

Don't Just Hear, Listen: The Criticality of Accepting Local Nationals' Priorities in Stability Operations

A Monograph

by

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Fort Leavenworth, KS
2021

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE			<i>Form Approved</i> <i>OMB No. 0704-0188</i>		
Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing this collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) 20 05 2021		2. REPORT TYPE MASTER'S MONOGRAPH		3. DATES COVERED (From - To) JUNE 20-MAY 21	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Don't Just Hear, Listen: The Criticality of Accepting Local Nationals' Priorities in Stability Operations			5a. CONTRACT NUMBER		
			5b. GRANT NUMBER		
			5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER		
6. AUTHOR(S) LTC Martin Prokoph, German Army			5d. PROJECT NUMBER		
			5e. TASK NUMBER		
			5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER		
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army Command and General Staff College ATTN: ATZL-SWD-GD Fort Leavenworth, KS 66027-2301			8. PERFORMING ORG REPORT NUMBER		
9. SPONSORING / MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) ADVANCED MILITARY STUDIES PROGRAM			10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)		
			11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)		
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release; Distribution is Unlimited					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES					
14. ABSTRACT This monograph suggests an explanation for the US-led international coalition's challenges during their stabilization efforts in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2018. The theory of a hierarchy of needs argues that lower-level needs must be sufficiently provided before addressing higher-level needs. Consequently, from the local population's perspective, security needs are subordinate to basic physiological needs. However, the intervening forces implemented a Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Transition approach, which prioritized security over everything else. A possible solution to that dilemma is to address both needs simultaneously rather than sequentially. The study used qualitative data analysis and examined eighty-two interviews with American and Afghan officials, conducted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). The results indicate that a phased approach focused on "security first" had no impact or a negative impact on stabilization efforts' outcomes. At the same time, attempts that simultaneously addressed security and reconstruction, based on an understanding of locals' needs and their priorities, consistently led to better and longer-lasting results. More research is necessary to validate the suggested theoretical construct. However, assuming the findings hold true, the author's conclusions offer possible improvements to designing, planning, and implementing future stability operations.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Stability, Stability Operations, Local National, Afghanistan, OEF, Stability Framework, Security, Reconstruction					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT	18. NUMBER OF PAGES	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT	b. ABSTRACT	c. THIS PAGE			19b. PHONE NUMBER (include area code)
(U)	(U)	(U)	(U)	61	913 758-3300

Monograph Approval Page

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Abstract

Don't Just Hear, Listen: The Criticality of Accepting Local Nationals' Priorities in Stability Operations, by LTC (GS) Martin Prokoph, 52 pages.

This monograph suggests an explanation for the US-led international coalition's challenges during their stabilization efforts in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2018. The theory of a hierarchy of needs argues that lower-level needs must be sufficiently provided before addressing higher-level needs. Consequently, from the local population's perspective, security needs are subordinate to basic physiological needs. However, the intervening forces implemented a Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Transition approach, which prioritized security over everything else. A possible solution to that dilemma is to address both needs simultaneously rather than sequentially.

The study used qualitative data analysis and examined eighty-two interviews with American and Afghan officials, conducted by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR). The results indicate that a phased approach focused on "security first" had no impact or a negative impact on stabilization efforts' outcomes. At the same time, attempts that simultaneously addressed security and reconstruction, based on an understanding of locals' needs and their priorities, consistently led to better and longer-lasting results.

More research is necessary to validate the suggested theoretical construct. However, assuming the findings hold true, the author's conclusions offer possible improvements to designing, planning, and implementing future stability operations.

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Acknowledgements

Throughout the writing of this monograph, I have received a great deal of support and assistance.

I am extremely grateful for my monograph director, Dr. Thomas E. Hanson, whose mentorship and support was invaluable. Your insightful feedback and expertise enabled me to take my research beyond my expectations.

I would also like to extend my deepest gratitude to my friend Dr. Mark Hull, who never tired of hearing about my work. Every time we discussed this monograph's challenges, you guided my thinking by asking the right questions and providing me with much clarity and valuable insight.

I would like to acknowledge the team of the Combined Arms Research Library for their wonderful collaboration. Their support of my research and their assistance in acquiring sources was a helpful contribution and saved me much time.

I would also like to thank my tutors, Colonel Gaétan Bédard of the Canadian Forces, Dr. Anthony Carlson, and Mr. Dwayne Beasley, for their valuable guidance throughout the past two years. You provided me with the tools and feedback that helped me to continuously improve my writing skills.

In addition, I would like to thank my friend, Brendan Curran, who provided stimulating discussions and feedback to my work.

Finally, I am deeply indebted to my beloved wife, Anne, and my dear children, Tommte, Elisabeth, Clara, and Friedrich. You traveled the world with me and created a home for us. I cannot thank you enough for allowing me to take this opportunity and time to further my professional development and provide me with comfort and many happy moments during our time here.

Abbreviations

ANA	Afghan National Army
ALP	Afghan Local Police
ASOP	Afghan Social Outreach Program
CN	Counter-Narcotics
COIN	Counter-Insurgency
DoD	Department of Defense
ERG	Existence, Relatedness, and Growth
IS	Islamic State
MDO	Multi-Domain Operations
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PSC	Private Security Company
PVO	Private Volunteer Organization
QDA	Qualitative Data Analysis
SCHBT	Shape, Clear, Hold, Build, Transition
SIGAR	Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction
SIKA	Stability in Key Areas
SSR	Security Sector Reform
VEO	Violent Extremist Organization
VSO	Village Stability Operation
WEIRD	Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, Democratic

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Introduction

Stability programs should be implemented simultaneously with a military intervention. The time gap between design and implementation must be minimum. Stability programs must be part of the bigger picture for which the military intervention has taken place, a piecemeal approach does not work.

—Niazi Rohullah, interviewed by
United States Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction

Creating local security as a precondition for reconstruction is the dominant school of thought for stabilization operations. The military does not consider the reconstruction of critical infrastructure and social services as their primary task. When it comes to reconstruction and the provision of social services, most military forces prefer to take a contributing rather than a leading role. However, while many recent stabilization efforts have fallen short of expectations and ended in protracted insurgencies, they have been successful in the past—including the post-World War II Germany, Japan, and the 1948-1960 Malay Emergency. That raises the question of what differed in the past that led to better outcomes. Among many factors, it is important to note that, in the examples just provided, the intervening military force provided both local security and governance services simultaneously. Therefore, this monograph examines current stabilization concepts from a different angle. Using the American-led efforts in Afghanistan between 2003 and 2018 as a case study, this monograph argues that any effort prioritizing local security over all other considerations, thereby addressing the needs of essential service providers before those of the local population, will most likely not deliver lasting stability.

Literature Review

Studies of recent stability operations abound, conducted by a myriad of examiners with a number of agendas. The results of these studies can be found in various media, including books, journal articles, reports, and doctrine, as well as blog posts, podcasts, and YouTube videos. However, most recent sources focus less on the local population's problems than the challenges

and problems of the intervening actors. Furthermore, little published research methodically analyzes common elements between different stability operations or draws conclusions that might universally apply.

In *Stabilization Operations, Security and Development*, Robert Muggah provides an overview of the topic.¹ He also describes several challenges for researchers, including a lack of commonly defined vocabulary, the multiplicity of actors, and the diversity of underlying purposes of stabilization efforts. Nevertheless, while there is no agreed definition of stability operations, they often result from a perceived requirement by outside actors to prevent and reduce violence and create the enabling conditions for investment and development.² They usually fall short of nation or state building but offer more than just peace enforcement. Thus, stability operations can mean vastly different things to different organizations (see Figure 1).

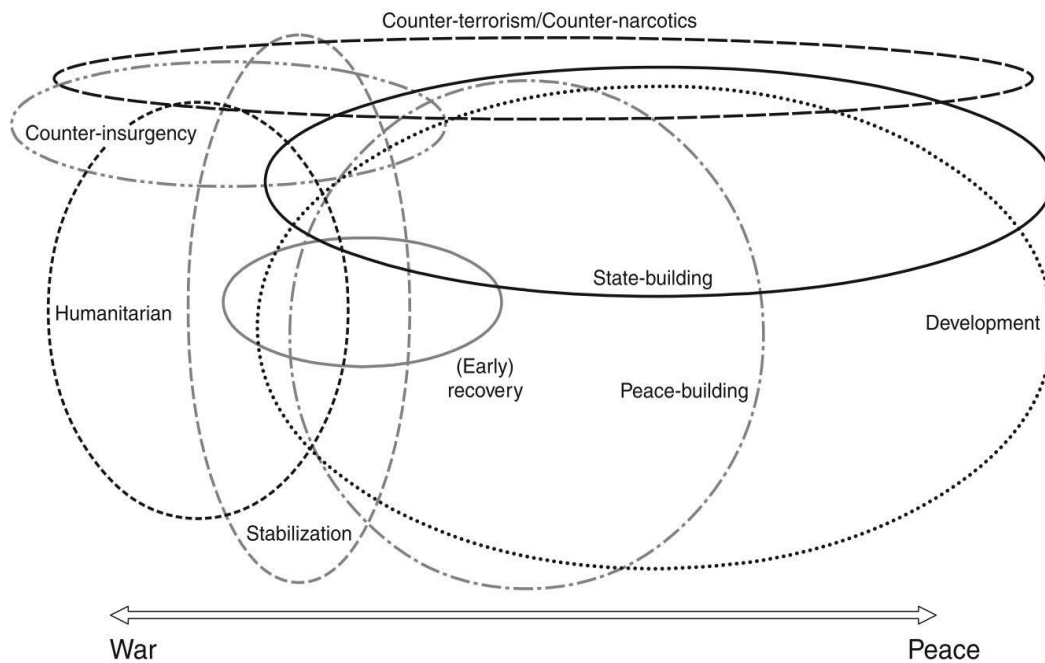


Figure 1. Stabilization Operations. Robert Muggah, ed., *Stabilization Operations, Security and Development: States of Fragility* (London: Routledge, 2014), 5.

¹ Robert Muggah, ed., *Stabilization Operations, Security and Development: States of Fragility* (London: Routledge, 2014), 9.

² *Ibid.*, 4.

Virtually all stabilization efforts in recent decades share the broad goals of creating a safe and secure environment, establishing the rule of law, achieving stable governance and enabling economic growth, and promoting the conditions for social well-being.³ However, these tasks and goals are not unique to stability operations; they overlap with other endeavors, including, for example, the United Nations (UN) concept of security sector reform (SSR).⁴ Consequently, the multiplicity of different actors, goals, and concepts, paired with a lack of standardized terminology across disciplines, highlights the difficulty of conducting any scientific research on stability operations. To prevent that sort of confusion, this monograph will narrow its focus to examine stabilization efforts after military conflict.

Approaches or “schools of thought” toward stability operations in general, and Afghanistan in particular, can be differentiated by groups of actors. On the one hand, the military/governmental school of thought emphasizes phased and comprehensive approaches. These need to be centrally-planned and executed to facilitate “top-down” coordination and oversight to produce lasting results. On the other hand, the humanitarian school of thought focuses more on the local population and tries to achieve short-term results on a local/regional level using a decentralized or “bottom-up” approach. Over time, both approaches evolved based on their results or lack thereof.

However, both schools of thought face unique challenges. The military/governmental approach usually suffers from a lack of resources (money, workforce, information) and unnecessary duplication of efforts. Based on this observation, in *War and the Art of Governance*, Nadia Schadlow examined the role of military forces in turning tactical success into political

³ Muggah, *Stabilization Operations, Security and Development*, 4.

