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MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

Complexities of Stability Operations

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
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Executive Summary

Title: Complexities of Stability Operations

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Thesis: To succeed in future large-scale stability operations, the U.S. military must improve joint interagency operations, operational environment assessments, and incorporation of stability operation in early coordination and planning.

Discussion: Stability operations continue to be a necessity today, as weak governance and violent extremism are causes of instability around the world and threaten U.S. interests, as stated in the 2017 National Security Strategy. Despite several decades of experience in stability operations, this type of mission still poses complexities and challenges for the U.S. military and government. Due to the rise of interstate conflict, U.S. involvement demands remain high and have resulted in several requests by the U.S. government (Secretary of Defense) to conduct studies and assessments of past military and interagency functions and their conduct during stability operations. The military is familiar with the manpower, equipment/material, and training required for kinetic operations, but lacks expertise in stabilization and the capacity when required to plan for the difficult task of transition from war to peace. This paper seeks to capture lessons from recently published reports and academic studies in order to improve multifaceted stability concepts and planning considerations for a more accurate understanding of complex stability operating environments.

Conclusion: DOD guidance has shifted to increased combat strength and readiness against near-peer competitors and as a result has significantly reduced focusing manpower, resources, and training towards stability operations. History has shown that stability operations are critical for consolidating combat achievements and attaining long-term strategic success. A reduction in focus in stability operations for the DOD in coordination with the DOS and USAID will result in a lack of preparedness in the interagency joint force for future conflicts and risk potential mission failure and/or a repeat of history with protracted costly consequences.

Preface

I chose to research this particular topic due to my family history and serving as an advisor while deployed to Iraq. My mother was born in Cambodia and her family experienced atrocities for many years while under communist control prior to her arriving in the United States as a refugee. My father served in the Army during the Vietnam War era. I deployed from November 2016 to August 2017 as an Iraqi advisor for Rotation (4), Task Force Al Assad. From these experiences, I have grown a humbling appreciation for security and liberties we enjoy daily and respect for all those who choose to serve our nation to ensure our freedoms.

I recognized the inherent complexities of stability operations while deployed and desired to educate myself further on this relevant and important area within the United States Government and Marine Corps for application in future operations. As I have discovered through my research, for stability operations to provide successful results, in-depth research, planning, and interagency coordination is critically required. For this reason, I do not solely focus on military lessons that can be applied to future operations in this paper. Additionally, this paper offers some recommendations, but focuses on several lessons extracted from various analysis conducted from past stability operations.

I would like to thank Dr. Jill Goldenziel, Ph. D for her mentorship, expertise, and patience through this process of learning. She is not only a true scholar, but I admire and respect her continued work that is essential in the struggle for improving quality of life for those worldwide who are vulnerable and in severe circumstances.

DISCLAIMER

THE OPINIONS AND CONCLUSIONS EXPRESSED HEREIN ARE THOSE OF THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT AUTHOR AND DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF EITHER THE MARINE CORPS COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE OR ANY OTHER GOVERNMENTAL AGENCY. REFERENCES TO THIS STUDY SHOULD INCLUDE THE FOREGOING STATEMENT.

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history, the U.S. has been more successful in total wars than it has been in limited wars and conflicts.¹ In the past few decades, the U.S. has engaged in several limited wars and though it has been able to accomplish its military objectives, it has received much scrutiny and controversy worldwide and domestically for its lack of effort in post-war actions (stabilization).² Due to the limited objectives, resources, and time constraints, the post-war efforts have been lacking and resulted in security vacuums coupled with the host country's difficulty to recover, develop governance, and provide security on its own.³ This resulting weak or failed state condition creates opportunities for insurgents, extremists/terrorists, and transnational criminal organizations to corrupt the developing government and impose grave security concerns.

Stability operations continue to be a necessity today, as weak governance and violent extremism are causes of instability around the world and threaten U.S. interests, as stated in the 2017 National Security Strategy.⁴ Despite several decades of experience in stability operations, this type of mission still poses complexities and challenges for the U.S. military and government. The military is familiar with the manpower, equipment/material, and training required for kinetic operations, but lacks the expertise and capacity required to plan the difficult task of transition from war to peace. To succeed in future large-scale stability operations, the U.S. military must improve joint interagency operations, operational environment assessments, and incorporation of stability operation in early coordination and planning.

Due to the rise of interstate conflict, demands for U.S. involvement remain high and have resulted in several requests by the U.S. government (Office of the Secretary of Defense) to

conduct studies and assessments of past military and interagency functions and their conduct during stability operations.⁵ This paper seeks to capture lessons from recently published reports and academic studies in order to continue the study of multifaceted stability concepts and planning considerations for a more accurate understanding of complex stability operating environments. This paper examines three factors that contribute to the study of stability operations in order to consolidate combat achievements and attain long-term strategic success in U.S. missions abroad. First, U.S. military doctrine on stability operations recently changed to improve effectiveness of operating in a whole-of-government approach. Second, analysis of three large-scale U.S.' stability operations provides lessons for application in future stability operations. The three case studies chosen to assess effectiveness of stability operations are Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq. These three operations were chosen due to its large-scale, complexity, and requirements exceeding military capacity solely. The case studies will be limited to identified complexities or challenges related to stability operations and will not focus on covering other aspects of the war due to the scope of this paper. Lastly, this paper will identify several lessons that should be applied to future stability operations in regards to improving joint interagency operations, operational environment assessments, and incorporation of stability operation in early coordination and planning.

