

# Nation-building Interventions and National Security

## An Australian Perspective

BY MICHAEL G. SMITH AND REBECCA SHRIMPTON

In their compelling book *Fixing Failed States*,<sup>1</sup> Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart offer a sobering prognosis for global stability and human security. They assert that “[f]orty to sixty states, home to nearly two billion people, are either sliding backward and teetering on the brink of implosion, or have already collapsed.”<sup>2</sup> This reality has profound implications for the future of foreign interventions for the purpose of nation-building. What might this entail for Australia? And what is involved in nation-building in failed or failing states? According to Ghani and Lockhart, the situation “is at the heart of a worldwide systemic crisis that constitutes the most serious challenge to global stability in the new millennium.”<sup>3</sup>

Such questions imply that nation-building interventions have a past, and arguably a present, in international politics. But as the current debate on international objectives in Afghanistan shows, nation-building is a contestable notion, meaning different things to different actors. History suggests that states undertake foreign interventions primarily in pursuit of national security interests rather than through a desire to build capacity for independent and competent governance in other countries per se. That said, nation-building does occur as a result of international interventions, even if this outcome is not always the intervention’s

**Major General Michael G. Smith (Ret.) is the founding Executive Director of the Australian Government’s Asia Pacific Civil-Military Centre of Excellence. Rebecca Shrimpton is the Centre’s Peace and Stabilisation Operations Program Manager. The views expressed in this article are personal and do not represent Australian government policy.**

primary objective, and successful nation-building demands a long-term commitment of considerable resources by donor states, as well as from organizations such as the United Nations (UN) and the World Bank.

If interventions are to occur in the future—a given if we accept the picture of global stability and security painted by Ghani and Lockhart—to what extent could they be driven by proactive and preconflict nation-building strategies, rather than ad hoc formulations as a response to conflict or war? And to what extent might nation-building be incorporated into the formal national security policies of Australia in the years ahead? Could the “3D Approach” for stabilization interventions—diplomacy, development, and defense—be applied in a coordinated preconflict manner to enhance security, governance, and sustainable development, rather than waiting for stabilization in a postconflict environment?

**Australia should consider nation-building as an integral component of its national security strategy**

This article contends that Australia should consider nation-building as an important pillar in conflict prevention and as an integral component of its national security strategy, and addresses four related questions:

- ❖ What are nation-building interventions?
- ❖ What is meant by nation-building, and can it be measured?
- ❖ What is the relationship between nation-building and international military interventions?

- ❖ What is the future for nation-building interventions in which Australia might be involved?

## **Nation-building and National Security**

Conflict prevention and preventive diplomacy have been consistent themes in Australia’s foreign and defense policies for many years. More recently, conflict prevention was emphasized in Australia’s first National Security Statement in December 2008, when then–Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that Australia’s approach to regional engagement should be one “that develops a culture of security policy cooperation rather than defaults to any assumption that conflict is somehow inevitable.” Rudd also saw utility in “creative middle power diplomacy . . . capable of identifying opportunities to promote [Australia’s] security and to otherwise prevent, reduce or delay the emergence of national security challenges.”<sup>4</sup>

Australia’s policy roadmap for conflict prevention, however, is yet to be articulated clearly. There are sound arguments that the next National Security Statement (and arguably a first National Security Policy document) should incorporate Australia’s contribution to coherent and coordinated nation-building strategies for fragile states, particularly those in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Such an approach would go beyond intervention to effect regime change, to achieve a military victory, to kickstart stabilization and reconstruction following conflict, or even to achieve the important Millennium Development Goals—goals currently lagging in the Pacific region.<sup>5</sup>

Positive nation-building policies would enhance Australia’s long-term security by helping to strengthen the resilience of the Asia-Pacific

1<sup>st</sup> Joint Public Affairs Unit (Leigh Cameron)

