



**MAKING THE WORLD SAFE FOR CANADA:
Canadian Security Policy in a World of Failed States**



ALEX WILNER

May 2008

Atlantic Institute for Market Studies

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In less than two decades, the international security environment has gone through periods of unimaginable flux. The end of the Cold War and the demise of the Soviet Union catalyzed a process of political idealism and global humanitarianism. Foreign policies concerning failed and fragile states, in Canada and elsewhere, reflected these optimistic trends. With few national security threats on the horizon, intervention in failed states during the 1990s was based primarily on humanitarianism rather than on calculations involving national interest, defence, and security.

The emergence of global terrorism, however, has affected these trends. Today, Canada faces a much more complex international environment than it did even a few years ago. Our national security is threatened in novel and unexpected ways. To that end, failed states have emerged as potential facilitators of global terrorism; they must be addressed accordingly.

Yet failed states are not all the same — some are more dangerous than others. Deciding which one represents a clear and present security threat demanding of our national attention has become a necessity. The wrinkle for Canadian decisionmakers is that, while they have developed the military, diplomatic, and reconstructive means with which to assist fragile and failed states, they continue to lack the mechanisms to decide, realistically and strategically, when to use them.

This paper presents two recommendations that might guide Canada's post-9/11 policy toward failed states. First, the Canadian government needs an agency able to calculate Canada's strategic interests in a world of failed states and to offer policy options that are intrinsically related to national security, not just to humanitarianism. Second, Canada requires a robust foreign intelligence-gathering capability to help decisionmakers to appreciate the complexities of failed political environments and construct appropriate responses. Given these tools, Canada would be better able to determine what failed environment most directly threatens its security and what actions are required to address, manage, and mitigate the emerging threat.

INTRODUCTION

In the emerging world of failing, failed, and collapsed states, Canadian national security is taking on a different meaning. Until recently, it was common for Western governments to think of failed states as someone else's problem, but in an international system beset by global terrorism and weapons proliferation, fragile political environments increasingly are becoming our problem, too. The absence of a centralized and capable national government usually results in some form of territorial disintegration — borders that exist on paper might not do so in practice. In the past, state collapse often resulted in various forms of civil — and often brutal — conflict, but the violence usually remained localized. Today, however, a well-funded, determined, and resilient terrorist organization might well look upon a failed state as a potential haven in which to plan, organize, and train for acts of global terrorism.

Perhaps the most up-to-date work on failing political environments is conducted by the Fund for Peace (FfP), a nonprofit research and educational organization, in conjunction with *Foreign Policy* magazine, published by the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Together, they provide a yearly Failed States Index (FSI). The FSI uses the FfP's Conflict Assessment System Tool (CAST) to measure and assess what states are most at risk of governance failure. Wading through thousands of international and regional sources, the CAST software assesses political failure along twelve causal variables — including sustained human flight and refugee migration, sharp economic decline, demographic pressures, deterioration of public services, and the rise of factionalized elites — that are considered important indicators of state functionality. The result is a robust appraisal of state stability, described in great detail in individual country profiles for every state assessed. For 2007, the FfP suggests that 32 states are currently in danger of failing, four more than in 2006. Put into context, one in every six national governments currently has difficulty controlling aspects of its sovereign territory. This is an astounding figure, and the crisis is likely to worsen in the coming decades. The top ten most unstable states are Sudan, Iraq, Somalia, Zimbabwe, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Afghanistan, Guinea, and the Central African Republic (see Fund for Peace 2007).

For the rest of the globe, the question is what to do about these chaotic polities. Canada's policy toward fragile, failing, and collapsed states has gone through an incredible degree of transformation over the past decade. The 1990s witnessed unprecedented levels of international and Canadian humanitarianism. If failing states could not help themselves, the rationale went, then it was the moral and political duty of stable states to assist them all. Of the roughly 55 United Nations-operated peacekeeping missions since 1945, 40 have taken place since the collapse of the Soviet Union (Dobbins 2005, 5). The distribution of humanitarian-based intervention before and after 1989 highlights the fact that humanitarian-based foreign policies are more prevalent to eras of perceived international stability. During the Cold War, for instance, Canada and its allies were far more likely to spend a



bulk of their time, energy, and money on bolstering their own national securities against the Soviet Bloc than on aiding fragile states to recuperate. With the demise of the Soviet threat, however, a liberal idealism washed over the victors (see Fukuyama 1992). Unshackled from the Cold War, Canadian foreign policy was not only suddenly free to assist weak states in their pursuit of internal political stability, justice, and freedom, but a widespread sentiment that Canada and others ought to do so flourished, too. In short, when Canada's national security and political welfare seemed all but guaranteed, humanitarian assistance came to the foreground of its foreign policy. As a result, the 1990s were a golden era for humanitarian-based foreign policies.

