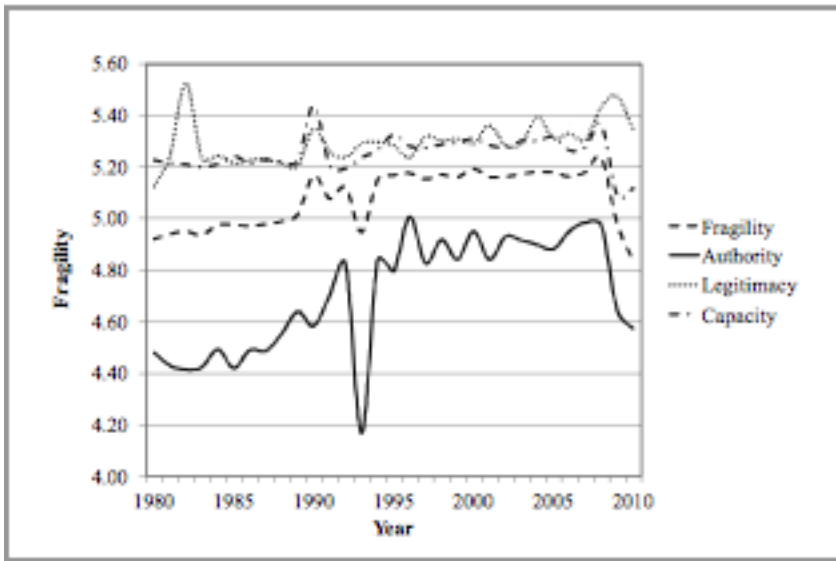
As can be seen in Figure 1 below, which tracks average data for all except high-income OECD countries, there is considerable variation in fragility and its ALC components over time. The long-term trend is that the developing world has become more fragile although with improvements in the last three years, despite deteriorations in capacity as a result of the global economic crisis. It is precisely the variation in ALC scores seen in Figure 1 below—but at the country level—that we want to exploit in order to understand transitions in fragile states. It is worth noting that authority scores tend to vary the most, as they are associated with factors such as internal conflicts and regime change and therefore are

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subject to rapidly stabilizing and destabilizing events. Although state *failure* is typically the result of a breakdown in authority structures, state *fragility* occurs as a result of transformations in A, L, and C. In the last section of this paper, we examine how the latter relates to one another across different country types. Furthermore, the utility of the ALC construct is clearly seen when examining country rankings across these different dimensions; other than the extremely weak states, states do not necessarily do poorly along all dimensions.<sup>12</sup>



FIGURE 1: EVOLUTION OF FRAGILITY, 1980–2010



### CASE SELECTION

We chose our cases based on a rank-ordering of countries according to their fragility scores. In particular, and for comparative purposes, we use our time series data over the period from 1980 to 2012 to select three types of countries: those that have been stuck in a fragility/failure trap (Type 1), those that have exited fragility and are now stabilized (Type 2), and those that have moved in and out of fragility (Type 3).

For Type 1 countries, we proceeded to rank all of the countries in our dataset according to their fragility scores for each year of data. We then considered the number of times they showed up in the top twenty ranking. While this is an extremely high threshold, it ensured that we only chose those states that were clearly stuck in a trap. Besides Afghanistan, which has ranked in the top twenty throughout the entire period, other candidates that showed up more than two times out of three in the top twenty included Pakistan, Angola, Sudan, Ethiopia, Somalia, the DRC, and Burundi. These are also countries that rank among the worst performers over the whole period when we calculate their average fragility scores. For Type 2 countries, we used our yearly country rankings to identify those that were fragile in earlier periods and were able to exit the top forty rankings for the last ten years or more. Countries in this category that stood out the most on the basis of their improved fragility scores include Algeria, Cambodia, Guatemala, Malawi, and Mozambique. Finally, for Type 3 countries, we considered those that moved in and out of the top forty ranked countries



in terms of fragility of which possible candidates include Guinea Bissau, Iran, Laos, Mali, Mauritania, and Senegal.

The following six countries were chosen for further analysis in the next section: Pakistan and the DRC (Type 1); Guatemala and Mozambique (Type 2); and Mali and Senegal (Type 3). Our choice was primarily guided by the criteria outlined above, but also to ensure regional coverage and comparability across cases. It must be noted that no single case can fully represent the class from which it is drawn; therefore, using two cases from each provides the basis for meaningful comparison and better theory construction. As we discuss further below, Pakistan and the DRC have both faced serious challenges to their authority structures, while Guatemala and Mozambique—which both have successfully emerged from years of conflict—have conversely seen important gains in authority. In the case of Mali and Senegal, there appears to be weaker relationships between poor capacity scores on the one hand, and changes in authority and legitimacy scores on the other.

## SEQUENCING AND TIMING: CASE STUDIES

### *Type 1: Pakistan and the DRC*

#### *Pakistan*

Pakistan belongs to a group of countries that, though not being considered outright failures, is particularly vulnerable to deficiencies in certain aspects of “stateness.” Pakistan is one of the Middle Income Failed or Fragile States (MIFFs).<sup>13</sup> MIFFs typically suffer from “undergoverned” spaces; in other words, just enough linkages to the world exist—including roads, telecommunications, and other infrastructure—to allow terrorists, drug lords, or other destabilizing non-state actors to operate, but the state does not have the effective control or state structures that would assist in purging such threats from the country. These are countries typically combining reasonable economic performance with poor governance.

