

UNITY OF EFFORT: DELINEATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND
STABILITY OPERATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL

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Strategy

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The opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the student author and do not necessarily represent the views of the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College or any other governmental agency. (References to this study should include the foregoing statement.)

ABSTRACT

UNITY OF EFFORT: DELINEATING RESPONSIBILITY FOR RECONSTRUCTION AND STABILITY OPERATIONS AT THE NATIONAL LEVEL, by Major Thomas J. Mahoney, 94 pages.

Stabilization is essential to set the conditions for strategic success in post-major combat operations environments. A great deal of effort is expended in planning and executing combat operations. However, surprisingly less effort goes into the planning and execution of stability operations, despite the criticality of this stage to establishing the desired end-state. Iraq has demonstrated the pitfalls of inadequate planning for or ineffectively executing stabilization. Many of the conditions that contributed to the insurgency in Iraq were directly or indirectly related to the coalition's ineffective stabilization of the country. The majority of the problems could have been solved if the lead agency would have asserted control over the operation. From the end of major combat operations in May 2003, until the Coalition Provisional Authority was disbanded and sovereignty established in June 2004, Iraq stabilization was led by the Department of Defense (Defense). The United States then established an embassy and stability operations were led by the Department of State (State), working in concert with the Iraqis. Neither State nor Defense was successful. This thesis explores the question, which U.S. government department or agency should have responsibility for Stability Operations in a post-MCO environment? Two of the most critical principles to stabilization, unity of effort and security, serve as the framework for analyzing over seven years of Government Accountability Office data to determine which U.S. government department is best-suited for leading stability operations. Nothing short of strategic success relies on the U.S. capably conducting stability operations.

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This thesis evolved from a desire to make a small contribution to the literature surrounding stability operations. The origin was my intent to address shortfalls in the useful leveraging of diplomatic, information, military and economic (DIME) instruments of power within various countries and regions that are covered by the geographic combatant commands. DIME integration is a topic of great debate lately. Much of the current discussion has stemmed from recognition that the overall desired end-states in Iraq and Afghanistan were not achieved through military success alone. The natural evolution of this topic was toward stability operations, which integrates all the instruments of national power. The lack of success in Iraq illustrates the importance of stabilization to realizing the strategic end-state and is an area where the U.S. must get much better in similar future operations. I whole-heartedly believe that the insurgency in Iraq would not have been nearly as robust if the U.S. had successfully stabilized the country in the early phase of post-major combat operations.

I owe my sincere thanks to my committee for their hard work and understanding in guiding me through the process. Dr. Randy Mullis, Dr. Dan Cox, Colonel Scott “Dutch” Murray, and Mr. Ken Ferris all provided helpful criticism, vital input, and perspective when I needed it the most. My most heart-felt thanks go out to my family. My supportive wife Chunran who was always there with a cup of coffee and words of encouragement when I felt the task was insurmountable. To my boys Kevin and Joey, who gave up a lot of quality time with dad; you kept me “balanced” with your humor and the many opportunities I took to play hooky by playing with the two of you. I feel fortunate to have such a wonderful family.

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ACRONYMS

AFRICOM	Africa Command
CJTF-7	Combined Joint Task Force Seven
CPA	Coalition Provisional Authority
Defense	Department of Defense
DIME	Diplomatic Information Military and Economic
DOD	Department of Defense
FM	Field Manual
GAO	Government Accountability Office
GCC	Geographic Combatant Command
JOC	Joint Operating Concept
JTFCD	Joint Task Force for Capacity Development
MCO	Major Combat Operations
MNFI	Multi-National Force Iraq
NSPD	National Security Presidential Directive
NSVI	National Strategy for Victory in Iraq
ORHA	Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance
S/CRS	State Department Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization
SSTR	Stabilization Security Transition and Reconstruction
State	Department of State
UN	United Nations
U.S.	United States
USAID	U.S. Agency for International Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Within this arena, control of populations and perceptions is the decisive and central event, with battle being a means to an end. Battlefields are now more often social structures than terrain, with ideas as weapons, human minds the targets and the will of the people the prize.

—Damian Cantwell, *A Force of No Choice:
The Role of the Military in Interagency Operations*

After all the bombs have been dropped and the enemy has been defeated that is the time to win the war. Re-building a war-torn country is not what many people think of as the path to success. However, experience in Iraq has demonstrated that you can win all of the military engagements, only to risk losing the war. Success is defined by the end-state. The desired conditions that define the end-state should be established before hostilities commence to ensure the ways link to the ends. The U.S. established its objectives for Iraq as “an Iraq at peace with its neighbors, with a representative government that respects the human rights of all Iraqis, and with a security force that can maintain domestic order and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terrorists” (GAO 2005a, 12). There is no aspect of the envisioned end-state that could be accomplished solely by any one department or government agency. To achieve the desired end-state, the U.S. had to apply an interagency solution to re-building Iraq.

Hypothesis

Stability operations are a complex undertaking and the topic has received much notoriety, given the ongoing reconstruction difficulties in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Despite overwhelming early military success in both operations, U.S. armed victory has not translated into strategic victory. In Iraq specifically, “multiple missteps helped to create a poor security

environment, including the lack of Phase IV planning” (McDonough 2008, 109). Much of the recent interest in stabilization has been generated by the apparent inability to achieve the desired end-state. The extant body of knowledge is rich and extensive and offers the opportunity to explore the problem of stability operations from a variety of viewpoints. This thesis focuses on which department or agency of the U.S. Government should have the lead role for planning and executing stability operations.

Of course, stability operations are accomplished beyond just the U.S., there are certainly international contributions as well. It is also beyond the scope of just government, with national and international non-governmental aid organizations, and even multinational corporations providing resources and manpower. The stability community consists of all national and international elements that respond in the aftermath of combat operations to stabilize and rebuild a country. Some of the better known agencies are the United Nations (UN), the United States (U.S.) Department of State (State), U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and other elements of the Department of Defense (Defense). Together, this community seeks to establish the conditions for long-term reconstruction in war-torn countries.

USAID is the principal U.S. Government agency responsible for stability operations and it has a world-wide remit. Accordingly, it has the greatest depth of knowledge in dealing with stabilization and reconstruction issues (Department of the Army 2008, A-6-A-7). However, USAID is not resourced for major stabilization and reconstruction operations. In a post-major combat operations (MCO) environment, the destruction is often massive, requiring an equally massive effort to re-build. USAID is an active participant, but many other actors must play a role in order to be successful. After combat, it takes a “whole of government” approach, integration

of the full complement of national capabilities, to successfully stabilize and reconstruct a country (Department of the Army 2008, Glossary 10). For the U.S. Government, Defense and State are the two primary agents that led the reconstruction of Iraq.

Iraq stabilization lacked coordination, de-confliction of effort, and delineation of roles and responsibilities, essentially the elements that leadership brings. As a result, stability operations were not nearly as effective as they might have otherwise been. Both State and Defense had responsibility for stabilizing Iraq for defined periods of time after combat ceased; Defense from the end of hostilities in May 2003 through June 2004 (as the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) and State from June 2004 until present (as the Ambassador). Based upon this view of Iraq, this thesis sets out to answer the following primary research question: which U.S. Governmental department should have chief responsibility for stability operations in a post-MCO environment? Additionally, this thesis posits that based on its much greater relative resources and the unstable security situation that often accompanies stability operations, Defense should have responsibility for leading stability operations.

Describing the Environment--Terms and Definitions

It is imperative to understand that stability operations are required throughout all phases of combat and are not unique to the concluding stage of war or its aftermath. The environment is often very fluid and the “fog of war” permeates throughout. “Planning, preparation and execution activities associated with Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) operations crosses all lines of effort of the campaign and are not unique to the concluding stage of the conflict, previously called “phase IV” (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, 9). Therefore, the same agencies responsible for the start, conduct, and completion of

MCO are key stakeholders in the start, conduct, and completion of stability operations, and the two primary responsible agents are the Departments of State and Defense.

Stability operations definitions abound. The following definitions are accepted within the military community and established in doctrine:

Reconstruction: the process of rebuilding degraded, damaged, or destroyed political, socio-economic, and physical infrastructure of a country or territory to create the foundation for longer-term development (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, 3).

Stabilization: activities undertaken to manage underlying tensions, to prevent or halt the deterioration of security, economic, and/or political systems, to create stability in the host nation or region, and to establish the preconditions for reconstruction efforts (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, 2).

Stability Operations: an overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the U.S. in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief (Department of the Army 2008, Glossary-9).

These definitions are not temporal nor are they mutually exclusive. Stability operations, reconstruction, and stabilization can and do occur simultaneously on the battlefield, at times in conjunction with other phases of combat. Therefore, these terms are used interchangeably throughout this thesis to denote re-building of infrastructure, delivery of essential services, and capacity-building in economics and governance. As seen in Iraq, these operations were conducted from the beginning of the war through today.

Setting the Boundaries

There are many causes of instability. However, the uniqueness of the post-MCO environment requires a much greater devotion of resources than other forms of instability, such as those caused by faltering governments or humanitarian crises. In many cases, the host nation is unable to govern in a post-MCO setting, or as in the case of Iraq, there may no longer be a host nation government because it has been deposed. As a result, there is usually a heavy reliance on international aid and expertise. In most cases, the same organizations that contribute to rebuilding during a humanitarian crisis are also present during post-MCO stabilization operations. However, this thesis is focused exclusively on post-MCO stabilization. Additionally, because of the vast scope of aid requirements and their experience in dealing with stability operations in a post-MCO environment, State and Defense are viewed as the only two organizations, departments, or agencies that have the capability to effectively lead stabilization in a post-MCO setting. Therefore, given the uniqueness of the environment, this thesis examines post-MCO operations and focuses on State and Defense as the only viable candidates to undertake the leadership role.

There are many ways to approach the topic of stability operations. This thesis uses a case study format examining Iraq that is outlined in chapter 3. To focus research and analysis, the principles of security and unity of effort are used as a framework for analyzing the effectiveness of both State and Defense in leading Iraq stabilization. These principles are identified in the recently published *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction*. Security and unity of effort are two cross-cutting principles; they affect all aspects of stability operations (United States Institute for Peace and the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute 2009, 3-12).

Unity of effort is desired in the absence of unity of command. The instruments of national power (diplomacy, information, military, economic or DIME) are divided among the various governmental departments. State has responsibility for diplomacy while Defense wields the military option. Information responsibility is spread across several agencies and encompasses public affairs; strategic communications; and intelligence collection, analysis, and reporting. Economic is distributed across several agencies to include the U.S. Department of Treasury. Together, these elements of the DIME comprise the effort that must be unified; no agency has the authority for all elements. Therefore, this thesis examines the unity of effort concept because unity of command is not achievable under the U.S. Government construct.

Establishing a secure environment is a prerequisite for setting the conditions that allow stabilization to succeed. It is essential to the task that not only civilians but the multitude of aid agencies are safeguarded as they accomplish the re-building mission. Until the environment is secure, “Stability operations rely on military forces quickly seizing the initiative to improve the civil situation while preventing conditions from deteriorating further” (Department of the Army 2008b, 2-3). Government Accountability Office (GAO) reporting was analyzed to determine the security difficulties that were present throughout stabilization and reconstruction operations. The author’s intent is to demonstrate that one department or agency is best-suited to undertake stability operations in a post-MCO environment in the hope that this small contribution to the body of knowledge will improve future stability operations.

Significance of Study

Stability operations have been a subject of great debate and interest over the past seven years. Much of the discussion centers on how to improve the interagency approach to stability operations. Some theses and monographs have also approached the leadership aspect of

reconstruction. However, the methodology used in this thesis is unique. The intent is to review the substantial GAO body of reporting on Iraq operations to determine which agency, State or Defense, was most effective at leading stability operations, using the security and unity of effort framework.

Perhaps the most damning criticism levied against the Operation Iraqi Freedom campaign planners is the apparent lack of adequate planning for Phase IV stability operations. During Phase IV, the military works with government and non-government elements to ensure that the civilian population is adequately cared for in the aftermath of major combat operations. “The post-major combat operations phase in Iraq is a stunning example of how the failure to effectively plan and execute interagency operations turned what started out as a rapid victory into a long, hard slog” (Schnaubelt 2005, 47). Planning and execution oversight are the responsibility of the lead agency, and are just two examples of how an effective lead agency ensures unity of effort. GAO reporting provides a good opportunity to analyze the effectiveness of both State and Defense in the lead agency role and their ability to provide unity of effort.

Conclusion

Given its importance to overall strategic victory and setting the desired end-state, it is essential to establish a lead agency to take responsibility for planning and executing stability operations in a post-MCO environment. The lead agency approach is critical to the success of reconstruction. This thesis attempts to ascertain which government agency--State or Defense--is best able to carry out this critical mission in the aftermath of future contingencies. As Gregory Cantwell points out, the military is often responsible for victory but it does not command all the elements of national power that are essential for success (G. L. Cantwell 2007, 4-5). Therefore, unity of effort is the goal in an interagency approach to stabilization. Likewise, security is an

essential pre-requisite to establishing the conditions that will allow reconstruction to take place and ultimately be successful. The cross-cutting principles of unity of effort and security establish the framework for examining Iraq as a case study to accept or reject the hypothesis: Defense should have responsibility for stability operations in a post-MCO environment.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Without belaboring what is already well-documented, multiple missteps helped to create a poor security environment, including the lack of Phase IV planning, insufficient forces assigned for post-invasion tasks, and the Coalition Provisional Authority's shortsighted orders to disband the Iraqi Army and remove government officials who belonged to the Ba'ath party.

