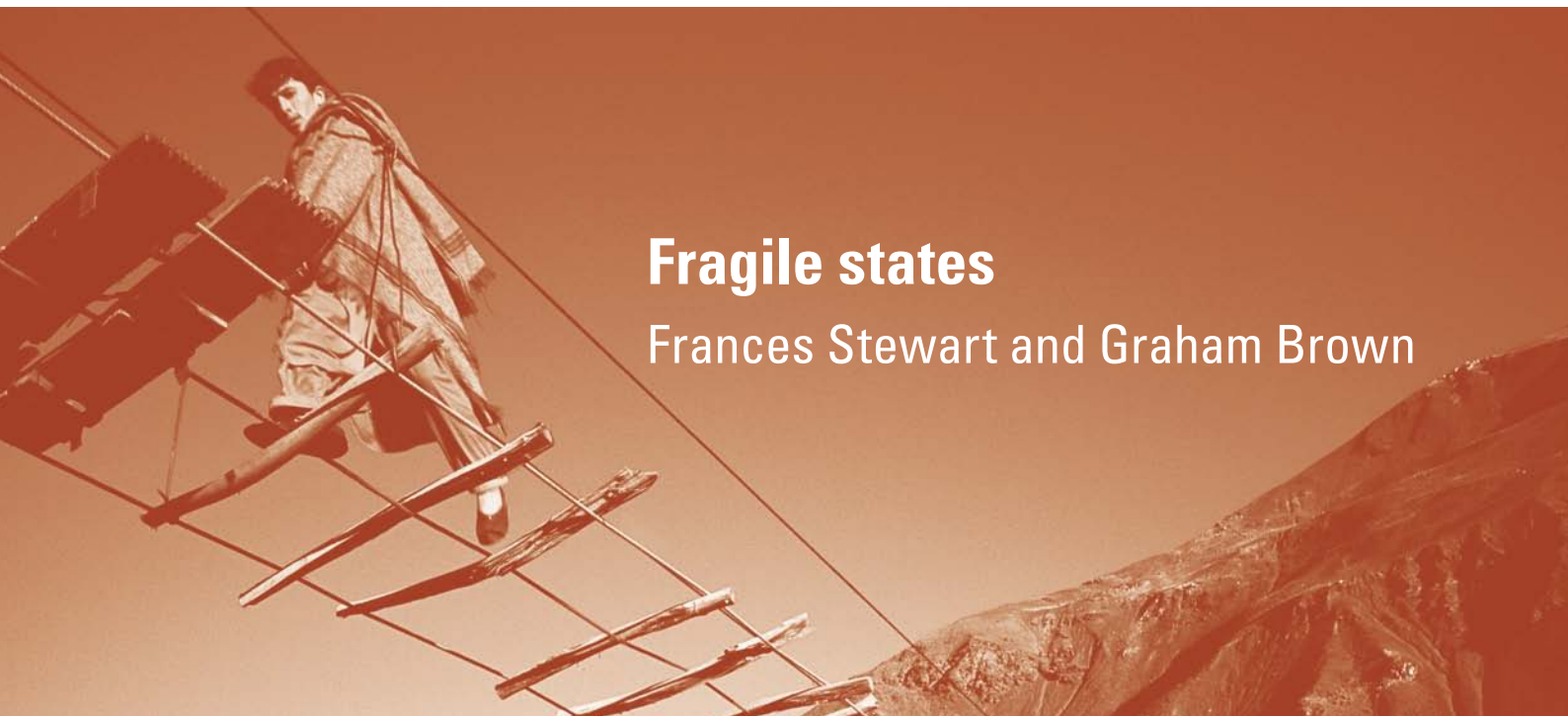# CRISE:

**Centre for Research on Inequality,
Human Security and Ethnicity**

Fragile states

Frances Stewart and Graham Brown

OVERVIEW

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Frances Stewart and Graham Brown[1]

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Abbreviations

CIFP   **Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (Canada)**

CMR   **Child mortality rate**

CP rights   **Civil and political rights**

DFID   **Department for International Development (UK)**

ESC rights **Economic, social, and cultural rights**

EU   **European Union**

HR   **Human rights**

MDG   **Millennium Development Goal**

OECD   **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development**

OECD–DAC **Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development–Development Assistance Committee**

SE   **Social exclusion**

SIDA   **Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency**

USAID   **United States Agency for International Development**

Executive summary

The aim of this Overview is to help make the concept of 'fragile states' operational for development policy. In the light of a review of different definitions of fragile states, this paper proposes a three-pronged definition of fragility that broadly encompasses all other definitions. Fragile states are defined as states that are failing, or in danger of failing, with respect to authority, comprehensive access to basic services, or governance legitimacy. We show that many states are fragile in one or two of these dimensions, but rather few in all three, despite causal connections among the dimensions. A review of how fragility, as defined, relates to other significant approaches to development indicates that it comes closest to a human rights (HR) approach, with failures on human rights constituting fragility. Yet while the HR approach embodies a particular approach to development and applies to all countries, the concept of fragility as such does not imply a particular approach to aid or development and 'fragile' states form a subset of especially vulnerable countries.

In the light of the definitions of fragility advanced by different donors, we propose an all-encompassing approach including all the proposed definitions. Fragility is then defined as describing a country that is failing or at high risk of failing in three dimensions:

■ *authority failures:* the state lacks the authority to protect its citizens from violence of various kinds.

■ *service failures:* the state fails to ensure that all citizens have access to basic services.

■ *legitimacy failures:* the state lacks legitimacy, enjoys only limited support among the people, and is typically not democratic.

In order to investigate relationships among the different dimensions of fragility and to make the definition useful for policy, we propose an empirical interpretation of failure and risk of failure in each dimension. Although the procedures are somewhat arbitrary, the exercise is helpful in pinpointing the different sources of fragility across countries. If we include failure and risk of failure in any dimension, the set of countries identified is much larger than those in the 'fragile states' list of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD); by identifying the countries at risk as well as those that are actually failing, however, the approach can provide warning of potential problems.

Causal connections among the three dimensions are suggested by common sense and supported by much empirical research. But despite the reasons to expect a strong connection, empirical research shows only partial correlation across the dimensions and many countries fail or are at risk of failure in one or two but not all three dimensions.

An exploration of the relationship between 'fragility' and other approaches to development shows a considerable overlap with the human rights approach, though the latter covers *all* countries and involves a process that relies on rights claims and the law.

The donor community has particular responsibilities for policies towards fragile countries because, by definition, the governments in fragile states are usually either unable or unwilling to take the necessary policy stance. Analysis of policy requirements points to the need for an identification of (1) the source of fragility and (2) the major causes of the failures in each of the three dimensions. Given that the policy environment in most fragile states is particularly challenging, donors must be sensitive and imaginative in their procedures.

Introduction

The main aim of this Overview is to help make the concept of 'fragile states' operational for development policy. Consequently, it proposes a working definition of fragile states in the light of existing definitions, suggesting a way of operationalizing the definition empirically. The paper proposes a three-pronged definition of fragility, arguing that while each captures different aspects of vulnerability, all are causally related to each other.

Having proposed a definition in Section 2 and proposed an empirical application of it, the Overview then considers how the different dimensions of fragility are related to one another, exploring the causual links between the approaches (Section 3). Section 4 reviews the relation between state fragility, human rights, social exclusion, and poverty reduction. Section 5 considers some implications for public policy aimed at reducing fragility and discusses both facilitating conditions and obstacles to the effective adoption of such policies. Section 6 offers concluding remarks.

2 Definitional issues: what constitutes a 'fragile' state?

Any effort of this kind must start by pointing out that there is no uniquely correct definition of this concept, nor of the allied concepts of 'failing' or 'failed' states, which are often loosely applied and can be politically provocative and sensitive. As the exercise in 'Piloting the Principles for Good International Engagement' of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development's Development Assistance Committee (OECD–DAC) concluded:

> The concept of a 'fragile state' emerged as problematic for various reasons in almost all cases. In some the rationale was for classifying the country as fragile was questioned. The concept was also seen as generalising across very different situations and problems and as not providing a definition that could be accepted by both donors and government. In some cases the terminology was seen as sensitive and causing suspicion from the government side and potentially impacting negatively on the relationship with government (OECD–DAC, 2006, p. 6).

A *Jakarta Post* opinion column presented a perspective from a country often classified as fragile or failing. Referring to the use of 'failed' or 'failing ' to describe Timor-Leste, the column notes that 'Timor Leste's political complexities cannot be reduced to simple slogans' and that 'nation-building is an ongoing, complex process' (Nguyen, 2006).

So while the concept of fragility points to certain vulnerabilities and consequently to the need for special treatment by the international community, it might be desirable to use a different and less provocative term, and indeed to be less categorical about situations that are uncertain, particularly since any categorization involves a good deal of judgement. However, the concept *is* widely used among donors: in particular, it underpins the central concept of the OECD–DAC's *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States*, first formulated in 2005. The term is also used pervasively by the British government. For example, in his foreword to a 2009 White Paper, Gordon Brown posits that 'fragile states that provide a safe haven for drug runners and terrorists trap more than a third of the world's poorest people in a web of violence and lawlessness' (DFID, 2009, p. 5).[2]

In the light of the widespread use of the term, it is helpful to arrive at a definition that makes sense and is operational while not being too far removed from the way the aid community is using the term. We are not looking for the correct definition, but rather exploring possible definitions in order to put forward concrete criteria so that the concept may be used operationally.

Donor definitions of fragility

It is helpful to begin by looking at existing definitions within the aid community.

■ The UK Department for International Development (DFID) uses a definition of fragile states that focuses on comprehensive service delivery: 'Fragile states are countries where the government cannot or will not deliver its basic functions to the majority of its people, including the poor' (DFID, 2010). DFID explicitly notes that it does not restrict its definition of fragility to countries experiencing or coming out of conflict: 'Countries range from those affected or emerging from conflict to those with strong governments

which are not committed to poverty reduction and where human rights are routinely abused' (DFID, 2009, p. 69). Conversely, countries that continue to provide an acceptable level of services, despite being in conflict, do not constitute fragile states under DFID's definition; many countries with ongoing, but contained, separatist struggles—such as Morocco—would fall into this category.

- The OECD definition is similar but goes beyond a government's failure to provide comprehensive services and includes the protection of the population's human rights and security: 'States are fragile when state structures lack political will and/or capacity to provide the basic functions needed for poverty reduction, development and to safeguard the security and human rights of their populations' (OECD–DAC, 2007).