⁴ Ann Fitz-Gerald, “Stabilization Operations and Post-Conflict Security Sector Reform: Strange Bedfellows or Close Allies?,” Chapter 9 in *The Future of Security Sector Reform*, ed. Mark Sedra (Waterloo, Ont.: Centre for International Governance Innovation, 2010), accessed 2 September 2020, <https://issat.dcaf.ch/fre/layout/set/fullscreen/content/download/1856/15293/file/The%20Future%20of%20Security%20Sector%20Reform.pdf#page=154>.

victories. She provides several case studies starting with the 1846-1848 Mexican War and continuing to Afghanistan and Iraq. Among other things, she concludes that the Department of Defense (DoD) needs to reestablish military governance units in the US Army and should take the lead from the Department of State for future stability operations.⁵ Having the necessary capabilities and capacity, however, does not guarantee successful stabilization efforts. In order to assess the situation in stability operations, much information is needed. In *Small Wars, Big Data*, the authors employed a quantitative approach to analyzing stability operations in Afghanistan, and found that timely access to information with the help of modern technology (e.g., cell phones) delivers the critical information for stabilization forces to ensure a safe and secure environment as a precondition for reconstruction and development.⁶

The military/governmental school of thought is rooted in strategic documents like the *US National Security Strategy* or the *NATO Strategic Concept*. Based on these documents, NATO member states expanded their doctrine and military capabilities to include counterinsurgency, stabilization, and reconstruction operations.⁷ Joint Publication 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*, describes a phased “Shape, Clear, Hold, Build, Transition” (SCHBT) approach, which aims at creating a secure physical and psychological environment, establishing firm government control of the geographic area, and gaining the populace’s support.⁸ US Army Field Manual 3-24, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, states that the SCHBT framework provides a foundation for

⁵ Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Victory* (Washington DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017).

⁶ Eli Berman et al., *Small Wars, Big Data: The Information Revolution in Modern Conflict* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2018).

⁷ NATO, “Active Engagement, Modern Defence: Strategic Concept For the Defence and Security of The Members of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation, adopted by the Heads of State and Government in Lisbon,” 6, accessed 29 August 2020, https://www.nato.int/nato_static_fl2014/assets/pdf/pdf_publications/20120203_strategic-concept-2010-eng.pdf.

⁸ US Department of Defense, Joint Staff, “Joint Publication 3-24, Counterinsurgency,” (2018), VII-6, last modified 2018.

detailed planning.⁹ Stability operations, while part of every phase, vary in their importance throughout a campaign. However, in practice, the military traditionally regards stabilization tasks as “someone else’s job.”¹⁰ In future efforts, according to *The US Army in Multi-Domain Operations (MDO) 2028* white paper, army forces will set conditions for a favorable new security environment through three concurrent activities: “physically securing terrain and populations for sustainable outcomes; setting conditions for long-term deterrence by regenerating partner and joint force capacity and by actively engaging across domains and the information space; and adapting force posture to the new security environment.”¹¹

Thus, proponents of the military/governmental approach view establishing a safe, secure, and stable environment as the critical first step to building the necessary capacity for a sustainable security sector.¹² In a post-intervention stabilization operation, military forces will provide local security, but most stability tasks require civilian expertise and civilian personnel to undertake them.¹³ As soon as the host nation’s security forces demonstrate competence, army forces should transition civil security responsibilities to host nation authorities.¹⁴ The guiding philosophy for

⁹ US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-24: *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies* (Washington, DC: US Publishing Office, 2014), 9-1.

¹⁰ Lawrence A. Yates, “The US Military’s Experience in Stability Operations, 1789-2005,” Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper, no. 15 (Combat Studies Institute, 2006), 21, accessed 20 August 2020, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/combats-studies-institute/csi-books/yates.pdf>.

¹¹ US Department of the Army, Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC), “The U.S. Army in Multi-Domain Operations 2028,” TRADOC Pamphlet, 525-3-1 (2018), ix, last modified 2018, accessed 20 August 2020, https://www.tradoc.army.mil/Portals/14/Documents/MDO/TP525-3-1_30Nov2018.pdf.

¹² Jesper J. Andreassen, Kenneth Boesgaard, and Anders D. Svendsen, “Stabilization Operations through Military Capacity Building--Integration between Danish Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces” (Capstone Project Report, Naval Postgraduate School, 2016), accessed 20 August 2020, https://calhoun.nps.edu/bitstream/handle/10945/51710/16Dec_Andreassen_Boesgaard_Svendsen.pdf?sequence=1.

¹³ Andreassen, Boesgaard, and Svendsen, “Stabilization Operations through Military Capacity Building--Integration between Danish Conventional Forces and Special Operations Forces.”; Linda Robinson, *Finding the Right Balance: Department of Defense Roles in Stabilization* (Santa Monica CA: RAND, 2018), 7, accessed 20 August 2020, https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2400/RR2441/RAND_RR2441.pdf.

¹⁴ US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 3-07: *Stability* (Washington, DC: US Publishing Office, 2014), 10.

this school of thought holds that, by developing legitimate, effective, and sustainable security institutions, army forces will establish sufficient conditions for enduring stability and peace.¹⁵

However, while simple in theory, in practice the challenges to be overcome are significant. The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) issued multiple lessons-learned reports on these challenges. Such lessons included the need for effective donor coordination, resolution of conflicting goals, knowledge-sharing, the lack of common assessment standards, and a demonstrated inability to institutionalize necessary changes from those lessons learned.¹⁶ In addition to the international-level problems, the US Department of State faces many domestic obstacles to its efforts to coordinate the actions of multiple federal agencies while being the point of contact on an international level.¹⁷ All US Government agencies involved in reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan report being insufficiently resourced.¹⁸ Lastly, the operational planning process evaluates success or failure using measures of effectiveness and measures of performance. While these are relatively easy to determine in combat operations, developing them for stability operations remains a challenge, since many aspects—such as human perception and well-being—defy quantification.¹⁹

¹⁵ US Army, FM 3-07, 10.

¹⁶ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, “Lessons from the Coalition: Conference Report,” SIGAR-16-59-LL (2016), International Experiences from the Afghanistan Reconstruction, last modified 2016, accessed 16 September 2020, <https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-16-59-LL.pdf>.

¹⁷ Beth Cole, *Guiding Principles for Stabilization & Reconstruction* (YouTube: Maxwell School of Syracuse University, 2014), accessed 14 September 2020, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5Mb61ddzJ48&t=3140s>.

¹⁸ Barnett R. Rubin, “Saving Afghanistan,” *Foreign Affairs* 86, no. 1 (2007): 78, accessed 2 September 2020, https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/20032211.pdf?casa_token=EY3ijkJ2DoAAAAA:-TKO9xQNxTOKCftPL5EMutkPSvR-mn8hIwKfIJXLWXfoqF_qjLNeVg46TDXCslMr4qWkb7EccUnY_gsnx7-YycPOHToknYwONJc7Hpqv1xAalaiieLwI.

¹⁹ William J. Gregor, “Military Planning Systems and Stability Operations,” *PRISM* 1, no. 3 (2010).

The humanitarian school of thought focuses on using civilian expertise to provide quick help on a local level, building stability from the bottom rather than waiting for the centrally-driven approach to achieve its long-term effects.²⁰ In contrast to military contributions in stability operations, humanitarian activities do not necessarily link to national political objectives. Many of them emphasize decreasing human suffering during and after military conflicts without reference to the combatants' positions. That is one reason why most sources address only a specific area of this approach, since no comprehensive and hierarchical concept exists. The different disciplines address primarily basic physiological needs, such as providing food, clean water, shelter, access to health services, and electricity.²¹ However, more recent approaches also include education needs and economic growth.²² In 1997, several non-governmental organizations (NGOs), private volunteer organizations (PVOs), and the international Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement developed the Sphere Project to improve the quality of humanitarian work during disaster response.²³ Together, they developed an agreed catalogue of minimum standards for humanitarian response.²⁴ Nonetheless, this approach faces challenges,

²⁰ UN High Commissioner for Refugees, *UNHCR Manual on a Community Based Approach in UNHCR Operations* (2008), accessed 14 September 2020, <https://www.refworld.org/docid/47da54722.html>.

²¹ Actions Against Hunger, "Breaking the Cycle: Towards a Collective-Needs Based Approach to Hunger in Afghanistan," Position Paper for the 2019 Geneva Ministerial Conference on Afghanistan, accessed 14 September 2020, https://www.baag.org.uk/sites/www.baag.org.uk/files/BREAKING%20THE%20CYCLE_ACF_GCA.pdf; ²¹ World Health Organization, "Country Cooperation Strategy at a Glance: Afghanistan," accessed 15 September 2020, https://applications.emro.who.int/docs/CCS_Afgh_2015_EN_16725.pdf?ua=1; UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Afghanistan: Humanitarian Needs Overview 2020."

²² Sakena Yacoobi, "Rebuilding Afghanistan from Within: A Community-Based Approach to Education," accessed 15 September 2020, <https://peaceisland.org/rebuilding-afghanistan-within-community-based-approach-education/>; Zimmerman, Blum, and Egel, *Task Force for Business and Stability Operations*.

²³ For a complete list of Sphere member organizations, see Sphere homepage, accessed 14 September 2020, <https://spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/sphere-full-members-list-1.pdf>.

²⁴ Sphere Association, *The Sphere Handbook: Humanitarian Charter and Minimum Standards in Humanitarian Response* (Geneva, CH, 2018), ii, accessed 16 September, 2020, <https://www.spherestandards.org/wp-content/uploads/Sphere-Handbook-2018-EN.pdf>.

too. The multitude of different national, international, and non-governmental actors in this field makes it practically impossible to integrate or even coordinate efforts, maintain oversight, or estimate needs for resources or personnel.²⁵ Additionally, humanitarian organizations often suffer directly from a lack of local security, but reject cooperation with military forces to preserve their “impartial” status.

Mixed-method approaches attempt to combine the advantages of both schools of thought. Humanitarian approaches have a distinct advantage by achieving quick results on a local level. This fact contributed to developing a mixed-method approach within the military/governmental school of thought. Building on the experiences of the US Marine Corps’ Combined Action Platoons in Vietnam, the Village Stability Operations (VSO) program undertaken in Afghanistan is one such example. It combined a local bottom-up approach and short-term effects without losing focus on the provision of local security.²⁶ Another mixed-method approach employs private security companies (PSCs) to strengthen the recipient state’s economic sector, aiming to create a stable economic base that can sustain the security sector long-term.²⁷

A significant weakness of both schools of thought is that they aim to achieve their ends using ways and means compatible with Western democratic states. This type phenomenon, called “ethnocentrism,” is described as a biased methodology in many social sciences.²⁸ Ethnocentrism is a view of things in which one’s own mindset—based on socialization, culture, and beliefs—sets

²⁵ Arne Strand, “Aid Coordination in Afghanistan,” (Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2002), last modified 2002, accessed 4 September 2020, https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Arne_Strand/publication/45666227_Aid_Coordination_in_Afghanistan/links/57456ccf08aea45ee8538dff.pdf.

²⁶ Robert Hulslander and Jake Spivey, “Village Stability Operations and Afghan Local Police,” *PRISM* 3, no. 3 (2012), accessed 2 September 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/26469751>.

²⁷ Matthew W. Parin, “Stabilization Operations Beyond Government: Joint Venture Public-Private Partnerships in Iraq and Afghanistan,” *PRISM* 1, no. 4 (2010), accessed 2 September 2020, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/pdf/26469081.pdf>.

²⁸ Ken Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, Routledge Revivals (London: Routledge, 2014), 15.

standards towards which everyone and everything is scaled and rated.²⁹ In the Western world this mindset is also known as Western, Educated, Industrialized, Rich, and Democratic (WEIRD). It provides a biased idea about what is achievable.³⁰ Consequently, intervening forces try to establish what they know works for them, instead of asking what might work for the recipient country. In a military strategic context this phenomenon was already described by the Prussian military philosopher Carl von Clausewitz. In an essay on polarity, he observed that if one does not intentionally try to see the world through the eyes of one's opponent, then one's idea about the opponent's intent is nothing more than a mere reflection of their own view.³¹ His observation applies equally to those who seek to help others.

The so-called “needs-based approach” starts with the “opponent” as point of reference. With regard to stability operations, the needs-based approach represents a third but less-popular school of thought. Though similar to the humanitarian school of thought, it differs in its fundamental concepts. The needs-based approach accepts specific differences as unchangeable and seeks alternative ways to create stability within this framework. For example, countries subject to stabilization operations are often poor. In *Govern Like Us*, Melissa Thomas argues that poor governments must govern less and differently from governments in wealthy liberal countries. A 2013 RAND study described such forms of local government as patronage networks which exist to strengthen the state. This explains the lack of improvement of government effectiveness, despite many smaller improvements.³² These patronage networks are “unique cultural or historical phenomena, [...] extended through a variety of channels—ethnic, religious,

²⁹ Booth, *Strategy and Ethnocentrism*, 15.

³⁰ Jonathan Haidt, *The Righteous Mind: Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion* (New York, NY: Vintage Books, 2013), 111.

