

# THE NATIONAL INTEREST

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# In the Wake of War

## *Getting Serious about Nation-Building*

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—Brent Scowcroft & Samuel R. Berger—

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**E**ARLIER THIS summer, Baghdad's mayor, Alaa Mahmoud al-Timimi, threatened to resign over shortfalls in funding for infrastructure rehabilitation, especially for the city's unreliable water supply. Recent rebuilding efforts were set back when insurgents damaged a key water main, leaving two million Baghdad residents without water during a week when average temperatures topped 100 degrees.

Iraq's economy and infrastructure rehabilitation remain shaky, as do the security situation and political transition. More than two years after a stunning three-week march to Baghdad, the United States still struggles to consolidate its battlefield victory.

Warfighting has two important dimensions: winning wars and winning the peace. The United States excels in the first, but without an equal commitment to stability and reconstruction, combat victories can be lost. Just as initial combat

operations require advance planning and substantial commitment of money and manpower to succeed, so does the second phase of victory, commonly called "nation-building"—known inside the Pentagon as "stabilization and reconstruction" activities. We echo Zalmay Khalilzad's point in the previous issue that we must "move forward quickly on the twin tracks of reconstruction . . . building up local capacity for the long term."<sup>1</sup>

We can no longer treat "nation-building" as an occasional emergency rather than an ongoing reality of the post-Cold War world. Since 1993, from Mogadishu to Mosul, the United States has undertaken six such operations around the world. Currently, 135,000 U.S. troops remain on the ground in Iraq, at an approximate cost of \$50 billion a year. In Afghanistan, three years after the Taliban fled, 9,000 NATO forces and 17,000 U.S. troops are left to secure the capital and countryside and to continue the hunt for Al-Qaeda. The pace of peacekeeping activities by the United Nations and regional organizations also continues to surge; the UN deploys 66,000 peacekeepers in 17 operations.

Yet "nation-building" remains a controversial proposition. The term still carries negative connotations, conjuring up memories of the interventions of the 1990s and the contentious debate about

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<sup>1</sup>"How to Nation-Build: Ten Lessons from Afghanistan", *The National Interest* (Summer 2005).

the merits of responding to conflict in weak and failing states.

The parameters of the discussion changed dramatically following 9/11. No longer were the problems presented by failing states and conflict simply a humanitarian concern. The Bush Administration understands this reality. The September 2002 *National Security Strategy* notes:

The events of September 11, 2001, taught us that weak states, like Afghanistan, can pose as great a danger to our national interests as strong states. Poverty does not make poor people into terrorists and murderers. Yet poverty, weak institutions and corruption can make weak states vulnerable to terrorist networks and drug cartels within their borders.

Thus, action to stabilize and rebuild states emerging from conflict is not “foreign policy as social work”, a favorite quip of the 1990s. It is equally a national security priority. And the challenges of failed states and nations emerging from conflict will remain a significant feature of the international landscape for the foreseeable future.

Yet, while the decade-long argument about the importance of stability operations to U.S. national security—which began over the first President Bush’s effort to prevent mass starvation in Somalia—seems to be resolved at the level of stated policy, there remains no consensus on questions related to implementation.

**D**ESPITE SOME welcome initial moves, the stark reality is that the United States today does not possess the right mix of skills and capabilities to stabilize and rebuild nations. Stabilization and reconstruction operations straddle an uncomfortable perch between conventional war fighting—the purview of the military—and traditional economic development assistance—traditionally a civilian responsibility. Within the U.S. government, re-

sponsibility for stabilization operations remains diffuse, and authority is unclear. For example, the U.S. military, the Justice Department and the State Department all have responsibilities relating to the training and monitoring of security forces. Further, policies delineating the proper role of military and civilian agencies have yet to be articulated. Poor bureaucratic organization has prevented “lessons learned” from one operation being transferred to the next, resulting in inefficient operations, wasted resources and stymied ambitions. The absence of explicit policy and institutional frameworks in this area reflects an outdated attitude that stabilization operations are extraordinary rather than expected.

In 1997 the Clinton Administration attempted to address the issue in Presidential Decision Directive 56 (PDD-56), which outlined the roles and responsibilities of various agencies involved in “complex contingency operations.” This directive drew on the expertise of U.S. officials who had been involved in multiple missions in the early 1990s. PDD-56 worked well in helping to establish a framework for civilian-military coordination. However, the directive was not consistently implemented. Moreover, having entered office very skeptical of the interventions undertaken by the Clinton Administration, the Bush Administration demonstrated little enthusiasm for PDD-56.