Pakistan is the ninth most fragile country in our latest ranking. Broadly, Pakistan’s political history can be broken into four distinct periods from 1980 to 2010. Taken chronologically, the “Second Military Era,” from 1977 to 1988, is characterized primarily by the government’s religious conservatism and its policy of disbanding previously implemented socialist practices. From 1988 to 1999, democracy returned to the country in what is termed the “Third Democratic Era.” Perhaps not surprisingly,

authority fluctuated wildly during this time, as seen in Figure 2. This was most likely due to the volatile power struggle between the left-leaning party of Benazir Bhutto and the right-leaning party of Nawaz Sharif. A coup of the Sharif regime by General Pervez Musharraf and his allies ushered in the “Third Military Era,” lasting from 1999 to 2007. Finally, facing increasing political instability and pressure, Musharraf resigned and, in 2008, voters rejected Musharraf’s policies by electing left-wing socialist and right-wing conservatives to form an alliance against the Musharraf faithful.

ALC scores have improved since the election; correspondingly the Pakistan People’s Party recently became the first in the country’s history to complete an entire five-year electoral term. Currently, Raja Pervez Ashraf of the People’s Party is serving as a caretaker Prime Minister while the country readies itself for elections. As Pakistan’s inability to control internal conflict, environmental degradation, and development of a highly unequal society increases over time, the legitimacy of the government continues to erode. Thus challenges from within increase. A reinforced authority structure—a type of bureaucratic authoritarianism—has been in place since the 1950s. Although governance is a primary area of weakness particularly with regards to inclusiveness, transparency, and accountability, security concerns, both domestic and regional, tend to undermine attempts

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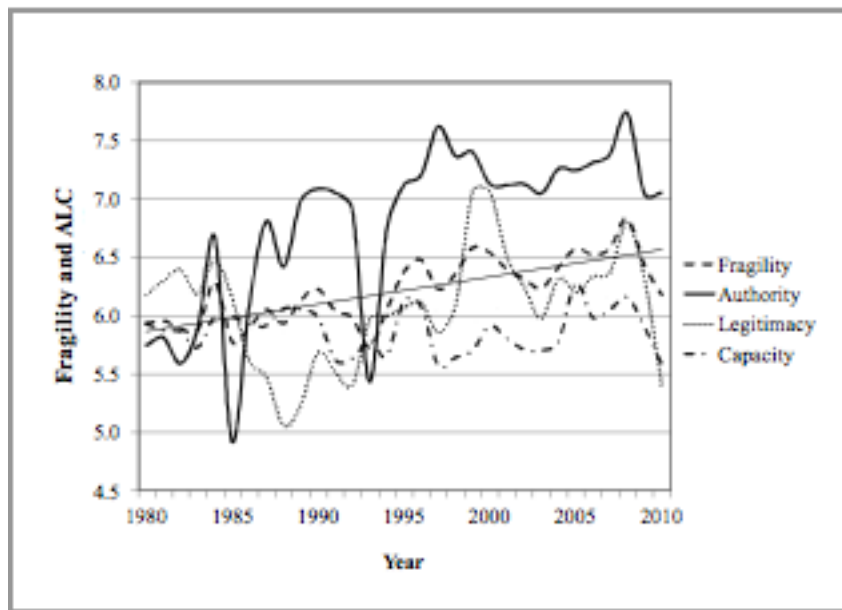
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to strengthen its internal governance structures. The grievances of many of the groups engaged in violent conflict in Pakistan stem largely from frustrations with its system of governance. This has led some to argue that the only way to hold an ethnically fractionalized and artificial country like Pakistan together is through strong-arm leadership. The key attributes of the governance structure are a highly centralized government, heavy investment in the military security apparatus and a very weak middle class.

..... An analysis of the country’s underlying risk factors shows that it faces significant performance challenges in all but a few of its core state functions. It is particularly weak in authority by our measurements because of challenges presented by various armed militant groups; this, despite receiving massive military aid from the United States since the September 11 attacks.

Furthermore, the government has been unable to extend effective control over the use of force throughout the country and faces secessionist movements from tribal and militant groups. State legitimacy is also challenged as attempts to retain control of the government and army draw protests from numerous quarters. To be sure, Pakistan's capacity is also at high-risk as the capacity of the state to respond to the needs of the population is weak. Although growth rates per capita have mostly been positive since the 1990s, poverty remains a challenge. The country is ranked in the medium human development category, only a few ranks above countries such as Angola, Madagascar, and Haiti. The absence of an efficient tax system means that the wealthy are largely untaxed with less than two percent of Pakistan's population paying income tax. This prevents any meaningful redistribution of income or the creation of a fiscal pact between government and taxpayers.

FIGURE 2: PAKISTAN, FRAGILITY AND ALC, 1980-2010



With respect to sequencing, we can see that when Pakistan experienced internal violence in the last few years, there was an effort to shore up existing authority structures—no matter how weak they were—as a bulwark against further decline. Shoring up these existing structures—as exemplified in the United States' long-term aid program for Pakistan as a result of its support for allies in the Global War on Terror—led to a distortion in both the selection of aid recipients in Pakistan and the type of aid provided. Thus, Pakistan has received a large amount of aid, despite being

a state with limited authority and capacity and regardless of the legitimacy of the regime in power. This has resulted in a state heavily dependent on external aid and often unstable over the long-term; in fact, these issues have been seen across multiple types of regimes. This shoring up of authority structures then results in a vicious cycle of further decline where both capacity and legitimacy are undermined, leading, in turn, to authority being further challenged.

