

Policy Memo

DATE: October 17, 2009

RE: Stabilizing States in Crises: Leveraging International Capacity, a roundtable summary from the 50th Strategy for Peace Conference

Since the end of the Cold War, the United States and larger international community have been confronted by a series of crises caused by acute instability and violent conflict in weak or fragile states. In many instances, such crises have necessitated costly interventions by the UN and the U.S. to stabilize and then rebuild the affected state. Ideally, such interventions could be averted (along with the need to disburse huge amounts of relief and reconstruction assistance) through a combination of proactive engagement, to lower the risk of instability and conflict before it emerges, and early preventive engagement to forestall further escalation when it does. In practice, however, proactive and preventive engagement has proven difficult to accomplish for a variety of political and institutional reasons.

Without dismissing the necessity for more proactive and early preventive engagement to manage the challenges posed by weak or fragile states, the purpose of the roundtable was to consider how international capacity required to respond rapidly to those states either on the verge of, or already in crisis, can be enhanced. The roundtable on Stabilizing States in Crisis: Leveraging International Capacity specifically focused on four key areas: international early warning systems designed to activate and guide more timely international response; rapid political capacities particularly in the area of fact finding, mediation, and electoral support; rapid economic assistance necessary for financial stabilization and basic service delivery; and rapid international security assistance. Participants shared a variety of viewpoints and offered concrete recommendations included in this policy memo which will serve as a background for the conference report.

Cross-Cutting Findings

Participants agreed that the role of multilateral and regional organizations is critical to facilitating successful conflict prevention strategies and to responding to crises in fragile states. Multilateral organizations have an invaluable comparative advantage in several important respects. They can provide much needed legitimacy to international responses, they have an extensive convening power that allows them to assemble diverse players typically viewed as impartial actors, and they can provide access to areas where some national and private actors have difficulty operating. However, despite these benefits, participants acknowledged that several significant challenges affect their performance in executing rapid and effective response

to states suffering from instability or violent conflict. Some of the cross-cutting challenges highlighted by the panel include:

- Need for both comprehensive and sustainable crisis response framework: Crisis response should not only harness the key actors and be sensitive to the main functional areas that need attention, but it should be carried out in ways that are sustainable over the long term. Too often, short-term responses undermine long-term solutions.
- Lack of cohesion among organizations and within institutions: Response mechanisms are too often fragmented by internal divisions. This is often reflected in a lack of definitional consistency on terminology; e.g., definitions for fragile states or peacebuilding. Greater efforts need to be made to not only coordinate different actors but also ensure that, internally, they are cohesive in designing and implementing comprehensive responses.
- Funding shortcomings: Available funding needs to be more flexible and rapidly disbursable, with higher risk tolerance to reflect the priorities and preferences needed to achieve a rapid response. There is an imminent need to create mechanisms that enable rapid and flexible funding across the peace and security and economic development realms that reflects the urgency on the ground.
- Planning and training deficit: Limited training capabilities and a lack of planning present challenges to ensuring effective institutional responses. Emphasis needs to be placed on preplanning activities and training of deployable staff to carry out responsibilities on the ground.
- Moral hazard: Crisis response often presents a variety of moral hazards, including elevating the role of illegitimate actors and encouraging spoilers.
- Capacity shortfalls: While there is general consensus on how to respond to states in crisis, there are still critical shortfalls in the needed key areas.

Important progress has been made in recent years to enhance the role and capacity of international organizations to respond to states in crises. There is now a shared understanding of the challenges and needed solutions. What is required now is greater attention to building capacity and ensuring timely and effective implementation. In particular, there needs to be more nuanced use of the available tools that reflect the distinctive elements of the given crisis. Specific recommendations from the each of the four sessions include:

Improving Early Warning Capabilities

- Welcome the renewed appreciation, particularly in the United States, to focus on drivers of conflict and conflict prevention in general in fragile states.
- Develop community-based early warning systems to supplement headquarter early warning and early response systems that can tackle micro-level conflicts, and in particular broaden out and deepen coverage in key hot spot areas.
- Focus more attention on how to facilitate early response through preplanning and conflict assessment, including linking traditional and nontraditional sources of early warning.
- Broaden the operational horizon of early warning systems to include emerging concerns such as criminality and climate change.

