

Maintaining a Meaningful Commitment to Conflict Prevention and Stabilization

The Global Fragility Act (GFA) is a **historic, bipartisan law** that reshaped how the U.S. prevents and addresses violent conflict, requiring the U.S. Government to take a **focused and strategic approach to stabilizing conflict-affected areas and preventing the emergence of new ones**. Rooted in hard lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq, the GFA was signed into law in 2019 by President Trump, who emphasized in his 2025 inaugural address, “We will measure our success not only by the battles we win but also by the wars that we end—and perhaps most importantly, the wars we never get into.”

The GFA mandates a 10-year strategy that integrates peacebuilding and conflict prevention into U.S. diplomacy, development, and security in fragile states. It reflects bipartisan priorities including strong interagency coordination, results-based programming, donor burden-sharing, locally-led engagement, and innovation. Its 2025 biennial report to Congress **demonstrates the successes** in fulfilling GFA’s promise to create more coherent and impactful U.S. engagement in fragile regions.

Becoming a Skeleton of Its Original Intent

Currently the success of the GFA is at significant risk: the destruction of USAID and overhaul of the State Department have gutted the very institutions needed to implement the Act. Along with the cancellation of USAID projects and the placement of core USAID staff on administrative leave, the State Department, in April 2025, eliminated the **Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO)**—the nerve center for GFA interagency coordination.¹ While regional bureaus are likely to adopt some aspects of GFA implementation, they have minimal capacity given their staffing reductions. Furthermore, implementation will be fractured without the CSO as a global coordinating

¹ The May 29, 2025 Congressional Notification submitted to Congress notes that “the [Office of Foreign Assistance Policy (F/POL)] will take on certain statutory and policy duties, including responsibilities related to the Global Fragility Act currently performed by CSO.”

unit. At this time, **none of the USAID staff with dedicated experience overseeing GFA implementation in Washington DC or overseas have been transferred to or within the State Department. Simultaneously, State Department employees with such experience are urgently seeking their own new assignments.** They expect to imminently receive RIF notifications or terminations, resulting in a further loss of significant experience and lessons learned to drive effective and efficient peacebuilding.

USAID was managing \$104 million—approximately 77% of the FY23 Prevention and Stabilization Fund within the Economic Support Fund (ESF), to fund GFA-aligned activities. USAID’s elimination and the foreign assistance reviews have resulted in the sudden loss of programming in all GFA countries. This cessation has jeopardized gains made in reducing violence, building community resilience and economic opportunity, and building local and diplomatic partnerships. It has also created an opening for adversaries like China to engage and replace the U.S. as a partner of choice.

The situation worsens when paired with the President’s Proposed FY2026 Budget, which slashes over \$8 billion from key accounts including Development Assistance, ESF, Democracy Fund, and Assistance for Europe, Eurasia, and Asia. Officials in the State Department are now seeking to understand the “statutorily minimum requirements” of the law to adopt an approach that is compliant with legal regulations. This approach **violates the spirit of the law**, which requires a comprehensive and dedicated approach to innovation, coordination, learning, and adaptation.

U.S. foreign policy is taking a step backward amid historic levels of conflict, jeopardizing American security and prosperity.

The world is experiencing increased and longer-lasting conflicts, with **the number and intensity of armed conflicts doubling** in the last five years. Such violence can result in humanitarian crises that result in mass starvation, disease outbreaks, and migration. Meanwhile, conflict itself can become a breeding ground for violent extremism, smuggling, and trafficking. These threats cannot be contained by borders and affect the U.S. and our interests. Effectively preventing conflict curtails these issues and reduces the need for costly humanitarian assistance or military intervention later.

The degradation of the GFA's implementation has **severe implications globally and within the U.S. Government**. Without continued meaningful commitment to the GFA:

- Peacebuilding efforts will become more fragmented and short-term, requiring the U.S. to revert to **more expensive and less effective** crisis-response approaches and weakening investments in economic opportunity that prevent conflict.
- Conflict-prone states will be less able to effectively address causes of instability, resorting to strategies that **escalate violence and invite U.S. adversaries**.
- U.S. **leadership and credibility is undermined** as the U.S. Government signals its reduced commitment to addressing root causes of instability, just as adversaries increase their influence in unstable contexts.
- Poor interagency coordination will lead to U.S. agencies that **operate in silos, duplicate efforts, reduce returns on resources, and pursue conflicting objectives**, resulting in less effective outcomes and higher costs to the American taxpayer.

What can Congress do?

- **Protect Funding:** Congress should maintain funding levels for the Prevention and Stabilization Fund and ensure that the ESF and Development Assistance accounts remain intact. These are critical to executing GFA strategies in fragile partner countries and avoiding costly security backslides.
- **Reinstate and Protect Core Expertise:** Congress must require the State Department to restore a centralized, expert-led conflict prevention team—whether by reestablishing CSO or designating a dedicated interagency GFA unit—to ensure continuity, oversight, and accountability for GFA implementation.
- **Mandate Full Execution of GFA Country Strategies:** Congress should direct the State Department to re-engage implementing the existing 10-year strategies for GFA pilot countries, with regular public reporting and Congressional briefings to assess progress, challenges, and adaptations over time.
- **Reauthorize the GFA:** Representatives McCaul and Jacobs reintroduced the GFA Reauthorization Act in April 2025. Passing the Reauthorization Act should be a Congressional priority.

Information in this document reflects the status as of June 17, 2025, and will be updated as new developments occur. For questions, meeting inquiries, or resources on the benefits of USAID and foreign assistance you can reach us at congressaidletters@gmail.com.