BACKGROUND

STABILITY OPERATIONS IN U.S. MILITARY DOCTRINE

Stability operations have been conducted by the U.S. military as far back as the 1800s and these concepts and tasks have been published in doctrine such as: small wars, military operations other than war, irregular/unconventional warfare, counterinsurgency, nation-building/building partner capacity, crisis response/contingency operations, peacekeeping and support operations, civil-military operations, etc. Lessons from the past century in this type of operation have resulted in

requiring support from across various departments in the U.S. government and not solely reliant on military efforts. Complications have occurred due to these government structures having separate and distinct definitions of stabilization within stability operations, leading to competing or conflicting efforts, inefficient spending, counterproductive outcomes, and repeated mistakes.⁶

The definition for “stabilization” recently changed in 2018 to enable all key organizations within the U.S. Government to concentrate efforts in a unified plan to reduce duplicate efforts and improve effectiveness in operating a whole-of-government approach.⁷ These organizations having a mutual understanding of the concept stabilization will lead to striving towards common objectives, of which to provide resources and efforts towards accomplishing, and ultimately accomplish the mission of transitioning from conflict to stability. The DOS, USAID, and DOD have now adopted the same definition of stabilization as:

“a political endeavor involving an integrated civilian-military process to create conditions where locally legitimate authorities and systems can peaceably manage conflict and prevent a resurgence of violence. Transitional in nature, stabilization may include efforts to establish civil security, provide access to dispute resolution, and deliver targeted basic services, and establish a foundation for the return of displaced people and longer-term development.”⁸

In an effort to synchronize interagency stabilization actions across the U.S. government, the Joint Publication 3-07, *Stability*, identifies five stability functions for the joint service: 1) security, 2) foreign humanitarian assistance, 3) economic stabilization and infrastructure, 4) rule of law, and 5) governance and participation.⁹ The DOD contributes to stability operations through military missions and actions overseas in conjunction with interagency organizations within the U.S. government to provide and maintain a secure environment in the host nation, provide essential services to reconstruct critical infrastructure, and to provide foreign humanitarian assistance in support of other national instruments of power. Crisis response and

contingency operations often expand into stability operations and the U.S. Marine Corps will most likely be the initial force respond.

The U.S. Marine Corps serves as the initial response force due to its expeditionary capabilities for crises response or limited contingency operations, specifically the Marine air-ground task force (MAGTF). Stability operations response actions have been included in these past missions as demonstrated in places such as Kosovo, Philippines, Somalia, Afghanistan, and Iraq. The Marine Corps has discovered that stability operations response actions are not reserved for post-conflict and have been required upon initial actions, during transformational activities, and throughout the range of military operations in order to prevent further crises.¹⁰ In addition to the five stability operations functions identified in the Joint Publication 3-07, the MCWP 3-03 identifies six core stability tasks for the Marine Corps: 1) establish civil security, 2) provide humanitarian assistance, 3) support and/or provide restoration of essential services, 4) support establishment of civil control, 5) support economic and infrastructure development, and 6) support to governance.¹¹ The Marine Corps may support these tasks with individual augmentation of expertise or personnel, logistics, engineering, communications, legal, medical support, or civil affairs (specifically civil-military operations).

Stability operations is framed in U.S. armed forces doctrine as a core mission, yet regulations are generic as to how the military supports the five stability functions. The military is proficient at combat operations and trains to the first stability function of security. The military is less proficient in the other four stability functions because there is not a standing joint interagency organization to conduct stability operations or training that ensures proficiency in stability operations. U.S. military doctrine does not have models to demonstrate success in the planning phase to support the other four functions of stability operations either. Doctrine

includes lessons from Vietnam, but is currently evolving to incorporate lessons derived from stability operations in Afghanistan and Iraq.

**VIETNAM - U.S. STABILITY OPERATIONS:
*JOINT INTERAGENCY OPERATIONS***

The U.S. fought in the Vietnam War from 1955 to 1973. U.S. experience in this region and analysis of complexities of stability operations continue to influence military policy. The Vietnam War was the first example in U.S. history of successful joint and interagency coordination between the Departments of Defense (DOD) and State (DOS) to stabilize a region during a major combat operation. The original mission for the U.S. had been to support the South Vietnamese government and their armed forces in combat operations against the National Liberation Forces (NLF) in the North and against the Viet Cong insurgency in the South. The U.S. initial conventional approach against the insurgents proved to be ineffective. The strategy shifted to integrate civilian nation building efforts with military counterinsurgency efforts to ensure unity of effort, which proved to be vital for mission success. The new aim was to win the support of the local population of South Vietnam through pacification (hereafter referred to as stability operations).¹ The U.S. government believed stability operations were necessary to stop communism from spreading, defeat the North Vietnamese supported insurgency, and to strengthen the sovereignty of the South Vietnamese government.¹²

This parallel mission in the Vietnam War could no longer be fought through primarily military means, but through stabilization efforts referred to as “the other war.”¹³ Difficulty

¹ The concept of stability operations was not developed yet during this time period. The concept of pacification during the Vietnam War had two purposes: “(1) sustained protection of the rural population from the insurgents, which also helps to deprive the insurgency of its rural popular base; and (2) generating rural support for the Saigon regime via programs meeting rural needs and cementing the rural areas politically and administratively to the center.” The updated stabilization definition in U.S. military doctrine has distinct similarities with the mission of pacification efforts in Vietnam. Robert Komer emphasized this process was civil as well as military operation. For more details into the nature of the Pacification Program 1966-1970, see R. W. Komer, “Impact of Pacification on Insurgency in South Vietnam,” *The RAND Corporation*, August 1970, pg. 2-7.

existed in the U.S. organizations in how to define stability operations, how to achieve this mission, and by either military or civilian operations. This dichotomous concept of military versus civil also further exacerbated the interagency dispute over prioritizing security versus development. Military leaders and advisors regarded stability operations as the DOS's responsibility and did not desire this burden. Additionally, the military leaders perceived security as paramount prior to social, economic, and political reform.¹⁴ Civilian agencies, DOS and U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), did not view stability operations as a joint interagency effort during this time. Civilian leaders disagreed with the military's standpoint of security first and debated the requirement for political allegiance in order to remove popular support from the insurgents.¹⁵ U.S. forces faced initial resistance due to the Vietnamese population's distrust and hatred towards the earlier occupying French military force, resulting in defection and support to the Viet Cong insurgency.

