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Addressing the Challenge of Failed and Fragile States: An Opportunity for Canada

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Introduction:

Today's world is a highly interdependent and volatile mosaic, and one of the central issues of this historical moment is that of failed and fragile states. Failed states undermine human security as well as international peace and security, as refugee out-flows can effectively export conflict to neighboring states. Moreover, failed states are often characterized as being breeding grounds for terrorists. Consequently, failed and fragile states have been the source of much debate in the international community, and within the Canadian government. This report will examine to what degree the Canadian government ought to assist failed and fragile states, given that Canada's resources and capacities are limited. Next it will make recommendations as to how the Canadian government can respond effectively to the challenge of failed states recognizing the restrictions outlined above. Having concluded these avenues it shall become clear that Canada has a vital role to play in the international arena, and by taking initiative Canada can become a leader in the maintenance of pacific affairs.

So Many Problems, So Few Resources: When Should Canada Act?

Canada ought to act in a manner consistent with its capacity, determined on a case-by-case basis. Each situation, be it failing or failed state, will have a different scope of requirements, and in some cases Canada will be able to contribute significantly, while in others only nominally. Assistance could, therefore, include anything from troop contributions, to financial aid, to mere political support in the United Nations General

Assembly. Moreover, in order to be consistent with our "Responsibilities Agenda",[1] and

for the promotion of human security, "which forms the foundation for our approach to

good governance," we cannot base our criteria for assistance on strategic interest.[2] For

implicit in the notion of strategic interest is the idea that some humans are of greater

importance than others, by merit of where they live. Such a view undermines Canada's

International Policy Statement and our "responsibility to protect."[3]

By adopting the "Responsibility Agenda", the Canadian government is inherently

endorsing a humanistic approach to world affairs. As such, we have a responsibility to

act and assist in all failed states in order to protect human security. Invariably, this poses

a significant problem to the Canadian government, considering our resource limitations.

However, this does not mean that Canada need to physically intervene in each and every

imploded state. What this does suggest, however, is that Canada has a responsibility to

consider each situation thoroughly, and try and motivate the international community to

act when we ourselves do not have the capacity for direct response. Clearly, Canada

cannot get involved militarily in all failed states; we are not the world's 'peacemakers'.

Indeed, on 29 September 2005 the Senatorial Committee released a scathing report

arguing that the Canadian military was both significantly under funded,[4] and

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[1] The Canadian "Responsibilities Agenda" is a five pronged approach aimed at helping to create a "more secure world": it consists of our "shared responsibilities: to protect civilians from conflict; to control weapons of mass destruction; to advance human rights; to promote genuine development [. . .] and to preserve the global commons." *Canada's International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the Word*, Government of Canada, Ottawa, April 2005, p 15.
[2] Ibid., p 20.
[3] Ibid., p 20.
[4] The report argues that Canada's budget of $14.3 billion for 2005-6 is significantly lower than necessary, and reports that in order to address the internal problems of our armed forces the budget should be "[s]omething in the order of $25-35 billion." *Wounded:*

understaffed.[5] Yet this does not mean that we should disregard failed states and their citizens if we ourselves cannot muster a military force. Resources are a limiting factor, but it does not cost barrels of oil for good offices, nor does providing a neutral location for negotiation necessarily require a military force. Rather than asking the question of when shouldn't we be acting, we might ask the question of to what degree ought we be acting in accordance with our capacity? By asking this question we do not shrug off our Responsibilities Agenda, but we force ourselves to seriously consider the depth of our altruistic actions. Canada can play a positive role in all failed states, regardless of resource limitations, in order to achieve this, however, we need to be conscious of our capacity and vocal in the international arena.

Balancing Assistance and Resources: How Should Canada Respond?