³¹ Carl von Clausewitz, “5. Kapitel: Polarität der Gegenseitigen Absichten im Kriege,” in *Carl von Clausewitz: Schriften, Aufsätze, Studien, Briefe*, ed. Werner Hahlweg, *Deutsche Geschichtsquellen des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts* Bd. 45, 49 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1966-1990).

³² James Dobbins, *Overcoming Obstacles to Peace: Local Factors in Nation-Building* (RAND Corporation, 2013), 239, accessed 27 January 2021, <https://apps.dtic.mil/sti/pdfs/ADA578028.pdf>.

tribal, clan, linguistic, or geographic.”³³ Only by understanding and accepting these factors will it be possible to design and support a stable post-conflict government.³⁴

While the military/governmental approach focuses primarily on security before anything else, the humanitarian approach as well as the needs-based approach focus first and foremost on access to basic physiological needs. Moreover, although the approaches are complementary in theory, in reality they often compete with each other for several reasons.³⁵ To argue for closer cooperation or an adaptation of any of these approaches, it is necessary to reflect on action and include the relationship between basic physiological and security needs.³⁶

A Hierarchy of Needs

Psychologist Abraham Maslow first introduced the idea of a hierarchy of needs in 1943. In Maslow’s view, people maintain their well-being by satisfying “basic physiological needs” like sleep, food, water, and the satisfaction of their “need for security” (social security and physical protection).³⁷ Although Maslow did not specifically make connections to human health, it is evident that the satisfaction of a human’s need for water, food, and shelter are preconditions for health and well-being. Maslow defines these needs as deficit needs. A deficit need does not create happiness if fulfilled, but one feels a need when there is a deficit.³⁸ Maslow also introduced the idea that higher-level needs are only motivating if lower-level needs are sufficiently satisfied.³⁹

³³ Dobbins, *Overcoming Obstacles to Peace*, 238.

³⁴ Melissa A. Thomas, *Govern Like Us: U.S. Expectations of Poor Countries* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 2015).

³⁵ Steven A. Zyck and Robert Muggah, “Preparing Stabilisation for 21st Century Security Challenges,” *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 4, no. 1 (2015): 7.

³⁶ Donald A. Schön, *The Reflective Practitioner: How Professionals Think in Action* (New York, NY: Basic Books, 1983), 26.

³⁷ Abraham H. Maslow, *Motivation and Personality* (New York, NY: Harper & Row, 1970), 47.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 135.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 97.

Consequently, the need for security is subordinate to basic physiological needs. In other words, people do not necessarily care about security forces patrolling the neighborhood if they are starving. Building on this idea, one can assume that in a well-functioning state, it is the government's responsibility to assure sufficient satisfaction of these needs by individual providers, including essential services and the security and healthcare sectors.

Although not universally accepted, more recent research validates much of Maslow's argument. Some scientists reject Maslow's model, claiming that the empirical evidence was insufficient to validate the concept in its entirety.⁴⁰ More recent research shows an exact hierarchical order among the lower-level needs, in line with Maslow's theory.⁴¹ Additionally, based on a hierarchical structure, newer models emerged that identified needs for Existence, Relatedness, and Growth (ERG).⁴² Research on ERG also identified basic physiological and safety needs as needs for existence, with safety needs being subordinate to physiological needs.⁴³ Finally, to avoid the WEIRD bias, one need only refer to a study of 123 countries by Louis Tay and Ed Diener. Agreeing with Maslow, they found that physiological and safety needs are universal prerequisites for social well-being.⁴⁴ Since stability operations are mostly concerned with these two lower levels of need, one can consider it sufficient to refer to Maslow's model for this monograph.

⁴⁰ Mahmoud A. Wahba and Lawrence G. Bridwell, "Maslow Reconsidered: A Review of Research on the Need Hierarchy Theory," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 15, no. 2 (1976).

⁴¹ Yadolla Saeednia and Mariani M. Nor, "Measuring Hierarchy of Basic Needs among Adults," *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences* 82 (2013), 85.

⁴² Existence needs include all the various forms of material and physiological desires. Relatedness needs include all the needs which involve relationships with significant other people. Growth needs include all the needs which involve a person making creative or productive effects on himself and the environment. Clayton P. Alderfer, "An Empirical Test of a New Theory of Human Needs," *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 4, no. 2 (1969): 146.

⁴³ Jane R. Caulton, "The development and use of the theory of ERG: A literature review," *Emerging Leadership Journeys* 5, no. 1 (2012), accessed 20 August 2020, https://regentparents.regent.edu/acad/global/publications/elj/vol5iss1/ELJ_Vol5No1_Caulton_pp2-8.pdf.

⁴⁴ Louis Tay and Ed Diener, "Needs and Subjective Well-Being Around the World," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 101, no. 2 (2011).

Based on the two levels of need and the contributing providers, one can further assume the following relations: (1) The security sector provides security. (2) Security is a necessary precondition for the welfare system to distribute its goods and services effectively. (3) The welfare system provides its services to satisfy people’s basic needs. (4) The sufficient availability of essential resources (food, water, and shelter) is necessary to sustain the security providers. The result is a straightforward system dynamics model in Figure 2.

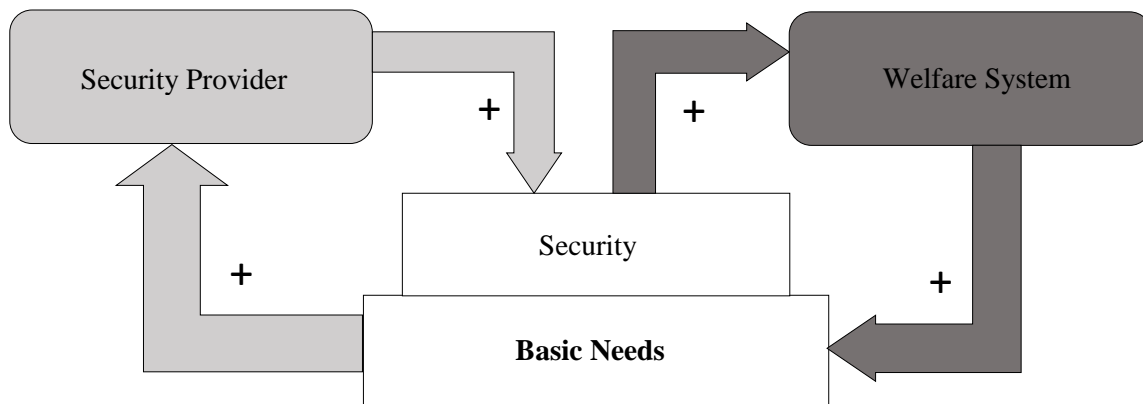


Figure 2. Self-Reinforcing Process for the Provision of Stability. Created by author.

This self-reinforcing system works as long as the dynamic is not disturbed. If anything (e.g., armed conflict or natural disaster) interrupts the system in one or more of the four steps, or if the system is not sufficiently resilient, the entire paradigm will fail, resulting in fragile or failing statehood.

Furthermore, either need can either be sufficiently (+) or insufficiently (-) satisfied. Figure 3 below describes the four resulting conditions in which a country or region can find itself. The desired state is the upper-left quadrant of the table, which sufficiently addresses both need levels. However, since it requires continuous efforts and resources to maintain this state, it represents not a stable condition but rather a fragile equilibrium. The upper-right and lower-left quadrants describe a situation in which either the need for security or the basic needs (including health services) can no longer be sufficiently addressed. The lower-right quadrant represents a stable but undesirable condition, in which neither basic needs nor sufficient security are provided. Based on the concept described above, the red arrows in the table describe how the system tends

towards the stable but undesired condition once one of the levels of need cannot be longer satisfied.

In the framework of stability operations, the military has its role in all four of these scenarios. Figure 4 proposes possible types of missions for each of the conditions.

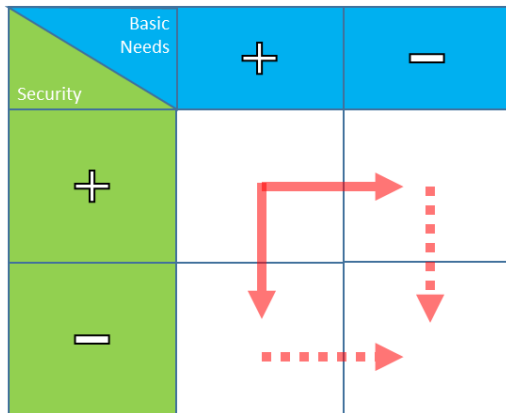


Figure 3. Tendencies Towards a Stable but Undesired State. Created by author.

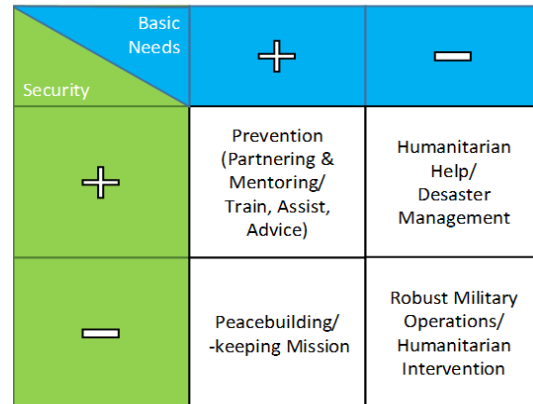


Figure 4. Examples of Military Contributions to Stability Operations. Created by author.

The goal of stability operations is to maintain or re-establish the fragile equilibrium. The desired condition is that physiological and security needs are sufficiently satisfied. Therefore, a continuous investment of resources is necessary. Once the equilibrium is disturbed, both basic physiological needs and security needs must be addressed simultaneously. A step-by-step approach that provides security first and addresses the physiological needs second is unlikely to lead to a return to equilibrium.

This equilibrium, however, is always vulnerable; two things can disrupt the system. One is the reduction of available resources. In natural disasters like droughts or flooding, the resources that are usually available and needed (clean water, food) are destroyed or no longer accessible. The second option is a sudden increase in the need for resources, exceeding the level of availability. Such an increase might result from mass migration (e.g., a refugee crisis; the outbreak of an epidemic disease such as Ebola). In terms of the need for security, it might be the

invasion by a foreign army or violent extremist organization (VEO), such as the Islamic State (IS).

Re-establishment of equilibrium requires an acknowledgment of the hierarchy of needs. Once the system loses balance, one must implement specific actions to re-establish the equilibrium. If a threat affects only the security sector, it might be sufficient to address only security issues in the supporting operation. If it affects only the provision of basic needs, it might be sufficient to help by providing food & water or medical services. However, due to the dynamic described above (Figure 2), the system usually spirals down into its stable but undesired condition whereby the governance system cannot sufficiently address either security and physiological needs. In this case, the proposed system offers two significant conclusions.

One, physiological needs are more important than the need for security. Since the need for security is subordinate to the basic physiological needs, it is essential to address the physiological needs as a first priority. If the security situation does not allow food distribution and health services, it must be addressed in parallel. Following the concept proposed in this paper, a step-by-step approach focusing on security first and on physiological needs second is highly unlikely to succeed (see Figure 5).

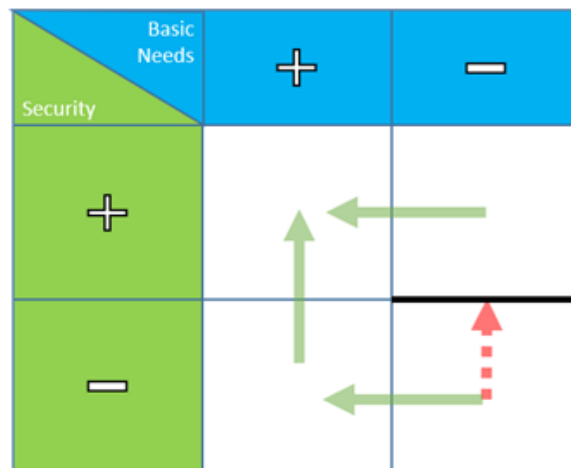


Figure 5. Re-Establishing the Fragile Equilibrium. Created by author.

Second, restoring a system to equilibrium requires more resources than maintaining a status quo. Consequently, one should not equate stability operations with economy-of-force

missions. If the initial support efforts do not address both the basic physiological needs and the need for security adequately, the system will always fall back into its stable but undesired condition, which will lengthen the duration of the operation.

