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Defining the Discipline in Theory and Practice

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J anuary 2012 brought one of the more unexpected and profound international crises in recent years: the establishment of an al-Qaeda-controlled terrorist safe haven spanning a region the size of Texas, within a five-hour flight of western Europe. Groups of Tuareg rebels returning home after the collapse of Qaddafi's Libya started an armed uprising in northern Mali that would soon be co-opted by al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb (AQIM), sparking the utter collapse of state security in the region. The Malian Army should have been prepared for this challenge. For the previous 10 years, the United States had spent tens of millions of dollars training and equipping Malian forces to confront terrorist groups and to maintain control of their sovereign territory. In the three years leading up to the crisis, U.S. special operations forces had particularly focused efforts on training an elite counterterrorism unit, the *Compagnie de Forces Speciales* (CFS).

And yet, when the fighting began, ragtag groups of poorly trained rebels and AQIM fighters turned back the CFS and the rest of the Malian military quickly collapsed. According to one press account, "as insurgents swept through the desert last year, commanders of this nation's elite army units, the fruit of years of careful American training, defected when they were needed most—taking troops, guns, trucks, and their newfound skills to the enemy in the heat of battle."[1] The common narrative held that Malian forces—despite years of U.S. training and support—simply withered in the face of a modestly capable enemy.

A deeper examination of this episode calls into question the common narrative. According to many on-the-ground accounts, the CFS acquitted itself reasonably well in fighting against AQIM and other combatant groups. The failure of the Malian Army's operations lay not primarily with the will or courage of its soldiers, but in deep systemic flaws in the institutions of the military as a whole. Soldiers fighting in the North quickly ran out of bullets and food because of the lack of a logistics system capable of resupplying them.[2] Other units outside the CFS had been poorly organized and unevenly trained due to a flawed human resource management system. Many were poorly equipped despite the large influx of weaponry through U.S. and international assistance because of an inadequate maintenance system. Certainly, a deeply divided political system and a chronically starved budget also contributed to the hollowing of the Malian forces.

Human resource management systems, logistics enterprises, and budgeting: these are hardly the capabilities that come to most minds when considering how to win wars. And yet, the failure of Mali's defense system and U.S. military training efforts in Mali to attend

to these capabilities, led to one of the most significant setbacks in the global fight against terrorism in years. It is a chronic failure across militaries in underdeveloped nations, and in the attendant U.S. and international military assistance missions seeking to build capacity within those militaries—from Iraq and Afghanistan to Ukraine and the Philippines.

Defense institution building (DIB) is the U.S. Defense Department's answer to these failures. DIB is a discipline that supports partner-nation stakeholders as they seek to build and sustain systemic capabilities within the core institutions of their defense sector. This chapter will explore the contours of DIB as it has evolved over the last decade, in an effort to define its purpose, scope, and key focuses. It will seek to illuminate, as the Mali experience suggests, the vital role of DIB in the effective, sustainable development of partner-nation military forces and their larger national security sectors.

U.S. Assistance to Defense Institutions: A Brief History

While the United States has a long history of working with partner-nation militaries at the institutional level, concerted efforts to build institutional capacities in support of effective defense sector governance are relatively new. In the wake of World War II, U.S. military advisors worked at the highest levels in Japan, as well as in some European governments, helping not only to rebuild defense agencies, but also to help entire new governments form and gain their footing, with great success. Thousands of military advisors also famously supported the Vietnamese Army in advance of the initiation of U.S. combat operations in Vietnam; while they were largely working at the tactical level, some advisory roles extended into the defense ministry as well. Advisors have worked within defense institutions in a number of other contexts as well, from the Philippines to Saudi Arabia. Raymond Millen, a professor at the U.S. Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, traces the U.S. role in advising defense ministries back to at least the 1848 occupation of Mexico.[3]

In all of these cases, however, the mission was primarily advisory in nature—that is, oriented toward providing advice and encouragement to foreign counterparts to take policy or strategic decisions in accordance with U.S. interests, rather than focused on building indigenous institutional capacities. Advising partner defense establishments to take decisions that advance U.S. interests is a far different proposition than building institutional capacity to support the ability of partner nations to advance their own, and shared, interests.

