

Policy Position Paper

Topic: Failed and Fragile States

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Course: PO327 Post Conflict Reconstruction
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Summary of Class Discussion

Issues Identified:

The class addressed the relationships - complementary, cooperative, competitive, contradictory - between state oriented national and human security and the challenges of supporting or building the components of a sustainable peace in failed and fragile 'disrupted' states. Those components included:

- Security as an essential prerequisite and resource priority?
- Internal and external process leadership and legitimacy
- Justice, truth, mercy as complementary or competing values and objectives
- Challenges of institutional and material dimensions – institution and infrastructure (re)building, service provision.

Areas of Consensus/Disagreement:

Consensus appeared that (a) basic security (physical safety) and human needs provision (food, water and shelter) are priorities for fast response, and the essential basis for progress with other components; (b) that sustainable peace processes in failed/fragile states requires not unlimited funds, but consistent and long term commitments of adequate political, financial and material resources.

Disagreement existed over the priority to give to (a) justice v. truth and reconciliation, and punishment v. compromise for future progress; (b) a Canadian resource focus on one sectoral priority for excellence globally e.g. CIVPOL, basic human needs, institution building vs. a choosing a limited number of states to exclusion of others.

Responses to eDiscussion Questions

Canada's IPS: Students wondered if the IPS was a framework oriented to "what is good for Canada", or if it is results-oriented towards "what will work in failed and fragile states". The IPS is a general statement that does not specify enough concrete actions, and its proof will come in commitment of real resources for meaningful results in (and for) failed states and especially their populations. It must be made real

in implementation, not just look good in design. There is very strong support for the R2P agenda, and that sovereignty is no shield for systematic large-scale abuses (war crimes, crimes against humanity, genocide, rape) by groups or by states.

Short versus long-term commitments: Frustrated by too many international failures to act, there was firm support for a multilateral system with new and clear criteria for intervention, good crisis intelligence gathering, and a political will to respond quickly to human security crises. Canada lacks sufficient resources for substantial long-term commitments; other states, the UN and other IGOs have greater combined capacity. Ottawa can and should be capable of acting immediately - even when others refuse - if intelligence indicates an impending crisis e.g. a 'Rwanda genocide scenario'.

It was pointed out that the government must lead, not follow, Canadian public opinion. There is public will to support programs in long time frames *if the government is clear and consistent with a strong case to make for the commitment*. Absence of prior public demand – waiting to see “what the public wants” - is not an excuse for inaction.

Response criteria: Prevention is cheaper than response, and much better for human security provision. Properly funded and targeted international development programs as part of the 3-D approach must be the “first response” and are sustainable over extended time periods. Canada has selected a limited number of states to receive targeted development assistance; this selection should include contributing to fragile states.

Ottawa should coordinate with other governments to support provision of security in failed states; share burdens but also divide responsibilities to maximize the range of response. Conflicts are too many, but still they are finite in number. Saying no is much easier if coordinated with a ‘yes’ by others.

Stability v. democracy? The wording of the FAC question is such as to predetermine the response. Nonetheless, if “undemocratic” means “benign but non-democratic” governance, this is acceptable in medium term should the alternative actually be destabilization; the UNMIK/KFOR/ Kosovo model is an example of non-democratic international governance as a short-term transitional stabilizer. If “undemocratic” means strict authoritarian rule that sets aside or regresses on human rights (Cold War era central American style) that is unacceptable.

Failed and fragile cities: Urban areas that are not hostile require ‘community policing’ and ‘community security’ approaches; and possibly special forces intelligence gathering. By itself, conventional military enforcement (urban warfare) of stability may be impossible to conduct effectively, or counterproductive to legitimacy as a result of ‘collateral’ damage and death e.g. US actions in Iraqi cities. Again, development investment in human rights, economic opportunity and community infrastructure support can offer valuable policy options to increase stability and improve community participation.