Qualitative Data Analysis of Stabilization Efforts in Afghanistan

The needs-based approach offers an alternative explanation for the failure to create lasting stability in Afghanistan.⁴⁵ Compared to the quantitative approach in *Small Wars, Big Data*, this monograph utilizes the explorative function of qualitative research to look for indications for or against the proposed model.

Qualitative Data Analysis provides a robust tool for exploration and hypothesis testing.⁴⁶ Since it is impossible to conduct experimental testing of the theory introduced above, this monograph must use data from the past.⁴⁷ One advantage of qualitative data is that it focuses on naturally occurring events in natural settings while emphasizing a specific case in its context. It accounts for the influences of the local context rather than seeking to strip it away. The possibility of revealing and understanding latent issues is strong.⁴⁸ Another benefit of qualitative data is its potential for revealing complexity.⁴⁹ The author used a Qualitative Data Analysis (QDA) software called MAXQDA to conduct an analysis of several hundred documents from the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction.⁵⁰ The fact that SIGAR collected these

⁴⁵ M. N. Browne and Stuart M. Keeley, *Asking the Right Questions: A Guide to Critical Thinking*, 8th ed. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 2007), 138.

⁴⁶ Matthew B. Miles, A. M. Huberman, and Johnny Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis: A Methods Sourcebook* (Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications, 2014), 31.

⁴⁷ Steven J. Taylor, Robert Bogdan, and Marjorie L. DeVault, *Introduction to Qualitative Research Methods: A Guidebook and Resource* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2016).

⁴⁸ Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 30.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ Stefan Rädiker and Udo Kuckartz, *Analyse qualitativer Daten mit MAXQDA*, 1st ed. (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2018).

interviews over a sustained period makes them a powerful resource for studying the evolution of stabilization operations, allowing the researcher to go beyond limiting/closed categories such as “what?” or “how many.”⁵¹

Hypothesis

This monograph argues that by prioritizing area security and eliminating insurgent networks over all other considerations, the US-led ISAF coalition missed an opportunity to build lasting stability in Afghanistan from 2003 - 2018.

The conceptual framework of a hierarchy of needs proposes a requirement to address basic physiological and security needs simultaneously. However, based on the available data, it is not practicable to search for positive evidence that supports this hypothesis, since US-led forces never implemented that approach on a grander scale. Alternatively, one can refer to the concept of falsification. Karl Popper introduced this concept in *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*. Instead of finding positive evidence to verify a working hypothesis, one can also find evidence to invalidate it. Therefore, such a working hypothesis (H0) remains valid as long as it cannot be falsified. If the working hypothesis is invalidated, the alternative hypothesis (H1) is assumed to be valid.⁵² Consequently, the author formulates the following hypotheses:

H0: Not addressing the local population/government’s prioritized needs simultaneously, but by phases, had a positive impact on the outcome of US stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

H1: Not addressing the local population/government’s prioritized needs simultaneously, but by phases did not impact or a had a negative impact on the outcome of US stabilization efforts in Afghanistan.

⁵¹ Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 30.

⁵² Karl R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, Routledge Classics (London: Routledge, 2002), accessed 1 October 2020, <https://archive.org/details/PopperLogicScientificDiscovery/page/n25/mode/2up>.

Description of the Dataset

The available dataset consists of 611 documents. The majority of data are interviews conducted by SIGAR between 2014 and 2018. Congress created SIGAR in 2008 to provide independent and objective oversight of Afghanistan-related reconstruction projects and activities. SIGAR conducts audits and investigations to promote reconstruction programs' efficiency and effectiveness, and to detect and prevent waste, fraud, and abuse.⁵³ These interviews refer to actual projects and reflect different perspectives by civilian and military representatives of the US, NATO, and Afghan officials, based on their experiences from as early as 2003. Additionally, this monograph included correspondence to or from US Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld from 2002-2004 that relate to US stabilization operations in Afghanistan. SIGAR and the Department of Defense disclosed all documents used in this monograph under the US Freedom of Information Act.

The overall set of available data covers the period from 2002 until 2019. However, the type and number of available files differ significantly over time (see Figure 6). The correspondence with Rumsfeld covers the time between 2002-2004, while all the SIGAR-recorded interviews except for one occurred between 2014 and 2019. The available data does not allow for exact temporal identification of four of the interviews.

⁵³ Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "About SIGAR," accessed 30 September 2020, <https://www.sigar.mil/about/index.aspx?SSR=1>.

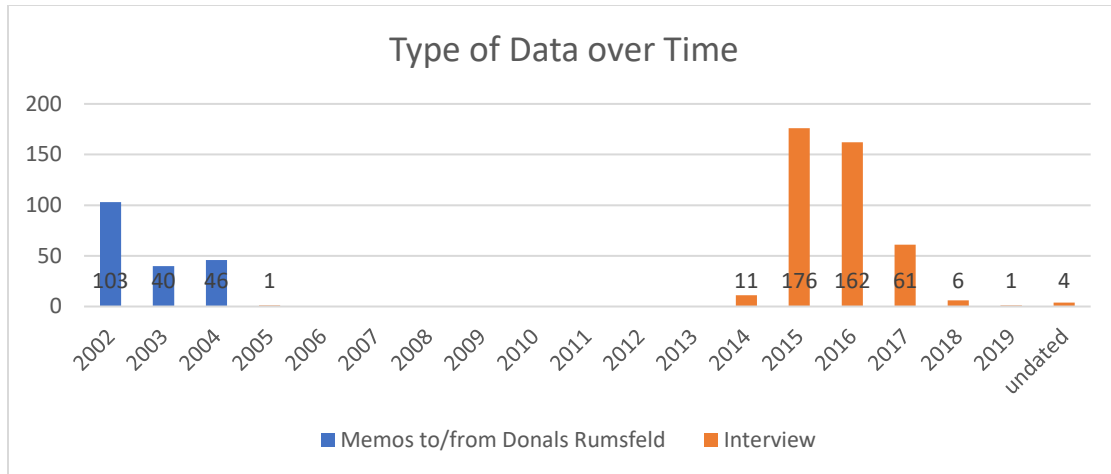


Figure 6. Consistency of the Entire Data Set by Type of Document over Time. Created by author.

Since not all interviews contain relevant data for answering the research question, the author reduced the dataset iteratively. In the first step, the author identified all documents that refer to the local population’s or government’s needs. Therefore, a random sample of five documents provided terms that describe “needs,” including “need,” “requirement,” and “demand.” Additionally, the author included the terms “necessity” and “must-have.” Table 1 shows the outcome of the lexical search.⁵⁴ The majority of occurrences referred to the intervening actors’ needs in order to succeed with their self-defined mission. Less than a third of the occurrences referred to the needs of the local government or population. Some documents contained more than one of the search terms. Therefore, the total number of documents that addressed the Afghan population’s/government’s needs is 177.

Table 1. Reduction of Data-Size - Step 1: Documents Referring to Needs.

Search Term	Need	Requirement	Demand	Necessity	Must-Have
# of hits total	1720	95	91	6	0
In # of documents	374	57	64	5	0
# of hits referring to needs of the Afghan population or government	335	29	34	0	0
# of documents	132	21	28	0	0

Source: Created by author.

⁵⁴ Rädiker and Kuckartz, *Analyse qualitativer Daten mit MAXQDA*, 57.

In a second step, the author identified all 177 remaining documents that refer to success stories. The working hypothesis posits that not addressing the Afghan population's/government's priority needs simultaneously, but by phases, led to a positive outcome. A lexical search, using several terms to describe success, allowed another reduction of the dataset (see Table 2).

Table 2. Reduction of Data-Size - Step 2: Success Stories.

Search Term	success	benefit	improve	succeed
# of hits total	287	73	107	35
In # of documents	99	42	58	20
# of hits referring to successful implementation of programs	183	22	25	1
# of documents	76	15	19	1

Source: Created by author.

Within the 177 documents, only 287 segments in eighty-two documents referred to the successful implementation of projects (see Figure 7). Only these remaining documents were subject to coding and further analysis.

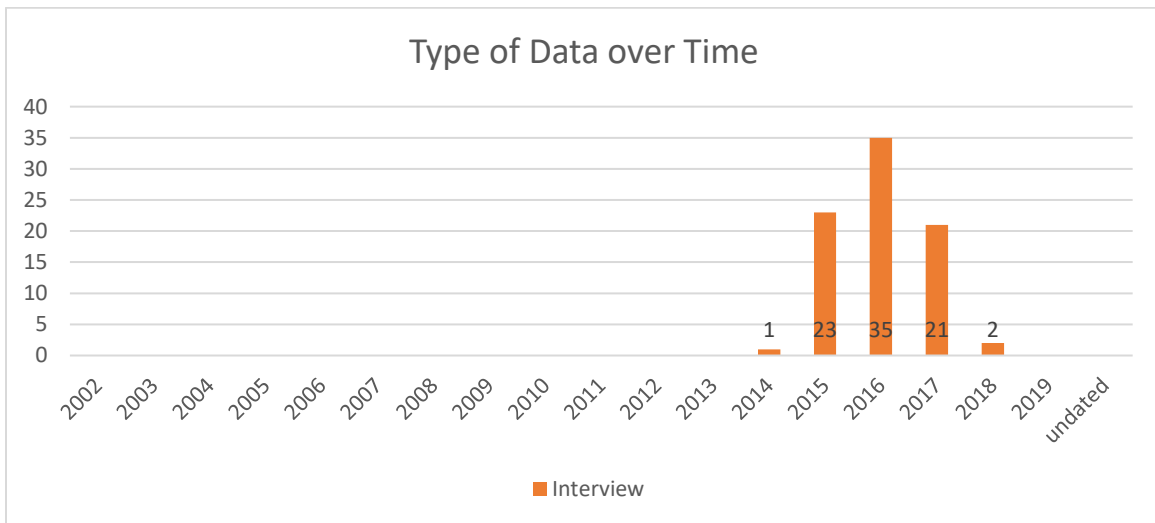


Figure 7. Consistency of Data Subject to Qualitative Data Analysis. Created by author.

Coding

Coding is an in-depth analysis and interpretation of the data's meanings.⁵⁵ Therefore, codes are labels that assign symbolic meaning to the information provided in the interviews.⁵⁶ The analysis followed two steps, called first- and second-cycle coding. First-cycle coding techniques cover a range of different approaches, each with a particular function or purpose.⁵⁷ Evaluation coding is a method that helps to assign judgments about the merit, worth, or significance of programs or policy. It is a standard analytical procedure for policy, organizational, and evaluation studies, particularly across multiple cases and extended periods.⁵⁸ Second-cycle coding is a way of grouping the first-cycle codes into a smaller number of categories, themes, or constructs. It allows the discovery of patterns and the identification of an emergent theme, configuration, or explanation.⁵⁹ By using cross-case analysis, the author can test the hypothesis by looking at negative data.⁶⁰ Finally, to avoid false conclusions from the absence of negative data regarding the test hypothesis (H0), the analysis will check for positive data that supports the alternative hypothesis (H1).⁶¹ The reader can request access to the code book, the interviews, and a list of all coded segments, by emailing the author under prokophmartin@gmail.com.

For sufficient context to answer the research question, the analysis focuses on the following sub-questions:

1. What were the needs of the Afghan population/local government?
2. Under which conditions did the Clear-Hold-Build Approach work?
3. Were there other successful approaches toward stabilization efforts?

⁵⁵ Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña, *Qualitative Data Analysis*, 79.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, 80.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 82.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 90.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 265.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, 266.

4. What factors were associated with lasting success?
5. What were the main challenges for the implementation of stability?
6. What were the proposed improvements for future efforts?

Findings

Question 1: What were the needs of the Afghan population/local government?

While most interviews focused on the intervening forces' and organizations' needs, many interviewees also recognized that the offers often did not meet the local needs. The Afghan population or local government's needs covered a wide range depending on the area and timeframe the interviewee was employed. The second-cycle coding summarized these needs in certain categories. Figure 8 presents these categories and how many documents referred to them. While these results are not statistically representative, they give an overview about the different types of needs and indicate their importance.