In the early years of the war, the U.S. military focused on a conventional fight in the North against the NLF and counterinsurgency tactics in the South against the Viet Cong, but relied on civilian agencies to win the support of the South Vietnamese population.¹⁶ Prior to 1966, stability operations were poorly managed by civilian agencies and uncoordinated with the military forces. Stability operations were conducted as separate operations and reported to separate headquarters producing unsatisfactory progress in stabilization. This resulted in separate offices spread out through 243 districts, with separate budgets, unable to operate at the high operational tempo of war, and often led to conflicting guidance to the South Vietnamese government officials.¹⁷ President Johnson directed a reorganization of the pacification (stabilization) program structure due to concerns with the intervention of the People's Republic of China and receiving American public pressure for less combat in Vietnam and more progress

of South Vietnam self-determination. The Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) structure created one joint interagency organization that integrated staff from military and civilian departments.

The new CORDS structure could effectively align social, economic, and political reform with combat efforts in the war. The President directed a three-pronged strategy at a conference with South Vietnamese government officials, military commanders, and civilian agency leaders of the following: 1) military pressure, 2) nation-building/pacification, and 3) negotiations.¹⁸ In addition to support from the U.S. President, integrating the civilian agencies and the military command structure was beneficial. The military leaders already possessed credible influence with the South Vietnamese senior officials to effect change and the military provided 90% of the resources. Integration reduced in redundancy and allowed effective management of personnel and rectified civilian agency personnel shortages. Stability operations were too complex for just civilian agencies to manage separately. Integration meant the South Vietnamese received advice from two representatives rather than various representatives conflicting one another.¹⁹

CORDS was responsible for providing advice, training, and support to South Vietnamese militia, organizing efforts against the insurgency's clandestine political-military command and information operations, and other successful counterinsurgency and stabilization programs such as the Tet Offensive nation-wide recovery efforts.²⁰ Vital to stability operations in Vietnam was the understanding of the operational environment and its indigenous population. With increased cultural understanding, the CORDS program effectively established programs and methods to convince the South Vietnamese villagers to gather intelligence in order to neutralize the Viet Cong. This was credited to the cultural study of tribes in central portions of Vietnam conducted by anthropologists from American University employed by the DOD.²¹ The Viet Cong's

manpower strength was estimated to be between 70,000 and 100,000 insurgents by 1967. The success of these programs and cultural studies can be attributed to neutralizing approximately over 81,700 from 1968 to 1972.²² Programs such as the Intelligence Coordination and Exploitation Program, South Vietnam's Revolutionary Development Cadre Program, Village Stability Operations, and the Strategic Hamlet Program are several effective programs implemented as a result of improved cultural understanding in Vietnam.^{23,24}

Similar to the insurgents and terrorists the U.S. military battles today, many of the Viet Cong were discovered (through operational environment analysis) to have been recruited due to coercion or necessity for employment instead of radicalization.²⁵ Additionally, most of the support for the Viet Cong was derived from aggravated farmers with grievances over land ownership. The Chieu Hoi (Open Arms) program was effective in paying over 200,000 Viet Cong insurgents to surrender and to cooperate with the South Vietnamese government in its propaganda campaign to message to other insurgents to surrender. Defectors were granted amnesty, given a monetary reward, trained for future employment, and allotted land for their family to resettle.²⁶ CORDS recommended and coordinated with South Vietnam to pass essential land reform laws and ensure families were apportioned fair quantities of land. This new policy on land was important to winning support from the local population to the South Vietnamese government.

Another study conducted by the Walter Reed Army Hospital in 1963 provided insight into the operational environment in regards to the poor Vietnamese healthcare system and its negative effects on the population. Only one-third of the South Vietnamese had access to potable water. Malnutrition and diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis, small pox, and others were pervasive throughout the country.²⁷ Initial analysis concluded the country only staffed 130

physicians, 10 dentists, and 8 pharmacists. The U.S. invested in funding 225 newly trained physicians, 64 new dentists, and 250 new pharmacists by 1972.²⁸

Vietnam's economic development required additional analysis to identify solutions for long-term success and stability. The surge of U.S. troops from 1966 to 1972 created over 300,000 jobs for the Vietnamese. The U.S. spent over \$2 billion to develop the local economy. The South Vietnamese public service sector contributed to 20% of the local economy and domestics, taxi drivers, bars, mechanics, handymen, and security guards contributed to 35% of South Vietnam's total income.²⁹ The U.S. Commodity Import Program facilitated imports that expanded the country's capitalism and assisted in controlling inflation. The sudden withdrawal of U.S. troops in 1973 had an immediate negative impact on the host nation's local economy. Inflation rose by 65% and 40% of the local population became unemployed resulting in living standards decreasing. This stability failure led to pervasive corruption, rioting, and tripling of patients at hospitals.³⁰

The CORDS' success is attributed to 93% of the South Vietnamese population reported living in secured villages by 1970 and the Viet Cong insurgency reported as mostly defeated.³¹ The South Vietnamese created a similar organization to CORDS in 1969 with a national pacification council combining their separate ministries under one unified command. It was called the Central Pacification and Development Council and run by a general officer.³² The goal of CORDS was achieved by integrating civilian nation building efforts with military counterinsurgency efforts to end the Viet Cong's support from the local population. The effectiveness of stability operations by the CORDS program was successful, yet short-lived due to an overall failed U.S. strategy of unclear objectives, delayed actions, and lack of full commitment.

The U.S. experience in Vietnam contributes critical lessons that can be applied to future stability operations. The successful joint interagency coordination was utilized as a model for smaller, yet similar organizations in Afghanistan and Iraq (PRTs). The Vietnam case study demonstrated the necessity for civil and military efforts in stability operations to be synchronized across security, counterinsurgency, and stabilization efforts for long-term development and strategic success. Additionally, stability operations centers that are spread out throughout a country are less effective than one unified command center. Studies by the RAND Corporation have since been conducted into the possibility or necessity of turning control of a foreign country over to a non-military force (i.e. United Nations) to facilitate stability operations once security has been established.³³ DOD may be best suited for disarmament and demobilization, but having another agency conduct reintegration may reduce local resistance to stabilization efforts due to potential grievances of inflicted collateral damage conducted by the military counterinsurgency force.³⁴ The local population may be more compliant with civilian agencies than military armed forces to transition into stabilization and reconstruction. Operational environment assessments are required to address grievances and prevent radicalization or recruitment by insurgents. It is important to conduct analysis of the operational environment to prioritize and align social, economic, and political reform with combat efforts. Operational environment analysis and transition criteria from DOD to the host nation is essential to preventing corruption, inflation, and loss of stabilization progress achieved.