Negative reinforcement of Pakistan's authority structures is achieved through an institutional system, political structure, and popular media in Pakistan that collectively reinforce the identity of state-centric nationalism. The Pakistani state is not so much subordinate to dominant ethnic groups as it works in partnership with them. This partnership is reinforced when regional minority groups challenge the state policies, itself a response generated by assimilative pressures, on in-migration, economic competition, and more recently political threats of secession. The net result is a lethal "policy feedback" process in which the central government's policies, in the form of entitlements for the majority ethnic groups, induce minority groups to organize for political action. This challenge in turn generates greater resistance to change from the state center. In sum, Pakistan suffers primarily from challenges to authority, via the proliferation of anti-government military groups, along with challenges to capacity due to weak institutions and a shallow tax base.

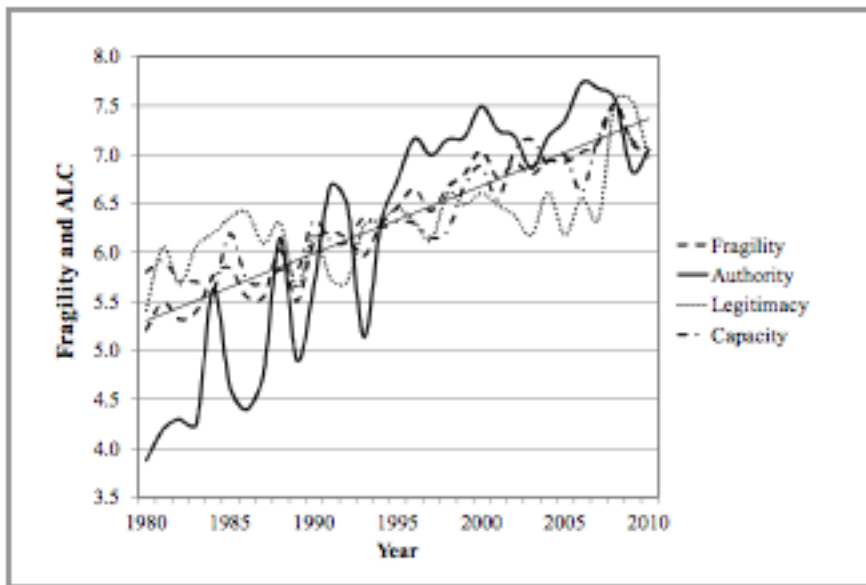
#### *The Democratic Republic of Congo*

The Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has a very long history of internal instability and violence that has caused the country's government to be challenged on almost every front: economically, politically, and regionally. The DRC is arguably the "poster child" of the fragility trap cases and falls victim to the three primary features of the "slow-growth-poor-governance equilibrium," namely political instability and violence, insecure property rights and unenforceable contracts, and corruption.<sup>14</sup> The country scores well below regional and global averages in terms of authority, legitimacy, and capacity. In fact, the DRC ranked among the top three of the most fragile states from 2002 to 2010. In 2011, it marginally improved its relative fragility score, coming in as the fourth most fragile state in the world.

Broadly speaking, the government's limited authority is reflected in its inability to control rebel group activity—particularly along the border with Rwanda—and to provide basic security to its citizens. Indeed, the

DRC's national armed forces are responsible for most of the reported incidents of civilian abuse. The country's legitimacy scores have occasionally improved when elections are held, but typically fall back thereafter. Moreover, its poor governance record and the persistent low-level violence between government and rebel forces heavily influence the DRC's structural baseline performance measure. Its capacity scores are largely a function of its abysmal economic development and place it among the worst in the world; the country is ranked at the very bottom of the Human Development Index. Its infant mortality rate is among the world's highest and less than half of the population has access to improved water and sanitation. By the first decade of the twenty-first century, the DRC was experiencing high growth rates largely because of an active mining sector, but this has not translated into tangible benefits at the local level. Corruption functions freely in a large and rapacious informal economy.

FIGURE 3: THE DRC, FRAGILITY AND ALC, 1980-2010



Security and crime related violence have long been high-risk areas for the DRC and reflect both internal rivalries and the general instability of the Great Lakes region. The history of civilian exploitation by the army continues to be a problem under the current regime. The DRC's neighbors have had a tradition of interference in its internal affairs for complex political, security, and economic reasons. Security, however, is the primary concern of neighboring states. Weak state capacity allows rebel groups to

operate in the DRC and launch attacks over its borders. Additionally, transitions in these countries have not been particularly democratic or smooth, which increases the likelihood of violent opposition. The prominence of armed forces in the political process adds to the destabilizing influences of regime change.<sup>15</sup>

When we examine the thirty-year trend line for the DRC, we can see that of the six countries under review, the DRC has the steepest trend upwards (see Figure 3 above). The country is indeed caught in a fragility trap in which wild swings in its authority scores—related to elections and the subsequent loss of political leadership—are reinforced by deteriorating capacity and legitimacy. The recent downswing in all three categories can

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only be considered a lull. The relative success of peacekeeping forces to quell violence, combined with economic growth, will not solve the underlying sources of instability in the country.

