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Developing an Army Strategy for Building Partner Capacity for Stability Operations

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Summary

Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates has defined the war on terror as "a prolonged, worldwide irregular campaign—a struggle between the forces of violent extremism and those of moderation." According to Gates, in order to effectively carry out such a campaign, the military must learn two hard lessons from the wars it has conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq since the fall of 2001.

First, "over the long term, the United States cannot kill or capture its way to victory."[1] In other words, "soft power"—including diplomacy, strategic communications, foreign assistance, civic action, and economic reconstruction—is at least as important as, if not more than, "hard power" in creating the conditions for the eventual defeat of violent extremism throughout the world.[2] To better meet this challenge, Gates has called for an increase in the capacity of civilian national security agencies—in particular, the U.S. Department of State (DOS) and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID)—so they can take the lead in exercising soft power in unstable parts of the globe. In addition, the Defense Secretary has recognized that the Department of Defense (DoD) must continue to play a major role in stability operations—maintaining security, providing humanitarian aid, beginning

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[1] Robert M. Gates, "A Balanced Strategy: Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age," *Foreign Affairs*, January/February 2009.

[2] "U.S. defense chief urges greater use of 'soft power,'" Agence France-Presse, November 26, 2007.

reconstruction, bolstering local governments and public services, especially "in the midst of or in the aftermath of conflict."[3]

Gates's second major strategic lesson from recent U.S. interventions in the Middle East is the desirability of taking an "indirect approach" to prosecuting the war on terror. In his view, because the United States is unlikely to mount another major invasion and occupation in the foreseeable future, it should follow a sustainable counterterrorism strategy that does not rely on the massive application of U.S. combat power. Ideally, the United States should work "by, with and through" its allies and partners and, when necessary, bolster the capacity of their governments and security forces to effectively contribute to the war on terror.

Study Purpose and Approach

The U.S. government is facing the dual challenge of building its own interagency capacity for conducting stability operations while simultaneously helping to build partner capacity (BPC) for stability operations across a wide range of nations. The purpose of this study is to assist the U.S. Army, DoD, and other U.S. government agencies in developing a well-defined, well-integrated BPC for stability operations strategy and to create a nexus between the concepts of BPC and stability operations. To accomplish this goal, a RAND Arroyo Center study team conducted an exploratory analysis of key strategic elements within the context of BPC and stability operations guidance as well as ongoing security cooperation programs, using a variety of analytical techniques.

Concepts

As currently conceived, BPC is a multi-agency, multinational initiative that draws on the elements of security cooperation to achieve U.S. strategic objectives. To help achieve these objectives, both U.S. allies and partners can act as force multipliers and as a hedge against future secu-

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[3] Gates.

rity requirements. With greater global demands for U.S. forces and an expanding list of adversaries, conditions, and crises that could threaten U.S. national interests, allies and partners increase and diversify the capabilities needed to counter a range of threats on unfamiliar geographical and cultural terrain.[4]

"Stability operations" is an evolving and variously named concept. Historically, the U.S. military tended to relegate operations that do not involve full-scale combat to several overlapping but not identical categories: small wars; low-intensity conflicts; military operations other than war; small-scale contingencies; peace operations; stability and support operations; stability, security, transition, and reconstruction (SSTR) operations; or simply stability operations. Despite their differences, all of these concepts refer to military operations in civilian environments. According to DoD Directive 3000.05, military support for SSTR operations consists of DoD activities "that support U.S. Government plans for stabilization, security, reconstruction and transition operations, which lead to sustainable peace while advancing U.S. interests."[5] In the interest of brevity, we use the Army's "stability operations" term throughout this report.

Findings and Recommendations

For this study, we conducted an exploratory analysis of five strategic elements necessary to align U.S. government security cooperation efforts with the goal of BPC for stability operations in a largely peacetime environment. Figure S.1 lays out the organization of the strategic elements as well as the corresponding chapter in which each element is examined in depth.

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[4]   White House, *The National Security Strategy,* September 2002, p. 29.

[5]   Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *Stability Operations*, FM 3-07, 2008; and Department of Defense Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations*, November 28, 2005. Although valid for the period of our study, this directive was reissued as Department of Defense Instruction 3000.05, *Stability Operations,* September 16, 2009. The new instruction updates policy and assigns responsibilities for the identification and development of DoD capabilities to support stability operations.