Things changed dramatically following the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington in 2001. In response, Ottawa's foreign policy began to shift in the same way it had in the years following the end of the Second World War. Then as now, clear and present security threats existed, and government attention realigned itself toward mitigating these threats and the safeguarding of national interests rather than promoting humanitarian goals. Although the threats we face today and the objectives we seek are obviously different — eradicating al-Qaeda and its affiliates as opposed to containing and defeating the communist bloc — the foreign policy process that precedes and guides the government's hand is the same.

The heyday of post-Cold War humanitarianism evaporated in the blast of catastrophic global terrorism, and Canadians can no longer afford foreign policy miscellany. *Canada's International Policy Statement* (Canada 2005) — the government's expansive policy document on diplomacy, development, defence, and commerce — reiterates this assertion. It states that the "impotence" of failed states' governing structures not only causes human suffering that is "an affront to Canadian values" but failed political environments can become "breeding grounds or safe havens for terrorism" that threaten Canadian security.

The nature of the international threat Canada and her allies currently face requires a failed-state policy that is not subjugated by notions of value promotion, humanitarianism, or democratization. As was the case during the Cold War, pertinent threats have emerged that require a *realpolitik* and toothy Canadian response. Rob Huebert, a leading Canadian academic, asserts:

Canadian foreign and defence policy has a legacy of wanting to do the "right thing". Since the Pearson era, Canadian peacekeeping is the best known example of this, and the subsequent development of...the human security agenda illustrates the importance that Canadians place on normative elements of their foreign and defence policy. Although commendable, such action as a core element of defence policy leads to dangerous problems. (2005, 71–72)

Since the terrorist attacks of 2001, the role failed states play in assisting and strengthening global terrorist organizations has been starkly spelled out. Failed states are no longer the sad, humanitarian cases of yesteryear, but potential facilitators of terrorism.

Global terrorist organizations — those that have the intent, capability, and drive to kill and maim Canadians — have begun, in predatory fashion, to use the anarchy borne of failed political environments

as a springboard for their devastating ambitions.¹ When the long arm of a centralized government no longer stretches over a state's territory, terrorist organizations find soil upon which to build their networks. Time and time again — in Afghanistan, Sudan, Somalia, Lebanon, Gaza, Iraq, Pakistan, and elsewhere — state failure has facilitated the establishment of terrorist infrastructure.

As a result, Canada's policy toward fragile political environments must evolve in kind, so that intervention is based less on the promotion of good governance, human rights, and social justice and more on the hard realities of Canadian security and national interest. The post-9/11 era demands that Canadian foreign policy align itself more wholly with emerging international security prospects and their related strategic concerns.

1 See, for example, Krasner and Pascual (2002); Rotberg (2002); Carment (2005a); Dempsey (2006); and Preble and Logan (2006).



THE NATURE AND THREAT OF FAILED STATES

In an international system developed on the principle of state sovereignty, a failed state, elementally, is one that cannot control the inner workings of its territorial entity. Various definitions are used to delineate between failed and functioning states, but generally speaking, the former share various characteristics. They are marked, first and foremost, by a (partial or substantial) loss of government control over the territorial borders of a given political area (see Rotberg 2002, 7). Thus, a failed state is characterized by a collapse of central authority that diminishes what little political order exists (Carment 2005b, 1). A lawless and corrupt society is usually a result, often plagued by competing armed groups that champion their own selective forms of political and social organization.

Likewise, the loss of legitimacy is often antecedent to the loss of governance, so that a failed state is usually rife with different (and often competing) perceptions of legitimate government that diminish the centrality of one ruling political system (see Dorff 1999, 62–66). As the state’s capacity to govern effectively diminishes, domestic interest groups are less likely to show support of and loyalty to the government, resulting in political disenfranchisement and marginalization, and the evaporation of the remnants of the “social contract” between citizens and government (Rotberg 2002, 7). Eventually, individuals transfer their political and social allegiances from the state to other collectives (ethnic, linguistic, familial, and even tribal identities), further weakening the legitimacy and rule of the government.

