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Fragile States: Stuck in Trap

by David Carment and Yiagadeesen Samy

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Opinion Editorial

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In our most comprehensive fragile states study to date Somalia tops our rankings followed closely by Afghanistan, Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, and Central African Republic. The Sudan, Eritrea, Pakistan and Côte d'Ivoire round out the lists top 10. It should come as no surprise that Somalia tops the list. After all, this is a country that has had no central government for more than two decades, ongoing civil unrest, a fundamental lack of economic and social development, and a Transitional Federal Government unable to exercise authority over militant groups.

Worrying, however, is Afghanistan, one of CIDA's 20 countries of focus. The situation there has actually deteriorated over the past decade, despite the injection of billions of dollars in aid money, including substantial amounts from Canada. Afghanistan was ranked twelfth on our list in 2002 when the Taliban regime was ousted from power in Kabul. Our data shows the country's authority, legitimacy and capacity scores have not significantly improved over the last five years. Throwing more aid at Afghanistan in the hope that it will reverse course (eg the US\$ 16 billion pledged by donors to Afghanistan last week) does not make a lot of sense without some thought being given to more fundamental questions.

Unfortunately, when it comes to the failure of donors to build resilience, Afghanistan is not unique. The countries classified as most fragile on our list are continuing to fall behind and will not meet any of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) by 2015, despite the fact that they receive a significant share of aid (37% in 2009 according to data from the OECD). Besides Afghanistan, several other countries of focus for CIDA – namely Bangladesh, Ethiopia, Haiti, Mali (where the situation is rapidly deteriorating), Pakistan and Sudan – are in the top 40 fragile states.

The persistence of fragility among certain countries over decades means that donors must have a much better strategy on aid effectiveness. The current policy approach is simply unworkable. In particular, there is an absence of effective linkages between analysis, monitoring and warning on the one hand, and support to donor decision-making on the other. Key is the identification of where the investment will yield the “biggest bang for the buck”. This means focusing on our strengths and being humble enough to say no in certain cases. It implies scaling back aid if necessary, and in particular cases, such as Afghanistan, where out of control corruption requires even more careful monitoring of every dollar of aid spent. If Canada coordinates with other donors to ensure that we are not constantly throwing money down bottomless pits, all the better.

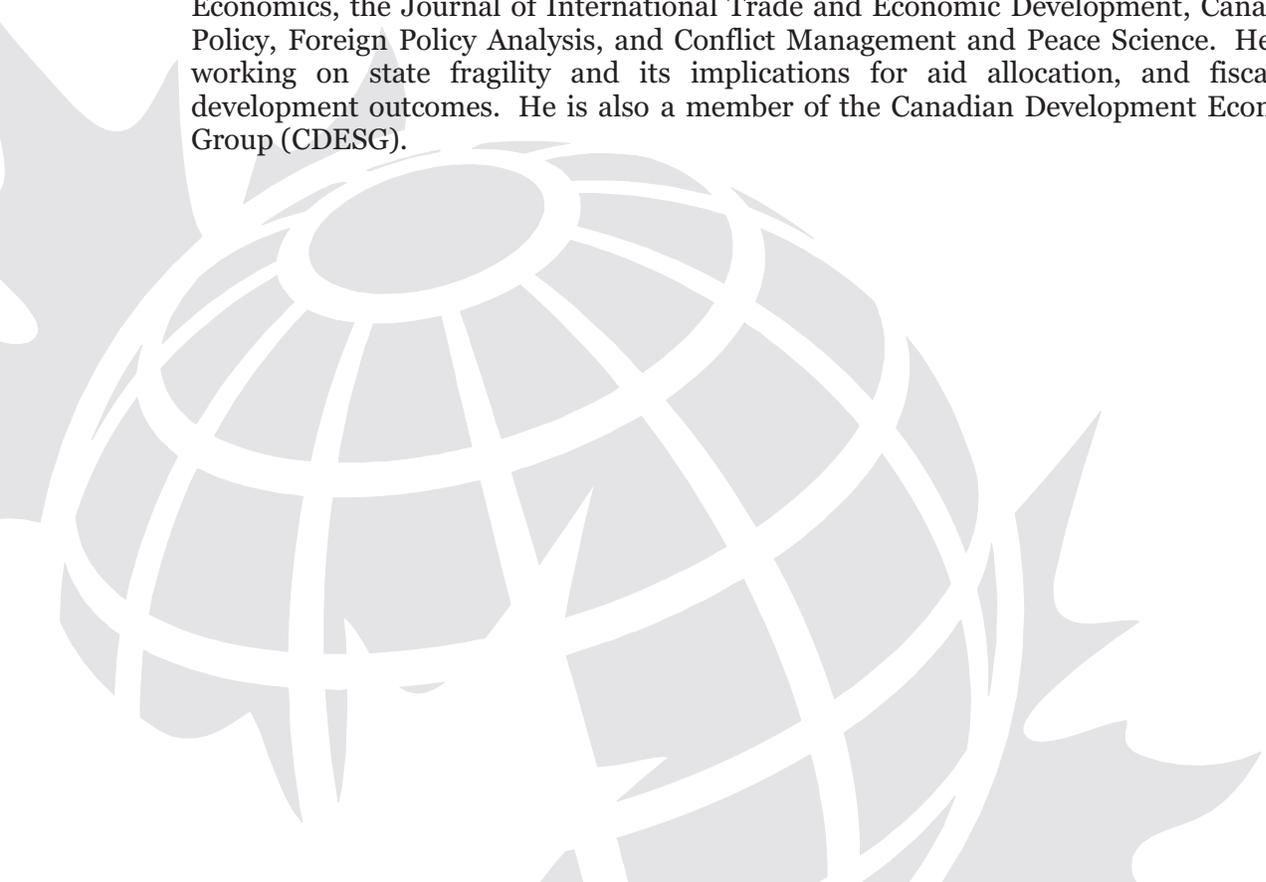
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► About the Author

David Carment is a Professor of International Affairs at the Norman Paterson School of International Affairs, Carleton University, Ottawa. He served as Director of the Centre for Security and Defence Studies at Carleton University from 2002-2004. His recent books include, *Peacekeeping Intelligence*, *Conflict Prevention: From Rhetoric to Reality*, *Using Force to Prevent Ethnic Violence: An Evaluation of Theory and Evidence* and *Conflict Prevention: Path to Peace or Grand Illusion?* In addition Carment serves as the principal investigator for the Country Indicators for Foreign Policy project. His most recent work focuses on developing failed state risk assessment and early warning methodologies evaluating models of third party intervention.

In 2000-2001 Carment was a Fellow at Harvard University's Belfer Center. While there he contributed an article on peacekeeping for *Harvard International Review* and a co-authored a paper on "Bias and Intervention" for the BCSIA Working Paper Series. After working as an intern at the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Mr. de Kerckhove became a Researcher at the Québec Centre for International Relations and then later headed up the International Security Section at the Canadian Institute for International Affairs (Québec section).

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CDFAI was created to address the ongoing discrepancy between what Canadians need to know about Canadian international activities and what they do know. Historically, Canadians tend to think of foreign policy – if they think of it at all – as a matter of trade and markets. They are unaware of the importance of Canada engaging diplomatically, militarily, and with international aid in the ongoing struggle to maintain a world that is friendly to the free flow of goods, services, people and ideas across borders and the spread of human rights. They are largely unaware of the connection between a prosperous and free Canada and a world of globalization and liberal internationalism.

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