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The US government (USG) should facilitate nation-building effort by IGOs/NGOs and regional governments so that the USG takes on a **minimum** security role (through the DoD) and a nation-building **advisory** role (through the DoS) in place of being the main effort. The USG should participate directly in post-conflict nation-building only as far as the scale of commitment, institutional arrangement, and societal makeup meet specific conditions and only in support of IGOs/NGOs and regional governments. The USG needs to use an instrument of power that competes for support from local masses in a weak state toward the side of US interests. The military instrument cannot do this; however, though the DoS has limited capacity for direct action it has significant ability to diplomatically influence others. A coalition of IGOs/NGOs and regional governments has the best chance of planning and executing successful post-conflict nation-building efforts, so the USG should reduce its role to providing immediate minimum security and then influencing a nation-building coalition to satisfactorily address commitment, organization, and societal issues.

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AMERICA IS NOT AN EFFECTIVE POST-CONFLICT NATION-BUILDING FORCE

SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF
MASTER OF MILITARY STUDIES

ROBERT W. STURGILL JR.

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Executive Summary

Title: America is Not an Effective Post-Conflict Nation-Building Force

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Thesis: The US government (USG) should facilitate nation-building effort by IGOs/NGOs and regional governments so that the USG takes on a **minimum** security role (through the DoD) and a nation-building **advisory** role (through the DoS) in place of being the main effort. The USG should participate directly in post-conflict nation-building only as far as the scale of commitment, institutional arrangement, and societal makeup meet specific conditions and only in support of IGOs/NGOs and regional governments.

Discussion: The desire of the American cultural majority to export its constitutional ideals has led to widespread efforts at foreign nation-building which have mostly failed when in the hands of the US military. The US military is good at conquering but bad at post-conflict rebuilding of weak states while holding back insurgencies. *Security* is typically included as a subset of post-conflict *nation-building*, but this paper distinguishes between the two. Rebuilding cannot be postponed until after insurgencies have been neutralized; combatting insurgency requires a solvent state capable of employing its people, offering prosperity, providing its own security, and enforcing law and order. However, dependency does not require handling them through the same means. The military must establish post-conflict security but not concurrent nation-building. Because of security concerns in regions of unrest and the US military's readily available standing resources, the Department of Defense (DoD) has assumed the preponderance of post-conflict nation-building efforts, but it should relinquish this role and instead only assist with security. Nation-building requires significant commitments, resources, international cooperation, socio-economic management, and cultural expertise that are beyond the capacity of the USG to handle alone. The Department of State (DoS) has authority to lead all USG nation-building efforts but has limited resources and expertise. Since World War II, the combined influences of three categories of conditions have determined the levels of success in post-conflict nation-building efforts: 1) the objective and scale of commitment by the nation-building entity, 2) the institutional arrangement of the nation-building forces, and 3) the societal makeup of both the host nation and the nation-building entity. US nation-building efforts have struggled and failed when weak in these conditions. The DoD's efforts to teach culture, business, and civics to its soldiers has not made them effective rebuilders, and the DoS does not have a program to groom cultural experts for teaching democratic principles and rebuilding nations. Remedial integration with the DoD has marginalized potential DoS coordination with better-suited nations.

Conclusion: The USG needs to use an instrument of power that competes for support from local masses in a weak state toward the side of US interests. The military instrument cannot do this; however, though the DoS has limited capacity for direct action it has significant ability to diplomatically influence others. A coalition of Inter-Governmental and Non-Governmental Organizations (IGOs/NGOs) and regional governments has the best chance of planning and executing successful post-conflict nation-building efforts, so the USG should reduce its role to providing immediate minimum security and then influencing a nation-building coalition to satisfactorily address commitment, organization, and societal issues.

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Preface

This paper runs the risk of implying failure on the part of the professionals serving in the State Department, military, or civilian political leadership, but that is not its intent. The ideas here are the next step in the progression of US foreign policy, from lessons learned after decades of experience as the United States has tried to shape the world through post-conflict nation-building. After trying to do it by sheer force of will and might (trusting in a belief that America's supreme rightness would win over all opposition), it is time for America to cede that sometimes nation-building should not be attempted or it may be best for others to do it.

This paper is intended to influence strategic leaders and policy makers in both the civilian and military sectors, but the discussion is germane to all levels of policy-making. Historical data illuminates the frustrations of US attempts to influence rebuilding states to follow the American model and become regional partners. Critical analysis of institutionalized national defense and security policies provides insight into past US intentions, how it worked out, and the plotted future of US international involvement. These sources provide the body of information on US foreign policy toward security, stabilization, reconstruction, and nation-building operations. They illustrate that the United States has options for restructuring the responsibilities and efforts of departments, agencies, and international organizations to provide a more balanced use of all of America's instruments of power toward promoting the growth of developing states.

I am grateful for all of the dedicated professionals serving this great nation, and I want to help. I wish to thank the Marine Corps for furthering my education and acknowledge how much they impress me for making not just highly-trained warriors but also educated leaders and conscientious citizens. Above all I am grateful for my amazing superhero wife who can do anything; I want to be like her when I grow up.

Introduction

"We're not retreating, we're just advancing in a different direction."

