

# CIVILIAN-MILITARY COOPERATION IN ACHIEVING AID EFFECTIVENESS: LESSONS FROM RECENT STABILIZATION CONTEXTS

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## Executive Summary

Another international stabilization, reconstruction and state-building effort on the scale of the recent efforts in Iraq or Afghanistan is unlikely in the foreseeable future. However, there will continue to be a substantial number of insecure and fragile areas where effective international aid will be needed but difficult to provide. Recent efforts to assess international aid effectiveness in fragile states have provided a framework of general principles and have begun the difficult work of assessing donors' efforts according to those principles. In addition, scholars and practitioners have recently begun to question more basic assumptions about aid in insurgency environ-

ments—that is, whether aid actually has the effect of promoting stability.

However, missing from these debates is a focused discussion of the role of foreign militaries in delivering the range of assistance needed in fragile, postconflict and conflict areas. Donor countries and the international community need to consider how to deliver the right mix of military- and civilian-provided aid, how militaries can best support the delivery of civilian-provided aid, and how to incorporate the civilian and military contributions of nontraditional donors like China. As a starting point, consider these lessons from recent stabilization contexts:

- *Develop the capacity of the host country to coordinate, manage and implement aid programs.* Host-country-led aid efforts have a better chance of success and sustainability. Ideally, the question of the right mix of military- and civilian-provided aid would be answered through a well-informed host-country analysis of needs and priorities.
- *Clarify the mission.* A lack of clarity regarding the aid mission's purpose has plagued recent stabilization efforts, especially in Afghanistan. Clearly articulating a realistic vision makes it more likely that civilian and military entities will work together effectively to achieve common goals.
- *Beware hastily planned and executed aid projects.* Many quick-impact projects pursued under exigent circumstances did not work, had unintended negative consequences or were not sustainable. With some exceptions, aid projects should fit into a broader longer-term strategy, and civilian experts should have input on all development projects. Sequencing is key.
- *Innovate ways to protect aid delivery.* Security is still the major issue inhibiting project implementation in stabilization contexts. Donors need to find more innovative, effective and varied ways to deal with security issues in aid delivery.

## The Context

Civilian and military cooperation in providing international aid is not new. Governments will continue to turn to militaries for help in humanitarian emergencies, because militaries are able to mobilize quickly to provide robust logistics, labor resources, and lifesaving aid such as food, medicine and fuel.

Militaries are also indispensable for restoring order and maintaining postconflict security through multi-lateral peacekeeping missions. In addition, militaries should take the lead in building the capacity of other military forces to contribute to regional and international peacekeeping efforts. Militaries should also be involved in security-sector reform, especially in countries emerging from decades of conflict.

Beyond these areas, donor countries and the international community need to consider how best to deliver effective military- and civilian-provided aid in insecure and fragile environments. Pakistan, Somalia, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Yemen, the Palestinian territories and other fragile areas will continue to pose serious challenges similar to those encountered in Iraq and Afghanistan. These low-capacity and so-called opposed development environments (that is, development activities undertaken in the presence of an armed opposition) require a different aid response from what is appropriate in more stable countries (see U.S. Institute of Peace 2010).

Traditional donors providing assistance to insecure and fragile areas will also need to agree on how best to utilize new actors interested in stability in certain regions and willing to commit resources and labor power in support of common goals. For example, the United Arab Emirates has shown an interest in supporting the development of effective security forces in Yemen and is looking to donor countries for guidance on how best to do this. China, once a critic of UN peacekeeping efforts, has quietly ramped up its contributions to such missions in recent years and is now a major contributor. In 2009, Beijing declined NATO's invitation to send Chinese troops to participate in joint military operations in Afghanistan; but China continues to provide substantial amounts of

assistance (more than \$250 million since 2002) to support security and development in Afghanistan.

Recently, the international aid community has made efforts to monitor the effectiveness of international aid in fragile countries. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development adopted a set of 10 “Principles for Good International Engagement in Fragile States and Situations” in 2007 to guide international engagement in fragile states across a wide agenda—including security, diplomacy, development cooperation, peace building, humanitarian action, trade and investment (OECD 2010).<sup>1</sup> These principles complement the commitments set out in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and are integrated into the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action.<sup>2</sup> Early in 2010, the OECD released a report reviewing the progress by donors, based on qualitative and quantitative indicators, in implementing its principles in six fragile countries: Afghanistan, the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Haiti, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste.

