



Fragile states: an urgent challenge for EU foreign policy

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Fragile states: an urgent challenge for EU foreign policy

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Introduction

»» A growing challenge for the European Union (EU) in years to come will be fragile and conflict-affected states (FCAS). Although definitions of what constitutes a FCAS vary, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, which leads much of the aid donor community's analysis on fragility) currently classifies 47 states as fragile – around one quarter of the world's countries. Moreover, increasingly many of these FCAS states are the EU's neighbours, whether in the Levant, North Africa or Eastern Europe.¹

Addressing the challenge of fragile states, therefore, should be a central priority for European policy-makers. It is clear that FCAS, both in Europe's neighbourhood and beyond, can threaten Europe's own security and prosperity. Moreover, the global goods that the EU seeks to promote – for example in the areas of security, climate and environment or economy – cannot be achieved while a significant proportion of the world's states remain weak, conflict prone and unable to effectively manage their own affairs or participate in collective multilateral action. Finally, the EU's own norms and policies commit it to assisting those populations most severely affected by poverty, conflict, and human rights violations, many of whom live in FCAS.

The EU's commitments to dedicate a higher proportion of its aid to fragile and conflict-affected states in coming years, as well as its recent adoption of a Comprehensive Approach² to crisis and conflict, can be important steps towards a more holistic and effective European response to the complex challenge of state fragility. As European policy-makers think through what a truly comprehensive response to fragility should involve, they must look beyond issues of institutional coordination – important as these are – to ask deeper questions about what fragility will look like in the future, which factors will drive it, and how other powers will respond to it.

1. See Castillejo, C., 'State fragility in the extended neighbourhood' in Keohane, D. and Grevi, G., *Challenges for European Foreign Policy in 2014: the EU's extended neighbourhood* (Madrid: FRIDE, 2014).
2. Outlined in a Joint Communication on The EU's comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises (11 December 2013) and Council Conclusions on the EU's Comprehensive Approach (12 May 2014).

The future drivers of fragility

» According to the World Bank, over 1.2 billion people currently live in FCAS. These states are generally defined as those that have weak authority, capacity and/or legitimacy, and suffer from weak state-society relations and poor governance. The development of FCAS tends to lag behind that of other poor countries, and they have performed the worst in meeting the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Currently, 42 per cent of the world's poorest people live in FCAS and this is predicted to rise to 62 per cent in 2030.³

In an increasingly globalised world, international and local drivers of fragility interact in potent ways. For example, through the combination of transnational crime, international jihadist ideologies, and local regional and ethnic grievances in the Sahel, or the interaction of the global drugs trade, corrupt governance, and high levels of social and ethnic exclusion in some parts of Central America. The weakness of FCAS makes them particularly vulnerable to harmful global trends (for example, volatile incomes from natural resources, price shocks, illicit activities, imported violent ideologies), while they lack the capacity and institutions to take advantage of the benefits of globalisation. As global interconnectedness grows, the impact of global factors on fragile countries will only increase.

It is therefore critical that the EU's response to fragility involves addressing both the local political, economic, and social context – its traditional focus, through country-based development or security assistance – *and* the global factors that drive fragility. In some cases, this may require Europeans to make difficult trade-offs with their own economic or strategic interests. However, as the OECD spells out: 'The impact of global factors on conflict and fragility [...] suggests that the more developed and richer members of the international community will have to increase their efforts towards creating long-term stability by confronting some of these global factors [especially] given the relentless progress of globalisation'.⁴

In order to develop a response to fragility that takes into account the interplay between global and local factors, it is important that EU policy-makers understand the key drivers of fragility that will be prominent in an increasingly globalised world. Some of these are discussed below.

Economic drivers

Given the mutually reinforcing relationship between a weak or badly managed economy and state fragility, it is likely that poverty and fragility will be increasingly intertwined in the future. While sturdier developing countries prosper, many FCAS will not only fail to achieve growth, but will also continue to be burdened by the huge economic costs

3. OECD, 'Summary of preliminary findings of the 2015 'States of Fragility' Report', OECD INCAF Room Document, Paris: OECD, unpublished.

4. OECD, 'Think global, act global: confronting global factors that influence conflict and fragility', Paris: OECD, 2012a.

of conflict.⁵ An example of this weak economy-fragility relationship is Pakistan, where economic stagnation and lack of opportunities is fuelling conflict, but weak and corrupt governance prevents the state from undertaking vital economic reforms, and foreign investment is dwindling due to concerns about insecurity and inadequate rule of law.

FCAS tend to have a marginal role in the formal global economy or are disadvantageously incorporated into it, while they frequently have a central role in the illicit global economy.⁶ The EU, therefore, should promote the integration of FCAS into the formal global economy in ways that significantly increase their Gross Domestic Product (GDP). Creating wealth and increasing government revenue can greatly help address economic grievances and strengthen a fragile state and its relations with society. This can include a variety of development assistance activities, such as strengthening public-private partnerships to increase FCAS exports of higher value added goods; addressing capacity and information gaps by supporting higher education or national data collection systems; or supporting new technologies to help FCAS overcome their lack of economic infrastructure.⁷

However, development aid is clearly not enough to address the economic woes of many FCAS, particularly as many middle-income FCAS are losing eligibility for such aid. Indeed, there is a growing call for a broader debate about the type of external finance required by these states, as well as how to stimulate greater trade and investment to provide jobs and livelihoods in FCAS on the massive scale required.⁸ In 2012, just 6 per cent of global foreign direct investment (FDI) went to FCAS, three quarters of which went to just seven resource-rich FCAS aimed at extractive industries.⁹ Such trends are clearly not a basis for economic growth that results in development or an exit from fragility. While FCAS are risky markets, they can also offer great opportunities and the EU should explore options to incentivise private investment in these states, such as supporting insurance for investors.

While economic growth is important, badly managed or non-inclusive growth can actually drive fragility, particularly where this breeds corruption or exacerbates inequality. FCAS tend to have very high levels of income inequality and this trend is likely to continue, as inequality rises around the world.¹⁰ In numerous FCAS – from Nigeria to South Sudan – badly managed growth that corrupts political systems and state institutions, fuels inequality, and does not provide economic opportunities or benefits for the vast majority will continue to be a major driver of fragility.