Australian soldiers—part of the International Security Force—maintain presence across East Timor through regional patrol program

region to conflict, natural and man-made disasters, and political and economic setbacks. To be effective, however, this nation-building approach would require Australia to continue to strengthen its commitment to whole-of-government (and whole-of-nation) civil-military<sup>6</sup> analysis, planning, and project coordination. This would demand the development of efficient mechanisms, and a cadre of trained personnel, to work collegially with host governments and international and regional organizations. Importantly, government departments and agencies would need to contribute to nation-building strategies in a collaborative way to achieve objectives agreed to by Australia and the governments of host nations. In practical terms, from Australia's perspective, this would require enhanced synergy between the programs of leading agencies—principally the Australian Agency for International Development, Defence, the Australian Federal Police, and the Attorney-General's Department—to develop country strategies that assigned responsibilities and priorities in concert with those of the host nation.

Focused nation-building policies of this kind offer an opportunity to provide the assistance necessary to arrest a fragile state's slide toward collapse *before* it reaches the critical tipping point—to strengthen a state's capacity to govern and provide security for its citizens. Such policies look to address the root causes of the systemic crisis described by Ghani and Lockhart to help turn the tide of a state's deterioration. Security policies can often link regional instability with national insecurity in a negative manner. More useful is a focus on building regional stability to enhance national security under a positive nation-building approach.

The implications of moving the locus of effort from perceived threats to existential opportunities are significant. Implementing an opportunity-based approach is more cost-effective over the long

term than having to respond to conflicts when they occur. As well, such an approach accentuates a focus on the following:

- ❖ identification of positive influences and forces that can be harnessed (as opposed to negative forces which must be defeated or countered)
- ❖ empowerment of local actors (as opposed to replacement with international actors), and support for local solutions (rather than importation of foreign solutions)
- ❖ a clear paradigm of local ownership with the host nation central to the process
- ❖ a long-term commitment based on mutual trust and interests.

By contrast, international postconflict stabilization responses risk weakening the host nation's authority and central responsibility (or even temporarily replacing it), potentially resulting in dependency and a delay in the restoration of state functions by local authorities.

A coordinated nation-building approach, beyond the efforts of individual departments and agencies, would not replace Australia's current threat-based approach to national security, but provide a complementary preventive mechanism to enhance regional security. Such nation-building policies would offer a suite of options for international engagement that address root causes of violence and conflict, not just the violence itself. Positive nation-building policies have the potential to neutralize threats before they arise.

Within the Asia-Pacific region, future competition between China and the United States for power and influence is a distinct yet parallel possibility to the problem of failed and failing states. Australia's dilemma will be to

structure and balance its national capabilities for possible great power (and their proxy) conflicts with the ability to respond to instability within a region comprising fragile states. History and geography confirm that instability in its immediate region become conflicts of necessity rather than choice for Australia, demonstrated not only by World War II but more recently by Australia's commitments to Bougainville (an autonomous region of Papua New Guinea), Timor-Leste, and the Solomon Islands. A preemptive, coordinated, and long-term nation-building approach by Australia to regional fragile states would not only help reduce the prospects of serious conflict and great power rivalry, but also contribute to sustainable development by helping empower people to avert the human indignity of poverty and the impact of natural disasters. This is a bold strategy, and one that would contribute purposefully to the Australia-U.S. alliance in a meaningful way beyond providing assets to more distant conflict and postconflict situations, as important as such contributions will continue to be. Australia's commitment to greater responsibility in its immediate region would be in line with the longstanding quest of the United States for "burden-sharing," now even more important given the impact of the global financial crisis and soaring national debt of the United States.<sup>7</sup>

Over the longer term, such a nation-building approach by Australia would be more cost-effective than accepting the inevitability of having to respond to regional instability through expensive military operations (in human, platform, and dollar terms as well as opportunity costs). In shifting the policy emphasis from a conflict response-based model to a conflict prevention-based one, the capability requirement becomes more civilianized,

more purposeful, less expensive, less overt, and less disruptive. Or, as the former Chief of the Australian Army, Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, noted recently, it provides “more security through less defence.”<sup>8</sup>

### Interventions

The importance of strengthening state resilience has become a central feature of approaches to international peace and security over the past two decades. “Nation-building” (or its associated but more narrowly focused sibling, “state-building”) is generally recognized as an essential tool in addressing the causes of conflict, as well as in bridging the divide between the traditional state-centric concept of power politics and the contested concept of human security as advocated predominantly by non-state actors.

