MEETING URBAN HUMAN SECURITY CHALLENGES IN FAILED AND FRAGILE STATES
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**Preamble**

There are failed and fragile cities within healthy states, just as there are thriving urban centres within failing states. While urbanization is the overwhelming modern trend, the current concentration of persons within urban centres of failed and fragile states varies dramatically – from 28 per cent in South-Central Asia to nearly 80 per cent in Latin America. [1] As such, approaches to human security must be addressed carefully within the context of each state.

Before outlining our proposed initiatives, we recommend first that Canada work to establish:

- clear failed and fragile state criterion;
- a clear entrance and exit strategy from stabilization efforts, so as not to erode the delicate public trust between failed and fragile state citizens and we, their de-facto service providers.

We suggest pursuing international consensus on the above points through a multilateral framework, most likely under the credible banner of the United Nations. In lieu of that, for purposes of clarity, we wish to draw attention to the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, and their top four criterion with which to distinguish a failing state:

- uneven development ("inequality within states—and not merely poverty—increases instability")
- state corruption – the public shifting of allegiances to factions other than the government
- population movement – persons seeking solace from pressures of conflict and poverty
- environmental degradation – often as s result of uneven development and conflict. [2]

**The Rural-Urban Relationship**

These criterion interrelate in ways that highlight the inexorable rural-urban relationship. First, with respect to uneven development, large urban centres tend to be attractive to the positioning of multinational corporations, fuelling urban economic development to the detriment of surrounding rural areas. Large corporate development can erode a nation's tax base as such entities rarely, if ever, anchor themselves within failed or fragile states.[3] Rapid urban economic development can persuade ruralites to seek urban job opportunities that would quickly boost their quality of life.

Setting off from the problem of uneven development, we have quickly arrived at the problem of rural migration. As ruralites seek urban opportunities, the resulting mass migration to urban centres rapidly strains urban infrastructure and hastens the decay of public health and the environment. This trend is especially prevalent when ruralites with little means settle in poverty-stricken urban slums. To compound the problem, public services and infrastructure cannot be provided with an eroded tax base, especially not if state corruption swallows tax revenue.

Consequently, and most problematically, whole peoples may be forced to rely upon their own means for survival. This accounts for the prevalence of civil disobedience, often related to black-market activities such as drugs and guerrilla or gang violence. This reliance upon untaxed black-market goods further erodes potential sources of tax revenue for the delivery of services.

**Long-Term Sustainable Development: A Proactive Canadian Strategy**

We believe that many of the solutions to urban human security challenges lie outside urban centres. By ensuring a more even level of development between urban and rural communities, unmanageable urban problems may be prevented. We therefore propose the introduction of policy that reflects the complex urban-rural relationship.[4]

The offer of focused, long-term sustainable development is the least intrusive, least offensive way of stabilizing externally hostile or internally repressive (and often corrupt) states.[5] In instances where UN-sanctioned military intervention is called for, long-term sustainable development should compliment any short-term Canadian commitment under the proposed Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START). To meet the multifaceted needs of human security and our responsibility to protect, we advise a coordinated response that works toward establishing public health and safety in unison with policing efforts. Without attempting to meet the most basic of needs, the circle of civil disobedience will continue.

We support the use of START to alleviate short-term pressures in both rural and urban centres by coordinating not only military efforts, but also those of CIDA and, whenever possible, civil NGOs.[6] We propose that CIDA subsequently sustain initiatives with minimal military support. This partnership would include such mechanisms as:

- JTF2, Canada's existing small, but highly trained military unit. Such a unit would be sensitive to the high numbers of people in urban areas, and ideally be able to negotiate the risk of civilian casualties to a minimum when combat is necessary, and;
- The modern technology required to be effective in surveillance and intelligence-gathering to better locate combatants and strategic goods in cities, as necessary

Again, assuming a role for the United Nations and the use of traditional peacekeeping personnel, START, with its unique combination of military and non-military resources, may effectively undertake:

- the temporary provision, and subsequent training of, police, with the aid of RCMP expertise, as needed
- the building of clean water/sanitation infrastructure in urban areas, as needed
- the coordination of services with (or development of) a governing civic structure
- the facilitation of local community outreach programs. Outreach programs would serve several functions, including the distribution of information and short-term aid; grassroots diplomacy in the form of visibility and communication; the fostering of community spirit, perhaps through sport and the arts; the gathering of intelligence at the grassroots level.

