

STABILIZATION OPERATIONS

A Successful Strategy for Postconflict Management

By JAMES P. TERRY

Civilian agencies and the private contractors who execute their policies play a major role in stabilization and reconstruction operations in Iraq and Afghanistan alongside their military counterparts. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization, U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), Department of Defense (DOD), and nongovernmental organization (NGO) initiatives being implemented in these theaters involve thousands of military personnel and civilian contractors supporting hundreds of projects designed to ensure these two nations not only survive but also grow in self-sufficiency.

The roadmap for the coordination of these initiatives must establish a sequencing of actions for progress within a range of functions. The activities involved must be designed to lead to the desired endstate for the assisted nations and must include the plans and direction for actions the nations themselves should embark upon. The *planning* process involves a security component as well as both economic and governance initiatives. Postconflict reconstruction and growth involve initiation and implementation phases. Key to successful execution of the *implementation* phase is the effort to build the indigenous military and police

forces to provide for the nation's own security. The *execution* phase is dominated by those activities and agencies that ensure the basic needs of the people are met and that prepare the people in Iraq and Afghanistan to fulfill those needs for themselves. The governance aspect is the most complex and encompasses the necessary activities to establish government institutions and an environment free from the threat of renewed conflict. This framework offers tremendous advantages in that the functions can be assigned to international agencies and NGOs to facilitate the distribution of responsibilities along each of the three lines of operation.

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Iraqi grouts tile at market being built with help of U.S. Army PRT



U.S. Army (Shane Samuels)

Postconflict Environment

The immediate postconflict environment in Iraq and Afghanistan provided important lessons concerning security, governance, and reconstruction realities. The primary concern after the cessation of open hostilities was security, as it must be in every conflict. If Iraq taught us anything, it was that in the aftermath of combatant operations, local security forces are likely to be unable, unavailable, or unwilling to address civilian lawlessness and violence. For this reason, U.S. and coalition forces must have clear orders and an effective plan to provide law enforcement in major population centers immediately after hostilities cease. Because this was not the case in Baghdad, street crime, looting, and general lawlessness were rampant. This failure greatly slowed the stabilization process in the end.

An important element of the need for immediate security is the concomitant requirement for a plan to retrain and equip local police and security forces. This plan must be given the highest priority and be properly staffed and funded. In Baghdad, this task initially fell to five members of the justice department and became a task impossible. In Afghanistan as well, neither effective train-

ing nor an appropriate pay scale to ensure sustainability of a security force received proper attention at first. In both countries, the institutions that backed the local police (Interior Ministry and Justice Ministry) were inadequate or completely absent. Law and order, the desired endstate when an effective security force is in place, can only succeed if the other elements of public safety, to include a judicial system with courts and prisons, are present and properly functioning.

The recognition that security, stabilization, and reconstruction are interdependent and must have integrated strategies is critical. Undertaking ambitious reconstruction goals was possible when security was assured in areas of both nations but was far less so when the security footprint was smaller and more tenuous. It is vital to examine the Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) model currently being used in Afghanistan as an

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effective approach for linking security and reconstruction.

The success of these interdependent elements largely depends on a funding stream that allows for a rapid dispersal of aid to local leaders and contractors, who are essential to success. Government officials and community leaders must be identified and relied upon for advice as to which local contractors are reliable and honest and have the ability to get things done. Planning before and during the combat phase must include the prepositioning of resources, both financial and physical, so communities and their leaders can be given a jumpstart when local governance is reestablished. The experience in Iraq has shown that the coordination of resources is key to successful implementation, and that failure to coordinate among agencies often results in overlapping efforts, which can hinder progress on this important front. For example, after the cessation of hostilities in Baghdad and outlying communities, the coalition forces leadership, USAID (through contractor Research Triangle Institute), and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) were all engaged in reestablishing local governance without effective coordination or planning. This led

to identification of, and support for, different community leaders by organizations that should have been unified.