Failed states, in a related fashion, are unable to provide their citizens the basic political goods that are expected of centralized, modern governments, including, as David Carment, a leading Canadian expert on the subject, suggests, mechanisms for “security, dispute resolution, norm regulation, and political participation” (2005b, 1). As a result, failed states offer few safeguards against the ills of politicicide, genocide, and violent regime transitions (see, for example, Rotberg 2003). Instead, chaos rather than order becomes the domestic environmental norm. Other scholars, notably Robert Jackson, highlight the “self-inflicted” condition evident to failed environments. Unlike states that have collapsed as a result of external coercive pressure or influence (through, for example, military invasion, occupation, or annexation), failed states buckle from the disarray borne of internal “armed anarchy”; in effect, they are self-destructed environments. Jackson also notes that, although failed states retain a “legal existence” — the state of Somalia, for example, exists as a legally understood entity — they do not have a “political existence” — no single overarching political system controls all of Somalia. Accordingly, Jackson concludes that failed states are “hollow juridical shells that shroud an anarchical condition domestically...[and] fail to disclose very much if anything in the way of empirical statehood” (1998, 2–3). Failed states retain a degree of sovereignty in word but in neither meaning nor action.

In general, then, failed states share a number of characteristics: a dangerous and tense social structure; a rise in criminal activity and political violence; ineffective political, judicial, and policing infrastructures; porous borders; a declining economic base; warlordism; the risk of genocide and sectarian tension; civil war; and other social, political, and economic deficiencies. To that, one might add the risk of terrorist predation.

The Consequences of Failed States

Of course, not all failed states are the same. In an international environment plagued by the threat of catastrophic terrorism, some failed states are more dangerous than others. In that respect, while all failed states represent a threat to the people living within their borders, only a few threaten the security of those living outside their borders.

To understand why, one only needs to appreciate that terrorist groups require a territorial base on which to organize their activities. While fundamentally “nonstate” in function and organization, terrorist groups nevertheless require a place in which to set some roots. Groups like al-Qaeda, Hezbollah, Hamas, Jemaah Islamiyah, and others require land where they can construct training facilities in which to prepare followers, logistically organize their affairs, and plan acts of terror. The domestic chaos prevalent in failed states offers nascent terrorist groups an environment devoid of the governmental security apparatus that might oppose their establishment. While “home-grown” terrorists (those rooted in functioning states) have grabbed headlines recently, it is understandably easier still to base one’s organization in an area where the threat of state intervention is limited. Without a working national army, police force, judicial system, and so on, a failed state is far easier prey for well-funded and motivated terrorist organizations than is a functioning state with all the associated institutions of coercive control.

The causal relation between failing political environments and terrorism is now being mapped out, and although the phenomenon of state failure is not new, it has become more salient today as a facilitator of global terrorism. As Rotberg suggests, “in less interconnected eras, state weakness could be isolated and kept distant. Failure had fewer implications for peace and security” (2002, 1). Failure was something that happened “over there,” not a dangerous and pressing matter “over here.” Today, that calculation has shifted dramatically. Some failed states not only threaten the wellbeing of the individuals living within and around their borders, but, by terrorist proxy, also threaten the security of unsuspecting millions living around the globe (see Krasner and Pascual 2002; Dempsey 2006).

However, a little perspective is needed. The increasing prevalence of mass terrorism since 9/11 has not created immediate dangers, for Canada and its allies, from all failed states. Indeed, only a small fraction of the more than 30 states that are considered failed and fragile poses a security threat to Canada. It is inaccurate, Preble and Logan suggest, “to claim that the ongoing state failure in Haiti poses a national security threat of the same order as would state failure in Indonesia, with its popu-



lation of 240 million, or in nuclear-armed Pakistan” (2006, 3). One can make the same argument for almost all of the states currently at risk of failing. Some cases are dangerous; most simply are not.

Accordingly, the strategic threat that emanates from failed states is not the failure *per se*, but the factors that might be *associated with* political failure (ibid.). Thus, the presence of active terrorist cells, a history of harbouring known terrorists, suspected monetary and tactical ties to terrorist groups, or, more generally, a population that shares sentiments in common with those espoused by known terrorist groups, all are more important in delineating a particular failed state from the many as a clear and present strategic concern.

Afghanistan, in the period before the overthrow of the Taliban regime, was both a failed state and a security concern to Canada and its allies because of the Taliban’s associated links with al-Qaeda and other like-minded organizations. The Taliban would have attracted far less international security concern had they not so fully associated themselves with Osama bin Laden’s terror network and its global aspirations. In sad truth, Taliban Afghanistan, despite its horrendous human rights record, might still exist today if it had not allied itself with al-Qaeda during the 1990s.

The Afghan case, however, is an anomaly. The general historic norm suggests instead that the overlapping occurrence of state failure and security concern is far less common. After all, most failed states, from Haiti to Burma and the rest, pose little danger to Canadians. Only a select few coalesce into full-blown threats.

