Clarity and Culture in STABILITY OPERATIONS

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PHOTO: A U.S. Army Soldier from the 82d Airborne Division provides security for a meeting between officials at the fertilizer plant in Bayji, Iraq, 28 February 2007. (U.S. Army, SFC Robert C. Brogan)

THE CONTEMPORARY OPERATIONAL environments that define the current global geostrategic setting are dynamic and complex. Today, a confluence of "conditions, circumstances, and influences . . . affect the employment of military forces and bear on the decisions of the unit commander."[2] The deluge of mostly unanticipated destruction in the 21st century is a symptom of the fragile and volatile nature of the economic and sociopolitical structures in these interdependent operational environments. To come to grips with the complexity and uncertainty underlying today's operational environments, the Army must rise to a new level of competency. It must transform and change its physical structures, its cultural mind-set, and the types of missions it willingly accepts as part of its culture.

The Army currently is undergoing that process. Integral to these changes are the Army's doctrinal understanding and acceptance of counterinsurgency (COIN) operations. A similar process for stability operations should accompany such change to deal adequately with the threats, both physical and conceptual, that influence conditions faced today.

The purpose of stability operations is to "promote and sustain regional and global security" in order to advance U.S. national interests.[3] This goal is difficult to achieve in today's operational environments and will continue to be so. Unfortunately, Thomas Barnett's theory that "disconnectedness [from globalization] defines danger" anticipates greater U.S. military involvement—and hence more stability operations—across the globe.[4] Barnett claims that U.S. military intervention will be required in "gap" and "seam" states, since eliminating the threats originating from those regions is the surest way to ensure worldwide stability and security.[5] The Report of the National Intelligence Council's 2020 Project depicts a world with an "arc of instability spanning [the] Middle East, Asia, [and] Africa."[6] These regions roughly correspond to the areas covered by Barnett's gap and seam states. Robert Kaplan argues further that "criminal anarchy emerges as the real 'strategic' danger. [Criminal anarchy entails] disease, overpopulation, unprovoked crime, scarcity of resources . . . the empowerment of private armies . . . and international drug cartels," as well as a breakdown of the

state and a lack of integration in the global political and economic community.[7] This milieu requires the Army to engage not only military and insurgent forces, but to concentrate on economic, cultural, and sociopolitical structures and issues. Stability operations, in many circumstances, become the decisive operations. As FM 3-0 points out, the Army will be involved in stability operations "for the foreseeable future."[8] The Army particularly needs to clarify its terms of art while incorporating stability operations deeply in its mission culture as a continuum of goals fused with COIN activities.

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Stability Operations Framework

The Army is a doctrine-based organization. Therefore, it relies on precise language to ensure a common understanding across the force. For example, tactical tasks with stipulative definitions such as "secure" and "clear" have very specific meanings; certain activities must take place and resources must be allocated to achieve those tasks. Precise language enhances the ability to define and articulate a problem and promotes a common understanding. Common understanding promotes unity of effort. Clear understanding of terms is necessary to meet the commander's intent and guidance and to achieve established goals.

Because of evolving doctrine, writers should synchronize manuals that address stability operations. Current experiences in Iraq have brought the terms "COIN" and "stability operations" into vogue. With the new emphasis on COIN, to include the publication of FM 3-24, *Counterinsurgency* (December 2006), common terms and concepts in COIN operations have been broadly disseminated. However, it is likely that Army personnel are less aware of what constitutes stability operations. In part, this is a reflection of the word "stability."

Because people can define stability in a general sense, preconceived ideas conjured up by the word obscure a precise understanding of stability operations. There is a similar problem with using the term "peace operations," which connotes activities in a non-threatening environment. However, peace-enforcement operations, a subset of peace operations under stability operations, require the threat or use of force; violence is, in fact, an integral facet of peace operations. Because such terms often carry implicit meaning, synchronization will help avoid cloudy thinking and misunderstandings.

