Counterterrorist operations, along with the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, have highlighted the important roles for the United States in stability operations, i.e., maintaining security, providing humanitarian aid, beginning reconstruction, and bolstering local governments. The Department of Defense has emphasized that a sustainable counterterrorism strategy should ideally allow the United States to work “by, with, and through” its allies and partners and, when necessary, bolster the capacity of their governments and security forces to conduct stability operations.

The U.S. government thus needs to build its own interagency capacity for conducting stability operations while simultaneously helping build partner capacity (BPC) for stability operations across a wide range of nations. To support this objective, RAND Arroyo Center recently conducted an exploratory analysis of key strategic elements necessary to align U.S. government security cooperation efforts with the goal of BPC for stability operations in a security environment without major overseas contingencies.

**BPC and Stability Operations Lack an Integrated Approach**

An important objective of the study was to clarify the relationship between BPC and stability operations. In general, BPC and stability operations are receiving a good deal of attention in official strategy and planning documents. However, an integrated strategy is lacking.

Key U.S. government agencies have come to an agreement on the major goals for stability operations. Largely absent from existing documentation, however, is a means to help decisionmakers prioritize and implement goals in a variety of pre-conflict, conflict, and post-conflict circumstances. Further, DoD planning guidance establishes only a general connection between stability operations goals and BPC activities, not a clearly defined and well-integrated strategy. Key agencies have yet to reach consensus on their respective roles and missions. 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.

RAND Arroyo Center conducted an exploratory analysis to help determine potential partners, assess the pros and cons of each, and choose ways to weight and assess selection factors. The analysis found that there are only a few well-rounded stability operations partners that are neither major allies nor advanced industrial states. However, the number of potentially willing partners expands significantly if one values past participation in U.N. operations over involvement in U.S.-led operations.

**Key Points**

- Building partner capacity (BPC) and stability operations are receiving attention in official strategy and planning. However, an integrated strategy is lacking.
- BPC for stability operations activities tend to be more effective when they are planned and resourced over a period of years; involve all relevant U.S. military and civilian agencies and allies; target multiple countries throughout a region; employ a variety of security cooperation tools; and consider indigenous partner requirements.
- Recommendations for the Army and DoD include: better integration of BPC and stability operations; improved visibility into related security cooperation activities; a concerted effort to learn from the experience of major U.S. allies; and rigorous methods for selecting and prioritizing partner countries—and assessing capacity-building efforts in those countries.
A New Assessment Approach Is Needed to Inform Decisions About BPC for Stability Operations

Arroyo developed a six-step assessment approach to enable the Army and other DoD agencies to make more informed decisions about BPC for stability operations planning, programming, and budgeting (see the figure). This approach provides a systematic method to evaluate the performance and effectiveness of existing security cooperation programs and activities with respect to stability-related objectives and end states in particular countries.

Based on its analysis using this approach, Arroyo 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 resource allocation.

Recommendations

RAND Arroyo Center’s analysis resulted in a number of recommendations for the Army and DoD to consider in moving forward.

- BPC and stability operations need to be more clearly defined and better integrated. U.S. government agencies need to understand not only primary strategic objectives but also their respective roles and missions. Mechanisms for aligning Army, DoD, and national BPC missions need to be strengthened through careful planning and resource allocation.

Six-Step Approach to Assess the Effectiveness of BPC for Stability Operations

1. Select desired end state and specific goals
2. Develop generic input, output, and outcome indicators and external factors
3. Identify focus countries, programs, program aims, and appropriate objectives
4. Identify appropriate indicators and external factors
5. Apply assessment framework
6. Determine overall program/activity contribution to the achievement of the desired end state

Conclusion

Building partner capacity for stability operations is an ongoing process. Ideally, the results of these analytical processes will have a significant impact on the set of BPC for stability operations activities and partners, aligning relevant and effective activities with appropriate partners.