If the EU is to address the economic aspects of fragility, it needs to look across the board at its aid and trade policies alongside investment and financial regulations, and ask how it can do more to support developmental growth in FCAS – whether by promoting investment, making trade fairer, or improving international financial systems to tackle problems such as capital



5. For example, it is estimated that in Africa the cost of armed conflict is around \$18 billion per year (Institute for Economics of Peace, 'The Economic Cost of Violence Containment', Sydney, New York, Oxford: Institute for Economics and Peace, 2014).

6. OECD 2012a, op. cit.

7. For example, mobile phone ownership is growing rapidly in FCAS and can help local businesspeople to access market information and monitor supply chains. However, internet use in many FCAS remains low.

8. See for example Lockhart, C. and Vincent, S., 'Ending extreme poverty in fragile and conflict situations', Background Research Paper submitted to the High Level Panel on the Post-2015 Development Agenda, UN, 2013.

9. OECD, unpublished, op. cit.

10. Vieira, S., 'Inequality on the rise? An assessment of current available data on income inequality, at global, international and national levels', New York: United Nations Secretariat, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2012.

flight. It must also address the governance challenges that prevent growth translating into more robust and accountable institutions and states that distribute resources more equally. This agenda throws up some sensitive issues for the EU, whether about the fairness of its trading relationships, its internal subsidies (such as the Common Agricultural Policy), or European tax havens.

Natural resources

Mismanagement of natural resources and tensions over access to them are major drivers of fragility around the world. These drivers are likely to become increasingly important as competition for natural resources increases at both global and local levels – in part because of the rapid growth of the middle class, which is predicted to account for over half the global population by 2030¹¹ – and FCAS make new discoveries or increase exploitation of natural resources.

According to the OECD, 20 out of 43 fragile states export oil and minerals, 17 export other natural resources and only six export other goods and services.¹² Natural resource exporting FCAS are frequently characterised by weak taxation – representation links, hollow and corrupt institutions, high levels of inequality, an undiversified economy and jobless growth. Countries such as Nigeria, Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) offer examples of such contexts. For example, although Nigeria averaged an annual GDP growth of 8.6 between 1999 and 2010, more than 40 per cent of Nigerians live below the official poverty line,¹³ and both corruption and inequality rates are extremely high.¹⁴ Given such patterns, there is a serious risk that increased natural resource exploitation in already fragile countries, such as Sierra Leone, Niger or Afghanistan, could further fuel these countries' fragility and undermine their institutions.

A clear priority for the EU in these cases, therefore, should be to support FCAS in harnessing natural resource production for development and stability. This can include supporting infrastructure, education and skills; helping develop national industries; and encouraging the redistribution of resource-export driven economic growth in ways that reduce inequality. The EU can also promote transparency and efforts to tackle corruption in extractive industries at both local and global levels. It can also help FCAS get the best deal from the big powers that buy their natural resources, for example by building local capacity to negotiate contracts or effectively monitor the activities of external investors.

Another challenge to stability is local conflict over access to natural resources. According to the Heidelberg Conflict Barometer,¹⁵ in 2010 and 2011 35 per cent of African conflicts and 50 per cent of Latin American conflicts were over natural resources. In FCAS, where there are often deep political and social grievances and cleavages, and the institutional framework for handling conflicts is weak, natural resource competition can easily spill over

11. Grevi, G., Keohane D., Lee B., and Lewis P., 'Empowering Europe's Future: Governance, Power and Options for Changing World', FRIDE-Chatham House, 2013.

12. OECD 2012a, *op. cit.*

13. Leke, A. et al., 'Nigeria's renewal: Delivering inclusive growth', New York: McKinsey Global Institute, 2014.

14. According to the UN, Nigeria has a gini coefficient (the most common measure of inequality) of 48.8. Transparency International gives Nigeria a score of 27/ 100 on its Corruption Perceptions Index.

15. Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 'Heidelberg Conflict Barometer 2011', Heidelberg: Heidelberg Institute for International Conflict Research, 2011.

into conflict. Moreover, in some fragile regions, such as Sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia, increasingly constrained natural resources will combine with demographic growth to create further potential for instability. The EU has an important role to play in supporting the development of local level institutions that can undertake sustainable natural resource management that helps to avoid conflict.

Population

In many FCAS demographic changes will fuel fragility in coming years, as population growth – especially large youth bulges – and rapid urbanisation combine with high unemployment, weak state institutions, and overstretched public services to ferment tension. In most FCAS the 15-34 age group makes up more than one third of the population, while across Africa the current median age is just 19.¹⁶ If these young populations are given skills and economic opportunities, they could be a powerful force for growth and development, but without such investment, they present an instability risk.

In recent years, there has been significant international focus on addressing this ‘youth problem’ in FCAS, particularly through development aid focused at promoting young people’s social inclusion. While this is important, it is certainly not enough. Indeed, some experts argue that what is required is a shift towards ‘a policy perspective that looks to private investment as the fiscal engine to generate the public goods for youth [... and sees] a healthy and basic educated youth, more as a competitive and market opportunity to be promoted to investors rather than a social problem hungry for public services to be supported by aid’.¹⁷ It is certainly in the economic and security interests of the EU to examine how it can encourage European private investors to offer such finance and investment in the youth populations of FCAS.

FCAS undoubtedly need to convert their large young populations into a demographic dividend¹⁸ by providing skills and opportunities. They also need to take advantage of the benefits of urbanisation, including economic growth, greater literacy, and the growth of civil society, while seeking to mitigate the strains on infrastructure and services and community relations that urbanisation brings. However, beyond just managing their population dynamics, FCAS need support to address the underlying reasons for continued high fertility, in particular extremely high levels of gender inequality. A whole host of fragile countries, including DRC, Central African Republic (CAR), Sierra Leone, Afghanistan, Eritrea and Haiti remain stuck at the top of the United Nations’ (UN) gender inequality index year after year. The EU institutions and most member states have strong policy commitments on gender equality, and action plans to support women’s empowerment in conflict contexts. However, these are often weakly implemented and gender issues tend to remain marginal on the state-building agenda of international actors in FCAS. Demographic challenges demonstrate that there are very important practical, as well as normative, reasons why women’s rights should be a priority for the EU in its support to FCAS.



16. OECD, ‘Fragile states 2013: resource flows and trends in a shifting world’, Paris: OECD, 2012b.

17. Canagaraja, S., ‘Realizing Africa’s youth potential: Africa needs investors to create jobs for its youth, and develop skills’, Washington: World Bank, 2014.

18. A situation where the labour force grows faster than the population dependent on it, enabling increased investment and consumption.