- Canada's Country Indicators for Foreign Policy (CIFP) project extends the definition of fragile states to include political legitimacy. Specifically, fragile states are those that '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 or abroad' (CIFP, 2006).

- The US Agency for International Development (USAID) 'uses the term *fragile states* to refer generally to a broad range of failing, failed, and recovering states. […] the strategy distinguishes between fragile states that are vulnerable from those that are already in crisis.' Vulnerable states are defined as 'unable or unwilling to adequately assure the provision of security and basic services to significant portions of their populations and where the legitimacy of the government is in question'. States in 'crisis' are defined as ones where the 'central government does not exert effective control over its own territory or is unable or unwilling to assure the provision of vital services to significant parts of its territory, where legitimacy of the government is weak or non-existent, and where violent conflict is a reality or a great risk' (USAID, 2005, p. 1).

- Finally, for the World Bank 'fragile states' refers to 'countries facing particularly severe development challenges: weak institutional capacity, poor governance, and political instability. Often these countries experience ongoing violence as the residue of past severe conflict. Ongoing armed conflicts affect three out of four fragile states' (World Bank, website, accessed May 2010).

Proposed definition of 'fragility' and 'failure'

From this brief review, we can see that there are considerable areas of overlap in the current use of the term 'fragile states' within the development community, but also differences of breadth and emphasis. For this Overview, we propose taking a broad approach that encompasses all the definitions given thus far. The proposed definition comes closest to the CIFP definition.[3]

We define fragility as applying to a country that *is failing or at high risk of failing* and we differentiate between three dimensions of such fragility: authority failures, service failures, and legitimacy failures. We take a dual-level approach by differentiating between failure and the risk of failure. Both types of differentiation are important because appropriate aid policy is likely to differ according to the *dimension* of fragility and between countries that are *actually failing* in one or more dimensions, and those that are *at risk of failing*.

Fragile states are thus to be defined as **states that are failing, or at risk of failing, with respect to authority, comprehensive basic service provision, or legitimacy**.

[3] While the CIFP includes authority, capacity, and legitimacy, we include authority, service provision, and legitimacy. Service failures may occur because of a lack of capacity or a lack of will to deliver services.

Let us now take a closer look at each of these three dimensions.

1. *Authority failures.* These are cases where the state lacks the authority to protect its citizens from violence of various kinds:

   a. There is significant organized political violence, often described as civil war. A current examples is Afghanistan.

   b. The state authority does not extend to a significant portion of the country. Somalia, Afghanistan, and Côte d'Ivoire are examples. Somalia is an extreme case with very limited central state authority.

   c. There is periodic political or communal violence causing deaths and destruction. Nigeria is an example today; Indonesia was one during the immediate post-New Order period.

   d. There are very high levels of criminality with almost no state action to control it; there is virtually no working justice system. Guatemala and Haiti are examples.

2. *Service failures.* These are cases where the state fails to ensure that all citizens have access to basic services. Criteria for failure are inadequate delivery of (or access to):

   a. health services.

   b. basic education.

   c. water and sanitation.

   d. basic transport and energy infrastructure.

   e. reduction in income poverty.

3. *Legitimacy failures.* Legitimacy failures occur where the state lacks legitimacy. The state may enjoy only limited support among the people; it is typically not democratic, often with the military ruling directly or strongly supporting and dominating the government. We may differentiate the following characteristics of legitimacy failures:

   a. no democracy (that is, no free, fair, and regular elections).

   b. a strong role for the military.

   c. acquisition of power by force.

   d. suppression of the opposition.

   e. government control of the media.

   f. exclusion of significant groups of the population from power.

   g. absence of civil and political liberties such as free speech and protection from arbitrary arrest.

A combination of these characteristics is common, as evidenced in Myanmar (Burma) today.

There is no hard and fast rule for deciding whether a state is failing in any of these three dimensions, or indeed in the subcategories listed above. At the extremes it is easy to recognize success or failure, but the dividing line between them is to some extent arbitrary. That line is particularly difficult to determine with respect to service entitlements, since most poor countries experience failures regarding the delivery of basic services. It could be argued that failure that stems from poverty is a developmental rather than a state failure; as such, it may not be due to the country's government at all. For service deficiencies to count as state failure, we thus introduce two additional criteria:

1. if a country's service coverage is significantly below (that is, one standard deviation below) the average performance for countries of similar income levels. This discrepancy would imply that it is reasonable to expect better performance.

2. if delivery involves sharp horizontal inequalities and social exclusion, with particular groups or regions excluded.

Hence, even if a country passes criteria (1), it may still be classified as fragile because it shows sharp inequalities in service entitlements. Almost every country shows some inequalities, so the dividing line here will also be somewhat arbitrary. For this reason—as well as because of lack of systematic data on exclusion and inequalities—we do not suggest incorporating exclusion into the measure of service access, but rather introducing it as an additional consideration in classifying countries.

Before applying our three-pronged definition of fragility to actual country cases, it is worth returning to the existing definitions of state fragility to see how they mesh with our proposed definition. Table 1 offers a summary.

Table 1 Comparison of donor definitions of fragility

Definition proposed in this Overview	A state of actual failure or high risk of failure with respect to:		
	Authority	Basic services	Legitimacy
DFID	Instrumental for service entitlements	Prime emphasis	Related to emphasis on 'justice'
OECD–DAC	Instrumental for service entitlements	Prime emphasis	Not mentioned
CIFP	Intrinsic aspect	Emphasis on institutional capacity	Intrinsic aspect
USAID	Intrinsic aspect	Intrinsic aspect	Intrinsic aspect
World Bank	Emphasis on high conflict risk	Emphasis on institutional capacity	Not mentioned

Application of the proposed definition

Inevitably, determining the precise nature and extent of state fragility requires in-depth country knowledge and analysis. To track global developments and flag countries at risk of fragility, however, it is useful to have broad indices of state failure across the three dimensions. This section presents preliminary analysis of how such indices might apply, using readily available data. For each dimension, we identify indicators of countries that have 'failed' and countries 'at risk of failure'. Furthermore, across the service dimension, we propose two approaches to determine failure: *absolute failure* and *progressive failure*. Absolute failure relates to absolute thresholds that determine whether a country is failing or at risk of failing; progressive failure relates to thresholds determined relative to a country's level of income. It is important to note here that we do not intend the analysis to be a definitive categorization of existing states, but rather an example of how such an analysis might be employed.

Authority failures

We take a good indicator of authority failure to be the extent of physical conflict in the country. A number of detailed global datasets are available from which to derive such an index. We use here the Major Episodes of Political Violence dataset from the Center for Systemic Peace[4]. This dataset distinguishes between three types of conflict—ethnic, civil, and international—and two levels of conflict—violence and war. In this context, violence is defined as 'the use of instrumental violence without necessarily exclusive goals'; war is defined as 'violence between distinct, exclusive groups with the intent to impose a unilateral result to the contention'. Although this definition of types of violence does not include casualty rates or duration, episodes of violence are typically shorter and with lower annual casualty rates than wars, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2 Characteristics of 'war' and 'violence' in the CSP dataset – all years 1945-2005

	Average duration (years)	Average annual casualty rate
Violence	3.38	12,500
War	8.53	47,400

For our purposes, the level of violence is more important than the type. We suggest the following criteria:

- ■ *Failure*: ethnic or civil war in the current period.

- ■ *Risk of failure*: ethnic or civil violence in the current or previous two years *or* ethnic or civil war in the previous four years (but not the current year).

Table 3 classifies states as fragile under this definition, using CSP data for 2007. It is worth noting that in some of these states, the area of the country in which state authority is weak or lacking is geographically restricted, and the state may have strong authority in the rest of the country. The Russian Federation is one example; lack of state authority is an issue in Chechnya, although the state is largely unchallenged in territorial control in the rest of the country. Similarly, poor state authority in the Philippines is mostly restricted to Mindanao. In further operationalizing state authority failures, it may be desirable to distinguish the geographical extent of state authority failure in individual countries; as will be seen below, however, we contend that even where state authority failure is geographically restricted it can have implications for other dimensions of state fragility.

Table 3 State fragility in authority, 2007

Failed	At risk
Afghanistan	Angola
Algeria	
Burundi	Colombia
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	Congo, Republic of the
Côte d'Ivoire	Ethiopia Thailand
India	Indonesia
Iraq	Liberia
Israel	Nigeria
Myanmar (Burma)	Saudi Arabia
Nepal	Sierra Leone
Philippines	Solomon Islands
Russian Federation	Sri Lanka
Somalia	Sudan
Central African Republic	Thailand
Russian Federation (Chechnya)	Uganda
Georgia (Ossetia)	Pakistan
Guinea-Bissau	Turkey
Serbia (Kosovo)	Haiti
Rwanda	Yemen
Chad	Kenya
	Lebanon

Source: calculated based on CSP, http://www.systemicpeace.org/warlist.htm.

Service failure

Following the principle of progressive realization adopted in relation to the fulfilment of human rights,[5] the level of services that would count as causing failure are arguably lower in a poor state than in a rich one. The distinction between absolute and progressive thresholds is thus important in service delivery. The problem with using a progressive measure of service delivery, however, is that states can in effect move out of failure simply by reducing their GDP; moreover, a minimum level of service can be expected even in poor states. As a result, it is important to adopt an absolute threshold as well.

Absolute threshold. Instead of dictating an absolute threshold, we have taken the average performance of all countries with a GDP per capita of USD 1,500 or less (in 2000 purchasing power parity) as the standard. Countries falling two standard deviations (or more) below this mean are deemed failures in service access; those falling between one and two standard deviations below are deemed at risk of failure. Since basic service access encompasses a variety of services, a decision will be needed on how to aggregate them (for example, by averaging achievement on each; by deciding that failure in one is enough to constitute failure; or, alternatively, failure in all or some proportion of the total is required). Table 4 shows estimates of thresholds according to three indicators taken separately; the absolute service entitlements index consists of an aggregate measure of the different indicators.[6]

Table 4 Equivalent thresholds for absolute service delivery failure (data for 2005)

Indicator	Average (poor countries)	Standard deviation	Thresholds	
			Risk	Failure
Child mortality rate, per 1,000 live births	111.2	66.7	>177.9	>244.6
Primary enrolment rate (% of cohort)	72.1	21.1	<51.0	<29.9
Provision of improved water (% of population)	69.8	17.2	<52.6	<35.4

Source: authors' calculations based on World Bank's WDI (2010).