While FM 3-24 has provided a comprehensive framework for COIN operations, it has not resolved the lack of clarity in the relationship between COIN and stability operations. The manual defines COIN as "a combination of offensive, defensive, and stability operations."[9] This arrangement implies that COIN comprises full-spectrum operations, of which stability operations is a subset. The manual then describes stability operations as activities concerned with civil security, civil control, essential services, governance, and economic and infrastructure development. This list does not, however, match the stability operations activities listed in FM 3-0, *Operations* (June 2001), and FM 3-07, *Stability Operations and Support Operations* (February 2003). While both these manuals are undergoing revision, they are still current and break down stability operations into 10 wide-ranging categories (see table).[10]

Furthermore, FM 3-07 discusses COIN under its chapter on foreign internal defense, a subset of stability operations. Adding to the complexity is joint doctrine. Joint Publication 3-0, *Joint Operations*, lists COIN as a type of military operation (along with combating terrorism, support to insurgency, and peace operations) that in Army doctrine falls under stability operations.[11]

Whether COIN is a subset of stability operations or vice versa is not the main issue. The issue is the need for clarity in doctrine and terminology. Such clarity will give personnel a common framework to identify and define problems, discuss issues and procedures, and develop solutions. Clarity is all the

> ***Common understanding promotes unity of effort.***

Types of Military Operations	OFFENSE	DEFENSE	STABILITY	SUPPORT
Types of Stability Operations and their Subordinate Forms	**Peace Operations** • Peacekeeping • Peace Enforcement • Operations in Support of Diplomatic Efforts **Foreign Internal Defense** • Indirect Support • Direct Support • Combat Operations **Security Assistance** **Humanitarian and Civic Assistance** **Support to Insurgencies** • Unconventional Warfare • Conventional Combat Actions **Support to Counterdrug Operations** • Detection and Monitoring • Host-Nation Support • C4 • Intelligence, Planning, CSS, Training, and Manpower Support • Reconnaissance		**Combatting Terrorism** • Antiterrorism • Counterterrorism **Noncombatant Evacuation Operations** **Arms Control** • Inspection • Protection • Destruction **Show of Force** • Increased Force Visibility • Exercises and Demonstration	

Stability operations table.

more important in joint, interagency, and combined environments. Without agreed-upon doctrinal terms, there is too much room for interpretation and misunderstanding.

Doctrine should serve as a descriptive guide that may provide some insights into the diverse circumstances one faces in war. However, doctrine cannot be prescriptive today because it cannot accurately reflect the evolving chaotic, nonlinear operational environment. Visualization and assessment are needed to understand the complex environment in which operations will take place. Within the doctrinal framework, visualization and assessment processes should help commanders formulate plans matching the circumstances of a particular environment. While current doctrine labels stability operations as phase IV of a campaign, such a linear, time-phased concept may be inappropriate, especially if one is to conduct war with constant regard for the desired peace. According to Department of Defense (DOD) Directive 3000.05, "Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations," "Military plans shall address stability operations requirements throughout all phases of an operation."[12] Therefore, the idea that there will be no phase IV without completing phase III (dominate offensive operations) is anachronistic.

In an Army culture that is action-oriented and formed around conventional ideas of warfare, it will be tempting to focus on the combat aspects of COIN rather than the developmental aspects of stability operations. This action-oriented culture has been instrumental to the Army's success. Yet it often overshadows the need to assess and understand before undertaking an activity or operation. Too often the first question is about what should be done rather than the nature of the problem. Skipping proper analysis can lead to rushing in with perceived solutions that have detrimental effects.

James Q. Wilson notes that an organization "will be poorly adapted to perform tasks that are not defined as part of [its] culture."[13] Tasks under stability operations include helping rebuild indigenous institutions, including the various types of security forces, correctional facilities, and judicial systems necessary to secure and stabilize the environment; reviving or building the private sector, including encouraging citizen-driven, bottom-up economic activity and constructing necessary infrastructure; and assisting in the development of representative governmental institutions.[14] One could argue that many of the tasks the Army currently trains for, like helping train security forces, are also stability operations activities. On the other hand, stability

operations tasks expand into the economic and political realms, which current Army training does not adequately address.

