

**A CCIC Commentary on  
A Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention:  
Key Entry Points of Action<sup>1</sup>  
A Policy Statement by the Development Assistance Committee, OECD, April 2003**

## **Introduction**

At the beginning of October 2003, the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) declassified a Policy Statement on development co-operation and terrorism. Its goal is to reassess or “recalibrate” development co-operation priorities (and spending) in light of a “whole-of-government” response to terrorism.

The statement was endorsed by the DAC High Level Meeting of Ministers in April 2003 and is intended to complement the DAC Guidelines, *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict* (2001), a reference point for development co-operation actors in this field.

In the words of the DAC Chair’s Introduction,

“While the causes of international terrorism are complex, there are connections with development arenas, actors and issues.

“This DAC Reference Document draws on donor responses to international terrorism. It is intended to guide the international community and governments in their efforts to address linkages between terrorism and development, and suggests how donor programmes might be designed or adjusted.”

## **Overview**

Linking acts of terrorism and their prevention with the goals of development co-operation in developing countries is highly problematic. Prior to September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, the South was well acquainted with terrorism and with few exceptions had put it in its place — very much subsidiary to other development issues and challenges, including responses to a broader context of violent conflict. Terrorism as a specific and explicit tactic on the part of politically motivated individuals or organisations (including the state) has been around for hundreds of years and at best represents a very small element in the context of violent conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> *A Development Co-operation Lens on Terrorism Prevention: Key Entry Points of Action* is available on the OECD DAC website at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/17/4/16085708.pdf>. This commentary has benefited from feedback from colleagues at CCIC and from Audrey Gaughran who coordinates the Global Security and Development project at BOND in the UK (<http://www.bond.org.uk/advocacy/globalsecurity.htm>). The author alone is responsible for the resulting analysis.

Despite several protocols and conventions on terrorism and work underway in the General Assembly, the international community has not been able to agree on definitions of terrorism or distinctions between its forms (largely due to the Israel/Palestine conflict). The US, the EU and other countries have devised very broad working definitions of terrorism for national legislation responding to the “war on terrorism”.

In the aftermath of September 11<sup>th</sup>, terrorism has become central to the domestic and international security preoccupations of Northern Governments, particularly in priorities for American foreign policy. The foundation for these priorities seems rooted, not in a geopolitical analysis of the relative threat of terrorism to citizens, but in a set of ideological and apocalyptic “moral judgements”, largely driven by the vision of a powerful faction within the current US administration, who are eager to assert American pre-eminent power globally. Terrorism has been given dimensions of “evil” versus “good”, constituting a universal threat, not unlike the threat of massive nuclear destruction that oriented four decades of the Cold War global politics.

Terrorism, as random acts of deadly violence against civilians whose purpose is to create fear and insecurity for surrounding populations, clearly constitute illegal criminal acts that are unambiguously morally reprehensible and devoid of any political rationale. Terrorism can have serious consequences for societies affected, including legitimate movements of people struggling to realise their rights within these societies. But September 11<sup>th</sup> notwithstanding, terrorism is not a pervasive tactic undertaken by significant numbers of groups and individuals seeking change through violent means. Far more people and societies continue to be affected by persistent internal conflict and violence, which impact large civilian populations with incalculable human and material costs over the past decade.

In 2001, the DAC published a very useful set of guidelines for donors on *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*. This work drew thoughtfully on the wealth of experience in conflict prevention and peace building efforts by governments, multilateral institutions, donors and civil society organisations. Interestingly, in 155 pages, the Guidelines mention “terrorism” only once! Tellingly this reference places terrorism along side other essentially criminal activities — drug trafficking, organised crime and illicit arms transfers — as a subject for international co-operation (but not necessarily ODA) That is how most acts of terrorism should be characterised.