Not all international security analysts may agree with Ghani and Lockhart’s assessment of state failure, but there is general consensus concerning the difficulties in implementing effective intervention strategies that lead to state resilience—strategies that in recent years have proved contestable or, at best, only partially successful. Paul Collier points out that one-sixth of the world’s population is currently caught in a poverty trap from which escape is problematic. He notes that the ultimate negative impact of such poverty will have far-reaching effects on global security, as well as having immediate and protracted local humanitarian consequences.<sup>9</sup> In December 2008, U.S. strategist Patrick Cronin highlighted the growing significance of “fragile and ungoverned spaces,” listing this as one of eight global security challenges facing the then new Obama administration. Cronin commented: “There is no surefire way to build effective states. And there are too many weak states to address them at once or to consider

investing everything in a solitary problem. . . . While weak states are not automatically threats, fragile states may aid and abet a host of other problems, from piracy to trafficking to incubating terrorism and pandemics.”<sup>10</sup>

The Fund for Peace, in its Failed State Index for 2010, highlights significant concern at the poor state of global governance.<sup>11</sup> This situation seems unlikely to improve markedly, given the slow recovery from the global financial crisis, coupled with the potential for increased intensity in the number of megadisasters resulting from climate change. The findings of the Failed State Index also indicate that Australia’s immediate geopolitical region requires closer policy attention and that more “heavy lifting” will be required of Australia in the years ahead.<sup>12</sup> There is a strategic choice to be made in Canberra about the nature of such heavy lifting, with a balance needing to be struck, weighted toward either responsive/reactive or preventive/proactive policies.

The United Nations and World Bank have also highlighted the importance of nation-building in contributing to global stability. The UN blueprint for reform—the Brahimi Report of 2000—links peacemaking, peacekeeping, and peacebuilding strategies to better enable states emerging from conflict to avert a return to fighting through the development of effective governance structures based on open communication with their citizens.<sup>13</sup> The World Bank has increasingly related its development responsibilities to security sector reform and the rule of law, to the extent that the working title of its forthcoming *World Development Report 2011* (WDR11) is “Conflict, Security and Development.” Although not stated as such, WDR11 is quintessential nation-building, tying the responsibilities of the state to the needs of its local communities, while at

the same time recognizing the need for coordinated international support.<sup>14</sup>

Individually and collectively, states and coalitions engaged in expeditionary interventions since the end of the Cold War have sought to achieve a more coherent, comprehensive, and whole-of-government approach to their endeavors, employing the 3D Approach. But in these undertakings, nation-building has been a product rather than a reason for intervention, and the product has demanded significantly more focus than anticipated to reach the standard required for stability.

### Definition and Measurement

Nation-building should not be confused with humanitarian intervention, which focuses on the immediate provision of life-support services. The ultimate goal of successful nation-building is a resilient, viable, and politically stable society supported by a responsive and accountable state apparatus. The concept of nation-building can be applied to strategies for both postconflict reconstruction and conflict prevention. Since

optimal nation-building is a dynamic interaction between a state and its people, supported by international intervention

the 1990s, however, Australian nation-building efforts have principally been responses to conflict situations, concentrating on stabilization and reconstruction. Far less attention has been given to important civil-military opportunities for conflict prevention, security sector reform, political reconciliation, and strengthening government accountability to

local communities as part of holistic nation-building and poverty reduction programs.