**AFGHANISTAN - U.S. STABILITY OPERATIONS:
*OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS***

The U.S. government has been involved in conducting stability operations in Afghanistan from 2002 to 2017, despite never officially assuming occupying power responsibilities.³⁵ The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) Report was published in May of 2018 and covers various lessons that can be applied to future stability operations for the Departments of State, Defense, and USAID. Overall, the U.S. government has spent \$117 billion on reconstruction in Afghanistan, \$70 billion of that was spent on Afghan security forces.³⁶

In 2003, the U.S. military conducted counterinsurgency (COIN) operations throughout the eastern and southern regions of Afghanistan and implemented the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) to build support for the district governments and to reduce popular support to the Taliban insurgency. In 2005, the military continued the “clear, hold, build” phases of COIN operations, while USAID implemented various stabilization programs, and the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) interagency coordination increased as more troops and resources were committed to Afghanistan. In 2008, as ISAF troop quantities increased, so did the incidents of suicide attacks and improvised explosive devices. Due to the increased stability in Iraq in 2009, the U.S. government surged more than 50,000 troops and hundreds of civilians to support a more rigorous stabilization strategy in Afghanistan.³⁷ Additional personnel and material were deployed to Afghanistan, but the plans for stability operations were constrained to 18 months which resulted in unattainable and unrealistic objectives due to the initial strategy requiring a 10-year commitment.³⁸

Success prior to this surge was noticed in certain areas such as the Nawa District in Helmand, where attacks decreased by 90% after six months of COIN operations by the Marines, and government officials were able to address constituents’ grievances (essential to marginalize

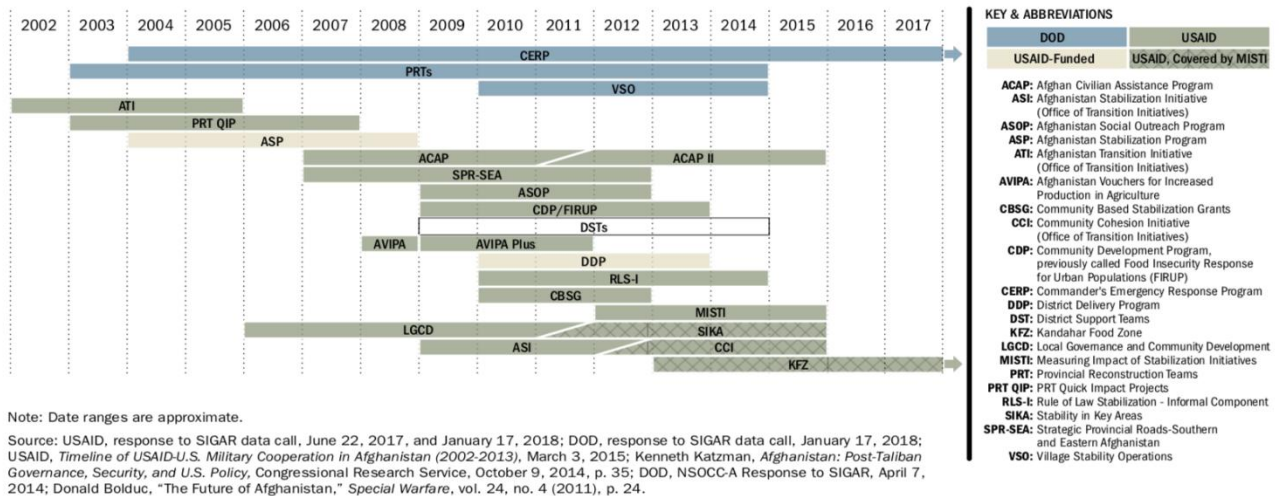
insurgent activity).³⁹ Additionally, in 2009 the Integrated Civil-Military Affairs Group (with staff from embassy, DOS, USAID, and DOD) published the Integrated Civil-Military Campaign Plan (ICMCP) to operationalize stabilization concepts and three lines of effort: security, governance, and development. Not considering these opportunities to expound on success, President Obama directed an 18-month stability campaign due to recent success in Iraq with stability operations. However, Afghanistan presented more inherent complexities than Iraq. For example, Afghanistan's unemployment rate was more than double the rate of Iraq at 40% compared to 18%, only 10% of women and 40% of men were literate compared to Iraq with a literacy rate of 74% before 2003, and 24% of the population lived in urban areas compared to Iraq's 67% of the population.⁴⁰ The 2009 Afghanistan-Pakistan (Af-Pak) Stabilization Strategy presented expectations and objectives of a long-term counterinsurgency effort, but in a condensed unrealistic timeline in order to obtain a "short-term exit strategy."⁴¹ Applying lessons from the Vietnam War, the ICMCP developed 14 civilian-military working groups to tackle Afghanistan-specific issues.⁴² Initial civilian-military cooperation and planning was robust and synchronized with the unified intent to assist the Afghan government in lessening the credibility of the Taliban and increasing essential services to their population. Unfortunately, the constrained 18-months' timeline negatively affected further planning, manpower staffing, programming, and assessing for stability operations.⁴³

This new time-constrained stabilization strategy differed from the recommended "ink spot" COIN theory towards prioritizing the focus on key terrain districts (KTDs) that were heavily contested and controlled by insurgents, despite Afghan government representatives' opposition to spread assistance thin and to such hostile areas that may hinder stabilization

progress.ⁱⁱ Civilian-military District Support Teams (DST) expanded their support from what was once six pilot districts to 83 KTDs.⁴⁴ The USAID and DOD budget from 2009 to 2014 increased by 800% from the years prior and, due to political pressure to demonstrate progress 18 months after the surge of troops, spending became the easiest measurement of success.⁴⁵ Spending too much too quickly resulted in poor management and oversight of funds, increased corruption, and exacerbated conflict through resource competition in communities which drove marginalized Afghans to seek provisions from the Taliban. The interagency created several stabilization programs in order to extend the reach of the Afghanistan government. These programs sought to offer services and projects not offered by the Taliban, such as: health services, education, flood walls, agriculture training, seed distribution, irrigation canals, building roads, etc. The below chart demonstrates the various programs and years implemented.

