Military Intervention and Security for the Bottom Billion

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The world's poorest countries are particularly vulnerable to civil wars, which are difficult to stop. Policies designed to tackle structural problems before conflict erupts are likely to be more effective than reactive intervention after domestic violence has broken out, and appropriately trained local and regional armies have an important part to play. Constructing preventative strategies, security guarantees and ensuring co-operation between regional and Western alliances, particularly the European Union, are priorities.

Interventions must be long-term to be effective

Most academics and diplomats do not share Collier's view that victims of Bottom Billion conflicts are potential enemies to Western societies, but they do support the idea that external intervention may often be necessary to resolve conflicts in these states. Very weak constitutions can make it difficult for conflicting parties to make credible, binding commitments to each other in negotiations. Even though both parties would be better off with a settlement, each continues to fight for fear that the other may renege on any agreement.

External powers that are willing to enforce a settlement on all parties can be vital in breaking this security dilemma stalemate (Lake and Rothchild in Brown *et al.* 2001; Carnegie Commission on Preventing Deadly Conflict 1997). Most would also agree with Collier that to be effective the external commitments made in these circumstances need to be for at least a decade and guarantors have to be willing to sustain casualties and, if necessary, impose the peace.

Benefits of preventative action

Preventative, rather than reactive, intervention is likely to be more effective. Collier focuses on military intervention in Bottom Billion states only in response to breakdowns that have already occurred. His analysis shows that the causes of such breakdowns tend to be structural, which suggests they might be addressed at least partly in a preventative manner. Since his work

Collier on military intervention

The Bottom Billion favours external military intervention in poor states in order to: expel an aggressor; restore order; maintain post-conflict peace; and prevent coups. Collier's analysis of the British intervention in Sierra Leone suggests that the ratio of benefits to costs in such interventions is high. In the case of post-conflict interventions, he urges that donor and international security commitments be assured for a decade, accompanied by 'host country' power-sharing, reductions in domestic military spending, and freedom for the media.

indicates that one outbreak of domestic conflict will greatly increase the probability of further outbreaks, prevention of initial conflict should give

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high returns. In weak states, external guarantees of 'the rules of the game' may provide the critical confidence that enables groups to compete with each other peacefully. Guarantees of stability for those countries that have not already broken down in conflict are the easiest and most efficient external factor to supply.

A credible commitment of support by a group of powers with mobile, well-equipped strike forces – and a good record of success in such ventures – would be highly effective and efficient in guaranteeing stability. The experience of France with its former colonies in Africa between 1960 and 1990 suggests that very few groups (military or civilian) were willing to risk a rebellion when a regime was guaranteed by a European power. However, France was intervening on a unilateral basis in order to protect non-democratic, if not authoritarian regimes. Leonard and Straus (2003) have proposed treaty agreements between African governments and international groupings that guarantee legitimate regimes against coups, invasions or rebellions in return for minimal human rights, independent courts and progress toward democracy.

Collier's advocacy for military intervention does not make it clear whether the issue at stake is to promote stability, which can be achieved by unsavoury authoritarian regimes, or democracy in peaceful environments. It is important to assure that:

- Presidents who have lost the support of their electorates cannot use international guarantees to extend their terms in office
- Changes of government can be accomplished without the use of force
- Regimes that are the beneficiaries of international guarantees be well-known
- Enforcement of guarantees must be quickly and reliably available if a regime is challenged by armed groups.

The final two points are critical for deterrence, credibility and, therefore, the efficiency of the international commitments. If guarantees of regime stability are extended through treaties between individual countries and an international grouping, they respect the norm of sovereignty. This is crucial to their acceptance by the non-NATO members of the UN, especially China and African states. It is unfeasible and undesirable in the current international system for any country to be forced to sign such an agreement. If a Bottom Billion government chose to terminate an agreement or to violate its commitments for democracy, human rights or the judiciary, the sanction would be the loss of its stability guarantees. The international system would not invade; the local government would simply become more vulnerable to coup or rebellion. Over the long run, we predict that the Bottom Billion regimes will find stable democracy preferable to unstable autocracy.