—William McDonough,
“Time for a New Strategy”

Post-conflict stability operations are a difficult undertaking, even under ideal conditions. Coordination between and among U.S. Government elements including State, Defense, USAID, and a host of others, can be daunting in and of itself. Add to this the requirement to coordinate with international organizations, governments, and charities and the task becomes immense. As is the case in Iraq and Afghanistan, stability operations are often conducted in unsecure environments where force protection becomes a key issue. The primary components of stability operations are establishing civil security and control, restoring essential services, supporting governance, and supporting economic and infrastructure development (Department of the Army 2008, 2-5). When done properly, stability operations can set the conditions for long-term reconstruction and hand-off to a capable civil authority. When done poorly, stability operations can increase resentment toward U.S. presence among the civilian population and results in the conditions that allow an insurgency to take root (Department of the Army 2006, 1-2). Ineffective stability operations can lead to nothing short of failure to reach the desired end-state.

The Stability Community

The stability community is made up of all elements of national power that respond in the aftermath of MCO. The purpose of this community is to fix what is broken and set the conditions

for longer-term development by building host nation capacity. Stability operations are not another phase of war but cross all phases of a campaign (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, 5). The same agencies responsible for the start, conduct, and completion of MCO are key stakeholders in the start, conduct, and completion of stability operations; the two primary responsible agents are State and Defense. For this reason, State and Defense historically carried lead agent responsibility for conducting stability operations in Iraq, and they have been the most prolific writers on the topic of stability operations.

Overarching Authorities

In an effort to address the need for interagency collaboration in stability operations, Presidents William J. Clinton and George W. Bush took steps during their respective administrations to formalize roles and responsibilities. Through Presidential Decision Directive-56 (PDD-56), President Clinton outlined his administration's policy regarding the management of complex operations, recognizing the need for improved planning processes (National Security Council 1997, 2). PDD-56 was the first major effort by an administration to establish a comprehensive whole-of-government approach to address stability operations. In an attempt to further improve the interagency approach, President Bush issued NSPD-44, directing State to "coordinate and lead integrated United States Government efforts" in reconstruction and stability operations (U.S. President 2005, 2). Together, these documents provide the strategic authority and guidance for U.S. management of post-conflict stability operations.

The Current Environment

Military authors, academics, interagency officials, and pundits have all recognized the importance of stability operations to military success and in setting the conditions for forging a

lasting peace. The topic has received much notoriety, given the ongoing reconstruction difficulties in both Iraq and Afghanistan. In Iraq specifically, defeat of Iraqi forces has not translated into strategic victory, largely because of the lack of a secure environment in which to operate (McDonough 2008, 109). The stability community has identified the inability to translate military success into a secure and stable environment in both Iraq and Afghanistan as a strategic failure. As a result, there is a rich body of literature addressing the purported shortfalls in planning and execution of stability operations, examining where the U.S. failed to set the conditions necessary for strategic success, and offering various solutions to the identified problems.

Reaching the End-state--Planning and Execution

Perhaps the most damning criticism directed toward Operation Iraqi Freedom campaign planners was the perceived lack of adequate planning for Phase IV stability operations. During Phase IV, the military works with government and non-government elements to ensure that the civilian population is adequately cared for in the aftermath of MCO. It is generally accepted in military doctrine that the host nation will be responsible for stabilizing the country (Department of the Army 2008, 2-2). While in many circumstances this may be true, when a government has been deposed, as was the case in 2003 Iraq, it then falls to the occupying force to provide stabilization resources until host nation civil authorities can assume responsibility.

During war planning, many assumptions are made in order for planning to continue. One of the keys to effective planning though is to validate and verify those assumptions as early as possible; in essence, turning assumptions into facts. A key planning assumption for Iraq was that State would be responsible for stabilization, although State was not informed by Defense of this expectation until much later (Phillips, Lauth, and Schenck 2006, 14). This was likely due to the

friction between the two departments and indicates a critical flaw in the staffing process. Without Defense providing State with its requirements, and including them in the planning process, there was little chance for successful planning. Eventually, Defense concluded that State was not capable of planning and executing reconstruction, so Defense began the planning for stabilization, which led to the creation of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) within Defense (Phillips, Lauth, and Schenck 2006, 14).

Without early, robust interagency planning, there is a significant risk that stability operations will fail to produce the desired strategic end-state and necessary conditions for withdrawal of military forces (Flavin 2003, 96-97). Lack of an integrated approach and “insular planning” severely hampers a commander. Beyond the success or failure of Phase IV operations, poor planning can actually hinder the overall success of an operation. Integration and robust collaboration are the basis for unity of effort. While planning considerations were an important factor in stabilization problems that occurred in Iraq, poor execution was similarly important. Christopher Schnaubelt, the 2004 Baghdad Chief of Policy in the C-5 directorate raised this point:

Much of the press has asserted a failure to plan for post-combat operations. The greater problem, however, was that of execution. Before the war, US Central Command published a 300-page operations order for Phase IV. A key aspect of DOD [Department of Defense] planning was to appoint a senior civilian administrator upon the completion of major combat operations. This was initially accomplished by the appointment of retired Lieutenant General Jay Garner and the creation of the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA). Subsequently, a somewhat more robust organization was established--the Coalition Provisional Authority (CAP)--led by Ambassador L. Paul Bremer. Garner, and later Bremer, would report to DOD rather than to the Department of State. (Schnaubelt 2005, 48-49)

Regardless of whether one accepts that it was a lack of planning or ineffective execution (or both) that led to the problems, it is widely accepted that Phase IV operations were insufficient in meeting the goals of the coalition and the needs of the Iraqi people.

A precursor to civil authorities undertaking their mission is security, which the military provides. ORHA was unable to enter Iraq because of the instability of the security environment (Phillips, Lauth, and Schenck 2006, 14). A pre-requisite for stability operations is the military establishing a permissive environment. Security allows follow-on civilian organizations to operate that do not have a force protection capability and enhances momentum for coalition operations (Department of the Army 2008, 2-3).

In order for a military force to seize the initiative, the force must have the resources and planning in place to undertake the operation and then execute it. This was not the case in Iraq: “The post-major combat operations phase in Iraq is a stunning example of how the failure to effectively plan and execute interagency operations turned what started out as a rapid victory into a long, hard slog” (Schnaubelt 2005, 47). One of the first problems that can be identified with the execution of Phase IV operations is generally when the transition took place. As events unfolded in Iraq, Phase IV essentially began immediately as units pushed north. Different areas of the country were in various phases all throughout the war, yet “the senior military headquarters in Iraq, commonly asked each other: ‘Are we in Phase IV yet?’” (Schnaubelt 2005, 48). This demonstrates a linear mindset for a non-linear process.

As the situation developed in 2003 and the CPA and Combined Joint Task Force-7 (CJTF-7) took over responsibility for Iraq from ORHA and the Combined Forces Land Component Commander respectively, the question of who was in charge became an issue. While Bremer held ambassadorial rank, he in fact reported back to the Pentagon. Despite the fact that both the CJTF-7 Commander, LTG Ricardo Sanchez, and Bremer had the same boss, it did not seem to improve the relationship among their respective staffs (Schnaubelt 2005, 50-51). What’s more, this raises an important question: who was State’s senior representative on the ground and

what was his role? Finally, Schnaubelt gets to the heart of the issue: “If two organizations both under DOD control--CJTF-7 and CPA--exhibit such problems in synchronizing their efforts, the prognosis for efforts involving DOD, Department of State, Department of Justice, Department of Homeland Security, and others is not good” (Schnaubelt 2005, 57).

While it may be true that Phase IV planning was ineffective--whether through the process itself or in execution--others argue that many of the reconstruction problems were inevitable. In fact, there are some noted experts who believe there were too many plans from too many sources addressing Phase IV operations (Phillips, Lauth, and Schenck 2006, 10). ORHA and the Combined Forces Land Component Commander both developed Phase IV plans. Throughout the process, there was recognition that Phase IV planning was necessary but no one truly understood who would be responsible for execution (Phillips, Lauth, and Schenck 2006, 11).

The Importance of Effective Transitions

In his monograph, Major David Hardy addresses the importance of operational transitions. Particularly with regard to stability operations, he identified the need for effectively managing operational transitions from major combat to stabilization (Hardy 2004, 1). Hardy identified the problems with the transition to stability operations in Iraq as poor planning, which affected the ability to move between phases of the operation. His research is important toward understanding how an ineffective transition from Phase III (Decisive Operations) to Phase IV (Stability Operations), can create the conditions necessary for an insurgency to take shape. As Hardy points out, the transition from MCO to stability is “critical” since it is during the post-conflict phase that the desired end-state is reached (Hardy 2004, 3).

Defense Response to Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction Operations

Over the past nine years, Defense has developed an understanding of the importance of stability operations. This deeper appreciation has manifested itself in doctrine that outlines the role the military will play in SSTR operations. DOD Instruction 3000.05 assigns responsibilities across the Defense establishment (Secretary of Defense 2009, 1). This instruction has gone a long way toward codifying the military's role in stability operations and has restructured Defense to meet the challenges of stabilization. Two key changes were the enlargement of the Office of the Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Stability Operations Capabilities, and the establishment of a division within the Army G3/G5 "dedicated to stability operations" (Department of Defense 2007, i).

Improving Stability Operations--A Doctrinal Approach

In response to 3000.05, Joint Forces Command established a new operating concept to address the requirements imposed on the military by the new instruction. *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations Joint Operating Concept (JOC)* lays out how the military will support and Reconstruction SSTR operations in the 2014-2026 timeframe. This document explains the Joint Force Commander's role in supporting SSTR operations at the operational level. *Military Support to SSTR Operations JOC* identifies six key lines of operation that the military supports:

1. Establish and maintain a safe, secure environment
2. Deliver humanitarian assistance
3. Reconstruct critical infrastructure and restore essential services
4. Support economic development

5. Establish representative, effective governance and the rule of law
6. Conduct strategic communication (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, iii).

The key purpose of *Military Support to SSTR Operations JOC* is to promote unified action among military and civilian agencies and operationalize DOD Instruction 3000.05 (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, v).

At the service level, the Army has developed Field Manual (FM) 3-07 *Stability Operations* that doctrinally addresses its role in SSTR. “Contrary to popular belief, the military history of the United States is one characterized by stability operations, interrupted by distinct episodes of major combat” (Department of the Army 2008, 1-1). Recognition of this fact has added another chapter in the doctrine of the American Army. Additionally, Army FM 3-24 *Counterinsurgency*, addresses the importance of the whole-of-government approach to counterinsurgency, which has definite implications for stability operations. These documents are key doctrinal advances in the military view of its support and enabling role in stability operations.

The State Department Solution

National Security Presidential Directive-44 (NSPD-44) established State as the lead agency for reconstruction efforts. It states:

The Secretary of State shall coordinate and lead integrated United States Government efforts, involving all U.S. Departments and Agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities. The Secretary of State shall coordinate such efforts with the Secretary of Defense to ensure harmonization with any planned or ongoing U.S. military operations across the spectrum of conflict. (U.S. President 2005, 2)

Much has been written about NSPD-44; it is essentially the embodiment of the debate over which agency is best suited for stability operations. Most agree that the effectiveness of

stabilization requires the integration of all instruments of national power. Therefore, NSPD-44 provides the authority for State to take the lead for stability operations, and to manage the non-military elements of national power, during post-combat operations.

NSPD-44 recognizes the importance of a comprehensive approach to stability operations. Since no single agency of the U.S. Government has authority over all instruments of national power, collaboration and interagency process management are essential to effectiveness.

Secretary of Defense Robert Gates identified the key requirements for success:

Economic development, institution-building, and the rule of law, promoting internal reconciliation, good governance, providing basic services to the people, training and equipping indigenous military and police forces, strategic communications, and more--these, along with security, are essential ingredients for long-term success. (Holsman Fore 2008, 14)

Operationalizing Stability--An Organizational Approach

To integrate the instruments of national power (the resources) within Iraq, the State Department established the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS). While there is a good deal of writing on aligning hard and soft power to achieve the desired end-state, Lieutenant Colonel Robert Bennett of the School for Advanced Military Studies specifically asks if S/CRS is up to the challenge (Bennett 2008). He argues that S/CRS has not been tested in actual intergovernmental planning and therefore cannot be assessed in these areas directly. However, Bennett asserts that S/CRS can be assessed based on analysis of its role with NSPD-44. Bennett's work offers a critique of S/CRS ability to manage stability operations and ultimately, Bennett surmises, that S/CRS lacks the authority to compel other key agencies to act (Bennett 2008, 47).

USAID--An Established Track Record

The USAID is an oft-cited authority on stability and reconstruction operations. Established in 1961, USAID has been at the forefront of every major and minor stability operation for close to half a century (Department of the Army 2008, A-6–A-7). While other elements of the U.S. Government are charged with responsibility and authority over stability operations, USAID has far more experience with these types of operations than any other government entity. As an agency, it bureaucratically falls under State but has an independent Director and a great deal of autonomy. USAID works closely with non-government developmental agencies and charities and has a proven track record for managing the involvement of these organizations within stability operations. Perhaps less developed is USAID's collaboration with Defense, though that relationship is improving with the formation of the "Office of Military Affairs" in 2005 (Holsman Fore 2008, 14-15). USAID has been instrumental in the work of Provincial Reconstruction Teams and in training military members in stability and development operations (Clarke 2009, 141). As a result of NSPD-44, USAID is taking great steps in improving its ability to respond to contingency operations including taking part in the establishment of a Civilian Response Corps, a group of pre-identified civilian experts in various fields necessary to stability that is able to deploy with little notice (Holsman Fore 2008, 23).