It is not surprising that numerous observers have made note of the dire situation in the DRC, with one such example being found in a 2009 article for *Foreign Policy Magazine* where Jeffrey Herbst and Greg Mills argue that “There Is No Congo.” Their thesis is summarized in the opening paragraph: “All of the peacekeeping missions, special envoys, interagency processes, and diplomatic initiatives that are predicated on the Congo myth—the notion that one sovereign power is present in this vast country—are doomed to fail.” A great deal of blood and treasure has been wasted in attempting to address this rampant humanitarian crisis, with “more than 18,400 United Nations peacekeeping troops and observers...stationed in Congo at an annual cost of \$1.24 billion.”<sup>16</sup> Thus far, the situation has at best stagnated and at worst deteriorated beyond the point of possible restoration. Addressing all of these issues is not an easy task, but better understanding them through this sequencing analysis is the first step.

Turning now to our working hypothesis, we find that the sequencing of Pakistan’s increasing fragility appears to begin with deterioration in its authority structures, which rather than being adaptively modified in a positive way are negatively reinforced by internal and external forces. The consequence of this is increasing instability over the short run. Similarly, the DRC remains stuck in a fragility trap as long as gains in capacity are

not matched by improvements in authority and, to some extent, legitimacy. Thus, we believe that countries stuck in a fragility trap are stuck precisely because of problems related to their authority structures. The sequencing of positive changes in these countries would be one that focuses on first addressing authority structures, and then addressing legitimacy to buttress that authority, and then finally capacity.

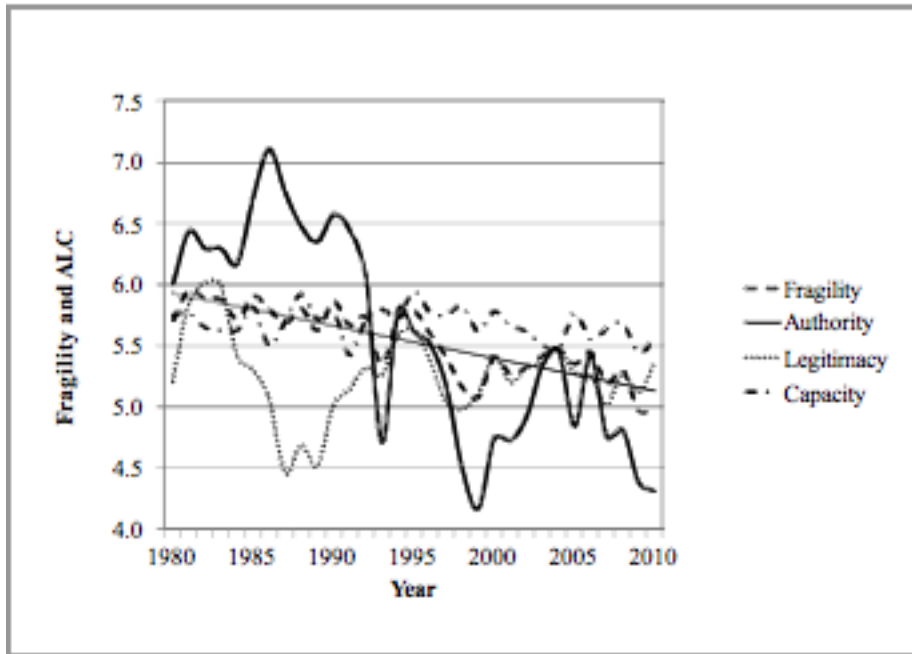
***Type 2: Guatemala and Mozambique***

*Guatemala*

Unlike the Type 1 countries, Guatemala, a lower middle-income country, is not facing high prospects of collapse. Its economy has grown at an average of 3.3 percent in the last decade.<sup>17</sup> Since the end of its thirty-six year civil war in 1996 with peace accords presided over by the Arzú administration, Guatemala has moved out of the top forty fragile states. In fact, its ranking for 2011 was seventy-five. The signing of the peace accords, which included comprehensive blueprints for political, social, and economic reforms, led to the demobilization of guerrillas, the reduction of government armed forces, better public institutions, improvements in health and education, and continued presidential elections. Much progress has been made in achieving democratic and economic stability. Challenges to authority, which were very common in the 1980s, have declined substantially and are largely responsible for the downward trend in fragility—despite almost no discernible change in legitimacy and capacity (see Figure 4 below). Local and national elections are regularly held and political violence has leveled off with the end of the civil war, but this has been replaced by increased violence largely related to the drugs trade. Growing insecurity was a major issue in the most recent presidential elections held in November 2011, with the winner, retired General Otto Perez Molino, promising to take a tough stand on crime.



FIGURE 4: GUATEMALA, FRAGILITY AND ALC, 1980-2010



Due to the various challenges that the country still faces, Guatemala's relatively low overall fragility ranking is surprising. In particular, its geographical position between some the largest producers and consumers of cocaine means that an increasing share of the global drug trade transits through its territory, leading to major security challenges. Homicide rates have been on the rise in the past decade from approximately 26 -38.5 per 100,000 inhabitants from 2000 to 2011, and are now higher than in Colombia and Mexico.<sup>18</sup> Moreover, corruption remains a major problem and is on the rise again after some improvements in previous years. The drug trade plays an important role in the corruption of the police and legal apparatus; it also represents an important source of revenue for the youth gangs responsible for violence and it undermines the rule of law.