But how best to delineate failed states that are strategic concerns from those that are not? Answering this question would seem to be of principal importance, not only to safeguard Canadian interests but also to guide the proper use of Canada’s limited diplomatic, military, and economic resources. The dilemma for Canada, then, is to develop and institutionalize the tools and mechanisms that might provide a ranking system not only of failed and fragile states — as FfP and other organizations have done — but, more important, of states that pose a security threat to our interests as well. We must be able to delineate between the two if Canadian foreign policy is to best reflect Canada’s evolving security environment in an era of complex terrorism.

With such a ranking system, Canadian decisionmakers would remain cognizant of the states that pose a humanitarian threat to their own citizens and those that pose a security threat to Canadian citizens. It would also lead to the evolution of a more realistic foreign policy, one more reliant on strategic interpretations of the type and nature of the post-9/11 security environment than on the idealism of post-Cold War humanitarianism. The result would be a more robust and prudent approach to tackling the phenomena of state failure and global terrorism.

Intervening in Failed States

As noted earlier, most historical interventions into failed environments have come at the behest of humanitarian concerns. The general post-Cold War assumption, in Canada and elsewhere, was that a failed state, in threatening the welfare and security of its citizens, required third-party intervention

to help reconstruct functioning institutions for the sake of those living within its boundaries. Assisting a faltering government in providing the policing and judicial mechanisms it needed to wrest coercive power from armed thugs was offered as justification and rationale for intervention. “For the betterment of others,” the motto read. Today, however, interventionist policy calculations are best taken with principal reference to Canada’s other strategic concerns — most notably, our role in countering global terrorism. As a result, security calculations override humanitarian instincts in foreign policy formation.

The wrinkle for Canadian decisionmakers, however, is that they have yet to come to proper terms with the evolving threat posed by certain fragile states. Quite simply, the Canadian government lacks the ability to determine which failed states matter the most and why (Carment 2005b, 4). In certain cases, as in Haiti, Canadian intervention is understood as a policy of helping the population develop the political, social, and economic infrastructure that might allow for improvements to its collective standard of living. Canadian involvement in Afghanistan, however, is of a different nature. That mission is understood as defending Canadians against a resurgent Taliban and likely al-Qaeda stronghold that threatens the security of Canadians directly. While both interventions involve humanitarian-like action — constructing schools, training police officers, assisting in the electoral process, and so on — the difference between the two is based principally on the original rationale for their initiation and the gravity of the mission’s long-term success. In Haiti, Canadian involvement is rooted in humanitarianism, and while failure would be a devastating blow to some — indeed, to many — it would not greatly reduce Canada’s security. In Afghanistan, the story is remarkably different. There, intervention is more accurately associated with global counterterrorism, and failure and the reestablishment of al-Qaeda’s base of operations would substantially diminish Canada’s security. Both missions have equal importance when viewed through a moralistic lens, but only the Afghan mission offers a case of strategic imperative.

In the years before 9/11, a humanitarian rationale for intervention might have sufficed, on its own, to shape an effective Canadian foreign policy. Today, in an environment threatened by high-impact terrorism, a policy of intervention devoid of strategic calculations is wasteful and likely dangerous. Canadians would be better served by a foreign policy that, as the first order of business, uses the country’s scarce diplomatic and military resources for its defence and welfare rather than for the promotion of international values.



RESHAPING CANADA'S FOREIGN POLICY

Canada has begun to develop the military, diplomatic, and reconstructive means with which to intervene in and assist failed states. But the federal government continues to lack the proper mechanisms to decide, realistically and strategically, how to use them — no systematic or rigorous way to determine where, to what extent, and to what ends Canadian assistance will be used to shore up failed, failing, and fragile states.

A 2005 conference report of leading Canadian academics suggested that the “factors that determined whether Canada should intervene or not [in failed states] were...predominantly political: what our allies wanted and what our public opinion, including the relevant diaspora, support” (Fraser 2005, 3). This finding is telling for two reasons. First, it highlights my earlier assumption that Canadian intervention in failed states has often been, and seemingly remains, a result of internal, moralistic pressures, while adding to it a secondary political element of third-party (that is, allied state) diplomatic pressure. Second and perhaps most important, however, is that the conference report does not mention, even in passing, *any strategic calculations to guide Canadian foreign policy* in the realm of failed-state intervention. That strategic posture and global security interest are absent from the report is highly suspect, and implies that Canadian policy remains heavily instructed by domestic constraints. What follows, then, are two policy recommendations that should prove useful in guiding Canada’s future policy toward intervention in failed states.

First, Canada’s international security concerns should become more wholly institutionalized into the policymaking process. Organizational and bureaucratic gaps that hamper Canada’s strategic calculation should be addressed and a systematic way of determining potential candidates for intervention among failed states should be developed. Second, Canada needs a more robust and independent foreign-intelligence-gathering capability, which would augment the country’s ability to meet its objectives in a failed-state environment in ways that reflect national security interests. With these two policy developments, Ottawa would be better able to determine which failed environment most directly threatens Canadian security and what forms intervention might take in managing and mitigating such a threat.