Again, one could argue that economics and politics are primarily civilian responsibilities. Nevertheless, experience in Iraq shows that combat units (not just civil affairs units) have had to establish economic markets, organize elections, and conduct a whole host of other tasks not considered military at the time. More critical than the training required is the mind-set of Army personnel in accepting stability operations as core Army tasks. While there is a lot of emphasis on stability operations right now, the real test will come after Iraq and Afghanistan. If the Army is going to conduct stability operations as an integral part of full-spectrum operations, leaders should embrace stability tasks as part of the organization's culture. Because culture is like personality, it can be a difficult and time-consuming endeavor to change it, or more appropriately, for it to evolve. Army personnel will revert to tasks they are most comfortable executing if they do not consider stability operations activities as core mission responsibilities.

The Army clearly has recognized the importance of stability operations, at least in its doctrine. The Army's approach to attaining a better peace is to execute stability operations within the larger framework of full-spectrum operations. Field manuals 3-0 and 3-07 provide the current doctrinal foundation. In these sources, stability operations embody multifaceted tasks, potentially simultaneous and overlapping, that may occur before, during, and after offensive and defensive operations. As aforementioned, these tasks are arranged in 10 categories under stability operations, as stipulated in FMs 3-0 and 3-7. By executing them, the Army works to "promote and protect U.S. national interests by influencing the threat, political, and informational dimensions of the operational environment."[15] In current doctrine, stability operations incorporate both lethal and nonlethal means. Stability operations are therefore critical military activities working to promote security and establish or restore a semblance of normalcy to the local populace.

DOD Directive 3000.05 reinforces the importance of stability operations by establishing those operations as a core U.S. military mission that "shall be given priority comparable to combat operations."[16] The directive defines stability operations as "military and civilian activities conducted across the spectrum from peace to conflict to establish or maintain order in states and regions."[17] It recognizes that an integrated civilian and military effort can best accomplish many stability operations tasks. However, it also directs that U.S. military forces "be prepared to perform all tasks necessary to establish or maintain order when civilians cannot do so."[18] Additionally, the directive describes broad parameters for stability operations. The near-term goal of stability operations is to "provide the local populace with security, restore essential services, and meet humanitarian needs. The long-term goal is to help develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, a viable market economy, rule of law, democratic institutions, and a robust civil society."[19] Efforts to achieve these goals require that stability operations plans be comprehensive and take a multidimensional approach that considers social, cultural, political, economic, military, and informational elements. In its extreme, stability operations means nation-building, a context within which common guidelines for operations would be useful for achieving the stated goals.

Problem Definition

The way one describes a problem will bias the options and ultimate choices available for solving it. The description can limit the range of alternatives one considers. Problem description requires identifying the underlying cause and not just the visible symptoms.[20] Field Manual 3-24 defines "planning" as problem solving and "design" as problem setting.[21] Specifically, "design provides a means to conceptualize and hypothesize about the underlying causes and dynamics that explain an unfamiliar problem … and [offers] insights towards achieving a workable solution."[22] While one often needs to address the symptoms of problems, focusing on them can lead to erroneous conclusions and

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improper solutions.[23] Design relates to the visualization and assessment processes that allow leaders to arrive at an awareness of the context of the situation. It prompts initial understanding of the problem.

One should avoid common pitfalls in problem definition. First, planners tend to embed implicit solutions within the problem definition.[24] For example, one may state that we don't have enough troops to defeat the insurgents. Stating so may imply the solution is more troops. Embedded logic can inhibit the development of solutions that prevent people from becoming insurgents in the first place. A second pitfall is including a diagnosis of the causes of the problem in the definition.[25] One accepts a causal relationship before conducting a thorough analysis of the problem. For example, one may say that poverty and economic deprivation lead people to terrorism. A large number of terrorists are economically depressed people; however, many terrorists, especially leaders, come from the progressive sectors of their society, hold advanced educational degrees, have deep ties to their communities, and maintain broad networks.[26] The political situation tends to motivate them more than economic circumstances. Overlooking this dichotomy between followers and leaders can significantly affect the development of strategies aimed at defeating terrorists and insurgents.