The DAC’s new policy on terrorism starts with the closed assumption that international co-operation must address terrorism. This assumption is never questioned. Unfortunately, the policy statement, developed largely in private sessions with little, if any, consultation with those involved in development outside government, may well undermine effective donor approaches outlined in *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*. In doing so, donor priorities will be overtaken by a northern driven agenda that targets significant resources to the “war on terrorism” and its extension to other forms of conflict. As such, it may negatively affect legitimate donor strategies to help prevent increasingly pervasive violent conflict, particularly in Africa, and also distort the focus of development co-operation away from the eradication of poverty and the needs of poor countries.

## Understanding the Rational and Implications of the DAC Policy Statement

### ❖ Terrorism, the Unseen Enemy in our Midst

The DAC policy statement offers no definition of “terrorism”. Rather it creates the spectra of an unseen and pervasive enemy in our midst. Referring to an article by the Minister for Foreign Affairs for Indonesia, it suggests that

“Support for terrorism comes from hatred born of exclusion, ignorance and prejudice, injustice and alienation, feelings of helplessness and despair. Terrorist leaders feed on these factors and exploit them, gathering support for their organisations and acts. Some terrorists and their “sleeper cells” live and work in OECD countries, taking advantage of efficient infrastructures and political openness. Terrorists are extremely adaptable. They use to their advantage their surrounding circumstances — locally, nationally, regionally and internationally.”  
(page 11)

The references in the forward and later in the document (page 8) is to “international terrorism” suggesting that the DAC paper is concerned solely with its global form that targets developed country interests.

### ❖ The Securitisation of Aid: Obscuring the Goals for Poverty Eradication

The DAC policy points to an emerging “securitisation” of aid in donor countries as military, political and humanitarian responses merge as a “whole-of-government” approach in response to countries experiencing protracted crises in the name of the “war on terrorism” and sometimes conflict prevention itself. The lens through which donors assess different potential responses to these crises are giving priority to Northern security interests and terrorism.

Globally, many in civil society have called for a clear purpose for aid in ending global poverty.<sup>2</sup> The limited resources devoted to supporting this latter goal have been declining and for many donor countries foreign policy objectives continue to orient their aid programs. In the past few years donors have paid considerable attention to improving the effectiveness of aid to tackle poverty. Donors are also committed to achieving the Millennium Development Goals, for which the UN suggests \$50 billion US is required in **additional** aid each year. Donors, even with promised increases are far off this mark. The inclusion of multiple objectives for aid, which are only tangentially (if at all) related to this overarching goal, compounds current concerns for focusing the impact of aid on poverty. Increases in aid should not be used to justify spending aid on other priorities.

In fact, to date, the most effective responses to “new” expressions of terrorism are effective policing and improved border/protection activities, (legitimate) activities and concerns that have little direct impact on poverty eradication. In many countries that have passed draconian security legislation across the globe, civil libertarians suggest that the state already has sufficient policing powers to effectively combat terrorism through **existing** international conventions and international instruments.

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<sup>2</sup> See for example various issues of the *Reality of Aid Report*, available at [www.realityofaid.org](http://www.realityofaid.org).

In this context, a Canadian coalition<sup>3</sup> suggests that our response to terrorism needs to be **proportional** (taking into account the extent of the apparent risk) and **sharply focused** (for anti-terrorism purposes). It is suggested that the goals of anti-terrorism legislation and related initiatives are driven predominantly by a desire to appease US demands to harmonise security, immigration and refugee, and border restrictions in the interests of global operability of the American security apparatus. There is growing evidence that similar legislation throughout South East Asia is intended to serve these purposes, with notable financing from the Australian aid program in a number of instances.<sup>4</sup> It appears that the DAC Aid Ministers may also have been drawn into this agenda.

#### ❖ **Conflation of Terrorism with Other Forms of Violent Conflict**

While DAC Ministers, in the statement, do not claim a role for development co-operation to address *all* the root causes of terrorism, they propose that “development co-operation *does* have an important role to play in helping to deprive terrorists of popular support and addressing the conditions that terrorist leaders feed on and exploit.” (page 11) In doing so, the DAC statement conflates these perceived root causes of terrorism with causes of conflict in general.<sup>5</sup> It then draws directly on donor strategies for poverty eradication and in the prevention of conflict in “failed states” [i.e. the DAC statement on the role of development co-operation in *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*] as equally valid for its development co-operation’s contribution to the prevention of terrorism.

