



## The Level of the Human Rights Protection in the Fragile Countries and its Impact on the Regional and Global Security

Krasimir KOEV<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** Objectives: The current paper presents the data from the latest issue of the Fragile State Index (FSI) 2023 and proves the thesis that the countries with the highest fragile index have significant problems in the protection of the human rights, listed in the UN Universal Declaration of the Human Rights and European Convention for the Human Rights. Such countries like Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan, Syria, Afghanistan and others have also the highest scores in other dimensions of the Fragile State Index as: Security Apparatus, Economic Decline, State Legitimacy, Refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons) and this way present a serious threat for the regional and global security. Prior Work: Conceptualization of the term “failed countries” and review of previous editions of FSI. Approach: The paper is based on a detailed theoretical review and secondary data analysis. Results: The main conclusion drawn in it is that the FSI is a reliable tool for signalling the riskiest areas in a particular country that may pose a risk for the international security as well. Implication: The obtained results are useful for prognosis of the global security situation and prevention of some security risks. Value: Innovative point of view in relation to global security issues.

**Keywords:** fragile state; Fragile State Index; global security

### 1. Introduction

In 2024, it will be 20 years since the first publication of the Failed States Index (FSI) by the non-governmental organization The Fund for Peace and Foreign Policy magazine. Through the created FSI, the Fund identifies a tool for assessing the pressures on the countries caused by existing problems in the fields of ecology, economy, politics, security, etc., as the increase in pressure leads to an increase in instability in the respective country. The term “failed state” was designed to highlight and draw attention to real risks that people would face if their states failed to address the factors and conditions measured by the index. When the Index was

<sup>1</sup> Senior Assistant Professor, PhD, University of Ruse “Angel Kanchev”, Bulgaria, Address: Studentska Street no. 8, Ruse, Bulgaria, Corresponding author: kgkoev@uni-ruse.bg.



Copyright: © 2024 by the authors.  
Open access publication under the terms and conditions of the  
Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license  
(<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)

published in its issue for 2014, it was presented under a changed name - The Fragile States Index (Wong, 2022). The experts from the Fund for Peace motivated their decision with the fact that the old name has attracted people's attention, but at the same time has shifted the focus from the main purpose to encourage discussions that support the increase in the people's security in all spheres of their life (The Fund for Peace).

The current paper interprets the interdependence between a country's average fragility index and its index of the rule of law and protection of human rights, using the latest edition of The Fragile States Index 2023 as an empirical base.

## **2. Theoretical Background**

There is no consensus on the exact definition of the concepts "failed state" and "fragile state". Some analysts describe the case of fragility as an erosion of the state capacity, characterized by a downward gradation of the state's ability to govern effectively, which in its most extreme form leads to a complete collapse of the state power.

It has to be pointed out that the concept "failed/fragile state" is not an official term in the international law. It indicates that a concrete country is undergoing a period of instability in some spheres of the public life and is in danger of potential problems in its governance. In many cases, the governments of the fragile states have lost the ability to provide basic public services or to protect their citizens from violence, either internally or externally. In some extreme cases, the fragile states may experience civil war or massive displacement of people due to the actions of criminal networks or terrorist organizations (John, 2008).

The term "failed stated" was created during the 1990s. According to Longley some events like revolution, legislative incapacity and military involvement in the politics could be common reasons for a state's failure/fragility/collapse (Wong, 2022).

The "fragile state" as an academic topic was introduced after the September 11 terrorist attacks. According to Patrick the fragile states are low-capacity and low-income countries in the developing world which present acute risks to the economies of their Western neighbours. In this sense, the fragile states share the same problems with the failed states but on a much smaller scale (Wong, 2022).

According to Tyagi the fragile states possess the following characteristics: Conflict/post-conflict/crisis/war or political change with dynamics; Deteriorating government; Slow growth of GDP; Long-term diplomatic or economic instability (Wong, 2022).

The OECD defines fragility as a combination of exposure to risk and insufficient capacity of the state to manage or mitigate those risks. The fragility can provoke violence, poverty, inequality, displacement, and environmental and political degradation. The OECD measures fragility on a spectrum of intensity of 5 dimensions (economic, environmental, political, security and societal) with inclusion in the edition of States of Fragility 2022 a sixth human dimension. Each dimension is represented by 8 to 12 indicators that measure risks and coping capacities of the state to risk mitigation (OECD, 2022).