The terms *nation-building* and *state-building* are often used interchangeably, although there can be important differences between the two. Nation-building represents the broad process of constructing a national identity and linking it to the authority of the state. It involves unifying the majority of the population within the state—despite ethnic, social, cultural, and/or religious diversity—and fostering a national identity that is reflected in the character and authority of the state. State-building is narrower in its focus, referring to the functioning of a state from the consolidation of its territory to the development of effective institutions, processes, specialized personnel, and a monopoly over violence. State-building involves improving the architecture and effectiveness of government instrumentalities in a nontotalitarian manner that is representative of the people it serves. Nation-building requires the establishment of ongoing dialogue and mechanisms for effective and safe interaction between the people and the state as opposed to building institutional frameworks and mechanisms. A focus on state-building alone can lead to the establishment of inappropriate governments for longer term stability. Without an accurate and appropriate understanding of what unifies (or conversely divides) a population, the potential exists to measure success based on short-term inputs and costs rather than longer term outcomes and processes. The reality is that international interventions are unlikely to be successful in the long term unless they are committed to nation-building.

Measuring the effectiveness of nation-building is a complex undertaking. The task requires looking beyond the easily quantifiable and tangible metrics of dollars spent, training

provided, militants demobilized, police and civil servants recruited, and growth in the private sector. It involves complementing quantitative data with qualitative analysis to provide an accurate appraisal of the accessibility, responsiveness, credibility, and legitimacy of the government, community perceptions of security and justice, and the effective and efficient delivery of basic services to the population. Strong and decisive political leadership is critical, and the process should result in a conflict-sensitive, locally owned, bottom-up popular investment in a host government and its national institutions. A range of political checks and balances on government action cannot be limited to a single milestone of free and fair elections. A strong sense of national identity can and should shape the development of government institutions to be responsive, appropriate, legitimate, and credible to the host population. Optimal nation-building, therefore, is a dynamic interaction between a state and its people, supported and facilitated by international intervention providing resources, advice, and expertise. Such an ideal does not incorporate regime change through intervention, although regime change may sometimes occur as an important step in the nation-building process.

Isolating the elements for successful nation-building further adds to the complexity of measuring its effectiveness. Each situation is unique, and solutions defy simple templating or transplanting. Building on the Brahimi Report of 2000, and reviewing peace interventions in Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Timor-Leste, and Afghanistan, an important Kings College study in 2003 identified five key areas for effective peacebuilding in postconflict environments: planning and process; public administration and governance; rule of law and

postconflict justice; the security sector; and the humanitarian-peacekeeping-development interface.<sup>15</sup> If each is developed in a manner that appropriately accounts for the unique history and culture of a host nation, these areas could represent the pillars of a nation-building strategy. But the relevance of these pillars can be applied equally to the viability of conflict prevention strategies as international assistance to nation-building is likely to be more effective in a preconflict environment.

Various organs of the United Nations, such as the United Nations Development Programme, Peacebuilding Commission, and UN Secretariat's Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs, have expended considerable effort in improving capacity in postconflict reconstruction, usually with limited resources and in situations of fragile peace. In such circumstances the Security Council has increasingly mandated missions with tasks that are akin to nation-building.

Ghani and Lockhart's "Ten Functions of a State" (see table) provide a useful guide in helping to measure effectiveness in nation-building. These functions, however, are not a prescription for success and must be contextualized within an individual nation's history and culture. What seems clear, however, is that countries that appear most at risk on the Failed State Index tend to display poor progress in these functions.

Two significant historical examples of nation-building are the post-World War II economic and political reconstructions of Western Europe and Japan. These triumphs of nation-building, nonetheless, were fundamentally based on U.S. and Western national security interests that arose in response to intense ideological, political, and military competition with the Soviet Union. As such, nation-building was a strategy for containing communism,

Table. Ten Functions of a State

National executive controls the <i>public administration</i>
National actors in education, training, health, and welfare invest in <i>human capital</i>
National utilities actors run effective <i>infrastructure services</i>
National enterprise actors invest in <i>natural, industrial, intellectual assets</i>
National legislature defines social contract and delineates <i>citizen rights and duties</i>
National diplomats and negotiators oversee <i>international relations and public borrowing</i>
National judiciary and police uphold the <i>rule of law</i>
National military controls a <i>monopoly on the means of violence</i>
National treasurers manage <i>public finances</i>
National economists/trade actors regulate and oversee <i>the market</i>

