

SMART POWER

Smart Power: Making Australia's whole-of-government strategy work in fragile states and situations is the Foundation's most recent release in its *Kokoda Papers* series. As the Australian Government defines its future approach to operating in conflict- or crisis-affected states and situations, the report helps to clarify some of the essential ingredients for success: namely, improved engagement with the respective context, fast-paced strategic development, operational innovation, and further investment in fostering the right culture, leadership and professional development within the public sector.

There is no doubt that Australia must be smart in the way it marshals and deploys its limited civilian and military resources in fragile contexts. The author, Dr Edwina Thompson, makes it clear that while most of the problems canvassed throughout the research covered old ground, there does appear to be genuine momentum to break out of the vicious circle to define what 'smart power' looks like in the Australian context, rather than simply restate the various dilemmas.

She maps the broad challenges and commitments of the Australian Government's engagement in fragile environments, reviews the obstacles to achieving effective cross-department cooperation when responding to the challenges, and proposes various options for Government to consider in bridging the gap between commitment to a holistic response and current practice.

Drawing from a series of closed workshops and discussions with Australians in the relevant sectors (Government; Non-Government Organisations; Academia; Business), the last chapter proposes immediate and short-medium term options for the Government to pursue in doctrine and at the operational and strategic levels. At the operational level, while the majority agreed that the problem of coordinating efforts will not necessarily be 'fixed' by creating another bureaucratic structure, there was support for the assembling of a more permanent task force, 'special unit', or 'ginger group' (high-level inter-departmental forum) to drive the change needed to manage policy and practice in fragile states and situations.

With Australia's ongoing commitment to rule of law programs, development and state-building efforts in the region and further afield, in addition to more advanced thinking on the concept of state 'fragility', it is timely to take a fresh look at the issue of how to make the holistic approach work from the Australian perspective.

Further information about this paper:

Dr Edwina Thompson
Beechwood International
edwina.thompson@beechwood.net

Further information about the Kokoda Foundation:

Nicole Quinn
Chief Operating Officer
Phone: 0488 033 327
coo@kokodafoundation.org.au