The report did not focus on civilian and military roles, though it did point out some weaknesses in the relationship between civilian and military providers of assistance. It found that one of the main challenges in introducing an integrated approach linking donors’ political, security and development objectives in fragile states was a lack of effective coordination structures. In Afghanistan, various military–civilian platforms have been established but have proven ineffective, mainly because of the dominance of the military agenda, the failure of the various parties to understand each other, and the rapid turnover of staff, particularly among the military. The report found no recorded occurrences of whole-of-government strategies—one strategy for a given donor, integrating polit-

ical, security and development goals—in any country except for the United Nations’ 2009 Joint Vision in Sierra Leone. It found that, generally, international military forces and peacekeepers operate outside national frameworks for security and development.

Scholars and practitioners have recently focused attention on whether aid activities actually promote stability in insecure environments. There is surprisingly little empirical evidence to support this notion, and more work is needed. In the context of NATO’s counterinsurgency strategy in Afghanistan, there is a serious question of whether aid activities are winning “hearts and minds” or losing them. In the context of longer-term development, aid may be more effective in consolidating stability in more secure areas rather than promoting stability in very insecure areas (see Feinstein International Center 2010; Bradbury and Kleinman 2010).

For international aid to be effective in fragile and conflict-affected areas, a consensus needs to be reached on the lessons of civilian–military cooperation learned from recent stabilization missions. A more detailed and comprehensive look is needed at the difficulties of deciding who should provide certain types of assistance, the appropriate sequencing and integration of civilian and military efforts, and how best to incorporate the civilian and military components of nontraditional aid providers. As a starting point, it is useful to consider the following four lessons from recent stabilization contexts.

### **Lesson I: Develop the Capacity of the Host Country to Coordinate, Manage and Implement Aid Programs**

Ideally, the question of the right mix of military- and civilian-provided aid in fragile and postconflict areas

would be answered by the host government based on a well-informed analysis of needs and priorities. A consensus is emerging that, to the extent feasible, the international donor community should demand and support leadership and guidance from recipient countries on aid priorities and implementation, even in fragile, conflict and postconflict environments. This approach can help harmonize donors' effort and build the recipient government's capacity to manage its development.

This challenge is indeed great. The lack of such competent and legitimate governmental entities is often the heart of the problem. In some contexts, civil society groups and the private sector may be the only viable recipients of donors' technical assistance and resources. But for the most part, fragile countries that receive aid have at least some functioning government entities that can be assisted in developing their capacity to manage donors' aid efforts. Even in Afghanistan, where governance structures are still weak, a consensus has emerged that the only way to sustain success in the development effort is for it to be led by Afghans. There have been significant successes in certain areas, for example, in health care delivery.

The key to building host-country capacity is to start early and to advocate it as the framework for providing assistance. Technical assistance to government ministries and efforts to develop a competent civil service should begin as soon as possible, even in advance of democratic elections. To the extent possible, projects should be implemented by local government ministries and local aid organizations rather than large, donor-based development firms. Building the capacity of such local institutions should be among the first aid projects begun in fragile and postconflict areas.

## Lesson 2: Clarify the Mission

The international aid effectiveness dialogue recognizes that each stabilization situation is different, and that the regional and country context must be the starting point when providing assistance in fragile areas. Some progress has been made by donors in this regard. Policymakers and aid providers are acknowledging that understanding and working within the political context of the host nation are critical for success.

What is often lacking, however, is high-level guidance from donors' civilian leaders regarding the overall scope of the aid mission. There is a continuum of potential end states that can potentially be achieved through stabilization and assistance activities, from simply maintaining a cease-fire to full nation building—complete with functioning democratic institutions and access to livelihoods. In stabilization contexts, military and civilian planners and implementers need high-level officials to articulate feasible, achievable goals for each phase of engagement. Without such clarity, military and civilian entities pursue projects and activities that meet their own goals—which are often different—and fail to integrate efforts. A clearly articulated and realistic vision makes it more likely that civilian and military entities will work together, including instituting appropriate coordination mechanisms, to achieve common goals.

In addition, there must be a credible forum where civilian and military entities can coordinate their activities and share the lessons learned with others engaged in development efforts in a particular context. Being able to share real-time information about what works and what does not in the context of a particular

fragile state can make the difference between a successful and an unsuccessful stabilization mission.

### **Lesson 3: Beware Hastily Planned and Executed Aid Projects**

In Iraq, the U.S. Commander's Emergency Response Program began in 2003 to enable military commanders to pursue, with little oversight, quick-impact humanitarian and reconstruction projects as part of the U.S. counterinsurgency effort. This program has since been expanded to Afghanistan. In both Iraq and Afghanistan, provincial reconstruction teams, which include military as well as civilian experts, were created to promote stability by facilitating the provision of aid in very insecure environments.