Source: The Institute for State Effectiveness, available at <[www.effectivestates.org/ten.htm](http://www.effectivestates.org/ten.htm)>.

rather than a commitment to build strong and stable societies per se, supporting the earlier claim that nation-building policies complement more realist and conventional defense policies. The rebuilding of Western Europe and Japan, and later South Korea following the Korean War stalemate, were interventions for the long haul, and focused on a deliberate civil-military approach that remained subordinate to civilian authority. Subsequent interventions have failed to replicate the size and success of these three nation-building enterprises. Aspirational aspects of this model, however, can perhaps be seen in the UN's modern integrated peacekeeping approach, although with a less clear political overlay and generally without the commitment of sufficient resources by member states.

In Australia's immediate region there are also examples of nation-building efforts that have had varying degrees of success, such as in Bougainville, Timor-Leste, and the Solomon Islands. Despite substantial differences in the political and security genesis of each of these interventions, each has required civil-military and multidimensional responses (even those that were originally more narrowly conceived as primarily military operations). These three different examples continue to be works in progress, despite the success achieved to date; the withdrawal or downsizing of foreign military and police forces does not necessarily correspond with or equate to a robust peace or signify sustainable nation-building. This becomes apparent when such forces are required to return to reclaim peace and stability as another start-point for nation-building, as was the case in Timor-Leste in 2006.<sup>16</sup> Much remains to be done in each of these countries for nation-building to prove successful, and emphasis needs to be given to conflict prevention strategies.

The interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq evolved differently from those that led to the rebuilding of Western Europe, Japan, and South Korea, which occurred over an extended period as part of a deliberate Cold War strategy. The former have been based on short-term planning horizons, respectively aimed at disrupting terrorist safe havens (Afghanistan) and neutralizing weapons of mass destruction (Iraq). These interventions commenced while lacking coordinated and coherent civil-military planning, and they have morphed repeatedly, without clear long-term visions and without promises of long-term commitments. Nation-building has neither been promised nor applied in earnest, yet the 3D Approach has the trappings of nation-building.

Operationally, the Afghanistan and Iraq interventions have been only partially successful in gaining the overall support of the local population, and in providing for their protection. In this modern and complex 3D environment, strategic priorities have oscillated between enhancing global security through countering terrorism and assisting host states in their nation-building efforts. A confluence of these two (sometimes contradictory) priorities has not been uniformly achieved between interveners and host states alike, particularly when regime change has been perceived as the prime motive for intervention. Nation-building in postwar Europe, Japan, and South Korea had a central focus on building democracies. The more recent interventions in Iraq and Afghanistan have been more focused on military objectives, with the political imperative of fostering democracy a secondary concern. In these interventions the first principle of war, the selection and maintenance of the aim, has proved difficult and rubbery, and long-term commitments to nation-building have been avoided by, and uncoordinated among, contributing

coalition partners. The *Christian Science Monitor* recently noted that “helping faltering regimes defend themselves because they supposedly face a terrorism problem, which may somehow morph into a threat to the United States [and by implication other countries], will often just mean assisting repressive governments defend themselves against their own people.”<sup>17</sup> Such action clearly does not constitute effective nation-building. Rather than being used as examples for future nation-building strategies, or as reasons for not undertaking nation-building, Afghanistan and Iraq should be consigned to the category of “exception” rather than of “rule.”

there is a lack of understanding of “the deep-rootedness of the political conflict” that spawns a complex crisis

## Relationships

The nation-building agendas of the international community and host states are fundamentally political in nature, but the political underpinnings of crises and national political dynamics are not always well understood by international actors. Based on practical experience gained in a host of operational crises from Angola to Afghanistan, James Kunder has emphasized that there is a consistent lack of understanding of “the deep-rootedness of the underlying political conflict” that spawns a complex crisis.<sup>18</sup>

Not all interventions respond to conflict or are military in nature. Interventions based primarily on long-term economic aid and development occur by mutual agreement between sovereign states, even if in some instances the receiving country may be dependent on foreign aid and have limited practical room for political

autonomy and maneuver. The relationship between Australia and countries such as Papua New Guinea and Nauru are sometimes cast in this light. Such aid and development interventions may be necessary for the economic survival of the receiving nation, but they do not always have a positive impact on nation-building. A challenge for donors such as Australia is how to channel aid and development into meaningful nation-building strategies, including at the community grassroots level, rather than creating situations of budgetary dependence. If fragile states are to prosper and escape the traps of poverty and insecurity, they and their donors will require strategies beyond the meeting of the expenditure targets of the Millennium Development Goals.

