THE GLOBAL CHALLENGE OF FRAGILE STATES
IS THERE A ROLE FOR CANADA?
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INTRODUCTION

The Canadian International Council recently (June, 2010) published a report outlining a series of recommendations for Canadian Foreign Policy called *Open Door – A Global Positioning Strategy for a Networked Age (www.onlinecic.org*). One of those recommendations is that following withdrawal (or reduction) from Afghanistan, Canada should develop a policy designed to stabilize weak states and rebuild their capacities to govern. This is predicated both on the perceived danger represented by unstable situations around the world and on the security and development capabilities which Canada has developed through its participation in Afghanistan. However, having a capability or "tool" is not in itself a justification for a policy. There needs to be a thorough discussion on Canadian foreign policy goals on the basis of needs and interests as well as capabilities. If the needs and interests are evident, then the tools can be developed, not vice-versa.

This note argues that this is a credible recommendation for a number of reasons, but strongly cautions that such a policy be developed not just as a "Canadian Policy" but as a contribution to a truly global policy of action, in the interests of human justice and global security. A joint effort will have a much greater impact, and for Canada to make an effort to work with others to take on some of the seemingly intractable problems of the world would signal that Canada can be a credible player.

CONTEXT

Since the end of the Cold War, we have witnessed a changing dynamic in international conflict, with the end of many inter-state conflicts (which were often proxy wars) and the rise of new threats to peace and security in the form of intra-state conflicts. More and more states are identified as fragile or failed states. These are states where governments are unable or unwilling to provide basic services to their populations, where economic and social systems are weak or non-existent and where a state of chronic or full-fledged conflict often exists. Hundreds of millions of people are suffering as a result.

Despite the bad news scenarios which adorn our headlines, things are improving around the world. More wars were brought to an end in the 1990's, and more people around the world are experiencing better conditions of economic and political security. But this scenario obscures the growing gap affecting a large percentage of the Global South. It is estimated that up to one billion people live in areas where security and economic and social conditions are deteriorating (*The Bottom Billion,* Paul Collier)*.*

More international players, both governmental and non-governmental, in dealing with fragile states are showing a growing awareness (not fully acted upon) of the overlapping nature of security and development. What has terrorism and dealing with conflict taught us in the last twenty years? The lesson is the same whatever the type of conflict and that is "Deal with the causes as well as the effects". An approach which focuses almost exclusively on security at the expense of dealing with the underlying

social, economic and cultural drivers of conflict has failed us on many occasions and leaves vulnerable populations caught in the cross fire.

In dealing with state fragility, it is useful to remember that the modern concept of an effective and peaceful nation state is a fairly recent one. The concept of the Westphalian state may be 350 years old, but it is only 60 years or so since Western countries stopped murdering each other's populations in a World War. We must therefore be modest in our attempts to magically create conditions of peace, security, human rights and development in states which did not exist 50 years ago, using limited tools of short term military intervention and meagre aid efforts. It will be important to understand the root causes of fragility and to have a long term approach which is based on local ownership at the level of civil society as well as state structures.

ADDRESSING FRAGILE STATES AS A GLOBAL ISSUE IS NOT A NEW IDEA

Since the end of the Cold War, the international community (largely, but not exclusively, through a newly energized Security Council) has taken on a renewed responsibility to address political and security crises worldwide. However, after some early successes in the 1990's, the more interventionist and multi-dimensional peacekeeping ran aground on the tragedies of Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia. The Security Council withdrew for a time, but returned with new vigour after the Brahimi Report (*The Report of the Panel on Peace Operations, June, 2000, A/55/305, S/200/809*) to address Sierra Leone, the DRC, Kosovo and East Timor and others as the new decade unfolded.

In the meantime, improvements were being made in humanitarian response and coordination and in human rights analysis and capabilities. Mediation was more and more sanctioned internationally, with almost every crisis around the globe having some attention paid to it through formal negotiations, or informal envoys and "good offices". Development responses were less successful as donors struggled with how to operate in post-conflict environments. The OECD/DAC members focussed on improved policy approaches, but few donors mastered the practice (with the exception of some successes by the UK and the Nordics). Academia became more focussed on understanding peacebuilding and the relationship between conflict and development (*The 2003 WB Development Report on Conflict and Development*).

However, while all these fields registered improvements, they were not working well together. As a result, particularly in the UN, there was pressure to develop more integrated approaches to enable peacekeeping, humanitarian, mediation, human rights and development to work together. Governments developed so-called 3-D approaches (defence, diplomacy, development) and the UN and NATO looked at delivering security and development in an attempt to "build peace". There was no real agreement, however on terms such as "nation building", "state building" and "peace building". The UN's High Level Panel on Threats Challenges and Change addressed this issue and proposed the creation of a new UN Peacebuilding Commission which was launched in 2006 with the mandate to bring all the players together around strategic approaches and the mobilization of resources for peacebuilding in the post-conflict environment.

WHY SHOULD WE (CANADA AND THE WORLD) TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR FRAGILE STATES?