- *Major General Oliver Smith, USMC,*
  Battle of Chosin Reservoir, 1950[1]

If democracy and capitalism are so great, why do so many nations refuse and thwart US efforts to give it to them? Are they miscreant kids who do not know what is good for them? Did the United States government (USG) handle it wrong? Should the USG meddle at all? America's political discourse is showing signs of stress from enormous investments and frustrating failures: wider polarization and blame between political parties (e.g., Iraq, Benghazi), fear-mongering against foreigners (e.g., Muslims, Mexicans), and indecision on where to get involved (e.g., Iran, Ukraine, Syria, Nigeria, Balkans).

The desire of the American cultural majority to export its constitutional ideals has led to constant, widespread efforts at foreign nation-building which have mostly failed when in the hands of the US military. The US military is good at conquering but bad at post-conflict rebuilding of weak states while holding back insurgencies and resistance. Depending on the political environment of the time, the attempted level of fix for post-conflict nation-building ranges from putting infrastructure and institutions back to where they were before the US military showed up and started breaking things, to trying to make the state or region better than it ever was. This involvement takes many forms, including stability operations, transition operations, reconstruction, transitional governments and constitutions, teaching democratic and free market principles, counterinsurgency, intervention, information operations, peacekeeping, peace enforcing, and humanitarian aid. For clarity of distinction between military and civilian lines of effort, this paper will divide the work into two categories: **security** (countering violence

with military or police force) and **nation-building** (helping to build a nation-state's internal mechanisms for improved standard of living and self-sustaining stability). Success is measured by sustained peace and representative governance. Representative governments can take many forms and do not have to look like the US system, but minority groups and grievances in the nation must have access to representation and protection.

Security is typically included as a subset of post-conflict nation-building, but this paper will distinguish between the two despite their dependency. Critical rebuilding cannot be postponed until after insurgencies have been neutralized; combatting insurgency requires a solvent state capable of employing its people, offering prosperity, providing its own security, and enforcing law and order. However, dependency does not require handling them by the same means. The military must establish post-conflict security, but not concurrent nation-building. Because of security concerns in regions of unrest and the US military's readily available standing resources, the Department of Defense (DoD) has assumed the preponderance of post-conflict nation-building efforts, *but it should relinquish this role* and instead only assist with security.

Nation-building requires significant commitments, resources, international cooperation, socio-economic management, and cultural expertise that are beyond the capacity of the USG to handle alone. The Department of State (DoS) already has statutory (legal) responsibility for US involvement in teaching democratic principles and rebuilding nations, but it is not organized, funded, or equipped to effectively build nations. The USG should facilitate nation-building effort by IGOs/NGOs and regional governments so that the USG takes on a **minimum** security role (through the DoD) and a nation-building **advisory** role (through the DoS) in place of being the main effort. The USG should participate directly in post-conflict nation-building only as far

as the scale of commitment, institutional arrangement, and societal makeup meet specific conditions and only in support of IGOs/NGOs and regional governments.

Post-Conflict Nation-Building

"Military victory is often the prelude to violence, not the end of it."

- *Thomas Shelling, 1966*[2]

Despite heavy investment by the United States, it is difficult to measure the rebuilding success or failure of the DoS and DoD in countries like Iraq, Afghanistan, the Balkans, multiple African nation-states, Somalia, Egypt, Burma/Myanmar, El Salvador, Colombia, and the Philippines. Obvious nation-building success stories like Germany, Japan, Panama, and Grenada happened because those states had the right conditions for success from a combination of factors such as a pre-existing tradition of the rule of law, expert diplomatic programs, and an appropriately sized and organized nation-building force. Some nations have successfully made a transition to representative governments and open markets (free trade, capitalism) without outsiders building their government or infrastructure for them. Some nations have been forced through reluctant reform following outsider takeover and rule (Ming China, Alexander the Great's Empire, the conquistador conquests).[3] Since World War II, three factors have largely determined the levels of success in post-conflict nation-building efforts: 1) the objective and scale of commitment by the nation-building entity; 2) the institutional arrangement of the nation-building forces; and 3) the societal makeup of both the host nation and the nation-building entity.

Objective and Scale of Commitment

The size, purpose, and time required of both security and nation-building efforts vary drastically, and more is not always better. Separating combatants is simple compared to

installing representative governments or reuniting divided nations. Investing too little manpower and money cannot overcome opposition and get the necessary work done. Too much from the nation-building entity can create a welfare state where the host nation never develops indigenous capabilities; the indigenous system must become strong enough to support itself. For instance, eventually the host nation must be able to self-maintain law and order through local law enforcement and judicial systems (not US peacekeeping) and must provide state services better than a shadow government or criminal syndicate. In a post-conflict insurgency, the relationship between the host nation's legitimate government and the populace must be stronger than the relationship between an insurgency and the populace. The effectiveness of the nation-building entity determines whether it takes years or decades for the host nation to reach self-sustaining law and order and provision of services. Some objectives and circumstances will require more commitment from the nation-builder and some less to eliminate instabilities without creating new ones.

Institutional Arrangement

The organization of the nation-building forces, the apparent presence of coalition involvement, unity of effort, and cadre expertise influence the effectiveness of the committed efforts. Institutionalized policies, processes, and training in the nation-building entity should be decided by the nature of the situation and will determine behaviors in both the nation-building forces and the host nation. These elicit or discourage national, regional, and international backing, which in turn determines the credibility of the effort as a benevolent coalition instead of imperialism. The unity and coordination of the nation-builder's civilian and military forces across an alliance of international units, and the cadre of experts found therein, determine the

nation-builder's ability to recognize and resolve societal fractures. Discord or lack of expertise among those forces will hinder development of effective plans and command structures.

