

**FRAGILE STATES AND THEIR CHARACTERISTICS*****Natalia MOTÎLI****Catedra Teoria Economică și Metodologia Cercetării*

Statele vulnerabile se caracterizează print-un număr de pericole pentru cetățenii lor și pentru statele vecine, printre care cele politice, economice, sociale. Autorul constată că și Moldova este un stat vulnerabil. De asemenea, se accentuează importanța implicării comunității internaționale în ameliorarea situației a aproape 900 milioane de persoane, care locuiesc în statele vulnerabile. În același timp, autorul consideră că societatea civilă din țările respective nu ar trebui să fie neglijată și că ea poate deveni un partener de încredere în eforturile donatorilor internaționali de a soluționa principalele probleme ale statelor vulnerabile, printre care și sărăcia.

**Introduction**

States that represent a combination of weak administrative capacity, lack of state control over use of violence, lack of accountability to population, lack of services, especially to poor or vulnerable, are considered to be fragile states. According to the report „Fragile States: What is international experience telling us?”, fragile states remain fragile for a long period of time - around 56 years - and present threat for country citizens and neighboring countries.

**Definition of a fragile state**

Presently there is no agreed consensus on definition of a „fragile state”. Nevertheless donors have more or less common understanding of the term: along with „weak”, „poor performing” and „failing”, the term „fragile state” is one of the multiple terms that have been used to describe states that are weak in their institutional capacity, control of their territory and ability (or willingness) to provide basic services to their people. USAID uses the term „fragile states” to refer generally to a broad range of failing, failed, and recovering states. A group of researches from Conflict and Development Network defined fragile state as a country which is beset by weak capacity and governance and does not respond to traditional aid modalities. According to the Australian AID, fragile states are characterized by lack of the capacity (or, in some cases, the political will) to provide public safety and security, good governance and economic growth for their citizens. DFID considers that that fragile states are those where „the government can not or will not deliver core functions to the majority of its people, including poor”. At the Senior Level Forum on „Development Effectiveness in Fragile States”, fragile states were defined as „countries affected by weak governance and institutions”.

Thus, states are fragile if they fail to adequately perform core functions for their people domestically and core functions as members of the international community. Depending on the source and definitions, 20 to 60 countries may be „labeled” as fragile. 46 countries appear in the bottom two-fifths of the Country Policy and Institutional Assessments (CPIA) of the World Bank ratings at least once between 1998-2003.

**Characteristics of fragile states**

Although fragile states have a lot of different traits, what they all have in common are: weak governance, failing public institutions, instability or conflict - all of which in their turn prevent country stability and increase level of fragility.

Fragile countries may present several threats for the citizens of these countries, neighboring states and the whole world. According to the Magazine for Development Cooperation, such countries can be a source of trans-border destabilization. Among the threats can be mentioned international terrorism, poverty, human rights violation, health pandemics, humanitarian crises, wars, environmental catastrophes, etc.

***Economic threat***

Fragile countries negatively influence economies of their neighbors. According to the Report “Development Effectiveness in Fragile States: Spillovers and Turnarounds”, two-thirds of the economic damage done by a fragile state are costs imposed on its neighbors. Having a fragile state as a neighbor reduces Gross Domestic Product by 1.6 percent per annum, and the cost of the average fragile state in economic losses alone is US \$100 billion - twice the global aid budget.

*Security threat*

Fragile states may greatly influence their own, regional and even global security. The majority (over 75 percent of fragile states) are conflict affected. They represent a major source of refugee movements, drugs transit and in some cases have been used as bases for terrorist activities. Gareth Evans, the president of the International Crisis Group, affirms that „Along with the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and international terrorism, ... the matter of state failure is one of the big three security problems that will preoccupy the first decades of the 21st century”.

*Human rights violation*

Fragile states fail in respecting human rights. Along with the most serious human rights violations, such as massacres of civilian population, raping and ethnic cleansing, fragile states fail in respecting principles of „equity”. Fragile states are characterized by high levels of inequality, which may take various forms: inequality in wealth, access to land and means to make a living, access to health services or education. „We will not be able to advance the development agenda without addressing the challenges of inequality within and between countries,” said José Antonio Ocampo, Under-Secretary General for Economic and Social Affairs, at launching the United Nations Report on the World Social Situation 2005: the Inequality Predicament. The Report stresses out that „inequality predicament will be perpetuated, frustrating efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals” as long as international community will fail to achieve commitments on social development agreed upon at the Social Summit in Copenhagen in 1995. Felix Naschold in his paper „Why Inequality Matters for Poverty?” also views inequality and poverty as being intrinsically linked and considers that by reducing inequality poverty reduction can be achieved. That is why “World Development Report 2006: Equity and Development” affirms that reducing inequality becomes central to tackling poverty and bringing about sustainable economic growth.

*Poverty*

Fragile states face particularly grave poverty and development challenges and are at high risk of further decline – or even failure. According to the DFID, nearly 900 million people (representing one third of the world poor) live in fragile states, what constitutes about 14% of world population. Also people living in the fragile countries constitute half of all children dying before the age of five; over one third of maternal deaths; one third those without drinking water; over one third of people suffering from HIV/AIDS – proportionally four times higher than elsewhere in the developing world.

People living in fragile states have higher chances to die prematurely or to lead a life full of suffering due to lack of basic education or essential health services. They become marginalized from the benefits of global development. Fragile states present an enormous challenge to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, becoming a powerful brake on accelerated progress towards the Millennium Development Goals. If poverty will perpetuate in the fragile countries, efforts to achieve the Millennium Development Goals will fail, letting poverty to dominate the world.