#### ❖ **Terrorism: Where is the Linkage with Poverty and “Failed States”?**

The DAC analysis of the links between poverty and terrorism is very confusing. The authors of the policy statement rely on the work of Karen von Hippel from the University of London and her paper, “The Roots of Terrorism: Probing the Myths”.<sup>6</sup> While von Hippel does end up making a case for development co-operation in addressing the roots of the “new terrorism”, in doing so, she makes several observations that significantly undermine the linkages between poverty, “failed states” and terrorism. Among her conclusions are the following:

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<sup>3</sup> International Civil Liberties Monitoring Group, “In the Shadow of the Law”, Response to Justice Canada’s annual report on the application of the Anti-Terrorism Act (C-36), April 2002. CCIC is a founding member of the Monitoring Group.

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Chirawatana Charoonpatarapong, “War against Liberties”, Focus on the Global South, [www.suaram.org/apsn](http://www.suaram.org/apsn); “ASEAN Governments Create More Terrorism through Violence and Repression, say activists”, Forum Asia Statement at ASEAN Summit, Bali, October 6, 2003; ACFOA [Australian Council for Overseas Aid], “Aid Budget 2003-04 Overview and Analysis”, May 2003 [www.acfoa.asn.au](http://www.acfoa.asn.au).

<sup>5</sup> The conflation of the prevention of terrorism with the prevention of conflict parallels recent re-profiling of persistent conflict by governments in the South (e.g. Philippines) as terrorism to permit the full force of anti-terrorism laws and involve US military assistance in regional conflicts.

<sup>6</sup> Karen von Hippel, “The Roots of Terrorism: Probing the Myths”, The Political Quarterly, Special Issue, September 2002.

“Common sense would dictate that there is a direct correlation between poverty and terrorism; yet the evidence gathered thus far does not lend credence to this proposition, and if anything, supports the opposite.” (von Hippel, page 26)

“Indeed, it is not clear that collapsed states, or part of states that are not longer controlled by government, are used as havens, where terrorists live, ‘breed’ and train. When bin Laden took refuge in Sudan, it was not in the southern parts of the territory that are considered ‘lawless’, but rather in Khartoum in the north, where the government is firmly in control. Similarly when he established his base in Afghanistan in 1996, it was no longer a collapsed state, but controlled by the Taleban, which eventually succeeded in ruling most of the territory.” (von Hippel, page 31)

Another source used by the authors of the DAC policy statement, “Seeking the Roots of Terrorism” by Krueger and Maleckov, actually conclude that “any connection between poverty, education and terrorism is at best indirect, complicated and probably quite weak”.<sup>7</sup>

#### ❖ **Anti-Terrorism Actions: Restricting Peoples’ Rights, Undermining Conflict Prevention**

There is no apparent harmony between appropriate donor strategies to promote peace, prevent conflict and encourage social and political cohesion and strategies and practices to prevent/combat terrorism. The former emphasise the creation of viable and broadly responsive state and civil institutions, the promotion of social cohesion based on justice, and tackling the backdrop of socio-economic conditions that underlie endemic poverty and exclusion. In contrast, current actions by governments (North and South) to prevent and counter terrorism are oriented to the restriction of peoples’ rights, deepening repression of communities in conflict with their government (whether peaceful or otherwise), strengthening the military/the police/agencies for covert action within government and the creation of a climate of fear among its citizens. These proactive anti-terrorism measures do little to create climates for peace and development in the interests of people living in poverty.