Societal Makeup

The manning, money, time, and institutional arrangement committed to post-conflict nation-building must deal with the society left behind by that conflict. Success, difficulty, and failure are influenced by the residual makeup of the host nation. The two factors from that makeup that have the most influence on nation-building efforts are typically internal ethnic-religious conflict and cultural differences between the host nation and the nation-building force. The societal makeup also depends on the collapse or viability of host nation institutions, how much conflict-intervention changed the power relationships in the host nation's society and with its neighbors, decisive defeat of the host nation, internal support for or resistance to nation-builder forces (e.g., organized crime or insurgencies), and contentions between factions (e.g., turf war or grievances).

Case Study Excerpts

After Germany and Japan suffered devastating defeats in World War II, the USG committed huge resources to rebuilding them: millions of troops and approximately $45 billion dollars.[4] These were both heavily USG-led efforts, but in Germany the USG used substantial Allied support whereas in Japan it was almost exclusively a US effort. Both incidences evidenced unity of effort and a cadre of rebuilding expertise (though not necessarily cultural expertise) within the institution. German culture was close to American and Western Allies' culture whereas Japan's was not, but both states were accustomed to the rule of law. In Germany, the Allies abolished and rebuilt every national institution. Where culture was different in Japan, the USG retained and reformed the government and as many institutions from within as possible.

Unilateral US nation-building efforts in Panama and Grenada in the 1980s succeeded on smaller scales with much smaller commitments. In both cases, the USG employed appropriately-sized and expert resources to retain and reform governments from within cultures that were largely dissimilar to America's and had weak traditions of the rule of law.[5]

North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) nation-building assistance in Bosnia and Kosovo in the 1990s illuminates cases of partial successes. Bosnia involved large amounts of time, money, personnel, and international support. In Kosovo, NATO quickly established security, and the United Nations (UN) set up a provisional administration which returned refugees to their homes within weeks. Instead of being heavily USG-led like in Germany and Japan, the United States composed less than one-fourth of the NATO forces in Bosnia and less than one-sixth of NATO personnel in Kosovo. Both instances had a moderate unity of effort and cadre of expertise within the rebuilding institution. The governments and institutions of both nations were retained as far as possible, both nations were culturally similar to the nation-building forces, and both were accustomed to the rule of law. In both cases, however, there were stark internal ethnic divisions which exceeded the expertise of the nation-building entity, post-conflict politics were organized along class and ethnic lines, and decades later they are not entirely stable or self-sustaining. They have elections and courts, but they are oligarchies plagued by corruption. Their rule of law is weak, and they are not functioning democratically.[6]

Post-conflict efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan in the 2000s represent significant nation-building failures. Afghanistan was initially tragically under-resourced, though it ballooned after 2003 as the DoS began combatting decreasing stability.[7] Security in Afghanistan was left as an Afghan responsibility even though they had no army or police forces. Iraq was considerably better-resourced than Afghanistan, but the effort was still military-centric. Security in Iraq was

assigned to the DoD with no initial accompanying diplomatic mission. The rebuilding entities in both states had weak unity of effort and a lack of expertise; Paul Bremer's Coalition Provisional Authority in Iraq had little expertise.[8] Neither culture was similar to the nation-building entity, but the USG attempted to completely rebuild both states' governments and institutions. Afghanistan was decentralized to begin with, and in Iraq US troops disbanded the military and dismissed senior officials. Iraq had a tradition of the rule of law, but Afghanistan did not (beyond a local tribal level). Both states were plagued by ethnic, religious, and ideological conflicts. The USG tried to rebuild from scratch two countries that were culturally-dissimilar to America.

USG Post-Conflict Nation-Building Efforts

"You break it, you own it."

- *US Secretary of State Colin Powell to President Bush on the planned invasion of Iraq, Summer 2002[9]*

Colin Powell's ownership comment has been misapplied in US foreign policy. The USG should not typically engage directly in post-conflict nation-building, even if the US military is responsible for breaking things in that nation. Even when it sends military forces to remove a regime, weaken a state's military, or destroy some portion of a state's infrastructure, the USG does not have to take responsibility for directly rebuilding that state. The United States steps into conflicts to stop unacceptable behaviors or threats in nations too weak or unwilling to handle it with their own resources. Responsibility for the consequences of that conflict partially lie with the state wherein the problem occurred.

Because US interests typically align with promoting stability (of open markets and representative governments) abroad, the USG has developed a habit of involving itself in foreign conflicts.[10] US isolationist practices ended with World War II, and its foreign policy is now entrenched in a mindset that the United States is responsible for fixing other nations (especially, but not exclusively, after beating them through force). Given a desire to export its ideals, the USG attempts to rebuild post-conflict civil infrastructures through massive reconstruction efforts rather than withdrawing forces and funding and influencing them to do it themselves or with local help. These efforts center around building representative democracy (establishing a constitution and the administration to enact it), civil liberties (the rule of law and a system of credible justice), and economic openness (free market, employment, self-determination, and opportunity for prosperity). They require large investments of time and money, strain the will of the American people and political cycles, and hamper US foreign rebuilding efforts. The USG has struggled and failed at some nation-building efforts because of a combination of insufficient commitment of resources, poor institutional organization, and unmitigated societal issues between itself and the host nation.