Foreign interventions that include the use of force for nation-building, on the other hand, must accord with international law, which rests on the principle of state sovereignty and the norm of nonintervention. Other than acting in self-defense or under specific mandate of the United Nations, no state can interfere in the domestic affairs of another (article 2[4] of the UN Charter). A recent exception to this principle, the Responsibility to Protect (R2P), was unanimously agreed upon by world leaders in 2005 as a new norm. R2P encompasses the notion that sovereignty is a responsibility and not a privilege, and that when a state is unable or unwilling to protect its citizens the international community has a responsibility to intervene when sanctioned by the Security Council. R2P, however, is yet to be invoked in practice.

The rise of militant nonstate actors has challenged the efficacy of international law between states. While irregular forces have been accommodated under international humanitarian law through the Additional Protocols to the

Geneva Conventions, international law has not always proved useful in managing asymmetric conflict between state and nonstate actors. To allow for nation-building in contested environments, old principles of irregular and counterinsurgency warfare have been dusted off and relearned. Principally, this requires the subordination of military forces to civilian authority in theater. But this has proved difficult to achieve in practice, particularly when host governments have been ineffective or corrupt, and when those intervening lack the necessary pool of well-trained civilian diplomats, mentors, change agents, administrators, development specialists, police, and technocrats.

Last-minute calls in such interventions for a “civilian surge,” capable of understanding the cultural requirements of different fragile states, cannot be accommodated quickly as such elements require years of preparation. In this light, Australia’s recent initiative to establish an Australian Civilian Corps (ACC) is sensible. Rather than short-term responses to conflicts and disasters, however, the ACC’s long-term utility may ultimately rest on its assistance to unstable and fragile states as part of conflict prevention through an understanding of the culture, history, politics, and language of the people in locations where they may need to be deployed frequently.

The lessons from nation-building interventions in nonpermissive environments such as Afghanistan, Timor-Leste, and the Solomon Islands are yet to be codified, while old lessons are relearned and misapplied. Nevertheless, some preconditions for success in such environments warrant repetition. These include:

- ❖ no intervention without strategy
- ❖ a political commitment for the long haul



1<sup>st</sup> Joint Public Affairs Unit (Chris Moore)

Royal Australian Navy dentist shows girl her infected tooth after removal at dental clinic aboard USNS *Mercy* on regional humanitarian mission in East Timor

- ❖ coordinated civil-military analysis, planning, and execution—the 3D Approach to security, governance, and development
- ❖ a supportive and receptive host government, relatively corruption-free and leading the change
- ❖ sufficient resources to ensure public security and to isolate insurgents and spoilers
- ❖ primacy of political objectives—civilian leadership and military subordination to a capable civil authority
- ❖ population respect for, and confidence in, the security forces of intervening states
- ❖ a genuine local and international commitment to governance and the rule of law
- ❖ effective mechanisms for population protection
- ❖ early and effective communications and information strategies
- ❖ a coordinated national development plan.

It is likely that the international community’s experience in Iraq and Afghanistan will curb the appetite of many countries for nation-building interventions in the near future. Ambition may have run well ahead of capability in these interventions, and mistakes made are likely to result in justifiable caution in future expeditionary endeavors. While it is not impossible to achieve success in such situations, the costs are significant and may be disproportionate to the benefits without

a clear understanding of the context, the task, and a capacity to apply the right tools to the right problems. Nation-building in hostile environments is a highly complex and political undertaking that is both resource- and time-intensive. The relearning of this long-known but ultimately forgotten lesson by the international community in Iraq and Afghanistan has been an unforgiving process. Yet much wisdom has emerged from recent experience and care should be taken to catalogue and institutionalize these civil-military lessons.