Figure S.1
BPC for Stability Operations: Strategic Elements with Related Analyses
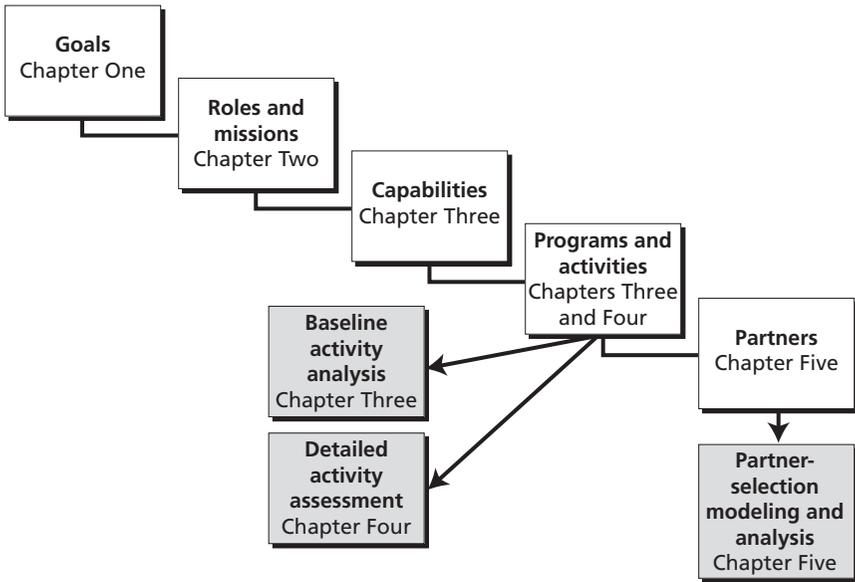
To integrate the five elements essential to BPC for stability operations, we developed three interrelated analytic processes (as depicted in Figure S.1):

- Baseline activity analysis.
- Detailed activity assessment.
- Partner-selection modeling and exploratory analysis.

Without these analytic processes, security cooperation planners and programmers in the Army and other parts of DoD will be left to develop a BPC for stability operations strategy based solely on anecdotal information and personal opinions—as opposed to detailed, multifaceted, longitudinal data that have been systematically collected, aggregated, and interpreted for decisionmaking purposes.

Goals

In recent years, key U.S. government agencies have come to an agreement on the major goals for stability operations. The *Post-Conflict Reconstruction Essential Tasks* list produced by DOS[6] is organized into five broad technical sectors, which are quite similar to DoD's six major mission elements of a stability operation, found in DoD's *Military Support to Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction Operations Joint Operating Concept.* Based on this DoD and DOS guidance, the fundamental goals of stability operations are to accomplish the following:

- Establish and maintain a safe and secure environment.
- Conduct strategic communications.
- Establish representative, effective governance and the rule of law.
- Deliver humanitarian assistance.
- Reconstruct critical infrastructure and restore essential services.
- Support economic development.

Largely absent from the existing documentation is an operational context to help decisionmakers prioritize and implement goals in a variety of pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict circumstances. Furthermore, DoD planning guidance, such as the BPC Execution Roadmap, establishes only a general connection between stability operations goals and BPC activities.[7]

Roles, Missions, and Capabilities

Although both concepts have deep historical roots, building partner capacity and stability operations have only recently migrated to positions near the top of the U.S. national security agenda. Furthermore, government officials have tended to consider the two topics separately rather than focus on the nexus between them. As a result, there is no

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[6] This document is also referred to as the Essential Tasks Matrix.

[7] See Jennifer D.P. Moroney et al*., Building Partner Capabilities for Coalition Operations,* Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, MG-635-A, 2007.

clearly defined and well-integrated strategy for using BPC activities to build stability operations capabilities in partner nations. In addition, key agencies have yet to reach a consensus on their respective roles and missions.

Mechanisms for aligning Army, DoD, and national BPC for stability operations strategy, planning, and resourcing should be constructed. Ideally, overall security sector assistance would be jointly managed by the departments of State and Defense. This could result in interagency objectives for employing and developing both departments' resources and capabilities for building partner capacity, as well as standardized procedures for formulating detailed BPC "roadmaps" for priority partners.