Resources

Under Title 22 of the US Code, the DoS has authority to lead all US government nation-building efforts, but the DoS lacks in-house resources and has limited expertise. There are limits to what the DoS can do with permission and a modest checkbook., such as how many and what kind of people can it send to build nations and what equipment it can rent. The Foreign Service of the DoS has approximately 13,000 officers working in 265 embassies, consulates, or diplomatic missions around the world and in the United States, and it has 11,000 civil servants mostly in administrative positions in Washington DC.[11] The DoS has just enough manning to

staff its embassies and DC administration offices and has no equipment of its own. For it to directly engage in a mission, it contracts out for resources. The DoD has forces in training that are available and can be compelled to deploy. It has the equipment to build and to ship resources to the host nation. It has reserve forces working in civilian jobs in industry, civil administration, banking, construction, and similar fields from which to form a cadre of experts. For instance, the Army has civil affairs personnel in the Reserves whose civilian jobs are in Los Angeles city management. Thus the DoD has uncommitted forces from which it can draw when the need arises. DoS personnel are engaged in daily agency duties, making it a struggle to give up man-hours just to accomplish routine language training.

The DoS currently spends its limited resources on running embassies and training its personnel, and it does not have enough money left to pay contractors to rebuild nations in place of the DoD. The FY 2016 budget provides $50.3 billion for the DoS and the US Agency for International Development (USAID).[12] Of that, the DoS Overseas Building Operations (OBO) has a $3 billion budget to build, maintain, and operate embassies.[13] The USG spent $6 billion a year rebuilding Iraq and $10 billion a year rebuilding Afghanistan.[14] There is no money budgeted to the DoS to cover what it would cost to handle the current nation-building responsibilities executed by the DoD.

Roles

The DoS has made overtures to *guide* military efforts in stability and transition operations, since it cannot afford to completely take over. Fleet Anti-Terrorism Security Teams (FAST) do embassy reinforcement under cooperative command relationships. Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), used since Iraq, include a DoS officer embedded with an Army unit but with no chain of command to the DoS (due to bureaucratic/legal interpretations of command authority).

When the White House tasked DoS to form PRTs for Iraq, the State Department faced an overwhelming lack of resources to do so and used the Army to shoulder the burden of the work. Also, the DoS had limited personnel who could be compelled to go to a newly-collapsed, highly dangerous Iraq. So the DoS deferred to the DoD as experts, most PRT ended up being contractors, and the DoS was marginalized. These efforts were remedial and incomplete attempts at the DoS working functionally with the DoD.

Nation-building is a stated duty of both the DoS and USAID. The DoS mission statement states: "The [State] Department's mission is to shape and sustain a peaceful, prosperous, just, and democratic world and foster conditions for stability and progress for the benefit of the American people and people everywhere. This mission is shared with USAID, ensuring we have a common path forward in partnership as we invest in the shared security and prosperity that will ultimately better prepare us for the challenges of tomorrow."[15] USAID claims that "USAID is the lead US Government agency that works to…enable resilient, democratic societies to realize their potential."[16] The DoS and USAID divide the authority and capacity to determine the level and type of US nation-building involvement and make it happen. National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD) 44 gives the DoS authority to "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."[17] NSPD 44 gives authority to the DoS, but DoS efficiency is severely handicapped by competing roles with USAID.

The DoS Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) was supposed to be the answer to the stability, transition, and rebuilding failures of Iraq and Afghanistan. It was initiated in 2011 under the DoS Undersecretary of Civilian Security, Democracy, and Human

Rights. Its website claims: "The Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations (CSO) advances the Department of State's understanding of violent conflict through…targeted, in-country efforts that help the U.S. government anticipate, prevent, and respond to conflict and promote long-term stability."[18] In practice, it ceded the nation-building mission to the DoD and USAID. CSO has little resources with which to help stabilize or rebuild state infrastructure systems; its largest commitment of resources to-date is investing $27 million in Syria to help relocate displaced refugees.[19] With a handful of people running an office with no dedicated money of its own, no significant fielded forces of its own, and no established authority over competing organizations, CSO is a fledgling idea, not a real force for change.

USAID has interests in both Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Response (HADR) and failed state operations which contest with CSO's mission. USAID bureaus parallel and overlap responsibilities with their equivalents in the DoS organization, but USAID operates and views itself as independent even though by statute it reports through the Secretary of State. USAID is currently educating numerous weak states on governmental transparency, free elections, and political participation processes.[20] The roles and authorities of the myriad USAID and DoS units, including their involvement with DoD, UN, EU, and NATO entities, are ambiguous and unmediated.

Inter-organization confusion, unclear division of duties, and parochial squabbling are hindering the efforts of well-intentioned civil servants. In the Kenya engagement from 2012-2013, CSO's after-action report indicated that "CSO may have a well-known mandate within the ranks but it clearly has been misunderstood outside of CSO, leading to unnecessary turf battles within DoS and between CSO and USAID, particularly USAID's Office of Transition Initiatives (OTI)."[21] Dr. Renanah Miles clearly detailed the struggles between the DoS (especially its CSO

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office), USAID, and the DoD, noting that "CSO has opted to scale back rather than face resistance" in its competition with USAID's OTI but at the cost of CSO leading any transition efforts.[22] She summarized, "the State Department…is not able to effectively lead or conduct stability missions, and there is little chance this will change in the near-term."[23] The USG needs to fix DoS, DoD, and USAID responsibilities and resources according to a single, deliberate nation-building policy and organization – as intended by NSPD 44 when it was issued in 2005.