Although USAID has the experience of managing stability operations from an interagency perspective, it is under-resourced in other respects (Nguyen 2009, 65). USAID must often rely on military support to provide the necessary logistics and security to access and operate in areas of instability in order to accomplish its core missions (Nguyen 2009, 72). This relationship is evolving based on operations in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Defense and USAID

need each other in order to meet stabilization demands. While Defense provides the necessary logistics and security, USAID provides the expertise in dealing with non-governmental organizations that are so vital to stability success. USAID “is designed to provide assistance in emergency situations all over the world by working with the military and contractors to provide basic necessities such as emergency medical supplies, food and water, sanitation and technical assistance” (Nguyen 2009, 14). Although Defense enjoys the lion’s share of the resources, funding for both USAID and State are expected to increase 9 percent over 2009 funding levels (U.S. Agency for International Development 2010). However, with its global remit, and operations in Iraq and Afghanistan competing for scarce resources, USAID will still likely lack the necessary resources to accomplish its mission.

In his thesis Major Quy Nguyen, of the Command and General Staff College, identifies several aspects of stability operations that can improve with increased coordination between Defense and USAID. Identifying common training opportunities, enhanced career progression for both military and foreign service officers, and core competency in stability operations based on frequent interaction and collaboration can all improve the working relationship between Defense and USAID (Nguyen 2009, 88). Indeed, Nguyen mentions Goldwater-Nichols legislation that essentially forced the various military services to work together jointly, as a positive step toward a similar unity of effort being sought among government agencies involved in stability operations (Nguyen 2009, 82). Several other authors have made the same observation, calling for a Goldwater-Nichols like law that would improve unity of effort in this area.

Defining the Problem

While the government established the authorities for managing stability operations through PDD-56 and NSPD-44, the issue of capacity to undertake the mission is an entirely

different matter. There is a great deal of literature that examines which agencies have the necessary resources and capabilities to successfully accomplish stability operations. Army Strategic Plans and Policy Officer Colonel Gregory Cantwell argues that the military is responsible for victory, but does not have the necessary tools to accomplish the mission (Cantwell 2007, 55-56). Cantwell recognizes the paramount role stability operations play in setting the conditions for reconstruction and ultimate success after MCO. His assertion is important as it essentially frames the current debate among academics and professionals; the military is not equipped for stability operations.

Despite being ill equipped, however, Cantwell goes on to suggest that the military is the best organization to lead interagency reconstruction efforts largely because no one else can do it as well (G. L. Cantwell 2007, 60). In his conclusion, Cantwell posits that the “Department of Defense is the best agency to lead the coordination of the elements of national power for stability, security, transition, and reconstruction operations. . . . Embracing this reality will enhance DOD’s chances of success” (Cantwell 2007, 67). Here, Cantwell identifies one of the crucial shortfalls that Defense has demonstrated in the past: a general unwillingness to undertake the stability mission. Although a great deal of stability planning often accompanies military operational plans, the truth of the matter is that the military often views its responsibility for stability as transitory, at least in the past. After all, the military’s job is to fight and win wars, and today’s military is extremely proficient at the fighting part. However, as is pointed out throughout stability literature, winning in combat does not translate into long-term strategic success.

Pre-requisites for Success

Effective stability operations require several essential components for success that must be considered throughout planning and execution. A planning capability to incorporate the full-spectrum DIME approach to solving the inherent challenges and underlying effects of stability operations is essential. This is problematic for the government as a whole: “Government planners and operators focus on immediate response to a crisis without considering the long-term implications” (Krawchuk 2008, 67). There has not been an agency or government organization that has yet proven that it can manage the whole-of-government approach to stability operations. Resource capacity is also a key consideration. Nguyen addresses the question of which organizations have the required resources in personnel and money to be successful in stability operations. He cites the inability to deliver “soft effects” that come from a comprehensive government approach as one of the reasons for the “massive failure in Iraq” (Nguyen 2009, 48).

Beyond the basic resources and capabilities that the military offers, specifically in a counterinsurgency environment such as in Iraq and Afghanistan, effective interaction with the civilian population is essential to the winning of hearts and minds. Every action that the military takes has second and third order effects on the population; informing the host nation of the actions being taken is important for success (Ryan 2007, 66). This is the heart of counterinsurgency operations; the military involvement in reconstruction (when done properly) promotes popular support among the indigenous population (Department of the Army 2006, 1-25). This condition translates into a more secure operation by denying support for insurgents and their operations, resulting in a more secure environment enabling longer term success through an established partnership between the military and the locals. This essentially sets the conditions for long-term success in meeting strategic objectives.

Conclusion

Upon reviewing the stability operations literature, it is easy to see that Defense and State took two different approaches to addressing their deficiencies. Defense approached it from a doctrinal framework, establishing the required concepts, operating procedures, and authorities within the department. State, on the other hand, re-organized itself, creating the S/CRS to plan and coordinate stability operations. How these changes affect the capacity of these departments to undertake stability operations is at the heart of this thesis and answers the research question: “Which U.S. government department or agency is best equipped to undertake stability operations in the aftermath of combat operations?” To answer this question, the author will analyze stability operations in Iraq, applying the principles of security and unity of effort as the framework for analysis. The data used for this process will be gleaned from government documents that identifies State or Defense success when they had the lead responsibility for stability operations. The methodology and research is addressed in chapters 3 and 4 respectively.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Conflict termination and resolution clearly are not the same thing. Conflict resolution is a long process. It is primarily a civil problem that may require military support. Through advantageous conflict termination, however, the military can set the conditions for successful conflict resolution.

—William Flavin “Planning for Conflict Termination and Post-Conflict Success”

There are many definitions for success in stability operations. The desired end-states found in Army FM 3-07, *Stability Operations* defines success in these ways:

Safe and Secure Environment

Established Rule of Law

Social Well-Being

Stable Governance

Sustainable Economy. (Department of the Army, 2008, 1-16)

Both State and Defense bring unique capabilities to stabilization operations though neither department controls all of the necessary elements to attain success. However, this paper posits that Defense should have the overall lead for stability operations in post-MCO because it can deliver on two crucial aspects for stability operations: security and unity of effort. Without security, aid agencies and stability partners will be unwilling and unable to operate. Unity of effort is crucial to overall success because it ensures that utilization of scarce resources serve the same end-state. Security and unity of effort are identified as two of seven crosscutting principles in the recently published *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (United States Institute for Peace 2009, 3-12). These principles are necessary antecedents to establishing the five desired end-states listed above. To establish a secure and stable environment that leads to

successful transition to civil authority, security and unity of effort are the basis for stabilization operations.

As mentioned previously, Defense controls the main security apparatus--the military--that will ensure safety of the population and of aid workers, until host nation forces are capable. State, on the other hand, has extensive experience managing the interagency process, and through USAID, the corporate knowledge for managing stability operations. Therefore, neither Defense nor State has all the requisite expertise and resources to accomplish stability operations solely. Rather, it takes a concerted effort by all interested agencies to provide the solution. Therefore, the issue becomes: which agency is best suited to undertake the lead role? This thesis approaches the question of stability operations management from a unique vantage. By applying the principles of security and unity of effort as a framework from which to view stability operations management, and using post-war Iraq as a case study, this thesis intends to prove that Defense is the existing agency best-suited to undertake stability operations management.

Framework

In an effort to demonstrate that Defense has greater capacity for providing security and unity of effort, this thesis uses *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* as the framework for analyzing Operation Iraqi Freedom as a case study. *Guiding Principles* is a capstone document that offers the first interagency approach for addressing stability operations. Written in 2009 by the United States Institute for Peace and the United States Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, the document provides an integrated approach for interagency operations during stabilization and reconstruction. While the U.S. military addresses stability operations in numerous doctrinal sources such as Army Field Manuals (FM 3-07, *Stability Operations*; FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency*; and FM 3-0, *Operations*), stability

operations have not been addressed in like manner within the civilian interagency body of knowledge. Although *Guiding Principles* specifically states that it is not doctrine and non-authoritative, it is the first consolidated effort for filling the void in civilian stability operations literature (United States Institute for Peace 2009, 1-3).

There are several reasons for adopting *Guiding Principles* as the framework for this thesis. First, it offers the freshest perspective; it was recently published in 2009. Second, this document has benefited from the stability operations experience in Iraq and Afghanistan, therefore, its fresh perspective is informed by ongoing operations, making it timely and relevant. Third, *Guiding Principles* underwent a comprehensive review process; numerous government and non-government agencies have contributed to its vetting (see table 1) including foreign partners and the UN. Additionally, since no one agency or department has ownership of the document, there is no slant toward a specific agency's equities; it is a combined civil-military effort. Finally, the document recognizes that "constraints may force difficult trade-offs in implementation" (United States Institute for Peace 2009, 1-3), so there is an inherent built-in flexibility.

Table 1. Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction Review Agencies	
U.S. Government	U.S. Department of State U.S. Agency for International Development U.S. Department of Defense U.S. Department of Health and Human Services U.S. Department of Justice
United Nations	Department of Peacekeeping Operations Department of Political Affairs Development Programme High Commissioner for Refugees Institute for Disarmament Research International Labour Organisation Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Peacebuilding Support Office
United Kingdom	Cabinet Office Department for International Development Foreign and Commonwealth Office Ministry of Defence Stabilisation Unit
France	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Defence Unit for Conflict Prevention and Reconstruction
Germany	Zentrum für Internationale Friedenseinsätze Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Defence
Netherlands	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Ministry of Defence
Note: “The agencies on this list were consulted and involved at various points in the development of this manual” (United States Institute for Peace and the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute 2009).	

Source: Created by author--United States Institute for Peace, *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: United States Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, 2009).

Guiding Principles identifies several crosscutting principles: host nation ownership and capacity, political primacy, legitimacy, unity of effort, security, conflict transformation, and regional engagement. While all the principles are certainly crucial to success, the principles of

security and unity of effort were chosen as the framework for this thesis; because of their recognized importance to current operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Throughout the literature review, these two principles were identified over the others as being particularly important to setting the conditions for long-term reconstruction and eventual handover to competent civil authority. *Guiding Principles* explains the importance of these crosscutting principles as follows:

Security—is a cross-cutting prerequisite for peace. The lack of security is what prompts an S&R (stabilization and reconstruction) mission to begin with. Security creates the enabling environment for development.

Unity of Effort—begins with a shared understanding of the environment. It refers to cooperation toward common objectives over the short and long term, even when the participants come from many different organizations with diverse operating cultures. (United States Institute for Peace 2009, 3-12)

Case Study

Iraq offers a unique opportunity for analysis as a stability operation case study. From the outset of the war in 2003 until 2004, Defense had the lead for stability operations. With NSPD-36 in 2004, President Bush assigned future responsibility for stability operations to State (U.S. President 2004). Therefore, throughout the operation, both State and Defense, the two most influential departments with respect to stability operations, each had a segment of time where they were responsible for Iraq stabilization. By examining Iraq as essentially two different case studies, one for the period of time when Defense had lead for stability operations, the other for the period when State was in charge, allows comparison in an effort to determine which agency led more capably.

The past six-plus years offers a rich body of information on the effectiveness of post-conflict stability and reconstruction operations. The conflict is broken down into timeframes based on over-riding themes, illustrated by table 2. The author intends to delve into the effectiveness of operations prior to NSPD-36 and likewise, the effectiveness of operations post-

NSPD-36. While this construct is not perfect--each period had its own unique challenges--the utility is that each department had responsibility for stability operations for a set timeframe and data exists on the outcomes of each period. This makes it easier to compare and contrast the successes and failures during each time period and allows one to draw conclusions as to which department, if either, effectively managed stability operations.

Table 2. Iraq Conflict Timeframes for Data Analysis
2003-2004 – Defense Takes the Lead as an Insurgency is Born
2005 – State Takes the Helm in the Face of Sectarian Strife
2006 – Security Situation Worsens
2007 – The Surge
2008 and Beyond – Light at the End of the Tunnel

Source: Created by author.

Data Points

The GAO reports provide the data used to apply the security and unity of effort framework. From 2003 through 2009, the GAO published forty-one separate unclassified reports dealing with various aspects of Iraq stability and reconstruction operations. All of these reports inform this thesis. However, several reports were particularly germane to this topic and serve as the data that will determine Defense and State’s effectiveness in stabilizing Iraq. The table on the next three pages lists all forty-one reports and the dates published. The reports that specifically deal with security and are useful to determining unity of effort are identified with an asterisk (*) and serve as the thesis database. The reader will note that several of these reports have the same

title and at least in one instance, the same publication date. In most cases, the report was re-issued with a minor correction by GAO. Under these circumstances, the reports with the latest publication dates were used.