Which Failed State Is the Threat?

Having an institutionalized way of ranking failed states by their threat to the country’s national security interests should be of paramount importance to the makers of Canada’s foreign policy. In an age

of global terrorism, failed and failing states are not all the same. Canadian policymakers may well be cognizant of this fact, but their policymaking tools have yet to catch up with the new realities of our era.

A ranking system for failed states should be sufficiently flexible to allow for the rapid incorporation of new intelligence that can be used to inform and guide assessment calculations. As Krasner and Pascual argue, “anticipating, averting, and responding to conflict requires a greater, more comprehensive level of planning and organization” on the part of the government (2005, 3). Such a system would also require further integration of the various agencies involved in international security along with their ability to mine and use intelligence properly. A review of the US experience in dealing with failed environments offers some important lessons for Canada.

The establishment in 2004 of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), an independent office attached to the US State Department, provides a model for the Canadian government. S/CRS is tasked with coordinating and institutionalizing the US government’s civilian and military capability in responding to failing political environments. It does so by establishing linkages between members of the State Department, the US Agency for International Development, the Central Intelligence Agency, the Army Corps of Engineers, and other government agencies.² In so doing, S/CRS is better able to monitor potential conflict situations in a coordinated, “whole of government” approach, giving officials the lead time they require to pre-empt security threats emanating from failed environments that challenge US national interests. In reality, S/CRS is a direct response to the inefficiencies of pre-9/11 stabilization and reconstruction efforts, most of which were conducted in ad hoc and limited fashion. Today, the US government finds itself better able to appreciate a failed-state environment and how it affects US security interests, if at all. The US government also has, well in advance of any actual intervention, access to various policy options based on continuously updated intelligence. The Office of Early Warning and Prevention is the organizational branch of S/CRS tasked specifically with identifying not only which states are at risk of failure but also possible preventive and mitigating responses. In collaboration with various intelligence agencies, including most importantly the National Intelligence Council (NIC) — which produces semi-annual reports on failed environments from various classified and unclassified sources — S/CRS is able to provide Washington the foresight it needs to prepare for, mitigate, and deal effectively with potential threats emanating from failed environments.³

Canada has begun the process of establishing an early warning system, but, curiously (and inexcusably), has done so without any regard to strategic valuations. The International Policy Statement (Canada 2005) established, within the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade (DFAIT), a Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) tasked with a role similar to that of the US S/CRS. It draws together expertise from across the Canadian government — including the Canadian

2 See the Web site of the US Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, <<http://www.state.gov/s/crs/>>.

3 See US Department of State, Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization, Early Warning and Prevention Division, at Web site: <<http://www.state.gov/s/crs/66425.htm>>.



International Development Agency, Department of National Defence, Public Security and Emergency Preparedness Canada, and other agencies — to provide a venue within which theory, practice, intelligence, and knowledge concerning failed environments can be combined. As with its US, British, and Australian institutional counterparts, START is meant to provide the Canadian government with better coordination, planning, and preparation for crises in fragile political environments. As Ross Hynes, former director general of START, explained, the newly minted Canadian approach is an attempt at “providing the institutional memory, analytical capacity, forward-planning capability and coordinating function to make Canadian response to crises more timely, more coherent and ultimately more effective in achieving our objectives.”⁴

This is all fine and good, yet it has become obvious that START is plagued by the same lack of strategic rigour that marked Canada’s historical approach to failed states during the 1990s. START’s institutional shell might look different, but its functional core remains nearly unchanged from Canadian foreign policy of decades past. Consider the comments of James R. Wright, then assistant deputy minister (Internal Security Branch), Foreign Affairs Canada and Canada’s current high commissioner to the United Kingdom: “If we are not immediately threatened by the collapse or implosion of these states, our values as Canadians and our responsibilities as global citizens must invariably compel us to action in the face of the victimization, human suffering and misery that are the inevitable result.”⁵ In the 1990s, such remarks by a high-ranking Canadian diplomat could well have been attributed to the euphoria of the end of the Cold War. That they were made in 2006, however, is more than a little troubling. By not taking into account the very real changes that have taken place around the globe over the past half-decade, the business-as-usual failed-state model does a disservice to Canadians. Canada’s policy toward failed states must begin by looking after the security of Canadians, first and foremost, followed only then by a responsibility to protect the globe’s victimized citizens.