Prior to the invasion of Iraq, the US planned for total defeat of the enemy and little commitment was made for post-victory rebuilding. The DoD established the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance (ORHA) in January 2003 just two months prior to the Iraq invasion, and the DoS setup an embassy a year later in 2004. The United States invaded Iraq with overlapping, confused, and unempowered rebuilding entities. Years later, DoD and DoS bureaucratic infighting ruined the stability-into-transition planning efforts; the DoS plan was developed too late and never accepted into DoD decision-making. After the invasion of Iraq, the USG realized the need to plan for nation-building prior to engaging in conflict and began working toward greater civilian oversight of it through the civilian-led Coalition Provisional Authority, but nation-building in Iraq today is still mostly a DoD effort.

The DoD has assumed *de facto* responsibility for the workload of an under-resourced diplomatic corps. Currently, reconstruction is primarily a DoD duty.[24] Per Field Manual 3-07.1, Army soldiers are expected to include foreign government and interagency coordination in planning and operations, understand the political implications of all their actions, defeat propaganda, publicize reasons for use of force, understand local grievances and underlying issues, and interact with all aspects of the community to identify root causes of grievances and

resistance.[25] The USG cannot even achieve these lofty goals with police in inner-city America, much less with soldiers in foreign countries.

Organizational Structure

The DoS has no infrastructure to support managing a reserve force even if it had the funds and manpower to put one together. The USG can continue its nation-building efforts and move more resources to the DoS, or the USG can do less nation-building and the DoS can handle it all without expanding the government. If more resources are dedicated to the DoS, its organizational structure will have to change (expand) to manage the missions currently accomplished by DoD resources. Folding USAID into the DoS would give the DoS the extra money and manpower it needs to make its CSO office capable of handling infrequent nation-building efforts and avoid growing too large for the current DoS infrastructure to manage it effectively.

Iraq and Afghanistan began a process of power being shifted from the DoS to the DoD. "During the course of the Iraq and Afghanistan wars in particular…there has been this steady accumulation of very specific authorities that have largely gone over to the Department of Defense. [But now that large-scale combat in Iraq and Afghanistan has diminished], do we have the balance right between State and DoD?" said Troy Thomas, special assistant to the president for national security, former Air Force officer and special assistant to the chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[26] It is time to stop DoD-shouldered nation-building missions, leave the DoD with security missions as its only non-conflict extra duty, and execute any USG involvement in post-conflict nation-building efforts solely through the DoS (which would primarily be aimed at advising and assisting others in doing the necessary work).

Host Nation Society

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International interactions are about influence, yet the USG has struggled to gain influence over the masses in areas of conflict and thus DoD-led actions have fostered insurgencies. "A modern military force capable of waging a war against a large conventional force may find itself ill-prepared for a 'small' war against a lightly equipped guerilla force."[27] In response, the USG has invested more in smaller, stealthier forces, but this non-conventional effort of force only holds back an insurgency. It does not address the perceived grievances of the people, remove the cause of or support for the insurgency, or create strategic US influence. Diplomacy cannot wait until after the military has established security; they must work simultaneously. Effective community-level political leadership is necessary for security because a dysfunctional political system creates internal instability.[28]

US policy makers try to figure out who in the target community has the power to make lasting change. In its Conflict Assessment Framework doctrine (CAF 2.0), USAID states that development is change and change involves competition and debate.[29] CAF 2.0 also states that the nation-builder must determine both the desired level of change (individuals or the institution) and the desired constituency to engage (more people or key people).[30] In effect, the USG must first decide whether to work with a weak government and create change from the top-down, or work with small communities in a coordinated effort to force change upward to a larger, central government. Then the USG must decide who has power in the target group, either masses or key individuals, and focus on guiding those decisive people to lead the rest.

Culture Clashes

One problem with exporting American ideals is that they are typically packaged with American culture. This may result in simple cultural clashes where the intended recipients of American well-wishing do not take well to those who show up in their neighborhoods with an

agenda (like Turkey, Belarus, Slovenia, and Lebanon).[31] Some cultures (like Pakistan) may

perceive the American lifestyle as gross decadence that is incongruous with their closely-held

beliefs.[32] Some cultures may view America's increasing national debt, breakdown of the family

as the fundamental unit of society, growing dependency on social welfare, and seemingly

constant media coverage of corruption as evidence that the United States is in decline because

unrestricted personal freedoms tend toward disorder (like Egypt, Iran, and China). These states

may not recognize how the ideals of representative democracy, civil liberties, and economic

openness can benefit their societies without having to replace their culture wholesale with

American culture.

Culture determines what options individuals think they have; people look at the choices

available to them and decide what they think they will get from those choices based on their

cultural experiences.[33] For example, a middle-class American and a tribal Afghan have widely

different beliefs about the value of formal education because their unique cultural backgrounds

provide differing expectations of what benefits they will get as a result of that education. US

efforts to introduce or emphasize institutions that are significant to prosperity in American

culture may be out of place in foreign cultures, even those as seemingly-benign as formal

education.

