

FILLING IRREGULAR WARFARE'S INTERAGENCY GAPS

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FILLING IRREGULAR WARFARE'S INTERAGENCY GAPS

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The interagency process is failing in the execution of irregular warfare. Most proposed solutions to this major problem emphasize increasingly complex bureaucratic coordinating mechanisms, increased capacity within agencies ill-suited to the required tasks, or unrealistic calls for intensified senior leader attention and centralized oversight. These solutions also rest upon faulty assumptions that make them unlikely to succeed, given the realities of the key agencies' existing organizational cultures, expertise, resources, and core defining tasks. Likewise, history discounts the "hope" that merely creating more venues for interagency dialogue will generate consensus or effective integration. Instead, any feasible and effective solution must include: (1) providing agencies clear, task-driven strategic-level statements of intent, responsibility, and authority; (2) enabling key agencies to develop relevant expertise at all levels; (3) giving agencies operational control over other-agency personnel to realize true unity of vision and effort; (4) integrating other-agency personnel throughout all combatant commands; and (5) creating interagency service career incentives. Overcoming likely political and practical obstacles will require creating an additional functional combatant command, a Humanitarian Assistance and Development Command, to be led by State or USAID.

FILLING IRREGULAR WARFARE'S INTERAGENCY GAPS

“A government ill-executed, whatever it may be in theory, must be, in practice, a bad government... The ingredients which constitute energy in the executive are unity; duration; an adequate provision for its support; and competent powers.”

Alexander Hamilton, *The Federalist* #70¹

Alexander Hamilton did not have the modern U.S. government's execution of irregular warfare in mind when he laid down his immutable principles of executive leadership, but he would easily recognize the violation of those principles if he were alive today. The U.S. government has consistently failed to apply the full weight of its instruments of power in irregular warfare conflicts in Afghanistan and Iraq, largely due to an inability or unwillingness of various agencies to agree upon the ends, ways, and means needed to prosecute those wars successfully. When coupled with organizational structures that make disjointed vision and effort the norm rather than the exception, this strategic interagency failing has had dire consequences for U.S. national security, thwarting the true “whole of government” approaches needed to overcome irregular warfare's complex challenges. Accordingly, most participants and observers agree that our government must reorganize its interagency process to succeed in these types of wars and the other similar national security challenges likely to arise in the future.

Unfortunately, however, that is where the consensus ends. For while nearly everyone agrees upon the need for interagency (IA) process reform, few agree on the specific prescriptions for that improvement. Commonly proposed solutions range from designs for increasingly complex bureaucratic IA coordinating structures, to unrealistic calls for heightened senior leader participation and centralized oversight, to plans for

expanding the capacities of agencies ill-suited to the tasks required of them.

Furthermore, these solutions typically hinge upon a pervasive assumption that effective IA coordination and integration will occur if only the right coordinating mechanisms are created. However, this assumption is not only false, but it also misreads history, human nature, and the practical experience gleaned from Afghanistan, Iraq, and other irregular warfare (IW) operations of the past.

Perhaps not surprisingly then, and for a variety of valid reasons, the U.S. government has turned to the Department of Defense (DoD) as a stop-gap substitute for actual robust “whole of government” interagency structures in executing IW, with mixed results in the best cases and profoundly ineffective ones in the worst. The IA problem stems primarily from a fundamental disunity of effort and incoherence of end-state vision among key U.S. agencies at the national-strategic level, along with a lack of command authority and required expertise at the theater-strategic and operational levels. But as the Department of Homeland Security’s problems compellingly illustrate, the answer—resoundingly—is not to superimpose another bureaucratic coordinating apparatus across the different agencies involved.² Nor does the right answer lie in rebuilding the National Security Council (NSC) in an attempt to exercise centralized planning and oversight over national security operations, especially IW operations that do not lend themselves readily to deterministic, “cookie-cutter” solutions. Instead, any truly effective solution will involve revising agency mandates, consolidating lines of authority, building relevant expertise among key agencies, realigning incentive structures, and decentralizing authority and execution.