Transnational organised crime (TOC)

TOC is a key driver of fragility in many contexts, from Guinea Bissau to Haiti. FCAS are useful production and transit points for TOC global supply chains. The combination of permissive environments, weak institutions, poor governance and poverty in FCAS means that there is little institutional oversight and it is easy to corrupt officials and recruit workers. The impact of TOCs on FCAS can be devastating, as seen in countries such as Afghanistan or Guatemala. TOC networks can undermine, corrupt or co-opt state institutions and political life, compromise state legitimacy by eroding state monopoly on violence, and fuel violence and competition between groups.

It is currently estimated that the drugs trade accounts for 85 per cent of the global value of TOC activity, while other illicit activities such as smuggling, human trafficking or trade in illegal military supplies make up the rest.¹⁹ The current approach of Western countries to drugs, with its strong focus on reducing supply at source and in transit through strengthened law enforcement, is not only failing to reduce the trade, but also exacerbates the negative governance and poverty effects in fragile supply and transit countries. There is growing agreement among experts on a need to refocus the response on demand in rich countries.

The impact of TOC on FCAS stands out as a challenge that is desperately in need of a genuinely comprehensive response by actors such as the EU. It requires the EU to focus on reducing the effects of TOC on FCAS through coherent internal policies, multilateral action and support to these countries, something that is currently lacking. For example, Europeans should rethink their own drug policies – recognising the direct impact these have on fragility in neighbouring regions such as the Sahel or Central Asia²⁰ – and seek to lower the profitability of the drugs trade, including through legalisation. Some experts suggest that at the multilateral level, the EU could come together with other multilateral organisations such as the Organisation of American States (OAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the global commission for drug policy and United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) to shape the global debate on drugs and build an international coalition to change policy direction.²¹ Meanwhile, on the ground the EU can support actors in FCAS to delink organised crime from politics and governance, whether by protecting political processes or strengthening the judiciary.

Climate change

The International Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently stated that: ‘Human security will be progressively threatened as the climate changes [...] climate change is an important factor in threats to human security through a) undermining livelihoods, b) compromising culture and identity, c) increasing migration that people would rather have avoided, and d)

19. OECD 2012a, op. cit.

20. For example, according to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, in 2007 and 2008 the 27 European Union and four European Free Trade Association countries accounted for more than a quarter of global cocaine consumption.

21. Kavanagh, C. (ed.), ‘Getting smart and scaling up: responding to the impact of organized crime on developing countries’, New York: New York University, Center on International Cooperation, 2013.

challenging the ability of states to provide the conditions necessary for human security'.²² Inevitably, climate change will have the most severe effect in FCAS, where it can exacerbate existing tensions and vulnerabilities and where states lack the human, economic, and technical resources to adapt. It is therefore in FCAS that droughts, temperature increases, and other slow onset pressures will put the most pressure on water, food, energy, and natural resource supply chains, making the basic conditions of life increasingly difficult.²³ Moreover, a significant number of fragile states – from Bangladesh to Sudan – are among the countries most severely affected by climate change.

The EU has shown global leadership in its response to climate change, including in supporting developing and fragile states in adaptation and mitigation. For example, the EU estimates that it provided over 50 per cent of mitigation and adaptation related Official Development Assistance (ODA) in 2010 and 2011. Moreover, since 2013 it no longer distinguishes between climate and development finance, with both coming out of ODA in order to pursue the EU's policy ambition of integrating support for poverty reduction and sustainable development.²⁴ The EU is therefore well placed to build innovative partnerships with other actors (including affected FCAS and emerging powers) to address climate mitigation and adaptation, as well as to further develop knowledge and best practice on mitigation and adaptation approaches that are sensitive to local dynamics of conflict and fragility.

The proliferation of violent non-state actors

Across the world, FCAS are becoming increasingly characterised by complex patterns of interrelated political and criminal violence carried out by a fluid array of state and non-state actors. Boundaries between these actors are often blurred and they tend to have strong cross border and international linkages.

In order to respond effectively to this proliferation of non-state actors, EU actors must move beyond traditional approaches to fragility that focus heavily on the state and its institutions. They need to expand their political analysis to understand the complex interrelationships between non-state actors, as well as between the violent or illicit activities (such as conflict, crime, corruption and terrorism) in which these actors engage. European actors working in FCAS should also be prepared to take greater risks in engaging with a variety of non-state actors, including illicit ones that may have significant local legitimacy. However, as Joëlle Jenny, Director for Security Policy and Conflict Prevention at the European External Action Service (EEAS), points out this is a challenge that requires excellent knowledge of the local context, 'as in today's conflicts the number of non-state armed actors and the blurring of interests and alliances can present a complex and confusing picture for those looking to identify and engage parties in peace processes'.²⁵



22. IPCC, 'Climate change 2014: impact, adaptation and vulnerability – Summary for policy makers', Geneva: IPCC, 2014.

23. Smith, D., Secretary General of International Alert, 'The Conflict Horizon', personal blog, available at: <http://dansmithsblog.com/2014/03/11/the-conflict-horizon-2-rising-pressures/>

24. European Think Tanks Group, 'Our Collective Interest', London: ODI, 2014.

25. Jenny, J., 'The growing role of conflict prevention in support of the EU's efforts in peacebuilding and statebuilding', *GREAT insights magazine* 4(1), 2014.

The future fragile state

»» In years to come FCAS will inevitably remain highly diverse in nature – and will continue to require tailor made responses from the EU that address the specific political, economic and social context of each country, as well as the particular way in which global drivers play out in each context. However, despite this diversity, current trends suggest that in the future there may be two broad types of FCAS that should be of particular concern to the EU.

Violent and conflict affected middle-income countries

The OECD estimates that around half of FCAS are now middle-income countries (MICs)²⁶ and that this proportion is set to grow as more FCAS graduate to middle-income status in coming years. Fragile MICs are a diverse group, including a few upper-middle-income countries (such as Iran and Angola), a large group of lower-middle-income countries (such as Sri Lanka and Côte d'Ivoire) and some lower-middle-income states that are also defined as least developed countries (LDCs – states with very low socio-economic and human development, such as Sudan and Yemen). Despite this diversity, fragile MICs tend to share some common traits. These include: weak and corrupt state institutions with poor accountability; elite capture of rents and high levels of inequality and social exclusion; ineffective and corrupt management of extractive or natural resource industries; high levels of urban and criminal violence (including TOC); large and underemployed youth populations; and the growth of violent megacities. Alongside all these negative traits, many fragile MICs also have highly educated, affluent and internationally networked elites, as well as some relatively strong elite led institutions (both state and non-state, for example military, civil society, business).

