

**The Gregg Centre for the Study of War & Society
Conference On
From Sarajevo to Kandahar:
Rescuing Failed States in Historical Perspective
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**Failed States:
Why They Matter and What We Should Do about Them
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Summary

Failed States are usually defined as those that are unable effectively to control their territory and comply with their international obligations. As such, they often pose a threat to their own populations and to international security. Failed states are of increased concern to us as Canadians, both because of the new UN **Doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect**, and because their threat to internati

The dumping of the developed world's subsidized agricultural surpluses has undermined the agriculture of some backward states.

ecological system will become steadily more vulnerable to the diseases, terrorism, and financial crises that emerge from its least resilient components.”⁷

Should we wish to work to prevent state failure due to the stresses of global integration:

we in the developed world might take the Millennium Development Goals more seriously;

we might consider expanding and emulating NEPAD, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development, which promotes integrated socio-economic development, including good governance;

we might offer greater support for equitable trade liberalization, including putting an end to the dumping of our subsidized agricultural surpluses in backward countries;

we might finance a more vigorous fight against destabilizing diseases, such as malaria and HIV/AIDS;

we might put a greater effort to reduce the effects of pollution and climate change in marginal countries.

We have to admit, however, that the collapse of many states cannot be prevented by our best efforts and that, in some cases, we shall have to envisage using force, whether for peacekeeping or peacebuilding. In considering whether or not to furnish Canadian troops for future international missions of this sort, we should not necessarily let ourselves be discouraged by the stalemate in Iraq and Afghanistan. Peacekeeping and peacebuilding have worked more often than they have failed. According to the Human Security Report 2005 and Human Security Brief 2006, preventive diplomacy, including peacemaking, has been a major factor in the enormous reduction in the number of armed conflicts, often arising from failed states, since the end of the Cold War.⁸

Of the 16 cases of nation-building since the Second World War that James Dobbins examined, ten countries remained at peace and had become democracies, while six were still wracked by violence. Among the successes are Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Bosnia, Eastern Slavonia, Kosovo, and Sierra Leone.⁹

What the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan do, however, is to caution us to participate in peacemaking missions only when we are tolerably certain that we can maintain public support. For this purpose, we might insist on the proposed mission meeting certain criteria before we agree to take part.

The first criterion would be:

⁷ Homer-Dixon, Thomas, **The Upside of Down Catastrophe, Creativity, and the Renewal of Civilization**, *Knopf Canada*, Toronto, 2006, pp. 286-7

⁸ **Human Security Report 2005**, Overview, *Human Security Report Project*, Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia, Vancouver, p.9
http://www.humansecurityreport.info/HSR2005_HTML/Overview/index.htm

Human Security Brief 2006 Overview, *Human Security Report Project* School for International Studies, Simon Fraser University, Vancouver,
<http://www.hsrgroup.org/images/stories/HSBrief2006/contents/overview.pdf>

⁹ Dobbins, James, **Nation-Building UN Surpasses U.S. on Learning Curve** *Rand Review Spring 2005*, Rand Corporation, Santa Monica CA, pp. 25-26.
http://www.rand.org/publications/randreview/issues/spring2005/RAND_Review_spring2005.pdf

The intervention should be seen as both legal and legitimate. This will usually mean that:

- all other means of dealing with the problem, including sanctions, have been exhausted;
- the consequences of inaction are clearly worse than the consequences of action;
- the intervention has been authorized by the UN Security Council or falls within the Doctrine of the Responsibility to Protect;
- the mission would be undertaken in good company, notably with the approval and participation of NATO

There should be an effective command and control structure including:

- unified civilian and military operations, enjoying a degree of autonomy from contributory countries and agencies,
- an effective system of consultation between mission partners, and, especially, with local stake-holders, whose involvement is key to the achievement of the goals of the mission.

The Haiti mission did not have sufficient autonomy from the United States authorities. The unity of civilian and military operations is one of the reasons for the success of the Kosovo mission. The second half of the Somalia mission failed, among other reasons, because of the lack of a unified military command. The mission in Afghanistan has been characterized by a lack of coherence between the contributing states.¹¹ The refusal of many countries to allow their troops to take part in any fighting is but the most blatant example of this incoherence. The poppy eradication programme, which has had a harmful effect on the war effort in Afghanistan, seems to be more a reflection of US domestic pressures than the fruit of consultations among the coalition partners and the Afghan government.

The fifth criterion should be:

The contributory countries and agencies must provide adequate political, economic and military resources for the mission.

According to James Dobbins, the single most important controllable element in determining the success of a nation-building mission is the level of the effort, as measured in troops, money and time.¹² The lack of sufficient resources was a major contributor to the failure of the second half of the Somalia mission, and the UN mission in Bosnia. It will probably be seen as an important factor in the failure of the US efforts in Iraq. The intervention in Afghanistan has been described as being one of the most under-resourced since the Second World War. The economic assistance that Afghanistan has received on a per capita basis is, or was until recently, markedly inferior to that provided in other recent peace building operations.¹³ In the province of Kandahar, where the Canadian troops are based, the ratio of the forces of order, including the highly unreliable Afghan police, to the general population is approximately only one tenth of the number usually considered necessary to deal with an insurrection.¹⁴

As a final criterion, we in Canada must be certain that we have the capacity necessary for the mission in question:

¹¹Dobbins, James, **Nation-building, The Inescapable Responsibility of the World's only Superpower**, pp. 19-21 [http://www.rand.org/publi4.5\(7 T \(abc%uo0 Tw\(3Mc-0.0002 Twfecessary fifecessaal poately the Tc.4\(Su1.1s.6cry 0](http://www.rand.org/publi4.5(7 T (abc%uo0 Tw(3Mc-0.0002 Twfecessary fifecessaal poately the Tc.4(Su1.1s.6cry 0)

- Our forces have to be adequately equipped and should not be over-stretched.

The high number of casualties in Afghanistan arising from the lack of helicopters for transporting men and supplies has been a major factor in the decline of public support for the mission.

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