The Fragile States Index (FSI), introduced by the Fund for Peace, is based on the analytical platform Conflict Assessment System Tool - CAST (Fragile State Index powered by the Fund for Peace, 2022) and comprises twelve risk indicators divided into 4 groups: *Cohesion indicators* - Security Apparatus; Factionalized Elites; Group Grievance; *Economic indicators* - Economic Decline; Uneven Economic Development; Human Flight and Brain Drain; *Political indicators* - State Legitimacy; Public Services; Human Rights and Rule of Law; *Social and cross-cutting indicators* - Demographic Pressures; Refugees and IDPs (Internally Displaced Persons); External Intervention. (Conflict Assessment System Tool) Each of the indicators of pressure on the countries includes sub-indicators whose total number is 100. The evaluation of the indicators is done on a scale from 1 to 10, as 1 means low risk /stability/ and 10 - high risk /instability/. Index indicators present a snapshot which could be compared with the previous ones. In this way it can be established which conditions are improving or worsening.

As can be seen from the list of the indicators above, Human Rights and Rule of Law indicator occupies an equal place among all other indicators, taking into account the characteristics of the political regime (authoritarian or democratic) and the protection of basic human rights, such as freedom of speech, civil and political freedoms, etc. There is no substantial research on the interdependence between FSI and the extent of human rights protection, but it could be argued that countries with a high FSI have insufficient control over violence against their citizens or the high levels of poverty and marginalization among their populations which is the evidence of non-compliance with the basic human rights. In earlier UN conventions, the civil and political rights were treated separately from the economic, social and cultural rights, but modern research examines them in a complex and traces their interdependence (Evans, 2008).

### **3. Interdependence between the FSI and Human Rights Protection in the Fragile States**

Having in mind the annual editions of the FSI, it is not difficult to establish a direct interdependence between a country's high FSI and its high Human Rights and Rule of Law index, i.e. the more unstable a country is, the more problematic it is to protect human rights in it. In the 2023 edition of the FSI, based on data for 179 countries for 2022, the 10 countries with the highest FSI are listed in Table 1 below:

**Table 1. Countries with highest FSI and respectively highest index on the Human Rights and Rule of Law indicator – 2023 edition**

No	State	Place in the ranking	Total index	Index Human Rights and Rule of Law
1	Somalia	1	111,9	9,0
2	Yemen	2	108,9	9,6
3	South Sudan	3	108,5	8,7
4	Congo Democratic Republic	4	107,2	9,3
5	Syria	5	107,1	9,1
6	Afghanistan	6	106,6	8,7
7	Sudan	7	106,2	9,2
8	Central African Republic	8	105,7	9,1
9	Chad	9	104,6	8,4
10	Haiti	10	102,9	8,7

Source: Fragile State Index powered by the Fund for Peace 2023.

<https://fragilestatesindex.org>

The data in the table clearly demonstrate that a high index of instability of a country signals problems in observing the rule of law and the protection of human rights. 6 of the countries in the top 10 on the FSI have serious problems with the protection of human rights, registering an index above 9 on a 10-point scale. In the 2023 edition of FSI we can see also some indicative examples of non-compliance with the human rights and the rule of law. For example, Iran ranks 40th in instability out of 179 countries with an overall index of 87.0, but ranks first in the Human Rights and Rule of Law indicator with an index of 9.9 out of 10. This means that the authoritarian regime in the country does not guarantees human rights protection and respect. The situation is similar with North Korea - 38th place in the ranking and 9.4 index on the Human Rights and Rule of Law indicator. In the context of the war between Russia and Ukraine, a comment can also be made on the position of Russia, occupying 53rd place in the FSI, but registering an index of 9.3 on the Human Rights and Rule of Law indicator.