As part of a U.S. government BPC for stability operations strategy, the military should focus on its core security-related competencies; help civilian partners increase their operational capacities; tap into partner expertise when its own capacity is lacking, and reinforce the work of others—or simply get out of the way—when those others are doing a good job. Specifically, DoD's new emphasis on working "by, with, and through" partners requires further developing the list of essential BPC for stability operations capabilities; distinguishing between "direct" provision of stability operations assistance and BPC for stability operations; accounting for specialized stability operations activities as well as generic activities that could be useful for stability operations; and considering a range of BPC for stability operations contexts when selecting and prioritizing potential partners.

Baseline Activities Analysis

After sifting through U.S. government guidance in order to identify roles, missions, and capabilities for building partner capacity to conduct stability operations, the Arroyo team next examined the BPC for stability operations activities and programs currently being conducted by DoD, other U.S. government agencies, and major U.S. allies. This analysis aimed to help Army leaders better understand what BPC for stability operations programs and activities are now being conducted—both within the Army and elsewhere.

The U.S. Army has policy, planning, and resource management authority over only a small fraction of BPC for stability operations activities; most are controlled and managed by other DoD components, other U.S. government agencies (particularly DOS), and major U.S. allies. The lack of accessible, comprehensive data makes analysis of event-level BPC for stability operations difficult. However, in certain combatant commands (COCOMs), such as U.S. Southern Command, a significant number of events, resources, and personnel are focused on BPC for stability operations. Although both the United States and its allies focus on the security dimension of stability operations, the allies tend to have a longer-term investment approach to working with partners, primarily because of their cultural and colonial ties with certain countries and regions.

The Army should improve its visibility into security cooperation activities relevant to BPC for stability operations. In addition, the Army should design its security cooperation database so that it is not only interoperable with similar information systems across DoD, but also flexible enough to be used for analytical and operational purposes. Once it has acquired an overall understanding of ongoing BPC for stability operations activities, the Army should:

- Increase the number and extent of its BPC for stability operations activities.
- Expand its BPC for stability operations support in certain regions, such as U.S. Africa Command, where its programs are relatively scarce but where arguably the demand is growing.
- Re-evaluate its methods of delivering stability operations assistance to various partners—e.g., direct U.S. help or BPC aid, specialized stability operations activities, or general-purpose activities that could serve as building blocks for stability operations.
- Coordinate its BPC for stability operations efforts with those of its allies in order to reinforce and build upon their achievements as well as to direct limited U.S. resources to areas not currently receiving assistance.

• Make a concerted effort to learn from the BPC for stability operations experience of its allies, in particular, the United Kingdom and France, in several key areas such as trainer selection, mode of deployment, training of the trainers, and career implications for the trainer.
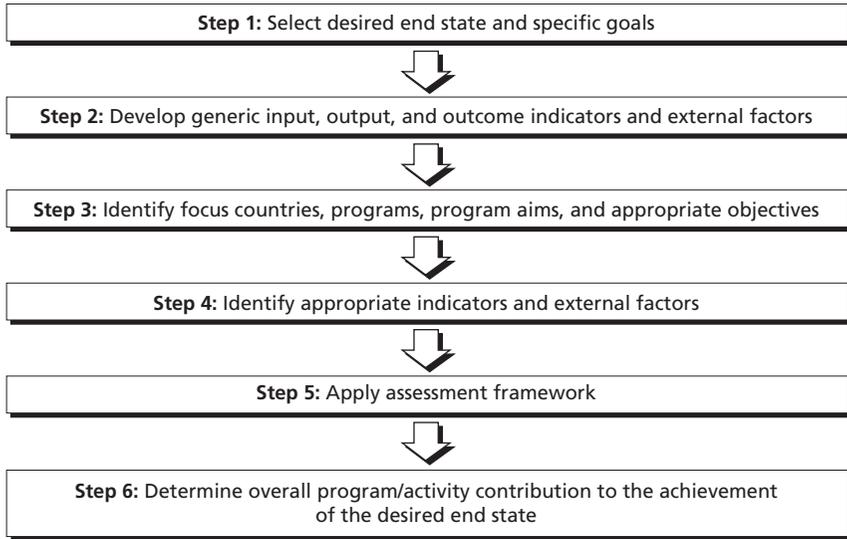
Detailed Activities Assessment

Building on the roles, missions, and capabilities synthesis and the baseline programmatic analysis described above, we next conducted an indepth analysis of a range of BPC for stability operations programs. At the heart of this analysis is a six-step assessment approach designed to enable the Army and other DoD agencies to make more informed decisions about BPC for stability operations planning, programming, and budgeting (see Figure S.2). This approach provides a systematic method to evaluate existing security cooperation program and activity performance and effectiveness with respect to stability-related objectives and end states in particular countries.