As far as capacity is concerned, even though the economy has grown in the last decade, income inequality and poverty remain important issues, especially in indigenous and rural areas. Several previous studies have pointed out that among Latin American and Caribbean countries, the country's level of poverty and social indicators are only higher than those of Haiti. According to a Freedom House Report on Guatemala in 2010, indigenous groups who make up almost half of the country's population continue to be excluded from economic, social, and political life, and "the

gulf between the political elite and the indigenous population is one of the most profound challenges confronting Guatemalan democracy today.”<sup>19</sup>

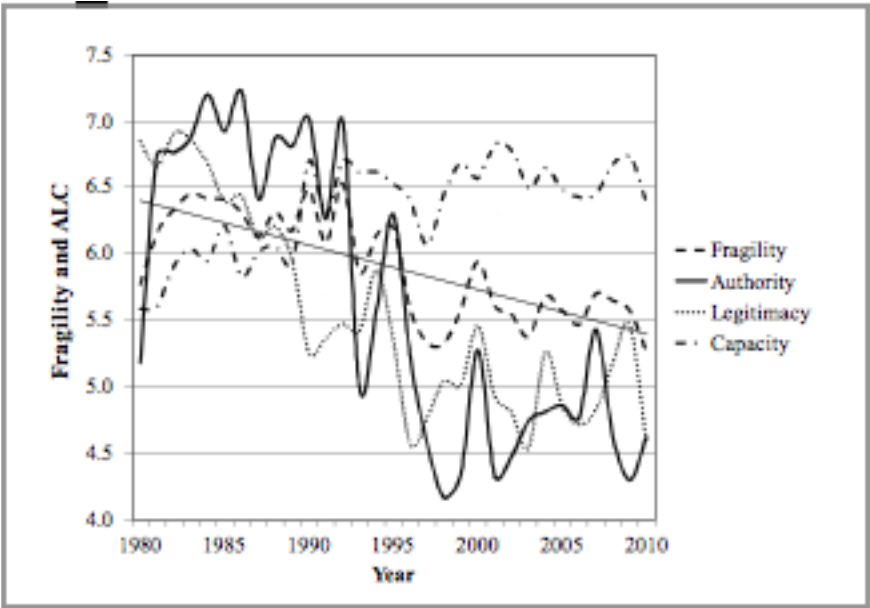
Guatemala’s current tax to GDP ratio is barely above ten percent and is among one of the lowest in the world.<sup>20</sup> This narrow tax base does not leave enough fiscal space for the government to make the required investments for poverty reduction. Remittances, mostly from the Guatemalan expatriate community based in the United States, represent an important source of foreign income and economic support for thousands of families. There are some positive indicators on certain aspects of Guatemala’s human development over time, namely improved access to water and sanitation and improved life expectancy. However, it is clear that sustainable long-term development requires improvements in the business climate and an increased confidence in government institutions, through a comprehensive strategy that deals with corruption, crime, and violence.

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### *Mozambique*

Mozambique is another country that has improved considerably since the mid-1990s, a few years after the end of its fifteen-year civil war. More specifically, its transition to stability was marked by the Rome General Peace Accords signed in 1992. Although it ranked among the top twenty fragile countries in the world in the 1980s, it moved out of the top forty in 1996 and was ranked fiftieth in 2011. As in the case of Guatemala, since the end of the civil war authority challenges have declined with an almost identical pattern as its legitimacy scores, albeit with less volatility. Democratic elections have been successfully held on five occasions without major problems and have strengthened the democratic process in the country. Major improvements in authority and legitimacy have more than compensated for the lack of progress in capacity. Therefore, overall fragility has clearly declined.

FIGURE 5: MOZAMBIQUE, FRAGILITY AND ALC, 1980-2010



The lack of improvement in capacity is surprising given that growth rates have averaged more than seven percent in the last ten to fifteen years, making it the fastest-growing non-oil economy in Sub-Saharan Africa. In other words, this growth, peace, and stability “success story” has not resulted into significant improvements in other indicators such as poverty, access to basic services, and inequality. Despite benefiting from debt relief under the original and enhanced Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative, the Multilateral Debt Relief Initiative, and other bilateral initiatives, the

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country remains heavily dependent on foreign assistance and will probably not meet most of the Millennium Development Goals. Important challenges include improving access to basic services such as health and education and fighting HIV/AIDS.

Poor governance and corruption remain problematic. Although an anti-corruption strategy was established in 2006, it is apparent from examining its scores on Transparency International’s Corruption Perceptions Index since then that the situation has hardly

improved—Mozambique was ranked as 123 in 2012 and interestingly tied with Guatemala on the 2011 ranking. Corruption persists as a result of a lack of government accountability and transparency; the general perception is that there is a lack of political will to deal with the problem. Given aid dependency, it is perhaps not surprising that the government will be more accountable to donors than its own people. Therefore, it is clear that donors have an important role to play in the fight against corruption, despite the politically sensitive nature of the problem.