Fragile MICs pose a particular challenge for the international community. International actors tend to have much less influence in these countries than in more aid dependent fragile low-income countries (LICs). However, these MICs are frequently the FCAS that pose the greatest threat to global security, both because they are frequently sub-regional powers whose insecurity can affect their whole neighbourhood, as well as because their illicit actors tend to have greater capacity and stronger international networks. Indeed, according to the OECD 'large middle-income fragile states, such as Pakistan, Nigeria and Sudan, will warrant special attention in the decade ahead because their large populations will include a high proportion of the global poor, and because of the risk of regional and global spill overs of conflict and fragility'.²⁷

26. OECD 2012b, op. cit.

27. Ibid.

The EU, along with other major donors, is committed to reducing aid to MICs and focusing assistance on the poorest countries.²⁸ This creates a real risk that fragile MICs fall through the cracks. Many may become ineligible to receive aid or concessional loans, but unable to attract sufficient investors or creditors because of poor security and weak rule of law. Moreover, as EU aid to these countries falls, so too does the size of the EU Delegation in the country. This reduced presence will clearly limit the EU's capacity to both understand and engage with fragile MICs. This is deeply problematic, given that many of these countries – such as Iraq, Yemen, Pakistan or Nigeria – frequently pose a significant challenge to Europe's own interests, whether in relation to security, energy, migration or other areas.

While the policy of shifting aid away from MICs makes sense for many stable MICs, greater thinking is required on what this should mean for different types of fragile MICs. There is no question that normal aid instruments may be less relevant in these contexts, but it is also clear that many fragile MICs will continue to need significant international attention. Given this, European actors must find new ways to stay present and engaged, and to provide targeted support to fragile MICs in catalyzing private investment or strengthening the capabilities of those institutions that are most critical for exiting fragility in each context.

Endemically fragile and underdeveloped states

The other group of countries that will continue to be of significant concern in years to come are extremely fragile or failing states that are likely to remain trapped in a cycle of fragility and extreme poverty. These are mostly in sub-Saharan Africa and include countries such as Somalia, Afghanistan, and the Central African Republic. These states tend to have extremely weak and unstable institutions, very low levels of development, weak human capacity, slow growth and negligible FDI. They also tend to have long histories of civil conflict.²⁹ Some of these states, such as Niger, Chad and Afghanistan are facing a significant reduction of international aid.³⁰ Indeed, many of these endemically fragile states are unattractive to donors because they are highly risky environments and are frequently not of strategic importance. However, support to them is crucial if Europe is to live up to its commitments to help particularly those most in need.³¹

Analysis of such endemically fragile contexts suggests that in the face of the weak institutions and lack of trust created by repeated cycles of conflict, what is required is long-term external support for locally led state-building processes to establish political settlements and strengthen institutions over time.³² However, standard donor approaches

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28. This policy is outlined in the 2011 European Commission Communication 'Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change'. Similar policies are also being followed by some EU member states, such as the UK. However, some of the poorest MICs, such as Pakistan, do presently continue to receive aid.

29. Ninety per cent of civil wars in the last decade occurred in countries that had already experienced civil war in the last 30 years. This demonstrates the power of the 'conflict trap', as institutions are weakened by each round of conflict, thereby making the next round all the more likely (Jones, B. and Elgin-Cossart, M., 'Development in the shadow of violence: a knowledge agenda for policy', New York: New York University, 2011).

30. OECD 2012b, op. cit.

31. As articulated in the European Commission Communication 'Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change', 2011.

32. Jones and Elgin-Cossart 2011, op. cit.

tend to be a ‘poor fit with [contexts] where instability is the norm, legitimacy is contested and risks are high’.³³ Donors’ accountability to their own constituents means that they tend to avoid risks, use aid cycles that create artificially short timelines, and avoid involvement in sensitive ‘political’ areas. In many endemically fragile states, from Afghanistan to Nepal, donors have overburdened weak local systems, created parallel structures, used unsustainable project models and sucked human capacity out of local institutions. Critically, they have frequently failed to stay the course or to recognise that genuine institutional change takes decades.

European actors are committed to working in these endemically fragile and underdeveloped contexts. However, they need to give greater consideration to the type of approaches that they should adopt in them. These approaches must be based on an understanding of the mutually reinforcing relationship between violence, weak institutions, poor state-society relations, and chronic underdevelopment in these countries. Moreover, they must be more flexible, adaptive and based on realistic timelines. Jones and Elgin-Cossart argue that exiting fragility in these contexts requires local actors to take significant risks and that a key role for international actors, such as the EU, should therefore be to share these risks.³⁴ This could be, for example, involve sharing security risks by providing security guarantees (as the UK did in Sierra Leone in 2000) or close protection for political elites (as NATO has done in Afghanistan). It could also involve sharing economic risks by providing low cost insurance to government or private investors. From this perspective, an important question for EU actors to ask is how they can share the risks of peace-building and state-building in these contexts in ways that are acceptable to Europe’s own citizens.

The international response to fragility

» Fragility and conflict have moved up the international agenda in recent years, but there remains a significant gap between international rhetoric and effective action to address this challenge. For example, since 2005 the majority of ODA has gone to FCAS. However, recent statistics show that if aid to Iraq and Afghanistan are deducted from these figures, ODA to fragile states has actually fallen, and 10 of the world’s 11 most persistent ‘aid orphans’ are FCAS.³⁵

There have undoubtedly been significant advances in multilateral policy frameworks for addressing fragility. Most notably, the 2011 New Deal for Engagement in Fragile States

33. Allouche, J. and Lind, J., ‘A new deal? Development and security in a changing world’, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies, 2013.

34. Jones and Elgin-Cossart 2011, op. cit.

35. OECD, unpublished, op. cit.

committed donors to support country led and locally relevant transitions out of fragility, prioritising five peace-building and state-building goals (legitimate politics, security, justice, economic foundations and revenues and services). This has been an important step to strengthen donor coordination in fragile contexts and to provide greater country ownership. However, the New Deal only applies to those states that recognise themselves as fragile (inevitably very few) and is in large part rejected by some key emerging powers, such as China and India.