The experiences of Afghanistan and Iraq, however, have started to change both attitudes and policies. The Bush Administration created the Office of Stabilization and Reconstruction at the State Department in July 2004. And the administration’s current plan to establish a “Stabilization and Reconstruction Policy Coordination Committee”, designed to develop general policy in this area, is a welcome first step in tightening coordination.

However, much more is needed. At the highest level, there must be decisive leadership to direct the proper roles of

the military and civilian agencies. This can be difficult, because the lines of responsibility in such missions are often fluid and awkward, but the problem is not trivial in scope or consequence. Resolving these inevitable conflicts is essential and requires the highest-level authority to provide guidance, resources and decisive leadership.

Given the stakes, the complexity and the interagency nature of policy decisions associated with stabilization and reconstruction, the National Security Council (NSC) should have responsibility for overarching policy in this area. We recommend creating an NSC Directorate for stabilization and reconstruction activities, with responsibility for mission planning, civil-military coordination, and establishing interagency roles and responsibilities.

Security and reconstruction are two elements in nation-building, but it will never be a purely “civilian” operation. The military will always have the main responsibility for establishing and maintaining public order and security in a post-combat setting. In a case like Afghanistan, where there is active armed resistance, these tasks challenge military forces to shift back and forth from combat to stability operations at a moment’s notice.

Since Vietnam, the military has generally resisted an expanded role in stabilization and reconstruction missions, arguing that the military’s critical mission is combat operations. Because of the emphasis on high-intensity conflict, the United States wins wars faster and with fewer forces and casualties. But “transformation” has had an unintended consequence. Rapid victory collapses the enemy but does not destroy it. Adversaries can go underground to wage guerilla warfare, creating a need for more troops for longer periods of time during the stabilization and reconstruction phases. This unintended consequence of military “transformation” has important implications for the structure and size of the military.

**W**E NEED a general purpose force of sufficient size and skill to “win the peace.” Attitudes in the military are changing, but this message must come unambiguously from the top. Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld should designate stabilization and reconstruction operations as essential military tasks, with attendant support for changes in the training and preparation of U.S. forces. This means increasing the number of active-duty personnel, both to diminish the burden on reserves and to account for the rotation of forces demanded by post-conflict reconstruction missions.

The civilian dimension is also in dire need of overhaul. Today, civilian agencies involved in stabilization and reconstruction activities operate without the benefit of a “unified command” structure to ensure that policy, programs and resources are properly aligned.

As a first step, the State Department should be empowered to oversee all civilian stabilization and reconstruction activities. This will require fundamental State Department reform. However, no other agency has the expertise for what is basically an exercise in state-to-state relations.

We believe the new State Department Coordinator for Stabilization and Reconstruction should be elevated to the undersecretary level. This would demonstrate the importance of post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization as a core State Department mission, as arms control and counter-terrorism are today. This office should be backed by a replenishing fund of \$500 million, creating a single, flexible, “no year” account of sufficient size to jump-start U.S. assistance programs while easing reliance on supplemental appropriations to handle crises.

For future missions, the State Department should focus on public security and rule of law programs and be prepared to deploy civilian “advance teams” as early as possible alongside the military,

down to the brigade level. Such a step would promote civilian-military coordination and streamline the often awkward transition from military-led activities to civilian-directed efforts. Over time, as the security environment allows, civilian staffing would increase, and the military presence would be drawn down.

Our efforts to prepare a cadre of trained civilian government employees and volunteers for participation in stabilization operations have been inadequate. Therefore, we recommend the development of a civilian “Active Response Corps”, comprised of volunteers with relevant expertise, to provide manpower for an expanded civilian role.

USAID should be tasked with the responsibility for day-to-day oversight of stabilization operations. Thus, we support the creation of a new post at USAID—a Deputy Administrator for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations, who would report jointly to the new undersecretary of state and the USAID administrator. This official would supervise the agency’s stabilization and reconstruction activities, some of which are currently undertaken through several USAID functional and regional bureaus (each of which now reports to an assistant administrator).

**A**NOTHER TOP reconstruction priority is providing essential services, including basic infrastructure repair, which, along with security, is a necessary precondition for further economic rehabilitation efforts. Though many governments and international organizations have developed quick-impact programs to jump-start small-scale projects, the larger capital construction projects are subject to slow and cumbersome processes.