Some projects were a great success in their own right. Some "foot-in-the-door" projects enabled engagement that generated the understanding needed to form a more strategic approach. But many projects did not work, had unintended negative consequences or were not sustainable.<sup>3</sup> Over time, as civilian–military integration became better, quick-impact projects also got better because they were linked to a longer-term development strategy.

With some exceptions, projects designed under emergency circumstances should fit into a broader longer-term strategy. Civilian experts should have input on all development projects. Sequencing and sustainability must be considered at the beginning of the planning process. Where the military is taking the lead on development, military units need to be appropriately incentivized to pursue projects that will have the most positive impact rather than projects that can be concluded during a single tour. All entities implementing development projects must moni-

tor and evaluate the projects' effectiveness. On the funding side, policymakers must balance the need for flexibility in the use of funding for aid projects with the need for transparency and accountability in the use of the funds.

On a broader level, donors need to seriously consider the consequences of pouring large amounts of aid money into a particular area as part of a counterinsurgency strategy, that is, to employ locals so they do not join the insurgency. Beyond the risks of waste and fraud, this approach can spark tensions and rivalries within the community and undermine the local government's attempts to build capacity and legitimacy by providing basic services to local populations (see Filkins 2010). Moreover, if not incorporated into a broader development strategy for the town, province and country, this approach can raise public expectations for handouts that the local government will be unable to sustain once donor funds are withdrawn (see Chandrasekaran 2010).

### **Lesson 4: Find Innovative Ways to Protect Aid Delivery**

Security is currently the major issue inhibiting the implementation of aid projects in Iraq and Afghanistan. Insurgents, terrorists and other armed groups will continue to be a reality in fragile states and regions for donors looking to provide assistance.

In very insecure environments, a foreign military presence may be indispensable. UN-led and other peacekeeping missions staffed by military contingents from UN member nations will continue to be called upon to provide breathing space for civilian aid efforts. To be successful, peacekeeping missions need adequate resources and achievable mandates. Donors must

bear in mind that in some circumstances, a peace-keeping mission may be the easiest political solution but not the most practical one, particularly if the mission is not given the resources and authority to actually succeed, or if there is no peace to keep.

The most important recent innovation in securing the provision of international aid in postconflict environments are the provincial reconstruction teams in Iraq and Afghanistan. PRTs evolved over time and will continue to be a useful tool in particularly dangerous contexts. The most important challenge facing the PRT experiment today is how best to transition the functions performed by PRTs into more permanent, longer-term aid structures. In some instances, such a transition will mean moving to local ownership of the mission (including training indigenous security forces to protect aid delivery), and others may require the creation of a permanent or semipermanent donor presence.

To deal effectively in a variety of fragile contexts, both militaries and civilian aid providers will need to innovate more ways to deal with security issues, depending on the particular situation. Using local implementers will be the right answer in many contexts, though higher security concerns will still exist for program monitors.

The bilateral involvement of militaries may also be crucial in certain circumstances. For example, the civilian side of the U.S. government is using its military to implement programs in areas of northwestern Pakistan that are too insecure for civilians to enter. These programs include teaching the Pakistani military how to manage aid programs. Training local security entities in how to provide aid and how to secure the provision of civilian-provided aid can fill

a crucial gap in aid delivery when a foreign military is seeking to downgrade its profile in a country but civilian aid providers still cannot operate freely due to the security situation.

## References

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## Endnotes

1. The 10 principles are (1) take context as the starting point; (2) do no harm; (3) focus on state building as the central objective; (4) prioritize prevention; (5) recognize the links between political, security, and development objectives; (6) promote nondiscrimination as a basis for inclusive and stable societies; (7) align with local priorities in different ways in different contexts; (8) agree on practical coordination mechanisms between international actors; (9) act fast, . . . but stay engaged long enough to give success a chance; and (10) avoid pockets of exclusion (that is, areas or social groups).
2. The Paris Declaration, endorsed on March 2, 2005, is an international agreement to which over one hundred ministers, heads of agencies and other senior officials adhered and committed their countries and organizations to continue to increase efforts in harmonization, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of actions and indicators that can be monitored.
3. For example, in April 2010, the special inspector general for Iraq reconstruction found that after four years of effort and about \$35.5 million in expenditures on 46 projects at the Baghdad International Airport, 24 projects valued at \$16.1 million had unsuccessful outcomes. The report found that Multi-National Corps-Iraq did not coordinate sufficiently with civilian agencies, lacked adequate expertise in development projects, and had no plan in place to evaluate the projects' results (Office of the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction 2010).