The international community will adopt a new global development framework – involving a set of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) to replace the MDGs – at the UN General Assembly in September this year. The process of creating a ‘post-2015’ development framework provides an important opportunity to integrate fragility and conflict issues into international development policy frameworks. While issues related to conflict, fragility and governance have been among the most sensitive aspects of the post-2015 negotiations, it now appears that there will be an SDG on peaceful and inclusive societies and accountable institutions, under which issues of fragility could be addressed (although the term fragility is likely to be avoided because it is rejected by some southern countries). Other SDGs are also likely to address some of the key drivers of fragility, such as inequality and inclusive growth.

In recent years, global governance institutions have proved themselves to be weak and inadequate for the new globalised context of fragility and conflict, and in need of reform. Regional organisations are playing a bigger role, notably in Africa, but have also demonstrated significant weaknesses and need to be strengthened and better linked to global multilateral structures. Critically, as emerging powers seek a greater international role on both security and development, there is an urgent need to develop multilateral and regional responses to fragility that both take account of the role of emerging powers in fragile contexts and seek to involve them in a shared response to the challenge of fragility.

Emerging power responses to fragility

Emerging powers are becoming ever more important political, security, investment, aid and trade partners for fragile states. For example, China invests in and provides assistance to FCAS around the world, and has recently signed megadeals in six sub-Saharan African FCAS; South Africa provides political leadership for regional African responses to fragility and conflict; and India focuses extensive political and economic resources on its own fragile neighbourhood. Brazil, China, India and South Africa are all significant contributors to UN peacekeeping missions, which they see as a way to strengthen their influence within the UN. Meanwhile, some middle powers are also taking a more prominent role in FCAS. Turkey is now the donor that allocates the largest percentage of its ODA to FCAS, while the United Arab Emirates (UAE) is the 15th largest provider of aid to FCAS in absolute figures.³⁶

Despite this, there has been relatively little analysis of the approaches of emerging powers to fragility, which tend to be heavily shaped by their own experiences of development and security. Some emerging powers, such as China and India, largely reject the concept of



36. Ibid.

‘fragile’ states, which they see as implying interference in sovereign affairs and forming part of an intrusive Western donor agenda. Others, such as South Africa, are relatively aligned with Western donor approaches to fragility. What is clear is that if EU is going to be an effective actor in addressing fragility, it will need to both deepen its engagement with emerging powers on this issue and tailor its interventions to take account of the changing context that emerging powers are creating in many FCAS. This requires an understanding of the approaches that different emerging powers take to fragility, which are discussed below.

China

China is the emerging power that engages most intensively with FCAS across the globe. In its own neighbourhood, Chinese support to FCAS, for example to Sri Lanka, is shaped by both economic and strategic interests (notably its rivalry with India). Further afield it is driven largely by economic interests, in particular to access natural resources and open new markets. Because of their links to the state, Chinese companies have a high-risk tolerance and are therefore particularly able to engage in underexploited markets in FCAS.

Respect for sovereignty and non-interference are central to Chinese foreign policy, including its engagement in FCAS. China therefore largely rejects the concept of fragility, as one that implies interference in sovereign affairs, as well as promoting Western governance norms. However, despite its strong rhetorical commitment to non-interference and non-conditionality, in practice where Chinese economic or security interests are at risk (for example from the impact of civil conflict on oil production in South Sudan to the spread of insurgency from Pakistan into north-western China), China does exert political pressure and places tacit conditions on its investments and aid. Moreover, in recent years China has begun to assume a more overt role in addressing conflict where its interests are threatened, such as mediating to prevent a resumption of conflict between Sudan and South Sudan.

In many FCAS, from Nepal to South Sudan, China and the EU have a shared interest in reducing fragility and promoting stability.³⁷ However, they frequently have different visions of both what drives fragility and what kind of stability is desirable. Beijing tends to view underdevelopment as the central cause of conflict, and its response is therefore to support economic infrastructure and promote growth in FCAS. It also ‘puts a premium on stability, understood as the state’s capacity to control its territory’³⁸ and therefore prioritises strengthening the capacity of governments in FCAS, with little interest in promoting inclusive settlements that bring in those who seek to challenge the state. In contrast, European actors tend to view conflict as arising from poor or exclusionary governance and weak institutions and therefore aim to promote an inclusive peace. This divergence between Chinese and European positions has been starkly highlighted in a number of contexts in recent years. For example, in 2010 the EU withdrew trade preferences from Sri Lanka because of the government’s refusal to address concerns over human rights and political inclusion; while in the same period China provided the Sri Lankan state with extensive armaments and infrastructure support.

37. Castillejo, C., ‘China’s impact on conflict and fragility in South Asia’, NOREF Report, Oslo: NOREF, 2013.

38. Campbell, I. et al, ‘China and conflict affected states: between principle and pragmatism’, London: Saferworld, 2013.

Despite these divergent approaches it is critical that the EU increase its engagement with China on fragility issues and seek points of alignment, particularly given China's increasing powerful economic role in FCAS across the world. Moreover, in certain contexts Chinese and EU interests can converge and form a basis for increased coordination, as happened in relation to elections in Nepal in 2013.³⁹ Critically, China's desire to be seen as a credible global player on issues of security and development could offer an opportunity for greater engagement in future.⁴⁰

India

India's approach to fragility is shaped by its own fragile neighbourhood and the threat that these neighbours pose to its stability and growth, as well as by its regional competition with China and its hostile relations with Pakistan. Over 70 per cent of India's aid is spent in neighbouring FCAS including Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan, Myanmar and Nepal.⁴¹ Frequently its aim is to build up long-term strategic partnerships to further its regional interests, as in Afghanistan, to counter growing Chinese influence, as in Nepal and Sri Lanka, or to strengthen regional economic infrastructure and boost intra-regional trade.

Because of close links between India's domestic ethnic and religious politics and the conflicts in neighbouring FCAS, as well as its history of overreach, notably in Sri Lanka in the 1980s, 'India's policy towards transition, turbulence and upheaval in its neighbourhood is predominately one of cautious prudence'.⁴² India tends to respond to threats to its own national security rather than actively intervene to address fragility or support local peace processes. India is particularly keen to block any external intervention in its neighbourhood to protect its own influence, which has been a major challenge for multilateral action in this highly fragile region.⁴³ Beyond its own region, India's engagement in FCAS is mainly private sector led and motivated by commercial opportunities and energy security. While this engagement is growing – for example in 2014 India became Nigeria's top crude oil importer – it involves little emphasis on addressing conflict.

