

## Coping with breakdown

ternal Affairs Green Paper, the report of the Joint Parliamentary Committee on Canada's international relations, and the government's response to the latter, have each reaffirmed this objective. Clearly, then, there are substantial incentives for Canada to seek a leadership position in such an initiative. Simply the reality that humanitarian assistance, conflict, and peace and security are all interrelated means that Canada's interests are directly involved. The fact is that the majority of conflicts which flare up in the Third World engage Canadian humanitarian interests, and some, in so far as they touch the concerns of the superpowers, affect Canada's security interests as well.

One beneficial spin-off of working through the UN would be improvement in the efficiency of UN-led HA/DR endeavors themselves. Here, Canada would contribute to the formulation of a framework, methodology, and procedures for enhancing their effectiveness and assist in identifying the political, organizational, bureaucratic and training requirements necessary for assuming this task. It could help rectify the intra-UN problems associated with HA/DR activities and ascertain how the responses of UN agencies, donor governments, and non-governmental organizations could be more profitably integrated, and rivalry and duplication avoided. Canada could lend a hand in fashioning a strategy to ensure that in a conflict situation victims on both sides were reached and, since it participates in both types of operations, propose ways in which HA/DR relief and long-term development through reconstruction and rehabilitation could be linked.

### Cut refugee production at source

Yet refugee pressures are the central reason why it would serve Canada's interests to associate itself with attempts devised to help determine the comparative advantages of UN HA/DR operations as a device for conflict management/prevention at both the intra-state and international levels. The two bills recently passed by Parliament, one designed to institute new ref-

ugee claims procedures, the other to deter illegal migrants, themselves the object of intense internal debate, basically seek domestic answers to domestic problems. What seems to have been lost sight of in all the tumult which they have occasioned is that refugees are a *foreign* policy question too. Above all, it should not be forgotten that the state of the refugee status determination process in Canada is intimately tied to the country's ability to combat the refugee problem diplomatically/internationally — be it multilaterally or through independent action. Nothing the Canadian government does at home, however magnanimous, to mitigate its refugee impasse will accomplish much toward grappling decisively with the basic issue: that there are refugees in the first place and that there will continue to be more and more of them. The problem will not be cured simply by turning them away.

Providing resettlement opportunities and extending financial aid are certainly not inconsiderable contributions. However, the most effective method of tackling the domestic refugee crisis, indeed the most potent means by which Canada could be a world leader in refugee policy, is to confront the problem at its source — the countries of origin and the political, economic and environmental problems plaguing them. Two of the greatest producers of refugees are political chaos and natural disaster. When they coexist the aftermath is a massive exodus of displaced persons. No doubt, then, an attempt by Canada framed to twin HA/DR operations with conflict management/prevention would be in its short- and long-term interests since, if successfully prosecuted, such a scheme would go a long way toward eradicating the suffering and violence which directly yield refugees. As far as Canada's, and the world's, swelling refugee dilemma is concerned, such a policy holds the potential to be a panacea, not just a stopgap measure. All in all, Canada is well-equipped to inject some impetus into evolving more trenchant tactics for coping with refugees. But ideally, and for optimum effect, such an initiative should consist of a 2-pronged offensive — abroad as well as at home.

### Conclusion

Canada, then, appears well-suited to performing a role that would couple emergency operations with conflict management, with the UN employed as the means to achieve this. It is equally evident that this is a role that needs filling. The outlook for several developing regions is bleak. Africa especially seems destined to remain perilously unstable for some time. Not only is there the ever-present menace of recurring droughts and famine, but political volatility within and between states continues to run at ominously high levels. Yet the danger of a breakdown of political and social harmony is by no means confined to that continent. In other areas the international narcotics trade, for example, poses the most important threat to such stability. And perhaps most notably, refugee flows show no signs of abatement.

There are only two certainties: that more emergencies entailing humanitarian assistance on a large scale will erupt, and that conflict situations will persist. Thus, given the relationship between regional conflict and international order, it is apparent that an urgent need has arisen for the discovery of durable solutions to the riddle of emergency operations conducted amidst regional turmoil, and for the development of strategies for more effective humanitarian assistance/disaster relief operations. This is the challenge and the opportunity facing Canada and all other nations worried about the burgeoning ranks of refugees. □

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