The statement rightly calls for improved policy coherence on the part of donor governments, particularly where “OECD governments might overlook severe [human rights] abuses taking place because they need co-operation from a particular country’s government”. (page 19) The international community has an obligation, rooted in international human rights law, to attend to **any** derogation of international human rights standards, not just the most extreme abuses. Governments have indeed compromised their attention to human rights issues in the “war on terrorism”. The DAC policy insofar as it emphasises support for “improved” security legislation and military/police capacities may further undermine an already weak focus by donors on a comprehensive approach to human rights in development co-operation.

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<sup>7</sup> Alan B. Krueger and Jitka Malecková, “Seeking the Root Causes of Terrorism”, *Chronicle of Higher Education*, June 7, 2003, quoted on the following web page (October 27, 2003): [http://www.buzzmachine.com/archives/2003\\_06.html#003949](http://www.buzzmachine.com/archives/2003_06.html#003949).

### ❖ **Undermining Partnership: Poor, Marginalised, Disaffected People as a Threat to Lives and Well-being of Citizens in the North**

The DAC policy statement makes assumptions that fundamentally distort both the realities/causes for the sources of terrorism confronting the US and other western countries. It situates the motives for development co-operation within a mind-set defined by terrorism — poor, marginalised, disaffected people are a threat to lives and freedom of citizens in the North.

- ◆ The statement suggests, in seeming contradiction to its own cited sources, that people living in poverty, as they become increasingly frustrated with their condition, easily become disaffected potential supporters of terrorism. Donors must therefore act to **convince** such people through public education campaigns and aid that they can affect change “within ‘the system’” because they are a part of it. Destroying it cannot be seen as the only recourse.” (page 13) Indeed for many civil society activists in development co-operation, fundamental change of “the system” is what is required to reduce poverty.
- ◆ Similarly “the precarity of their political development, government structures and civil society [in fragile and failed states] can render them more vulnerable to radicalisation, less able to deal with illicit activities (e.g. training camps) and more likely to provide an environment in which terrorists are recruited and supported”. (page 16) While there are profound issues affecting poor people in failed states, not least being two decades of donor imposed structural adjustment policies, there is little evidence that such states have been bases for promoting terrorism.
- ◆ Likewise the policy statement encourages donors to increasing their engagement with the diaspora in their countries, because “they can underwrite violence, including terrorism”. (page 17) Such blanket characterisations of the diaspora, again unsubstantiated by evidence, can only play into rising xenophobia and substantial human rights abuses experienced by immigrant and refugee communities in many northern countries, including Canada.

Such assumptions fundamentally contradict an approach to development co-operation based on the promotion of rights for poor and vulnerable populations. Current practices in anti-terrorism, which are promoted by northern governments and which include the identification of many conflicts with terrorism by self-interested southern governments, belie the stated intention of DAC Ministers to “help ensure that strategies to fight poor governance, conflict and terrorism are coherent and co-ordinated, and consistent with human right norms and standards”. (page 12)

### ❖ **Inappropriate Donor Strategies and Approaches**

The means by which DAC Ministers propose to contribute to the prevention of terrorism draw extensively from strategies which are set out in *Helping Prevent Violent Conflict*. In directing such strategies to deal with (unfounded) assumptions about the role of poor people or the diaspora in terrorism, they will not only fail to deal effectively with terrorism, they may also undermine the credibility of donors in the face of complex and real issues involved in preventing more pervasive forms of violent conflict and creating conditions for peace.