Addressing fragile states is now one of the most pressing global issues. This means addressing both the threat they represent to their own populations in the loss of livelihoods and human dignity and

the potential threat which they represent to global security, through the increased incidence of civil war which can spill over borders.

It will be impossible to meet international goals, such as the Millennium Development Goals, improved national and global economic conditions, the eradication of disease, climate change targets, or a reduction in international crime, including drugs and human trafficking, address refugee crises or ensure better management of natural resources without bringing fragile states and their populations into the community of nations. In addition, the risk of creating enabling environments conducive to terrorist movements and international piracy is increased in fragile political environments.

And there is another set of issues, beyond the risks to global peace and security, addressing crime and the attainment of agreed international goals. That is to ask ourselves in this day and age of tremendous advances, and recognizing that the vast majority of people in the world now live in areas where improvements in quality of life are either concrete and visible or at least possible, whether we can accept a situation where hundreds of millions of people live in societies where their situation can only get worse. This raises the question of good global citizenship and the argument for an approach based on justice and human dignity. Thanks, in part, to Canada the world has endorsed the concept of *The Responsibility to Protect* (R2P) whereby the international community has a right to intervene in the absence of the state executing its responsibility to protect its own citizens. Are we to leave this concept on the books, with little or no practical application? Addressing fragile and failed states is one way to implement R2P.

There is also the question of cost: i.e. pay now to try to fix things or pay more, later, either in humanitarian response and/or in peacekeeping. The bill for military intervention is high and the cost of massive humanitarian programmes to keep people alive around the globe will not go away unless we address the underlying causes of ongoing and potential crises. The most important humanitarian response is to end the conflict and address the causes of suffering. This includes the need to take preventive action before crises develop into full fledged violent conflict. Addressing state fragility is also key in addressing natural disasters. Natural disasters *per se* are not the problem. The poverty which creates the conditions which exacerbate natural disasters and prevent their being addressed is the issue.

In the 1990's in response to growing disillusionment with the policies of structural adjustment and the way in which they were applied, donors took on a more mature relationship with recipient countries based on performance. In response to promises of development investment, newly responsible leaders committed to improvements in governance, policies, anti corruption and other issues. Donors could tell their tax payers that aid money was being spent in countries where it could do the most good. Countries which were unwilling or unable to meet performance criteria didn't make the donor lists. They became the neglected countries. Have these countries, the non-performers, become the victims of the law of unintended consequences?

Finally, studies indicate that inequality can be seen as the cause of a much broader series of ills than previously thought. There is a body of work which claims that societies which address inequality are actually more productive, have less crime, less disease, including obesity, than societies in which the gap continues to grow. The growing inequality gap in some societies is a matter of serious social and economic concern, except perhaps to those at the top of the tree (*The Spirit Level, Wilkinson and Pickett*). This can be seen as a global issue as well as a national issue.

WHO IS DOING IT NOW

The United Nations is the only body currently providing a platform for a universal approach to dealing with fragile states - not NATO, not the G20, not the OECD/DAC members. All of these latter bodies address parts of the problem, but none are in a position to address the issues holistically. All aspects of the system need to find ways to work together. The question then becomes, how can the United Nations, NATO, the G20, the OECD and other bodies such as the AU or the OAS support each other more meaningfully to develop a broad based approach to address fragility at the national level?

The closest thing to a working universal mechanism is the admittedly limited UN Integrated Peacekeeping/Peacebuilding Mission model which provides security tools along with human rights, election support, some limited Rule of Law tools (unfunded), protection mandates (but not means), coordination mechanisms, including coordination with development and humanitarian players and through the Security Council, international legitimacy. These missions, however, are hamstrung by member states who do not give them the means or the mandate. (For example, the largest UN mission, the DRC, has 19,000 troops/police and about 1500 international civilians. Afghanistan has 120,000 troops and who knows how many thousands of civilians). NATO countries contribute marginally to UN troop contingents.

One must, therefore, be careful in judging the successes or failures of UN efforts. The so-called "bloated and wasteful" UN budget is, for the UN Secretariat, less than the budget of the City of Ottawa ($2.1b vs. $2.5b for 2010). Canada's multi-year effort in Afghanistan alone is costing in the order of $16 billion. In one year, the UN spends only $8 billion on 16 peacekeeping missions around the world. It is a miracle that they work as well as they do.

It is time for other world bodies, therefore, to support efforts to address the issues of fragile states as follows: renewed engagement at the policy level from the G20, the EU and the AU; more robust peer pressure within the OECD/DAC to get donors to engage in fragile states, whether bilaterally or multilaterally; commitment from NATO as an organization and from NATO members individually, to strengthen UN efforts in conflict and post-conflict environments in fragile states; and for the WTO to move on global trade issues benefitting the poorest countries.

WHAT WOULD A "FRAGILE STATES" POLICY ENTAIL?

AT THE GLOBAL LEVEL

- Effective prevention mechanisms – including the political will to identify and monitor fragile states. (Prevention is the weakest tool in the international tool kit). Can we learn how to solve problems before they become international crises (e.g. Guinea Bissau)?