The fall of the Soviet Union initiated a fundamental reorientation toward institutional capacity building, beginning with the establishment of the Partnership for Peace (PfP). At a summit of North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) defense ministers in Travemünde, Germany, in October 1993, the United States first proposed the establishment of the PfP; the Partnership was launched at the NATO Summit in Brussels three months later. The *Declaration of Heads of State and Government*, issued at the Summit, proclaimed that the PfP would expand military cooperation throughout Europe by focusing on practical cooperation and, in particular, "at a pace and scope determined by the capacity and desire

of the individual participating states, we will work in concrete ways towards transparency in defence budgeting, promoting democratic control of defence ministries, joint planning, joint military exercises, and creating an ability to operate with NATO forces in such fields as peacekeeping, search and rescue and humanitarian operations, and others as may be agreed."[4]

The PfP provided a platform for U.S. and NATO cooperation with states of the former Soviet Union to enhance institutional capacity and align policies, processes, and standards with NATO and its members. It laid the groundwork for "defense institution building," and, in fact, the term itself officially emerged at the 2004 NATO Summit in Istanbul, when NATO released the "Partnership Action Plan on Defense Institution Building" (PAP-DIB). PAP-DIB represented a critical evolution in two ways: first, it provided a concrete conceptual framework for approaching capacity building within the defense institutions of NATO's partners; second, it prompted the establishment of new initiatives specifically oriented toward DIB within the U.S. Department of Defense (DOD).

In the United States, DOD launched a robust line of DIB programming through its Warsaw Initiative Fund (WIF, recently renamed the Wales Initiative Fund), launched by President Bill Clinton in a 1994 visit to Poland. WIF has grown to provide DIB support to over 15 PfP members in Eastern Europe and Central Asia. As the Department saw the gains by PfP partner defense sectors enabled by WIF's DIB support and began to recognize the need for greater institutional capacity among partners beyond the PfP, it started to explore ways to take DIB global.

As the Department was seeing its DIB efforts pay off in Eastern Europe, it was also coming face to face with the challenges of large-scale, intensive capacity building in defense institutions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Following combat operations that toppled sitting regimes in each country, U.S. reconstruction efforts initially focused on training units within the military and civilian security forces to confront remaining threats associated with the ousted regimes. However, in each country, it quickly became clear that functional defense ministries were required to direct, support, and sustain military forces, including these newly trained units, if there were to be any hope of enduring stability. In Iraq, ministerial development was initially so ignored that the Coalition Provisional Authority established a new Ministry of Defense (its establishment rushed to meet the scheduled 2004 transfer of sovereignty to an Iraqi government) with only three weeks of training for incoming officials at the National Defense University and the U.S. Institute of Peace in Washington, DC.[5] Beginning in 2005, DOD initiated an evolving mission to provide training and advisory assistance to the Iraqi Ministry of Defense, which brought together a mix of U.S. military personnel, civilians, and contractors.[6]

In Afghanistan, the period from the launch of combat operations in 2001 through 2009 was, as one researcher described it, one of "fragmented inattention." U.S. military training organizations "focused the bulk of their initial technical assistance resources and energies on the rapid generation of armed forces over the long-term management capacity inside the defense ministry."[7] The United States did provide limited support to the development

of the new Ministry of Defense (MOD) through commercial firms that provided contracted advisory support, primarily Military Professional Resources International (MPRI, now Engility) and DynCorp, and through retired military officers and former government civilians with vast but varied experience. Dedicated advisors, primarily military personnel, began to be assigned to the Afghan MOD in 2007; however, it was not until 2009—with a rejuvenated Combined Security Transition Command-Afghanistan and a newly created NATO Training Mission-Afghanistan—that the United States began to elevate ministerial development as a priority.