Some examples among many in the policy statement,

- ◆ The orientation of donor sponsored dialogue with governments, civil society organisations and communities to convince them of “the terrible human, economic and political consequences of terrorist acts”, as if these actors are unaware and/or ignore such costs! (page 13)
- ◆ “Support groups that encourage and promote peaceful political change to reduce the constituency and the strength of terrorist organisations. This is especially important at the community level.” (page 13) The assumption presumably is that such community based organisations will otherwise turn to terrorism?
- ◆ Build positive capacity in the media by assisting education for journalists, which “should help counter attempts by terrorists to use information systems as key weapons of propaganda”. (page 14) Concern for the media must address the capacities of the media to address issues affecting the rights of poor and vulnerable citizens, which, in many developing countries, is already severely constrained by long-standing government oversight and recently introduced anti-terrorism legislation.
- ◆ Work with “fragile, disenfranchised youth” whose “feelings of humiliation have little link with terrorism directly, but they can contribute to the desire to be part of a system or group that ‘seeks justice and retribution’ and make them more susceptible to embracing terrorism”. (page 14) The assumption that in “seeking justice” disenfranchised youth will be susceptible to embracing terrorism is a counter-productive rationale for urgently needed more just livelihood strategies in support of vulnerable and poor youth.
- ◆ Donors must also work with partner governments on “the content and purpose of education curricula”. (page 15) “When education spreads faster than jobs, it can be destabilising and increase the risk of social unrest in some cases. This phenomenon may heighten awareness of inequalities and disparities and breed frustration...When educated youth live in restrictive political systems, they may voice their opposition by targeting foreign, rather than local or national ‘culprits’.” Given the profound roles of donors in the poorest countries, might not “foreigners” share some of this culpability?

#### ❖ **Reviewing ODA Eligibility Criteria to Include Support for the Prevention of Terrorism**

The DAC policy statement concludes with a call for the tracking of donor activities and financial disbursements towards preventing terrorism, pulling together experiences thus far. (page 20) As developed countries increase their focus on conflict in the context of concerns for terrorism, it would be essential for donors to make transparent all activities relating to security, terrorism and development, irrespective of their relationship to development co-operation and ODA.

The policy seems to provide a rationale for redirecting aid from countries that are dedicated to poverty reduction and the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals towards those that are on the “front-lines” in the “war of terrorism”. Several donor agencies face significant pressure to direct very large aid resources to Afghanistan and Iraq, while Denmark, for example, has shifted aid away from least developed countries to its priorities in the Middle East.

The proposed review of ODA eligibility criteria” is highly problematic. (page 20). Opening the door of ODA eligibility in the context of this policy statement will have profound impact on the integrity of ODA as a resource for poverty eradication. There certainly are many legitimate actions by northern governments (diplomatic, military, technical exchanges) for conflict prevention and constructing conditions for peace that fall from state obligations to international human rights law. Some of these actions may be directly related to poverty reduction and already included. However, including the disbursements for a broader range of activities for the prevention of terrorism in ODA will only dilute the public notion of aid and its purpose and will effectively divert scarce ODA resources away from poverty eradication. We would argue that many current actions (police, security and military strengthening) to prevent terrorism, linked by some governments to a “war on terrorism”, clearly fall outside the boundaries of effective strategies for conflict prevention.

The integrity of the notion of ODA is already deeply compromised. For example, more and more donors now count within their ODA, first-year financial support for refugees coming to their countries from the South. This is permitted by DAC rules. This now amounts to \$1.3 billion US out of total ODA of \$52 billion US (2001). For Canada, in 2001/02, \$197 million Cdn was added to Canadian ODA (amounting to almost 7%). It is also subject to abuse. Australia was able to count as ODA support for refugees in Australia, the costs of recent Pacific Island internment of boat people seeking refugee in Australia!

The integrity of ODA as a resource devoted to poverty eradication must be supported by all donors at the DAC. Canada chairs the DAC working group reviewing ODA and conflict prevention, including terrorism. Coalitions of development organisations in the UK, Australia, New Zealand, the Philippines, among others, have come together in support of a joint statement to the DAC questioning the policy and the diversion of aid resources. These same organisations are participating in an informal network on Global Security and Development, coordinated by BOND in the UK.<sup>8</sup> This network will be following closely the discussions at the DAC as well as actions by individual donors in their orientation to development co-operation and the prevention of terrorism.

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<sup>8</sup> The statement, as well as other background materials on global security and development, are on BOND’s web site, [www.bond.org.uk](http://www.bond.org.uk).