The progressive measure of service entitlements is calculated by identifying the extent to which countries fall below the level of service delivery that would be expected according to their level of per capita income. This extent is derived from a regression relating particular services—specifically provision of improved water sources, child mortality rates, and primary enrolment rates—to per capita incomes for all developing countries. Countries falling one standard deviation below the overall average are deemed 'at risk' of service entitlements failure; countries falling two standard deviations below are classified as failing in service entitlements. The annexe to this Overview describes the derivation of the progressive thresholds for failure in the service dimension in detail.

Table 5 lists countries that fail in the service dimension according to these criteria, using World Development Indicators data for 2005. Perhaps unsurprisingly, all the failed and at-risk states using the absolute threshold are in sub-Saharan Africa; when the progressive measure is employed, however, a number of additional countries enter the fragile category, and others leave it. Notable among the states that are considered to have failed or are at risk on the progressive but not the absolute measure are oil states (Libya, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates) and Papua New Guinea. These states have sufficient (potential) government revenue to ensure access to adequate services but are failing to do so. It should also be noted, however, that this method of determining progressive failure does not take into account other factors that may impede service entitlements, such as inhospitable terrain, as is probably the case in Papua New Guinea.

In contrast, countries that are no longer classified as failed or at risk of failure when a progressive definition is employed are poor countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, that are managing to provide better services than their GDP level would suggest. Interesting here is that a number of countries that have only recently emerged from serious and protracted civil war—such as Liberia and Sierra Leone—actually move out of the fragile categories when a progressive measure is employed. This may be partly due to the fact that during conflict GDP per capita (particularly as officially measured) falls more than some services; in addition, post-conflict efforts are often focused especially on social services.

Table 5 State fragility in service entitlements, 2005

Absolute		Progressive	
Failed	**At risk**	**Failed**	**At risk**
Angola	Benin	Angola	Chad
Burkina Faso	Cambodia	Burkina Faso	Cameroon
Burundi	Cameroon	Equatorial Guinea	Congo, Democratic Republic of the Congo,
Central African Republic	Côte d'Ivoire	Ethiopia	Congo, Republic of the
Chad	Djibouti	Mali	Côte d'Ivoire
Congo, Democratic Republic of the	Ethiopia	Niger	Djibouti
Equatorial Guinea	Gambia	Saudi Arabia	Guinea
Guinea-Bissau	Guinea	Sierra Leone	Guinea-Bissau
Liberia	Madagascar		Libya
Mali	Malawi		Mozambique
Niger	Mozambique		Nigeria
Nigeria	Senegal		Oman
Rwanda	Swaziland		Papua New Guinea
Sierra Leone	Tanzania		Swaziland
	Togo		United Arab Emirates
	Uganda		Zambia
	Zambia		

Source: authors' calculations based on World Bank, World Development Indicators (2010)

Legitimate governance failures

As noted above, the level of democracy is not necessarily the sole determinant of regime legitimacy. In this exercise, however, we take it to be a reasonable proxy of overall legitimacy, using the Polity IV dataset developed at the University of Maryland under the direction of Monty Marshall. The Polity IV dataset scores each country (annually) on two indices from 1 to 10: level of democracy and level of autocracy.[7] The overall Polity score is determined by subtracting autocracy from democracy, providing a range of –10 (least democratic) to +10 (most democratic). For the legitimacy dimension, we take simple cut-off points of –6 and 0 for failure and risk of failure, respectively. Table 6 shows that countries that fail and are at risk of failing in the legitimacy dimension.

7   The University of Maryland website states: 'The Polity conceptual scheme is unique in that it examines *concomitant qualities of democratic and autocratic authority* in governing institutions, rather than discreet and mutually exclusive forms of governance. This perspective envisions a spectrum of governing authority that spans from *fully institutionalized autocracies* through *mixed, or incoherent, authority regimes* (termed "anocracies") to *fully institutionalized democracies*. The "Polity Score" captures this regime authority spectrum on a 21-point scale ranging from –10 (hereditary monarchy) to +10 (consolidated democracy)' (CSP, n.d.).

Table 6 State fragility in legitimacy, 2007

Failed	At risk
Azerbaijan	Algeria
Bahrain	Angola
Bangladesh	Cameroon
Belarus	Central African Republic
Bhutan	Chad
China	Congo, Republic of the
Cuba	Egypt
Eritrea	Equatorial Guinea
Iran	Fiji
Kazakhstan	Gabon
Kuwait	Gambia
Laos	Guinea
Libya	Jordan
Morocco	Rwanda
Myanmar (Burma)	Singapore
North Korea	Sudan
Oman	Tajikistan
Qatar	Thailand
Saudi Arabia	Togo
Swaziland	Tunisia
Syria	Uganda
Turkmenistan	Yemen
United Arab Emirates	Zimbabwe
Uzbekistan	
Vietnam	

Source: calculated based on CSP (n.d.)

Legitimacy failures are broadly spread geographically, with only the Americas unrepresented.

Table 7 brings together the three dimensions of fragility, listing all the fragile states, which have failed to meet the criteria in at least one dimension. Table 8 shows the countries that have not failed in any dimension but that are at risk of failure in at least one dimension. The tables indicate with an 'n/a' where assessments could not be made due to lack of data. If a country is neither at risk nor failing in a particular dimension, the cell is left blank. Countries marked with an asterisk (*) are on the OECD list of fragile states, and those marked by # are on the World Bank's list of fragile and conflict-affected countries. The worst failures (failing in two dimensions) are the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Myanmar (Burma), and Saudi Arabia. Angola and Rwanda are the most at risk, both in two dimensions.

Table 7 Provisional list of fragile states: failure in at least one dimension

	Authority	Absolute service delivery	Progressive service delivery	Legitimacy failure	Failures	Risk
Afghanistan*#	Failing	n/a	n/a		1	0
Algeria	Failing			At risk	1	1
Angola*#	At risk	Failing	Failing	At risk	1	2
Azerbaijan				Failing	1	0
Bahrain				Failing	1	0
Bangladesh				Failing	1	0
Belarus				Failing	1	0
Bhutan				Failing	1	0
Burkino Faso		Failing	Failing		1	0
Burundi*#	Failing	Failing			2	0
Central African Republic*#	Failing	Failing		At risk	2	1
Chad*#	Failing	Failing	At risk	At risk	2	1
China				Failing	1	0
Congo, Democratic Republic of the*#	Failing	Failing	At risk		2	0
Côte d'Ivoire*#	Failing	At risk	At risk		1	1
Cuba		n/a	n/a	Failing	1	0
Equatorial Guinea*#		Failing	Failing	At risk	1	1
Eritrea*#				Failing	1	0
Ethiopia*	At risk	At risk	Failing		1	1
Georgia (Ossetia)	Failing				1	0
Guinea-Bissau*#	Failing	Failing	At risk		2	0
India	Failing				1	0
Iran				Failing	1	0
Iraq*	Failing	n/a	n/a		1	0
Israel	Failing				1	0
Kazakhstan				Failing	1	0
Kuwait				Failing	1	0
Laos				Failing	1	0
Liberia*#	At risk	Failing			1	1
Libya			At risk	Failing	1	1
Mali		Failing	Failing		1	0
Morocco				Failing	1	0
Myanmar (Burma)*#	Failing	n/a	n/a	Failing	2	0
Nepal*#	Failing				1	0
Niger*		Failing	Failing		1	0
Nigeria	At risk	Failing	At risk		1	1
North Korea*		n/a	n/a	Failing	1	0

	Authority	Absolute service delivery	Progressive service delivery	Legitimacy failure	Failures	Risk
Oman			At risk	Failing	1	1
Philippines	Failing				1	0
Qatar				Failing	1	0
Russian Federation	Failing				1	0
Rwanda*	Failing	Failing		At risk	2	1
Saudi Arabia	At risk		Failing	Failing	2	1
Serbia (Kosovo)	Failing				1	0
Sierra Leone*#	At risk	Failing	Failing		1	1
Somalia*#	Failing	n/a	n/a		1	0
Swaziland		At risk	At risk	Failing	1	1
Turkmenistan				Failing	1	0
United Arab Emirates			At risk	Failing	1	1
Uzbekistan				Failing	1	0
Vietnam				Failing	1	0

Notes:

* classified as fragile by the OECD–DAC

classified as fragile by the World Bank

n/a assessment not available

We find that 8 countries fail in at least two dimensions; 12 fail in one dimension and are at risk of failure in another; and another 31 fail in one dimension only. Table 8 shows that 26 countries do not fail in any dimensions but are at risk of failure in one or more dimensions. The last group should arguably not be defined as fragile, but the list is still of importance as it highlights which countries are on the edge of fragility. The classification itself may be fragile, as these findings are based on selected criteria for one particular year; in addition, deficient data for some countries may lead to understatement of failure or risk of failure.

Table 8 Provisional list of fragile states: at risk of failing in at least one dimension

	Authority	Absolute service delivery	Progressive service delivery	Legitimacy failure	Failures	Risk
Benin		At risk			0	1
Cameroon*		At risk	At risk	At risk	0	2
Colombia	At risk				0	1
Congo, Republic of the*#	At risk		At risk	At risk	0	3
Djibouti		At risk	At risk		0	1
Egypt				At risk	0	1
Fiji				At risk	0	1
Gabon				At risk	0	1
Gambia*#		At risk		At risk	0	2
Guinea*#		At risk	At risk	At risk	0	2
Haiti*#	At risk				0	1
Indonesia	At risk				0	1
Jordan				At risk	0	1
Kenya*	At risk				0	1
Lebanon	At risk				0	1
Madagascar		At risk			0	1
Malawi		At risk			0	1
Mozambique		At risk	At risk		0	1
Pakistan*	At risk				0	1
Papua New Guinea*#			At risk		0	1
Senegal		At risk			0	1
Singapore				At risk	0	1
Solomon Islands	At risk				0	1
Sri Lanka	At risk				0	1
Sudan*#	At risk			At risk	0	2
Tajikistan#				At risk	0	1
Tanzania		At risk			0	1
Thailand	At risk			At risk	0	2
Togo*#		At risk		At risk	0	2
Tunisia				At risk	0	1
Turkey	At risk				0	1
Uganda*	At risk	At risk		At risk	0	3
Yemen*#	At risk			At risk	0	2
Zambia		At risk	At risk		0	1
Zimbabwe*#				At risk	0	1

Notes:

* classified as fragile by the OECD–DAC

classified as fragile by the World Bank

According to this data, a rather surprisingly low proportion of African states fail in the legitimacy dimension—indeed, only two: Eritrea and Swaziland. Yet we know that 'democracy' in many countries is somewhat of a charade—for example in Zimbabwe and Côte d'Ivoire. This suggests that the Polity score may not be a good way of characterizing this aspect. In-depth country knowledge is needed to correct some of the classifications and to explain the results.