In 2009, these two threads—the mounting evidence of institutional gains in Eastern Europe and the growing concerns about institutional failings in Iraq and Afghanistan—came together to prompt the Defense Department to significantly expand its commitment to DIB. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates established two new programs exclusively devoted to DIB: the Defense Institution Reform Initiative (DIRI), designed to undertake programming similar to WIF's efforts but for partners around the world outside of the PfP, and the Ministry of Defense Advisors (MODA) program for Afghanistan, specifically designed to meet mounting ministerial development needs in that country. One year later, the MODA program was given a global reach, authorized to assign civilian experts as technical advisors to partner defense institutions around the world.

As these three programs—WIF, DIRI, and MODA—have matured and have been complemented by other Defense Department programs offering relevant institutional assistance or engagement, the Department has begun to embrace DIB as a critical element of its broader security cooperation with partner nations across the globe. By 2015, robust DIB programming had taken root around the world, spanning more than three dozen partner nations.

Defining DIB

As the discipline of DIB has emerged, one essential challenge has been defining what it means to build defense institutional capacity, and what DIB ultimately seeks to achieve. As a discipline, it is a unique blend of security assistance and institutional capacity building. It is distinct from most assistance programs targeting partner defense sectors in that it focuses on institutional capacity rather than tactical or operational mission readiness. As a recent RAND study put it, "DIB aims to promote effective, transparent, and responsive institutions in a variety of ways. Its goals include improving civilian control of the military, building respect for the rule of law, and improving military professionalism. What it does *not* do is focus on the operational readiness or tactical capabilities of the host nation's military."[8] That is not to say DIB does not contribute—significantly—to operational readiness or tactical capabilities; however, such contributions are outcomes of the DIB discipline's focus on broader processes at the institutional level, as opposed to outcomes of interventions specifically targeted at individual, tactical-level units or capabilities. While DIB can draw lessons from institutional capacity-building efforts often seen in the development community, it remains distinct in that it targets defense capacities that are

often without counterpart in civilian ministries, and are ultimately intended to support and sustain specific military roles and missions.

Department of Defense Directive 5205.82, the Department's top-level policy guidance for DIB, defines the discipline as follows:

> *Security cooperation activities that empower partner nation defense institutions to establish or re-orient their policies and structures to make their defense sector more transparent, accountable, effective, affordable, and responsive to civilian control. DIB improves defense governance, increases the sustainability of other DOD security cooperation programs, and is carried out in cooperation with partner nations pursuant to appropriate and available legal authority. It is typically conducted at the ministerial, general, joint staff, military service headquarters, and related defense agency level, and when appropriate, with other supporting defense entities.[9]*

Defense institution building, therefore, is generally organized around two primary objectives. The first is to enable a partner nation to improve its ability to provide for its own defense, including by undertaking roles and missions that benefit shared security interests. That is, DIB seeks to help partner militaries become more effective so that they can provide more valuable contributions to regional and international security operations, as well as to more effectively protect the security of the citizenries they are established to defend. There is thus an immediacy assigned to DIB objectives: desired improvements in defense governance are embedded within strategy-based plans to address emerging or existing real-world security challenges.

The second objective is to empower a partner nation to undertake reforms within its defense sector that achieve greater transparency, accountability, efficiency, legitimacy, and responsiveness to civilian oversight. In other words, DIB seeks to help partners improve defense governance, resulting in defense sectors that are both more effective on the battlefield and more responsive to their citizenries. While these two goals are fairly straightforward, taken together, they distinguish DIB from institutional capacity building in other settings, where capacity-building efforts are often focused exclusively on enabling more effective partner-nation governance, with a less explicit expectation that improvements in such governance will lead to direct benefits for the donor nation or broader international community. Other such institutional capacity-building efforts may not be strictly altruistic, but may be developed in service to strengthening international systems or regional stability over the long term. DIB, on the other hand, is often expected to generate more effective militaries that will be employed to meet shared, often specific, national security objectives.