We emphasize that none of the above efforts should take place without a sustained and focused effort to meet root causes of urban human security in rural areas. Therefore, above all else, we strongly urge:

- the development of sustainable agriculture
- the expedient de-mining of agricultural land
- assessing the need for health and sanitation infrastructure in rural areas
- assessing the need for and/or the training of rural paramedics

To facilitate this long-term commitment, we propose a greater role for CIDA in the reconstruction of failed and fragile states, particularly by more deeply integrating CIDA with Foreign Affairs (we also propose that the restructuring of DFAIT continue, by separating Foreign Affairs from International Trade).[7]

At home, we believe that the Canadian public commitment to long-term development ventures is more easily sustained than a commitment to long-term military operations. Nevertheless, in addition to traditional advertising and public awareness methods, we also propose the institution of a refugee discourse initiative, wherein willing refugees or refugee groups from failed and fragile states may speak at public Canadian forums, including Canadian public schools.[8] This would open up dialogue between Canadians and our global community within Canada, help to teach the benefits of long-term efforts, and foster a positive culture of problem-solving at home. We also propose counting the associated costs of this endeavour toward our Official Development Assistance quota.

**Conclusion**

The dynamics at play between the rural and urban worlds are less divided than they are interrelated. Many of the greatest problems within failed and fragile states are not solely the problems of one category or the other, and solutions to the problems must reflect that complexity.[9] A more proactive Canadian strategy will be an important step toward meeting the challenges of human security in failed and fragile states. However, no new initiative should be considered a replacement for, but rather be seen as a compliment to, a renewed Canadian commitment to international peacekeeping.

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[1] from UNFPA State of the World Population, 1996

[2] While there is some overlap, other criterion include: Mounting Demographic Pressures; Legacy of Vengeance - Seeking Group Grievance; Chronic and Sustained Human Flight; Uneven Economic Development along Group Lines; Sharp and/or Severe Economic Decline; Criminalization or Delegitimization of the State; Progressive Deterioration of Public Services; Widespread Violation of Human Rights; Security Apparatus as "State within a State"; Rise of Factionalized Elites; Intervention of Other States or External Actor.

[3] Also stunting of grassroots development, as profits and re-investment capital flow abroad.

[4] Balancing stabilization efforts with resources is key to any initiative. We believe that current resources may be reallocated with little additional funding to meet the following suggestions.

[5] Such an offer could be made in exchange for a commitment from failed and fragile state governments to corruption monitoring.

[6] We also posit that this outfit will possess the flexibility to work both independently and within a multilateral framework. We suggest studying the feasibility of a formal command structure comprised of representatives from the military, CIDA, and even the invitation of representatives from civil NGOs (as NGOs often have a very good sense of problems and needs even before deployment). This dynamic command structure could even function in place of an absent or dysfunctional civic government in order to co-ordinate services and prepare for transition back to local authorities.

[7] With Failed and Fragile States as the greatest threat to world security, this restructuring of Foreign Affairs works to address modern security concerns. Such restructuring would also minimize the loss of time and resources that result from internal department discord.

[8] For example, see Plamondon, Diane. *Students Without Borders, Africa 2007,* (Winnipeg: College Jeanne-Sauve Brochure, 2005).

[9] The Taliban's hunted now run in rural Afghanistan, ruled mostly by warlords; the diamond-rich jungles of the former Zaire fuel conflict in Central Africa; urban centres in Uganda enjoy a better quality of life than rural northern Uganda, which continues to suffer from interrelated poverty and disease issues. And in Sudan's Darfur region, the problems did not arise out of urban decay.