Consider further the various international success stories START purports to have led and assisted in its inaugural year: support for the Abuja peace talks on Darfur; assistance to the 7700 African Union peacekeepers active in Sudan; demobilization of 30,000 Colombian paramilitaries; police advisory assistance during Haiti’s election; advisory assistance to the United Nations Protection Standby Capacity teams; facilitation of a regional peace support operations school in Mali; postconflict forensics services in Kosovo and Croatia; disaster relief in Pakistan and Indonesia; and de-mining operations in Afghanistan, Lebanon, Central America, Algeria, Jordan, and Cambodia. That most, if not all, of these international projects retain an important humanitarian rationale is not challenged. That Canada has an important leadership role to play in many of these regions is also not in question. That these projects have had a constructive impact on the welfare and security of individuals around the globe should also be taken as a positive outcome. What is at issue, however, is the simple fact that, through its many actions in these well-meaning, humanitarian projects, START has yet to make Canadians safer — indeed, it is not meant to.

4 Quoted in “The New Diplomacy: Canadians in a Turbulent World.” *Canada World View* 29 (Spring 2006), p. 5. Available at Web site: <<http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca/canada-magazine/issue29/CWV29-e.pdf>>.

5 Ibid., p. 6.

None of START's four offices — the Humanitarian Affairs and Disaster Response Group, the Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Group, the Mine Action and Small Arms Group, and the Peacekeeping and Peace Operations Group — is equipped to gauge what is and what is not in Canada's national interest or to give timely and pertinent strategic advice as such to the minister of foreign affairs. The best policy is informed by strategic imperative, but nowhere in START is there a systematic apparatus incorporating intelligence that might help to produce a prioritized rank order of failed environments that represent clear and present threats to Canadians. Moreover, START lacks the capacity to act in ways that might assist rebuilding in failed states while simultaneously augmenting Canadian security. While Canada's post-9/11 failed-state policy is institutionally coordinated, it has yet to become more focused in practice or tailored to particular security-oriented tasks.

Canada, through START or another agency altogether, would be better served by an institutionalized body that calculated strategic incentives, associated risk assessment, and policy options for Canadian officials. While the NIC provides US agencies and S/CRS the information they require to formulate policy that best reflects US strategic concerns — thereby aiding Washington to decide effectively and efficiently where its resources and personnel should be used — Ottawa's policy toward failed states remains only haphazardly developed. Canadian officials still do not know where the greatest risks emanate from or how Canada might best respond. Until they do, Canadian resources will be used in failed-state environments on an ad hoc basis, devoid of any strategic calculation that makes sense for combating the types of conflicts and violence by which Canadians are challenged.

Intelligence for Effective Action

What needs to happen first, then, is a determined assessment of which failed state is of the greatest strategic importance to Canada. This would take time, money, and effort. DFAIT and others should begin with a coordinated series of concurring discussions (as the NIC does every six months) with academics, policy officers, think tanks, and nongovernmental organizations, as a way of catalyzing a process by which prioritized lists of countries at risk are constructed, maintained, and updated. In this manner, Canadian officials would be better prepared to use scarce resources in a failed-state environment to meet Canada's strategic objectives in a world racked with complex security dilemmas.

With strategic concerns considered, priorities set, and policy recommendations constructed, Canada's failed-state policy would then have to take into account the potential effectiveness of our actions. Canada's ability to carry out foreign intervention is limited — we are, after all, a medium-sized country with limited resources. Accordingly, our best option remains to work in unison and alongside our allies and other like-minded states in the United Nations, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and other regional groupings. Not only does Canada lack the ability to undertake sustained unilateral intervention, but the nature of rehabilitating dangerous failed states is a long-term and costly affair that requires a coordinated and multilateral approach (Carment 2005a, 10). Furthermore, as Carment suggests, “today's complex situations also require increased cooperation between non-governmental organizations and the military...which entails the harmonization of



civilian and military interests” (12). What must be accomplished, then, is a matching of Canada’s ability and commitment from both the military and diplomatic communities.

Effectiveness itself, however, hinges on solid and reliable intelligence.⁶ A failed state might be considered a security threat to Canada, but without proper (and repeatedly updated) information on the situation, Canadian officials have little way to know. Not only are they unable to interpret properly whether or not a particular environment represents an actual challenge to Canadian interests; they are also hamstrung in deciding which course of action carries the best odds of success.

Furthermore, lack of solid intelligence threatens intervention missions on the ground. Insufficient environmental intelligence crippled Canadian Major General Roméo Dallaire’s UN-mandated mission to Rwanda, for instance. While Canada’s involvement in the UN mission was based almost exclusively on humanitarian objectives, the fact remains that better intelligence might have uncovered the ferocity of the struggle between Hutus and Tutsis in advance of the Canadian deployment (Carment 2005a, 23; see also Pratt 2003). The same lesson applies to cases where Canada’s foreign involvement is based on safeguarding national security. Solid intelligence goes a long way in matching means and ends in all cases of foreign intervention. While other factors certainly influenced the ensuing Rwandan genocide, more robust intelligence might have forced both the United Nations and others to pursue a more vigorous intervention with more stringent rules of engagement and clearly understood mandates. Intelligence matters in mitigating this sort of uncertainty.