In Mozambique, we have the mirror image of the countries stuck in the fragility trap. We note that the positive sequence of Guatemala's ALC structures is largely a function of changes in more effective authority and legitimacy structures, which have not yet proven fully effective at economic management and immunizing the country from regional instability. Mozambique, like Guatemala, has emerged from conflict and improved its fragility scores when positive gains are made on authority structures. Although each country faces its unique set of challenges, these have not been severe enough to send them back among the most severe cases of fragility.

### ***Type 3: Mali and Senegal***

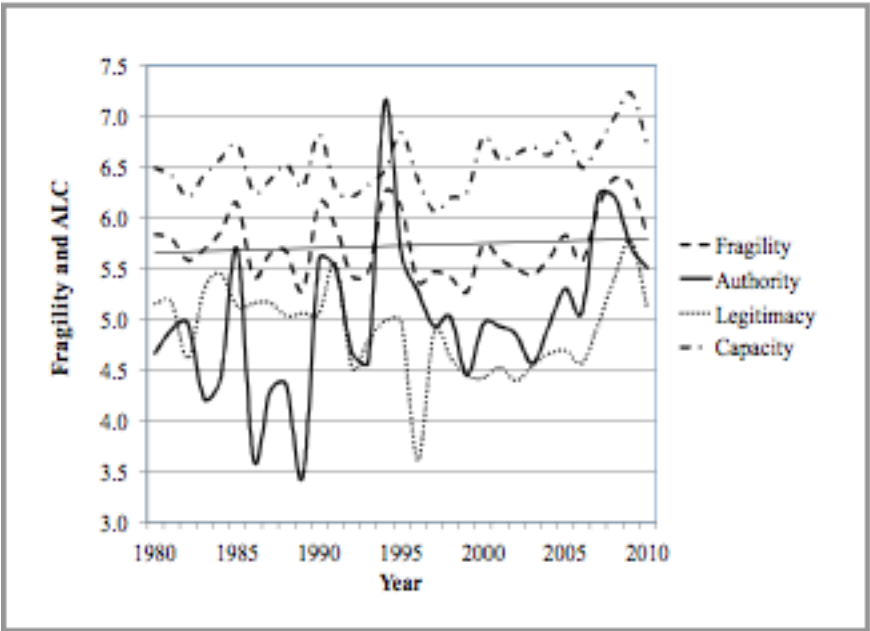
#### *Mali*

Mali has oscillated in and out of fragility throughout the past thirty years. In order to better understand this pattern, it is useful to briefly review the country's modern historical and political situation. To begin, a bloodless coup in 1968 led to the formation of a one-party state based on military rule and, by 1974, a new constitution had been drafted, aiming to move the country to civilian rule. However military leaders, including the eventual President General Moussa Traoré who led the country for twenty-three years, were not keen to relinquish power. In fact, single party elections in 1979 ensured that the military would continue to rule the country. The political situation under Traoré was generally stable for most of the 1980s. The main exception was the brief war over the mineral-rich Agacher strip between Mali and Burkina Faso; the visible spike in authority and capacity in 1985 can arguably be attributed to this event.<sup>21</sup> Both the challenge to the political leadership from an outside force and the expenditure of resources required to fight a sudden war may help account for the aforementioned pattern. After 1991, ALC scores briefly improved as multi-

party democracy was implemented in Mali and the peace agreement with the Tuaregs, a separatist ethno-religious minority group found primarily in the north, was brokered by Algeria. This pattern culminated in 1992 as Alpha Oumar Konaré was inaugurated as the president of Mali.

Moving forward, however, the most striking feature of the Malian case is the dramatic fluctuation in authority scores, particularly in the mid-1990s (Figure 6). This pattern makes sense when examining the rise of more cohesive and effective opposition parties along with political leaders’ attempts to deal with the Tuareg secessionist movement when the peace agreement failed in 1994; this breakdown is evident when scrutinizing the ALC scores, notably visible in the form of the sharp spike in authority and smaller spikes in legitimacy and capacity that year. More specifically, the “Flame of Peace” agreement was signed in 1996 and was symbolized by a national reconciliation ceremony, in which decommissioned weapons were destroyed symbolically in a giant fire. In Figure 6, the ALC patterns match this development closely, as can be observed with the dramatic improvement in legitimacy in 1996 concurrently with less extreme but still significant drops in authority and capacity scores in the same year.

FIGURE 6: MALI, FRAGILITY AND ALC, 1980-2010



Fragility levels remained relatively stagnant for the next decade, even as Traoré was re-elected in 2002. A severe drought in 2005 was followed by a fresh rebellion in the following year and into 2007, with all three

dimensions following the pattern that would be expected with such events: a sharp spike in fragility in 2005, followed by a more gradual increase in fragility over the next several years. Authority scores saw the greatest impact, which agrees with our theory that challenges to political leadership through armed rebellion will negatively affect authority. In 2009, the Malian government hit back at the rebellion with a strong counter-insurgency effort, which may account for the improvement of authority and legitimacy seen that year. The fact that capacity did not fluctuate much supports this notion. CIFP's most recent ranking puts Mali as the twenty-ninth most fragile state in the world, indicating a relatively high risk of conflict onset.