The data from the 2023 edition of the FSI about the countries with the highest index on the Human Rights and Rule of Law indicator is confirmed by the 2022 Annual Human Rights Reports (2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices). In these reports the state of the human rights protection is commented in the light of the international law and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. It is important to say that the countries with the highest Human Rights and Rule of Law Index in the 2023 edition of the FSI, mentioned above, are among the examples of the countries with the greatest problems in the area of human rights protection, commented in the Annual Human Rights Reports. First of all, the violence and causing death of innocent people by Russia during its war with Ukraine is commented on. A particularly indicative example mentioned in the Annual Human Rights Reports 2022 is about the brutality and violence of the regime in Iran in suppressing the peaceful protests in the country caused by the tragic death of Mahsa Jina Amini as a result of the actions of the so-called "moral police". In this case, the right of expression and religion of Iranians are severely violated. Next, the decree of the Taliban in Afghanistan, which forbids women employees of non-governmental organizations from working in their workplace, is commented on. This decree threatens millions of Afghans whose survival depends on humanitarian aid. The report for Syria describes how the regime continues to imprison, torture and kill political opponents, human rights defenders and journalists. Over 154,000 people remain missing or unjustly detained by the regime, ISIS and other parties to the conflict.

The concurrence of the data in the two reports cited above on countries with the highest levels of rule of law and human rights abuses shows that the FSI is a reliable tool for signaling the riskiest areas in a particular country that may pose a risk for the international security as well.

Not by chance, based on the data in FSI, in the spring 2022 the Biden Administration issued the Global Fragility Act's (GFA) directed to four priority countries - Haiti, Libya, Mozambique and Papua New Guinea, and one region - Coastal West Africa. The Fragile States Index (FSI) was critical in this selection process with its evidence-based quantitative data. The FSI will also be essential in the process of monitoring the GFA implementation. If the GFA's strategy is successful, it will become the norm in all U.S. foreign policy strategies for conflict-affected and fragile states (2022 Prologue to US Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability).

#### **4. Conclusion**

The general conclusions of the 2023 edition of the FSI can be summarized, in confirmation of the empirical value of this instrument.

- According to FSI 2023, the five most fragile countries are Somalia, Yemen, South Sudan, Congo Democratic Republic and Syria. With some exceptions during the years, these countries have been among the top 20 most fragile states since the start of FSI in 2005. They present examples of how the crises and instability can cause a threat for the security in a global scope.
- There is an increase of the social and political polarization in both rich and poor countries across the globe, which causes a growth of the authoritarianism and nationalist movements.
- In the past research, the state fragility has been interpreted as phenomenon valid mostly for the developing world. Today it can be stated that the fragility of some countries can cause threatens for the developed Western countries, too, because the fragility can flow both ways. Examples of this are that the war in Europe can lead to food crises in Africa and a pandemic can be easily spread around the world. The fragility must be addressed everywhere with strategies for social and political cohesion and timely analyses and prognoses like these provided by the FSI.

#### **5. References**

\*\*\*(2022). 2022 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/reports/2022-country-reports-on-human-rights-practices>, accessed on 12th June 2023.

\*\*\*(2022). 2022 Prologue to US Strategy to Prevent Conflict and Promote Stability. Bureau of conflict and stabilization operation. Retrieved from: <https://www.state.gov/2022-prologue-to-the-united-states-strategy-to-prevent-conflict-and-promote-stability/>, accessed on 05 June 2023.

\*\*\*(2022). Fragile State Index powered by the Fund for Peace. Retrieved from: <https://fragilestatesindex.org/methodology/>, accessed on 15th June 2023.

Conflict Assessment System Tool-CAST. Retrieved from: <http://library.fundforpeace.org/cfsir1418>, accessed on 15th June 2023.

Evans D.G. (2008). Human Rights and State Fragility: Conceptual Foundations and Strategic Directions for State-Building. *Report prepared for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Government of Denmark.*

John Di, J. (2008) Conceptualizing the Causes and Consequences of Failed States: A Critical Review of the Literature. *Crisis States Research Centre. Working paper No 25-Development as*

State-Making. Retrieved from <https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/57427/wp25.2.pdf>, accessed on 10 June 2023.

OECD (2022) *Adding the human dimension to the OECD fragility framework; The OECD's States of Fragility data platform*. Retrieved from: <http://www3.compareyourcountry.org/states-offragility/overview/0/>, accessed on 20th June 2023.

*The Fund for Peace*. Retrieved from <http://library.fundforpeace.org/blog-20140528-fsirenamed>, accessed on 10<sup>th</sup> June 2023.

Wong, Chi Swian (2022). *The past, the present and the future: A bibliometric analysis of failed/fragile/collapsed state research during 1990-2020*. Retrieved from: <https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/frma.2022.720882/full>, accessed on 25th June 2023.