Patrolling soldiers change and shape the culture they are in.[34] US military troops have not

won hearts and minds in Iraq or Afghanistan, despite policy makers' insistence that doing so is

the only way to win, because they are not in the cultural inner-circle. Friend-making

accidentally grew into a military duty because the personnel were already there, resourced, and

looking for a mission during a time of drawdown. The DoD was assigned stability duties in Iraq

and militarized the effort. The Army took over stability and reconstruction operations but was

plagued by inefficiency, corruption, and lack of will in the impotent local interim government. From 2003 to 2007 almost $6 billion was spent on 3000 reconstruction projects in Iraq, and all but $500 million of it was rejected by the interim Iraqi government.[35] The interim Iraqi government was labelled an American puppet by the insurgency and was dependent on American authority, money, and force, so to gain legitimacy it felt the need to reject USG overtures whenever possible.

In civil wars and counterinsurgencies, victory is the ability to gain popular support and isolate insurgents.[36] As described in the 1958 political novel *The Ugly American*, after World War II the US Foreign Service failed to integrate into local cultures in Southeast Asia and lost the alliance of those states to the Soviet culture-insertion campaign that did. The man wielding the gun makes enemies, not friends; a man who wants to help must live among and live like the indigenous people so they trust him. Soldiers cannot integrate like this; they do not live like or with the natives. Soldiers eye the local populace warily as containing potential threats. The DoD's efforts to teach culture, business, and civics to its soldiers has not made them effective rebuilders, and the DoS does not have a program to groom cultural experts for teaching democratic principles and rebuilding nations. Between the DoD soldiers who just hurt and killed or DoS civilians from the same country, the USG does not have experts who can overcome significant cultural conflicts inherent in exporting American ideals.

The Way Forward

"The community of states must be willing to work with local partners and institutions to create enduring structures of liberal democratic governance, the rule of law, market economy, and civil society."

- *Ramesh Thakur, 2006[37]*

Today the USG is not fighting any direct wars against organized state militaries, but it is fighting indirect resistance over terrorism and drugs in Africa, South America, the Philippines, and the Middle East. These fights are less about fielded forces and more about influencing the population of a region. Guerrilla warfare is a "means to an end…the winning of political power."[38] Power comes from and is measured by the strength of local support. "To try to carry out [guerrilla war] without the support of the population is to court inevitable disaster. The guerrillas are the fighting vanguard of the people…for the…seizure of power. They have the support of the worker and peasant masses of the region and of the whole territory in which they operate. Without these prerequisites no guerrilla warfare is possible."[39] The USG needs to use an instrument of power that at least challenges guerrilla fighters' and insurgents' manipulation of and support from local masses and preferably courts that support toward the side of US interests. The military instrument cannot do so; however, though the DoS has limited capacity for direct action, it has significant ability to influence others diplomatically. A coalition of IGOs/NGOs and regional governments has the best chance of planning and executing successful post-conflict nation-building efforts, so the USG should reduce its role to providing immediate minimum security and then influencing a nation-building coalition to satisfactorily address commitment, organization, and societal issues.

Provide Minimum Security

The military has a specific part to play to support nation-building: the defeat of organized armed resistance and the suppression of violent opposition so that the real work can be done. The USG should stop asking the DoD to take responsibility for nation-building operations including running security forces, providing law and order, managing the buildup of civil infrastructure, teaching democratic leadership, and developing a judicial system. The irony is

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that military doctrine spells out that the way to win is through a non-military effort, but the military has historically been the main effort. "Successful counterinsurgency entails altering a political and economic system – and sometimes even a culture…The State Department and US Agency for International Development do not have the resources to undertake large-scale, protracted counterinsurgency. No part of the US government has a robust, expeditionary capability to help build legal and intelligence systems in alien cultures without a tradition of rule by law."[40] The Army is mostly on its own and has developed doctrinal guidance for its soldiers that expounds what stability, transition, and building operations entail, why it matters, and how soldiers must behave as (potentially) the sole representatives of both the United States and the global democratic community.

Troops fighting in the Middle East, Africa, and the Philippines have faced a situation laced with paranoia akin to what was experienced in Vietnam, where they feel they are under constant siege from an enemy that is indistinguishable from non-combatants.[41] It is a struggle for soldiers to work among the populace in a peaceful role when they see potential enemies behind every door.

The root cause of an insurgency is the grievances (real or perceived) of the people. Therefore counterinsurgency requires providing a solution to people's issues.[42] Marine Corps doctrine states that "the decisive effort is to isolate the insurgents by denying the local population as a base of support."[43] Army doctrine lists seven counterinsurgency lines of effort: establish civil security, establish civil control, support Host Nation security forces, restore essential services, support economic and infrastructure development, support governance, and conduct information engagement.[44] However, if the DoD is the primary representative of US civil rebuilding efforts, insurgents can easily create a narrative of an occupation. "When the US acts,

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even temporarily, as the primary counterinsurgent, commanders operate carefully between fighting for a population and being seen as fighting against a population."[45] Coalitions of regional players can support infrastructure development, governance, and information engagement better than the DoD.