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More recently, the March 22, 2012 coup d'état which ousted President Amadou Toumani Touré, occurred only two days after the African Union Peace and Security Council Ministerial meeting in Bamako where attendees discussed both the general situation in the Sahel region and more specifically the Tuareg rebellion in the north of Mali. The coup marked the return of Mali to a state of high fragility after years of peace and general improvement. It was well-recognized months beforehand not only that the rebellion was growing, but also that the Malian armed forces were undersupplied, under-trained, and incapable of holding the Tuaregs at bay.<sup>22</sup> This pattern was also discernable from the CIFP fragility index and ALC structures, notably through the steady climb in all three dimensions throughout the early 2000s. Other indications of a brewing conflict included: allegations of corruption in government circles; dissatisfaction on the part of the population over growing inequality and a lack of economic opportunities; disagreement over the timing of slated presidential elections; mass proliferation of small arms and other weapons precipitated by the Libya intervention by NATO forces; student union protest; and an overall perception of government incompetence, particularly in relation to allowing fighters to enter the country from Libya.<sup>23</sup> The majority of these grievances fall into our authority and legitimacy categories, and have been getting increasingly worse despite a slight drop in 2010.

Indeed, the future of Mali looks bleak. With the Tuareg rebels taking control of the northern part of the country in 2012 and the subsequent French intervention in early 2013, the future stability of the country is

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questionable. Our data do not yet capture the most recent crises; however the CIFP fragility index did have Mali at a relatively high position on the fragility index, indicating that it was a likely case for the outbreak of civil conflict. Conversely, many other indices placed Mali in a relatively stable category, with the country exemplifying a functional African state with high capacity for aid absorption. If Mali is to return to its favorable position as a stable and democratic country, leaders in both the international community and the Malian government will need to exercise sound judgment and expend considerable resources to re-assert the authority and legitimacy of the central

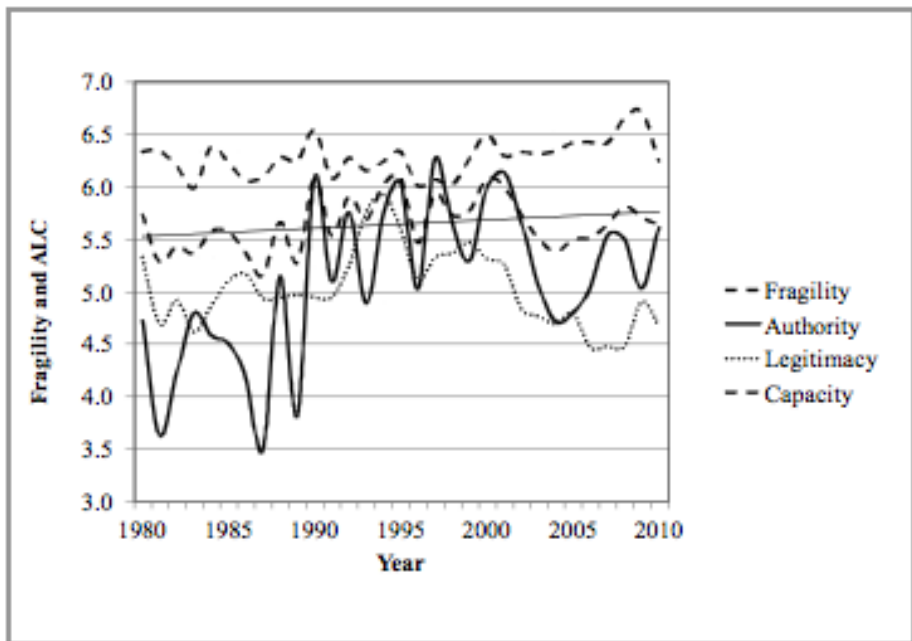
government, as well as to re-attract the aid dollars and investment that poured out once the conflict began.

### *Senegal*

After a period of relative stability for most of the 1980s, Senegal has moved in and out of the top forty in fragility ranking in the last twenty years and was ranked forty-first in 2011. In examining the country's ALC scores over time, we can see that capacity has remained extremely poor. However, the greatest fluctuations are to be found in its authority and legitimacy scores. Despite improvements in the last year or so, the general trend line is weak but upward for the overall fragility score. The sequence of ALC over the last thirty years suggests that challenges to authority and the subsequent loss of legitimacy are relatively insulated from poor economic performance. In other words, poor economic performance may not be a good predictor of why countries like Senegal move in and out of fragility.



FIGURE 7: SENEGAL, FRAGILITY AND ALC, 1980–2010



Senegal is the only West African country to have not experienced a coup or civil war since its independence. It has also avoided military or authoritarian rule, which is why it is often described as an example of a successful democracy in Africa. By virtue of geography and political history, the Gambia and the Republic of Senegal have a unique relationship, which is integral to understanding Senegal's fluctuating fragility scores. Situated in the middle of Senegal, the Gambia cuts off direct access to Casamance—Senegal's most fertile province, and the scene of a bloody separatist revolt in the late 1990s. Thus, Senegal's in and out status is largely a function of internal and regional violence focusing on Casamance. Going back thirty years, we can see that internal revolt was a major driver of instability, including a bloody separatist revolt in the southern province of Casamance that started in 1982.