Stated directly, this paper makes a number of related arguments. First, the U.S. government's existing IA mechanisms are failing to integrate and coordinate agency resources and effort effectively, a problem that arises primarily from a disjointedness of authority and vision at the national-strategic level, resulting in corresponding adverse effects at the theater-strategic and operational levels. Furthermore, commonly proposed solutions to this major problem depend upon a set of faulty assumptions that makes them unlikely to succeed, given the realities of the key agencies' respective organizational cultural norms, existing expertise, comparative resources, and core defining tasks. Instead, any feasible and effective solution to the IA problem must include: (1) providing clear, task-driven strategic-level statements of intent, responsibility, and authority; (2) enabling key agencies to develop relevant expertise at all levels; (3) giving agencies operational control over other-agency personnel to realize true unity of vision and effort; (4) integrating other-agency personnel throughout all combatant commands; and (5) creating interagency service career incentives.

To be clear, however, this paper does not represent a call for DoD primacy across the spectrum of "hard" and "soft" applications of American instruments of power. On the contrary, while it is true that DoD must have access to the expertise and resources needed to carry out its specific IW responsibilities, the broader expertise needed to prosecute IW, nation-building, and stability operations successfully cannot and should not reside in DoD alone. Instead, the challenges of these missions will require developing leaders and capabilities within other key agencies with existing or growing national security roles, jurisdiction, and subject matter expertise. So while the U.S. military is the right vehicle for delivering American power in the non-permissive

environments where most nation-building missions and all irregular warfare operations occur, it is equally important to develop complementary resources, leaders, and capabilities in the other-than-DoD agencies that will be engaged in IW as needed.

Admittedly, changes of this magnitude will not come easily, and implementation will require overcoming major practical and political obstacles. As such, it will be necessary to create a new functional combatant command—a Humanitarian Assistance and Development Command, led by a senior executive from outside of DoD—to help overcome both types of obstacles. But the bottom line remains that in spite of claims or theories to the contrary, the only feasible path to interagency unity of effort is true unity of command. History teaches us that there is no feasible substitute for a clear statement of commander's intent and the leverage of command authority to implement it.

Disunity of Effort: The Problem, Scope, and Cause

Gaps in the interagency process, beginning at the national-strategic level and subsequently trickling down level by level, have led to an incoherence of effort in Afghanistan and Iraq and bode poorly for future IW, stability, and reconstruction missions. Agencies and their leaders disagree about desired end-states, and they then pursue their own visions, as no one agency has sufficient leverage or authority to compel any others to follow its lead. Not surprisingly then, the agencies' IA effort in IW reinforces Kingdon's broader description of American bureaucratic practices, suffering from an incoherence of vision and effort while "nobody leads anybody else."³ Observers inside and outside of American government, including deVillafranca, McCaffrey, Rashid, and others, have offered similarly stark assessments of our IW efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq.⁴

This disunity of effort shows itself in many ways. Projects are undertaken where they are needed the least, as the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) and other non-DoD agencies cannot operate in non-permissive security environments. Compounding this weakness, these agencies then complete projects that are only partially resourced, such as constructing schools without providing the teachers needed to staff them, building courthouses or jails where no trained judges or prosecutors exist, or undertaking other similarly short-sighted projects that only make sense if one's metric for success is counting "how many projects have been completed." Conversely, the military is too often guilty of focusing disproportionately upon security-centered metrics that underemphasize the development of the elements of the rule of law, institutions of national and local governance, economic infrastructure, or much-needed literacy programs, each of vital importance to IW success. These critical aspects of progress are overlooked when one's major metric for success is "how many trained army and police units have been fielded."

Furthermore, the operational-level correctives for the IA problem are not nearly as effective as they are claimed to be. While Afghanistan's Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) do in fact provide a venue for interagency coordination at the brigade level, the truth is that they vary widely in their levels of effectiveness, cohesion, and coherence.⁵ As an example of this wide variation in effectiveness, a very senior member of NATO's International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, the agency with nominal authority over the PRTs, indicated that he did not believe that he or other ISAF leaders could focus the PRTs' efforts on ISAF's specific lines of operations. Instead, he felt that the PRT members' ultimate loyalties resided with their parent U.S.

agencies or their home governments, respectively.⁶ One observer suggests that PRT performance hinges almost solely upon the ability of the military commander to overcome the IA and coalitional obstacles to success.⁷ And while there are numerous venues for interagency coordination at the joint task force (JTF) level of operations, it is clear to all participants that agreements reached in those venues ultimately have to be approved by the leaders of the parent organizations, far from the tip of the spear. These challenges are further exacerbated by the heavy concentration of civilian contractors involved, as well as the veritable “alphabet soup” of agencies with roles, responsibilities, or expertise relevant to the IW mission. There are thirteen other-than-DoD agencies listed in *Joint Publication 3-08*.⁸