Table 3. Data Collection	
GAO Report Title	Date Published
2003	
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ</i>	May 15, 2003
2004	
<i>RECOVERING IRAQ'S ASSETS Preliminary Observations on U.S. Efforts and Challenges</i>	March 18, 2004
<i>REBUILDING IRAQ: Fiscal Year 2003 Contract Award Procedures and Management Challenges</i>	June 2004
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: Resource, Security, Governance, Essential Services, and Oversight Issues</i>	June 2004
2005	
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police</i>	March 14, 2005
<i>REBUILDING IRAQ: Actions Needed to Improve Use of Private Security Providers</i>	July 2005
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: Status of Funding and Reconstruction Efforts</i>	July 2005
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: U.S. Assistance for the January 2005 Elections</i>	September 7, 2005
<i>REBUILDING IRAQ: U.S. Water and Sanitation Efforts Need Improved Measures for Assessing Impact and Sustained Resources for Maintaining Facilities</i>	September 2005
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: Enhancing Security, Measuring Program Results, and Maintaining Infrastructure Are Necessary to Make Significant and Sustainable Progress</i>	October 18, 2005
2006	
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: Stabilization, Reconstruction, and Financing Challenges</i>	February 8, 2006
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: Governance, Security, Reconstruction, and Financing Challenges</i>	April 25, 2006
<i>REBUILDING IRAQ: Actions Still Needed to Improve the Use of Private Security Providers</i>	June 13, 2006
<i>*REBUILDING IRAQ: More Comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals</i>	July 2006
<i>REBUILDING IRAQ: Continued Progress Requires Overcoming Contract Management Challenges</i>	September 28, 2006
<i>IRAQ CONTRACT COSTS: DOD Consideration of Defense Contract Audit Agency's Findings</i>	September 2006

REBUILDING IRAQ: Status of Competition for Iraq Reconstruction Contracts	October 2006
*REBUILDING IRAQ: Status of DOD's Reconstruction Program	December 15, 2006
2007	
*SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ: GAO Audit Approach and Findings	January 18, 2007
*SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight	January 2007
*REBUILDING IRAQ: Reconstruction Progress Hindered by Contracting, Security, and Capacity Challenges	February 15, 2007
STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Conditions in Iraq Are Conducive to Fraud, Waste, and Abuse	April 23, 2007
*STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Coalition Support and International Donor Commitments	May 9, 2007
REBUILDING IRAQ: Integrated Strategic Plan Needed to Help Restore Iraq's Oil and Electricity Sectors	May 2007
REBUILDING IRAQ: Serious Challenges Impair Efforts to Restore Iraq's Oil Sector and Enact Hydrocarbon Legislation	July 18, 2007
*STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: U.S. Ministry Capacity Development Efforts Need an Overall Integrated Strategy to Guide Efforts and Manage Risk	October 1, 2007
*STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Serious Challenges Confront U.S. Efforts to Build the Capacity of Iraqi Ministries	October 4, 2007
*SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ: GAO Audits and Key Oversight Issues	October 30, 2007
SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Iraqi Government Has Not Met Most Legislative, Security, and Economic Benchmarks	September 5, 2007
*REBUILDING IRAQ: International Donor Pledges for Reconstruction Efforts in Iraq	December 18, 2007
2008	
IRAQ RECONSTRUCTION: Better Data Needed to Assess Iraq's Budget Execution	January 2008
STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Actions Needed to Address Inadequate Accountability over U.S. Efforts and Investments	March 11, 2008
*SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ Progress Report: Some Gains Made, Updated Strategy Needed	June 2008
REBUILDING IRAQ: DOD and State Department Have Improved Oversight and Coordination of Private Security Contractors in Iraq, but Further Actions Are Needed to Sustain Improvements	July 2008
SECURING, STABILIZING, AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Progress Report: Some Gains Made, Updated Strategy Needed	July 23, 2008
STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Iraqi Revenues, Expenditures, and Surplus	August 2008
STABILIZING AND REBUILDING IRAQ: Iraqi Revenues, Expenditures, and Surplus	September 16, 2008
2009	
*REBUILDING IRAQ: Improved Management Controls and Iraqi Commitment Needed for Key State and USAID Capacity Building Programs	June 2009

Source: Created by author--Titles of Various GAO Reports Regarding Iraq Stabilization and Reconstruction.

Drawing on GAO's analysis of the issues is central to this thesis. GAO is recognized as an authority in audit-style research. For example, GAO quality assurance received a "clean opinion" rating from an international peer review team, "only the second time a national audit institution has received such a rating from a multinational team (GAO 2007c, 14). GAO's analysis is very candid and the GAO remains free to make recommendations to improve the shortfalls that it identifies. Additionally, GAO is independent of the executive branch, so there are no equities with any government agency or department where it is concerned. GAO's reports are provided to Congress and the American public, and its findings influence legislative outcomes. Therefore, GAO is recognized for its expertise; its reports are unbiased and have weight and influence within the government.

Conclusion

The ongoing war in Iraq offers a unique opportunity to analyze stability operations over an extended period. Particularly interesting with regard to Iraq is the fact that both Defense and State had responsibility for stabilization at specific times. These snapshots provide the author with the opportunity to evaluate the relative effectiveness of each department on Iraq stabilization efforts during their particular tenure as the lead U.S. Government agent. *Guiding Principles* provides the framework for analysis, specifically the crosscutting principles of security and unity of effort, recognized for their importance to the success of stability operations. With this framework in place, twenty-GAO reports serve as the analytical data points. Using this methodology, the author seeks to illustrate that Defense is the U.S. department that is best suited to lead stability operations in post-MCO environments.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS

Despite stunning military success, the victory failed to simultaneously produce the anticipated wellspring of support. Within three months of the fall of Baghdad, this notion was completely discredited as Iraq found itself in the grip of a nationwide wave of violence.

—Christopher M. Ford, “Speak No Evil: Targeting a Population’s Neutrality to Defeat an Insurgency”

Crosscutting Principles for Success

From the outset of the war in Iraq in March, 2003 until June 28, 2004, Defense had responsibility for stabilization operations in Iraq, first through the ORHA and then, shortly thereafter, through the CPA. In May 2004, NSPD 36 established State as the lead agency for Iraq’s reconstruction, with the exception of responsibility for security and military operations, which remained with Defense. In June 2004, Iraq established an interim government and CPA was dissolved. The U.S. assigned an Ambassador and responsibility for reconstruction officially transferred from Defense to State (GAO 2006b, 9). State, Defense, USAID, Department of Treasury, the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, and a host of other governmental and non-governmental organizations have played key roles in Iraq’s stabilization and reconstruction over the past six plus years; however, it fell to Defense first and then to State to coordinate and de-conflict their efforts. Together, these agencies provided the critical support to secure the populace, rebuild the infrastructure, and deliver essential services. This effort became the “largest U.S. assistance program since World War II” (GAO 2005c, highlights).

In May 2003, the GAO submitted a report to Congress addressing the requirements for rebuilding Iraq. This report captured the key challenges that lay ahead for stabilizing and

reconstructing the country, and offered a candid assessment of the very difficult undertaking which, at the time, was viewed as an overwhelming military and strategic victory in Iraq. The intent of this reporting was to identify key issues for Congress to consider as it deliberated future requirements related to Iraq's reconstruction and stabilization, to include appropriations (GAO 2003, 1). Throughout this period and over the course of the next six years, GAO reporting provided insight into the effectiveness of U.S. stabilization and reconstruction operations.

Through the analysis of GAO reporting, the author intends to analyze the effectiveness of both Defense and State as the lead organizations in stability operations in Iraq. The purpose is to draw some observations and conclusions about the ability of each organization as the lead agent, and to offer recommendations on how the U.S. Government can lead and manage reconstruction in post-MCO environments in the future. The basic framework for assessing the trends are the guiding principles of unity of effort and security. These crosscutting principles are generally held by the stability community, to include State and Defense, to be essential pre-cursors to success in stability and reconstruction operations.

Unity of Effort

Unity of effort promotes effective management, establishes overarching coordination, and de-conflicts operations even when organizations have diverse cultures that can create friction (United States Institute for Peace and the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute 2009, 3-12). Diversity cuts both ways. On one hand, the capabilities that various U.S. Government Agencies are able to contribute are essential to eventual success; no one agency has all the capabilities to win a war. On the other hand, diversity brings different leadership, doctrine, and procedures. Bringing this diversity together to solve a common problem is often a daunting challenge in any environment. In MCO stabilization operations, it is even tougher.

Unity of effort is derived from an effective lead agency that takes responsibility for developing and implementing a strategic plan. Because various agencies operate with their own individual leadership chains and have distinct equities, unity of command is often not possible, which makes unity of effort so essential. Agencies do not necessarily require the same boss to work well together but they must have a unifying lead that sets the agenda, deconflicts operations, and promotes coordination. This same lead must also resolve differences and clear roadblocks. When successfully done, unity of effort ensures that the greatest U.S. Government capability is brought to bear in areas where it is most needed and will yield the most benefit. Unity also brings good fiscal stewardship, ensuring that low-density resources are not overlapping in the same area and are, in fact, serving the same overall goal. Roles and responsibilities must be established and are a pivotal aspect of unity of effort.

Security

The greatest single detriment to stability operations in Iraq, throughout the entire conflict has been a lack of security. Security is defending the populace against the threat of violence and providing protection to capability providers; and in turn, it “creates the enabling environment for development” (United States Institute for Peace and the U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute 2009, 3-12). It affects operations in a number of ways. First and foremost, security creates support for operations among the host nation and sets the conditions for success in other stability areas. Second, lack of security restricts the employment of the full complement of U.S. power and capability. Without at least a semi-permissive security environment, civilian agencies are unable to contribute their full potential. Finally, a poor security situation inhibits the hand-off of security responsibility to the host nation. As seen in Iraq, security is the paramount consideration for the effectiveness of the stability operations.

2003--Defense Takes the Lead as an Insurgency is Born

Shortly after the end of MCO, GAO released a report titled, *Rebuilding Iraq*; capturing what it saw as the initial challenges facing the coalition as it undertook stability operations. Table 4 on the next page captures the general themes of this report, as well as GAO reporting for 2004. Several themes were identified in this initial GAO report, with “Peace Operations” specifically applying to security and three other themes, “Food and Humanitarian Relief,” “Economic Reform,” and “Governance and Democracy Building” (GAO 2003, 1-2). The other topic included in the report, “Weapons of Mass Destruction,” does not relate to this thesis and will therefore not be covered. Throughout this data analysis, topics and themes covered by GAO reports will be captured in similar tables to highlight areas of GAO concern and reporting emphasis.

Table 4. U.S. Key Challenges Identified Through GAO Reporting 2003-2004			
Document Title	Security Related	Unity of Effort Related	Other
<i>Rebuilding Iraq</i>	Peace Operations	1. Food Aid and Humanitarian Relief 2. Economic Reform and Reconstruction 3. Governance and Democracy Building	Weapons of Mass Destruction
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Resources, Security, Governance, Essential Services and Oversight Issues</i>	Security	1. Resources 2. Governance 3. Essential Services	N/A

Source: Created by author using various GAO Reports.

Unity of Effort

One of the early challenges identified by the inaugural 2003 GAO report was the importance of coordinating international aid as combat operations ramped down and focus shifted to stabilizing Iraq (GAO 2003, 1). From the start, GAO recognized the importance of unity of effort to the success of stability operations and recommended the development of a “structure” to develop objectives, offer guidance, and coordinate operations for all the participating national and international agencies, both within the government and outside (GAO 2003, 12). These statements speak directly to the need for unity of effort, and the fact that GAO identified structure as an important component is telling. Unfortunately, it becomes a repetitive theme throughout the next six years of GAO reporting.

The interagency approach was present from the beginning. Deployed personnel from USAID and international relief organizations were responsive almost immediately (GAO 2003, 8). Coordination was important to ensure that aid was evenly distributed, but how coordination was taking place was apparently not easily ascertained. GAO asked the question “How is the United States coordinating the delivery of humanitarian and food assistance among other international donors and relief organizations?” (GAO 2003, 9). The fact that this question was asked indicates that coordination mechanisms were insufficient, at least at the start.

In October 2003, an international donors conference was held in Madrid, with 76 countries, 20 international organizations, and 13 nongovernmental organizations attending to pledge support for the rebuilding of Iraq. In April 2004, \$1 billion in aid was committed and another \$14 billion pledged for 2004 alone (GAO 2004, 18). This funding was funneled into the International Reconstruction Fund Facility for Iraq, which amounted to two trust funds created to channel international aid. CPA established three Iraqi-led bodies to administer all international

reconstruction funding and projects, to include those originating from the U.S.: the Iraqi Strategic Review Board, The Ministry of Planning and Development Cooperation, and the Council for International Coordination. All contributed to managing different aspects of the reconstruction effort in Iraq (GAO 2004, 23). However, in June of 2004, the CPA Inspector General identified that there was no process to “coordinate internationally funded projects with other CPA reconstruction efforts” (GAO 2004, 23). While this shortfall is an Iraqi responsibility, CPA must also accept some of the blame for the lack of coordination since it is responsible to the U.S. Government for American money spent on Iraq’s reconstruction.

The 2004 GAO report also indicated that there was a need for unity of effort. Defense was given overall responsibility for Iraqi relief and reconstruction from the beginning and CPA became responsible for overall oversight, but it never adequately identified how it planned to accomplish this task (GAO 2003, 18). A great deal of the problems stemmed from understaffing mainly due to personnel coming from multiple agencies and sources; many of the positions ended up being “gapped” (GAO 2004, 2-3). One of the key shortfalls in the system was the inability to track internationally funded efforts with U.S. funded programs and projects (GAO 2004, 23). Inability to track funds can lead to problems with managing reconstruction projects, as agencies can end up duplicating effort.

Complicating matters were the numerous funding streams that were used to initiate and support projects. One such funding source was the Commanders’ Emergency Response Program that allowed military commanders to fund projects within their areas of responsibility in order to promote stability. A second source, the Rapid Regional Response Program, was U.S. funding disbursed to regions and governorates, also to promote stability. However, it was over a year before an auditor was assigned to review the Development Fund for Iraq, the overall program

that both the commanders' and the regional funds fall under (GAO 2004, 34). Without auditor feedback, CPA could not be sure that fiscal aspects of its projects and programs were being properly managed.

Security

The security environment posed the most significant challenge to stability throughout this and succeeding timeframes. The coalition had to deal with a burgeoning insurgency, as well as civil control issues related to a post-combat operations environment. One of the key problems identified at this point of stabilization was the security force footprint on the ground. Was the necessary level of force present to provide security to relief workers? (GAO 2003, 11). As the GAO pointed out in 2003, "... establishing a secure environment is necessary for economic and political rebuilding to proceed" (GAO 2003, 12). In May 2003, CPA disbanded the Iraqi military and decided to rebuild it from the ground up, which certainly increased the coalition's security responsibility.

From June 2003 through 2004, there was marked increase in attacks on both coalition forces and civilian relief organizations to the point that it began to limit the effectiveness of the relief operations. Many organizations, including the UN, had to limit their operations or leave Iraq entirely (GAO 2004, 3). Those agencies that did stay were required to devote more resources to security, limiting manpower and money that was available for stabilization operations (GAO 2004, 3). A second-order effect was that "important" reconstruction actions had to be canceled as a result of the civilian agencies ratcheting back their operations to focus more on security (GAO 2004, 3).