India's strong commitment to South-South solidarity and respect for sovereignty, as well as its deep scepticism about Western-led global development agendas, means that it rejects the concept of fragility and frameworks such as the New Deal. Moreover, New Delhi has been active in blocking a progressive approach to issues of fragility in the post-2015 negotiations. India has limited shared interests with the EU in the area of fragility, and it is the most uncompromising of the emerging powers in its rejection of Western donor agendas. Unlike China, it does not seek to build a reputation as a global security player, beyond its extensive participation in UN peacekeeping. This means that opportunities for EU-India engagement on fragility are limited. However, on the ground in some specific contexts, notably Afghanistan, Indian and Western donor interests have aligned and limited collaboration has been possible. The EU must continue to seek and build on such moments of convergence.



39. Castillejo, C. & Hackenesch, C., 'The EU and its partners on development: how strategic on the ground?', *FRIDE Policy Brief*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2014.

40. Small, A., 'China: Two kinds of assertiveness' in Grevi, G. and Keohane, D. (eds), *Challenges for European Foreign Policy in 2015: How others deal with disorder* (Madrid: FRIDE, 2015).

41. Saferworld, 'India and conflict affected states', *Saferworld Briefing*, London: Saferworld, 2013.

42. Pai, N., 'The paradox of proximity: India's approach to fragility in the neighborhood', New York University: New York, 2011.

43. A recent example of this was India's attempts to stop the establishment of a UN mission in Nepal.

Brazil

Brazil's foreign policy has a strong focus on conflict and between 2003 and 2010, it provided assistance to 23 FCAS.⁴⁴ Like China and India, Brazil prioritises South-South solidarity and non-interventionism in relation to FCAS, and is uncomfortable with the fragility agenda of Western donors. However, its analysis of the causes of conflict and fragility does in practice converge more closely with that of many European actors. Like European donors, Brazilian policy-makers tend to understand fragility and conflict as largely driven by socio-economic inequalities and social exclusion and therefore emphasise the need to alleviate such inequalities in FCAS.

Brazilian programmes in FCAS are also closer to those of European actors than others. Brasilia tends to emphasise the links between security and development and seeks to develop a holistic response that addresses these links. While Brazil's assistance to FCAS is demand driven, with no preset policy approach, it tends to draw heavily on its own experience of dealing with violence and conflict. It also seeks to work at multiple levels on issues of local and national security, development and political reconciliation, as can be seen for example in Brazil's support to Guinea Bissau.

It therefore appears that, despite a rhetorical opposition to Western fragility agendas and strong commitments to non-interference, there is in fact significant common ground between the EU and Brazil in terms of understanding and responding to conflict. Moreover, Brazil's strong commitment to multilateralism also chimes well with EU commitments to enhance both regional and global responses to fragility. Given these areas of convergence, it appears that there is space for the EU to engage more proactively with Brazil on fragility, while recognising sensitivities around South-South solidarity and non-interference.

South Africa

South Africa's national interest is closely tied to the stability and prosperity of its broader region, and its foreign policy is therefore strongly focused on promoting African security, development and regional integration. Indeed, 'conflict transformation is a core element of the country's identity [and] its foreign policy has considerable overlap with the peace-building agenda'.⁴⁵ South Africa's strong commitment to engagement with FCAS is reflected in its 2011 Foreign Policy white paper, which commits to 'play a leading role in conflict prevention, peacekeeping, peace-building, and post-conflict reconstruction'. South Africa's own transition experience means it tends to prioritise support for political reconciliation processes. The moral authority South Africa gained from this transition has enabled it to play a mediating role in many African FCAS, including Burundi, DRC, Côte d'Ivoire, Lesotho, Zimbabwe, Sudan and South Sudan.

South Africa engages on fragility at a number of levels: bilaterally with African FCAS; as a leader within African Union (AU) led regional peace and security processes and institutions;

44. Saferworld, 'Brazil and conflict affected states', Saferworld Briefing, London: Saferworld, 2013.

45. Saferworld, 'South Africa and conflict affected states', Saferworld Briefing, London: Saferworld, 2013.

and at the international level, where it has played a strong norm setting role, such as on Responsibility to Protect (R2P). South Africa frequently acts as a bridge between North and South on fragility and conflict issues, for example linking UN and AU peace and security processes.⁴⁶ Given South Africa's commitment and moral authority on these issues, and its bridging role between Northern and Southern actors, South Africa could be an important partner for the EU in championing holistic approaches to fragility at global level, for example in the post-2015 agenda.

South Africa and the EU clearly have substantial shared interests in addressing fragility in Africa, as well as significant convergence in their approach to this. There should be scope for greater collaboration between the two on these issues, including through increased cooperation in the field of development, which the EU has yet to explore.⁴⁷ However, because of its own history and its strong pan-African solidarity agenda, South Africa does not want to be seen as too close to Western actors nor does it want them to play too great a role in Africa. South Africa has also shown it will privilege 'anti-imperialism' over international norms in fragile contexts such as Sudan and Zimbabwe (where anti-imperialist discourses against Western actors are at play). In recent years, this stance has led to tensions with the EU, for example resulting in South Africa's President Zuma boycotting the 2014 EU-Africa summit in Brussels. Therefore, any European efforts to strengthen collaboration with South Africa on fragility will have to be nuanced to these sensitivities.

Turkey

Turkey, like India, is situated in a highly fragile neighbourhood. However, unlike India, geopolitical dynamics limit Turkey's ability to engage on fragility with neighbouring FCAS – whether in Syria, Iraq or the Caucasus. Ankara is therefore more focused on positioning itself as a proactive international player in responding to fragility and conflict beyond its own region, most notably in Africa. Its growing engagement in FCAS is driven both by the governing Justice and Development Party's (AKP) desire to increase Turkey's international standing, as well as by powerful resource and business interests.⁴⁸ Indeed, in recent years Turkey has opened or upgraded 31 embassies in Sub-Saharan African, many of them in FCAS as well as increased its aid to African FCAS. In parallel, Turkey's trade volume with Sub-Saharan Africa increased from \$742 million in 2000 to \$7.5 billion in 2011.⁴⁹

Turkey prioritises mediation, preventative diplomacy and international dialogue regarding FCAS and seeks to position itself as an international mediator. Turkey has hosted summits between Afghanistan and Pakistan; a regional conference on Afghanistan; one Organisation of the Islamic Conference (OIC) on Somalia; and two UN conferences on Somalia. Turkey's Muslim identity gives its interventions in relation to Muslim FCAS, such as Afghanistan and Somalia, significant credibility.



46. For example, South Africa was instrumental in pushing the AU to accept R2P and shift its position from non-intervention to non-indifference.