- Expanded mediation tools to deal with leaders in fragile states, and to attempt to bring them into a discourse. While some will remain intractable, others may respond to greater attention and understanding. (Situations are not intractable, people are intractable.)

- Commitment from NATO to support ongoing strengthening of UN Peacekeeping with contributions of troops, equipment and resources.

- Commitment from OECD/DAC donors to develop and implement effective development in post-conflict/fragile environments on the basis of their existing policy development work such as the OECD/DAC *Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States (2007)*.

- Commitment from policy setting bodies like the G20 to put Fragile States on its agenda and in its budgets.

- An international process to identify fragile states and to ensure that no country is totally neglected. Donors should agree a process, either through the DAC or the Peacebuilding Commission to ensure a minimum number of partners for each fragile state.

- Adequate funding with non military peacebuilding measures, including civilian deployment, receiving funding equivalent to levels of military funding. A look at budgets can shed light on priorities, i.e. it has been calculated that in 2008, one year of military expenditure was $1.5 trillion. This represents about 700 years of the UN Secretariat budget. In 2008, $35 billion in aid went to Africa from the DAC donors, but $600 billion went to the GM bailout in one week.

- Greater investment in analysis to understand the elements of fragility, i.e. how do the elements of poverty/poor leadership/poor external policies/bad neighbours/chronic conflict /poor management of natural resources interplay to keep countries in a state of fragility.

- Better implementation of approaches to build up populations in fragile states through support to civil society, education, human rights and community support. Local ownership must include helping populations to develop local solutions to hold leaders to account

- Holistic approaches to problems of international poverty, especially global trade reforms.

FOR CANADA

 Many of the same elements as outlined at the Global level would need to form the basis of a Canadian policy for dealing with Fragile States. Plus more specifically:

- Willingness to participate in UN missions and other multilateral efforts – to look at the "big picture" – not just to identify entry points, (i.e. in supporting specific parts of a problem as we do in the Sudan and other places). We need to be prepared to be part of a truly holistic effort. Canada's idea of coordinated efforts sometimes seems to be stuck on internal coordination around the 3 Ds. We need to go beyond this and be prepared to participate in internationally coordinated efforts on a much bigger scale and at a higher level of integration.

- Lead an effort to get NATO to work with the UN. It is not either/or NATO/ UN, but how can we get NATO members to work both individually and as an alliance to strengthen UN efforts or work alongside them (*cf* the UK in Sierra Leone).

- Completely re-work aid approaches to peacebuilding. This would require getting away from current project results approaches which effectively rules us out of operating in fragile states; this would require a political decision which accepts that security and development must go hand in hand in supporting reform in fragile states; and creating a closer working relationship for CIDA with DFAIT and with Multilateral institutions. We must be willing to work more closely

with partners who are already figuring it out. (See DfID, 2005 "*Why we need to work more effectively in fragile states*")

- Increase overall spending and re-order allocations to put more effort into "non-performers". In two years on the Peacebuilding Commission, Canada made no investment in any of the four countries on the PBC agenda, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea Bissau and the Central African Republic.

- Understand certain basic principles for dealing with fragile states: a) participate in and contribute to the global learning process of how to get the Security/Development balance right. Learn from others, DfID, OECD; b)understand the dynamic which has human rights concerns, humanitarian requirements and development needs informing the security agenda, not vice-versa; c) be prepared to pay (see above); d) join currently planned international efforts to create civilian deployment capabilities; e) don't respond to failure by pulling out, this game is for the long haul; f) understand when to support governments and when to support civil society; g) support joint international strategy building – what will keep a fragile state on the road to peace and stick to it; h) if local government is dysfunctional, the international community must find ways to intervene to protect the population.

WHICH FRAGILE STATES

Canada must avoid falling once again into the trap of designing its interventions in a vacuum, deciding what we want to do on the basis of our strengths and launching ourselves on an unsuspecting world. Rather we should choose our interventions on the basis of need and in concertation with other actors.

- The issue of fragile states will require a broad based joint multilateral approach at all levels, including a process to identify which are the most needy, the most dangerous, the most prepared to work with the international community, the ones not ready (and what are the consequences of not dealing with them).

- Canada could work with others to lead a process in the DAC or via the PBC to summarize what is being done where and who is doing what. The process would identify danger spots which could deteriorate if neglected. The Security Council and the PBC could identify the interventions necessary and the magnitude of funding required.

- DAC donors should commit to taking on one or two each of the neglected states, the "forgotten crises". At the very least such a process should ensure that no state is left without partners, exacerbating the neglect which has enabled fragility.

- Early warning systems must be strengthened through joint analysis and knowledge based approaches AND THE FINDINGS MUST BE ACTED UPON AT THE LEVEL OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY, LED BY THE SECURITY COUNCIL.

CONCLUSION

We neglect the growing problem of fragile states at our peril and at the peril of their populations. A new focus on finding ways to bring the bottom billion of the world's population out of poverty and neglect is imperative. An approach centred mainly on political/security is failing us. The

human rights agenda, humanitarian and development approaches must inform the political/military agenda. **Advancing the human condition must be recognized as a global good.**