

Lesson Plan: Fragile States

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States suffering from internal conflict, weak infrastructures, lack of economic development, and general instability are emerging as a large threat to the international security. These states foster terrorists, piracy, genocide, and regional conflicts that create a genuine humanitarian crisis for their citizens.

Today, fragile states are receiving more attention. The international community is researching sustainable ways to bring stability to fragile states on the brink and foster stronger states worldwide.

Since 2009, the Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting has published over twenty multimedia projects on fragile states from around the world. These reports are collected on our special Global Gateway, Fragile States (<http://pulitzercenter.org/fragile-states>).

“Fragile States” lesson plan draws on select video reports from the Fragile States Global Gateway. After completing this plan your students will have:

- Learned what factors contribute to the creation of a “fragile state” and understand the international community’s role in helping these states avoid failure or rebuild from conflict.
- Defined “international aid,” gained an understanding of the intricacies involved in providing aid, and accurately represented the percentage of the U.S. budget dedicated to global foreign aid.
- Gained a better understanding of specific elements of the conflicts in Afghanistan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, East Timor, and Bosnia and Herzegovina, the plight of child soldiers abducted by the Lord’s Resistance Army, and the experience of every-day Haitians both before and after the 2010 earthquake.
- Imagined life in a society vastly different from their own.

Specific Subject-Area Connections

Social Studies

- Modern day genocide
- Universal declaration of human rights
- Modern day conflicts
- The political and social conditions of developing nations
- War crimes and terms of peace
- World Religions
- Impact of global trade on regional civilizations
- Political revolutions

Materials

- Pulitzer Center Fragile States DVD
- Computers with Internet access (optional)

Student Preparation/Background Information

This lesson plan has been designed so that each video can be taught separately or so that several videos can be taught together focusing on the theme of international aid. Option A prepares students to focus specifically on fragile states. Option B prepares students to discuss U.S. International Aid in addition to fragile states. Combining Options A and B will give students a more comprehensive lesson.

Option A

Before viewing the videos have your students come up with a definition of a fragile state. This can be done as a class, in small groups or individually. Make sure they include what factors contribute to fragile states.

[Possible factors: government, political leaders, education structures, role of women/children, abundant or limited natural resources, etc.]

Option B

This option can be added to *Option A* to incorporate the theme of international aid into the lesson. The following prompts can be used as an individual assignment, small group work, or class discussion.

Today, any countries around the globe have received, are currently receiving, or hope to receive international aid. This aid can take the form of humanitarian funding, military funding, provision of experts, peacekeepers, supplies, etc.

On November 30, 2010 worldpublicopinion.org conducted a public opinion poll on American public opinion on foreign aid. To start off the discussion, ask your students the following questions that were on the poll:

1. Just based on what you know, please tell me your hunch about what percentage of the federal budget goes to foreign aid. You can answer in fractions of percentage points as well as whole percentage points.
2. What do you think would be an appropriate percentage of the federal budget to go to foreign aid, if any?

Once your students have answered, you can tell them the results of the poll.

1. The average response was that 27% of the federal budget went to foreign aid.
2. The average response was that 13% of the federal budget should go to foreign aid.

In reality, the United States devotes about .2% (less than 1%) of its federal budget to foreign aid. In comparison, post-WWII during the Marshal Plan the United States devoted 2% of its federal budget to foreign aid. (Figures from the 2004 Congressional Research Service report on Foreign Aid. Link:

<http://fpc.state.gov/documents/organization/31987.pdf>)

Second, have students discuss and respond to the following questions:

1. How should the United States determine how much money to devote to foreign aid?
2. How should the United States determine to what countries it should provide aid?
 - A. Should the United States consider the values of the receiving government when giving aid or only the need of the people? Why or why not?
 - B. Should diplomatic relationships play a role in whether or not a country receives aid? Why or why not?
 - C. When do you think that aid should absolutely be provided?
3. Is it the responsibility of the United States (and other developed countries) to provide international aid for general development? How about in response to a humanitarian crisis? How about natural disasters?
 - A. At what cost (monetary, lives) should the United States provide foreign aid?

Videos and Discussion Questions

This lesson includes general group discussion questions as well as questions specifically related to the discussion of international aid. Additionally, video-specific questions and supplemental materials have been provided.

General Discussion Questions:

1. Look back at your definition of a fragile state. Would you change your definition based on the information you learned in the videos? Why or why not?
2. What common factors were present in the fragile states featured in the videos?
3. Can these states become more stable? Can they do it with foreign support? Why or why not?
4. What threats do these states pose to U.S. security? Do they all pose the same level of threat? Do they pose different potential threats? Why or why not?

International Aid Post-Videos Discussion Questions:

1. How have these cases of fragile states influenced your perspective on U.S. foreign aid?
 - a. Do you think the United States should increase or decrease its foreign assistance? Why or why not?
2. Do you think U.S. foreign aid (if present) was effective in these cases? Which ones and why or why not?
3. Based on the videos, when do you think it is important for international actors, including the United States, to intervene or give aid?

Additional Information

“Among Pakistanis, Perception of U.S. Aid Varies”

By Steve Inskeep, National Public Radio, Morning Edition June 3, 2011

Link: <http://www.npr.org/2011/06/03/136905333/among-pakistanis-questions-about-u-s-aid>

Videos:

1. Afghanistan

“Afghanistan By Donkey”

By Anna Badkhen

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/video/afghanistan-northern-balkh-province-taliban-insurgency-nato>

Question: How has NATO/U.S. involvement in Afghanistan affected the people? Has it led to a change? What is the nature of the change?