Of interest here is that many countries appear as fragile in some dimension although they are not classified as such by the OECD or the World Bank[8]. An examination of the sources of the difference reveals that the most widely applicable is the legitimacy dimension, which led us to classify 29 countries as fragile in some respects which were not so classified by the OECD or World Bank; of these 21 showed actual failures with respect to legitimacy. As noted above, neither the OECD nor the World Bank include legitimacy as part of their definition, so their classifications are consistent with their own definitions. Service failures, absolute or progressive, were a feature of 15 countries that we classified as fragile although the OECD and World Bank did not. Of these, less than a third were actually failures, the rest being at risk of failure. Our definition indicates far from comprehensive basic service availability in the 'at risk' categories, an important finding given that the institutions under review adopted definitions that include the provision of services for most of the population. Finally, failure in the authority dimension was a feature of seven countries included here but not by the OECD/WB and a further nine countries were classified as at risk of such failure, but were not on the OECD/WB list.

This analysis suggests that donor institutions (1) may not be very consistent in classifying countries as fragile and that (2) they omit some countries from the classification although they may need 'special' policies if a worsening situation is to be avoided. For example, our classification identified Nigeria as fragile according to the services and authority dimensions; Thailand as at risk in both authority and legitimacy dimensions, and India (failure) in the authority dimension. Events in 2010 indicate that these states *are* indeed fragile in some respects, as evidenced by the violence in Jos, Nigeria, massive protests in 2010 (and their suppression) in Thailand and quire extensive Maoist activities in India.

8   A few countries are classified as fragile by the OECD and/or World Bank, but not by us. A lack of data prevented us from classifying most of these.

3

Causal links among the three dimensions of fragility

While we have identified three distinct components of fragility—failures with respect to authority, service delivery, and legitimacy—it seems plausible that they are causally linked. For example, absence of authority would make service delivery difficult, while failures in authority and service delivery are likely to reduce a state's legitimacy. Conversely, lack of civil liberties and political rights (lack of legitimacy) may be a cause of conflict and failed authority.

All the potential causal connections are illustrated in Figure 1, with arrows indicating the directions of causality. The causal links for which there is most evidence are labelled A^1, B^1, C^1, while the evidence is more uncertain for causal links in the opposite direction, i.e. A^2, B^2, C^2. This section presents evidence for these causal connections .

Figure 1 Schematic representation of links between dimensions of fragility
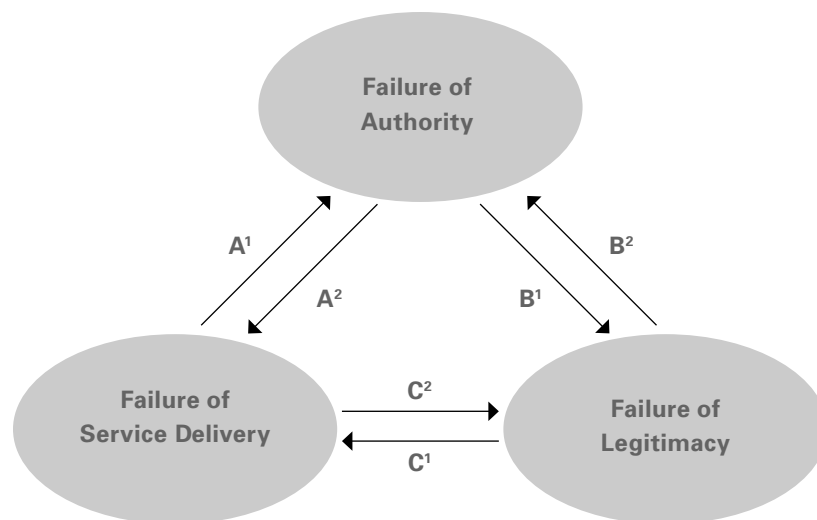
A^1—*Authority failures are associated with service delivery failures.* A lack of authority makes it difficult to deliver services in a comprehensive way. Moreover, authority failures are commonly associated with the presence of violent conflict. A conclusive research finding is that conflict is associated with worse development—that is, lower or negative growth, more poverty, generally worse social services, and worse human indicators (Stewart and Fitzgerald, 2001; Stewart, 2003; Collier et al., 2003). Although some countries managed to grow during conflict, including Guatemala, Sri Lanka, and the Sudan, these situations are uncommon, and econometric evidence suggests an annual loss of per capita income of more than two per cent from an 'average' conflict.[9] Conflict also leads to lower expenditure on the social sectors as incomes and tax revenue fall and expenditure on the military rises. On average, it has been estimated that military expenditure rises from 2.8 per cent of GDP (average for developing countries in peacetime, 1995) to 5.0 per cent of GDP (Collier et al., 2003). Moreover, conflict causes trained manpower to flee, undermines transport links, and is often associated with direct destruction of facilities. Even in the absence of conflict, where there is a general loss in authority, service delivery is seriously handicapped.

9 See, for example, Hoeffler and Reynal-Querol (2003). Precise estimates of costs are not reliable; estimates of the costs of the Nicaraguan war have varied from 77 per cent of 1980 GDP (Fitzgerald, 1987) to 17–26 per cent of GDP (di Addario, 1997).

A[2]—Service delivery failures, including those resulting in poverty, social exclusion, and horizontal inequalities, can cause conflict and loss of authority.

There is a well-supported connection between a country's per capita income and conflict, or loss of authority, and some presumption therefore that this indicates that countries with more poverty are more likely to suffer a loss of authority (Auvinen and Nafziger, 1999; Elbadawi and Sambanis, 2002). Moreover, a negative association has been found between a country's educational level and conflict, indicating that improved service delivery (at least in relation to education) reduces the risk of conflict (Collier and Hoeffler, 2004).

Where failures in service delivery are uneven across groups, the resulting horizontal inequalities may become a cause of conflict. There is considerable evidence, both econometric and from case studies, supporting the view that greater inequalities between culturally defined groups (horizontal inequalities) raise the probability of conflict.[10]

B[1]— Authority failures, especially when associated with violent civil war, are associated with a loss of civil and political rights; consequently, authority failures are associated with legitimacy failures. Conflict is often associated with a reduction in civil and political rights—indeed, sometimes with massive human rights violations by the state, as in the cases of Guatemala, Indonesia, and Sudan. At a general level, Thoms and Ron show an association between conflict and a measure of the average repression of personal integrity rights on the basis of 159 countries' experience from 1990 to 2003 (Thoms and Ron, 2006).

In general, then, loss of authority weakens the other two dimensions of fragility—service delivery and legitimacy.

B[2]—Suppression of civil and political rights (loss of legitimacy) can cause a loss of authority by provoking conflict, but not invariably. Such suppression is a common reaction to rebellion, which is sometimes exercised pre-emptively. This pre-emption—if conducted harshly—can itself provoke counter-violence and thus lead to escalation. Guatemala and East Timor seem to fall into this category; in both cases, what started as a relatively peaceful protest turned into violent opposition in reaction to the violence of the state.

Suppression of the right to freedom of peaceful opposition to the government is also an element accounting for the violent opposition to the state among some ethnic groups in Myanmar (Burma). Conversely, it is plausible to argue that the reason Bolivia has escaped the violence of neighbouring states is that protests have been permitted, and concessions made. Yet there are many examples in history of strong states that have suppressed political rights over a long period and *not* experienced major violent opposition, perhaps because of their military strength. Haiti under the Duvalier regime is an example; this period was associated with 'indiscriminate repression, martial law, curfews, censorship and autocratic rule' (Thoms and Ron, 2006, p. 51). Yet there was no sustained rebellion.

Can we conclude from the above that promotion of democracy which would increase state legitimacy will also enhance authority by reducing the likelihood of conflict? Such a conclusion would not be in accordance with the evidence. It is true that the states least prone to conflict are established democracies. But the most conflict-prone are recent democracies or countries in transition to democracy.[11] This is partly because in such countries there is no tradition of peaceful transfer of power via the ballot box, nor of the military being neutral towards political outcomes. Consequently, governments may pervert the electoral process and losing groups sometimes then take to violence. Haiti from 2000 to 2004 was a case in point: Aristide's re-election in November 2000 was widely considered fraudulent, leading to demands for its annulment. Eventually, in 2004, this tension led to violent insurgency, which was only prevented from escalating by international forces. The story of Uganda under Obote followed this pattern, as have events in Côte d'Ivoire. Another reason is that majoritarian democracy can be associated with permanent political exclusion of minorities, who then see no possibility of political participation without violence. This danger can be overcome by inclusive political processes; these, however, are by no means an automatic conse-

10 See Stewart (2002; 2008); Østby (2004); Barrows (1976); Mancini (2005); Cobham (2005).

11 See Reynal-Querol (2002); Stewart and O'Sullivan (1999); Snyder (2000); Thoms and Ron (2006).

quence of democracy *but need to be added as an explicit requirement*, which is at odds with the way Western countries interpret democracy. In contrast, some authoritarian regimes have sustained peace and development—as shown by China, South Korea, and Taiwan's earlier history, and Chile under Pinochet.

In sum, there is not an invariable connection between a failure in legitimacy and a failure in authority.

C[1]—Weak legitimacy, or poor performance on civil and political HRs, , can cause poor service delivery. While the evidence is unclear on whether there is a systematic relationship between democracy and economic growth (Przeworski and Limongi, 1993; Przeworski, 2000), it is much stronger in supporting the existence of a positive relationship between democratic institutions and human development indicators, suggesting a positive relationship between the legitimacy and service dimensions (Ahmed, 2004; Frey and al-Roumi, 1999). In support of this, we found that political discrimination —a type of legitimacy failure—was related to service delivery, after allowing for the effect of per capita income (Stewart et al, 2009). There is a significant worsening in aggregate achievements on infant mortality, child mortality, and life expectancy as political discrimination increases. Yet, while the outcome variables showed such a relationship, no association was found with the more direct service delivery variables of water provision, primary enrolment, or secondary enrolment.