### Future Interventions for Australia

The prognosis for effective nation-building interventions by Australia in the future is not clear. For major conflicts such as Afghanistan, the time horizons seem ridiculously short for nation-building to be effective, and contributions by Australia (while important in Oruzgan Province) will have minimal impact on Afghanistan's overall nation-building outcome. In tough economic times, and acknowledging that the conflict has become increasingly unpopular among the populations of some coalition countries, the strategic focus has shifted to limiting public expectations of success and contemplating withdrawal timelines. Current NATO strategy does not represent a consolidated plan for building the nation-state

nation-building beyond Afghanistan, and the priority of nation-building as a component in national security strategy.

Post-Afghanistan, the priority for Australia's nation-building efforts should concentrate on the archipelagic and maritime environment of its immediate region, incorporating strategically important countries in Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. Rather than focusing on responses to conflicts and natural disasters, priority should be given to strategies for conflict prevention and disaster risk reduction. Comprehensive civil-military nation-building strategies will be required over the long term, with an emphasis on identifying opportunities to strengthen physical security, economic development, governance, and the rule of law. This is a mammoth task, but, compared with many other continents and regions, it should be possible to reduce the current level of fragility and to contribute to a more secure, prosperous, and peaceful region. Such an approach will require Australia to work closely with host governments and multilateral agencies, and to harmonize expectations and programs into less stovepiped and more coherent nation-building strategies. Through these efforts, and by working to achieve a careful and effective balance in emphasis between proactive nation-building strategies and the enduring traditional defense policies for conventional threats, Australia will enhance its own security and be respected as a regional middle power "punching to its weight."

Such a strategy, if implemented effectively, would make an important contribution to strengthening the Australia-U.S. alliance, and would be consistent with the U.S. goal of burden-sharing its global responsibilities, particularly as the balance of power between the United States and China continues to evolve. Optimizing peace and security in the important

**Australia's nation-building efforts should concentrate on the archipelagic and maritime environment of its immediate region**

of Afghanistan. Australia must honor its commitment in Afghanistan, but equally it needs to consider and plan its future approach to

maritime environment of the Indian and Pacific Oceans proximate to Australia is an important contribution to global security.

Australia is a small but respected middle power in the global context. Contributions to global peace, security, and development will be optimized through purposeful engagement with the United Nations and the Bretton Woods economic institutions. Increased multiagency engagement by Australia will contribute positively to the UN's capacity and reform program, and enable Australia to learn important global lessons for potential application in regional nation-building strategies. For example, Australia has much to learn from Africa, the global epicenter of security and development case studies that dominate the UN peacekeeping and peacebuilding agenda.

## Conclusion

Australia's national security can be enhanced through proactive and long-term civil-military nation-building strategies based on conflict prevention and disaster risk reduction, principally focusing on Southeast Asia and the Southwest Pacific. More work is required by policymakers if Australia's immediate region is to be peaceful, prosperous, and secure. These efforts should be complemented by support to multinational agencies in the global arena—principally the United Nations and the World Bank Group. By contrast, nation-building efforts focused on stabilization and postconflict reconstruction, particularly in more distant locations, are likely to be more costly and less successful. Such interventions should be considered by exception. Australia's experience in regional nation-building interventions has shown greater success than ventures farther afield.

A national security strategy with increased emphasis on regional conflict prevention through coherent nation-building strategies will help strengthen Australia's contribution to the Australia-U.S. alliance. This alliance is likely to remain the cornerstone of Australia's security policy even as the balance of power continues to evolve in the Asia-Pacific region. **PRISM**

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States: A Framework for Rebuilding a Fractured World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 3, 4.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Kevin Rudd, "The First National Security Statement to the Parliament: Address by the Prime Minister of Australia," December 4, 2008. Kevin Rudd is currently Australia's Minister for Foreign Affairs.