Additional/Related Reporting

“The Lost Villages”

By Anna Badkhen, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/articles/afghanistan-balkh-province-mazar-e-sharif-taliban-insurgents-nato>

2. East Africa

“Dear Obama: A Message from Victims of the LRA”

By Marcus Bleasdale

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/video/dear-obama-message-victims-lra>

Question: The main targets of the LRA are children, many of whom are your age, how do their concerns and priorities compare to yours?

Additional/Related Reporting

“PBS: Voice of America features IC’s work in Congo”

By Invisible Children

Link: <http://blog.invisiblechildren.com/2011/01/pbs-voice-of-america-features-ics-work-in-congo/>

“Child Soldiers Around the World”

By Eben Kaplan, Council on Foreign Relations

Link: <http://www.cfr.org/human-rights/child-soldiers-around-world/p9331>

3. Bosnia and Herzegovina

“Fragile States: Continuing Struggles for Bosnia and Herzegovina”

By Jason Maloney

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/video/fragile-states-continuing-struggles-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

Questions:

- Do you believe it is accurate to say that Bosnia and Herzegovina’s instability mainly comes from its political structure? Why or why not? What other factors contribute to the country’s instability?
- The video mentioned that Bosnia and Herzegovina currently has two presidents and one prime minister. How do you think the United States would function if it had a major political leader for different regions, ethnicities or religions?
- In the video, Bosnia and Herzegovina’s divided government is defended with the claim that it protects the minority opinions. Do you think this is a valid claim? Do you believe that the U.S. ‘one man one vote’ system represses minority opinion within the United States?

Additional/Related Reporting

“The Challenge of Reforms in Bosnia and Herzegovina”

By Sara Di Stefano, Center for Strategic and International Studies

Link: <http://csis.org/blog/challenge-reforms-bosnia-and-herzegovina>

4. Haiti

“Despite Years of Crushing Poverty, Hope Grows in Haiti”

By Kira Kay and Jason Maloney

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/video/despite-years-crushing-poverty-hope-grows-haiti-pbs-newshour>

Questions:

- Before the earthquake, the United States was using the private sector to deliver aid and foster development in Haiti. For development post-earthquake do you think the same strategy will be effective? Why or why not?
- Why do you think it is in the strategic interest of the United States to make sure Haiti is developing and rebuilding back to normalcy? Could an unstable or fragile Haiti be a security threat to the United States?
 - [Possible answers: Yes, because of possible state failure, potential for a refugee crisis, potential for causing wide-spread regional instability, etc.]

Additional/Related Reporting

“Haiti’s Reconstruction: Building Back Better”

By William Wheeler and Justin Thomas Ostensen, Pulitzer Center on Crisis Reporting

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/projects/caribbean/haitis-reconstruction-building-back-better>

5. Democratic Republic of the Congo

“Congo’s Bloody Coltan”

By Mvemba Phezo Dizolele

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/video/congos-bloody-coltan>

Question:

- For the people of the Congo, have these mineral resources been a blessing or a curse? Why ?
- Do you believe the international community, particularly the countries purchasing mineral resources from Congo, should be responsible for the mining conditions? Why or why not? Should they be responsible for the lack of economic growth that has occurred in Congo?

Additional/Related Reporting

“Struggling with the Resource Curse”

By Nina Merchant-Vega

Link: <http://asiafoundation.org/in-asia/2011/04/06/struggling-with-the-resource-curse/>

6. East Timor

“East Timor, 10 Years after Independence”

By Kira Kay, Jason Maloney

Link: <http://pulitzercenter.org/video/east-timor-10-years-after-independence>

Questions:

- The video mentions the concept of human security, how would you define this term, what do you think human security means? How does human security differ from national security? Is one more important than the other? Why or why not?
- For East Timor, what factors contribute the most to its instability? What programs seem to be the most effective in combating these factors and therefore improving stability and development?
 - [Possible Answers: Factors: education, unemployment, lack of delineation between police force and military]

Additional/Related Reporting

“Human Security for All – Introduction: Investing in a New Vision of Security for the 21st Century”

United Nations Trust Fund for Human Security

Link (to pdf):

<http://ochaonline.un.org/Reports/BookletHumanSecurityforAll/tabid/2187/language/en-US/Default.aspx>

Extension Activities:

1. RAFT Assignment

Role	Audience	Form	Topic
Child Soldier	Modern Americans	Blog	Argue need for increased/decreased international aid
Aid Worker	President Obama	Newspaper Article	Preventing fragile states from forming
Government Official	Future Generations	Creative Writing Story	Growing up in a fragile state
Civil War Survivor	Your Peers	Poem	Rebuilding a nation

2. Class Debate: Hold a debate on what role the United States should play in the international community in regards to international aid and assistance.

3. Have students identify and research other fragile states. What are the main factors creating instability in that country? Is the state receiving international aid, if so is it effective? Does this fragile state pose a threat to U.S. national security? How about its region's security?

4. Create a dialogue between two of the following characters (they can be chosen randomly or students can choose). The two characters should talk about what they have in common, differences in their daily lives, their hopes and aspirations, their concerns, etc.

A child soldier in Eastern Africa

A Coltan miner in the Congo

An unemployed young adult in Haiti

A Bosnian Muslim/A Bosnian Christian

An East Timor politician

5. Awareness Event: After watching these videos, and learning more about the conflicts in highlighted countries, your students may be interested in created an awareness campaign at school or within their home communities to publicize one of the issues covered through the Pulitzer Center reporting. This could be done through posters, a short video, or a "public service announcement" on the school's morning news program or over the PA system.

6. Contact the Journalists: If your students are interested in learning more about a topic explored in one of the videos in this lesson, the Pulitzer Center offers the opportunity for students to connect directly with journalists via email, Skype, or in-school visits. Visit <http://pulitzercenter.org/request-pulitzer-center-journalist-visit> for more information.