C[2]—The converse relationship—from poor service access, especially if exclusionary, to lack of legitimacy—is also likely. This is the case when the social contract has broken down, leading to a lack of legitimacy and sometimes to a challenge to authority. Horizontal inequalities, often associated with service failures, can also lead to state fragility in the legitimacy dimension, since states that exclude significant proportions of their population economically and politically are likely to be perceived as illegitimate not only by the affected groups but also by others sympathetic to their plight. Moreover, repression of political rights and military coups in many countries have at least partly been driven by, and justified in terms of, the regime's inability to deal with ethnic and regional rebellion. In Indonesia, the draconian practices of Soeharto's New Order regime were mainly justified in such terms; similarly, in Nepal, the king's dismissal of the prime minister in 2002 and his subsequent abrogation of parliament in 2005 were justified in terms of the democratic system's inability to deal with the Maoist insurgency. The 1962 military takeover in Myanmar (Burma) and Marcos' declaration of martial law in the Philippines were also directly linked to the failure of existing democratic regimes to deal with ethnic and regional insurgency.

To summarize, we find strong causal connections among some of the dimensions of fragility, particularly between authority failures and both service and legitimacy failures. Authority failures associated with violent conflict weaken service access and undermine legitimacy; such failures cause failures in social, economic, and political rights, weaken the realization of MDGs, and often reinforce inequalities. This is why strengthening authority by reducing the incidence of conflict is an imperative for any effective development policy. There are also connections going in the opposite direction—from failures in legitimacy to conflict, and from failures in service access, especially if exclusionary, to conflict. While human rights violations, such as killing people, detaining them, or suppressing peaceful opposition, can provoke violence, pushing countries into democratic transition can do so as well.

Given these relationships, we should find some positive statistical association among the different types of failure. Table 9 shows correlations of the three dimensions across countries. However, while there are, significant relationships the correlations are quite low. This indicates that while some causal relationship among the dimensions occurs, each dimension captures a *different* aspect of performance; consequently, it is important to analyse and devise policies towards each of the three.

Table 9 Kendall's tau-b correlations between dimensions of fragility

		Authority	Service delivery (absolute)	Service delivery (progressive)	Legitimacy
Authority		-			
Service (absolute)	tau-b significance	0.266* 0.089	-		
Service (progressive)	tau-b significance	0.146* 0.086	0.616* 0.079	-	
Legitimacy	tau-b significance	-0.011* 0.078	-0.145* 0.066	0.057* 0.084	-

Service delivery failures, both in the absolute and progressive measure, are positively correlated with authority failures, suggesting that the relationship here is indeed strong, although it is not clear whether the causality runs in one or both directions. Interesting is the significant *negative* correlation between legitimacy failure and both authority failure and absolute service delivery failure. The negative link with authority failure may be symptomatic of the well-known 'inverted-U' relationship between democracy and conflict, which suggests conflict is less likely in authoritarian states and consolidated democracies, with transition democracies being the most vulnerable.[12] Finally, absolute service delivery failure is negatively correlated with legitimacy failure, but progressive service delivery failure is positively correlated with legitimacy failure, a finding that may need more investigation to explain fully.

We thus find broad causal connections between our three dimensions of fragility, but these connections are not invariable, meaning that countries can be fragile in one or two dimensions without being fragile in all three, as is, indeed, shown in the earlier evidence. The fact that the connections are not invariable offers hope for policy to prevent fragility from becoming a trap that makes failure on all fronts inevitable. Policy can aim to strengthen the dimension(s) that cause fragility and to prevent fragility in one dimension from leading to fragility in others.

12 See, for example, Hegre et al. (2001).

4

The relationship between state fragility and other approaches to development

This section considers the relationship between the 'fragile states' approach and major development approaches, including human rights, social exclusion, poverty reduction, and the MDG goals.

Human rights and fragility

An HR approach to development has been widely advocated and is increasingly accepted as the explicit basis for development policies by a number of agencies, including DFID, the European Union (EU), the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), and UNICEF. In some cases, it is taken on as the basis for all development activities (notably by SIDA); in others, it underpins part of the programming (as is the case with DFID and the EU).[13] The OECD has defined a human rights approach as follows:

> Unique elements [of the HR approach to development] include using recommendations of international human rights bodies and mechanisms, assessing the capacity of rights-holders to claim their rights and of duty-bearers to fulfil their obligations, and developing strategies to build these capacities. Essential elements include, for example, recognising people as key actors in their own development (rather than as passive recipients of commodities and services), and valuing participation, empowerment and bottom-up practices (OECD–DAC, 2006, p. 61).

Internationally recognized human rights are those included in the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, developed in 1966 by two covenants that came into force in 1976: the International Covenant of Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. The first of the covenants covers civil and political (CP) rights, including the right to life, liberty, and security of the person as well as freedom from torture, from arbitrary arrest and detention, freedom of thought, of religion, of opinion and expression, of assembly and association, and the right to participate in the government where the person is a citizen. The second covers economic, social, and cultural (ESC) rights and includes, among others, the right to an adequate standard of living for health and well-being—including food, shelter, and medical care—and the right to education.

Other human rights instruments include the 1965 International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the 1979 Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the 1984 Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Human Rights Covenants and Conventions have been officially endorsed by the vast majority of countries (UNDP, 2000). States that have agreed to particular HR instruments are under an obligation to fulfil them.

Important basic features of such HRs are that (a) they are universal and pertain to every person by virtue of being human; (b) there is an explicit rejection of discrimination of any type;[14] and (c) they are often argued to be indivisible—each person has a right to every right in the Covenants and Conventions, and there is no trade-off among rights. Rights imply duties. One of the aims of an HR approach is to identify and help enforce such duties.

13 See, for example, Stewart (1989); Frankovits and Earle (2001); Piron and O'Neil (2005); Uvin (2004); OECD–DAC (2006).

14 Article 7 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states: 'All are equal before the law and are entitled without any discrimination to equal protection of the law. All are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination.' See UNGA (1948).

It is recognized, however, that realization of the ESC rights (sometimes described as positive freedoms) takes time and resources; therefore, they cannot be realized immediately in poor countries, unlike the CP rights (sometimes called negative freedoms). Moreover, the Covenants do not define precisely what is meant by many of the ESC rights (such as how generous the rights are). Consequently, there is some ambiguity about interpretation, and also about the timing of the obligation to realize the positive rights. Hence the principle of 'progressive realization' was introduced, meaning that for low-income countries immediate realization of all positive rights would not be realistic or expected; instead, a steady move towards realization in a way that was commensurate with the resources available is a more realistic requirement.

An HR approach to development has two important facets. On the one hand, a supply effort is required both to persuade governments to realize their obligations with respect to both ESC and CP rights, and to use aid to help fill major gaps with respect to ESC rights. On the other hand, a demand effort is needed to help people realize their rights by providing assistance of various kinds for citizen empowerment.[15]

One important implication of a rights approach is that national and international law should be used as effective instruments or levers, with people encouraged and supported to use the law to enforce their rights. In practice, however, this is difficult to do unless the rights are incorporated in national legislation. Where they (or some) are embodied in the constitution—as, for example, in India, South Africa, and EU countries with respect to rights incorporated in the European Convention on Human Rights—the legal approach to enforcement has proved helpful (UNDP, 2000). Many rights-based aid projects assist people in exercising their legal rights.

How does the HR approach fit with the approach to fragile states being adopted here? *It is clear that substantial failures to meet HRs will qualify a country as a fragile state according to our definition.* However, there is a difference between the two approaches: a relatively small failure on HRs (such as with respect to one element only, or in a minor way only) would not be sufficient to classify a country as fragile. If it were sufficient, almost every country in the world would qualify as fragile. Put in another way, the HR approach to development has useful applications almost universally, while the fragile states approach points to the problems of a particularly vulnerable subset of states. A further difference is that a variety of policy approaches might be adopted to reduce fragility effectively without necessarily using an explicit HR framework.

The progressive realization of rights is very similar to the progressive definitions of service and legitimacy failures suggested above. In operationalizing the human rights perspective for the development agenda, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights notes the important distinctions between 'respecting', 'protecting', and 'fulfilling' human rights. Particularly with respect to ESC rights, progressive realization may entail state policies that respect and protect certain rights without fulfilling them, at least in the short to medium term. Treatment of the basic CP rights, in contrast, are mandatory; states are obliged fully to respect and fulfil the right to life, liberty, the security of the person, and freedom from torture, irrespective of their level of socio-economic development.

Thus, our distinction between absolute and progressive thresholds for (the risk of) state failure across the service dimension corresponds to the distinction between human rights that the state can be expected to fulfil regardless of its level of socio-economic development (absolute measures) and those it is to achieve progressively (progressive measures). Authority failures are clearly linked to some core CP rights, including the right to life and security of the person. All CP rights are embodied in the legitimacy dimension since critical and defining aspects of legitimacy include realization of CP rights.

15 An example is assistance in becoming a recognized citizen provided by a DFID project in Bolivia (OECD–DAC, 2006, p. 61).

A state that is the (complicit) aggressor in internal repression is culpable of legitimacy failure by failing to respect the basic CP rights of its citizens; similarly, states responding to an insurgency may also violate CP rights and lose legitimacy through excessive use of force, arbitrary detention of suspected rebels, or the use of torture. High levels of crime raise similar issues. In the first place, very high levels of criminality that significantly endanger citizens' personal security constitute an authority failure and a failure to respect citizens' right to security of their persons; second, the reactions of authorities to this situation—including sometimes police 'death squads'—constitute a clear infraction of human rights and thus, again, implicate the state itself in legitimacy failures. As Cavallaro and Ould Mouhamedou note, such problems are particularly liable to occur in states that have undergone recent democratic transition, where state policy-makers 'are charged with the difficult task of assuring citizen safety while not allowing police and other security forces to revert to abusive practices characteristic of the pre-transitional society' (Cavallaro and Ould Mouhamedou, 2005, p. 127).

Social exclusion and fragility

DFID defines social exclusion as:

> a process by which certain groups are systematically disadvantaged because they are discriminated against on the basis of their ethnicity, race, religion, sexual orientation, caste, descent, gender, age, disability, HIV status, migration status or where they live (DFID, 2005, p. 3).

While the precise definition varies, there is broad agreement that social exclusion consists of:

> [e]xclusion from social, political and economic institutions resulting from a complex and dynamic set of processes and relationships that prevent individuals or groups from accessing resources, participating in society and asserting their rights (Beall and Piron, 2004).

The latter definition immediately draws our attention to several key aspects of social exclusion:

- It is multidimensional, including political dimensions as well as social and economic ones.

- There is a *process of exclusion* and agency involved—the behaviour of particular agents and institutions leads to the *exclusion* of certain groups. Indeed, social exclusion occurs 'when the institutions that allocate resources and assign value operate in ways that systematically deny some groups the resources and recognition that would allow them to participate fully in social life' (Zeitlyn, 2004).

