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# Improving Capacity for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

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## Summary

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Stabilization and reconstruction operations will almost certainly constitute an important part of the national security agenda facing the new Obama administration. Stabilization, which refers to efforts to end social, economic, and political upheaval, and reconstruction, which includes efforts to develop or redevelop institutions that foster self-governance, social and economic development, and security, are critical to securing political objectives before, during, or after conflict. Until recently, however, governments and militaries preferred to focus on conventional military operations. Skills and capacities for stabilization and reconstruction were either not fully developed or allowed to atrophy. This book provides an overview of the requirements posed by stabilization and reconstruction operations and recommends ways to improve U.S. capacity for them.

### **What Do Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations Entail?**

Stabilization and reconstruction operations occur in places where host governments are weak or have lost the capacity to govern effectively. This means that those conducting such operations must assume, at least temporarily, many roles of the state while simultaneously trying to rebuild that capacity. Stabilization tasks, which are the highest priority, include such efforts as restoring law and order; providing humanitarian relief; supporting the disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration (DDR) of former combatants; and building or rebuilding local

security capacity. Once these goals have been achieved, reconstruction tasks, such as building or rebuilding government institutions, promoting economic stabilization and development, and promoting democracy and representation, can be pursued.

These general stabilization and reconstruction tasks lead to specific U.S. capacity requirements:

- **Policing and the rule of law.** Since it is very unlikely that local civilian police will be capable of restoring law and order, stabilization operations require deployable civilian police, police trainers, and judicial and corrections experts.
- **Military and intelligence training and capacity building.** Military personnel can be used effectively for training the armed forces of the host country. U.S. and allied intelligence services usually take the lead in rebuilding intelligence capacity. However, both of these efforts require effective civilian and political oversight and appropriate levels of transparency.
- **DDR.** DDR efforts can be undertaken by either civilian or military personnel, but these efforts must be integrated into and flow from broader political reconciliation to be successful.
- **Humanitarian assistance.** If large-scale violence has forced key international organizations and nongovernmental organizations out of the country, then U.S. military and civilian personnel may be required to provide humanitarian assistance directly until the country is secure enough for the relief organizations to return. Otherwise, U.S. government personnel are more likely to be involved in coordinating international and domestic relief efforts than in providing direct assistance.
- **Governance, democratization, and human rights.** In the immediate aftermath of conflict, U.S. personnel may have to help govern the host country. Over time, they can move into an advisory role vis-à-vis indigenous personnel. Relevant expertise exists throughout the U.S. government, but not in a deployable form.

## Recent Efforts to Build Capacity

In the past few years, the U.S. government has undertaken a number of important initiatives to build the capacities identified above. The most important of these steps is the creation within the State Department of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), whose mission is to coordinate and lead U.S. government efforts to plan, prepare, and conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations. In addition to chairing interagency working groups, S/CRS has developed a planning framework that guides the development of civilian plans for stabilization and reconstruction. It has also developed an interagency management system for operating in crises. When fully implemented, this system will include a policy-coordination group, a civilian planning cell, and deployable civilian teams.

S/CRS's most ambitious effort to date is the Civilian Stabilization Initiative, which includes a deployable civilian capacity called the Civilian Response Corps. As planned, the Corps will include three components:

- an *active* component composed of 250 full-time U.S. government personnel from eight U.S. agencies who are available to deploy within 24 hours
- a *standby* component composed of 2,000 personnel from the same eight agencies who would receive stabilization and reconstruction training and be deployable within 30 days for up to six months
- a *reserve* component composed of 2,000 personnel from the private sector and state and local governments who have unique skills not found in the federal government.

The biggest problem with the Civilian Response Corps is that Congress has only recently started allocating the funds to make it fully operational.

Other U.S. government initiatives to improve capacity for stabilization and reconstruction operations include the National Security Professional Development Program, which combines several initiatives to encourage familiarization with stabilization and reconstruction opera-

tions and closer cooperation among U.S. government civilian personnel. The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) has also adopted a number of initiatives to improve its capacity in these areas, including the creation of a new Office of Military Affairs to facilitate USAID coordination with U.S. and foreign military personnel. The Department of Defense (DoD) is also institutionalizing new processes for managing its deployable civilians.