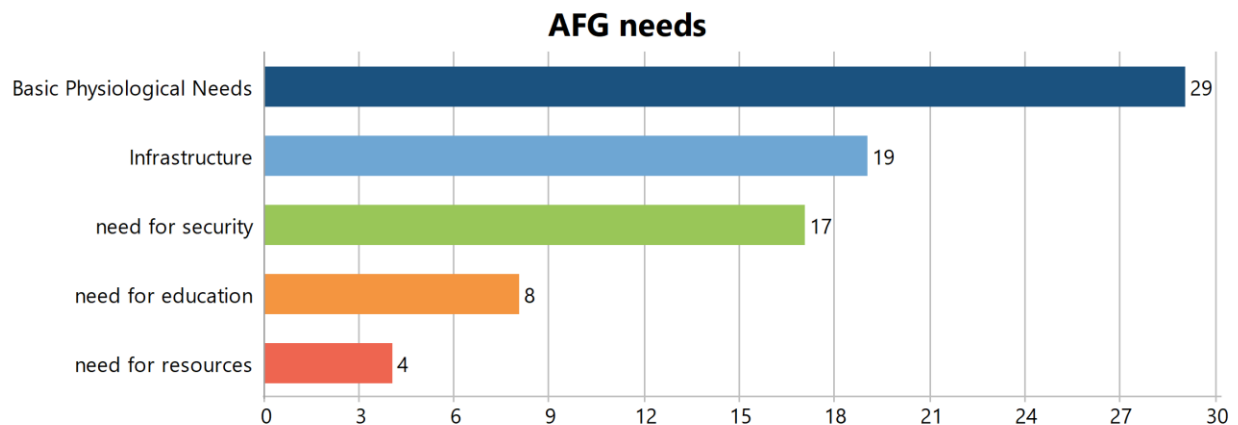


Figure 8. Needs of the Afghan Population and Local Government. Created by author.

Question 2: Under which conditions did the Clear-Hold-Build Approach work?

Overall, Stability operations in Afghanistan have not been evaluated as a lasting success (see Figure 9). Due to the iterative downsizing of the dataset focusing on success stories, every single one of the eighty-two documents contain some story that claimed success concerning the

projects or interventions. However, in the framework of stability operations in Afghanistan, in only nine of the documents did the interviewed person describe the stability operation as a success. Moreover, in only one case was the project described as part of a SCHBT approach. The following paragraphs will present these categories in more detail.

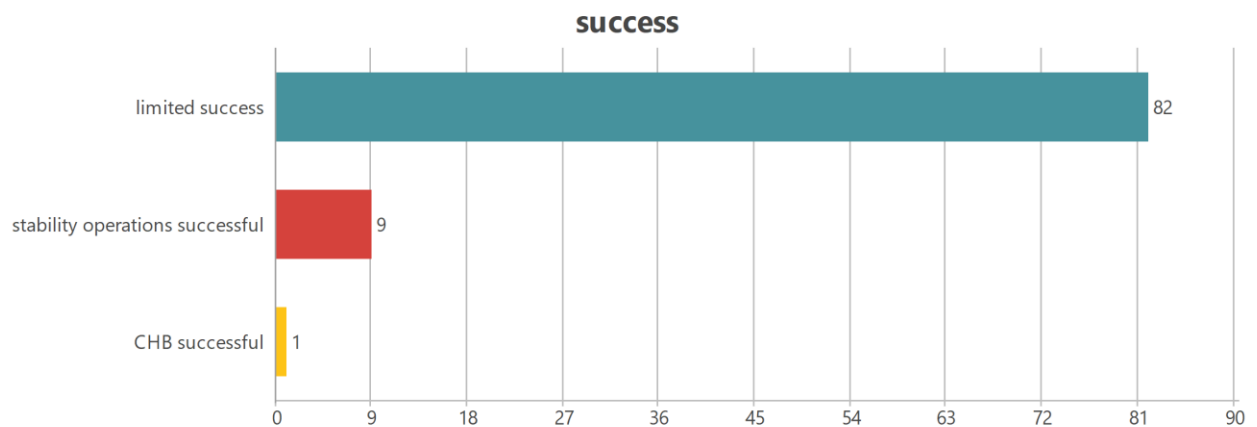


Figure 9. Types of Success Stories. Created by author.

In the case that described the SCHBT approach as a success, the intervening military unit staff did “consult with a village and get a list of development priorities, despite OPSEC concerns, before the operation.”⁶² During the operation, most locals left the area, but “[a]s soon as some people began to return probably about six or seven days after the operation, [the unit was able to] start meeting with local elders and evaluate some of the needs - in terms of projects - although we had done some advance planning and already [had] several projects tee’d up in anticipation.”⁶³

Thus, the unit was able to:

start projects, and over six months completed a lot of great projects, pushing into parts of the valley that had previously been impossible to access because of security. Projects included school repairs, flood protection walls (for agriculture) and perhaps most importantly a road repair project that enabled people from deeper in the valley to more easily travel into the district center to interact with the District Governor. It was also a great example of civ-mil coordination, and one that I shared with higher-level military officials.⁶⁴

⁶² Interview: background_ll_07_xx_dc_03242017, P. 2: 1671.

⁶³ Ibid, P. 3: 700.

⁶⁴ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_dc_03242017, P. 3: 1476.

Thus, the military unit did not leave the area but provided security throughout the build phase, perhaps serendipitously addressing the need for security and development simultaneously and not in consecutive phases. The interview did not address meeting basic physiological needs. Thus, one could assume that they had not been a requirement. Ultimately, the unit followed a needs-based approach and had information about what the local population needed so that “14 days after the Operation, people were able to see dirt move.”⁶⁵ Besides, the unit “tried to let him [the district governor] take credit for activities.”⁶⁶ Consequently, this example was a success, but it does not represent the typical SCHBT approach.

Question 3: Were there other successful approaches toward stabilization efforts?

The majority of interviews described success stories that did not have lasting effects. Nonetheless, these interviews provided a range of different aspects that have been described as successful (see Figure 10).

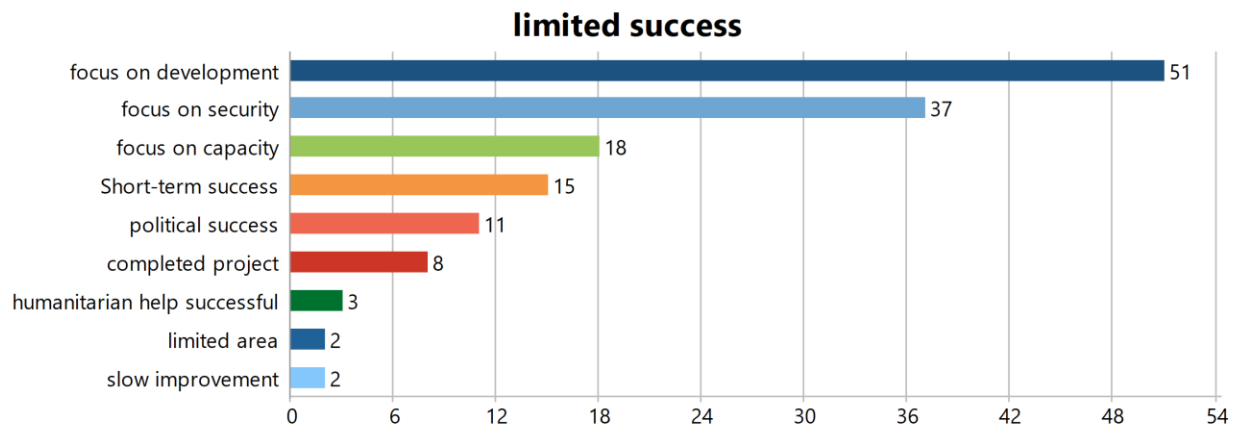


Figure 10. Categories of Successful Stabilization Efforts. Created by author.

In most cases, the success narrative referred to either implementing a development project (fifty-one documents) or establishing a secure environment (thirty-seven documents).

⁶⁵ Ibid., P. 2: 2110.

⁶⁶ Ibid, P. 3: 3290.

Less than a quarter of the analyzed documents addressed the local population's capacity to sustain a project as a critical factor for a successfully implemented project. Other success stories framed partial successes along space and time. They described successes as only short-term successes (fifteen documents) or slow improvements (two documents). Two interviews described geographically or temporally limited success but an inability to recreate these successes on a larger scale (two documents). Some stories described their success stories as political successes (eleven documents), indicating that they made good headlines or benefitted the central Afghan government but failed to improve local Afghan people's situation. A tenth of all interviews described success in terms of completed projects, because the projects themselves either had no positive effects or did not contribute to other successes, directly or indirectly. Thus, "as soon as the development projects were stopped, violence restarted in the district."⁶⁷

Interviewees evaluated stabilization as successful when security needs and development were both sufficiently addressed. The nine documents that mentioned lasting improvements represent examples in which no security challenges existed during the implementation of development projects. One respondent on projects related to counter-narcotics observed that, "Where improvements in security were combined with the development of legal livelihoods options, it was possible to reduce opium poppy cultivation."⁶⁸ Other interviews evaluated VSO as a successful model for stabilization operations. One person stated: "The VSO brought security, so that helped. [...] We were the first ones to open a clinic and fund micro grants. The bazaar was right next to the VSO and ALP [Afghan Local Police]. The governor was near by- there were a lot of shops closed before the VSO, and a lot of people returned as a result of the VSO."⁶⁹ Other

⁶⁷ Interview: esmati_tariq_ll_12122016, P. 2: 3069.

⁶⁸ Interview: background_ll_04_xx_04112018, P. 8: 1554.

⁶⁹ Interview: background_ll_05_c11_01272016, P. 2: 2879.

people described VSOs as “very successful”⁷⁰ or “VSO is how to do COIN [Counter Insurgency]. 100K troops going in isn’t COIN ... VSO is it instead.”⁷¹ However, since special forces have to conduct VSOs, they cannot be reproduced on a larger scale.⁷²

Another successful model for Stabilization Operations was the “Stability in Key Areas” (SIKA) project. USAID operated SIKA and supported linkages between the Afghan government and local development and governance entities, helping identify sources of instability and address needs and grievances identified by targeted communities.⁷³ One person assessed SIKA as “the best program. SIKA worked a lot of private sector stuff [...] everything done through Afghans, no one knew it was an American program. SIKA aligned with the district program for stability. They were able to accomplish much more than anyone else.”⁷⁴ However, SIKA depended on externally-provided local security. “When stabilization worked, it was because of security.”⁷⁵

These observations indicate two things. One, the interviewees evaluated stabilization operations “most successful” when such operations addressed security and development/reconstruction together. Whenever stability operations only addressed one of these dimensions, the resulting benefits remained localized, of limited endurance, and not sustainable. Two, successful stabilization of an area depends on many other factors. While security and development/reconstruction can help external actors identify “what” to address, it seems to be similarly significant to know “how” to address these dimensions. The following paragraphs will explore which factors respondents associated with success and failure regarding lasting stabilization operations results.

⁷⁰ Interview: background_ll_05_xx_phone2_01272016, P. 3: 1664.

⁷¹ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_phone_08152016, P. 3: 444.

⁷² Interview: background_ll_05_xx_phone2_01272016, P. 4: 242.

⁷³ USAID, “Stability in Key Areas (SIKA),” last modified May 7, 2019, accessed 9 February 2021, <https://www.usaid.gov/afghanistan/fact-sheets/stability-key-areas-sika>.

⁷⁴ Interview: background_ll_05_xx_phone_01222016, P. 3: 1477.

⁷⁵ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_dc_10072016, P. 2: 2270.

Question 4: What factors were associated with lasting success?

Bottom-up approaches, an understanding of the local needs and their priorities, solutions that connect with the Afghan culture, and the simultaneous engagement of basic physiological and security needs were factors that people associated most often with successful stabilization implementation efforts in Afghanistan (see Figure 11). Other factors associated with success were an orientation on the conditions before the war, maintaining a dialogue with the local population and government, and unity of effort among the intervening actors. However, one document also referred to modern management as a factor for success, and one document highlighted luck and coincidence. The following paragraphs will investigate the more prominent factors in more detail.