In summary, problem identification and definition are critical aspects of stability operations. Identifying and defining the threats in the operational environment beyond just the physical forces of insurgents and terrorists can broaden the number of options and solutions the Army develops. It is likely that in both COIN and stability operations, the need to address local security problems and political and socioeconomic issues will outweigh the need for direct action against insurgents and terrorists. The question planners and decision makers should answer is whether insurgents and terrorists are the problem or symptoms of a problem. The answer will provide the basis for developing strategies to solve the problem.

Considerations for Stability Operations

Using historical events and analogies to determine blanket solutions for current conditions can be problematic. It is extremely unlikely that the

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variables comprising one situation will be the same in another. Furthermore, the interaction of those variables is so random and complex it makes outcomes unpredictable. Initial variables and the outcomes they produce change the environment they operate in and change themselves in the process. A simple example is the learn-and-adapt process occurring in Iraq. Both the insurgents and the Army have changed organizationally and conceptually (e.g., the Army to COIN) because of their interactions. Just the infusion of these two variables into Iraqi society has changed the operational environment. The two variables affect the local populace's behavior, and the behavior of the latter affects how insurgents and Soldiers operate and behave. In sum, the inputs of the variables in complex systems will not produce the sum of those variables; therefore, any strategy based on historical analogy will be inherently problematic.

This lack of historical correspondence echoes Clausewitz's point on the unpredictability of war. No matter how well intentioned and targeted they are, interventions will have unanticipated effects. Intervening in a complex system (a society or nation) through any operation (stability operations) will create multiple changes and new challenges. Intervention planners must account for the unintended side effects that stability operations can create.

Field Manual 3-24 discusses the use of logical lines of operations (LLOs) in COIN. These include combat operations/civil security operations, host nation security forces, essential services, governance, and economic development.[27] Underlying these LLOs are information operations (IO), which continue until the completion of operations. These LLOs are interconnected, and they must be synchronized to achieve the desired end state. Not surprisingly, the LLOs are similar to the short-term and long-term goals of stability operations that DOD Directive 3000.05 outlines. They provide a basis

for a plan that accounts for and deals with evolving challenges as much as possible.

This unpredictability should not discourage planners from using history to help deal with new situations. However, one should be cautious when applying historical examples and analogies to current situations. "History," as Mark Twain opined, "does not repeat, but it does rhyme." Events in history are like snowflakes that look remarkably the same until one examines them closely. Still, as Richard Neustadt and Ernest May point out, "Past conditions can offer clues to future possibilities."[28] Planners who can assess a situation in detail and determine its likenesses and differences to other, similar historical events can make use of history.[29] By studying the historical development of current events, they can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the problems posed by stability operations. No event develops in isolation. Looking at an event as a continuation of previous interactions provides clues to understanding the true nature of a problem.

As an example, Neustadt and May offer insight derived from viewing the Marshall Plan as an event in a stream of time. "Sensing that the present was alive with change, they [the Marshall Plan's conceivers] knew the past would be outmoded by a future that had never been. But their image of that future could be realistic because informed by understanding of its sources in the past . . . similarly informed, could be their sense of how much care and effort it would take to shape the future as desired, how crucial therefore to survey the obstacles and count the costs beforehand."[30] Understanding the historical context of a current situation or problem and determining the cost of taking action on it are critical to stability operations.

Stability operations require interactions with local populations that create a level of trust and credibility. But frequent interactions have great potential for estrangement and conflict if cultural understanding is low among Soldiers. Cultural misunderstandings can jeopardize a mission and ultimately result in disaster. Use of culturally meaningful language and symbols and references to historical events can be powerful IO enablers that convey meaningful messages to a particular population.

Environments in which tribal divisions prevail are a case in point. As Ben Connable points out about tribal groupings, "People group together to survive, to protect each other [and] an attack on one is an attack on all."[31] In many developing nations, a harsh environment has forced the formation of clans and tribes. Operational environments with tribal divisions can dictate the local framework for authority and legitimacy as people develop mechanisms and structures for survival. Knowledge of historical events with these conditions becomes especially critical in pursuing successful stability operations.