ⁱⁱ Ink spots, also referred to as oil spots or inkblots, refer to the counterinsurgency strategy of ensuring 100% security in a smaller more manageable area, then dedicating military and civilian resources to provide stability programs such as governance, essential services, and development. Once these smaller areas have achieved success in stabilization, agencies (PRT, COIN forces) can expand this stability to neighboring areas when conditions permit. For additional information, see: 1) Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, *Stabilization: Lessons From the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan*, (Arlington, VA, 2018), pg. 67; 2) ISAF Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) Handbook, Edition 4, pg. 16; and 3) Karl A. Slaikeu, Ph.D., “Winning the War in Afghanistan: An Oil Spot Plus Strategy for Coalition Forces,” *Small Wars Journal*, May 18, 2009, pg. 3.

AFGHANISTAN STABILIZATION PROGRAMMING FROM 2002–2017



The abundance of programs conflicted with one another, were spread too thin across too many regions, produced counterproductive results, and created grievances and rivalries among Afghan communities and tribes. Some aid was captured by insurgent or violent extremists. In Afghanistan, surging troops and funding in highly contested areas resulted in increased violence.⁴⁶ A review of 19 studies concluded that increased violence resulted where foreign aid was expended in highly insecure areas compared to foreign aid expended in areas with government control.^{47,48} By contrast, smaller combined joint interagency specialized team (PRT or country team with experts for example) and smaller funded projects concentrated in areas where the government had a degree of control resulted in more stability, in line with “ink spot” COIN theory.⁴⁹ These areas also achieved sustained impact by demonstrating the ability of the government to protect and provide for its citizens.

Despite the National Security Presidential Directive 44, directing establishment of a Civilian Response Corps (CRC) for the DOS reconstruction and stabilization missions, DOS and USAID experienced difficulties in the rapid mobilization of experts to Afghanistan. This resulted in many temporary or new hires, which did not provide adequate oversight of

stabilization programs and inability to contribute to the broader interagency development effort due to lack of experience. Of the active component of 250 USAID field program officers with stabilization and reconstruction experience, only 36 were assigned to Afghanistan's PRTs and District Support Teams.⁵⁰ Inadequate monitoring and evaluation of stabilization programs resulted because of limited personnel within DOD and DOS with experience in stability operations actually supporting the Afghanistan Mission. Inexperienced personnel with a limited situational awareness led to a lack of reliable data, ambiguity of meeting goals, and frequent shifting in priorities.⁵¹ Assessment tools such as the Measuring Progress in Conflict Environments framework was first developed by U.S. Institute of Peace (USIP) and Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) in 2010, but was not utilized to evaluate impacts and outcomes of the host nation perceptions, behaviors, and relationships shaped by stability operations versus inputs and outputs (specifically to prevent fraud in reporting statistics).⁵² Accurate monitoring and evaluation by experts (USAID) in Afghanistan would have resulted in proper oversight of accomplishing the goals in the stabilization strategy, accountability for funds, and necessary adjustments to prevent counterproductive results.

A few programs developed from analysis of the operational environment to support the Afghan local economy were the Community Development Program (CDP) and the Afghanistan Vouchers for Increased Production in Agriculture (AVIPA) embraced a "cash-for-work" theory. This theory posits that the population will be less likely to join insurgents if employment opportunities exist. The AVIPA program was successful in assisting wheat farmers in 18 provinces by conducting agriculture training, distributing wheat seed and fertilizer, and developing solutions to the food crisis caused by drought. The program disbursed over \$469.5 million in aid from 2008 to 2011 to provide accessible and affordable agricultural emergency

support and irrigation canals to these farmers.⁵³ The CDP was successful in creating quick and easy construction projects to be implemented in each community in coordination with the central government. The “cash-for-work” programs estimated to increase the local economy in some areas such as the Nawa District in Helmand by three to four times. If supplementary assessments of the operational environment were conducted, it would have reported an unexpected negative consequence was “cash-for-work” paid higher wages than local teachers. Despite the need for teachers to increase the literacy rate and education quality, the central government salaries could not compete with the income received from the stabilization programs such as CDP and AVIPA.⁵⁴

Finally, the sudden withdrawal of U.S. troops tied to a preconceived date instead of stabilization conditions had extreme negative impacts. This transition to Afghan control happened before the host nation was ready to sustain itself and permitted opportunity for regional power struggles. Many regions reverted to the control of strongmen and tribes due to weak or absent government control. Insurgents, violent extremists, and even militia increased corruption in attempt to undermine the government’s legitimacy.⁵⁵

The stability operations in Afghanistan began with promising aims planned by the interagency, but was overall unsuccessful due to the time constraint of the initial stabilization strategy from 10 years to 18 months. The 10-year stabilization strategy published in the ICMCP was developed from key lessons learned in Vietnam.⁵⁶ This effort appropriately analyzed the operational environment for security, stabilization, transition, and reconstruction priorities in Afghanistan to synchronize with combat efforts as learned in Vietnam. Stability programs demonstrated success upon inception, but progress did not sustain due to competing requirements in a short timeframe. Constraining stability operations to 18 months resulted in

shifting to priorities not tailored to Afghanistan's cultural dynamics and did not permit supplemental operational environment assessments to make appropriate adjustments. The time-constrained stabilization strategy focused on narrowed objectives, hasty projects, meeting a deadline versus transition criteria, and was not appropriately tailored to the country of Afghanistan for long-term sustainment. This time constraint shifted priority to the most dangerous districts. This was a challenge for coalition forces to clear of insurgents, which did not produce enough progress to convince the population that the central government could protect or provide for them. Stabilization achievements and impacts did not last much longer after the withdrawal of coalition troops and civilian agencies.

