

Guess what? We give more than .7% already

David Carment, Citizen Special

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The second issue is the interesting question of where to concentrate our efforts. Developing countries may be relevant to Canadian foreign policy for a number of reasons; from cultural, linguistic and historical linkages to the presence of vibrant diaspora communities and networks to economic ties to strategic considerations to concerns of national security. To this end, the Senate report on Africa recommended that a redoubling of effort is necessary if Africa is to be brought back from the brink.

In research that we conducted, all but one of the most fragile states are to be found in sub-Saharan Africa. By the same token, the Western Hemisphere is becoming increasingly important to Canada as measured by private sector interests, spillback violence, transnational crime and tourism. For example, Canada has repeatedly taken a lead role in international efforts to intervene in Haiti and has made Jamaica the second-largest recipient of its development assistance in the region. In brief, it is altogether easier to say that we should concentrate our aid as well as our diplomatic and defence efforts than it is to spell out where and why we should do so. Africa and the Western Hemisphere justify our full engagement but for somewhat different and equally plausible reasons.

The third issue is that Canada should focus on strengthening governance, anti-corruption and market efficiency in countries that are making real efforts to address these problems. In fact, the answer is rarely so simple.

The really poor performers are so, in part, because of donor neglect. They are the "aid orphans" who typically underperform in relation to the "aid darlings." To ignore the orphans is to only worsen their situation. To tackle the problem of fragile states is to understand that aid may have a stabilizing result when the country has the capacity to direct aid toward good governance. Conditional aid that fails to take the absorptive capacity of a state into account rarely induces desired changes.

Although aid can have an indirect effect on patterns of governance, without strong domestic leadership, the effect is relatively weak.

Canada must select eligible countries through careful analysis with specific attention given to both the most fragile of states that are at risk of failure and those whose improved performance demands continued international support.

Ultimately, any engagement whose strategy and measures of success are not clearly defined, or one in which the specific Canadian contribution is not explicitly clear and measurable, will be difficult to justify to voters.

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