A number of significant challenges remain, however. There have been several new interagency strategies, plans, and initiatives in the U.S. government in recent years, but there has been little effort to rationalize and prioritize them. A huge funding mismatch between DoD and the rest of the civilian agencies involved in such operations persists. This disparity has perpetuated the lack of deployable civilian capacity and has led the military to take on many of these missions by default. No fewer than eight separate congressional committees deal with stabilization and reconstruction issues, which makes coordinating funding a particular challenge. And neither the United States nor its most frequent global partners have enough capacity to meet the demands for deployable police forces in these operations. While rhetoric about the importance of nonmilitary capabilities has grown, funding and capabilities have remained small compared to the challenge.

## Recommendations

Many reports have been written on stabilization and reconstruction during the past few years. All agree on the need for increased civilian capacity and better interagency coordination. However, there is less agreement about exactly how to implement those changes. The following list offers several broad themes that should guide decisions on capacity development and suggests ways ahead that can help reconcile priorities, resources, and capabilities in the years to come:

- **Emphasize civilian rather than military capabilities.** Although many initiatives are under way to build civilian capacity within other branches of the U.S. government, there is also a significant

effort under way in DoD to develop reconstruction and stabilization capabilities. If the development of military capacities in DoD continues to outpace the development of civilian capabilities in the State Department and USAID, DoD will continue to lead stabilization and reconstruction operations by default. This continuing trend would weaken the State Department and strengthen the perception that the U.S. military is the nation's primary instrument of power. This could be harmful to perceptions of U.S. aid efforts globally. The trend would also likely prove ineffective, since most of the knowledge and expertise for these missions lies outside the military.

- **Realign National Security Council, State, and USAID roles.** While it is tempting to build new agencies or rearrange organizational charts to address the interagency challenges of stabilization and reconstruction, reforming existing agencies may make more sense. The National Security Council (NSC) should be responsible for interagency coordination for stabilization and reconstruction, since its primary mission is to coordinate the nation's foreign and security policies. The NSC, however, is poorly resourced and structured to define detailed strategies and policies. The State Department may be better suited to play this role from an organizational perspective. However, it has very little large-scale expeditionary capability, and it does not control the majority of programs and capabilities necessary to actually conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations.

USAID is the organization that makes the most sense to take the lead in these operations. It already has an expeditionary culture, and it controls the majority of the programs related to stabilization and reconstruction. USAID capabilities would require significant upgrading and development to allow the agency to take on the lead role in stabilization and reconstruction operations without overtaking its existing mandate. These changes would require transformation of recruiting, training, management, and deployment in addition to significant new resources.

- **Fund and implement the Civilian Stabilization Initiative.** The Civilian Stabilization Initiative is currently the U.S. govern-

ment's most important effort to build civilian capacity, but it has never been fully funded. The new administration should work closely with Congress to convince the relevant appropriations committees that relatively small investments in these areas will provide large returns in ensuring that the U.S. government can adequately respond to the challenges of stabilization and reconstruction. Once this happens, bureaucratic challenges associated with implementing such funding decisions will undoubtedly arise, especially regarding trade-offs with capacity at the state and local levels.

- **Improve deployable police capacity.** This capacity requires special attention because of its significant requirements in terms of both capabilities and numbers of personnel. Some current and former police officers already serve in these types of operations, but using currently serving police officers on a large scale poses numerous problems. If the U.S. government is serious about expanding its deployable police capacity, it will need to find ways to encourage police departments around the country—as well as individual police officers themselves—to participate. The National Guard and Reserves and Urban Search and Rescue Teams may be able to serve as models.
- **Improve management for stabilization and reconstruction.** The State Department and USAID have focused on improving day-to-day and strategic management, but they have paid less attention to crisis management. This involves identifying potential missions that the United States will undertake, building sufficient capacity for such missions, planning for potential missions, and implementing crisis-management processes.
- **Ensure coherent guidance and funding for effectiveness and sustainability.** Building capacity for stabilization and reconstruction means not only developing the right approach but also making sure that approach can be implemented. This means that (1) the legal and bureaucratic framework has to reflect efforts under way, (2) resources must be allocated as needed, and (3) the new institutions can outlast individual administrations. Directives such as National Security Presidential Directive–44, Man-

agement of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization, are important but not themselves sufficient. Presidential-level guidance must be the source of a coherent and consistent package of regulations and rules that creates a new, effective system. Presidential guidance must be coordinated with congressional guidance, both in defining missions and tasks and in allocating resources.