The military can continue trying to be both destroyer and builder, or it can focus on its unique role. It is reasonable to expect DoS civilians (if there were enough) to be better rebuilders than soldiers, and it is reasonable to expect regional neighbors to be more effective than American civilians. Potential future conflicts that would involve the DoD include: terrorist cells in Africa, the Philippines, and South America; Russian aggression over polar sea lanes and oil shelves; civil wars in Iraq, Afghanistan, and the Balkans; Pakistani insurgents; Syria and North Korea regime suppression or overthrow; Iran, Syria, North Korea, and Pakistan weapons of mass destruction; cyberattacks against US government or corporate entities; naval blockade/interception (e.g., Russia shipping missiles to Iran); Somali pirates; and Chinese aggression over the South China Sea. The DoD has enough of its primary security job to do that it should stop trying to play diplomat and social engineer as well.

The DoD needs to focus on fighting. Figure 1 shows a ridiculous military attempt to understand and influence the Afghan people. It does not list the tribes, their leaders, and their values and grievances; it does not identify the local individuals who must be coalesced into a governing coalition to represent and unite the contentious factions; it just identifies human domain categories in which the military must operate. It was briefed to Gen. Stanley A. McChrystal, commander of American and NATO forces in Afghanistan, in the summer of 2009 as the military tried to figure out how to manage stability and transition operations *seven and a*

half years into the war. It indicates how poorly managed the nation-building effort was prior to and well into the invasion of Afghanistan.
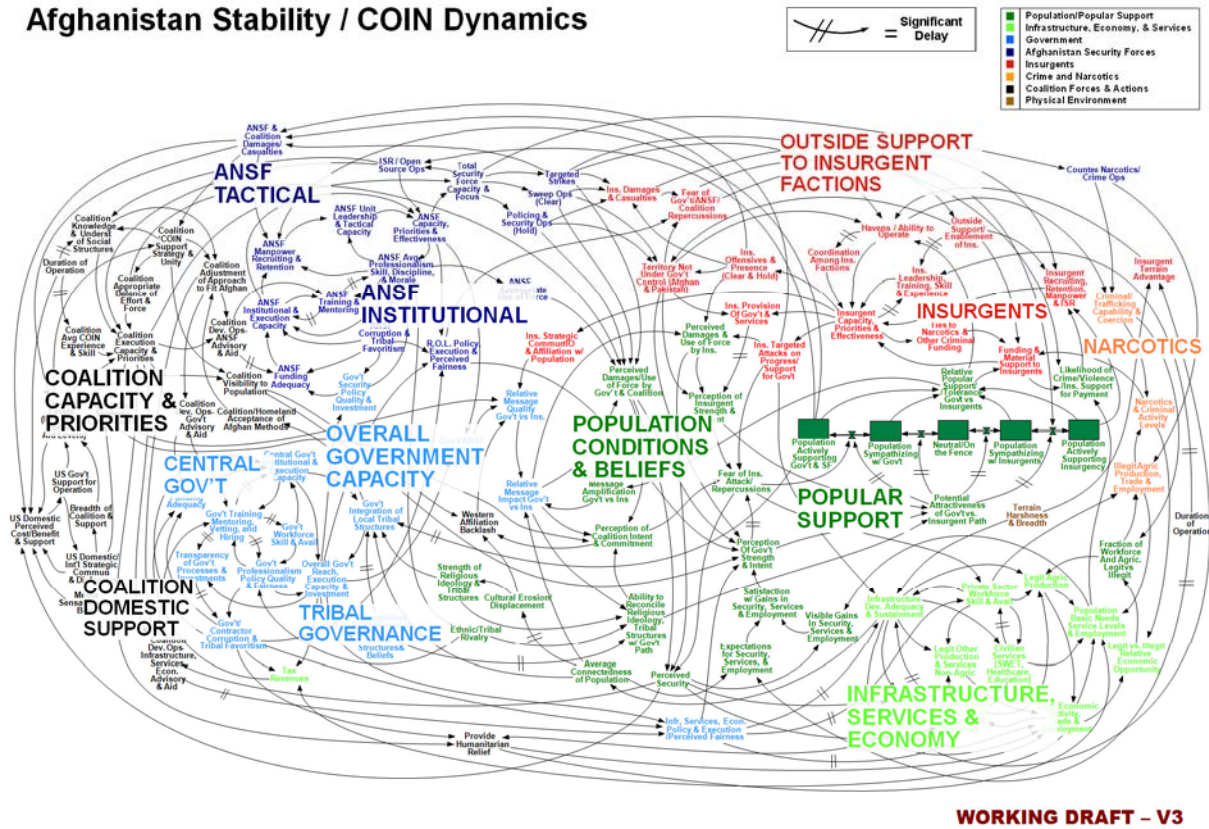

Figure 1: Actual Slide Briefed to Gen. McChrystal in Kabul, Summer 2009[46]

Influence a Nation-Building Coalition

The best option is to use the DoD briefly to restore minimum security while the DoS influences the right people to take over security and do the rebuilding. Influencing a coalition to rebuild in place of the USG (especially if the US military caused some of the damage) is harder to manage diplomatically but has the best chance for success. Without effective international coordination, USG unwillingness to directly fix other nations might change the willingness of other states to support US military actions. In HADR, the USG provides food, medical care, and energy in the initial crisis and then leaves responsibility to IGOs/NGOs and the local government

for rebuilding. In the case of weak governments and failed states (including those broken after conflict with the US military), the rebuilding would be done with UN-guided regional coalition help. This is closer to a break-and-leave policy than Colin Powell's you-break-it-you-own-it principle. The DoD would no longer handle anything beyond security (no stability, transition, or rebuilding operations), and the DoS would handle all other US involvement in any foreign nation-building. This involvement would be mainly advisory to the UN or regional coalition – the DoS still would not have any reserve force or funding providing capability for the USG to take on such a burden. This option is best because the US has spent decades and trillions of dollars trying to nation-build, has hurt its reputation and made ideological enemies, has spent the bodies and minds of its military volunteers, and has not had much success helping post-conflict nation-states become truly stable, free-market democracies since World War II. It is time to let neighboring states and international coalitions try to help each other.