Another aspect of the security situation was in the way that it has affected Iraq's ability to build capacity in its own government agencies. In this respect, security became the critical factor

inhibiting the transfer of authority to the Iraqis and the viability of Iraqi government institutions. The security situation directly affected the judicial system as judges were being assassinated; in the power generation sector, security accounted for 18 percent of costs; and the general “pace and cost of reconstruction” overall was greatly affected by attacks (GAO 2003, 4). So began the trend of insurgent attacks severely hindering the ability of the coalition to stabilize Iraq.

2005--State Takes the Helm in the Face of Sectarian Strife

In 2004, the inherent relationship of the U.S. toward Iraq shifted from temporary authority over the country as the occupying force to one of support for the interim Iraqi government (GAO 2005b, 3). Although State took responsibility for reconstruction in 2004, Defense maintained the lead agency role for the rebuilding of the Iraqi military. In 2005, Iraq held successful elections, which the U.S. supported heavily with security and \$130 million in nonsecurity assistance with USAID playing the key non-security role (GAO 2005d, 2). This evolution should be viewed as a success. Initially, the U.S., as the occupying force, established CPA but after only one year, Iraq was able to seat an interim government and only six months later, Iraq held successful democratic elections. All of the efforts during this period were in the face of increasing sectarian violence, primarily between Sunni and Shia Muslims (GAO 2005b, 9).

Table 5. U.S. Key Challenges Identified Through GAO Reporting-2005

Document Title	Security Related	Unity of Effort Related	Other*
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Preliminary Observations on Challenges in Transferring Security Responsibilities to Iraqi Military and Police</i>	1. Strategy for Transferring Responsibility to Iraq 2. Data on Status of Iraqi Forces 3. Challenges	N/A	N/A
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Status of Funding and Reconstruction Efforts</i>	N/A	Progress Made in Oil, Power, Water, and Health Sectors	Funding Applied to Reconstruction Effort
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: U.S. Assistance for the January 2005 Elections</i>	N/A	N/A	1. U.S. Assistance 2. Improvements in Elections Process that Participating Organizations Identified
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Enhancing Security, Measuring Program Results, and Maintaining Infrastructure Are Necessary to Make Significant and Sustainable Progress</i>	Worsening Security Environment and Strong Insurgency Make Security Transfer to Iraqis Difficult	Inadequate Performance Data and Measures Make it Difficult to Determine Progress	Difficulty with Iraq Maintaining New and Rehabilitated Infrastructure

Source: Created by author using various GAO Reports.

Unity of Effort

During the 2004-2005 timeframe, the U.S. accomplished many tasks focused on restoring essential services, such as restarting Iraq's oil production and export, increasing electrical generation capacity, restoring water treatment plants, and improving health services (GAO 2005c, 3). Although many agencies were involved in these projects, State, Defense, USAID, and U.S. Army Corps of Engineers played central roles. To manage this effort, the U.S. began to work with Iraq to develop a database to track the multitude of bilateral tasks but had still not completed the project after a year in development (GAO 2005c, 11-12).

It is readily apparent that much of the responsibility for managing stability and reconstruction fell to Iraq after it had seated a government. However, the U.S. had a responsibility, as well, to help Iraq manage these programs, both as fiscal stewards to ensure the best use of U.S. funding, but also from a capability standpoint. It was apparent the Iraqis did not yet have the capacity to manage the multitude of ongoing stabilization and reconstruction activities. GAO made the point of the importance of tracking projects:

The U.S. reconstruction program in Iraq's water and sanitation sector has made some progress toward completing a reduced scope of activities. . . . However, State was unable to provide a list of those completed projects, which would enable us to evaluate the significance of the project numbers in terms of scope of work, cost, or size. (Government Accountability Office 2005c, 27-28)

As lead agency for the reconstruction of Iraq, it fell to State to track, validate, and verify that projects were contributing to the restoration of essential services and were viable, long-term. This is a critical aspect of unity of effort.

In an October 2005 report, the GAO identified a key challenge to reconstruction. A dearth of performance data hindered the ability to determine the overall impact of stabilization and reconstruction activities in the area of essential services (GAO 2005a, 2). In an effort to adequately manage stability operations, NSPD 36 established two temporary organizations aimed at reconstruction: (1) the Iraq Reconstruction and Management Office to transition rebuilding efforts to the Iraqi government and (2) the Project Contracting Office to manage U.S.-funded reconstruction projects (GAO 2005a, 3). Therefore, the Department of State did provide some oversight through these offices. However, GAO findings indicate that oversight measures were inadequate compared to the immensity of the effort. For example, despite keeping records on the projects in water and sanitation that were completed, there were no measures to indicate the effectiveness of these projects (GAO 2006a, 17). As the lead agency, State was responsible

for ensuring that metrics were established and tracked for reconstruction projects. Ideally, State would have managed the efforts of numerous agencies by directing operations to the areas where they gained the most benefit, and where they were most needed. However, without adequate control measures, this aspect of unity of effort could not be achieved.

Security

In 2005, the U.S. was heavily involved in rebuilding the Iraqi military. The intent was to have a standing Iraqi Army as fast as possible, in order to transfer security responsibilities, thus allowing U.S. forces to re-deploy. The plan was for U.S. forces to slowly drawdown in parallel with the Iraqi Army stand up but numerous problems with training and equipment forced the U.S. to maintain its presence (GAO 2005b, 2). Although gains were made at this time, they were not realized as fast as originally planned. The growing insurgency made transferring responsibility quite difficult, and the gains made crumbled in the face of daunting security challenges (GAO 2005b, 2). In 2004, amid increased insurgent attacks, many Iraqi security forces “collapsed” and in turn, emboldened the enemy (GAO 2005b, 4).

According to the GAO, there were inaccuracies in the reporting of Iraqi security force status. State reported that 271,041 Iraqi forces across the Ministry of Defense (military forces) and Ministry of Interior (police and other) were needed for security in Iraq but 141,761 were actually trained and equipped. However, discrepancies in reporting held the Ministry of Interior forces higher because they included those forces absent, even though Defense officials estimated absentees numbered in the tens of thousands (GAO 2005b, 7). Additionally, the total number of forces is misleading because both the trained readiness levels and nature of training varied across the force. For example, the police force was not trained in counterinsurgent tactics (GAO 2005b, 7).

The security environment hindered U.S. ability to transfer missions to the Iraqi military; insurgent operations increased in both overall number and the number of attacks against civilians (GAO 2005b, 9-10). These attacks undoubtedly had a significant impact on the success of stability operations at the time. Security requirements began to eat larger portions of the available aid, where over the course of less than a year, security and justice costs rose by 11 percent, making insurgency the greatest risk to Iraq stability and reconstruction (GAO 2005c, 7). To counter this threat, U.S. forces faced four key challenges in standing up the Iraqi security force:

1. training, equipping, and sustaining a changing force structure
 2. determining progress in developing capable forces without a system for measuring their readiness
 3. developing loyalty and leadership throughout the Iraqi chain of command
 4. developing police capable of democratic law enforcement in a hostile environment.
- (GAO 2005b, 12)

Because of the lack of effective security, both in terms of an inadequate Iraqi force and insufficient coalition troop levels, reconstruction efforts were severely hindered. U.S. civilian members were still unable to move to reconstruction sites because of inadequate security (GAO 2005a, 15-16). In terms of reconstruction costs, “Security conditions have, in part, led to project delays and increased costs for security . . . in March 2005, the USAID cancelled two electrical power generation-related task orders totaling nearly \$15 million to help pay for increased security costs incurred at another power generation project.” (GAO 2005a, 14). As costs racked up, security proved to be the most expensive consideration related to stabilization and reconstruction operations.

2006--Security Situation Worsens

Throughout 2006, many of the same trends continued on the security front. Even as Iraqi troops were being trained and fielded, sectarian violence and insurgent attacks increased. The culminating event was the Samarra mosque bombing that appeared to bring the country to the brink of civil war (GAO 2006a, highlights page). The security problems continued to add to the price tag of reconstruction projects and generally hindered coalition operational effectiveness; however, unity of effort improved. The President issued the National Strategy for Victory in Iraq (NSVI) which identified the overarching strategy along three tracks: political, security, and economic, which were expected to generally improve progress along other tracks (GAO 2006a, 1). The situation overall, however, was quite poor and the coalition was not making the gains necessary for success in Iraq.

Table 6. U.S. Key Challenges Identified Through GAO Reporting-2006			
Document	Security Related	Unity of Effort Related	Other*
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Governance, Security, Reconstruction, and Financing Challenges</i>	Security Environment Continues to be a Concern	N/A	1. Sectarian Divisions Delayed Formation of a Permanent Government 2. Higher Security Costs, Funding Reallocations, and Inadequate Maintenance Have Impeded Reconstruction Efforts
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: More Comprehensive National Strategy Needed to Help Achieve U.S. Goals</i>	N/A	No Unified Strategic Plan for Rebuilding Iraq	N/A
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Stabilization, Reconstruction, and Financing Challenges</i>	Worsening Security Environment and Strong Insurgency Make Security Transfer to Iraqis Difficult	Inadequate Performance Data and Measures Make it Difficult to Determine Progress	Difficulty with Iraq Maintaining New and Rehabilitated Infrastructure
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Status of DOD's Reconstruction Program</i>	N/A	Status of Construction Work	Support Costs Incurred by the Design-Build Contractors in DOD's Program

Source: Created by author using various GAO Reports.

Unity of Effort

Several key advances occurred in unity of effort during 2006. The President issued his NSVI, which outlined a strategic way forward. Operationally, Multi-National Force Iraq and the U.S. Embassy began developing Provincial Reconstruction Teams designed to improve security, political, economic, and rule of law sectors of Iraqi society (GAO 2006a, 12). Each of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams brought robust capability with a staff of over 100 people that offered a host of capacity building tools. The Provincial Reconstruction Team vision was to provide interagency unity of effort even under austere conditions and in non-permissive security environments, significant limiting factors for capacity-building operations. While Provincial

Reconstruction Teams were being stood up at the provincial level, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad was working toward building Iraqi capacity in key areas such as budget processes and logistics management systems at the national level (GAO 2006a, 10).

Despite establishing the NSVI, GAO saw shortfalls in the strategy. The NSVI purpose and scope were clear; it generally addressed the threats and risks associated with the strategy, and outlined objectives and goals (GAO 2006b, 3-4). However, it only partially identified the current and future costs of the war and reconstruction, and it did not discuss how U.S. efforts would be integrated with the Iraqi government or the international community (GAO 2006b, 4). Perhaps the greatest shortfall in the strategy, however, was that it did not adequately identify which U.S. Agencies were responsible for different aspects of reconstruction (GAO 2006b, 4).

Delineation of effort is a key responsibility of the lead agency. GAO faulted the President's NSVI because it failed in this regard. State, however, was empowered to take on the delineation role through NSPD-36 and NSPD-44. Both of these policy directives gave State the necessary authority to establish lines of action and assign key responsibilities. NSPD-36 stated, "The Secretary of State shall be responsible for the continuous supervision and general direction of all assistance for Iraq" (U.S. President 2004). NSPD-44 provided more comprehensive authority beyond just Iraq: "The Secretary of State shall coordinate and lead integrated United States Government efforts, involving all U.S. Departments and Agencies with relevant capabilities, to prepare, plan for, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction activities" (U.S. President 2005). Therefore, while State did not have an overarching command authority, as one might see in a military operation, State had the required authority to delineate responsibilities and establish key lines of action among U.S. Agencies through Presidential direction.

The NSVI established three broad tracks for reconstruction (security, political, and economic) and eight principal objectives:

1. Defeat terrorists, neutralize insurgents
2. Transition Iraq to security self-reliance
3. Help Iraqis forge a compact for democratic government
4. Help Iraq build government capacity and essential services
5. Help Iraq strengthen the economy
6. Help Iraq strengthen the rule of law
7. Increase international support for Iraq
8. Strengthen public understanding of coalition efforts and public isolation of the insurgents. (GAO 2006b, 10)

GAO faulted the NSVI for not laying out specific agency responsibilities, except in one example (GAO 2006b, 25). While this may be true, it is important to note that the NSVI is a strategy document that should lay out broad, overarching concepts. It fell to State, as the declared lead, to lay out specific agency responsibilities. Furthermore, GAO found that the NSVI did not articulate how agencies would resolve conflict; project delays were directly caused by interagency conflict, in years past (GAO 2006b, 26). To address this shortfall, GAO recommended that the National Security Council improve the strategy by “articulating clearer roles and responsibilities” (GAO 2007c, 2). Once again, one could argue that the purpose of a strategy document is not to lay out conflict resolution guidelines, an issue that should rather be addressed by the lead agency.

State took exception with several of GAO’s NSVI findings. For example, State highlighted that the *National Strategy for Supporting Iraq* (a classified report) specifically linked

goals with lines of action (GAO 2006b, 42). Additionally, State argued that it is in the process of linking resources, specifically 2006 fiscal year funding, to the National Strategy for Supporting Iraq and stated that information on interagency resources are contained elsewhere (GAO 2006b, 42-43). However, while funding is an important aspect of strategy, it does not directly address the shortfall that GAO identified with regard to roles and responsibilities. Furthermore, GAO responded that the body of knowledge that makes up the comprehensive U.S. strategy for Iraq, which it reviewed in total, still lacked “key characteristics of an effective national strategy” indicating that roles and responsibilities was still a shortfall area (GAO 2006b, 48). It is important to note that GAO did modify its recommendation to “improve the U.S. strategy for Iraq.”