There is no shortage of presidential guidance or prescribed interagency coordinating structures, so simply creating more “legislation” or “direction” is not the solution. The Clinton Administration’s 1997 *National Security Presidential Directive (NSPD)-56: Managing Complex Interagency Operations* outlined new mechanisms for facilitating interagency coordination for peace and stability operations.⁹ The *Presidential Decision Directive (PDD)-71: Strengthening Criminal Justice Systems in Support of Peace Operations* of 2000 subsequently defined the roles and responsibilities of federal agencies related to enhancing civilian law enforcement capabilities in peace operations.¹⁰ After implementing *NSPD-1: Organization of the NSC System* in 2001, the Bush Administration gave further explicit IA guidance in *NSPD-44: Stabilization, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations* in 2005.¹¹ *DoD Directive 3000.05* operationalizes that guidance, among other documents.¹² And early in 2009, the U.S. government published the *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide*, written

collaboratively with input from each U.S. agency with a major national security role.¹³

Obviously, there is no shortage of IA guidance.

However, what all of these documents share in common is a basic lack of statutory authority allowing any one agency of the U.S. government to manage the resources or personnel of any other agency directly. Put another way, each of these documents encourages the agencies to work together, but none of them actually mandates cooperation or integration, and as a result each agency is ultimately free to pursue its own vision and decisions. And to put the scope and complexity of the IW and nation-building challenges into proper perspective, Ghani and Lockhart identify ten major functions of the state that must be achieved for nation-building to succeed, including (1) implementing the rule of law, (2) providing security and managing the use of force, (3) providing administrative control, (4) managing public finance, (5) developing human capital, (6) providing social welfare, (7) providing basic services, (8) managing public assets, (9) establishing a commercial market, and (10) facilitating public borrowing.¹⁴ Clearly, no one agency of the U.S. government has the expertise or resources to go it alone in these nation-building tasks, and each of those ten major state functions requires coordinated and integrated actions from different U.S. agencies. Yet no one agency is really in charge under the current organizational structure.

Inevitably, perhaps, the results have reflected these inherent problems. In Afghanistan, Flanagan and Schear identify “a progressive loss of momentum” since 2006, a trend they attribute to several main obstacles, including “the inherent weakness of state institutions, the death of human capital, inadequate international resources, and a lack of visible progress at the local level to give Afghans hope.”¹⁵ They cite poor

development practices, the drug trade, violence, and corruption as factors that have contributed to a dismally short 43.77 year Afghan life expectancy, a meager 28.1% literacy rate, and other key indicators of a grim quality of life for the average Afghan.¹⁶ In his insightful report of conditions on the ground in Afghanistan, General McCaffrey lauds the quality of the military's kinetic operational efforts, but he then goes on to describe a country that is "in misery," given its constant warfare, short life expectancy, high infant and pregnancy mortality rates, and wholesale government corruption.¹⁷ Ricks and others offer accounts from Iraq that are consistent with these perspectives.¹⁸ We clearly have not gotten the IA/IW model right just yet.

Commonly Proposed Solutions and Faulty Assumptions

The commonly proposed potential solutions to the U.S. government's interagency problems typically fit into one of three categories:

Increasing bureaucratic complexity: One category of commonly proposed solutions to the IA problem emphasizes increasingly complex bureaucratic coordinating mechanisms, or enhanced and more complex rules for interagency interaction, to provide more and better venues for interagency coordination. These technocratic approaches usually emphasize new coordinating venues, interagency checklists, common terminologies, or a realignment of operating procedures. As an example of this line of thinking, State's Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization issued *The Post Conflict Reconstruction Essential Tasks Matrix* in 2005, an exhaustive compilation of the individual requirements for a complete nation-building mission.¹⁹ This list includes hundreds of tasks. Similarly, Pulliam suggests realigning State and DoD's regional operational boundaries—redrawing the operational maps—to help facilitate

common operating practices.²⁰ Other proposals along these lines have suggested the need for “official” interagency languages and terminology, while still others have focused on redesigning the Joint Interagency Coordination Groups (JIACG) and similar operational-level IA coordinating venues.

