In the last fifty years, the international community has undergone a transformation.

Social, economic and political dynamics have radically changed: the international power structure has shifted towards a more complex structure, new powerful international actors have emerged, security threats have mutated and economies have been largely liberalized.

These changes brought about two major consequences for Nation States. First, a new standard of governance emerged that resulted in increased responsibilities to each State’s nationals. Second, States have become increasingly inter-independent and have additional (both in numbers and substance) obligations towards each other and the international community in general.

However, certain States are unable to operate in this new system of increased responsibility, in terms of obligations towards other States, the international community and their citizens. These States – often referred to as fragile, failing or failed States – become ineffective actors in the international stage. This poses multiple problems for the international community as certain necessary obligations and required acts fail to be performed, weakening the entire system.

The introductory paragraphs below briefly analyze, first, the new standards of national and international governance, and, then, explore their consequences for the international community and nation States.

1. New Standards of Governance Bring Increased Domestic Responsibility for Each State

The first consequence of contemporary governance is the increased overall responsibilities of each State. States must perform innumerable actions daily, directed at their own people, other States, and the international community.

Contemporary society is based on the premise that each person has multiple rights and obligations that arise from being a national of a certain State and a member of the international community. Individual rights include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and range from the right
to life, to the rights of free movement, ownership and vote. These rights can derive from both domestic and international provisions. In general, the parallel obligation that allows for the right to be enjoyed is primarily imposed upon the State as a sovereign.

Obligations to confer rights to individuals are enumerated by international binding agreements, principally concluded under the aegis of the United Nations, since its creation in 1945. Further, the United Nations Charter itself, which is almost universally ratified, provides for the fulfillment of personal rights of individuals by promoting “higher standards of living, full employment, and conditions of economic and social progress and development” as well as “solutions of international economic, social, health, and related problems; and international cultural and educational cooperation” and “universal respect for, and observance of, human rights and fundamental freedoms for all without distinction as to race, sex, language, or religion.” These obligations fall on each Member State. In fact, each member of the organization also pledged to take action to achieve these goals. As such, an entire organizational structure made up of agencies and programs is created and organized by the United Nations to monitor the development and implementation of these rights by each State.


2 In general, national constitutions include specific references to several individual rights, which are broadly similar to ones that originate from international treaties, although in certain cases more numerous and detailed. For example, these rights include, the right to self-determination, the right to life, the right to health, the right to liberty and security of the person, the right to dignity and equality, the right to fair trial, freedom of expression, freedom of religion, the right to marry and have a family, the right to participate in the political process, the right to fair wages and safe and healthy working conditions, the right to equal opportunities, the right to participate in the economic process, the right to form trade unions and organize, the right to education, the right to participate in cultural activities, and the right to the benefit of scientific progress and its applications.

4 U.N. Charter Art. 55(b).
5 U.N. Charter Art. 55(c).
6 U.N. Charter Art. 56.
7 U.N. Charter Arts. 57–58 (stating respectively that “(1) [t]he various specialized agencies, established by intergovernmental agreement and having wide international responsibilities, as defined in their basic instruments, in economic, social, cultural, educational, health, and related fields, shall be brought into relationship with the United Nations in accordance