In 2004, Defense was responsible for reconstruction and established the International Reconstruction Fund Facilities for Iraq to manage funding that the U.S. Congress appropriated for this purpose; \$13.5 billion in total to Defense alone (GAO 2006d, 1). When responsibility for reconstruction transferred to State, Defense maintained oversight and responsibility for this funding, mainly in the form of multi-year contracts through the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers/ Project and Contracting Office. Defense obligated (a definite commitment that creates a legal liability for payment) an impressive 97 percent of this funding (GAO 2006d, 4). However, in 2006, only \$5.73 billion was completed work (see table 7). The fact that these contracts did not transfer to State when authority transferred, calls into question whether or not unity of effort among the various projects was attained. With Defense maintaining this responsibility, it called into question how Defense projects were reconciled with State and other agency (such as USAID) efforts.

Table 7. Comparison of Completed Work			
Dollars in Millions			
Sector	Planned Work	Estimated work-in-place (completed work)	Completed work relative to planned work (percent)
Security and justice	1,460	1,310	90
Electricity	3,000	1,920	64
Oil Infrastructure	1,300	950	73
Public works and water	1,360	930	69
Buildings, education, and health	500	360	72
Transportation and communications	420	260	62
Total	8,040	5,730	71

Source: GRD/PCO, *Comparison of Planned and Completed Work by Sector Using All DoD Acquisition Strategies, as of October 8, 2006* (Washington DC: Government Accountability Office, 2006), 4.

Capitalizing on this point, in December 2006, GAO identified more than 50 capacity building programs led by six different agencies but argued that no structure existed to integrate these efforts (GAO 2007c, 10). Unfortunately, despite the efforts of both Defense and State, Iraqis themselves have identified problems with reconstruction. From a March 2006 “Survey of Iraqi Public Opinion, International Republican Institute,” a majority of the Iraqis surveyed felt that the reconstruction was going in the wrong direction and that key sectors of the government were worsening (GAO 2006b, 13). Coalition operations appear to have been less than effective, at least from the perspective of the average Iraqi.

Security

According to GAO reporting in 2006, “U.S. goals are to defeat the terrorists and neutralize the insurgency, develop capable Iraqi security forces, and help the government

advance the rule of law, deliver services, and nurture civil society” (GAO 2006a, 6). The first two stated goals are critical enablers to the other goals and the overall desired end-state in Iraq, which is “an Iraq at peace with its neighbors, with a representative government that respects the human rights of all Iraqis, and with a security force that can maintain domestic order and deny Iraq as a safe haven for terrorists” (GAO 2005a, 12). One of the four stated challenges to successfully stabilizing Iraq was neutralizing the insurgency and addressing sectarian violence (GAO 2006a, 8).

As 2006 progressed, it became more apparent that the deplorable security situation was rapidly spiraling out of control. In a very strong statement on the security situation and its effect on the Iraqi people, GAO stated: “Poor security conditions, threaten to undermine the development of an effective Iraqi government and the transfer of security responsibilities to the Iraqi government” (GAO 2006a, 14). Additionally, insurgent attacks against the power grid and oil production infrastructure have severely weakened these sectors of the Iraqi economy (GAO 2006a, 19). Furthermore, security costs reduced the amount of available resources and the scope of reconstruction projects (GAO 2006a, 22). In a more comprehensive statement of security impact, State reported insurgent attacks hindered operations and that improvement in the security situation was necessary to set the conditions for U.S. withdrawal (GAO 2006d, 7).

The poor security situation generated second and third order effects with regard to donor commitments and funding focus. Donors expressed reluctance to donate more aid until the security situation improved (GAO 2006a, 3-4); donor commitments were down four percent over the course of one year, from twelve percent of projected investment to eight percent (GAO 2006a, 27). The U.S. is the primary contributor to Iraq reconstruction but in 2006, future U.S. aid was envisioned for infrastructure sustainment, increasing ministerial capacity, and security,

while Iraq still required more reconstruction aid (GAO 2006a, 3). If neither the U.S. or the international community are willing or able to commit more funding, it would fall to Iraq to pay this bill. The net effect of the security environment therefore, was decreased aid, increased security costs specifically, and increased reconstruction costs overall.

2007--The Surge

2007 GAO reporting was the greatest in terms of the number of reports issued, which makes sense considering 2007 was the year that the U.S. changed to a more deliberate counterinsurgency strategy. The U.S. Government's new approach was an "all in" effort to reclaim Iraq before it spiraled too far out of control. As its contribution to supporting the new strategy, GAO issued a comprehensive 2007 report that captured a great deal of the reporting history to that point. This report stated the following in the cover letter:

The U.S. rebuilding effort in Iraq has focused on helping the Iraqi government establish a sound economy with the capacity to deliver essential services. Although Iraq's economy has grown and U.S. efforts have helped restore portions of Iraq's infrastructure, the poor security environment and mismanagement have diminished the overall results of U.S. investments. (Government Accountability Office 2007e, 1)

Unity of Effort

GAO recognized the importance of establishing Iraq ministry capacity but noted that the U.S. lacked a plan to integrate efforts and "improve Iraq's capacity to provide security and deliver essential services" (GAO 2007e, 47). GAO felt that the U.S. had not identified key attributes for effective management, specifically milestones and metrics; "there is no specific plan for capacity development that considers and integrates all U.S. efforts" (GAO 2007e, 48). Additionally, the lack of a plan makes it "unclear" how U.S. efforts are taking Iraqi priorities into account, or what core needs are being addressed (GAO 2007e, 50).

Table 8. U.S. Key Challenges Identified Through GAO Reporting-2007

Document	Security Related	Unity of Effort Related	Other*
<i>Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq: GAO Audit Approach and Findings</i>	N/A	N/A	1. GAO's Scope, Authority, and Coordination 2. GAO Insights from Extensive Iraq Reporting 3. GAO Quality Assurance Framework
<i>Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq: Key Issues for Congressional Oversight</i>	1. Security Conditions 2. U.S. Military Readiness	1. Strategy and Costs	1. Governance Challenges 2. Reconstruction Challenges 3. Improving Acquisition Outcomes
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Reconstruction Progress Hindered by Contracting, Security, and Capacity Challenges</i>	Deteriorating Security Situation and Capabilities of Iraqi Forces	N/A	1. Factors Affecting DOD's Ability to Promote Successful Acquisition Outcomes 2. Issues Affecting the Iraqi Government's Ability to Support and Sustain Reconstruction Progress
<i>Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: Coalition Support and International Donor Commitments</i>	Troop Commitments Other Countries Have Made to MNF-I	N/A	1. Funding the U.S. has Provided to Support Other Countries' Participation in Multinational Force 2. Financial Support International Donors have Provided to Iraq Reconstruction Efforts
<i>Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq: GAO Audits and Key Oversight Issues</i>	Progress on Improving Security	Efforts to Develop Clear Strategies for Programs to Rebuild and Stabilize Iraq	Iraqi and International Contributions to Economic Development in Iraq
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: International Donor Pledges for Reconstruction in Iraq</i>	N/A	N/A	Additional Information on Donor Commitments Requested by Congress
<i>Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: Serious Challenges Confront U.S. Efforts to Build the Capacity of Iraqi Ministries</i>	N/A	1. Multiple U.S. Agencies Leading Efforts Without Overarching Direction from a Lead Agency or a Strategic Plan that Integrates Their Efforts 2. Shifting Timeframes and Priorities in Response to Deteriorating Conditions in Iraq	1. U.S. Efforts to Build Capacity Face Four Key Challenges 2. U.S. Government is Beginning to Develop an Overall Strategy for Ministerial Capacity
<i>Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: U.S. Ministry Capacity Development Efforts Need an Overall Integrated Strategy to Guide Efforts and Manage Risk</i>	1. Shifting Timeframes and Priorities in Response to Deteriorating Security Situation	1. Multiple U.S. Agencies Lead Individual Efforts	N/A

Source: Created by author using Various GAO Reports.

Despite numerous similar reports from previous years, GAO found that there still was not a clear lead agency providing overall direction to develop Iraq ministry capacity, a key requirement for success (GAO 2007d, 3). The “New Way Forward in Iraq” strategy was intended to provide time and space to the Iraqi government to address societal differences (GAO 2007d, 4). Security improved, specifically in the number of attacks on coalition troops, though the attacks on Iraqi civilians did not improve to the same degree. Still, while the security environment was becoming somewhat more permissive, the shortfalls in strategy remained. GAO took the opportunity to once again highlight the need for a more comprehensive strategy to address reconstruction, specifically roles and responsibilities (GAO 2007d, 9). GAO found that, due to the lack of a lead agency for overall direction, “...U.S. priorities have been subject to numerous changes” (GAO 2007d, 10).

GAO identified two factors that contributed to the lack of a lead agency. First, the capacity-building efforts lacked an overall strategy from the beginning and when one was in development in 2003, it was shelved in favor of establishing this responsibility with the Iraqis (GAO 2007f, 4). This seems to be a questionable decision, considering the lack of capacity in the Iraqi government; they had not held their first election and were only an interim government at that point. The second factor was that the U.S. had not implemented suggestions from a 2005 State report, which recommended that USAID take the lead for reconstruction (GAO 2007f, 4).

Two specific outcomes resulted from no lead agency. First, the various agencies involved in stability operations developed different metrics to track progress in their various projects, despite efforts in 2005 to develop a common set of metrics among State, Defense, and USAID (GAO 2007g, 16). Second, the distinction between USAID and Iraq Reconstruction Management Office “blurred” because they focused on different timeframes (GAO 2007g, 16). The Iraq

Reconstruction Management Office focused on short-range efforts to “jump start capacity development” and USAID on longer-term projects. The Iraq Reconstruction Management Office did not begin its programs until USAID had already started some projects; they began to undertake efforts that the other agency was responsible for. A lead agency would have been able to de-conflict these projects (GAO 2007g, 16).

GAO acknowledged that some steps were taken in 2006 and 2007 that improved interagency coordination. State had by this point assigned an ambassador to take the overall lead for short and long-term civilian capacity development programs (GAO 2007f, 4). An interagency task force (Joint Task Force on Capacity Development) was established to help delineate roles and coordinate activities. Additionally, GAO also identified several steps that agencies were taking individually that were making strides toward unifying effort (see table 9). State also began to develop a capacity-building strategy in 2007, though GAO faulted the document for lack of detail (GAO 2007f, 7).

Table 9. Status of U.S. Capacity Development Strategy

Key Component	Description	Status of Efforts
Clear purpose, scope, and methodology	Addresses why the strategy was produced, the scope of its coverage, and the process by which it was developed.	- Limited discussion of purpose and methodology for overall strategy - Scope of capacity development efforts have shifted
Delineation of U.S. roles, responsibilities, and coordination	Addresses who will be implementing the strategy, what their roles will be compared with others, and the mechanisms for coordinating their efforts.	- Roles not clearly delineated between USAID, MNSTC-I, and embassy - Limited documentation on how efforts are to be integrated, such as a security cooperation office and a lead agency - Interagency task force helping to clarify roles, responsibilities, and coordination
Desired goals, objectives and activities	Addresses what the strategy is trying to achieve, priorities, and steps to achieve those results, consistent with Iraqi priorities	- U.S. Embassy-Baghdad defined overall end-state: assist Iraq's transition to self-sufficiency - MNSTC-I priorities and objectives for the MOD, consistent with Iraqi priorities - Overall, Iraqi government priorities not clearly identified
Performance measures	Performance measures to gauge results	- Status of efforts to develop performance measures is unclear - U.S. embassy is using process or output measures at civilian ministries; uncertain about future assessments - MNSTC-I is in process of developing outcome and results measures at the security ministries
Description of costs, resources needed, and risk	Addresses what the strategy will cost; what sources and types of resources and investments should be targeted, balancing benefits, costs, and risks.	- No assessments of risk provided with agency funding requests for fiscal years 2007-2008 - No estimates of long-term costs and resources needed to achieve program results

Source: Government Accountability Office (GAO), *Stabilizing and Rebuilding Iraq: U.S. Ministry Capacity Development Efforts Need an Overall Integrated Strategy to Guide Efforts and Manage Risk* (Washington, DC: GAO, 2007g), 29.

Finally in 2007, GAO identified a key Defense shortfall in its contracting system. According to GAO, “A pre-requisite to having good outcomes is a match between well-defined requirements and available resources” (GAO 2007e, 99). While GAO specifically cited Defense on this issue, the problem is likely emblematic of the overall unity of effort challenge posed by Iraq. Identifying Iraqi needs and priorities, managing resources from a multitude of funding streams and sources, and bringing U.S. interagency capabilities to bear against the reconstruction problems in Iraq are essential to any successful rebuilding strategy.

Security

In 2006, the security situation in Iraq had seriously deteriorated and coalition forces and Iraqi citizens were challenged on numerous fronts: increased insurgent attacks, growing sectarian violence, and militia influence, all of which impacted U.S. and Iraqi efforts to secure Baghdad and other urban areas (GAO 2007e, 10). State reported that the security conditions affected the ability to engage with the Iraqis and affected political and economic progress (GAO 2007e, 25). The security situation in 2006 was the key factor in the U.S. adopting its New Way Forward strategy and increasing the number of U.S. forces on the ground during “The Surge.”

A key aspect of the new U.S. strategy focused training, equipping, and fielding Iraqi forces. The approach the U.S. took in this regard was different than other security assistance programs, which was understandable considering the chaotic environment in Iraq since the end of MCO. Defense was responsible for the Iraqi train and equip program, while traditional security assistance programs fell under State and are under the supervision of the embassy, with the geographic combatant commander executing the program (GAO 2007e, 33). This provided Defense with additional flexibility to manage the program but ultimately may have led to accountability problems as weapons and equipment were transferred to Iraqi forces (GAO 2007e,

34). Many of the problems were attributed to staffing shortfalls and initial delays in establishing an accountability system (GAO 2007e, 34).

