



CYBERNOTES

Making the Grade: Defining Failing States

Since the Sept. 11 attacks and the resulting war on terrorism, the international arena is no longer a stage for conflict among great powers. Prodded by the mounting concern over trans-state groups, such as al-Qaida, the focus has shifted to the problem of failed and failing states (the focus of this month's *Journal*). These vulnerable states have stumbled into the spotlight as potential hotbeds for terrorist activity and recruitment.

The term "failing states" refers to regions suffering from extreme poverty, weak governance and internal conflict, conditions with high risks of global spillover effects, such as terrorism and pandemics. As the July/August issue of *Foreign Policy* aptly puts it, "World leaders once worried about who was amassing power; now they worry about the absence of it" (www.foreignpolicy.com/story/cms.php?story_id=3098).

While the potential threat from these countries is universally accepted, there is less agreement on what actually constitutes a failing state and how the danger it poses can be mitigated. Several tests, reports and indices — each utilizing different definitions and indicators — have been created to identify fragile states and assess their implications globally.

The Independent Evaluation Group, a division of the World Bank, recently published a report listing the world's fragile states, known in Bretton Woods jargon as low-income

50 Years Ago...

There are many pros and cons on the merits of the 'conference' approach to diplomacy as opposed to the traditional, bilateral form of diplomatic relations, but it seems reasonable for us to expect that the U.N. type of diplomacy will be an important feature of international relations for the rest of our careers.

— Editorial, "Multilateral Diplomacy and the Foreign Service," *FSJ*,
November 1956



countries under stress, or LICUS. (The Bank changed the term "low-income countries under stress" to "fragile states" this past January, after the work for this report had been done.) The list encompasses 26 states and territories, including Afghanistan, Somalia and Haiti (www.worldbank.org/ieg/licus/download.html).

Part of the World Bank's broader initiative toward fragile states, the report categorizes failed states on the basis of per capita income and Country Policy and Institution Assessment ratings. The CPIA is a diagnostic tool consisting of 16 criteria reflecting the extent to which a country's policy and institutional framework support sustainable growth.

The results so far look grim: poverty and conflict among these states seem to be worsening despite efforts by international organizations and donor countries. Since the last report was published in 2003, the number of

fragile states has grown from 17 to 26. According to the IEG, eight of these states have dropped from "marginal" or "core" status to "severe," indicating significant economic and social deterioration. Only five nations — Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea, Niger, Kyrgyzstan and Yemen — have managed to shed their failed-country status, while 14 new territories have joined the list.

The IEG report also assesses the efforts made thus far by the World Bank and the international community to economically engage and stimulate these volatile regions. The report attempts to identify the obstacles faced in economic engagement, and seeks to provide possible solutions for improved assistance.

In 2005, the Fund for Peace, a research organization dedicated to war prevention, published a "Failed States Index" in collaboration with *Foreign Policy* (www.fundforpeace.org/programs/fsi/fsindex.php).



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This index, which was updated in 2006, uses 12 indicators to rank 146 countries in terms of fragility. The indicators include demographic pressures, movement of refugees, inequality and uneven development, economic decline, human rights violations and delegitimization of the state, among others.

Though more extensive than the World Bank's list, the Failed States Index is more descriptive than prescriptive. It does not attempt to suggest what ought to be done to rectify the situation, but rather serves as an instrument to measure the capacities of state institutions and to predict trends regarding failing states.

A third list comprising 46 fragile states is published by Britain's Department for International Development (www.dfid.gov.uk/pubs/files/fragilestates-paper.pdf#search=%22DFID%20fragile%20states%22). The DFID report evaluates states according to indicative factors such as state authority for security, effective political power, economic management and administrative capacity to deliver services. It attributes problems in these areas to a lack of capacity and unwillingness to deliver within failing states. Like the World Bank, the DFID also addresses the inefficiency of current systems of foreign aid and tries to put forth solutions to improve assistance to failing regions.

While the various lists on failing states differ in methods and composition, they all hit upon the same critical

point: for the sake of all, in developed and developing nations alike, the betterment of poor and conflict-ridden populations remains crucial to a more secure world.

— *Lamiya Rahman,*
Editorial Intern

Putting the "Security" Back into "National Security"

As skirmishing over policy for Iraq and the war on terror accelerates going into the November elections, a new think-tank hopes to raise the

level of debate over how to best safeguard international and domestic security despite partisan concerns.

The National Security Network (www.nsnetwork.org), dedicated to promoting "pragmatic and principled foreign policy and responsible global leadership that will make America secure and prosperous," was launched on Sept. 26 by former Secretary of State Madeleine Albright; Representative Jane Harman, D-Calif.; Rand Beers, a former special assistant to Presidents Clinton and George H.W.

Site of the Month: whatsonwhen.com

As every globe-trotting Foreign Service employee knows, much of the charm in a new post lies in the chance to discover a country's unique culture. At www.whatsonwhen.com, exploring new cities is made quick and simple.

This award-winning Web site "tells you more than a guidebook can. Quite how *Whatsonwhen* manages to keep track of events all over the world is hard to imagine, but they do it exceptionally well," says *The Guardian*. The site features upcoming events in 111 cities and 30 countries — from film festivals in San Sebastian and canal tours in Amsterdam to opera on the Nile, and more.

With its user-friendly format, you're sure to find something of interest, whether you're single or traveling with a family. Specified search options allow users to search by continent, country, city and date. In addition, the site includes a list of themes, ranging from "Clubs & Parties," to "Performing Arts," to "Kids & Family."