Specific cases of direct US involvement in post-conflict nation-building are illustrated in Figure 2, with the most successful examples listed first and proceeding down to the least successful examples. They show that the level of success correlates with three keys: 1) the size of the committed force matches the nation-building purpose; 2) unity and expertise in the force; and 3) either a) cultural similarity between the host nation and the nation-building force, or b) government and institutions that can be retained and a tradition of the rule of law. In most cases, the time and resources committed were appropriate. The easy blame that the USG does not have the stomach to stay long enough is typically not the problem; the USG is not using the right people. The DoS should use these three keys as the specific conditions to decide when and how to get involved in nation-building. If any are missing, the attempt will fail. The weaker any of the three are, the less successful the rebuilding will be.

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Conditions that Determine Success in Nation-Building Efforts			
Example	**Commitment**	**Institution**	**Society**
Japan	Appropriate: medium time, large money & manpower	USG, high unity & expertise	No cultural similarity but *retained* government & institutions, tradition of rule of law
Germany	Appropriate: long time, large money & manpower	USG and allies, high unity & expertise	Similar culture to builders, rebuilt government & institutions, tradition of rule of law, local support
Panama	Appropriate: short time, small money & manpower	USG, high unity & expertise	Minimal cultural similarity but *retained* government & institutions, weak tradition of rule of law
Grenada	Appropriate: short time, small money & manpower	USG, high unity & expertise	Minimal cultural similarity but *retained* government & institutions, weak tradition of rule of law
Kosovo	Appropriate: short time, medium money & manpower	NATO & UN, small USG, medium unity & expertise	Similar culture to builders, retained government & institutions, tradition of rule of law, ethnic division
Bosnia	Appropriate: long time, large money & manpower	NATO, small USG, medium unity & expertise	Similar culture to builders, retained government & institutions, tradition of rule of law, ethnic division
Iraq	Appropriate: long time, large money & manpower	USG, small coalition, low unity & expertise	No cultural similarity but *rebuilt* government & institutions, tradition of rule of law, ethnic division
Afghanistan	Initially insufficient money & manpower, long time	USG, small coalition, low unity & expertise	No cultural similarity but *rebuilt* government & institutions, ethnic division

Figure 2: Examples & Comparison of Post-Conflict Nation-Building Since World War II

The best way forward is not for America to rebuild nation-states on its own or set up

puppets to do it on America's behalf; the USG needs to wield its diplomatic might to convince

and teach the relevant community of states to help its neighbors do it for themselves. There is no

guarantee that others will succeed, but failure by others within the same culture does not obligate

the USG to try. The USG needs to step in when states reach an unacceptable level of behavior

but otherwise stay out of directly trying to build other nations. America can warn bad actors to

stop, punish unchecked bad behavior, withdraw its military forces, threaten to do it again if bad

actors do not fix themselves, and stay out of executing the building business. America should

convince others to fix foreign states in place of an "if it's broken, we'll fix it" policy.

Conclusions

"Counterinsurgency…victory requires not simply defeating an extant enemy, but changing a system."

- *Steven Metz, 2012*[47]

America has choices on where and how much to get involved with foreign nation-building. "The object should be to accomplish the aim of strategy with as little combat as practicable."[48] The DoD should stop fighting counter-insurgencies unless international civilian agencies are simultaneously working on building up an infrastructure that can solve the grievances that undermine the political establishment. The DoS is better suited than the DoD to manage foreign stabilization operations, civil infrastructure rebuilding, establishment of a free market, and transition to democratic government. The DoS should change the level of America's involvement in such nation-building affairs to be less hands-on in the nation-of-interest and more of a leadership/guidance capacity to assist international partners.

The United States should not make messes, absolve itself of responsibility, and leave a conflict without cleaning up after itself; the USG should help the **right** people execute the building effort. If the United States does not fix its messes after punitive military action, it may lose international support for military operations (including basing rights and overflight). However, as long as the USG is supporting the right people trying to nation-build in the manner most likely to succeed, the United States is still acting responsibly. Other states may not be able to afford nation-building, have the expertise, or want to do it, so the USG will likely spend considerable diplomatic effort and money to make it happen. This requires changing the DoS and expecting them to succeed where soldiers have not. It also requires changing US national policy and practice, which is a decision that must be made by the President of the United States.

America wants the world to be stable, safe, and protective of human decency, but it should

no longer use its military as the world police who punish misbehavior and force bad state actors

to govern more benevolently. The military breaks things and kills people. It can quickly

establish minimum security in post-conflict nations and pass responsibility over to host nation or

coalition security forces. The rest of nation-building should be handled by IGOs/NGOs and

regional governments with the DoS exercising diplomatic and economic power to influence and

assist them. The success of those nation-building coalitions depends on sufficient commitment

of resources, institutional organization, and mitigation of societal issues in the host nation. With

these principles in-hand, the USG can help the international community be an effective nation-

building force instead of struggling to do it for them.

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