- Social exclusion tends to be a feature of *groups* rather than individuals. These groups may be distinguished from others in society by their culture, religion, colour, gender, nationality or migration status, or caste; or they may be identified by gender, age, physical or mental disabilities or illness, or—particularly in developed countries—by their housing or lack of it.

- Social exclusion is relational, which means that its definition depends on what is normal in the particular society where people live.[16]

How does this relate to our definition of fragile states? A state can be fragile without SE being present since failure on any of the three criteria does not require SE. For example, one can imagine a fragile state that fails to ensure comprehensive service entitlements, but not in any particularly exclusionary way; similarly, it may fail with regard to authority. Somalia is a state where government functions have become minimal in terms of service entitlements and authority, yet one where the effects are general and not particularly exclusionary in terms of one group or another. Similarly, states can lack legitimacy as defined (for example, by being non-democratic, lacking free media, and having poor performance on human rights) without exhibiting pronounced exclusion—Cuba and Pinochet's Chile are examples. Therefore, SE does not necessarily follow from fragility.

The relationship is more complex the other way round. A state *with a significant degree of SE* would be counted as fragile with respect to both service entitlements and legitimacy according to our definition. It would be fragile regarding service entitlements because it fails in comprehensive deliv-

16 The material defining social exclusion is taken from Stewart (2005).

ery and does so in an exclusionary way;[17] it would be fragile with respect to legitimacy because exclusion of a *major* group is a cause of lack of legitimacy. One difficult issue is determining the size of the excluded group, and the sharpness of the exclusion that would qualify a state as fragile. A state that excludes a small fraction of its population (perhaps less than one per cent) would not be fragile; however, one that excludes 30 per cent or more would be. The exact dividing line is a matter of judgement. Moreover, as noted in the definitional discussion, the extent and nature of exclusion that leads one to classify a state as fragile is also a matter of judgement. Exclusion may also be associated with conflict and loss of authority, but this is due to a causal relationship between SE and conflict rather than part of the definition of fragility.

Exclusion does not necessarily lead to failures in the authority dimension. A strong state may sustain its authority in the face of social, economic, and political exclusion, so long as the groups excluded are not too large. For example, exclusion of the Roma people in Central and Eastern Europe has not led to failures with respect to authority. Nevertheless, SE can lead to loss of authority—and indeed to civil war, as discussed earlier in relation to horizontal inequalities as a cause of conflict.

Poverty reduction, the MDGs, and state fragility

The MDG approach—which entails pursuit of the MDGs, including poverty reduction—is the most universally accepted development strategy at present. While this approach has much in common with the other approaches discussed, there is more blue water conceptually between it and the definition of fragile states than in the other cases. The MDGs have little to say about either authority or legitimacy in a conceptual way (causal connections were discussed earlier). There is direct relevance to the service dimension of fragility, however; success with respect to the MDGs would generally be expected to be associated with success in service access. Conversely, failure in reaching the MDGs would imply failure in terms of service access. Nonetheless, it should be noted that success on the MDGs can be achieved while many remain in poverty; and if the distribution of poverty remains significantly unequal across groups or regions, it may be associated with failure and fragility in the service dimension as well. The cases of Sudan and Nepal are examples. Both made significant progress on the MDGs. Yet in both cases, such progress was skewed—against the South in Sudan and the hill regions in Nepal; this was a source of fragility in both countries. By the same token, MDG success can be associated with HR failure in the presence of severe discrimination.

We have seen that there is considerable conceptual overlap between fragility of states and their failures with respect to HRs, SE, and the MDGs, but the overlap is not complete (see Table 10).

Table 10 Conceptual relationship between approaches to fragility

Relationship to fragility	Authority	Services	Legitimate governance
Human rights	Failures regarding authority imply failures with respect to the 'security of persons'.	Failures with respect to economic and social rights (and discrimination in their distribution) imply service access failures, and the converse.	Failures concerning civil and political rights imply lack of legitimacy, and generally the converse.
Social exclusion	Contingent.	Significant SE implies failed service entitlements, but not minor SE; fragility may occur without significant SE.	Significant SE implies lack of legitimacy if SE entails political exclusion.
MDGs	Contingent.	Failures regarding the MDGs imply service failures, but service failures may still occur with realization of MDGs.	Not relevant.

17 Here we depart from the DFID definition of fragility, which refers to service entitlements failure to 'the majority of the people'; majority delivery is possible with social exclusion.

5 International policy towards fragility

The objective of international public policy towards fragile states is to help them move away from fragility. What this means for public action in practice will vary hugely according to the source of fragility and the nature of the state.

The non-fragile state is easy to describe: it is one in which government authority is established throughout the state's jurisdiction and in which the government respects human rights, has political legitimacy, and is willing and able to ensure that basic human needs are met in an inclusive way, including making progress towards the MDGs and poverty reduction more generally. As noted, departure from these conditions can occur in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons.

One general problem is that a fragile state, by definition, is not in a position to correct its own weaknesses fully. A government may lack the authority to do so, or it may not want to correct particular weaknesses, such as social and political exclusion, or it may have very limited human and financial resources, and may not be able to correct all deficiencies on its own, however willing. The international community thus has an important role to play, but a difficult one. If the local government is resolutely exclusionary—as in, for example, Côte d'Ivoire, Guatemala, and Sudan—the international community is limited in what it can do. It can try persuasion, but this was unsuccessful over decades in Sudan; alternatively, it can use its own funds to make limited progress on some fronts, which also proved inadequate in Sudan.

There is more potential for the international community where the government is weak but not unfavourable to inclusive policies. Donors can support governments in raising revenue, supplement local resources with their own, and provide technical assistance. In the case of Nepal, for example, prior to the political agreement, the international community was already distributing resources towards the neglected hill areas; it is now able to support the government to this end. Prior to the peace agreement in Sudan, donors were able to distribute some funds to the South; nevertheless, the South remained much less developed than the North and the bulk of aid funds went straight to the North, where they supported exclusionary practices. Even resources apparently intended for the South were often diverted.[18]

There is an issue concerning which type of fragility to prioritize if a state is failing in more than one dimension. In the short term, it is essential to restore authority since when a war is raging, ensuring comprehensive access to basic services is difficult, if not impossible. But it is necessary to tackle some of the root causes of conflict if authority is to be sustained in the medium term, so service entitlements must soon be prioritized. Indeed, it is important to reach people with food and some health services even during conflict (Stewart and Fitzgerald, 2001). Promoting legitimacy does not typically cost economic resources, so policies to restore it need not be at the expense of achieving the other objectives. Yet it requires authority and is thus likely to be achievable only gradually. Improved legitimacy would both contribute to and facilitate by the restoration of authority.

Identifying policy implications

From a policy perspective, one needs to identify in which dimension the failure is occurring, and then go beyond this to an understanding of why the failure came about. The precise policies to be followed need to be differentiated according to the dimension(s) of fragility in the particular state, and the reasons for it. Considering each dimension separately:

18 For evidence for the statements in this paragraph see Stewart et al. 2009.

1. Weaknesses in authority. A lack of authority represents a very basic state failure and one that makes it difficult—indeed, sometimes impossible—to overcome other types of fragility. While it is easy to state that authority needs to be restored, it is not possible to generalize about how to do so, since situations vary greatly. The international community itself (whether under the auspices of the UN, regional organizations, coalitions of countries, or unilaterally) may occasionally use force to impose authority. Yet this is often unsuccessful as it can further provoke local opposition and may leave the state dependent on continued international intervention for its authority—as appears to have occurred in Afghanistan, Iraq, Kosovo, and Somalia. Meanwhile, repeated international interventions in Haiti have done little to restore authority or HRs. In Côte d'Ivoire, French intervention helped bring outright conflict to a halt, but it left an uneasy peace with a major loss of authority in the north.

A generally more desirable alternative is to encourage and facilitate local peace processes and then provide support (including military, if needed) for any agreed and legitimate government. This approach was used (broadly speaking) in East Timor, Guatemala, Nepal, and Sudan.

We should note that authority is sometimes supported at the expense of legitimacy. In cases where the various parties have diverging demands, authority might be re-established only by suppressing human rights and democracy. In some cases, authority and legitimacy may only be achievable through secession—as in East Timor and Eritrea. In others, political settlements can be designed to reconcile authority and legitimacy if all parties are willing, as in Nigeria following the Biafran war. Similarly, peace was secured with Southern Sudan by offering considerable autonomy and the promise of a referendum on independence; however, we have yet to see whether this will be honoured and the peace sustained.

Risk factors contributing to the breakdown of authority might include:

- socio-economic horizontal inequalities.

- political horizontal inequalities.

- low incomes and service delivery failures.

- lack of employment opportunities.

- a weak security apparatus.

Clearly, policies should not only aim to restore authority in the short run, but also to identify and tackle the underlying causes to prevent a recurrence of a breakdown in authority.

2. Service failures, including social exclusion. Aid and policy dialogue can contribute to reducing service failures (Brown and Stewart, 2006). The potential for aid to do so is high in countries where aid accounts for a substantial proportion of GDP (such as in many Sub-Saharan African countries).

While the nature of assistance varies with the situation, there is a general requirement that service access be *inclusive* and that social exclusion be explicitly considered, measured, and addressed. Aid cannot achieve comprehensive social and economic rights or social inclusion in countries with strong exclusionary tendencies, unless these are specifically addressed. This does not follow automatically from a focus on the MDGs—which can often be achieved most cheaply by reducing poverty and extending services to the already relatively privileged groups and regions. For example, aid to Guatemala since the peace accords has not achieved much in the way of reducing social exclusion, while aid to Ghana has reduced poverty significantly in the south but rather little in the north.

Possible explanations for failed service delivery include:

- poor revenue potential because of low incomes and the nature of the economy.

- lack of technical and administrative capacity.

- limited authority so that some of the country cannot be reached.

- resource potential, but unwillingness of the government to introduce adequate taxes.

- resource potential, but unwillingness of the government to meet the needs of certain groups (ethnic, religious, or gender-related, for example).

It is helpful to typologize situations according to the main reasons behind the service delivery failure, and to suggest policies accordingly. For example, if the issue is deficient revenue potential, then aid could play a clear role, both in supplementing resources and in increasing tax capacity. But if it is due to government unwillingness to raise revenue, aid could be counterproductive, encouraging tax reductions. If it is due to government intentions not to meet the needs of certain groups, then discussions and conditionality may be needed, supplemented by aid that *bypasses* the government.