One of the most important areas affected by the poor security situation was the Iraqi oil sector, its economic livelihood, at least for the immediate future. Delays, cost overruns, and sabotage led to major shutdowns and lost revenue. Without its oil sector, Iraq was hard pressed to contribute much to its own reconstruction. Skimming profits from the oil sector also led to funding for insurgents and corruption is widespread with up to thirty percent of refined oil products ending up on the black market. Likewise, security problems have plagued the electricity sector, hindering Iraq's ability to deliver essential services. Finally, insufficient troop numbers to guard armories have contributed to the looting of munitions stockpiles, which in turn have supplied insurgents with materiel to carry out attacks (GAO 2007e, 87).

The nature of the modern battlefield, especially in a reconstruction environment, necessitates an interagency approach to be effective. The U.S. does not have all stability and reconstruction capabilities contained within one agency or department. Therefore, the security environment must be at least semi-permissive for all agencies to contribute unimpeded and requires "that DOD create the conditions conducive for success" (GAO 2007b, 5). In 2007 reporting, GAO found that Defense had faulty planning assumptions about the amount of required money and time needed for reconstruction, but most importantly, the expectation that the security environment would be permissive (GAO 2007b, 7). Because of the reality of the security situation, DOD was forced to rely extensively on contractors to meet the requirements on the ground. Civilian organizations were likewise required to contract security services because it "was not part of the U.S. military's stated mission" (GAO 2007b, 9).

Coalition governments began significant troop withdrawals in 2007 resulting in gaps that had to be filled by U.S. forces. Coalition partners contributed 24,000 troops from December 2003, which fell to almost half (12,600) by May of 2007 (GAO 2007h, 5). Many of the functions performed by these troops were critical stability and reconstruction tasks, such as humanitarian aid and medical support (GAO 2007h, 3). Although troop withdrawals were seemingly insignificant in comparison to U.S. troop commitments, three coalition partners (United Kingdom, Poland, and Republic of Korea) led operations in three of seven security sectors (GAO 2007h, 6). As the length of the conflict increased, the coalition of the willing progressively lost its resolve. It is important to point out that the support that the U.S. enjoys at the beginning of an operation may dwindle over time as it did in Iraq, meaning that the U.S. will have to commit more resources, not less, to make up for shortfalls.

2008 and Beyond--Light at the End of the Tunnel

The U.S. sent approximately 30,000 additional troops to Iraq in 2007. The purpose, according to the New Way Forward security strategy was to provide the Iraqi government with time to establish the necessary conditions in order to meet key goals in three areas: security, political, and economic (GAO 2008, 1). According to testimony by the U.S. Ambassador to Iraq and the Commanding General of Multinational Force Iraq, this strategy paid off. The results included an improved, albeit fragile, security situation (GAO 2008, 1). With the marked security improvement came opportunity to improve reconstruction efforts. GAO issued two reports, one each in 2008 and 2009, addressing the security situation and other key reconstruction topics.

Table 10. U.S. Key Challenges Identified Through GAO Reporting--2008-2009			
Document	Security Related	Unity of Effort Related	Other*
<i>Securing, Stabilizing, and Rebuilding Iraq: Progress Report: Some Gains Made, Updated Strategy Needed</i>	1. Security Markedly Improved but Handoff to Iraqis Slow	N/A	1. Unfinished Iraqi Legislative Agenda 2. Iraq Spending Only a Portion of its Budget
<i>Rebuilding Iraq: Improved Management Controls and Iraqi Commitment Needed for Key State and USAID Capacity-Building Programs</i>	N/A	N/A	1. State Unable to Ensure it is Meeting Objectives 2. Management Controls do not Adequately Verify Expenditures 3. Iraq is Providing Some Support for National Capacity Development

Source: Created by author using GAO Reports.

Unity of Effort

Previous GAO reporting emphasized the need for a comprehensive and overarching strategy for rebuilding Iraq. The 2008 GAO recommendation to Defense and State was to establish a strategy to address security, legislative, and economic goals, both near and long-term with a focus on goals, objectives, roles, responsibilities, and resources (GAO 2008, 4). The response from the two departments was that the New Way Forward strategy together with the classified Joint Campaign Plan addressed these concerns (GAO 2008, 4). GAO's counter-response pointed out that several problems exist with this approach:

1. Changes to the security situation that need to be addressed
2. The New Way Forward was only intended to go through July 2008, therefore, a new strategy was required for the next timeframe
3. Goals and objectives for the New Way Forward strategy were captured in numerous documents, rather than one overarching strategy

4. The classified Joint Campaign Plan is an operational document and not a strategy (GAO 2008, 4).

Capacity challenges were still a prime area of concern for the coalition. Various ministries were having difficulty spending their funds on essential services, which originated from a lack of training (GAO 2008, 9). Additionally, GAO criticized efforts based on the fact that multiple U.S. agencies were leading individual, uncoordinated efforts and recommended that Congress consider tying future reconstruction appropriations to “completion of an integrated strategy” (GAO 2008, 10-11). In short, despite the progress made in numerous areas, many unity of effort challenges hindered delivery of essential services.

Security

From June 2007 to June 2008, enemy attacks decreased by approximately 80 percent (GAO 2008, 2). The new counterinsurgency tactics adopted by U.S. forces and the influx of additional troops greatly contributed to improvement to the security situation. However, there were still some negatives with regard to security. Iraqi provincial governments took responsibility for security in only 8 of 18 provinces and the situation remained “volatile” (GAO 2008, 2-3). Although training levels of Iraqi units improved greatly, only a paltry ten percent had the highest readiness level (GAO 2008, 6). Iraqi forces needed more time to reach the level necessary to effectively manage counterinsurgency operations.

Analysis--Drawing Conclusions

Iraq’s seven-plus years of conflict offer a rich case study. Neither State nor Defense was particularly effective as the lead agent in Iraq. Based on GAO reporting, however, one is able to draw conclusions about the effectiveness of each department in the areas of unity of effort and

security. Based on trends, shortfalls, and weaknesses, it is apparent that enhanced planning and proper execution could have greatly improved the effectiveness of stability and reconstruction operations. Therefore, the author intends to analyze the significance of GAO reporting and subsequent conclusions.

Unity of Effort

From the outset, U.S. efforts in Iraq lacked a clear lead and a well-developed strategy. Despite voluminous GAO reporting on this point, the numerous agencies involved in stabilization continued to establish their own lines of activity without the benefit of effective deconfliction. Despite being named the lead agency, State failed to establish roles and responsibilities, a major short-coming when dealing with a multitude of national and international government and relief agencies. This mismanagement inhibited the formulation of metrics that would have determined not only the most effective use of resources and the greatest areas of need, but also the overall performance outcomes. Several strategies were mentioned to include the NSVI, the New Way Forward, and the Joint Campaign Plan. However, all of these plans lacked elements of an effective strategy and the Joint Campaign Plan was not even a strategy at all.

Despite the numerous problems GAO reported with regard to establishing an effective strategy, most telling was that State, as the designated lead, did not take responsibility for filling gaps and shortfalls. It is unclear if State was not empowered to take responsibility for the effort or if it just felt that it did not have the authority to do so. A third possibility is that the task was just too overwhelming for State, which has limited resources in relation to Defense. In 2005, State did recommend that USAID take the lead role, likely due to its extensive experience in stability and reconstruction operations. However, this recommendation died on the vine. In many

ways, other attempts to unify effort met a similar outcome. Attempts at clearly articulating a new strategy and increased coordination met with little success.

Security

The greatest detriment to U.S. mission accomplishment in Iraq was the non-secure environment. More than any other factor, it hindered the ability of the average Iraqi to return to a normal sense of daily life. Attacks against military and civilians degraded the ability of the coalition to accomplish its mission. One of the greatest impacts was the attacks against relief workers that eventually inhibited their ability to move freely to accomplish key tasks. At various points, the security situation was so poor that relief workers were forced to stay on secure bases, and could not venture out to meet with Iraqis. Eventually, aid organizations greatly limited their operations in light of the security threat, or left Iraq altogether.

Security also greatly raised the costs of doing business in Iraq. Insurgent attacks required vast resources to re-build damaged infrastructure, which drove construction costs up. Additional resources were used for security, which meant less money left for the projects themselves. As a result, coalition stability and reconstruction costs were a great deal more, yet yielded diminished results than may have otherwise been the case.

The most significant goal of reconstruction was to build Iraqi capacity quickly, so U.S. personnel could turn over responsibility to the Iraqi government. This is especially true in the security sector where the U.S. sought to train and turn over responsibility for counterinsurgency and security. The decision to disband the Iraqi military in May 2003 notwithstanding, the effort to transition to an Iraqi security force was much greater than anyone anticipated. Table 11 illustrates U.S. troop levels in Iraq throughout the campaign. The U.S. had to rely on a surge in

forces in 2007 to finally turn the tide of this seven year war. High troop levels over such an extended period of time was a prime contributor to U.S. public loss of support for the war.

Table 11. U.S. Troop Levels: Peak Strength by Year	
Year*	U.S. Troop Levels
2003	122,000
2004	148,000
2005	160,000
2006	140,000
2007	160,000
2008	145,000
2009	110,000
2010 (Through April)	95,000
* End of Year Troop Strength	

Source: Brookings Institute, Iraq Index: Tracking Variables of Reconstruction & Security in Post-Saddam Iraq (<http://www.brookings.edu/~media/Files/Centers/Saban/Iraq%20Index/index.pdf> (accessed 1 May 2010))

Conclusion

The importance of both unity of effort and security to stability operations cannot be overstated. Without both, the chances for success are slim. Likewise, the importance of stability and reconstruction operations to the end-state and strategic success cannot be overstated either. In a post-MCO environment, effectiveness is essential to setting the conditions that will allow the military and interested civilian agencies to turn over responsibility to the government. Chapter 5 of this thesis lays out recommendations to improve the conduct of stability operations in a post-MCO environment, based upon conclusions drawn from the extensive body of GAO reporting.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

There is common agreement that the [United States Government] must move to resolve its current capability deficiency in S&R as soon as possible. The solution to this capability deficiency lies in the interagency and not in any one department alone.

—Neyla Arnas, Charles Barry, and Robert B. Oakley
Harnessing the Interagency for Complex Operations

Stabilization plays a pivotal role in the overall strategic success of MCO. This is not to say that stability operations will win wars but they will certainly set critical conditions for success or, if done poorly, doom an operation to failure. The Iraq insurgency is a perfect example of how failure to set the conditions early allowed the post-combat environment to devolve into chaos, and cede momentum to the enemy. As the environment became more chaotic, the insurgents exploited the opportunity to further de-stabilize the country and prevent the coalition from reaching its desired end-state. Stabilization, on the other hand, gains momentum and separates the people from the insurgent cause. Stability operations create the conditions that promote support for the coalition and facilitate progress toward the end-state. The U.S. must provide the resources necessary to establish stability early, which requires capabilities from across the government landscape. These capabilities must be unified in action and effort to ensure the greatest benefit from scarce resources and a secure environment must be established to protect both the force providing reconstruction and the host nation populace. The only existing government agency capable of providing unity of effort and security in the post-MCO phase is the DoD.

Transitioning to Stability--Establishing a Secure Environment

Iraq demonstrated that military victory does not equate to strategic success. Although the U.S. military was overwhelmingly successful in combat, the military and civilian leadership miscalculated the force requirements for the transition to stability operations. A large portion of U.S. and coalition forces withdrew from Iraq, leaving a force presence too small to secure the host nation or maintain operational momentum during the transition to stability operations. As a result, insurgent groups formed and destabilized the local environment. Attacks were primarily against coalition forces at first, but subsequently increased targeting of civilians. As the number of attacks rose, support for the coalition declined.

The transition from major combat to stability operations is important, even critical to strategic success. A number of factors affected the transition to stabilization in Iraq, but the key factor centered on security. David Hardy's model for operational transitions offers a framework for understanding the changes that occurred in Iraq. According to Hardy, effective operational transitions have the following characteristics:

1. A clear and accurate picture of the present (pre-change) state
2. Clear understanding of the desired end-state
3. Understood and identified conditions indicating need to transition
4. Developed plan for managing transition state. (Hardy 2004, Abstract)

In May 2003, the military had a clear picture of the operational environment and the stability requirements. One could argue, however, that the U.S. did not recognize the impending insurgency and the environmental change that it created. The objectives of a free, democratic, and stable Iraq were well-understood by the military and CPA. However, the military failed to understand the conditions indicating the need to transition. Early on in the war, as coalition

forces pushed north to Baghdad, the liberated areas to the south required stabilization. The coalition was responsible for securing these areas and transitioning rapidly to stability operations but the military did not have the resources in place, nor the situational understanding, to make this transition. Opportunities to pour in humanitarian aid and secure the populace, thereby creating good-will among the Iraqis, were lost. Several weeks after the coalition liberated Iraq, the U.S. began re-deploying forces back home, even as attacks against forces increased, indicating a burgeoning insurgency that was de-stabilizing the country. The U.S. did not have the troop strength necessary to conduct stability operations.

A strategy is as important to the security transition as it is to the overall reconstruction effort. The U.S. had the wrong strategy to secure Iraq. Perhaps one of the greatest miscalculations of the Iraq war was the decision to disband the Iraqi military, while at the same time, re-deploying a good portion of the combat power left in theater. This left insufficient numbers to provide security as stabilization began (Moylan 2005, Abstract). Therefore, the security footprint, the size and disposition of security forces, plays an important role in how effective the U.S. will be in the war-termination phase. There does not appear to be any evidence indicating that coalition war plans included assumptions for an insurgency; the U.S. assumed it would be viewed as liberators welcomed by the Iraqis. While this is true to an extent, the ability of other factions to foment unrest was either not anticipated or was underestimated. Regardless of all the problems that occurred in Iraq, the Defense decision to place responsibility for stabilizing post-MCO Iraq with the military was still the correct choice. There is no department or agency capable of providing security in post-MCO environments, other than Defense; no other organization is trained, equipped, or fielded for this purpose. Unfortunately, the U.S. had to learn

that planning and executing the proper strategy is as important as picking the right department or agency to lead it.

