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on the assumption that what worked for us must work for everybody. Yet our history does entitle us to say that ethnic multiplicity can be a source of strength rather than weakness; that linguistic multiplicity does not necessitate secession; and that political dialogue can avert the breakup of a nation. We have some authority in these matters, and we should use it, not to lecture, but to listen, not to impose but to learn, adapt and change our ideas as they encounter the different reality of other political cultures.

In democratic societies that are stable and capable of development, Canadian policy can assist with improving the institutional design and operation of governance. Where societies, in John Rawls' phrase, are "burdened" with ethnic conflict, religious hatred, or a bitter memory of civil war, we need to perfect a tool kit of preventive intervention: conflict resolution at the village and community level, political dialogue at the national level, constitutional change, in the form of devolution to empower disenfranchised regions or groups, and minority rights guarantees to end discrimination and injustice. No country has managed to put all of these elements of prevention—conflict resolution, political dialogue, constitutional change, together with economic assistance—into a coherent stand-by capability, bringing together NGO, government and professional capacities. That is a challenge we should seize as a country, since, as I have argued, we have comparative advantage in the politics of managing divided societies.

Finally, in societies where conflict has reached the point of massacre and ethnic cleansing, we have a "responsibility to protect," and, with that, a responsibility to intervene, if necessary, with military force. "Responsibility to protect" is a phrase that has entered the global lexicon thanks to the Canadian initiative to support the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty. The ICISS is only the latest of a series of examples which illustrate that one of Canada's largest contribution to international affairs has been in the realm of ideas.

"Responsibility to protect" is one such idea. Instead of conceiving sovereignty as a synonym for territorial control, the Canadian idea sees sovereignty as entailing a responsibility to provide a people basic protection. When the state is either unwilling or unable to perform this duty, whether from incapacity or malignant intention, the duty to