To be effective policy needs to be directed at the main sources of the problem. In the Guatemalan case, for example, this would appear to be a matter of raising government revenue, of redirecting expenditure towards indigenous people and areas, and of introducing land reform. For the most part, generous aid to Guatemala has done little on these fronts, despite a strong focus on the MDGs. Guatemalan policy illustrates the limited influence of outside agencies in the face of government unwillingness. Outside donors can put these issues on the agenda as forcefully as possible and local agents may then take them up. Nonetheless, aid can make some direct contribution towards tackling the particularly weak areas (such as deficient revenue generation in the case of Guatemala; excessive military expenditure in the case of Nigeria and Indonesia; lack of regional balance in expenditure in the cases of Nepal and Sudan).

3. Legitimacy failures. Policies are required to move countries away from authoritarianism and failures in HRs towards inclusive democratic systems in which PC and ESC rights are broadly respected. As noted earlier, it is important to do so not only as an objective in itself, but also for the contribution this will make, especially in the longer term, to reducing other dimensions of fragility. Yet there can be trade-offs in this area. The attempted transition to democracy in Côte d'Ivoire, for instance, provoked the exclusionary policies and suppression of HRs that followed. A similar transition in Indonesia was soon followed by a series of lethal communal conflicts. In addition, in peace-making contexts, insistence on HRs, including criminal investigations of major violators, can make it more difficult to reach a peace accord.

Potential reasons for legitimacy failures include:

- military domination.

- absence of democratic structures.

- lack of respect for the democratic process.

- government control of the press.

- high levels of corruption and elite capture of state resources.

- factors contributing to authority failures that also contribute to legitimacy failures (notably political and socio-economic horizontal inequalities).

As with authority and service failures, appropriate action to correct legitimacy failures depends on the nature and source of the failure. It should be borne in mind that it is always difficult—and often counterproductive—for outside agencies to intervene on political issues such as legitimacy.

A major issue with respect to policies towards all three types of failure is that frequently it is the government itself that is responsible for these failures; in such cases, failure is the intended, not the unintended, consequence of government policy. In this context, an HR approach is especially helpful. Where a government has agreed to HRs, both the international community and local communities (or individuals) can argue that the government is violating its own agreements. If failures are due to unintended consequences of government policies, appeal to the HR agreements may be effective in securing policy change. In the case of deliberate failures, naming and shaming is sometimes effective. In some contexts, legal measures (international or domestic) can be used to try to enforce these rights. In others, appeal to HRs can be a useful advocacy tool. In some cases, aid agencies may need to adopt an indirect approach, using project aid to support HRs. In extreme cases of HR failure, aid has been cut off—for example by Finland in both Kenya and Nepal. However, caution is needed here as this may not be helpful in changing policy, and it may harm the population, accentuating fragility.

An HR approach also supports interventions that help empower individuals and communities so that they themselves can exert pressure to secure their rights. How far this is possible, however, depends in part on the source of fragility. In a situation where there is near-universal loss of authority (such as Somalia or the Democratic Republic of the Congo), this would be difficult to organize and not necessarily effective, since the government lacks any capacity to respond to pressure. Similarly, where CP rights are severely restricted (such as in Myanmar/Burma), there may be little scope for such outside interventions. An empowerment approach is likely to be most effective in poor countries suffering from service failure rather than in states that are experiencing severe breakdowns in authority or legitimacy.

Enabling conditions for corrective policies

Inclusive democratic governance. Establishing an inclusive government is arguably the most important element in corrective policies for fragile states, as it would decrease the likelihood of challenges to authority and increase the probability of pressures from the population for comprehensive services. As already noted, democratic systems tend to have a higher degree of legitimacy than authoritarian regimes; the existence of democratic structures is thus an important enabling condition for corrective policies. But, particularly in ethnically or religiously polarized countries, simple majoritarian democracy may not be sufficient to establish broad legitimacy for the government if smaller groups remain at risk of exclusion. In these cases, there is a need for inclusive political structures, which may be formal or informal. Formal measures may include

- reserved seats in parliament for specific groups. Indian policy towards scheduled castes and tribes is an example.

- constitutional bodies charged with ensuring the representativity of government, as with the Federal Character Commission in Nigeria (Mustapha 2007).

- the banning of ethnically or regionally based political parties, as in Ghana, Indonesia and Nigeria.

- the granting of special powers and privileges to areas of particular fragility, as in Aceh, or marginalized groups, as with the Malay 'special rights' in Malaysia.

Informal measures include:

- the formation of 'grand coalition',[19] that is governments that include all major groups, as in Malaysia.

- informal power-sharing precedents, such as ensuring that the president and the vice-president represent different groups or regions (or, as in Indonesia, the *bupati* and *sekwilda* at the local level).

19 See Lijphart (1977).

There are advantages and disadvantages to both formal and informal strategies. Formalized constitutional measures make it more difficult for governments to renege on the demands of inclusion; however, they may also reify ethnic difference and make it difficult to transcend ethnicized politics in the long term, as has been argued with reference to special rights in Malaysia (Jomo, 2004; Means, 1972). Informal measures are arguably more responsive and flexible, but they are also easily abandoned when political elites feel it in their interest. The example of the appointment of regional *bupati* in Indonesia is a case in point; the abandonment of such informal conventions was itself a major source of legitimacy failure and fragility.

Long-term economic planning. Policies to correct embedded socio-economic social exclusion are likely to take a long time to come to fruition. Bringing groups that have suffered educational exclusion up to parity, for instance, may take at least a generation. For political reasons, rectification of economic inequalities may require a gradual and long-term strategy to ensure that positive action in favour of excluded groups does not lead to excessive resentment among the privileged groups that will lose by the policies. Malaysia is an example of a state that has initiated such a long-term strategy, with broad success; its New Economic Policy, implemented in 1970, set 20-year targets for improvements in *bumiputera* socio-economic conditions. Even with such a moderate approach, however, Chinese resentment at the policies emerged into sustained protest when an economic downturn in the mid-1980s brought home their comparative losses (Brown, 2005). In contrast, the Sri Lankan policies towards reducing Tamil privileges—which were introduced abruptly—helped provoke the Tamil rebellion.

Truth and reconciliation commissions. A number of countries emerging from extended conflicts, such as East Timor, Guatemala, and Peru, have followed the South African example in initiating some form of truth and reconciliation commission. Where properly executed, such commissions potentially have a major stabilizing influence on fragile states. They can also provide an important mapping function by identifying the dynamics of social exclusion that drove the conflict in the first place. This was the case in Guatemala, where the Truth and Reconciliation Commission provided categorical evidence of the 'racism' of the state and its role in fomenting the conflict.[20] They can improve the legitimacy of the state by, in effect, drawing a line under the human rights abuses and social exclusion of the past. For this latter function to succeed, however, the state must possess the political will to implement measures to correct the social exclusions and human rights abuses identified by the process; if such will is lacking, as appears to be the case in Guatemala, this may serve to undermine further the legitimacy of the regime and lead to increased fragility.

Conditions hindering corrective policies

Entrenched political interests. Entrenched political interests at the elite level can prevent effective corrective policies. For example, in Indonesia, it is clear that commitments to pursue corrective policies were not followed through because of such interests; consequently, the explicit guarantees of the 1995 peace accords that indigenous welfare would be prioritized by the government were not realized. It seems evident that the failure to implement corrective policies is linked in part to failures to reach an *inclusive* political settlement. Where post-conflict settlements leave the power of existing elites untouched, there is often little incentive for them to deliver fully on corrective policies.

Military and police autonomy. A major focus of post-conflict aid is often the disarmament, demobilization, and rehabilitation (DDR) of rebel combatants. In fragile states, however, particularly those that have recently experienced or are experiencing violent conflict, the state military and police forces themselves are often significant perpetrators of human rights violations. This also extends to state-backed militia organizations, such as the 'janjawid' in Sudan and the anti-independence militias in East Timor at the time of the referendum. A

20 See also, Caumartin (2005).

strong military that is relatively autonomous (that is, beyond civilian control) is likely to hinder the implementation of corrective policies because its agenda often differs from that of the civilian administration. This is all the more likely in contexts where military personnel can profit individually from the war economy.

Corruption. The term corruption is used to cover a wide range of practices at different levels of the state, from the skimming of aid funds by national leaders to petty extortion by police personnel. High-level corruption is clearly a condition hindering corrective policies as it can prevent such policies from being implemented effectively. This is of particular concern in ethnically divided countries; case study evidence shows how ethnically neutral aid pro-grammes are easily skewed through corrupt implementation to favour one or another group and thus undermine the stabilizing potential of aid (Cohen, 1995). More generally, wide-spread corruption is likely to continue to undermine the legitimacy of the state. This applies both at the high and lower level—arguably more so at the latter, given the fact that petty cor-ruption and bribery at the low level is likely to affect the lives of average individuals more directly.

Low capacity to fulfil agreed solutions. This problem may occur as a result of a lack of author-ity (as in Afghanistan) or weak infrastructure and technical personnel. Many fragile states suffer from both (such as Somalia). Lack of budgetary control seems to be one reason why many Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers are only partially translated into policy (McKay and Aryeetey, 2004). Even where there is political will, there are some very difficult chal-lenges involved in designing effective policies to reverse fragility. For example, balanced regional development is a requirement for inclusionary policies. Yet while it is relatively easy to ensure that public service delivery is balanced, it is much more difficult to generate sustained economic growth in historically deprived regions such as northern Nigeria. Anoth-er example is employment creation. Sustained expansion of employment opportunities for youth should have the potential to reduce political fragility significantly. Yet what has been described as 'jobless growth' is a frequent characteristic of economic development in regions that do enjoy sustained growth. In many others, even attaining growth is extremely difficult. There may be trade-offs here, too. Particular government interventions such as employment creation schemes and import substitution may be needed. But adopting poli-cies such as these puts countries into direct conflict with the non-interventionist and open-market approach of the international financial institutions. In general, it is easier to reverse social discrimination and inadequacy of social services than to reverse economic inequali-ties in the current policy environment.

Broadly speaking, all these hindering and enabling conditions imply the need for a long-term strategy, yet there are clearly some tensions between some of these conditions. For instance, democracy is likely to improve political inclusion, but it also tends to lead to economic short-termism as governments submit themselves for regular re-election. Corrective policies may therefore involve some trade-offs. In Malaysia, for instance, long-term planning and inclu-sive government have been achieved at the expense of some civil freedoms and the entrench-ment of a political elite. However, democratic practices, although somewhat curtailed, ensure that the government is at least 'responsive', if not 'representative' (Crouch, 1996).