When viewing the efficacy of the Defense Department's leadership in stability, the military is still the only force that meets Hardy's requirements for transition operations. As mentioned, the military fulfilled the first two requirements, understanding both the current state and the desired end-state. Although the military failed on the last two counts, this was more a matter of poor planning and execution with insufficient resources than not having the right capability to succeed. Because of its training and situational awareness on the ground, the military is in the best position to know when to shift from MCO to stabilization, if transition planning takes place. The U.S. failed in Iraq because it did not recognize the fragile state of the country and how easily the environment would devolve if security was not established.

The fact that the military lacked a strategy to effectively rebuild Iraq does not mean that it fell squarely on Defense to develop one. It requires a robust interagency effort. The military simply does not have the assets to succeed alone and must plan to incorporate all interagency elements. While both State and Defense are capable of coordinating an overall stability strategy, the DOD is the only option to effectively execute it in a post-MCO environment. Stability operations during this phase are dynamic. One moment, soldiers may be distributing aid, while the next they are in a firefight. This phenomenon of warfare is characterized as the "Three Block War" and winning it is essential to strategic success (Krulack 1999).

The Three-Block War principle essentially demonstrates that there are many transitions in a post conflict environment. Southern Iraq was in need of stabilization and moving toward a post-conflict state before U.S. forces rolled into Baghdad. This was simply the confluence of geography, the U.S. war plan, and the relatively benign environment in Basra. Threats were

certainly present in the south, but much less so than the rest of the country. Therefore, the coalition began stability operations only days into combat. The fluidity of combat requires agile capabilities that can operate across the spectrum of conflict; the military is the only government organization that can effectively operate in such an environment.

After major combat has ended, the military should retain the lead agency role until a permissive environment is established. Although essential to satisfying stability objectives, the interagency is not adept at operating without robust security and only the military has an organic force protection capability (D. M. Cantwell 2008, 4). Operations in Iraq have borne this out as aid organizations and government agencies were restricted to secure bases, thus limiting their effectiveness, or forced to leave Iraq altogether (GAO 2004, 3). Unless civilians begin to train as soldiers and provide self-protection, the military will remain the only force capable of establishing a secure environment. As seen in Iraq, the military provided effective security for itself, but it was not able to secure civilians to enable them to meet their objectives. Either there needs to be a much greater commitment of military forces to both accomplish its own missions and secure other agencies, or the military should have responsibility for stabilization, until the environment has been deemed permissive enough for other agencies to operate. This is a cabinet level decision.

Giving the military the lead agency role does not eliminate the need for the participation of other agencies. It simply recognizes the fact that security is the overriding consideration during the early phases of stabilization. Security is the most important element of stability operations. Without security, agencies cannot deliver essential services, infrastructure development, political reform, and rule of law. Put another way, the U.S. cannot build host nation capacity until the populace is safe and secure. The early lessons of Iraq demonstrated that

security is the paramount consideration and properly resourced to undertake the mission. But establishing security is only half the battle.

Unifying the Interagency

Effective stabilization requires well-laid plans. GAO identified several aspects of an effective strategy that both Defense and State failed to deliver during their tenure as lead agency in Iraq (GAO 2007g, 29). The closest either department came was Defense with its New Way Forward strategy, which essentially was a security strategy and not all-encompassing for stabilization. Without a strategy, it was extremely difficult to gauge whether or not State or Defense used the right tools to re-build Iraq. Roles and responsibilities were neither delineated nor well-defined, which created overlap in some areas and led to ineffective use of low-density, high-demand capabilities. It falls to the lead agency to unify effort. Additionally, the coalition lacked an overarching strategy document that defined how each agency would contribute to delivering the desired end-state.

Taking the necessary steps to execute stability operations properly is equally important to success. Establishing metrics to gauge success in measuring and meeting objectives is a lead agency responsibility. However, it is very difficult for a peer agency to levy tasks and ensure accountability with other agencies. Without command authority, unity of effort is difficult to achieve. Interagency actions by nature bring a clash of cultures and competing equities. One way to create the opportunity for success during interagency operations is to create organizations that promote interaction well before the capability is needed.

Organizing for Success

While the military has done an exceptional job of conducting operations and accomplishing missions that it was untrained and unqualified to do in Iraq, it must learn to integrate the capabilities of other government organizations and agencies more effectively. This requires training, interaction, and planning. Defense cannot effectively accomplish these tasks as it is currently organized. While planning does take place at the geographic combatant commands (GCCs), the GCCs do not have the expertise to plan stability operations, comprehensively. GCC Joint Interagency Coordination Groups and civil-military operations centers are established for the purpose of operational coordination and execution. A planning body is needed that will ensure the full complement of national capabilities is considered during campaign planning. Interagency planning must take place prior to war plan execution. Representatives of the military and civilian agencies must interact to develop a full appreciation for each other's capabilities. As U.S. Army War College Professor William Flavin states: "The best way to understand the skills, knowledge, and capabilities of international organizations and NGOs, as well as US government agencies, is to establish and maintain relationships with them before embarking on a mission" (Flavin 2003, 107). Likewise, training must occur so each of the respective elements is well versed in interagency capabilities.

In many ways, a military-led operation would resemble any other interagency effort: "The pantheon of participants in a military lead effort would remain the same as a civilian effort, but their relationships would change to allow the military personnel to organize, plan, and execute the effort" (Strategic Studies Institute, 2010b, 104). Stability operations remain a part of the military planning cycle. "Phase IV" characterizes the transition from major combat to stability and articulates the need for robust security during stabilization. As Iraq has

demonstrated, the military is still fighting a campaign during this phase of operations because the security situation is so fragile and the desired end-state has not been reached.

Several models have been offered as templates to promote military and interagency cooperation, coordination, and interaction. Many point to the Joint Interagency Coordination Group at combatant commands as a possible alternative. The Joint Interagency Coordination Group is tailorable, scalable, and brings a great deal of capability to filling shortfalls and gaps in knowledge on GCC staffs. However, it is well known that the State Department and other agencies have very few resources to provide representatives to all of the GCCs; a dearth of resources prohibits equitable distribution of capabilities to all combatant commands. The military and civilian organizations can try to plan according to the areas of the world where there is the greatest potential for combat operations and staff those GCCs. Central Command and Africa Command are two likely candidates. However, all combatant commands have potential crisis flashpoints so this option offers a gamble with low-density capabilities rather than an investment of resources.

A better model establishes a military command or similar organizational structure that provides a standing body of experts and specialists from across government. This body is functional in nature, focused on humanitarian contingency response in peacetime, and stability and reconstruction in wartime preparation and execution. The military would be lead but the deputy could be from the State Department or USAID. This construct would be similar in many ways to the National Counterterrorism Center; functional and has a worldwide remit. Representative of all interested parties: intelligence, military, and law-enforcement among others reside in a fusion center. Having all of these experts in one place would lend itself to more effective interagency cooperation, realized in combating terrorism. Such an organization could

be subordinate to Joint Forces Command, Strategic Command, or other Major Commands and when necessary, an interagency planning cell could “chop” to a GCC for war planning purposes. This construct ensures the interagency is well represented during contingency planning and promises that an overall stabilization strategy is developed prior to execution.

Another benefit of this construct is the interaction between the strategic-level planning bodies, such as S/CRS at State, the National Security Council, and Defense. Bringing the policy and strategic view of stabilization to the operational level would enhance the ability to incorporate the strategic end-state into planning. The military is quite adept at translating the end-state into military objectives that contribute to overall success. The interagency has been much less successful in establishing stabilization and reconstruction objectives in a like manner. Creation of a military command that is able to plan stability operations would be a major achievement that would reap many benefits. Such a command can determine requirements, make assumptions, develop courses of action, and plan lines of effort that contribute to the commander’s (in this case the President) envisioned end-state.

The military is best suited to lead stability operations during a post-conflict, major combat operation. However, in other scenarios where the military may be relied on to provide relief, such as humanitarian operations or disaster response, the military should be subordinate to civilian agencies, as long as the environment is secure. In this regard, the military would be another member of the interagency that would follow the lead of a civilian agency in planning and execution, since the civilian organizations would have long-term responsibility for reconstruction. This requires analyzing the environment to determine the level of the threat and the security resources that may be available. If the host nation is capable of providing security, the military may be able to draw down its security forces more quickly and hand over

responsibility to the interagency, most likely the State Department, the UN, or regional organizations.

Concluding Thoughts--Suggested Topics for Future Research

This thesis topic barely scratches the surface of stability operations. The topic is rich for exploration and it is the author's desire to advance the topic with this very small contribution. The importance of stabilization to attaining the overall strategic end-state cannot be overstated. As a result, there are numerous areas open for further research:

1. The Organization of a Stability Command
2. The International Response to Post-MCO Stability Operations
3. Intelligence Support to Stability Operations
4. Non-combat Stability Operations
5. Interagency Legislation

The first suggestion for additional research is the organizational structure of a stability command. This thesis suggests bringing all of the interagency stability apparatus together under a military command to develop long-term connectivity that would enhance the ability to plan and conduct stability operations in a post-MCO environment. Yet many questions remain unexplored. What should such a command look like? How should it be staffed? Should it have a purpose beyond post-MCO reconstruction operations? Who should control it and lead it (Defense civilian or military)? How would it interact with GCCs and their planning staffs or functional component commands (air, land, sea)? How would a stability command interact with embassies and the country teams? These questions are fertile ground for further academic research. Analyses that answer these questions would greatly contribute to the proposal of a stability command.

Another suggested topic for further exploration is how the international community responds to post-MCO stability operations. The focus of this thesis was exclusively on the U.S. governmental response to stabilization. However, the international community plays a crucial role in contributing resources and personnel to reconstruction activities. Yet, not much has been discussed about how the U.S. stability community can better interact with international governmental and non-governmental organizations. Additionally, not much research has addressed the success and/or failure of international support to Iraq's reconstruction. What is the UN construct for stability operations and how can it be improved? How does the U.S. interact with the UN and what are ways to improve this interaction? What international laws govern stability operations? These are just a few of the questions that can guide further research on this topic.

Intelligence is a key enabler for the military operations and the counter-insurgency fight in Iraq. However, not much study has taken place concerning intelligence support to stability operations. There is little written about intelligence application to stability operations, yet information plays an essential role in reconstruction. Understanding the "human terrain" and all aspects of the environment that contribute to stability is critical to effective operations. How is a collection plan generated against the mosaic of combat and non-combat areas that make up a country that is undergoing stabilization? What are the indicators that a transition is necessary? What intelligence disciplines are of most value to stability operations and how does one create an all-source picture of the environment? There is likely considerable data available to undertake scholarly research in this area, especially as it pertains to Iraq.

This thesis focused exclusively on post-MCO stabilization, yet stability operations occur more often in other environments. What has not been explored is the military role in non-combat

or smaller scale contingency stabilization. The U.S. has a great deal of experience in small scale contingency stabilization, such as Haiti, Somalia, and the Pacific region after the tsunami of 2005. There is likely a large body of data to cull and analyze; there are still many questions to be answered. What is the military's role in humanitarian assistance and is it properly resourced to undertake this mission? Should the military take responsibility for planning and leading all stability operations? What are the other agencies' responsibilities and are they adequately resourced for their role in humanitarian assistance? These questions are ripe for exploration and research in this area would further advance the stability body of knowledge.

Finally, there has been a great deal of discussion in stability literature about undertaking a legislative approach to solving the inherent stability operations problems. Many recognized the success of Goldwater-Nichols upon the military hierarchy, which gave combatant commands primacy at the top of the war-fighting structure. A topic for further study could address the shortfalls of interagency cooperation in stability operations through legislation. Is interagency legislation a viable alternative for solving the problems in stability operations? Is it practical to legislate a solution and would it reap the desired benefits? What areas would such legislation address and how would it organize the interagency community? The idea of an interagency Goldwater-Nichols is an intriguing research topic.

Conclusion

The post-MCO environment is unique in warfare. In many cases, the U.S. has not achieved its strategic end-state until a country is stable and moving down the path of reconstruction. The importance of combat operations is readily apparent; the U.S. Government risks lives and treasure to pursue national objectives. The risk adds a dimension that gives planning and execution recognition and prominence. The U.S. will not send Americans off to

war without a plan. Yet the U.S. has proven that it is willing to risk lives and treasure without a plan to achieve the strategic end-state. After Iraq and Afghanistan, America better understands that tactical success does not equate to strategic victory. Establishing Defense as the lead for stability operations in post-MCO environments, and re-organizing the DOD in order to establish a command-like structure for stability and reconstruction operations, are the first steps to planning for strategic victory in stabilization.

GLOSSARY

Reconstruction. The process of rebuilding degraded, damaged, or destroyed political, socio-economic, and physical infrastructure of a country or territory to create the foundation for longer-term development. (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, 3)

Security. A cross-cutting prerequisite for peace. The lack of security is what prompts an S&R (stabilization and reconstruction) mission to begin with. Security creates the enabling environment for development. (United States Institute for Peace 2009, 3-12)

Stabilization. Activities undertaken to manage underlying tensions, to prevent or halt the deterioration of security, economic, and/or political systems, to create stability in the host nation or region, and to establish the preconditions for reconstruction efforts. (U.S. Joint Forces Command 2006, 2)

Stability Operations. An overarching term encompassing various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe and secure environment, provide essential governmental services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief. (Department of the Army 2008, Glossary-9)

Unity of Effort. Begins with a shared understanding of the environment. It refers to cooperation toward common objectives over the short and long term, even when the participants come from many different organizations with diverse operating cultures. (United States Institute for Peace 2009, 3-12)

Whole of Government. Integration of the full complement of national capabilities, to successfully stabilize and reconstruct a country (Department of the Army 2008, Glossary 10)

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