

## THE INDIVIDUAL'S ROLE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S RECOVERY

To understand why South Africa (SA) will not become a failed state, it is important to understand how we differ from states that have failed. States like Yemen, Somalia, and Syria. According to research conducted by Fund for Peace, countries that we often ascribe failure to, like Zimbabwe and Venezuela, are not extreme cases of failed states. But before we address the question of SA's failure, it might be worthwhile to distinguish between a state and a government.

A state consists of four elements: Citizens, territory, government, and sovereignty. The government exercises power and authority on behalf of the state by formulating the will of the state into laws, and then implementing and enforcing those laws. Therefore, even though they are distinguishable, the idea is that if the government fails, the state fails too. But when do governments and, by implication, states, fail? A failed state is a state that has lost its effective ability to govern its people; much like the position that SA is currently in. A failed state maintains legal sovereignty but experiences a breakdown in political power, law enforcement, and civil society, leading to a state of anarchy; some might say that SA ticks this box too.

But are we, in fact, a failed state, and, if not, are we going to become one? To answer this question, analysts often turn to the Fragile States Index (FSI), which considers key elements of a country, like cohesion, politics, economics, social well-being, and the level of external intervention. The FSI shows that while SA has been on a decline over recent years, we are still far from being a failed state, that is, being a country with a "very high alert". Currently, we are the 79th most fragile country out of 179 and still better off than some of our peers, such as Brazil, India, and Turkey.

We maintain that SA will not deteriorate to the point of complete collapse because of five differentiating forces: Our love for democracy (freedom), freedom of speech, an independent central bank, an enforceable and equitable rule of law, and liquid and deep financial markets. But it does go deeper than that: At the heart of these five forces lies the "moral individual". An individual who takes responsibility, who takes ownership of their own life, who is accountable and resilient. But also an individual who understands their responsibility towards the community. Collective individualists that drive stakeholder capitalism, not shareholder capitalism, where the current and future benefit of capital is enjoyed by more than just the few who own it now. Although these moral individuals are few, a remnant of them remains in SA. For this reason, even if our government should deteriorate further, as we expect it will, the remnant of moral individuals will ultimately produce constructive progress.

In many rich (successful) countries, governments ensure that the mentioned five forces, among others, move an economy towards equitable progress. But, because the South African government has failed, the moral individual must, once again, step up, as they have done so many times before.

What must the South African government do? The government must fundamentally change. Our current ruling party has been in power for too long, we have become too bureaucratic, too slow, and too fixed in our ways. We need a new growth mindset but, most importantly, we need accountable action. We need strong leadership and moral individuals in government.