Following Senegalese intervention during an attempted coup in the Gambia in 1981, the two countries entered into a confederation with the objectives of integrating security forces and communication networks, coordinating foreign policy, and forming a monetary union. Reluctant to accelerate trade and customs unions, the Gambia withdrew from the agreement in 1989. The Senegalese government and the separatist Movement of Democratic Forces of Casamance signed a cease-fire and a peace agreement on March 16, 2001, and since then the country has been more stable. The

peace agreement allowed: the free circulation of people and goods; an end to all arbitrary arrests, kidnapping, torture, killings, and manhunts; and the resettling of refugees and building of roads to connect Casamance with the rest of the country. Nevertheless there remain several sources of instability, including hosting a high number of refugees and continued pressure on political freedoms.

Since the end of the civil war, Senegal's economic situation has improved, though not significantly. According to data from the World Development Indicators, its growth rate averaged almost four percent in the last decade, compared to 2.7 and 2.4 percent in the 1990s and 1980s respectively. However, like many countries in West Africa, it has a high-risk score for human development. Senegal has been a major target of international donors, who have spent millions to help build schools and clinics, pay off its debts, and plan infrastructure projects. Today, its leadership is criticized by the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank over public spending and policies that have worsened the effects of rising food prices, created unemployment, and failed to address political protests. Thus, capacity problems have not allowed it to move out of fragility indefinitely.

We believe that both Mali and Senegal will continue to be in and out of the top forty fragile states. Recent events suggest that Mali may even move into a fragility trap position whilst Senegal may continue to fluctuate until its capacity structures are addressed. The recent insurgency and international intervention in Mali, coupled with deterioration of both authority and legitimacy, make Mali a risky candidate primed for further conflict in the years to come. It remains to be seen if the French intervention will be a help or hindrance to stability in Mali.

## CONCLUSIONS AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

Successful transitions out of fragility are a process of improvement in the proper sequence of authority, legitimacy, and capacity through compliance with the law and incorporation of peoples into a functional economy, among other things. Challenges to and degradations in authority and legitimacy appear to be key reasons why countries remain stuck in a fragility trap. When it comes to sequencing countries out of fragility, donors are still uncertain on how to tie economic success to effective political development. For example, in cases such as Senegal and Mozambique, we see that low capacity scores appear to have little relationship with changes in legitimacy and authority performance. Intuitively, this would suggest that

shifts out of fragility are not obtained through economic transformation alone, and especially if economic gains do not lead to positive changes in authority and legitimacy.

From a donor perspective, particular attention must be paid to strategic dilemmas in terms of weighting, prioritizing, and sequencing aid instruments at various junctures in the state-building process. Likewise, attention must be paid to the degree to which specific initiatives may contribute to economic development yet undermine political change. Of particular relevance are the implicit trade-offs between measures taken to achieve short-term economic growth and longer-term institutional development objectives. At its core, effective state building involves the fundamental transformation of a broad spectrum of state-society relationships—something the donor community has historically shown to be utterly inept at addressing.

In some cases, conflict in fragile states occurs at transitional stages when existing ideologies fail to legitimize the positions of various actors in a hierarchical social structure—such is the case in Pakistan, Mali and Senegal. Thus, the emergence of a fragility trap is due to the failure of prevailing societal values to legitimize existing divisions of labor and political order. For example, compliance with the law can degenerate when state institutions lose legitimacy in the eyes of portions of the population. Under such conditions, the result can be the breakdown of the social and political order. The destruction of national identities of the kind we see in Pakistan stands in the way of acquiring shared values that could provide a basis for inter-group cooperation and recognition of a common authority. The obstacles to contractual or hierarchical solutions to the problem of mutual non-cooperation are analogous: both the trust required for a contract and the legitimacy needed for stable authoritative hierarchy will be elusive when state-society relations are weak. Conversely, shifts out of fragility occur through economic and political incorporation that manifests itself in migration from rural to urban areas and engagement with remote regions through economic and communication centers.

Even though a successful transition out of fragility is primarily a domestic process that involves local actors, the role of international actors, while limited, is still very important. This argument is buttressed by our

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two cases that emerged from fragility and have become more resilient: Mozambique and Guatemala. In addition to aid, the donor community can contribute to supporting and facilitating political and institutional processes in order to strengthen the basis for resilience. This might include political settlements—by working to underpin the responsiveness of the state to effectively fulfill its principal functions in providing key services and by supporting legitimate forms of societal political pressures that will determine how a state should function. However, the identification of where the investment will yield the “biggest bang for the buck” is key. More generally, aid needs to be context-specific, timed properly and strategically, and must be tied directly to indigenous capabilities that demonstrate long-term effectiveness. ■

## ENDNOTES

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- 3 David Carment and Yagadeesen Samy, “Engaging Fragile States: Closing the Gap Between Theory and Policy,” *Global Dialogue*, Vol. 13, No. 1, (2011).
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- 7 Carment, Prest, and Samy *Security, Development and the Fragile State*, (2009).
- 8 Carment and Samy, “Engaging Fragile States,” (2011).
- 9 See, for example: Carment, Prest, and Samy (2009).
- 10 A detailed description of the methodology employed can be found at Carleton

- University's CIFP website, "CIFP – Country Indicators," [www.carleton.ca/cifp](http://www.carleton.ca/cifp).
- 11 CIFP includes gender indicators in calculations of all clusters when that information is available. Some of our data is available at "CIFP – Country Indicators."
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  - 23 Ibid.