The role of the European Union

Bilateral guarantees work faster than multilateral agreements, but the legitimacy of multilateral arrangements is much greater. The EU may be the best candidate for providing such stability guarantees, partly because of the growing influence of member states anxious to prevent European military intervention from taking a neo-colonial turn. It has been much more active in conflict management than Collier suggests, through the mobilisation of rapid reaction forces (with five such missions since 2003). EU military interventions, such as Operations Artemis and EUFOR Congo (both in the Democratic Republic of Congo), have led to conceptual innovations – such as the creation of battle groups of about 1,500 troops with appropriate supporting units, able to intervene promptly in 'collapsing states' anywhere in the world. Similarly, two EU missions have provided assistance and advice on necessary reforms to the security forces and the police, consolidating the EU's contribution to post-conflict reconstruction by civilian means. The EU has been active in restoring democratic order as well as in managing post-conflict environments, and its operations have increasingly taken on long-term and preventive approaches. Similarly, security concerns have been integrated into its trade policy, as testified by the Kimberley Process

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Certification Scheme and the Action Plan for Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade.

Combining Western and regional action

Western assistance must be coupled with the intervention of local troops. This first involves reinforcing the effectiveness of regional bodies. It is very hard to imagine a system where western forces would intervene without regional bodies – such as the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). Contrary to Collier's disdainful observations, ECOWAS has demonstrated its efficiency in highly dangerous and risky environments (Liberia, Sierra Leone and Cote d'Ivoire). The kind of abuses that were committed by its troops in early missions are now more likely to be avoided, thanks to the adoption of the Mechanism for Conflict Prevention, Management and Resolution, Peace-keeping and Security and the addition of the Supplementary Protocol on Democracy and Good Governance. The Supplementary Protocol's main concern is the development of a constitutional state, based on the rule of law, the strengthening of democracy and the adoption of common principles of good governance within ECOWAS' 15 member states, in order to avoid the militarisation of governance. If implemented in other sub-regions, such protocols could be very useful tools for building a system of guarantees –

providing a regional multilateral backing to bilateral or EU agreements.

Improving local security forces

Preventative packages must include improving the ability of local security forces to intervene appropriately and effectively in violent domestic conflicts and to enforce their resolution. Weak states are much more vulnerable to conflict. The Security Sector Reform (SSR) processes that have been underway for a decade in Africa need to be widened. Collier's view of Bottom Billion armed forces as only 'kleptocratic' and his recommendation that military expenditures in these countries be reduced in order to release resources for development is insulting and short-sighted for many countries. His position is the traditional approach adopted by the World Bank.

A major shift in the thinking of multilateral as well as bilateral development agencies has begun to occur and a more nuanced approach is gaining wide influence. It is increasingly recognised that while reductions in military expenses are sometimes accompanied by an increase in political stability and a redirection of a part of military budgets towards developmental goals, there also are compelling examples where political stability could not have been reached without efficient reforms to the security services (military and police).

Research on SSR – largely endorsed by important development donors, including the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and the EU – suggests that what is required is cost-effective management of the sector. This includes the adoption of cheaper and more effective defence strategies (emphasising lighter and more mobile armed forces and the elimination of organisational duplication) as well as the introduction of whole new sets of approaches and values (as are encouraged by the training of Bottom Billion security services for involvement in international peacekeeping missions).

Southern armies are not going to disappear. Most of these countries perceive themselves as facing threats to their national interests, sovereignty and internal stability (cross-border raids; restoration of law and order; public-order policing, etc.) which cannot be addressed by external forces over the long-term. Bottom Billion states will continue to insist on the means to fulfil these missions and if security forces are going to exist, it is dangerous for them to be underpaid, poorly equipped or badly trained with inappropriate values.

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