**IRAQ - U.S. STABILITY OPERATIONS:
*EARLY COORDINATION AND PLANNING***

The U.S. has been in Iraq from 2003 to 2011 and again from 2014 until present. The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGAR) Report was published in February of 2009 and covers various lessons that can be applied to future stability operations for the Departments of State, Defense, and USAID. Overall, the U.S. government has spent \$60 billion on reconstruction in Iraq, \$25 billion of that was spent on Iraqi security forces.⁵⁷

From the onset of planning for the U.S. invasion into Iraq, bureaucratic in-fighting developed between the Departments of Defense and State. President George W. Bush stated the war would be inevitable after the September 11, 2001 attacks and directed planning to begin for required actions in Iraq post-Saddam Hussein's control. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld deemed the U.S. forces would liberate Iraq from Saddam's tyranny, but not occupy the country after his removal. He further believed that after Saddam's removal a transfer of interim Iraqi authority would take place soon after. This meant the U.S. would not be required to administer to Iraq's government functions once combat operations concluded. Secretary of State Colin

Powell disagreed and argued that upon replacing Iraq's totalitarian regime, the U.S. would have to commit to years of stabilizing due to its history of sectarian violence.⁵⁸ Secretary Rumsfeld convinced the President to approve the "liberation rather than occupation" plan in order to avoid the "culture of dependency" mindset.⁵⁹ This required minimal military presence to force the local population to rely on their own governmental leadership quickly to resolve problems. The "loya jirga" (tribal leaders' assembly) in the U.S.' campaign in Afghanistan supported the feasibility of rapid transfer of political authority. Postwar planning and execution authority were granted to the Secretary of Defense due to the DOS not having the personnel and capacity to plan for this large of a stability operation. Secretary Rumsfeld believed this would ensure a seamless transition from war to stabilization.⁶⁰

Critical time to plan for postwar efforts was misspent due to differing organizational culture (DOD vs. DOS), lack of synchronization and integration, compartmentalization of planning, and lack of prioritizing stability operations. From political pressure from Secretary Rumsfeld's plan to invade with a light expeditious force and utilize advanced war-fighting technology, previously existing plans were not considered.⁶¹ Prior to the invasion of Iraq, military and political leaders developed two operation plans to address key issues requiring joint and interagency support if the U.S. invaded Iraq and considerations of post-war efforts.

The first plan titled "Desert Crossing" was developed and reviewed in June of 1999 by the U.S. Central Command Commanding General, General Anthony Zinni. The Desert Crossing plan identified 3 U.S. involvement models (Bosnia, Japan, Arab-state) and assessed key concerns to include the following: potential crises and consequences, military/coalition/interagency requirements, impacts to internal/regional stability, possibility of fragmentation or uprising threat to seize advantage of internal disorder, transitional pluralistic governance, civil functions, and

criteria for success.⁶² The second plan titled Operation Plan 1003-98 was developed in 1996 and revised in 1998, called for approximately 450,000 troops and several years to accomplish the proposed mission in Iraq.⁶³ These two pre-existing and evaluated plans were not aligned with Secretary Rumsfeld's aims for Iraq and therefore were not considered or utilized for any planning considerations to invade Iraq. The U.S. government was remiss in not applying lessons developed in these two "shelf" plans.

In response to the direction of the President in 2002, the DOS established the "Future of Iraq Project" working group to begin planning for U.S. presence in Iraq to support reconstruction and humanitarian assistance to range from 5 to 10 years.⁶⁴ Despite extensive military and interagency effort early on to prepare Iraq war-plans (to include reconstruction), disagreement between political and military leaders resulted in negatively impacting U.S. mission success in Iraq from the beginning. DOD took charge of the planning for stability operations on January 20, 2003 as directed in the National Security Presidential Directive 24, but did not devote sufficient resources for Phase IV operations (Stabilize the Environment).⁶⁵ They failed to integrate experts from throughout the government and did not synchronize civilian humanitarian assistance/relief efforts with military combat operations. Most of the planning of Iraq's invasion was focused on the combat phases and failed to develop a coherent operational plan. Military and political planners did not effectively incorporate USAID representatives in planning from August to December of 2002. Military planners assumed the DOS had the capacity to deploy a large quantity of specialized experts soon after the armed forces landed in Iraq to begin stability operations and to rapidly achieve conditions for the withdrawal of U.S. forces once the interim Iraqi authority was in place. This poor assumption did not properly consider the operational environment and USAID's limited capacity.⁶⁶

Significant delay of integrating a civilian office within DOD to coordinate post-war planning resulted in grave consequences and lack of unity of effort. The Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Affairs (ORHA) was created in the Pentagon less than two months prior to the war starting.⁶⁷ Four separate planning and command centers were established: 1) ORHA, 2) Central Command's Joint Task Force-4 (to plan Phase IV), 3) USAID's Humanitarian Operations Center, 4) and DOD's Civil-Military Operations Center. This delay and establishment of separate command centers negatively impacted the time required for approval and processing of contracts required for stability operations.