47. Masters, L., 'The EU and South Africa: towards a new partnership for development', *FRIDE Policy Brief*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2014.

48. For example in 2011 Turkey had over 50 contracting projects in Sudan alone (Allouche and Lind 2013, op. cit.).

49. Figures from Allouche and Lind 2013, op. cit.

On the ground, Turkey supports a variety of reconstruction, humanitarian, development and security sector reform activities in FCAS. The range of its involvement in these countries can be seen in Somalia, where Turkey is a key player in political negotiations, a significant humanitarian provider and provides substantial reconstruction assistance. Allouche and Lind claim that ‘Turkish officials in Somalia have stated that their aim is to demonstrate an alternative approach to support, involving an on-the-ground presence and a willingness to promote development despite on-going conflict’.⁵⁰ In this sense, Turkey appears particularly willing to take risks in highly fragile contexts.

Current high tensions and conflict in Turkey’s own region are likely to distract it from its focus on building an international profile through support to FCAS further afield, as well as dominating Ankara’s dialogue with European actors. However, while tensions exist between Turkey and Europe over upheavals in Turkey’s region – from the Arab revolutions to the Syria and Iraq conflicts – it is possible that space may be open for dialogue and collaboration on less strategically critical FCAS, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa.

A stronger EU response to fragility

» The EU is committed to strengthening its support to FCAS. This commitment is emphasised in the 2011 European Commission communication and related Council conclusions ‘Increasing the impact of EU development policy: an agenda for change’, which calls for the allocation of more funds to fragile states. It is also demonstrated by the fact that over the next five years, the EU plans to use more than two thirds of the €30.5 billion available under the 11th European Development Fund, as well as over half of the €19.7 billion available under the Development Cooperation Instrument for 2014–2020, to assist people in fragile situations.⁵¹ The EU is particularly well placed to support FCAS, because of its fewer bilateral interests compared to states, its capacity to establish long-term partnerships, its global and long-term presence, the critical mass of aid it provides, its mix of short- and long-term instruments, and its potential for an integrated approach.⁵² Moreover, between them the EU institutions and member states have an unrivalled range of instruments to bring to bear on fragility, including innovative ones such as the ‘Instrument contributing to stability and peace’ (which succeeds the ‘Instrument for stability’ and has a budget of €2.34 billion for 2014–2020) and the new EU ‘state building contracts’ that provide budget support in fragile states.

However, in reality the EU often fails to live up to its potential in responding to fragility. For example, a recent analysis of EU performance in FCAS commissioned by the European

50. Ibid.

51. European Commission, ‘Operating in situations of conflict and fragility: an EU staff handbook’, Brussels: European Commission, 2014.

52. European Think Tanks Group 2014, op. cit.

Parliament⁵³ found major weaknesses. These included poor analysis and poor use of analysis, ineffective early warning systems, an inadequate focus on conflict prevention, lack of expertise and weak coordination within and among EU institutions and member states. These weaknesses are nothing new and have been raised in previous evaluations and analyses of the EU's work in FCAS.⁵⁴ However, given the growing challenge that fragility will pose to Europe in coming years and the EU's increased commitment to focus its external action (especially development assistance) on fragility, it is ever more critical that the EU overcomes these limitations and becomes more than a sum of its parts. With the stronger role for the new European Commission Vice-President and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Federica Mogherini, which can facilitate clearer direction and greater coherence across the EU's external action, and the advent of the comprehensive approach, there appears to be renewed political will within the EU to do so.

A comprehensive approach for a more effective country level response

The EU's 'comprehensive approach to external conflict and crises' was laid out in a joint European Commission and EEAS communication in December 2014 and related Council conclusions in May 2014. The Council conclusions called for the development of a comprehensive approach action plan during 2015. In essence, the comprehensive approach seeks to realise a long held ambition for a 'whole-of-EU' approach that brings together different policy areas and EU actors in situations of fragility, conflict and crisis.

The comprehensive approach undoubtedly has the potential significantly to improve the EU's response to fragility, most notably by facilitating a more coordinated and coherent response across different policy areas and between various EU and member state actors. It should also encourage a stronger focus on conflict prevention and the drivers of fragility. If meaningfully implemented, the comprehensive approach could help to support the multiple and simultaneous transitions that are required across different spheres – such as political life, infrastructure, services and markets – in order for countries to exit fragility. However, the extent to which the comprehensive approach will make a difference will depend on both the level of ambition expressed in the action plan and the political will to transform ways of working and increase collaboration across EU institutions and member states.

The EU has a poor record of working in a coordinated and coherent way across policy areas, and previous commitments to do so (for examples commitments to policy coherence for development made in 2005 and 2009) have generally had little impact. While the commitment of the new European Commission led by Jean-Claude Juncker to increase team-work and overall policy coherence suggests that there is political will at the highest level for such change, within EU institutions and member states there is apparently both resistance and scepticism about the willingness of others to genuinely collaborate.⁵⁵ Given past challenges and ongoing resistance, it is critical that the comprehensive approach action plan draws on lessons from recent attempts to work comprehensively, for example in the

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53. European Parliament, 'EU development cooperation in fragile states: challenges and opportunities', Directorate General for External Policies of the Union, Brussels: European Union, 2013.

54. For example in the 2011 Thematic Evaluation of European Commission Support to Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding.

55. Faria, F., 'What EU comprehensive approach?', *ECDPM Briefing Note*, Maastricht: ECDPM, 2014.

Sahel, Horn of Africa, and Great Lakes. Indeed, it is perhaps in Somalia where the EU has come closest to a genuinely comprehensive approach – engaging in active diplomacy and the political process, providing a range of security support⁵⁶ and being the biggest ODA provider – and from which the most positive lessons can be drawn.

Although the comprehensive approach is a welcome step, its focus remains strongly on addressing fragility at national levels. While the joint European Commission and EEAS communication recognises global drivers of fragility, such as illicit trafficking and migratory flows, as well as the importance of working in partnership, it does not provide a vision of how to build a stronger multilateral response or partner with emerging powers on fragility issues. Nor does it provide a vision of how to respond to fragility in middle-income countries where there is little scope for EU intervention or influence and EU engagement is in fact reducing.

