

# **Stabilizing States in Crisis: Leveraging International Capacity**

50th Strategy for Peace Conference  
Sponsored by the Stanley Foundation  
October 15-17, 2009  
Airlie Center, Warrenton, Virginia

Paul Stares, Council on Foreign Relations, Roundtable Chair  
Farah Faisal, Rapporteur

## **Premise**

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 United Nations and the United States to stabilize and then rebuild the affected state. By one calculation, the United States has carried out military stabilization and reconstruction missions on average every 18-24 months since 1989, with each typically lasting 5-8 years—altogether an immensely costly undertaking. The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations currently oversees 17 missions with approximately 116,000 women and men deployed, including troop and police contributions from 117 member states, supported by a budget of some US\$7 billion—an eightfold increase since 1999.

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. As a consequence, the United States and the international community typically react belatedly and hastily to emerging crises. The nature of the response, moreover, is more often than not palliative and short term without providing the necessary foundation for sustainable peace and stability.

## **Purpose**

Without dismissing the necessity for more proactive and early preventive engagement to manage the threat of weak or fragile states, the purpose of the roundtable is to consider how international capacity to respond rapidly to those states either on the verge of or already in crisis can be enhanced. For the United States, the need to help improve international capacities in this area has grown in recent years. As the country most frequently looked to offer assistance, international capacity building can help relieve some of the pressure on the United States, especially given its current commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan. More importantly, it is now widely accepted that effective crisis response increasingly necessitates international partnerships not only to share the burden but also provide much needed legitimacy. Some international organizations can also operate in areas where the United States is either unwilling to do so or is otherwise constrained.

The roundtable will focus on three 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. In each area, the goal is to take stock of current capacities and deficiencies, identify how gaps can be filled and the necessary organizational arrangements improved; and propose ways in which the United States can contribute so that it can make better use of international partnerships in the future. Given the need to ensure that crisis interventions provide an appropriate foundation for sustainable post-conflict peacebuilding, the roundtable will also consider the United States work with global and regional IGOs, major NGOs, allies, donor states, and others to accomplish this goal.

### Agenda

- I. Thursday, October 15, 8:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.: **Introductions and Overview**
  - A. Introduction of participants/Chatham House rules
  - B. Premises/key objectives of the conference
  - C. Review of agenda
  
- II. Friday, October 16, 9:00 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.: **The State of International Early Warning Capabilities**
  - A. Background briefing: David Nyheim’s paper
  - B. Guiding questions
  - C. Potential prescriptions
  
- III. 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon: **Rapid Political Response**
  - A. Background briefing: Michéle Griffin’s paper
  - B. Guiding questions
  - C. Potential prescriptions
  
- IV. 2:00 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.: **Rapid Economic Response**
  - A. Background briefing: Sally Fegan-Wyles’ paper
  - B. Guiding questions
  - C. Potential prescriptions
  
- V. 4:00 p.m. – 5:30 p.m.: **Rapid Security Assistance**
  - A. Background briefing: Ron Capp’s paper
  - B. Guiding questions
  - C. Potential prescriptions
  
- VI. Saturday, October 17, 9:00 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.: **Looking Ahead: Review of Policy Prescriptions**
  
- VII. 10:30 a.m. – 12:00 noon: **Wrap-Up Plenary Session of All Roundtables**
  - A. Summary of conclusions and recommendations