Lawrence Rosen provides an extremely insightful look at a pertinent example of tribal division: Arab culture.[32] Rosen believes that an Arab person's individual identity relies on relationships.[33] Similarly, Rosen claims that the legitimacy of political institutions is tied to the individuals in office (bound by their obligations and relationships) and not to the institutions themselves.[34] Individuals develop relationships through "an unending process of interaction and obligation . . . [and these] relationships . . . grant some measure of predictability in a constantly fluctuating world."[35] Social consequence outweighs individual failings. Therefore, what Americans may consider hypocrisy when Arabs attempt to "hide their sins" may be, in reality, a reflection of the cultural belief that "actions harming the social order are more dangerous than personal failings to a community of believers."[36] Understanding an individual comes from knowing the person's history, and specifically the relationships that the person has or may have had.

Neustadt and May advocate what they call "placement," a process that uses historical information about a person to enable a more sophisticated analysis of the person's outlook and perspective.[37]

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U.S. Army Soldiers and U.S. Marines attached to 2d Battalion, 5th Marine Regiment, Civil Affairs Group, share a meal with local government officials, Iraqi Army, and Iraqi police in Ramadi, Iraq, 17 September 2007.

An Arab person's ability to create obligations (in some cases through bribery) is fundamental to his establishing relationships and therefore fundamental to him as an individual.[38] The implication for stability operations is that dealing with an Arab individual also means dealing with the web of obligations and relationships that Arab is enmeshed in. Not allowing individuals to act in a manner that develops obligations destabilizes that society. This interference will counteract efforts aimed at attaining operational goals.

Stability operations require that the local people view the intervention as legitimate. Their idea of legitimacy may differ from ours and others in the world community. Establishing legitimate government institutions in Arab countries will depend on which individuals occupy government offices. Planners should pay particular attention to this, and to Arab culture and local traditions in general, when trying to establish legitimate governments.

Securing victories. In designing stability operations, planners should identify potential opportunities to secure early short-term victories. What constitutes a victory will depend on the circumstances. For instance, an early short-term victory could be restoring electricity to the local tribal leader's home. Such victories build confidence within the operating force and the local population.[39] Most of these victories will be relatively easy to achieve, and they will provide traction for gaining the initiative that is essential to stability operations. Subsequently sustaining the initiative will depend on the ability to articulate clear goals and objectives that can produce measurable results. Setting and articulating realistic expectations early is essential to managing the behavior of the local population.

Minority rights. The issue of minority rights in societies divided along religious, ethnic, racial, and/or tribal lines can be inflammatory. Ted Gurr argues that "if minority peoples who constitute a majority in one region of a heterogeneous state have the right to protect and promote their collective interests, they also have a claim to local or regional self-governance within existing international boundaries."[40] He claims that minority efforts to achieve self-determination and institutional protection usually result in the transfer of power away from the central government and a revision of political boundaries within the existing state.[41] The critical task for the sake of stability is to ensure the majority recognize

the collective rights of the minority by bringing the latter into the political process in an environment that includes institutional protections. Ethnic protests within the political process may increase. However, this is an expected part of the democratic process.[42] Overall, political pluralism may help manage ethnic conflict and violence.

Stephen Biddle describes Iraq as a civil war divided along communal and religious affiliations (Sunni and Shi'a).[43] Because the United States supports a government led by the majority Shi'a group, it has had a difficult time gaining the trust of the minority Sunni faction. This issue is extremely important when one considers that the legitimacy of any intervening force can be a strategic center of gravity. During stability operations, planners should consider the possibility of establishing autonomous regions for each group.