As discussed in greater detail below, DIB draws from traditional defense security cooperation, foreign development assistance, and the broader discipline of security sector reform (SSR), but it is distinct from all three. By definition, DIB falls within the broader set of activities within DOD termed "security cooperation": that is, it is one tool with which

the Department seeks to engage and assist key foreign partners and allies to build military capabilities, promote interoperability, and enable the United States and partners to jointly pursue shared national security interests. It also falls within the broader area of "security sector reform," a discipline which emerged in the late 1990s along a trajectory similar to DIB's evolution, which has come to mean "the set of policies, plans, programs, and activities that are undertaken by a series of stakeholders to improve the way a state or governing body provides safety, security, and justice to its civilian population within the context of rule of law."[10] DIB is not generally considered to fall within the boundaries of development assistance; nevertheless, the two disciplines share key similarities. Notwithstanding the overlap across these terms, DIB has emerged as a distinct practice, blending key elements of all three broader disciplines. It is more focused on institutions and long-term outcomes than most traditional defense security cooperation, while it is more focused on specific security outcomes of direct relevance to U.S. national security interests than is development assistance. Security sector reform efforts and related literature, meanwhile, have largely focused on justice and policing sectors in their brief history; however, without question, defense sector reform is a critical—if unique—sub-area within SSR.

DIB efforts may vary widely in scope and, because of the different models involved, the intended scope becomes another important question in defining DIB. Two settings that were in many ways the birthplace of U.S. DIB (Iraq and Afghanistan) are also outliers in the discipline's practice. Massive DIB interventions in which a large number of embedded trainers and advisors seek to help build or fundamentally rebuild a defense ministry, such as those the United States undertook in Iraq and Afghanistan, look far different in practice than the more common DIB programs in which a relatively small team works in partnership with ministries to seek agreed-upon reforms of various levels of ambition and complexity, depending on the partner. Because of the differences in models and underlying conditions that these two approaches entail, it is important to distinguish the large-scale, from-the-ground-up type of effort on display in Iraq and Afghanistan, from the more targeted activities that represent the norm.

Finally, any definition of DIB should be accompanied by a caveat: activities do not constitute DIB simply because they take place within the defense sector, or even within defense institutions. DIB is a specific subset of such activities that focuses on enhancing the systemic capabilities involved in governing the defense sector. Nicole Ball, an expert on SSR, has issued a similar warning in that context: "All too often, the term SSR is applied to a wide range of security-related activities. In fact, in many cases 'SSR' entails re-hatting existing programs or initiating activities that are largely devoid of governance content."[11] Governance, as Ball rightly notes, is the key defining factor; if an effort is not primarily focused on improving a partner's capacity to govern its defense sector, then it is not DIB.

The Role of Defense Institutions within the Defense Sector

As suggested above, DIB is distinguished from other defense security cooperation activities

not only by its objectives and scope, but also by where its activities are situated within a defense sector. Because building military capabilities necessarily involves the development and improvement of specific tactical units tasked with employing those capabilities, most defense security cooperation activities are appropriately located at the unit and individual level—that is, focusing on specific operational units or individual personnel. DIB, on the other hand, must target institutional systems to achieve its objectives. These systems are found at a number of different levels within a defense sector, but always above the unit level.

A nation's defense sector consists of a number of different elements, ranging from the national leader—who often serves dually as the Commander-in-Chief of the national armed forces—to individual military units at the bottom of the chain of command. As *Figure 1* demonstrates, these elements might be divided into five levels distinct in function but often, in practice, overlapping in structure: national governance, ministerial, military headquarters, operational, and tactical (or unit).