In like fashion, Canada’s evolving strategic policy toward failed states will provide security only if the government and its diplomatic and military reconstructive tools are properly informed. While Canadian officials receive some intelligence from various allied and international sources, without information specifically tailored toward Canadian security requirements, decisionmakers risk being insufficiently informed when contemplating complex foreign policy developments. What Ottawa requires to intervene effectively in failed states that threaten Canadians is a more robust foreign-intelligence-gathering apparatus that is uniquely Canadian. With customized intelligence, security policy can be developed around the most pertinent information. Consider comments by Thomas Axworthy to the Standing Senate Committee on National Security and Defence:

In this world of security, intelligence is like the blood in our bodies. It is the essential nutrient that keeps the whole body moving. Information is like that blood. Intelligence is like that blood. We need a collection system that continues to pump that intelligence and to put it forward before decision makers, where it should be known. (Canada 2003)

⁶ Besides a need for reliable intelligence, there is the related requirement that good intelligence be properly analysed and used. If this latter process breaks down, so that good intelligence is either misunderstood, fails to reach those in charge, or is altogether disregarded by decisionmakers, no amount of solid intelligence will make an impact on state policy. However, the question of intelligence use and intelligence failure, though pertinent, rests beyond the scope of this paper. It would seem, though, regardless of how badly intelligence is analysed or disseminated, that having the proper information available first is altogether less risky than having none at all.

That Canada is the only G8 and NATO country without its own foreign intelligence agency should no longer be considered a historical quirk but a real impediment to protecting Canadian interests and security.

To achieve the right balance between threat perception and strategic action, Canada needs to collect the kind of foreign intelligence that more readily suits its needs. The nature of failed states is such that the most useful intelligence is derived from human interaction. Institutions such as the Canadian Security Intelligence Services (CSIS), the Department of National Defence's Communications Security Establishment, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) already provide signals intelligence (SIGINT, intelligence gathered electronically by intercepted telecommunications or other electronic emissions) and imagery intelligence (IMINT, intelligence mined through satellite or aerial photographs), and both are of great value. None of these institutions, however, deals specifically with the gathering of foreign-based human intelligence (HUMINT), the type of intelligence that would best inform policymakers about the social and emotional variables that might assist them in assessing the potential dangers of failed environments and terrorist organizational capabilities. Without proper inputs from HUMINT sources, Canadian policymakers will continue to make decisions with imperfect and incomplete intelligence. Perhaps David Pratt, former member of Parliament for Nepean-Carleton and champion of Bill C-409 — a 2003 private members' bill that called for the development of a Canadian Foreign Intelligence Agency — puts it most clearly:

If [Canadians] rely primarily on our allies for foreign intelligence, we have no way of ensuring that questions vital to our national interests are being addressed in the information we receive. A separate Canadian foreign intelligence agency which generates our own intelligence product would allow greater independence in policy formulation, based on a Canadian perspective. (Pratt 2003, 3)

In short, Canadian interests are best served if the Canadian government is able to employ Canadian-specific intelligence in its decisionmaking processes.

Yet Canada's HUMINT capabilities, to be blunt, are nearly nonexistent. Of all the developed Western states, Canada is the last to lack a foreign-HUMINT-gathering service, even though it finds itself (both offensively and defensively) at the forefront of the Global War on Terrorism. While the Canadian government did establish the Integrated Threat Assessment Centre, with the mandated task of "produc[ing] comprehensive threat assessments" of various environments, the body remains constrained by a lack of Canadian-specific HUMINT (CSIS 2007, 2; see also CSIS 2004b, 14–16). What is more, Canada's allies have begun to notice the sorry state of our foreign intelligence affairs.

An expansive comparative study of British, French, Australian, and Canadian intelligence-gathering models published by the RAND Corporation notes not only that Canada was the only ally that had "no separate overseas intelligence service of its own" and therefore relied "primarily on information provided by friendly foreign services and bureaus," but also that our institutional deficiencies had resulted in a deteriorated security environment (Chalk and Rosenau 2004, 48–51). Security gaps began to show: as Christopher Andrews, a British intelligence expert, notes, while "Canada long ago



stopped subcontracting its diplomacy to Britain and set up its own embassies,” it is surprising to British officials “that Canada is still willing to subcontract its HUMINT...to its allies” (1991, 10). Even the US Public Broadcasting Service (2001) has weighed in, offering an interesting and lengthy program on Canada’s complicity in failing to impede, over a period of nearly a decade, Ahmed Ressam’s plans to attack Los Angeles during the city’s millennium celebration. Canada’s failure was due in great part to a lack of solid human intelligence, this time domestically based. Perhaps it is time that Canada grew up, filling the shoes that are required of all developed states and looking after its own security requirements.