This breakdown to incorporate stability operations in early coordination and planning with applicable agencies resulted in failure in the higher mission in Iraq. ORHA was initially approved \$146 million compared to the \$50 billion the U.S. spent for stabilization and reconstruction in the first five years.⁶⁸ Only 160,000 of the half a million troops recommended were approved, which proved to be inadequate for securing all urban areas and providing interim policing functions.⁶⁹ A U.S. armed force of approximately 25,000 troops occupied the capital city of almost six million, which resulted in a 1:250 troop to civilian ratio.⁷⁰ U.S. armed forces secured Baghdad quickly, but overestimated the accuracy of their "smart weapons." The lack of precision targeting resulted in power outages, telephone services ceasing, and breaking pipes that allowed sewage to contaminate water flowing into residential taps.⁷¹ This negatively affected the coalition's media campaign to address the public with important messaging. An example would be to require critical electricity and water service workers back to work and to establish general rule of law and authority to prevent the subsequent chaos.⁷²

The ensuing chaos after the fall of Saddam was looting and organized violence. Unfortunately, Secretary Rumsfeld cancelled an additional 50,000 troops from deploying and

ordered the withdrawal of an entire Army Division.⁷³ This additional troop strength was required for security and ensuring transition to post-war stability operations. Looting quickly became insurgents' primary methods to destabilize the country and developed into organized theft by Iraqi criminal gangs.⁷⁴ Looting resulted in billions of dollars of damage, tons of munitions stolen from depots to be used later as improvised explosive devices against coalition forces, and a lost opportunity to restore government services to increase credibility quick enough to effect positive and lasting changes.⁷⁵ Lack of operational environment assessments and DOD continuing to disregard ORHA's planning consideration led to military leadership not allowing stabilization efforts to begin until 60 to 90 days as the originally planned timeline to secure Iraq (Phase III) before transitioning to civilian administration (Phase IV).⁷⁶ This resistance to allow stability operations to synchronize with combat operations resulted in the breakout of looting, organized crimes, and mass chaos in the absence of established governance.⁷⁷ The Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant took advantage of these vacuums and the failure for the coalition force to consolidate military gains by exploiting sectarian divides and weak governance from 2007 to 2010.⁷⁸

The invasion of Iraq achieved a quick military victory, but demonstrated the U.S.'s unpreparedness for post-war stability operations. The Commander of the Coalition Forces stated, "If you don't plan and organize and rehearse together, you end up with ad hoc solutions during execution. [Iraq] is a classic case of not having done it all together."⁷⁹ Iraq's post-conflict environment was wrought with destruction, violence, looting, sectarian and political divides, an insurgency, nascent terrorist organization, and collapse to its government and economy.⁸⁰ There was no approved unified mission plan or organization to carry out contingency relief and stability operations. Upon stability operations beginning, troop size was an issue for security, military planners excluded stabilization experts, operational environment assessments were not

appropriately conducted or considered, stabilization programs were not tailored to the population's priorities and needs, and significant delays in personnel and materials arose. The war in Iraq has provided valuable lessons of incorporating stability operations plans in advance, in a comprehensive and integrated approach, and to have flexible standby plans ready.

LESSONS FOR THE FUTURE

The U.S. experience in large-scale stability operations in Vietnam, Afghanistan, and Iraq have provided key insight to lessons that can be applied to future stability operations. Lessons that can be applied to future stability operations should include improvements to joint interagency operations, operational environment assessments, and incorporating stability operations in early coordination and planning. The importance of stability operations must be emphasized due to recent military and political leaders advocating for the U.S. government to shift away from focusing personnel, material/equipment, and training towards large-scale stability operations due to its history in failing at this type of mission. The Special Inspector General of Afghanistan's Reconstruction (SIGAR) stated in his report that large-scale stability operations are inherently difficult and should not be conducted at all if lacking the technical investment or the support from political leadership.⁸¹ However, the SIGAR acknowledges the U.S. will inevitably be involved in stability operations of this large scale in the future. The Secretary of the Army Mark Esper recommended eliminating the title "peacekeeping" from the Army's mission and eliminating entirely the Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) in 2018 due to budget restraints.⁸² The DOD is definitely overwhelmed with mission sets and stretched

thin in funding all requirements to meet current missions and to prepare for future missions, but this does not exclude stability operations.

Stability operations cannot be accomplished by the military alone, but history has demonstrated that the military can lose these operations alone and negatively affect the entire strategic mission if it does not synchronize stability and combat operations. The goal of combat operations is to destroy the enemy's will and capability to fight, whereas stability operations can be utilized to prevent future combat operations by establishing an environment conducive to political, economic, and diplomatic negotiations.⁸³ Stability programs work towards reducing the intensity of the conflict by inhibiting political and local violence and addressing the population's grievances. Military participation is significant to stability operations consolidating combat achievements and ensuring strategic success. The three case studies analyzed draw numerous similarities and differences, but the following sections will focus on three key lessons for future stability operations.

JOINT INTERAGENCY OPERATIONS

All three case studies reveal the need to improve joint interagency operations. Currently, the Army has the only institute fully dedicated to studying stability operations and DOD has threatened to reduce funding for PKSOI. While PKSOI does have participants from all armed services, it is minimal representation outside of the Army. Additional students from the Marine Corps and Navy should participate because of their initial crisis response capability and to maintain developing relationships with interagency partners. PKSOI is the only military institute that conducts historical analysis and cooperative studies with the U.S. Institute of Peace established by Congress. The two institutes have contributed to developing conflict assessment

frameworks, stabilization models, handbooks, and lessons from experts to assist the DOD in its role in stability operations.

After-action reports have shown requirement for increase in joint and interagency coordination, but the U.S. government has reduced overall funding, personnel, and focus on stability operations. Reports have shown that despite Presidential Decision Directives, DOS does not maintain a ready force of civilian experts to deploy immediately. Not maintaining a ready force of civilian experts may result in delays to commence stability operations, lack of stabilization expertise to synchronize with DOD personnel, and may lead to failure in accomplishing stability strategy aims. U.S. government funding has forced military structure changes and personnel shortages of military police, engineers, civil affairs, and medical to support stability operations.⁸⁴ Due to stretched funding, the Marine Corps limits stability operations training during pre-deployment training for deploying Marine Expeditionary Units and during Enhanced Mojave Viper training. The initial/entry force, USMC, should be trained in stability operations in order to set conditions for follow-on forces to sustain. The Army is developing Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs) to train, advise, and assist host nation security forces a part of stabilization efforts.⁸⁵ History has highlighted the importance of maintaining trained experts in DOD and DOS for joint interagency coordination in preparation for and in the conduct of large-scale stability operations.