Increasing Other-than-DoD Agency Capacity: A second set of proposed solutions to the IA problem calls for increasing the IW capabilities of other-than-DoD agencies. Examples include the effort to create a Civilian Response Corps within the State Department, as well as other proposals to scrap DoD’s geographic combatant command (GCC) structure altogether in favor of a set of functional interagency commands, thereby deemphasizing the military’s role while enhancing the role of the ambassadors in each country. Like State’s other overseas postings, this proposal counts on volunteers to step forward for each contingency.²¹ Similar ideas have included creating a new independent government organization responsible for integrating civilian and military planning, or replacing the GCCs with “regional Embassy-like teams with all agencies represented.”²² Related initiatives are under consideration in other agencies that are traditionally focused on domestic American operations, including USDA, DOJ, and others.

Increasing Key Leader Engagement and Oversight: A third category of commonly proposed solutions to the IA problem focuses upon largely unrealistic calls for heightened senior leader attention or centralized oversight of IW operations at the national level of government. Examples of this line of thinking include a proposal that would create a “czar for IA,” or Deputy National Security Advisor for Interagency Affairs, as well as a similar approach that would create Crisis Action Teams (CATs) for each IW

mission.²³ Another similar idea includes a proposal to expand the NSC to give it a major role in the planning and oversight of these missions, while still others call for increased leader emphasis and oversight, with some focusing on the president's role and others highlighting the role of the Secretary of Defense. Proponents call for an increase in the priority given to these stability operations and IW missions at the highest levels.²⁴

In each category, however, these proposed solutions fall short of solving the IA problem, as each provides for more dialogue without addressing the fundamental cause of the disunity of effort in the first place. IA practitioners find it hard to imagine that additional coordinating bodies, increasingly complex checklists and plans, or extra presidential directives will result in more effective IA operations in the field. As long as agency personnel remain ultimately accountable to "the home office" instead of leaders on the ground, and as long as the agencies in question do not have adequate opportunities to develop the operational- and strategic-level expertise needed to meet the complex challenges of IW, these operations will remain disjointed and ineffective.

Likewise, these commonly proposed solutions also rest upon a set of faulty assumptions, assumptions likely to undermine their prospects for success upon implementation. For example, each of these solutions assumes to some degree that other-than-DoD agencies will be able to operate in non-permissive security environments, which is simply not the case. Proponents also assume that the key government agencies have the expertise needed to carry out the tasks required for nation-building and IW, such as creating the elements of rule of law, building local and national institutions of governance, or constructing other civil institutions and infrastructure, but this assumption is false, as well. In one case, the U.S. embassy in

Kabul was given the responsibility for overseeing the development of Afghan national and provincial governing institutions. But while the embassy personnel and their counterparts proved adept at their core competencies of strategic-level policy coordination, communications, and reporting, they fell far short of what was needed to bring about Afghan governmental development at the national, provincial, and local levels. This shortfall was evident in the poor quality of the mentoring effort, inadequate planning, and a low level of resolution in their tracking mechanisms. State's core competency of "conducting foreign policy" clearly does not equate to the ability to "build foreign governmental capacity," especially below the national-strategic level.

Another pervasive assumption that underpins the commonly proposed IA solutions is the idea that the lack of coordination is merely due to a lack of venues for coordination and dialogue. As this thinking goes, if all U.S. government agencies were to sit down together routinely, they would then likely achieve consensus around a common vision of the desired strategic end-state as well as the actions needed to achieve it. However, experience shows that this assumption just does not hold up, even among agencies with nominally hierarchical relationships, such as State and USAID. Instead, the more common scenario is for agencies to disagree over their visions, and to "opt out" when decisions are made that contradict their views. Where there is no forcing function to compel cooperation or unified effort, it rarely occurs. These commonly proposed solutions also assume away the problems associated with the multiple points-of-entry into the U.S. government in IW theaters. Host nation leaders, host nation agencies, allies, IGOs, and NGOs each commonly seek to "exploit the

seams” between U.S. agencies, often shopping leader-to-leader or agency-to-agency until they get the answer they want to any resource or policy question.

Finally, some commonly proposed solutions assume that placing a senior leader from State or USAID into a geographic or functional combatant leadership position will somehow automatically enable that person to lead at the theater-strategic or operational levels, functions inconsistent with those agencies’ core defining tasks and organizational cultures. Instead, leaders from State, USAID, and other key U.S. agencies will need significant training and developmental assignments in relevant commands before they will be capable of exercising those responsibilities.