A core problem is the donor conference process. While the impact of failing infrastructure is felt from day one, these conferences take significant time and effort to pull together. Further, once

pledges are made, it often takes donor countries an unacceptably long time to fulfill their commitments, since many, including the United States, rely on budget supplementals to mobilize these funds.

We recommend the creation of a standing multilateral reconstruction trust fund, managed under the auspices of the G-8. The new fund should be capitalized at approximately \$1 billion and would be managed by a donor board consisting of G-8 member states’ representatives, as well as representatives from other donor countries. Its focus would be high-priority year-one reconstruction projects or underwriting certain critical recurring expenditures (such as supporting salaries and maintaining key government institutions).

These steps will help the United States develop the necessary capabilities to undertake nation-building. However, we recognize that these operations require a range of expertise and resources that no single nation—not even the United States—can easily assemble or afford.

In countries where active conflict has largely abated but instability remains, UN-led operations are generally the most effective means of promoting long-term security and stability. The \$4 billion estimated annual costs of all ongoing UN-led deployments (of which the United States is responsible for roughly \$1.2 billion) is a relative national security bargain.

However, demand for the UN to conduct stabilization and reconstruction missions continues to outstrip the capacity of the institution. Troop and personnel requirements often exceed the numbers that member states are willing to contribute, while failed states spiral into chaos.

Among other steps, we believe the UN should focus more on mission planning, training and developing operational standards to improve interoperability of national forces in a multilateral environment, recognizing that many missions authorized by the UN Security Council may be more appropriately led by

“green helmeted” national forces than “blue helmeted” ones. Further, new missions should not be authorized unless the proper numbers of peacekeepers and related equipment are identified. It is better to get it right than do it fast. And since there is no consistent funding for crucial non-military stabilization and reconstruction activities, the UN should establish an assessment schedule similar to those used for peacekeeping operations.

**A**LSO CRUCIAL is developing stabilization and reconstruction capabilities within regional organizations. There is a pressing need to increase the overall number of well-trained and well-equipped peacekeepers. The large majority of UN peacekeepers are now in Africa, and African governments have the greatest interest and incentive to contribute to such operations. However, they also have the greatest need for train-and-equip programs to enable them to undertake additional responsibilities. The Bush Administration has indicated it would seek an additional \$660 million to train and equip peacekeepers through the Global Peace Operations Initiative, starting in Africa. In a welcome move, Congress funded the first year of the Bush Administration’s proposal at \$80 million.

Beyond Africa, both NATO and the European Union have launched initiatives to develop stabilization capabilities. At the June 2004 NATO summit, the alliance vowed to improve its operational capabilities to better deal with challenges such as stabilization activities outside its traditional theater of operations. NATO announced that it intended to upgrade its commitment to the International Security Assistance Force in Afghanistan, partly through the introduction of provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs). PRTs, with both civilian and military personnel, are deployed to Afghanistan’s provinces to provide security for aid workers and assist

in reconstruction work.

For its part, the European Union also has sought to develop its capacity to deploy military forces and civilians for stabilization and reconstruction operations. The EU assumed formal control of the peacekeeping mission in Bosnia in December 2004, and there are EU police missions in Bosnia and Macedonia and an EU rule of law mission in Georgia.

But this should not be solely a “transatlantic” matter. It is time for the United States to engage other governments, such as Australia, India, Brazil and Argentina, to encourage broader peacekeeping cooperation in regions that have not been actively engaged on this issue. These and others have demonstrated significant capabilities in stabilization and reconstruction, and their skills and expertise could play an important role in encouraging more effective involvement by states in their regions.

In the end, however, the momentum for change means that America must show leadership and sustained attention to this question. We must take the first step by getting our own house in order. In doing so, the United States will be in a strong position to persuade others to change.

Enhancing America’s capability to conduct stabilization and reconstruction operations in cooperation with others should be a top foreign policy priority. In failed states with ongoing conflict and terrorist footholds, economic and political improvements will never be realized. Where conflict has been followed by inattention and unmet promises, violence can reappear and spread, and military advantages can be lost in chaos and corruption.

The United States, with history’s most powerful armed forces, need not squander its victories with poor post-war planning. The United States can no longer afford to mount costly military actions and then treat the follow-on mission with anything less than the same seriousness of purpose. □