Whatsonwhen also offers a number of helpful travel services. Users can browse through leisure-event guides, watch travel videos, book hotels and tickets and even submit their own photos and events.

Launched in 1999, *Whatsonwhen* started out with the aim to "let people plan their leisure time according to their interests and to make sure they did not miss an event they really wanted to see." Though perfect for travelers, the site also serves high-profile clients such as Thomas Cook and Reuters.

— *Lamiya Rahman,* *Editorial Intern*

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Bush; and Leslie H. Gelb, president-emeritus of the Council on Foreign Relations. Beers is president of the new organization and Gelb is chairman of its advisory board.

The Washington-based think-tank draws on the expertise of over 1,000 national security specialists on both sides of the partisan divide. It intends to extend the debate to the public through town hall meetings, citizen outreach and online exchanges. The Security Framework Project, a communications hub sponsored by, and maintained for, the progressive national security community, is another key project.

“The National Security Network acts as a switchboard to connect media, political leaders and experts to ensure the best ideas are getting where they need to go,” Beers said at the launch event at the National Press Club. “NSN members are committed to fostering an informed public dialogue to ensure a secure and prosperous future for the United States and to restore America’s legitimacy as a global leader.”

One of the core missions of the Network is to strengthen citizen support for responsible foreign policy throughout the country. Chapters are currently active in three states, and are being set up in five more.

“The National Security Network aims to put ‘security’ back into ‘national security’ and do it by restoring bipartisanship,” said Network Advisory Board Chairman Leslie H. Gelb. “No other national security organization integrates policymaking, messaging and community outreach within one enterprise. Network members are the best of the next generation. They are problem-solvers addressing real challenges.”

— *Susan Maitra, Senior Editor*

Religious Freedom Report Draws Criticism

Despite a general trend toward religious freedom, in certain regions the past year has witnessed increased governmental efforts “to create sectarian violence and attack people of other faiths,” said John V. Hanford III, Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom, at a Sept. 15 briefing on the *2006 Annual Report on International Religious Freedom* (www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/rm/2006/72303.htm).

The State Department report covers conditions in 197 nations and territories, noting significant abuses in eight “countries of particular concern.” The CPC list — China, Eritrea, Iran, Myanmar, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Sudan and Vietnam — remains unchanged from 2005 but, according to Hanford, an updated list is forthcoming.

Among the CPCs, the report traces a decline of freedom in Iran, where “government actions and rhetoric created a threatening atmosphere for nearly all religious minorities.” Both recognized and unrecognized minorities in Iran continue to suffer at the hands of discriminatory government-sponsored media campaigns, the report states.

The report cites ongoing restrictions in China, where Christians, Muslims and Falun Gong practitioners continue to be violently persecuted. It also expresses concern over intensified restriction of religious activities — on the part of both Christian and Muslim groups — in Uzbekistan, which many speculate will be included in the new CPC list.

Criticism has been leveled at the report from both the domestic and international arena. The U.S. Commission on International Religious Freedom stated that it was “shocked”



by the State Department's claims of improvement in Saudi Arabia, where it says progress has been insignificant and "freedom of religion does not exist" (www.uscirf.gov/mediaroom/press/2006/september/20060915StateDeptRpt.html). The USCIRF also denounced positive references to Vietnam's progress in the report.

Not surprisingly, the report has drawn even angrier responses from the CPCs. Iranian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mohammad Ali Hosseini denounced it, claiming that it "pursues a U.S. foreign policy agenda and is of no value" (www.rferl.org/featuresarticle/2006/09/0C3098FB-CC24-49A5-8CAF-63CE752BBBAF.html).

While expressing Vietnam's good will toward the United States, Foreign Ministry spokesman Le Dung protested his nation's being singled out as a country of particular concern. According to Dung, "Vietnam has made enormous progress on religious freedom" (www.nhandan.com.vn/english/news/190906/domestic_vn1.htm). However, the report states that despite improvements for Protestants, certain Buddhist factions are still repressed.

In Beijing, Foreign Ministry spokesman Qin Gang dismissed the report as a "groundless" interference in China's internal affairs. Ye Xiaowen of the State Administration for Religious Affairs remarked, "This subject has become a major obstacle to constructive cooperation between China and the United States" (<http://today.reuters.com/news/home.aspx>).

In Pyongyang, officials charged that the United States should stop meddling in others states' religious policies. "The United States is not a 'religious judge' but a chief culprit in the repression and extermination of religion," declared the *Rodong Sin-*

Sept. 11, 2001, has not had the same reverberations as World Wars I and II, or the end of the Cold War. America has not reshaped the world, and the world has not reshaped America. But that does not mean that the challenges brought on by 9/11 are not momentous. The challenge for the United States is managing and mitigating the turmoil in the world, while taking steps to keep the American people safe.

— Lee Hamilton, "Five Years After 9/11," Remarks at Pace University, Sept. 7
www.wilsoncenter.org/docs/staff/Hamilton_Pace.doc

mun daily newspaper, citing U.S. campaigns in Afghanistan and Iraq (<http://today.reuters.com/news/home.aspx>).

Though not on the CPC list, Russia, too, was critical. "We did not expect balanced, unbiased judgments from this document," states Russian Foreign Ministry spokesman Mikhail Kamynin (www.interfax-religion.com/print.php?act=news&id=2062). "Just like in previous years, the U.S. Department of State's report is abundant in inaccurate and often grossly erroneous wordings. It juggles facts, outdated information, and references to apparently unreliable sources."

For the full report, see www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/irf/2006/.

— Lamiya Rahman,
Editorial Intern

Answering Expatriate Booklovers' SOS

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— Lamiya Rahman,
Editorial Intern ■