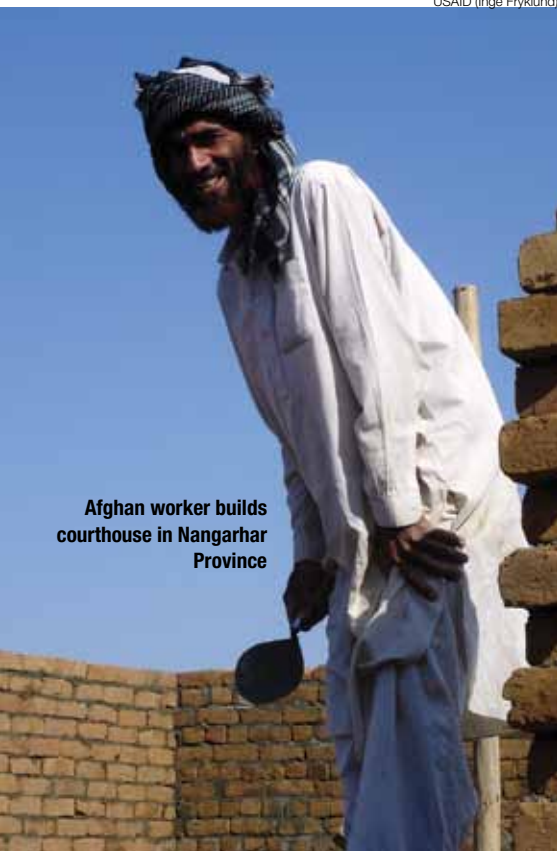
Similarly, the postconflict efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrated that reestablishing governance requires an understanding of local history and culture. While recreating functioning institutions is critical, gaining the trust of the populace is equally if not more important. Local leaders must believe we are attempting to find appropriate solutions for them and that we are not just transplanting our system onto their country. This is especially true in a state like Iraq that has a history of oppressive governance and a tendency to be skeptical of imposed solutions. The local leaders must also be convinced that our commitment to their success is long term and does not consist merely of the imposition of a Western-style system with which they will be uncomfortable and that they will be unable to maintain when we are gone.

Just as establishing trust within the populace is critical, maintaining that trust is directly tied to our ability, and to that of the coalition in both countries, to deliver on our promises. Early in the postconflict stabilization of Iraq, the CPA promised dramatic and timely improvements to the Iraqi economy. When the coalition's inability to suppress the insurgency for a lengthy period resulted in critical delays in economic development, frustration mounted among the people and the fledgling Iraqi government. The key lesson is that coalition leaders must match authority and capacity in postconflict settings while carefully managing the expectations of the populace. More importantly, sound planning must ensure that right-sized missions are undertaken so achievable goals can be met. As important as matching authority with capacity is the need to demonstrate the ability to implement projects quickly. The Commander's Emergency Response Fund has assisted in providing this capacity in Iraq at the local level.

Finally, both Iraq and Afghanistan have shown that the speed with which we introduce private enterprise and promote economic development is fundamental to the success of the stabilization effort. The one-crop narcotic economy in Kabul poses special challenges to our stabilization effort because unless alternative livelihoods are provided, and quickly, the economy will likely take the whole process down. Fortunately, the Afghan people are motivated and dedicated, and our extension of

USAID (Inge Fryklund)

Afghan worker builds courthouse in Nangarhar Province



credit and assistance in the development of real alternatives, combined with effective training, will be key if we are to succeed in Kabul.

Institutions and Laws

Rebuilding the foundations of a civil society and establishing effective governance are always the most difficult and time-consuming elements of the transition process. A transfer of authority from the intervening power to a newly established government, usually through both a security agreement and a Strategic Framework Agreement (as in Iraq), is accompanied by the development and adoption of laws and regulations, training in their application and enforcement, investments in appropriate infrastructure, and the transfer to civilian control from the coalition leadership. This transfer to indigenous political institutions, to include functioning legislative bodies and accountable executives, requires both time and the willingness of local leaders to take ownership.