Market economy. Especially within ethnically divided states, promoting a market economy requires much thought and deliberation. Amy Chua has written that "[ethnic] divisions bear a distinctive and potentially subversive relationship to the project of marketization and democratization . . . Marketization is often destabilizing, fermenting ethnic envy and hatred . . ."[44] Planners must be aware that any market-economy initiatives might damage social equity and exacerbate ethnic tensions. They should also understand that, early on, the new market environment has to include a governmental process that allows marginalized players to redress their grievances in lieu of resorting to violence.

Application of Stability Operations

In an exercise conducted at the U.S. Army Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, students war-gamed a scenario that required them to develop a plan for stability operations (after phase III) in Azerbaijan. At issue were insurgent forces known as SAPA, the military wing of a political organization called SAPP. Some students wanted to act directly against the insurgents while conducting the reconstruction efforts required by stability operations. Other students, however, determined that SAPA was only a symptom of SAPP's inability to participate in what it perceived to be a legitimate political process and legitimate elections. They arrived at this conclusion by studying the historical development of SAPA and SAPP. The question they asked was not how to eliminate the SAPA forces, but how and why SAPA had developed and what events had led to the insurgency. Armed with information that helped them understand the nature of the problem, they developed a plan that revolved around bringing the members of SAPP back into the political process.

In this exercise, tribal and clan relationships formed the basis of individual identity. SAPA had strong ties to the local population in Bilesuvar province. Since they were an integral part of that population, targeting the insurgents meant creating enemies out of those linked to them by tribal and clan associations. American forces faced a similar situation in Somalia when attempting to target General Aideed: Somali culture demanded that clan members and allies rally to Aideed's defense. To say the least, American insensitivity to tribal connections led to unanticipated reactions.

The students decided that negotiating with SAPP to bring them back into the political process would also help deal with SAPA's insurgents. Providing SAPP an opportunity to participate in local governance undermined the insurgents' IO campaign. Additionally, as a condition before receiving local governance authority and to some extent regional autonomy, SAPP had to reign in the SAPA insurgents. One may question whether military forces should take such political actions, but in the absence of an effective government, the military might be forced to act (e.g., the 101st Airborne Division in the Mosul area, as detailed in the Harvard case study titled "The Accidental Statesman: General Petraeus and the City of Mosul, Iraq.")[45]

One question facing the "negotiate first" students was to what extent the Azerbaijani Government would allow regional autonomy. With the end of phase III, the students determined there was a window of opportunity to force the government to agree to elections monitored by a third party with representatives from each of the tribal regions. Historical study showed that the government had stayed in power through corruption and fixed elections; it had little physical capability to enforce the rule of law in Bilesuvar. Thus, the opportunity was available for the United States to force all parties to the negotiation table.

The negotiating students also determined that an IO campaign attempting to solidify the U.S. military's legitimacy based on ties to the Azerbaijani Government actually undermined the U.S. position in Bilesuvar. Since the insurgency had developed because the people in Bilesuvar had come to believe that the national government was illegitimate, aligning U.S. forces with the government would only antagonize the locals.

This example highlights the complexity of stability operations. While circumstances will help dictate the plan and strategy adopted, it is important to evaluate the complete range of options and solutions after having identified the problem. The problem may evolve because of changes brought about by intervening forces, but understanding the context of the situation is critical to adapting successful solutions. In most cases, stability operations will enable operators to manage, though not solve, socioeconomic and political issues. Still, stability operations should help create conditions that allow the indigenous government to address those issues in relative stability.

Conclusion

Stability operations will continue to be an integral part of full-spectrum operations. The nature of the operational environment and evolving threats will ensure the Army remains engaged in stability and COIN operations. Doctrine writers should synchronize Army doctrine to provide clarity to those who must execute stability operations. Clarity, in turn, will help ensure that planners design stability operations in proper context and within a framework that is common across the force. The Army should also incorporate stability operations tasks among its core missions and, to reinforce competency, should adopt stability operations as part of its culture. Stability operations planners must take a multipronged approach and consider objectives and actions on a continuum of short- to long-term goals. Those planning and executing these goals have to be sensitive to the cultural realities in the areas of operations. Ultimately, for the Army to remain relevant and ready for any future contingency, it should be fully competent in stability operations. *MR*

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