Essential Features of a Feasible IA Solution

In crafting a workable framework for the U.S. government, the Founders created a system of separated, shared, and fragmented powers aimed primarily at minimizing the potential for abuse of authority. However, they emphatically drew the line at fragmenting executive authority, instead creating a unitary executive to exercise the powers of that office. As Alexander Hamilton noted in *The Federalist* #70, many colonies and other egalitarian societies of the past had implemented organizational schemes aimed at dividing executive power among different actors within government. However, none of these schemes had ever worked, leading to Hamilton’s telling observation that whatever these fragmented executive structures might be in theory, they had uniformly failed in practice, regardless of the good intentions of the designers.²⁵

Speaking specifically of the U.S. government’s executive branch, and relying upon a close observation of the failures of divided executive authority over history,

Hamilton identifies four components essential to realizing “energetic”—or effective—executive leadership. These four elements include (1) *unity*; (2) *duration*; (3) *an adequate provision for support*; and (4) *competent powers*.²⁶ *Unity* refers to mathematical unity, or the idea that the only effective executive is one person, ultimately responsible and accountable for exercising that executive authority. Hamilton describes at length the fallacy of investing one set of executive responsibilities in more than one person. *Duration* refers to the idea of a fixed period of executive authority and responsibility, accompanied by periodic scrutiny, performance reviews, and mechanisms of accountability. *Adequate provision for support* refers to both appropriate compensation and a staff sufficient to enable the executive to succeed. The phrase *competent powers* refers to providing the executive sufficient authority to carry out the assigned responsibilities of the office, without circumscribing or limiting those powers in a way that prevents the mission from being accomplished. Applied to our modern context, Hamilton argues that history discounts the notion, or “hope,” that merely creating enough venues for interagency dialogue will generate consensus, more effective coordination, or the efficient execution of complex operations.

Examining the same problem much more recently, Wilson analyzes why some bureaucratic agencies are quite successful in the execution of their responsibilities while others fail. Using armies, schools, and prisons as representative bureaucratic agencies, Wilson attributes the success of the German army against the French in World War II to an organizational culture which emphasized clearly-understood objectives and decentralized planning and execution.²⁷ Citing van Creveld’s careful analysis, he highlights the success realized through the Germans’ “mission-oriented command

system,” in which higher commanders expressed their intent in “an unmistakable way” while allowing subordinate commanders on the ground to exercise wide latitude in making personnel, resource allocation, and operational planning decisions, taking advantage of those subordinates’ proximity to the situation and their superior understanding of circumstances on the ground.²⁸ In turn, these subordinate commanders fostered independent decision-making and decentralized authority down to the lowest level, simultaneously holding subordinates strictly accountable for the consequences of their actions and punishing infractions severely.²⁹

Keeping Hamilton and Wilson’s analysis and logic in mind, any effective solution to the U.S. government’s interagency problems must include the following:

(1) The IA solution must provide clear, task-driven strategic-level statements of intent, responsibility, and authority. Most strategic documents currently emphasize vague “goals” that sound like more rhetorical platitudes or ambitious hopes than clear, task-driven guidance. Furthermore, these “goals” can be interpreted variously among the different agencies in accordance with their own organizational cultures and existing core competencies. Accordingly, the Army has viewed IW as a nearly conventional security operation—though this perspective is changing—while State, USAID, and other agencies have interpreted those same goals in ways consistent with their own organizational cultures. As Wilson notes, “The State Department has goals, but they are so general that no executive can derive from them a clear definition of the department’s tasks.”³⁰ To succeed in these complex IW missions, the national leadership must create and clearly articulate one vision for each IW theater of operations, visions built using one common language that also clearly defines specific tasks to be accomplished while

assigning equally specific roles, responsibilities, and authorities. Similarly, the national leadership must define and assign specific goals for “improved IA performance” and then hold those agencies accountable for achieving them.

(2) The IA solution must enable key agencies to develop relevant IA and IW expertise at all levels. The agencies playing key roles in IW only have part of the expertise that they need to succeed in these lengthy, complex, and demanding missions. Furthermore, these agencies often have relevant expertise at one end of the strategic spectrum while lacking corresponding skill sets at the other levels of war. Accordingly, any solution to the IA problem for IW must enable all of these key agencies to develop subject matter experts (SMEs) for each set of tasks and for each area of responsibility, including operators and planners from State, USAID, DoD, and the other responsible agencies. This task-by-task and country-by-country expertise cannot be developed merely by reading books. It is developed through a focused and persistent effort over time to understand the challenges of nation-building and IW as well as the culture, demography, geography, politics, infrastructure, economics, key leaders, and associated transnational movements of those particular countries and regions.