The most significant challenges faced by the fledgling governments include developing economic capacity, maintaining civilian control of security structures, and administering the rule of law. Building a viable economic base involves the creation of markets, the chartering of a banking system, and the development of a fair and accepted system of taxation. As the people in Iraq and Afghanistan

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transition from societies based upon imposed order to societies based on openness and competition, they must also develop regulations to address clashing economic interests, legal systems to adjudicate disputes, and a political process with sufficient authority to check excessive executive behavior.

The most frequently cited shortcoming in nationbuilding is the failure to develop the necessary local capacity, legitimacy, and effectiveness to sustain the rule of law and maintain order. Key to this challenge is effective

civilian control of security structures, to include civilian police, civilian control of the military, and competent and respected defense and interior ministries. Similarly, administering the rule of law impartially is critical to the new government being perceived as having legitimacy, and key to this legitimacy is respect for the judiciary, the court system, the penal system, and the constitution under which they operate. Creating local capacity often takes far more time than donor countries and their citizens are willing to give. For this reason, timely development of effective local leadership and control is critical to a positive transition from stabilization to other stages of postconflict development.

The Way Forward

To better foster the development of internal capacity in newly reminted states like Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States must develop a *permanent* civilian capability that both complements our military effort and contributes to the leveraging of multilateral efforts. The Nation began that effort 6 years ago when the Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction (S/CRS) was established in the State Department. With the signing of National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44 and the issuance of DOD Directive 3000.05 in 2005, an organization was created to lead interagency civilian efforts and coordinate between these agencies and the military to help countries emerging from conflict build a sustainable government. The purpose of S/CRS vis-à-vis civilian agencies is much like the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) role with respect to the combatant commands. Like the JCS, which ensures that all forces interoperate within a theater to achieve a common goal, the charge of S/CRS is to lead the design of a common U.S. stabilization strategy in a given theater for civilian agencies and between those agencies and the military.

Other core elements are also critical to establishing a viable stabilization organization. The first is the capability to quickly deploy a competent field team to survey requirements and spearhead civilian program strategies on the ground. It should include a mix of economic, security, communications, construction, and political specialists. Presently, members are sent to these teams on an ad hoc basis from various State Department posts, rather than serving in primary assignments where their expertise is reinforced through continuous training. A permanent

corps established under the aegis of S/CRS would ensure that the civilian side of the government has skills that more fully complement our military capacity.

PRTs in Afghanistan reflect a successful application of these principles in that these teams include a mix of military and civilian

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personnel and can be tailored to reflect the level of threat in the area being worked. The capacity to deploy trained and capable civilians in military-led PRTs increases their effectiveness and allows stabilization and reconstruction efforts to begin under the military umbrella. The PRT can help build the host nation's legitimacy and effectiveness in providing security to its citizens and delivering essential government services. The focus of these combined military and civilian efforts is to diminish the means and motivations for conflict, while developing local institutions so they can take the lead role in national governance.

The PRT can bridge the gap between conflict and stability and assist in areas that have not been pacified sufficiently to remove security forces. The military can operate effectively but lacks the development skills to enhance economic viability and deliver essential public services. The PRT solves this problem and, when stability objectives are fulfilled, can be dismantled in favor of traditional development programs.

The State and Defense Departments have begun to take steps to better coordinate stability and reconstruction activities, but key challenges remain. Without an interagency planning framework that better defines roles and responsibilities, as contemplated by NSPD 44, unity of effort may remain difficult to achieve, and DOD-centric planning will likely continue. More importantly, unless the State Department develops and implements a credible plan to build a permanent civilian stabilization organization rather than maintaining the current ad hoc approach, DOD will continue to be heavily relied upon to provide the needed expertise for transition operations. **JFQ**