<sup>5</sup> Lowy Institute for International Policy, *Advancing Innovative Development and Aid Strategies in the Asia-Pacific: Accelerating the Millennium Development Goals: Final Conference Report, July 2010*, available at <[http://lowyinstitute.richmedia-server.com/sound/2010\\_Aid\\_and\\_MDGs/Final\\_Conference\\_Report.pdf](http://lowyinstitute.richmedia-server.com/sound/2010_Aid_and_MDGs/Final_Conference_Report.pdf)>.

<sup>6</sup> The civil component is broad, including all nonmilitary functions such as policing.

<sup>7</sup> The quest for alliance burden-sharing commenced with President Richard Nixon's Guam Doctrine in 1968. It has been estimated that by 2017 the annual interest payments on the U.S. national debt will exceed the defense budget.

<sup>8</sup> Peter Leahy, "Shifting Priorities in National Security: More Security Less Defence," *Security Challenges* 6, no. 2 (Winter 2010). Retired Lieutenant General Peter Leahy, Officer of the Order of Australia, is a former

Chief of the Australian Army and foundation Director of the National Security Institute at the University of Canberra.

<sup>9</sup> Paul Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

<sup>10</sup> Patrick M. Cronin, “Barack Obama Faces 8 Global National Security Challenges,” *U.S. News & World Report*, December 15, 2008, available at <[www.usnews.com/articles/opinion/2008/12/15/barack-obama-faces-8-global-national-security-challenges.html](http://www.usnews.com/articles/opinion/2008/12/15/barack-obama-faces-8-global-national-security-challenges.html)>.

<sup>11</sup> See Fund for Peace, Failed State Index, available at <[www.fundforpeace.org](http://www.fundforpeace.org)>.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.* According to the Fund for Peace, Failed State Index, of 177 countries listed, 37 were in the “alert” (red) category, including Burma (16) and Timor-Leste (18). Regional countries in the “warning” (amber) category (from 38–129) included the Solomon Islands (43), the Philippines (51), Papua New Guinea (56), Indonesia (61), Fiji (74), Thailand (81), and Samoa (107). Not all smaller countries in the region were listed, such as Nauru and Tonga. A further 34 countries were included in the “moderate” (yellow) category, including Singapore and the United States. Only 13 countries were included in the “sustainable” (green) category, including Australia and New Zealand.

<sup>13</sup> See United Nations *Comprehensive Review of the Whole Question of Peacekeeping Operations in All Their Aspects: Report of the Panel on UN Peacekeeping Operations*, UN document A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000, referred to as the “Brahimi Report.”

<sup>14</sup> This assessment is based on the draft “Concept Note” for WDR11, dated January 7, 2010.

<sup>15</sup> Nicola Dahrendorf, *A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change* (London: Kings College, March 2003).

<sup>16</sup> The International Crisis Group series of reports provides an account of, and important insights into, the crisis in Timor-Leste in 2006: International Crisis Group (ICG), *Resolving Timor-Leste’s Crisis*, Asia Report No. 120, October 10, 2006; ICG, *Timor-Leste’s Parliamentary Elections*, Asia Briefing No. 65, Dili/Brussels, June 13, 2007; ICG, *Timor-Leste: Security Sector Reform*, Asia Report No. 143, January 17, 2008; ICG, *Timor-Leste’s Displacement Crisis*, Asia Report No. 148, March 31, 2008; ICG, *Timor-Leste: No Time for Complacency*, Asia Briefing No. 87, Dili/Brussels, February 9, 2009; ICG, *Handing Back Responsibility to Timor-Leste’s Police*, Asia Report No. 180, December 3, 2009.

<sup>17</sup> Dennis C. Jett, “US Military Support for Troubled States: A Dangerous Doctrine Returns,” *Christian Science Monitor*, August 20, 2010.

<sup>18</sup> James Kunder, “The Politics of Complex Operations,” in *Commanding Heights: Strategic Lessons from Complex Operations*, ed. Michael Miklaucic (Washington, DC: National Defense University Press, May 2010), 80.