Put another way, we cannot afford to continue to apply ad hoc solutions to recurring challenges. Instead, we must build and maintain the expertise needed to carry out these increasingly common nation-building and IW missions. To facilitate the sharing of IA and IW lessons learned across agencies, it will be helpful to create a national security clearinghouse for IA lessons learned similar to the Center for Army Lessons Learned (CALL) in the Army. To avoid agency parochialism, this center should be housed in the National Security Council (NSC). As the USJFCOM leadership has

noted, “The joint force will need patient, persistent, and culturally savvy people to build the local relationships and partnerships essential to executing IW.”³¹

(3) The IA solution must give agencies operational control over other-agency personnel to realize true unity of vision and effort. To create a true unity of vision and effort, any feasible and desirable IA solution must give combatant and JTF commanders operational control over interagency personnel and the SMEs that each agency develops, during the period in which they are assigned to that command. One benefit of this operational control will be to provide genuine professional development and educational opportunities for national security planners and operators from all relevant agencies, facilitating the cross-fertilization of organizational cultures and expertise as well as enhanced IA effectiveness at all levels of planning and execution. Likewise, commanders should be given streamlined access to funds that have a direct, significant, and visible impact on the lives of average citizens within the theater of operations. Nagl identifies the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) as one such vehicle.³² More typically, State and the other key non-DoD agencies have retained the ultimate approval for spending decisions in Washington, DC. Similarly, we must fix civilian contractors’ employment contracts to make them results-based rather than merely time-based, a move consistent with governmental reforms suggested by Osborne and Gaebler.³³ In a sense, these moves to decentralize operational decision-making and personnel control will take advantage of the benefits of our broader system of “federalism,” where the key decisions that affect operations locally are made by the leaders closest to the situation.

(4) The IA solution must integrate other-agency personnel throughout all combatant commands. Any feasible solution to the IA problem must also integrate other-agency personnel throughout all functional and geographic combatant commands. This change would bring other-agency perspectives into the planning, resourcing, and operational processes in each command, ensuring that each agency has the opportunity to have their viewpoints heard. Furthermore, it would be wise to create new “deployable IA structures” to mobilize as needed to jumpstart the interagency process, similar to the USJFCOM’s Joint Enabling Capabilities Command (JECC) and its deployable elements that help JTFs bridge the gap between single service and joint operations. These new IA structures would represent a cadre of trained specialists in nation-building and IW tasks, with particular emphasis upon the interagency process and the overlaps and gaps between agencies. It may be appropriate to build these “Standing Joint Interagency Core Elements” in each geographic and functional combatant command. Interim measures could include placing deputies for economic development (USAID) and governance and diplomacy (State) in each combatant command, similar to the mix in U.S. Africa Command (USAFRICOM). In sum, the basic goal would be to shift the military’s primary focus from security force-centered operations to citizen-centered ones, again consistent with some of the basic reform themes advocated by Osborne and Gaebler.³⁴ This change would build upon two earlier operational and tactical level IA success stories from the past, including the Marine Corps’s “Combined Action Platoons” and the “Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support” (CORDS) program, both of which achieved significant IA success in Viet Nam.³⁵

(5) The IA solution must create meaningful interagency service career incentives.

Any solution to the IA problem will also need to align personnel incentives with the specific IW tasks that the agencies must achieve. These career incentives may range from promotions to awards to financial incentives to professional educational opportunities, earmarked for the deployable personnel from DoD and the other key agencies who become the cadre of IA, IW, and humanitarian assistance and development missions. Unfortunately, U.S. agencies typically move in the opposite direction in their personnel practices, whether due to promotion considerations, a desire for balanced experience throughout the organizations, or as a perceived need to distribute opportunities fairly. Wilson notes, “U.S. agencies distribute assignments in ways that seem to minimize the chance for key employees to become expert in their tasks.”³⁶ As Madison noted in *The Federalist* #51, “Ambition must be made to counteract ambition,” meaning that the agencies’ most talented individuals must be given similar opportunities to pursue leadership development and advancement.³⁷