OPERATIONAL ENVIRONMENT ANALYSIS

Stability operations programs must be tailored to the specific country as the three case studies demonstrated a “one-size fits all” solution does not exist. This can be accomplished by analyzing the operational environment in advance to gain a baseline and cultural insight.

Cultural advisors and interpreters are essential in this process. Operational environment analysis

should continue to assess combat and stability operations effects and progress in order to adjust if necessary and to achieve success. Initial language barriers posed issues in establishing local support from the Vietnamese population and lack of cultural understanding produced counterproductive results with the strategic hamlet programs. Utilizing models of Iraq in Afghanistan did not produce similar results due to differences in the two societies including literacy rates, education quality, and urban populations. Iraq differed from Vietnam and Afghanistan with sectarian divides, unfair government representation, and inequalities in housing and employment. Every country has distinct cultural complexities that must be considered to render stability operations successful.

Additionally, troop size and organization will be situationally dependent as stated by doctrine.⁸⁶⁸⁷ The issue is without a stability organization model to refer to, the U.S. military tends to always request for additional forces to surge into a host nation. A smaller footprint of troops with specialized skillsets (military police, civil affairs, intelligence, logistics, medical, and others required) may produce the results desired in stability operations compared to surging a larger force. After-action reports have indicated that surging large forces in Vietnam and Afghanistan had negative consequences and were counterproductive to stabilization goals and the country's development. In Vietnam, the surge of U.S. forces ultimately inflated its economy and created dependence, and progress was not sustained after troop withdrawal. In both Afghanistan and Iraq, surging of troops in some areas was counterproductive to the COIN "ink spot" theory and resulted in increased violence and attacks. In Afghanistan, a 1:50 troop to civilian ratio was found to have success in COIN operations and could be used in doctrine as a model. In Iraq, the 1:250 troop to civilian ratio proved as a poor model to follow and inability to handle stability operations supporting tasks. The lessons learned from Vietnam, Afghanistan,

and Iraq should be incorporated into doctrine for large-scale stability operations, specifically in regards to how analysis of the operational environment is critical to tailoring the stability programs to the host nation.

EARLY COORDINATION AND PLANNING

The three case studies reveal the importance of incorporating stability operations in early coordination and planning. The new DOD Directive 3000.05 dated 2018, stated, “stabilization must be incorporated into planning across all lines of effort for military operations as early as possible to shape operational design and strategic decisions.”⁸⁸ The SIGAR, SIGIR, and RAND Corporation after-action reports have recommended stability operations to progress over 10 to 15 years and irregular warfare tends to protract conflicts with proven success in this tactic. Analysis from all three case studies demonstrate how the U.S. government attempted to condense planning, coordination, funding, and time to commit to stability operations which resulted in prolonged involvement regardless. In Vietnam, the initial goals were focused on conventional warfare and other objectives were unclear or lacked full commitment. In Afghanistan, the original 10-year plan was condensed to 18 months. This resulted in withdrawal of U.S. forces prior to the Afghanistan government preparation to assume control. It also resulted in quick-fixes, no assessments of effectiveness, or adjustments. In Iraq, the goal was an “in and out” combat operation with a lighter and more modern military force. There was a lack of consideration for existing plans and interagency coordination. For the future, doctrine should include historical examples of realistic timelines associated with stability operations and appropriate conditions or criteria in order to transition authority to the host nation government and armed forces. These lessons must be retained, included in doctrine, training courses, academic curriculum, and in operational plans.

COUNTERARGUMENT

Some would argue that the U.S. military as a whole should not involve itself with “peacekeeping” or stability operations. These three case studies and the after-action reports (SIGAR, SIGIR, and RAND) all support the evidence that circumventing this requirement after invading a foreign nation is unavoidable and not practical. Additionally, the U.S. military force has certain legal obligations upon occupying another country. The Common Article 2 and Articles 47 through 78 of the 1949 Geneva Convention addresses provisions when occupying a territory.⁸⁹ The Hague IV Regulations and 1954 Hague Cultural Property Convention lists Articles 42 through 56 to direct certain responsibilities of the occupying military force over any foreign hostile state.⁹⁰

When the U.S. military occupies another territory, it must comply with certain standards identified in international law. In regards to stabilization, which will be conducted during stability operations, the U.S. must ensure public order and safety for the occupied nation’s citizens and property. The U.S. must provide essential food and health services to the population. Other stabilization tasks directed by international law consist of providing care and education to children and protecting cultural/historical property.⁹¹

Lastly, some environments do not permit civilian agencies to assist due to the severity of hostility, requiring the DOD to take on a more extensive role in security and possibly governance. U.S. military forces should be aware of these responsibilities related to providing governance prior to executing orders to conduct forcible entry combat operations with intent to overthrow the central government. The U.S. government resources are limited, but the U.S. has had to pay for costly lessons in recent history. Emerging and irregular threats will continue to require some amount of stabilization and the U.S. military will most likely be included. DOD’s

authority is not restricted to just winning wars, and it may be held responsible to assisting in ensuring peace as well.

CONCLUSION

DOD guidance has shifted to increased combat strength and readiness against near-peer competitors and as a result has significantly reduced focusing manpower, resources, and training towards stability operations. History has shown that stability operations are critical for consolidating combat achievements and attaining long-term strategic success. A reduction in focus in stability operations for the DOD in coordination with the DOS and USAID will result in a lack of preparedness in the interagency joint force for future conflicts and risk potential mission failure and/or a repeat of history with protracted costly consequences. Failed states are vacuums for intrastate or asymmetric conflict, mass displacement, humanitarian emergencies (disease), and instability caused by violent extremists or transnational criminals. Stability operations can be a positive alternative to war or mitigate conditions prior to risk to national interests to the U.S., its allies, and partners.

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