- Pay more attention to how early warning capabilities are communicated and transmitted to policymakers to overcome political inhibition of early action. Additionally, improve understanding of the recipients of warning to ensure that their objectives are being met.

Strengthening Rapid Political Response

- Need to encourage the development of nimbler, less risk-averse crisis response mechanisms to prevent the further escalation of crises, and thereby avoid the need for expensive peace operations.
- The UN should continue to strengthen regional partnerships and regional capacity to engage in a variety of political responses to crises, including mediation, fact-finding and arbitration. The role of the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA) to support regional organizations needs to be enhanced, including continued investment in the Mediation Support Unit (MSU) to enable successful political operations.
- The United States needs to improve its ability to work with international organizations and to contribute to international missions that will ultimately benefit its national security.

Enhancing Rapid Economic Response

- Recognize that different planning/budgeting/funding systems (the one focused in New York or other capitals and the one focused in country) have to be brought together, with incentives built in for stronger coherence at every level.
- Encourage efforts to pre-position appropriate peacebuilding response capacity, both pre-positioned funds and rosters of qualified technical staff (national and international, including Diaspora).
- Design adapted rules that allow for fast allocation of funding and staff, and that ensure the best staff (especially the leaders at country level) are attracted to work in such countries, taking the necessary risks.
- Encourage institutions dedicated to managing economic shocks to focus on fragile states as a key constituency as a preventive tool for a further decline.

Improving Rapid Security Assistance

- The United States and its international partners should pursue immediate low-cost investments to greatly improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations. Specifically, investments in headquarter resources and equipment on the ground are desirable. A Peace Support Operations Training Center of Excellence within NATO can address critical shortages of strategic planners and Francophone staff officers as indicated by the New Horizons report.
- Encourage emerging powers to provide more substantive contributions to missions. In particular, provide incentives for those who currently contribute a moderate or modest number of troops to increase their participation in peacekeeping operations. Multilateral efforts to build national security sector capacity should also be encouraged.
- Serious consideration should be given to developing a UN Emergency Peace Service, which can serve as a rapidly deployable police and political expeditionary service, which in the long term could lessen dependence on UN Peacekeeping Missions.

In conclusion, participants agreed that the changing nature of global transnational challenges and the geopolitical shift in power dynamics from a Western dominated world order to one that considers emerging powers, will necessitate improved normative frameworks and operational mechanisms that can more effectively and comprehensively respond to crises in fragile states. In this regard, participants welcomed the sea change in US foreign policy and emphasized the value of the new administration's commitment and support for multilateral partners and solutions. There is renewed hope for bridging the tension between short-term crisis response imperatives and long-term solutions for sustainable peace.

Each year the Stanley Foundation convenes the Strategy for Peace Conference on a wide range of US foreign policy issues with experts from the public and private sectors who meet in autonomous roundtables. This year's event focused on the challenges of state fragility for US and global security in an interdependent world. Specifically, via three concurrent roundtables, participants addressed the potential contributions of AFRICOM to problems of state fragility in Africa; the possibility of better US efforts at multilateral leveraging of latent international capabilities and capacities; and finally, the need for a new US strategy for strengthening fragile states overall. More information on the entire conference is available at <http://www.stanleyfoundation.org/articles.cfm?ID=603>.

The analysis and recommendations included in this Policy Memo do not necessarily reflect the view of the Stanley Foundation or any of the conference participants, but rather draw upon the major strands of discussion put forward at the event. Participants neither reviewed nor approved this document. Therefore, it should not be assumed that every participant subscribes to all of its recommendations, observations, and conclusions.

For further information, please contact Michael Kraig or Keith Porter at the Stanley Foundation, 563-264-1500.

About The Stanley Foundation

The Stanley Foundation seeks a secure peace with freedom and justice, built on world citizenship and effective global governance. It brings fresh voices, original ideas, and lasting solutions to debates on global and regional problems. The foundation is a nonpartisan, private operating foundation, located in Muscatine, Iowa, that focuses on peace and security issues and advocates principled multilateralism. The foundation frequently collaborates with other organizations. It does not make grants. Online at <http://www.stanleyfoundation.org>.