Overcoming Political and Practical Obstacles to Implementation

Without any doubt, changes of this magnitude will not come easily, whether viewed from a practical perspective or a political one. Foreign policy practitioners have been skeptical of the expansion of the military’s role in the execution of foreign policy since the 1990s, when the Clinton Administration gave DoD new responsibilities for de-mining, drug interdiction, anti-terrorism, disaster relief, and other unconventional missions.³⁸ As a result, political obstacles to these proposed changes to IA practices will include concerns about a perceived “militarization of U.S. foreign policy.” Along these lines, Priest asserted in a recent and influential book that a mismatch exists between

the “culture and mission” of the demands of reconstruction and stabilization operations and the U.S. military’s mindset.³⁹ She further argues that the demands of the “Global War on Terror” have exceeded even the broad capabilities of the military, stretching the military too thin while requiring skills and expertise not available among the services.⁴⁰

Similarly, bureaucratic politics and existing organizational cultures will create additional resistance to change. Specifically, any attempt to reduce or change the roles, responsibilities, or resources of any of the major U.S. agencies involved in nation-building and IW will result in bureaucratic “pushback” that can undermine the effort from the start. Therefore, any solutions to the problem of the IA gaps must be additive to all organizations concerned. That is, to be successful, organizational changes generally must increase agency resources rather than subtracting from them, and these changes cannot threaten the existing functions and organizational culture within the agencies affected. Wilson found that additive types of changes—or the addition of roles and resources—are the ones most likely to succeed given bureaucratic and political realities.⁴¹

From a practical perspective, the main obstacles to this proposal center largely on the lack of the relevant expertise that the agencies need to carry out the nation-building and IW tasks, as well as the current DoD-driven combatant command structure’s limit on career incentives and senior leadership opportunities for non-DoD personnel. Put directly, these practical obstacles include a lack of learning opportunities and vehicles for providing IA and IW experience for non-DoD personnel. Non-DoD personnel also currently do not have significant opportunities for developing the operational planning experience that becomes second-nature in DoD’s planning culture,

or the career incentives to develop this professional experience—although senior-level field assignments such as the Deputy Chief of Mission position are in fact highly coveted within State. Finally, senior leaders from State, USAID, and other key agencies with a role in this area of national security also do not have an opportunity to realize a culminating assignment as a combatant commander under the current structure, thus increasing their incentives to pursue culminating “home office” assignments within their parent agencies rather than committing to the IA track.

With all of these practical and political obstacles in mind, creating an additional functional combatant command (FCC), a Humanitarian Assistance and Development Command (USHADCOM), led by State or USAID, would help to overcome many of these impediments. Headed by a four-star equivalent civilian leader from USAID or State, this FCC would provide a developmental track for aspiring planners and operators from USAID, State, and other relevant agencies, as well as promotion opportunities and career incentives. This new FCC would also facilitate the integration, interaction, and development of personal relationships among these key agencies, while enabling State, USAID, and other non-DoD agencies to develop much-needed planning and operational expertise at the theater-strategic and operational levels. Movement back and forth from USHADCOM to mainstream State and USAID assignments would also cross-fertilize those agencies, simultaneously performing the same function for DoD and the other combatant commands. Similar in some ways to the organization of USAFRICOM, it would be appropriate to provide a military deputy to USHADCOM, and to integrate DoD personnel at all levels throughout the new USHADCOM. The creation of this FCC would be additive, allowing the agencies to maintain intact their

organizational cultures and basic capabilities and structures, while also helping to “de-militarize” the face of American foreign policy even while enhancing the IA process.

In closing, if America intends to continue to attempt to “fix failed states,” then it is imperative that we reshape the relationships among the relevant U.S. government agencies to enable them to carry out their assigned tasks. Using DoD as a stop-gap substitute for actual “whole of government” structures in the execution of irregular warfare and nation-building has yielded results that have been lackluster at best, and it is likely that more of these types of nation-building and IW missions will be required in the future.⁴² Approaches that give agencies all of the responsibility but insufficient authority are destined to fail, and our nation ignores the basic and immutable principles of executive leadership outlined by Hamilton and others at its peril.

Endnotes

¹ Alexander Hamilton et al in Charles R. Kesler and Clinton Rossiter, eds., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 422.

² See Susan B. Glasser and Michael Grunwald, “Department’s Mission Was Undermined from the Start,” *The Washington Post* on-line edition, December 22, 2005, page A-01, accessed on 4 March 2009, and available at <http://www.washingtonpost.com>, as one example of the various accounts of the dysfunction at the Department of Homeland Security.