Figure 1: Functional Levels within the Defense Sector

President, Prime Minister, Royal Leader

National Security Councils/Staffs/Cabinet Administration

Ministry of Defense

General/Joint Staff

Service Headquarters, National Functional Commands, National System Commands

Service Ops HQ

System Commands, Service Functional Commands

National Commands for Operations

Corps to Division/Air Force Cmd/Fleet Cmd/Joint Regional Commands

Military Units: Brigade, Air Wing, Strike Group, and Tactical Forces

- National Governance Functions
- Ministerial Functions
- Military Headquarters Functions
- Operational Functions
- Tactical Functions

At the national governance level, defense institutions are guided by decisions, laws, and processes managed by interagency government leaders and organizations, including national leaders and other national government departments, and usually by laws passed by legislative bodies. It is at this level that governance of the defense sector is integrated with broader government objectives, strategies, and equities. While functions at the national governance level bear upon the defense sector, this level is most often characterized by actors outside of defense institutions—ranging from presidential offices to parliaments—and thus is best addressed through whole-of-government interventions broader than DIB.

A second distinct level is the ministerial level, comprised primarily of the Ministry of Defense, but also potentially including specific defense-related organizations housed within other ministries (for example, some offices or organizations within certain Interior Ministries perform defense-related ministerial functions, such as oversight of National Guards) or other civilian defense institutions organized outside of the Ministry of Defense.

The military headquarters level captures those functions associated with general and joint staffs, military service headquarter operations, and certain national commands: namely, those functions associated with the translation of ministerial-level policy and guidance into military policies and orders, and with the organization, maintenance, training, and equipping of armed forces. The military headquarters level could be divided into two levels based on two separate functions: one, generally associated with joint and general staffs, translating ministerial-level policy into broad, cross-service military policies and orders; and the second, generally residing in individual military service headquarters organizations, involving the organization, training, and equipping of forces. In practice, however, many militaries do not include general or joint staffs, and the two functions are commonly combined into a single organization.

A fourth level, the operational level, captures those functions associated with the employment of those armed forces in military operations, and generally includes operational commands (such as the U.S. Military's Geographical Combatant Commands).

The latter three levels—the ministerial, military headquarters, and operational levels—encompass the institutional systems upon which individual military personnel, units, and capabilities depend. For that reason, DIB activities are targeted at these levels, almost exclusively. The final level is the unit (or tactical function) level, which is comprised of the individual military units of a partner nation's armed forces and is generally associated with tactical operations and activities. While units at this level are dependent upon institutional systems, they generally are not in a position to manage or shape such systems and, for that reason, are rarely objects of DIB engagement. It is worth noting that military training and assistance often target individual military personnel, which may represent the lowest level of a military organization; however, for the purposes of simplicity individual personnel are treated as part of the unit level within this chapter.

Defense Sector Level	Core Capacity Focus Areas
Ministerial	- Resource Management - Human Resource Management - Strategy, Policy, and Planning - Acquisition and Logistics - Rule of Law
Military Headquarters	- Total Force Management - Force Development - Logistics - Command Responsibility and Accountability
Operational	- Readiness - Command-and-Control - Logistics - Operational Planning

DIB plays out differently at each of the three targeted levels. Each level is characterized by institutional capacities, processes, and systems that enable organizations to carry out the functional responsibilities associated with that level. These capacities, processes, and systems are connected and integrated across levels in many cases; for example, an effective national logistics system depends on policies and governance at the ministerial level and a functional distribution network that ensures acquisition and dispersal of equipment from national organizations to dispersed local units—involving military headquarters and operational level functions. However, while they are connected, different capacities are required at each level.

The list of capacity areas required for a defense sector to function efficiently, effectively, and in alignment with broader national policies, laws, and strategies could fill volumes. However, at each of the three targeted levels of a defense sector, there are a handful of core capacities that are vital for any defense sector, no matter its organization, scope, or level of maturity. While U.S. DIB activities have not been restricted to these core capacities, they are the starting point for effective defense institution capacity building—each a *sine qua non* for effective defense institutions. The annex at the end of this chapter offers a taxonomy, summarized in *Figure 2*, of the core capacities at each level.