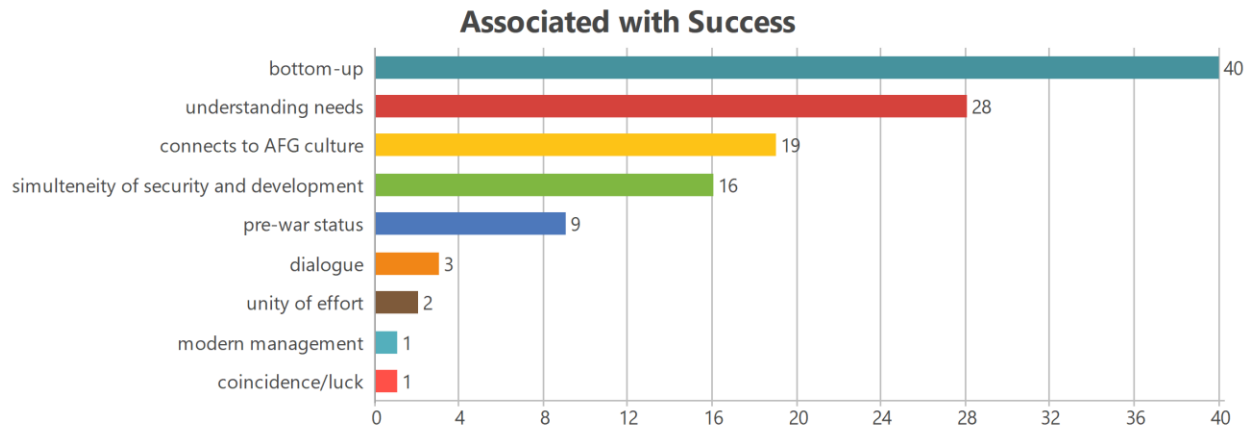


Figure 11. Factors Associated with Lasting Success. Created by author.

Forty of the eighty-two analyzed documents promoted a bottom-up approach in one way or the other, supported by thirteen people who mentioned that top-down approaches were not helpful. While one interviewee stated that a bottom-up approach would never work, forty interviews support the idea that “Afghanistan needs to be built from the ground-up, not top-down.”⁷⁶ Because it “all depends on what people on the ground need ... so stab ops have to be inherently decentralized.”⁷⁷

⁷⁶ Interview: background_ll_05_xx_phone_01092015, P. 2: 2457.

⁷⁷ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_dc_11182016, P. 4: 473.

However, a bottom-up approach, if addressed carelessly, also created challenges, as one Afghan highlighted in his interview: “[The local] Government tried to [...] bring priorities from the people, but in many cases the situation was that a list was given to the people [by ISAF] and were told that they can want some things but not others.”⁷⁸ One American official concluded that for a true understanding of the recipient’s needs “[w]e need to have dialogue even if it is not rapid, but we need to at least tell others about our interests and hear about theirs.”⁷⁹

Solutions had to be culturally acceptable for the Afghans, not just for the intervening states. A point stated repeatedly in the interviews was that a provided solution to a problem that did not connect to the Afghan culture and way of life did not last. Not only was the Afghan way significantly different from those of most intervening states, but “[t]hey had 30 years of civil war behind them. They were not about to turn everything in because the Americans said that this would be a good idea.”⁸⁰ One American official stated: “We treated the problem mainly as a military problem, without thinking about what it means afterwards. We still have this problem today in Afghanistan. How does Afghanistan survive?”⁸¹ Therefore, programs seem to be more successful when supporting an Afghan solution with local materials and workers instead of importing foreign solutions and implementing them with contractors.⁸² For example, the Afghan Social Outreach Program (ASOP) earned praise as “a good program because it matched the traditions and it didn’t impose foreign structures onto Afghans.”⁸³

Finally, such solutions have to achieve what was called the “local buy-in.” When Afghans identified with a project and saw it as owned by and beneficial to their community,

⁷⁸ Interview: baran_safiullah_ll_02182017, P. 1: 2409.

⁷⁹ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_nyc_1500_10212015, P. 5: 575.

⁸⁰ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_newjersey_10222015, P. 6: 3247.

⁸¹ Ibid., P. 9: 1521.

⁸² Interview: background_ll_07_xx_skype_05092017, P. 6: 369.

⁸³ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_arlington_09132016, P. 1: 1000

programs were consistently described as successful and longer-lasting. Findings indicated that local ownership is one way to improve acceptance, backed-up by eleven interviewees, who identified a lack of local ownership as a contributing factor for project failure. Interviewees also identified that projects hearkening back to Afghans’ pre-war status helped the local population embrace a given initiative. “If you think about the 1970s, it was a transactional economy. It was tourist based/micro/small. There was nothing greater than small businesses.”⁸⁴ Consequently, bigger projects often failed. “In Afghanistan, people knew how to be shopkeepers, traders, [...]. But [they had] no machine tool experience.”⁸⁵

Question 5: What were the main challenges for the implementation of stability?

Intervening forces and organizations faced a wide range of challenges while trying to stabilize Afghanistan. Figure 12 provides an overview of the challenges identified within the interviews. The following paragraphs will highlight those challenges that are most relevant concerning the research question.

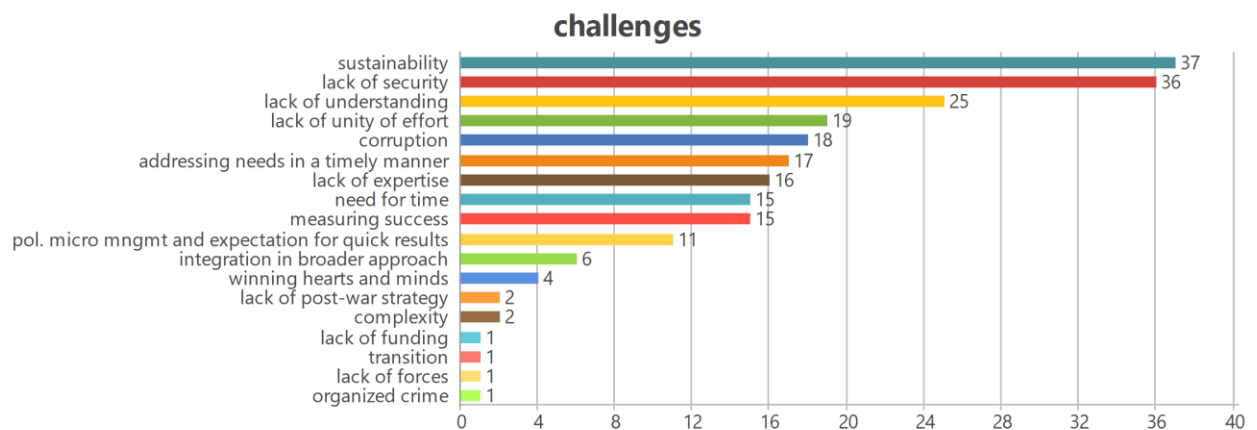


Figure 12. Challenges for the Implementation of Stability. Created by author.

⁸⁴ Interview: yamashita_ken_ll_05_a7_12152015, P. 3: 3026.

⁸⁵ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_dc_09232014, P. 3: 490.

Sustainability

Nearly half of all interviews contained statements about obstacles to achieving lasting and sustainable results. The reasons mentioned by interviewees included a lack of money, no linkage of the project's solution to the Afghan way of life, the local government's lack of capacity to govern, or the short-term nature of many projects. The effects usually included a reduction or total disappearance of all achieved benefits and, in many cases, the deterioration of the security situation, e.g., the return of the Taliban.

Lack of Security

A second but usually interconnected challenge was the lack of security. Other than the need for security of the Afghan population, this category refers to the requirement for security to conduct reconstruction or development projects. Since many organizations working in Afghanistan depended on a civilian workforce, including contractors, establishing and maintaining a safe and secure environment was a precondition in the SCHBT approach. Often these organizations "provided solutions, but security was a concern."⁸⁶ Initially, only NATO forces could provide security. That meant "security falls apart if we're [NATO] not there, so these programs depended on continued presence."⁸⁷ The solution of building more Afghan security forces, on the other hand, also had its challenges. Even some Afghan officials recognized: "we can't afford a force of that size [...] affordability versus the requirements was the big argument at the time."⁸⁸ To solve this dilemma, donor nations provided money to fund the Afghan security forces and attempt to jumpstart the local economy. However, this flood of money led to another challenge that interviewees frequently identified as a source of instability, corruption.

⁸⁶ Interview: background_ll_05_c11_01272016, P. 3: 925.

⁸⁷ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_arlington_09132016, P. 1: 533.

⁸⁸ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_xx_10192015, P. 11: 501.

Corruption

One interviewee stated: “The biggest problem is corruption, then security. These people are making Afghanistan insecure.”⁸⁹ In this case, the cultural disconnect between the donor nations and the Afghans was apparent. “Because Afghans had a culture of corruption/nepotism, we advised to make sure they were doing the right thing. Monitoring is needed, but it’s more costly because humans are needed. But we need to do it or else we are pouring into barrels with holes.”⁹⁰ Thus, “a major cause of instability in south was corrupt and brutal officials.”⁹¹

Lack of Understanding

This instability, in turn, created an immense need for resources, which led to another dilemma. “We saw an enemy-centric strategy with a push of resources toward the south and east. In the north and west, Afghans see all the resources going to the south and east. So the incentive is to invite insecurity into my region to bring attention and development. The warlords then see an opportunity to fill the vacuum.”⁹² However, an integrated, needs-based approach focused on stable regions was not practical from a non-military perspective, either: “There were two options going in: we could have either done needs based and NOT been integrated with the military, or we could have used stability criteria and been integrated with the military, which is what we did. You can’t do needs based if you’re attached with the military, because they’re deliberately targeting districts that are unstable.”⁹³

⁸⁹ Interview: background_ll_05_f2_08112017, P. 3: 2097.

⁹⁰ Interview: background_ll_05_xx_phone_01202016, P. 5: 2008.

⁹¹ Interview: mamundzai_farid_ll_12112017, P. 4: 1259.

⁹² Interview: background_ll_01_xx_brussels_02242015, P. 3: 3759.

⁹³ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_skype_08302016, P. 3: 350.

Time

Finally, time was a factor that created challenges in two ways. One, not only do politicians expect quick results, but in Stability operations “[y]ou succeed or fail on whether you can do these things in a timely manner.”⁹⁴ The lack of unified effort between the military as the security provider and USAID or other organization as the reconstruction/development agency led to a disconnect between the clear/hold and the build phases. When intervening forces could not promptly address reconstruction and development efforts, the delay usually led to a deterioration of the security situation over time, leading to the second time-related aspect. Successful interventions require more time than a military force typically invests in a discrete operation, or is allowed to invest given domestic pressures and operational constraints, closing the loop to the Lack-of-Security challenge.

Question 6: What were the proposed improvements for future efforts?

The interviewees proposed a wide range of possible actions to improve the outcomes of stability operations in Afghanistan. For a complete list of proposals, the reader may consult the SIGAR reports. However, concerning the research question and the possible conclusions drawn from it, it is sufficient to look at the proposals made when the interviewees claimed some degree of success (see Figure 13).

⁹⁴ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_xx_10192015, P. 7: 4075.

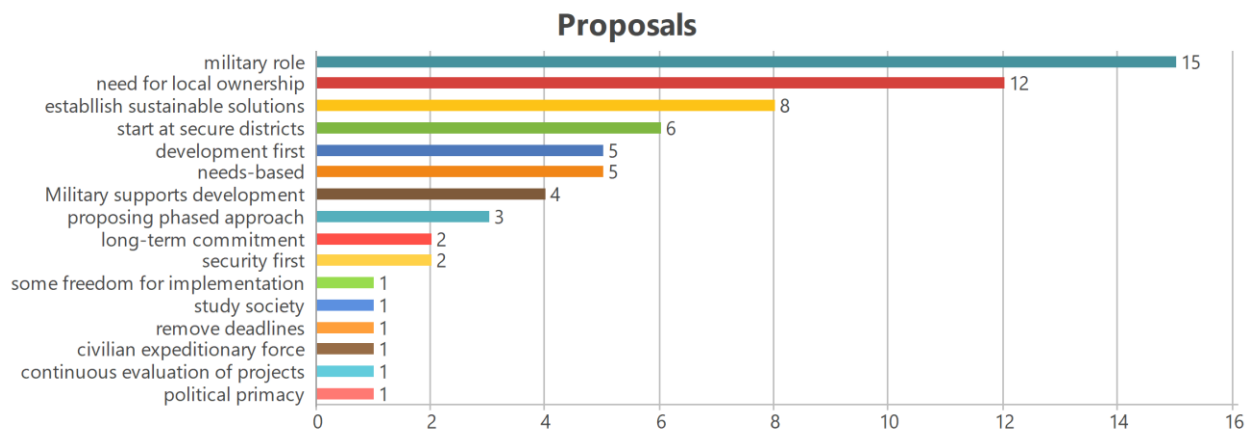


Figure 13. Proposals for Improvements of Future Stability Operations. Created by author.