Based on our analysis using the six-step approach, we found that BPC for stability operations activities tend to be more effective when they are used in the following ways:

• Applied in coordination with other, related activities to reinforce key concepts.
• Worked with, by, and through existing regional organizations and arrangements.
• Not "handed over" to an ally with little to no U.S. oversight.
• Sustained through careful planning and realistic resource allocation.

There tends to be greater follow-through (i.e., better outcomes) in an indigenous as opposed to a coalition operational context. Indigenous partners appeared genuinely interested in stability operations, especially disaster preparedness and response. Building partner capacity for coalition operations was more problematic given the political nature of out-of-country deployments.

Figure S.2
Six-Step Approach to Assess the Effectiveness of BPC for Stability
Operations

Step 1: Select desired end state and specific goals

Step 2: Develop generic input, output, and outcome indicators and external factors

Step 3: Identify focus countries, programs, program aims, and appropriate objectives

Step 4: Identify appropriate indicators and external factors

Step 5: Apply assessment framework

Step 6: Determine overall program/activity contribution to the achievement of the desired end state

RAND *MG942-S.2*

The Army should assist the COCOMs in developing a holistic approach to BPC for stability operations that

- is planned and resourced over a period of several years;
- involves all relevant U.S. military and civilian agencies and allies;
- targets multiple countries throughout a region; and
- employs a variety of security cooperation "tools" that are packaged and sequenced for each partner country.

The Army and DoD should consider the indigenous requirements of partners when designing BPC for stability operations activities and regional strategies. This may reduce the need for direct U.S. military assistance and increase the incentive for partners to engage in future coalition operations with the United States.

Analysis of Potential Partners

In an effort to provide some analytical rigor and standardization to the partner-selection approach, the Arroyo team developed a relatively simple spreadsheet method to help determine potential partners, assess the pros and cons of each partner, and choose ways to weight and assess selection factors.

Our exploratory analysis focused on identifying three types of potential stability operations partners:

- **Coalition partner.** A willing provider of significant stability operations-related capability in support of coalition operations outside the nation's own borders. A preferred partner demonstrates a moderate level of internal stability, international legitimacy, and strategic affinity with the United States.
- **Regional leader.** An actual or potential provider of capability and leadership for regionally based stability operations that are compatible with U.S. interests. Core regional partners demonstrate a moderate level of internal stability, international legitimacy, and strategic affinity with the United States.
- **Indigenous partner.** A fragile state, preferably receptive to U.S. government assistance and advice, whose deterioration or collapse could pose a significant threat to U.S. interests.

After introducing two partner-selection models—the regional/coalition model and the indigenous model—the Arroyo team used the models to conduct an exploratory partner analysis, which produced a detailed, country-by-country examination of potential BPC for stability operations partnerships. One of the most striking results of our exploratory analysis was that there are only a few well-rounded coalition and regional BPC for stability operations partners that are neither major allies nor advanced industrial states. That said, the number of potentially "willing" partners expands significantly if one values past participation in U.N. operations over involvement in U.S.-led operations. With respect to potential indigenous partners, domestic fragility and a lack of receptivity to outside intervention tend to go together.

In addition, finding strategically valuable indigenous partners that are receptive to U.S. help is especially difficult in the Middle East.

RAND Arroyo Center's exploratory partner analysis using the regional/coalition and indigenous models could support divergent courses of action. The apparent scarcity of high-potential partner nations could justify a narrowing of U.S. government BPC for stability operations efforts or serve as an impetus for greatly increasing the amount of resources dedicated to those efforts. Less ambiguously, the United States should consider focusing more on coalition and regional candidates with a demonstrated willingness to participate in U.N. deployments. Because few countries are both fragile and receptive, the decision to attempt to build indigenous stability operations capacity may, in many cases, have to be based on the degree of a country's internal weakness and the salience of the U.S. strategic interest in that country.

Ideally, the results of these analytical processes will have a significant effect on the set of BPC for stability operations activities and partners, aligning relevant and effective activities with appropriate partners.