Unfortunately, according to DFID, foreign aid failed to considerably reduce poverty in the fragile states due to several reasons, among which: not enough amount of aid, not timely aid and not efficient ways to provide aid. So-called „good performers” and countries with moderate income levels receive disproportionately more official development assistance than do fragile states. Moreover, fragile states more often become „pockets of exclusion” and „aid orphans”. Aid volatility is twice as high in fragile states than in other low income countries and appears to reflect changes in donor priorities.

**Case of Moldova**

Analysis of Moldova proves that this country is an example of fragile state. Unresolved conflict with Transnistria presents a security and economic threat not only to Moldova, but also to the countries in the neighboring region. Human rights violations are taking place in Moldova, the state being accused in more than 100 cases at the European Court for Human Rights (ECHR) by February 2008. According to the Country Brief 2006 prepared by the World Bank, poverty remains very high in Moldova. With a GDP per capita of only US\$720 and a poverty headcount of 34%, Moldova continues to be the poorest country in Europe. Government of Moldova fails to provide adequate services to its citizens, forcing them to leave abroad.

**Commitment**

Fragile states should be oriented towards reforms and first of all address those issues that clearly distinguish them as fragile, namely: failure to deliver basic services, failure to protect people and their property,

weak public financial management, decreasing security, etc. Making progress in these areas will provide a significant improvement in life of the country citizens, and especially, the poor ones.

#### *Governments*

2005 Human Development Report calls governments to expressly commit themselves to targets for reducing inequality. As long as governments will not be committed to „eradication” of inequality, it will be difficult to „eradicate” poverty and achieve other substantial improvements in lives of the citizens, especially in the fragile states. When governments are not accountable for accomplishing their promises, individuals are deprived of their human rights, which become pure aspirations.

Reducing poverty and inequality in fragile countries can become one of the most efficient tools in achieving progress in human development worldwide. Attacking inequality and poverty should not be only a concern, it should become primary objective and commitment for each fragile state separately and for the whole world, because „when development and governance fail in a country, the consequences engulf entire regions and leap around the world” [USAID, 2002]. Over the years, several prominent economists (e.g. Adam Smith, Friedrich Hayek) have agreed that given the complexity of issue of inequality, easy solutions can not be found. It seems that centuries after we should agree with them. But we should not stop looking for solutions to tackle poverty and inequality – French government considers that it should be “an all-out, on-going, long-term commitment”.

#### *Donor Community*

Fragile states will not be able to transform themselves into „good neighbors” in a short period of time and without international assistance. International donor community should undertake urgent measures to tackle problems that are created (or might be created) by the fragile states. In the „Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness” from March 2005, donors and recipient countries emphasized their commitment to remain involved in fragile states for the long term. Andrew Natsios, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) Administrator, expressed the view that that donor assistance to fragile or crisis-prone countries needs to be faster and more flexible. Several donors developed in recent years their own strategies oriented towards assisting fragile states. USAID developed its fragile states strategy in January 2005. DFID has made a commitment in 2005 to increase engagement in fragile states. Australia’s AID program developed long-term approach to helping fragile states addresses development, economic, security, and political issues in a comprehensive and sequenced way. But there is a need for coordination of the donor efforts.

Realizing need for efforts coordination, OECD developed in April 2005 draft twelve principles to guide appropriate international engagement in fragile states. These principles are oriented towards maximizing positive impact of donor involvement and minimizing harm that might be brought by donor assistance. The main objective for international involvement in fragile states is to help national governments build legitimate, effective and resilient state institutions. In 2006 these principles will be tested in nine fragile states (Democratic Republic of the Congo, Guinea Bissau, Haiti, Nepal, Somalia, the Solomon Islands, Sudan, Yemen, and Zimbabwe) to determine their relevance and impact, prior to applying these principles to other fragile states.

Delivering aid to the fragile states is difficult. But it is critical to support peace and stability in these countries, and to improve lives of the millions of citizens who find themselves in a vicious circle of conflict, poor governance and poverty. Addressing issues of poverty and inequality in the fragile states is vital in terms of human rights respect, because poverty is an unacceptable denial of human rights and according to Terry Davis, Secretary General of the Council of Europe, is an insult to human dignity. „Wherever we lift one soul from a life of poverty, we are defending human rights. And whenever we fail in this mission, we are failing human rights” – considers Kofi Annan, United Nations Secretary-General.

#### *Civil society*

Civil society can play important role in fragile state transformation, putting accent on advocacy for social issues and governance reform. If civil society organizations are strong and active, they may become „drivers of change” and can take responsibility for certain functions where governments fail to be efficient, among which are: promoting participatory decision-making, improving governance, involvement in policy formulation, conflict management, peace building and other areas of life. World Bank Report „Engaging civil society organizations in conflict-affected and fragile states: three African country case studies” brings evidences that in the absence of capable or credible public institutions, civil society organizations may take initiative to provide basic public services, especially aimed at reaching poor and vulnerable citizens. Civil society of the

fragile country can become a trustful partner for the donor community. But at the same time donors should try to avoid permanently bypassing governments of fragile states, but instead make efforts to strengthen „country ownership” and to build capacity of state institutions, to have fully operational and responsible government.

### Conclusions

Around fifty countries in the world can be considered fragile states, Moldova being one of them. Among the main characteristics of fragile states are poverty and inequality. As long as fragile states will not be transformed, they will represent threat for their own citizens, neighboring countries and the whole globe. International community should be interested in providing coordinated and efficient assistance to these fragile states to help them recover, because they present various threat to the neighboring countries and globally. Civil society from the fragile states can also play important role in making governments accountable or even taking responsibility for providing certain services. Addressing poverty and inequality in the fragile states will ensure respect of human rights and will allow making progress towards achieving Millennium Development Goals in these countries.

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