³ John W. Kingdon, *Agendas, Alternatives, and Public Policies*, 2nd edition (New York: Pearson, 1997), 71-89.

⁴ See Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos* (New York, Viking, 2008); General Barry R. McCaffrey, “After Action Report: Visit NATO SHAPE HQ and Afghanistan, 21-26 July 2008,” unpublished memorandum (New York: Department of Social Sciences, U.S. Military Academy, July 30, 2008); and Richard deVillafranca, “Reconsidering Afghanistan: Time for an ‘Azimuth Check,’” *Parameters*, Vol. 38, number 4, winter 2008-09.

⁵ Robert J. Bebbler, “The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in COIN,” *Small Wars Journal* on-line edition, 10 November 2008, available at <http://nps.edu/programs/ccs/Webjournal>, accessed on 15 February 2009.

⁶ Personal interview with the author in theater in January 2008.

⁷ Robert J. Bebbler, "The Role of Provincial Reconstruction Teams in COIN," *Small Wars Journal* on-line edition, 10 November 2008, available at <http://nps.edu/programs/ccs/Webjournal>, accessed on 15 February 2009.

⁸ Department of Defense, *Joint Publication 3-08: Interagency, Intergovernmental Organization, and Nongovernmental Organization Coordination During Joint Operations, Volume II* (Washington: Department of Defense; March 17, 2006), Appendix B.

⁹ Thomas S. Szayna, Derek Eaton, and Amy Richardson, *Preparing the Army for Stability Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2007), 9.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 9.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, xiv.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ U.S. Government, *U.S. Government Counterinsurgency Guide* (Washington: Government Printing Office, January 2009).

¹⁴ Ashraf Ghani and Clare Lockhart, *Fixing Failed States* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 124-163.

¹⁵ Stephen J. Flanagan and James A. Schear, eds., *Strategic Challenges: America's Global Security Agenda* (Washington: INSS/ National Defense University Press, 2008), 134-135.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 136.

¹⁷ General Barry R. McCaffrey, "After Action Report: Visit NATO SHAPE HQ and Afghanistan, 21-26 July 2008," unpublished memorandum (New York: Department of Social Sciences, U.S. Military Academy, July 30, 2008), 3.

¹⁸ Thomas E. Ricks, *Fiasco* (New York: Penguin, 2006).

¹⁹ Thomas S. Szayna, Derek Eaton, and Amy Richardson, *Preparing the Army for Stability Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand Corporation, 2007), xv.

²⁰ John E. Pulliam, "Lines on a Map: Regional Orientations and U.S. Interagency Cooperation," *USAWC Strategy Research Project*, U.S. Army War College, March 2005.

²¹ See Office of Inspector General, "Inspection of Embassy Kabul, Afghanistan," *OIG Report ISP-I-06-13A*, 18 January, 2006.

²² Stephen J. Flanagan and James A. Schear, eds., *Strategic Challenges: America's Global Security Agenda* (Washington: INSS/ National Defense University Press, 2008), 303.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 321.

²⁵ Alexander Hamilton et al in Charles R. Kesler and Clinton Rossiter, eds., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 421-429.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 15-18.

²⁸ Ibid, 16-18.

²⁹ Ibid, 16-17 and 25.

³⁰ Ibid, 31-49.

³¹ Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare (IW) Joint Operating Concept, Version 1.0* (Washington: Department of Defense; September 11, 2007), 1.

³² John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 edition), xiii.

³³ David Osborne and Ted Gaebler, *Reinventing Government* (New York: Penguin, 1993), chapter 5.

³⁴ Ibid, chapter 6.

³⁵ John A. Nagl, *Learning to Eat Soup with a Knife: Counterinsurgency Lessons from Malaya and Vietnam* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005 edition), 138-165.

³⁶ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 171.

³⁷ James Madison et al in Charles R. Kesler and Clinton Rossiter, eds., *The Federalist Papers* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 319.

³⁸ Dana Priest, *The Mission: Waging War and Keeping Peace with America's Military* (New York: Norton and Company, 2004), 45.

³⁹ Ibid, 19.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 396-397.

⁴¹ James Q. Wilson, *Bureaucracy: What Government Agencies Do and Why They Do It* (New York: Basic Books, 1989), 225.

⁴² Stephen J. Flanagan and James A. Schear, eds., *Strategic Challenges: America's Global Security Agenda* (Washington: INSS/ National Defense University Press, 2008), 142.