The Role of the Military

Overall there exists confusion about the role of the military.⁹⁵ One of the topics most often referred to was the military’s role in stabilization operations. While one interviewee stated that “the overall commander should be a military commander,”⁹⁶ and three interviewees stated that the military should play no role during the development phase, a majority of interviewees chose a middle path and proposed to improve relations between the military and civilian actors. However, four interviewees proposed putting the military in a supporting rather than a supported role in terms of stability and reconstruction. One interviewee even proposed a “civilian expeditionary force [...] with people who have different skill sets and can be mobilized”.⁹⁷ Thus, it seems necessary to reflect on the military’s possible roles while developing potential approaches for future stabilization operations. This also touches on the question of where to start with reconstruction and development.

⁹⁵ Interview: background_ll_05_xx_12142015, P. 4: 909.

⁹⁶ Interview: richards_david_ll_07_67_09262017, P. 4: 1035.

⁹⁷ Interview: bullion_james_ll_05_c1_11182015, P. 4: 2998.

Stability and Security

The military tends to focus its efforts on insecure areas, which align with the SCHBT approach. However, based on the experiences mentioned above, directing resources for stability and development only into insecure areas can entice leaders of secure districts to encourage instability to get attention. Based on the individuals' backgrounds and experiences, interviewees proposed different approaches towards regional priorities of efforts. Therefore, the results are mixed. While the American respondents declared they must "put security first, but with the aim of the more important development and governance component coming right behind it,"⁹⁸ Afghans claim that "[p]rograms should have started from the relatively secure districts and should have expanded to the insecure areas."⁹⁹ One Afghan interviewee proposed a compromise by implementing stability programs in both unstable and relatively stable districts at the same time, but to emphasize secure areas as a way to demonstrate success.¹⁰⁰ Success itself, if connected to the local buy-in, leads to another category of proposals.

Local Ownership and Knowledge of Needs

This research uncovered local ownership as a critical aspect for the success of stabilization and development efforts. Since stability is "locally defined and contextual,"¹⁰¹ it is essential to include the local population and government. As former Speaker of the US House of Representatives Congressman Thomas J. "Tip" O'Neil famously observed, "[a]ll politics is local."¹⁰² His wisdom easily translates to stability operations: "... every donor and every intervening country must have a good level of local knowledge. They must conduct their studies

⁹⁸ Interview: richards_david_ll_07_67_09262017, P. 6: 388.

⁹⁹ Interview: babakarkheil_hedayatullah_ll_12292016, P. 4: 872.

¹⁰⁰ Interview: mamundzai_farid_ll_12112017, P. 6: 519.

¹⁰¹ Interview: background_ll_07_xx_dc_11182016, P. 4: 809.

¹⁰² Tip O'Neill and Gary Hymel, *All Politics is Local, and other Rules of the Game* (Holbrook, MA: B. Adams, 1995).

and must select objectives and priorities in close collaboration with the host country and listen to its priorities.”¹⁰³

Establish Sustainable Solutions

“What we have to do is create a situation in which Afghanistan can maintain itself.”¹⁰⁴ Despite all the good intentions of developing a country further, one way of achieving sustainable solutions is to orient stabilization and reconstruction efforts on things that existed before the military intervention. It might not be beneficial to establish a strong central government when people have no experience with it. “Afghanistan [is] different from other places, here most of the things depend on the ethnic and tribal affiliations”¹⁰⁵ Thus, one could not “make the argument that this was a society ripe to be democratic.”¹⁰⁶ Consequently, smaller projects oriented on the pre-war status, implemented with local workers and local resources, and aligning with the Afghan way of life are most promising to achieve sustainable results.

Critical Review of the Findings

Critics could argue that this research’s findings only reflect the SCHBT approach’s failure, an artifact of SIGAR’s purpose to identify the problems that prevented lasting successes. However, the open-ended interview questions also encouraged interviewees to assess how effective their program was and what went well. Therefore, responses claiming that a phased approach would have been successful should be expected.

One of the biggest challenges for any intervening actor is to identify measures of effectiveness. Thus, even if more data were available, quantitative data could not provide more valuable results than the chosen qualitative approach. Additionally, testing the hypothesis of this

¹⁰³ Interview: haider_ghulam_ll_01262017, P. 6: 1200.

¹⁰⁴ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_newjersey_10222015, P. 3: 2508.

¹⁰⁵ Interview: babakarkheil_hedayatullah_ll_12292016, P. 4: 1288.

¹⁰⁶ Interview: background_ll_01_xx_xx_10232015, P. 3: 2734.

study requires an experimental research design beyond the time, scale, and resources of this study. Consequently, the utilized dataset is the broadest and most complete set of unclassified data, including open-ended questions across American, Allied, and Afghan officials currently available. Thus, as flawed and incomplete as the current study might be, it offers key insights from Afghanistan that qualify as general findings for stabilization operations.

Afghanistan is geographically, culturally, and in many other aspects significantly different from successful stabilization efforts in the past. However, rather than looking for deviations in the operational environment to explain the results, this study attempted to find an underlying similarity (here, the hierarchy of needs), which – if not appropriately addressed – leads to less successful outcomes. Furthermore, this study did not aim to provide scientifically-proven rules on conducting stabilization operations in general. Instead, this monograph’s scope was to challenge how intervening nations think about their approach to stabilization efforts and find indications to improve this mental framework further. The results presented here can only represent one case in a specific range of time. However, the indications can serve as a foundation for future research to further validate or reject the proposed theoretical concept.

Summary of Findings

The findings could not provide sufficient evidence that a phased SCHBT approach was or can be successful. Furthermore, the findings indicate that basic needs are more relevant to the local population than security needs—in other words, ISAF’s priority (security first, provision of basic needs second) proved to be the opposite of what most Afghans needed or expected. Additionally, interviewees assessed interventions most successful when security was not an issue or when the hold-and-build phase of an operation occurred simultaneously or soon after the clearing phase. The section below will interpret if and how these findings support the hierarchy of needs’ theoretical construct.

Interpretation of Key Findings

Needs of the Local Population

The findings support Maslow's hierarchy of needs. The analysis of the Afghan population's needs reflects a hierarchy of basic physiological needs over security. The number of documents that focused not on the intervening forces' needs but those of the local Afghan population was small. Most interviews reflected a WEIRD mindset and the military/governmental school of thought, especially among non-Afghan interviewees.

Basic Physiological Needs

Interviewees expressed their desire for basic physiological needs like food, water, shelter, or health care access. However, most Afghans demonstrated a culturally-based lack of empathy for displaced people, instead privileging their own everyday needs for improvements in development work. These included moving a well closer to the village, water management for irrigation purposes, or food distribution, and not food, shelter, or clothing for refugees.

Need for Infrastructure

The need for infrastructure addressed the reestablishment of bridges, community buildings, and especially roads. Roads often went unrepaired and experienced severe damage by ISAF's use of heavily armored vehicles. Three factors can explain the number of times interviewees mentioned infrastructural needs. First, roads are the population's lifeline, especially in rural or mountainous areas, so there is an existential need for functional road infrastructure. Second, local people know that stability forces favor road-construction projects to improve the region, which encourages them to highlight that type of need. Finally, since the Afghan interviewees were people involved in stabilization efforts and knew the donor nations' preferences and domestic constraints, it seems not surprising that they mentioned infrastructure so often.

Need for Security

Interviewees mentioned the need for security significantly less often than basic physiological needs. That does not necessarily mean that it is less critical to the people, mainly since the category of basic physiological needs includes a wider variety of factors. Moreover, respondents might have mentioned security needs less often because there was no lack of security. However, the military usually seeks to operate in insecure regions and provides security for the organizations that provide reconstruction and development projects. Thus, it is unlikely that a safe and secure environment was why not mentioning security needs more often.

Furthermore, security needs represented the need for physical security and social security, including dispute resolution. These services do not exclusively require a military presence. Therefore, it seems fair to conclude that the results indicate that the need for security was less prevalent than basic physiological needs.

Need for Education and Resources

Interviewees mentioned the need for education and related resources much less often than any other needs. This might be explainable because many Afghans do not think long-term. In unstable regions, uncertainty regarding the future among the population is high. In Afghanistan, this situation has endured for nearly fifty years. From this perspective, it is understandable that people focus most on their immediate needs and ignore investing in an unpredictable future. Of note is the small number of interviewees that mentioned an Afghan need for resources. This interpretation resonates with the finding that local projects based on local resources and personnel were most successful in creating sustainable and lasting results. However, this finding stands in massive contrast to interviewees' statements requesting more resources to enable better results.

Overall, the identified needs categories did not contradict but instead supported the idea of a hierarchy of needs proposed by Maslow.

Shape-Clear-Hold-Build-Transition Approach

While not a single case indicated the SCHBT approach's effectiveness, interviewees evaluated development-focused approaches as successful more often than security-focused approaches. While one cannot exclude that there are many other reasons for these successes or the lack thereof, these findings did not contradict the theory that both dimensions (basic needs and security) need simultaneous attention. Therefore, an SCHBT approach regarding a handover to another service provider did not improve the situation.

Successful Projects

Successful projects addressed need priorities according to the proposed concept. Based on the theoretical construct (see Figure 14), successful projects occurred in regions where either security or basic needs were the only issues (upper right or lower left corner). Thus, addressing the dimension in need was enough to re-establish the equilibrium that we define as stability. If service providers designed their projects to be sustainable with local resources and connections to the Afghan way of life, the results could become enduring.

However, when stability forces had to address basic needs and security needs (bottom right corner), only attempts that

addressed both dimensions simultaneously were evaluated as successful. Consequently, identifying and understanding the need priorities seems to be the key to successful and lasting stabilization efforts.

Summary of Interpretations

The analysis' findings above show that a WEIRD mindset was the mental paradigm that shaped most stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. The range of interviewees and the described approaches often reflected the military/governmental school of thought. Project implementations

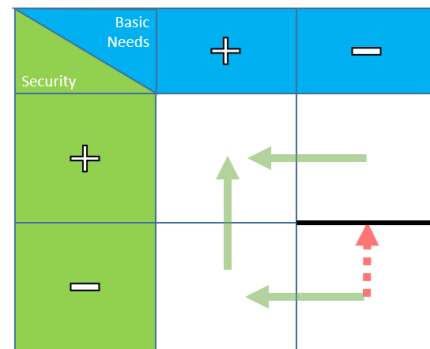


Figure 14. Re-Establishing the Fragile Equilibrium. Created by author.

often oriented themselves at political expectations, the intervening forces' needs, and the donor nations' limitations. However, the factors that people identified as significant for the success of programs reflected the needs-based approach described by Melissa Thomas.¹⁰⁷ Overall, the findings indicate required changes to be more successful in future stabilization efforts regarding what to address and how to address it.

Conclusions

This study's findings allow concluding proposals for the strategic, operational, and tactical levels of planning for future stability operations. Since this monograph's findings do not support the research hypothesis (H0), the author rejects it in favor of the alternative hypothesis (H1). Therefore, not addressing the local population/government's prioritized needs simultaneously, but by phases had no or a negative impact on the outcome of US stabilization efforts in Afghanistan. Assuming future research further verifies this case study's findings, these findings allow drawing conclusions that should encourage politicians and Army leadership to reframe their perception of stability operations. As proposed by this case study, a needs-centric perspective would further offer a clear perspective on improving planning, conduct, and assessment of future stability operations.

General Conclusions

The key to success in stability operation is understanding and accepting the needs of the local population and their local government. Based on cultural background and socialization, these needs can differ depending on the stability operation's geographic location and recent events. Following the idea of a hierarchy of needs, one can reestablish the fragile equilibrium described by the word "stability" only when sufficiently addressing the local populations' needs. Therefore, it is necessary to identify these needs and accept that one must prioritize basic

¹⁰⁷ Thomas, *Govern Like Us*.

physiological needs over security. Since both these levels are deficit needs, it will not be possible to win the recipient population's hearts and minds, since they do not create happiness when fulfilled but only unhappiness when insufficiently addressed. Consequently, nations that deploy resources and forces to create stability must carefully assess local needs and address them while developing their approaches. Based on this study's findings, the following section will provide a more detailed list of planning considerations that should assist planners in developing approaches for lasting effects.