In the wake of 9/11, the Canadian government, through CSIS, has begun to do so. Some foreign intelligence and HUMINT capabilities have been developed. CSIS, for instance, now publicly acknowledges that *The CSIS Act* (1984) “places no geographic limits on the collection of intelligence about threats to the security of Canada, nor on the techniques, covert or otherwise, used in such collection” (CSIS 2004a, 3; see also CSIS 2004b, 10–15). That CSIS found it rather uncomfortable to say as much during the 1980s and 1990s only highlights the sea change that has come about. Consider further candid remarks offered by former deputy prime minister Anne McLellan: “We may want to redefine the existing section of the CSIS legislation to give [the agency] broader powers abroad, and perhaps to gather different kinds of intelligence” (CTV News 2004). Likewise, the number of CSIS security liaison officers — individuals stationed at Canadian diplomatic missions worldwide with the task of collecting relevant intelligence and information from other diplomats, local security forces, open sources, and official documents — has grown from 50 to roughly 250 over the past decade (CSIS 2004a 3). Another 50 intelligence officers working with CSIS are also thought to be active internationally (Freeze 2006). Some Canadian agents, CSIS deputy director Jack Hooper suggested in 2006, are certainly active in Afghanistan, where their “support has been principally focused...to help the Canadian Forces defend themselves” (Canada 2006). And since its assistance in uncovering and foiling the Ontario terrorism plot of 2006, the agency has augmented its recruitment drives.

With these steps, Canada is moving, if only slowly, toward developing a robust foreign-HUMINT-gathering capability. Indeed, Canada is well positioned to do so — it is, after all, a multi-ethnic, multi-lingual, and multi-religious society with 250,000 new immigrants entering yearly from all around the globe. CSIS seems well able to recruit individuals who would do well as foreign intelligence officers. In that manner, Canada should be able to use to its advantage what some critics have regarded as a weakness. Chalk and Rosenau, for instance, argue that international terrorist organizations are prevalent in Canada because “the country, which has been built on immigration and a commitment to ethno-nationalist and religious tolerance, represents a source of political refuge that has been effectively used by...extremist elements from around the globe” (2004, 26). That same Canadian characteristic, however, could well be used not only to keep track of dangerous domestic groups — as was the case with the 2006 Toronto terrorist cell, thwarted with the help of well-placed RCMP informants — but to help the Canadian government gain access to the intelligence it needs to determine where Canadian interests rest when facing a multitude of failed and fragile political environments (see Parkinson 2006).

CANADIAN SECURITY IN A WORLD OF FAILED STATES

Foreign policy formation, in Canada and elsewhere, has gone through a period of remarkable change since the events of 9/11. While terrorism has existed for tens, if not hundreds, of years, the scale and brutality of the 2001 attacks — to say nothing of the many acts of terrorism that have been carried out or foiled since — introduced a novel form of organized violence at the international level. In response, states continue to develop novel ways to combat and mitigate its effects.

Part of that evolutionary process has centred on developing more effective policies concerning failed states. While the post–Cold War era saw dozens of humanitarian-based interventions into fragile political environments, today states are more likely to intervene when their security interests are at stake. The rationale is simple: the threat of terrorism, much of it rooted in failed environments, negates the wisdom of a policy that places humanitarianism above security.

A foreign policy based on security calculations rests on a *realpolitik* assessment of the international environment. It is a reactionary process, wherein certain international developments elicit particular state reactions. In a global system where state failure has become a security — and not only a humanitarian — concern to Canada, it is of utmost importance that the Canadian government establish a way to measure its national interests and discern what actions allow for their safeguarding. Such a security-driven policy is well overdue.

Canada has begun the process of adjusting its failed-states policy to reflect its national and security interests, but there is much left to be done. The primary concern is to establish a systematized method that decisionmakers can use to evaluate where Canadian national interests concerning failed states rest. While START goes a long way toward coordinating Canada’s failed-states policy, it is gravely limited in its application by doing so from within a “national interest vacuum.” As in decades past, Canadian foreign policy remains based more heavily on humanitarian aid than on promoting national security. Ottawa needs a more robust foreign intelligence agency able to calculate Canada’s strategic interests in a complex world of failed states and to offer the appropriate policy options. Only with such a tool can Canadian policymakers determine where the greatest risk emanates from and how best to respond.

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