Canada's International Policy Statement (IPS) is right to concede that failed and fragile states are a dynamic problem. Moreover, the longer the international community lingers, the more intractable conflicts become. In light of this significant challenge the IPS correctly recommends that Canada focus "first and foremost, on preventing state breakdown."[6] Therefore, revitalizing the world's rapid response mechanisms is a key priority for Canada in order to maximize our capacity for addressing failing and failed sates. By acting early, or even preemptively, the international community can reduce

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Canada's Military and the Legacy of Neglect, Senatorial Committee, Ottawa, September 2005, p 8.
[5] The report also claims that "Canadian Forces are operating at a personnel level approximately 40-45 per cent below what they require to perform the types of duties they have been ordered to perform over the past decade." Ibid., p 11.
[6]*International Policy Statement: A Role of Pride and Influence in the Word*, Government of Canada, Ottawa, April 2005, p 13.

over all costs, and more important, save lives. To improve rapid response mechanisms Canada needs to promote reforms within the United Nations.

Specific Initiatives:

In order to draw proper attention to emerging conflicts, and generate an effective and timely response, the UN needs an adequate early warning system. Currently, a scarce amount of resources are set aside for such an overwhelming task. In light of this, Canada, perhaps acting in concert with the "Friends of Rapid Deployment",[7] should help to reinvigorate the idea of the Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS), a proposal which would help to "bring budding crises" to the attention of the UN Secretariat for further consideration.[8]

Furthermore, Canada should re-conceptualize its role within the UN Stand-by Forces High-readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG), and strive to enhance SHIRBRIG's capacity.[9] SHIRBRIG's current restriction to a Chapter VI mandate is of little value in

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[7] The "Friends of Rapid Deployment" is a group of countries in favour of enhancing the UN's capacity for rapid reaction. The group consists of: Argentina, Australia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Germany, Indonesia, Ireland, Jamaica, Japan, Jordan, Malaysia, The Netherlands, New Zealand, Nicaragua, Norway, Poland, Senegal, South Korea, Sweden, Ukraine, and Zambia. For a more detailed description of the "Friends of Rapid Deployment" see H. Peter Langille. "Conflict Prevention: Options for rapid Deployment and UN Standing forces," Oliver Ramsbotham and Tom Woodhouse, (eds.), *Warlords, Hawks and Doves: Peacekeeping as Conflict Resolution,* (London: Frank Cass Publishing, 2000). Reprinted in *International Peacekeeping*, Spring 2000 p 225.

[8] EISAS was proposed in what is commonly referred to as the "Brahimi Report". Essentially, it was a proposal to consolidate a number of smaller conflict monitoring offices into one main office, which would then report to the Secretary General to raise alarm. For a more detailed description of the proposal see *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,* Executive summary, A/55/305 S/2000/809, p xi.

[9] SHIRBRIG is the result of a Danish initiative to create a Vanguard Force for peacekeeping missions. SHIRBRIG is deployable within 30 days, and has a maximum deployment of 6 months. Although SHIRBRIG is not directly a UN initiative, it is run through UNSAS and requires a UN Security Council resolution for deployment. See

failed state situations, as such missions will almost exclusively require a Chapter VII mandate which authorizes the use of force.[10] Canada should take the lead in instigating changes within SHIRBRIG that would see it evolve to be a more useful force for dealing with fragile and failed states. By increasing the capacity of SHIRBRIG, Canada can make an important contribution to the international communities conflict management toolkit, and by acting in concert with other like minded states we can help reduce the overall costs to Canadians.

Conclusion:

By taking initiative in areas like those outlined above Canada can set a valuable precedent for the rest of the international community and multilateralism. Too often does the world criticize the UN for its failures; however, it is important to remember that the UN is only as strong and innovative as its member states allow.   Canada needs a way to help address failed states with our limited resources, and the UN needs states to take initiative, by working together we can begin to realistically address the conflicts of the twenty-first century, starting with failed and fragile states.

Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) concerning the Steering Committee for The Multinational United Nations Stand-by Forces high Readiness Brigade (SC/SHIRBRIG), 9 March 1997, article 3.3. See SHIRBRIG web page <http://www.shirbrig.dk/shirbrig/html/facts.htm>

[10] Currently SHIRBRIG is only deployable with a Chapter VI mandate, which authorizes the use of force only in self-defense. A Chapter VII mandate would allow for the use of force in order to carry out protection of civilians, and would allow for intervention in the absence of consent in order to maintain international peace and security. Both of these factors are important to failed states, as typically there is no government to grant consent, and often there is no peace to keep. For a more detailed differentiation of Chapter VI and Chapter VII see the United Nations Charter < http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>

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