Why: Identifying the Purpose of the Intervention

The role of the armed forces in stability operations depends on their purpose. Since there is no agreed definition of stabilization among all actors involved, such a mission might touch many different issues (see Figure 1). Analyzing the local government's situation along capabilities to satisfy basic physiological and security needs should enable planners to develop a better understanding and identify possible generic approaches (see Figure 4). This should also clarify if the military, employed as an instrument of power, must be complemented by others or if it acts in support of civilian actors based on the unique capabilities that it can provide within a comprehensive approach. Once the purpose is clear, planners should identify possible generic approaches (see Figure 5) even if political guidance might lack clarity. The ultimate goal should be to enable the local government to sustain the fragile equilibrium between satisfying basic and security needs. Therefore, the first step in every stabilization effort should be to identify the purpose of a military intervention instead of asking for potential military contributions.

What: Identifying Roles, Required Capabilities, and Approaches

The overall approach should depend on the local situation. A research report of the RAND Corporation from 2018 identified three key roles for DoD in stability operations: (1) a leading role in the provision of security and building security capacity; (2) a supporting role in nonmilitary stability functions; and (3) a supporting role in the crosscutting functions of

information, planning, coordination, and physical support.¹⁰⁸ This monograph generally supports these findings, but taking it one step further shows that this idea falls short of solving the problem. Building on the proposed two-by-two table and based on contemporary uses of the military for stability operations, one could identify which quadrant best reflects the situation of a particular area (see Figure 4), to identify the optimal role for the military. If the security situation is stable (upper right quadrant) the military could remain in a supporting role and assist civilian actors to reestablish conditions that allow the local population and government to regulate and assure the provision of basic physiological needs. This may include the construction of shelter, roads, access to potable water, and access to health care. Suppose the local government is able to maintain the distribution network but security threats prevent people from accessing these services. In that case, the military could help the local government maintain a safe and secure environment by conducting peacekeeping or peacebuilding activities. In cases of violent revolutions, this assistance might go towards an interim governance organization or unit. However, the focus should be on the security of the civil population.

Nevertheless, since the results indicate that the deterioration of one dimension quickly leads to the deterioration of the second, military units more often than not find themselves in the matrix's lower right quadrant. In this case, it is crucial to accept that the hierarchy of needs requires a simultaneous approach toward both needs categories. This, however, is the most challenging situation, since the cooperation between military and civilian actors creates a range of problems, the lack of unity of command/effort being one of the most important. The international community did not develop satisfactory solutions for this problem during its nearly two decades of stabilization efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq. In addition to an improved status quo, the findings above suggest two possible alternatives that might inform strategic dialogue and solve the question of the military's role in stabilization operations.

¹⁰⁸ Robinson, *Finding the Right Balance*, 5.

First, employ private military contractors (PMC) to assure local security. While this scenario might at first seem extreme, it could potentially solve the issue that civilian companies and agencies refuse to provide reconstruction or development works when it is not safe. The employment of PMCs is not a new idea. Until now, the problem is that their focus was only on the security and support of the intervening forces, but not the local population's security needs. Properly trained and resourced, PMCs could also support the local government to establish local security. In this way, the local government could address basic physiological and security needs simultaneously, and the complicated coordination between military and civilian actors becomes unnecessary. In *The New Rules of War*, Sean McFate proposes that the "Westphalian Order" is an outdated model.¹⁰⁹ In a realist mindset, the state has the monopoly of power, and mercenaries are not allowed. However, McFate observes that if one approaches the world today with a more liberalist view, one can clearly see that a pre-Westphalian model is no longer unthinkable. While it might not seem the desired future from a WEIRD point of view, politicians looking for options to save money and free their high-tech militaries from what seems to be a never-ending stability mission may embrace this approach. There is, however, a second option that might be more desirable.

Second, the military conducts governance tasks while providing security. In her book *War and the Art of Governance*, Nadia Schadlow claims that "success in war ultimately depends on the consolidation of political order, which requires control over territory and the hard work of building local governmental institutions."¹¹⁰ Thus, "[w]hen done well, as in the [post-]World War II cases of Germany, Japan, and Italy, lasting strategic successes have resulted. When done poorly, the failure to consolidate gains resulted in protracted conflicts, increased costs, higher

¹⁰⁹ Sean McFate, *The New Rules of War: Victory in the Age of Durable Disorder* (New York, NY: William Morrow, 2019), 31.

¹¹⁰ Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 1.

causalities, and the loss of public support for the effort. Governance operations are central to strategic success in war”.¹¹¹ Among the recommendations she makes are some points that offer another solution to the challenges of simultaneously addressing basic and security needs. She proposes that the United States must realize that unity of command is essential to operational and strategic success. Thus, military forces should serve as the main instrument for political consolidation. Consequently, the army needs operational control over governance operations in war, even though civilians write policies. Therefore, the United States, especially the military, must have some standing capabilities and organizations to conduct essential governance tasks.¹¹²

At the strategic level, in the context of current discussions about Large-Scale Combat Operations (LSCO), the consolidation of gains is highlighted as one of the US Army’s strategic tasks, which includes stabilization as an integrated joint phase.¹¹³ Lt. Gen. Mike Lundy *et al.* argue that “[s]uccessful consolidation of gains is an inherent part of achieving enduring success in each of the other three roles in competition and conflict.”¹¹⁴ In this role, they foresee the US Army conducting governance operations. This idea, too, nests itself in the examples of the Second World War. “Governance detachments reestablished civil administration, cared for sick and injured locals, registered the local population, assisted refugees and displaced persons, collected weapons and contraband, organized local citizens for the cleanup of their communities, and reestablished basic services to the cities, towns, and villages occupied by Allied forces to the

¹¹¹ Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance*, 307.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 309.

¹¹³ Lt. Gen. Mike Lundy and Col. Rich Creed, “The Return of US Army Field Manual 3-0, Operations,” *Military Review* 97, no. 6 (2017): 17, accessed 29 August 2020, <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/3e34/621cd83cc5e99d7560f715c449245fc7bdae.pdf>.

¹¹⁴ Lt. Gen. Mike Lundy, Col. Richard Creed, Col. Nate Springer and Lt. Col. Scott Pence, “Three Perspectives on Consolidating Gains,” *Military Review* 99, no. 5 (2019): 17, accessed 29 August 2020, <https://www.armyupress.army.mil/Portals/7/military-review/Archives/English/SO-19/Lundy-Three-Perspectives.pdf>.

best of their ability.”¹¹⁵ Once the US Army developed these capabilities, it could also use these in scenarios other than LSCO.

While none of the concepts introduced in this section addresses the needs-based approach to stabilization, they offer potential answers to the question of the potential military roles and required organizational capabilities to address basic physiological and security needs at the same time. However, both approaches should be seen as two extremes of a range of possibilities. Neither one is likely to be a reality in the foreseeable future. Nonetheless, they mark the boundaries of a field of possible solutions. The next section will highlight conclusions for the implementation of a needs-based approach.

How: Considerations for Planning and Implementation

Stability Operations require tolerance for a diverse set of local approaches. This study’s findings indicate that bottom-up approaches have a greater chance of achieving lasting results than top-down approaches. Cultural, ethnic, geographic, and infrastructural diversity limits the chances for success of a one-fits-all solution. Therefore, planning for stability operations must rest on a proper understanding of local needs and customs, and requires flexibility in the approach. In addition to what the intervening force will need to conduct the operation, this study proposes to add the perspective of the local population and government. While this study cannot offer a universal and complete catalog of questions, its findings indicate that some information categories seem to be more critical to success than others. Therefore, the following questions should inform planning efforts for stability operations:

1. What does the local population need (which might significantly differ from what they want) A “catalogue” with what one can/may offer is not a bad thing to have, but it should not be the foundation upon which to plan reconstruction or development activities in a given area.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 22.

2. How was that need addressed before the intervention? And, is that also sufficient for the needs of the intervention force? (e.g., size and load categories of roads, airfields, etc.)
3. Is it sufficient to re-establish the status quo or is a new, more resilient, solution necessary? Did the situation deteriorate because the need was previously addressed in an unsafe or unsustainable manner? Does the planned solution align with the local culture, traditions and way of life?
4. What things should have priority? Where do priorities of the population and the intervening forces overlap? Instead of asking: “What can be done?”; planners should use the hierarchy of needs to identify what needs are sufficiently addressed and which have to be addressed better?
5. How does this area govern itself? To assure a successful transition to local governance, planners must accept that the local model/idea of governance might differ significantly from a Western model of governance.
6. What other factors will influence the level of acceptance of new projects? This might influence the answers to subsequent questions like: Who should own the solution? Who else should or should not benefit from the solution? Who should plan, build and maintain the solution?
7. Can the solution be sustained with local resources once the intervening forces are gone?
8. What consequences/activities will the work in one area have on the surrounding areas? Will investment in one area become a source of instability in adjacent areas?

The answers to these questions will not only differ regionally but also over time. Even though the analyzed data offers answers to most of these questions, the author decided to refrain from such a list since the reader might mistake it for a set of instructions. A proposal like: “Local

ownership in combination with smaller investments makes control less necessary and reduces the risk of corruption but requires acceptance of a lack of control, and the risk of failure”; are tempting. However, a solution for one area might not work in another. Therefore, this monograph restricted itself to raising these questions and highlighting that their answers will increase the chances of success when asked repeatedly during the planning and conduct of stabilization operations.

Creating and retaining access to information of this sort is critical. Sufficient access to the necessary data requires new approaches towards quality and quantity. In terms of data quality, the US Army could include the perspective of the local population. FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*, requires army leaders to develop a comprehensive understanding of their operational environment, including civil considerations.¹¹⁶ However, according to FM 6-0, civil considerations are noted only insofar as they might influence military operations, while the findings of this study propose to widen the view and ask how military operations can influence and support the civilian population and local governance.¹¹⁷ Therefore, including the local population’s priorities and needs should complement the understanding of the operational environment. Concerning the quantity of data, *Small Wars, Big Data* represents a quantitative approach to the stability operations in Afghanistan. They conclude that a detailed understanding of the interrelations between civilians, governments, and insurgents provides a new set of tools to reduce violence and increase stability.¹¹⁸ They claim that projects could be more successful if they were (a) created to *address* the *needs* of the civilians in the local community and (b) simply *better designed* [to] yield more violence reduction per dollar spent, and (c) *conditioned* on information-sharing by the community (i.e., revoked when information is not shared) will be

¹¹⁶ US Army, FM 3-07, 57.

¹¹⁷ US Department of the Army, Field Manual (FM) 6-0,C2: *Commander and Staff Organization And Operations* (Washington, DC:Government Publishing Office, 2016), A-4.

¹¹⁸ Berman et al., *Small Wars, Big Data*, 17.

more violence reducing at a given level of spending.¹¹⁹ Thus, the use of new communications technologies (e.g., cell phones) in concert with personal relations will allow a safe way to access timely information that will address the ever-changing and evolving needs and security challenges within the framework of stability operations.

Based on such a comprehensive understanding, and with access to the necessary information, the implementation of stability efforts should allow for a diverse range of bottom-up approaches and avoid streamlining and stove-piping from the outset. Stabilization efforts should focus on the local population's and the government's needs, culture, and habits. Efficiency and effectiveness in such efforts will depend on the unity of effort between all actors involved to assure simultaneous efforts towards basic and security needs.

Outlook

Future research efforts on stability operations must remain free from ideology and agnostically root themselves in data and evidence.¹²⁰ While this qualitative study's findings seem to be in line with those of the quantitative approach in *Small Wars, Big Data*, these results are limited to a specific time and geographic location. Additional research should further validate or refine the proposed concepts by looking at other case studies and throughout a more extended period. Besides a better understanding of underlying principles, the conduct of stability operations itself offers an even bigger room for further research.

Among other things, this study has shown that one of the significant challenges in the design and conduct of stability efforts in Afghanistan was the lack of a strategic vision beyond the defeat and displacement of the Taliban. Many things were done with good intentions but without a good understanding of the operational environment. Before the background of past successes and through the lens of current research, more questions arise. Should the US Joint Force

¹¹⁹ Berman et al., *Small Wars, Big Data*, 77.

¹²⁰ Zyck and Muggah, "Preparing Stabilisation for 21st Century Security Challenges," 7.

reestablish a military governance school? If yes, how should such a capability be designed to allow scalability? How can the unity of effort among all actors involved best be achieved? What criteria allow identifying transition points for the transfer of authority between the military, civilian actors, and the local governments? The author sincerely hopes that future researchers' answers to these and other questions will further increase future success by including a needs-based approach.

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