For donors seeking to help states to move out of fragility, this suggests a number of impor-tant conclusions. The first prerequisite is careful diagnosis to permit the design of appropri-ate responses in each case; a 'one size fits all' approach to fragility is likely to be ineffective and potentially damaging. Second, donors and the international community should adopt a long-term commitment to fragile states, to support the long-term vision and strategy neces-sary to move countries permanently out of fragility.

6 Conclusion

The concept of fragility is widely used in the donor community—although generally not by developing country sources—usually as though to refer to a well-defined set of countries with clear characteristics. In practice, however, there are many approaches to the definition of 'fragile states' and some arbitrariness in classification.

In this Overview we have proposed a definition involving three dimensions—failures in authority, service delivery, and legitimacy—and have suggested differentiating between 'failure' and 'risk of failure'. Together, these dimensions encompass all the criteria adopted by donor agencies referring to fragility; further, they identify a list of countries similar to those commonly known as fragile. But they have the major advantage of pointing to the main source of fragility. Nevertheless, the choice of indicators and of thresholds are subject to discussion and could be improved upon.

In addition to identifying the three main dimensions of fragility, we also highlighted——causal connections between the dimensions by drawing on extensive literature. Empirically, the causal relationships show up in a positive correlation among the measures of the three dimensions, but the correlation is not high, pointing to the independence of the three dimensions.

When it comes to policy towards fragile states, more information is needed than provided by the three dimensions. We need to know *why* there is failure, or risk of failure, on each dimension. This then points to a new set of information requirements. Countries that fail in any one dimension may do so for different reasons. It is necessary to identify the sources of failure in each dimension in each country before developing relevant policies to help the country move out of fragility.

Annexe: Methodology for statistical measures of progressive service failure

We have argued for a progressive and absolute measure of service delivery. This annexe explores how these measures might be developed and employed.

We begin with the measure of progressive service delivery. One possible way of measuring state fragility in this dimension would be simply to regress indicators of service delivery against GDP per capita and take the error term for each country as a measure of its progressive service delivery, as depicted in Figure A1.[21] Countries falling below the line of best fit are failing to provide the level of service delivery one might expect of countries with a similar level of GDP per capita.

Figure A1 Primary enrolment rate by level of GDP per capita
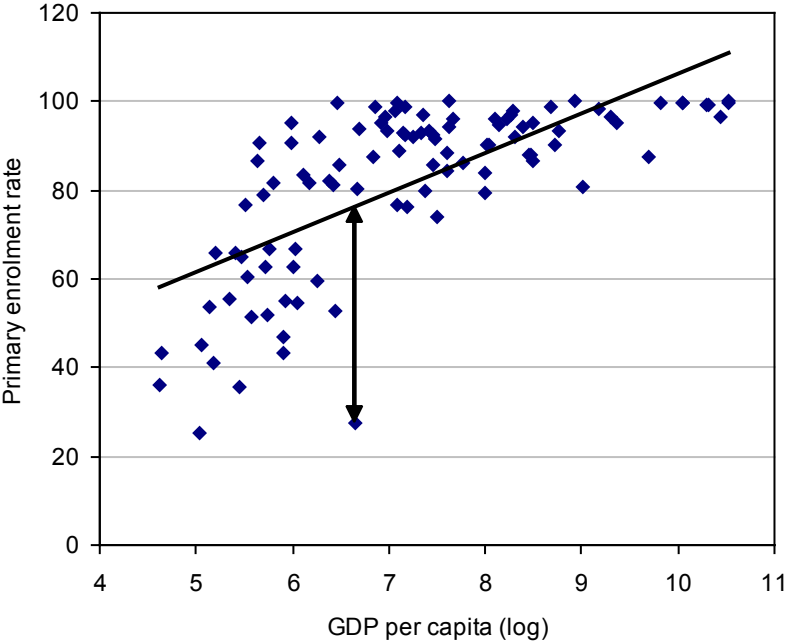
A clear problem with this approach, however, is the extension of the line of best fit beyond the maximum possible point (for example, 100 per cent primary enrolment). This results in better-off countries emerging as fragile because, for instance, the regression predicts their enrolment rate should be 120 per cent, which is impossible. One possible way of obverting this problem is to look only at developing countries, but this is a somewhat arbitrary solution. We propose the following process.

1. GDP per capita is transformed into a shortfall index, as used in the computation of the Human Development Index. Arithmetically, this is given by the equation: GDP(i)=(actual value−minimum value)/(maximum value−minimum value). This index is used as the *independent* variable in the subsequent regressions.

2. The desired measures of service delivery are similarly converted into a shortfall index. Where increases in the variable are associated with a worsening situation, the index is reversed, for example for child mortality rates (CMR): CMR(i)=1–(actual value–minimum value)/(maximum value–minimum value).

3. Each new measure of service delivery—for example, CMR(i)—is regressed against the GDP measure, GDP(i), and an estimated variable stored—for example, CMR(e). Where this predicted variable exceeds 1, it is reset to 1 (see Figure A2).

Figure A2 Child mortality rates
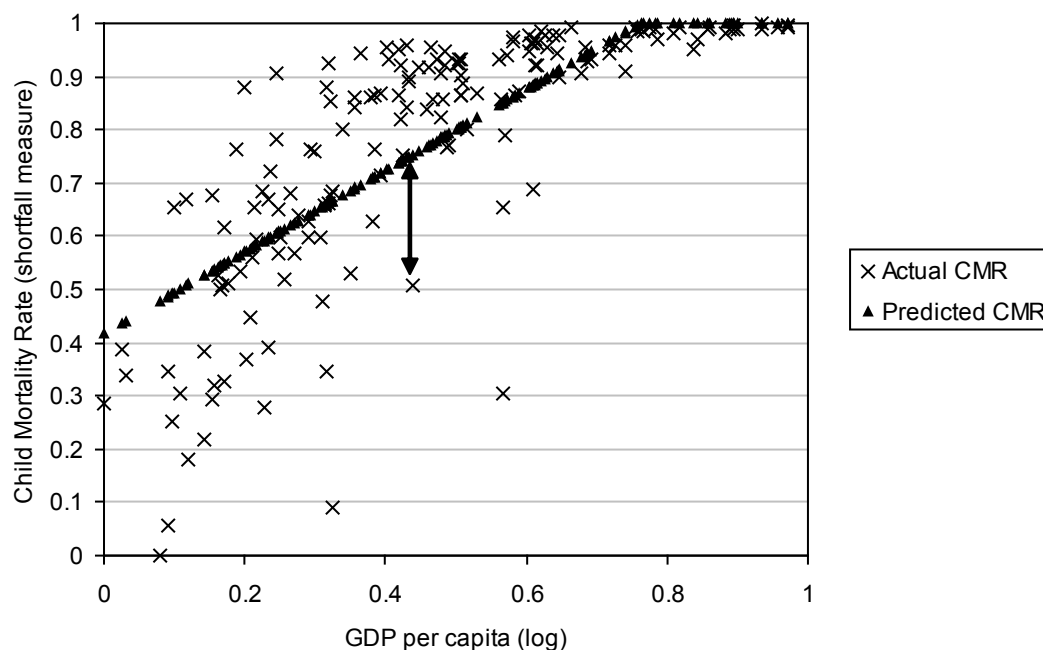
4. The final measure of each element of service delivery is computed by subtracting the (adjusted) estimated value of the indexed measure from the actual value—for example, CMR(s)=CMR(i)–CMR(e). Positive values indicate that countries are performing better than would be expected for their level of GDP; negative values indicate they are performing worse, and the lower the resulting value, the worse the country in question is performing relative to its level of GDP per capita. This is then normalized around a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

5. An overall measure of service delivery can then be computed as an average of different dimensions, such as education and health statistics. Again, this is normalized around a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1.

Using data from the World Development Indicators, we apply this process using three indicators—provision of an improved water source, child mortality rates, and primary enrolment rates—for 101 countries for which all three data sources were available. Figure A3 shows the distribution of these countries around the adjusted line of best fit. It is worth noting the close overlap between estimated shortfall in each dimension at a given level of GDP.

Figure A3 Computation of predicted levels of service delivery across three dimensions
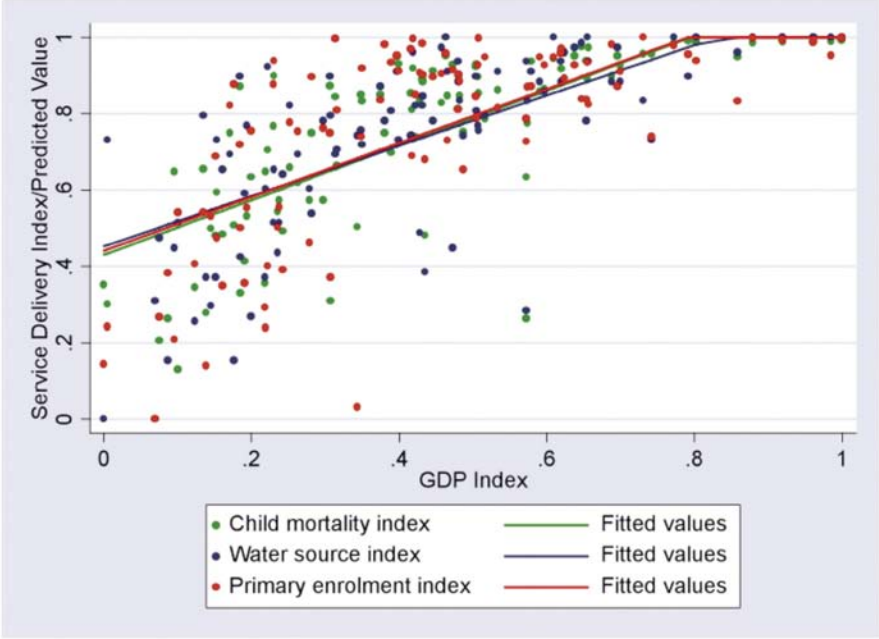
Taking the average of the error terms in each dimension produces the overall measure of service delivery failure. Figure A4 shows the distribution of this overall measure, forming a broadly normal distribution around a mean of 0, which equates to a level of service delivery equal to that expected for the level of GDP per capita. The higher the score, the worse the service delivery shortfall.

Figure A4 Distribution of service delivery measures

We propose that countries more than one standard deviation above the mean be taken as at risk of failing in service delivery; two standard deviations above the mean would constitute actual failure.

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