EU advocacy for a more effective global response

It is clear that global drivers of fragility undermine attempts to build peace at national or regional level, and therefore efforts to improve support to FCAS – such as the comprehensive approach – must be accompanied by a stronger multilateral response to tackle these drivers. The post-2015 development framework provides an important opportunity to do this by crafting shared international goals in relation to some of the drivers and consequences of fragility. Moreover, the ‘universal’ nature of the post-2015 framework⁵⁷ can help to move beyond a focus on just the most obviously fragile countries, to instead analyse and address the risks and vulnerabilities of all countries in terms of violence, institutions, economic foundations and so on. Such an approach is critical to help move the international community beyond crisis response to prediction and prevention.

The EU has an important role to play in promoting the strongest possible approach to fragility in current discussions on post-2015 targets and indicators, in line with its proposals in the 2013 European Commission communication ‘A decent life for all: ending poverty and giving the world a sustainable future’. Likewise, in ongoing discussions about financing the post-2015 framework, the EU can press for the mobilisation of resources to tackle the global drivers of fragility, as well as for ‘smart aid’ that is tailored to FCAS in ways that leverage domestic and international private finance to reduce aid dependency. Critically, in seeking to further these agendas and build fragility into the future multilateral development framework, the EU must strengthen its engagement with emerging powers on these issues. This means using existing mechanisms, such as the EU’s strategic partnership dialogues with countries like Brazil, South Africa and China, to identify and build on common interests in the area of fragility.⁵⁸

There is no doubt that as a significant trading and diplomatic block, the EU does have potential to push for a stronger multilateral response to the global drivers of fragility.

56. Through EU military operations ATALANTA and EUTM, civilian mission NESTOR, and support to the AU mission AMISOM. For more on this see Daemers, J., ‘The EU in Somalia: beyond Atalanta’, *EUISS Issue Alert*, Paris: EUISS, 2014.

57. The goals will apply to all countries – not just developing countries – and all countries will contribute to their achievement.

58. Castillejo, C. (ed.), ‘New donors, new partners? EU strategic partnerships and development’, *ESPO Report*, Madrid: FRIDE, 2014.

However, meaningfully to address some of the most challenging global drivers of fragility would involve questioning Europe's own policies in sensitive areas such as drugs, migration or financial regulation. With the EU mired in its own economic and political problems, there is currently little political will to ask searching questions about the way Europe contributes to the problems of others, nor is there a shared vision across EU member states on this. Therefore, beyond promoting a strong post-2015 framework, it is unlikely that the EU will take any major steps to seriously tackle the global drivers of fragility in the near future.

Understanding the nature and future of fragility

If the EU is to genuinely improve its response to fragility, it must enhance its understanding of the dynamics of fragility at global, regional and national level. This will require increased investment in research and analysis in a number of areas.

In terms of monitoring, the current focus of the OECD Development Assistance Committee and its members – including the EU and member states – is monitoring the progress of a list of already fragile states in relation to standard governance indicators and state capacity. However, this approach has clearly failed to identify some key fragile situations where states have scored high on such indicators, for example Tunisia in 2011. This suggests a need to strengthen and expand fragility monitoring to look at a broader range of countries and go beyond standard measures of government effectiveness, including for example a focus on the quality of state-society relations. It is particularly critical if the EU wants to shift its focus from crisis response to prevention, as laid out in the comprehensive approach. Indeed, EEAS Director for Security Policy and Conflict Prevention, Joëlle Jenny, acknowledges that the EU's 'investment in focused analysis and the institutionalisation of the preventive culture are in their early days and still need deepening'.⁵⁹

In terms of political analysis on the ground in FCAS, the EU has a weak record of both undertaking political analysis and using it. Indeed, although 'commitments to improve political analysis and evidence-based policy and programming are standard rhetoric in EU policy documents, they are frequently not implemented because organisational incentives do not encourage analysis and learning, or the feedback of new knowledge into planning, programming or re-adjusting strategies'.⁶⁰ While this weakness is problematic in any country, it is particularly so in FCAS, where, as Allouche and Lind point out, 'understanding the politics of complex situations of conflict and violence where "traditional" development actors and donors may have little influence is a pre-condition for crafting effective aid interventions in those settings'.⁶¹

Finally, there is a significant knowledge gap regarding how FCAS exit fragility and how international actors can support them to do so. The argument for greater investment in credible, long-term research in this area is eloquently made by Jones and Elgin-Cossart, who point out that most research focuses on the causes of conflict and there has so far been little study of trajectories of recovery from fragility or how external policy interventions

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59. Jenny 2014, op. cit.

60. European Think Tanks Group 2014, op. cit.

61. Allouche and Lind 2013, op. cit.

impact these trajectories.⁶² The EU is well placed to support research that can deepen understanding of both how states become fragile and how they transition out of fragility.

Conclusion

»» The EU has recognised that fragility will be a critical challenge for its external action in the future and has committed to strengthening its response to this challenge. Doing so will require EU actors to better understand the complex nature of fragility and the interrelated global, regional and local factors that will affect FCAS states in years to come. It will also require them to craft responses that go beyond standard development or security interventions in FCAS, to instead work coherently across all policy areas, as well as at local, regional and global levels to address fragility and the complex factors that drive it.

The coming years are likely to present significant challenges in terms of fragility and conflict. Whether from state failure and spiralling violence across the Middle East and North Africa; geo-political tensions affecting FCAS in Eastern Europe and the Caucasus; the spread of violent ideologies and groups in West Africa and the Sahel; or pressures from population growth, climate change and environmental degradation in a range of particularly vulnerable FCAS.

However, the coming months and years also offer a number of important opportunities for Europe to improve both its own and the world's response to fragility. If the new European Commission led by Jean-Claude Juncker throws its political weight behind the comprehensive approach and ensures that this is effectively implemented (in coordination with the EEAS and the member states), it could help the EU to achieve the joined up response to conflict and crisis that it has so long aimed for and is so desperately needed. Beyond the EU's own policies and practices, negotiations over the new SDGs offer a chance to build a stronger and more credible multilateral framework to address both the challenges faced by FCAS and some of the global drivers of fragility. Critically, the EU increasingly recognises that it must increase dialogue and collaboration with emerging powers on common interests and approaches in relation to development, conflict and fragility. The EU's strategic partnership dialogues, which until now have been underutilised, could offer an important forum for such engagement.

The EU wants to improve its response to fragility and there is no question that across the Union the resources exist – whether in terms of funds, people, knowledge or instruments – to do so. However, the challenge will be ensuring sustained political will and coordination across EU institutions and member states, which will be necessary to bring together European resources in a truly comprehensive and coherent approach to the urgent problem of state fragility.

62. Jones and Elgin-Cossart 2011, op. cit.

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