DIB, Development Assistance, and Defense Security Cooperation

Defense institution building remains a new and evolving discipline for DOD. The taxonomy outlined in the annex remains somewhat theoretical; the Department has a relatively limited set of experiences from which to draw lessons, and several potentially promising models have yet to be fully explored. Nevertheless, even the relatively short history of DIB has offered a number of practical lessons, many of which highlight additional elements helpful

in defining and distinguishing DIB. Many such elements highlight just how different DIB is compared to other defense security cooperation activities, at least as they are currently undertaken by most of the world's security exporters, and just how challenging it can be to integrate DIB and other defense security cooperation activities into holistic approaches.

Among the distinctions that separate DIB from mainstream defense security cooperation are considerations relating to engagement rhythms and time horizons, target audiences, practitioners or implementers, and considerations with regard to foreign partners. Most defense security cooperation engagements with foreign partners are sporadic and short-lived. While the acquisition and transfer of equipment to a partner may take months or years as defense articles are put on contract and delivered, their delivery to partners is experienced as a single event. Because of the authorities and resources available to most security exporters and their military's training rhythm, foreign partner training is rarely sustained over long periods. Additionally, the bulk of defense security cooperation activities are conducted as discrete events—military staff talks, port calls, exercises, or subject matter expert exchanges.

Part and parcel with the engagement rhythm is the target audience. Because most defense security cooperation activities are focused at the unit level—primarily seeking to build capacity, interoperability, shared understanding of tactics or operating concepts, or rapport with individual units—such activities tend to be conducted with a rotating cast of partner leaders and units. Each U.S. military service will tend to work with its foreign counterparts, and will generally work with a range of units within each partner-military service. This approach creates a cumulative effect that can powerfully build military capabilities or develop interoperability but, individually, most security cooperation activities are characterized by their short time horizons, sporadic engagement rhythms, and diverse set of unit-level partner participants.

DIB, meanwhile, lends itself to sustained, consistent engagement with a core group of stakeholders that, working persistently over many months or years, are committed to reforming institutional systems and capacities. Institutional change, as a rule, cannot be achieved through one-time events; it requires a persistent, cooperative effort to identify institutional shortcomings, develop potential solutions, and adjust the solutions under implementation as circumstances dictate. Such a sustained effort, in the DOD experience, must be led by committed partners who take the lead in developing homegrown solutions and building consensus within partner governments for implementing them. Moreover, such committed partners, by virtue of DIB's institutional focus, will largely be found at the Ministerial, Military Headquarters, and Operational levels; rarely are individuals at the unit level empowered to lead institutional reforms.

DIB is thus distinguished from other aspects of defense security cooperation in that it involves regular, sustained engagements with a core of committed participants at institutional levels, rather than largely sporadic, short-term engagements with a diverse set of actors primarily at the unit level. This distinction is not inherent or inevitable: in fact, experience has demonstrated that mainstream defense security cooperation efforts, like DIB,

will achieve more successful outcomes when planned in coherent, sustained approaches that target actors across different levels of a defense sector. However, mainstream security cooperation efforts are often constrained by a host of factors that impose less pressure on DIB programs. For example, equipment programs are tied to acquisition and delivery cycles, while unit-to-unit exchanges or trainings are dependent on the separate training and deployment cycles of each unit, which makes sustained engagement or routine follow-up challenging. Given their focus at institutional levels, DIB programs are often less affected by deployments, training requirements, and rapid personnel turnover and are more likely to involve committed partner counterparts empowered to lead reforms to achieve desired outcomes.

This practical distinction between mainstream security cooperation activities and DIB can create challenges in integrating the two. DIB interventions may take years to bear tangible fruit. In an ideal world, DOD could work with partners to enhance institutional capacities during simultaneous efforts to build tactical capabilities and link them into a broader defense enterprise; in practice, however, it is difficult to predict DIB outcomes and timetables and thus to develop coherent implementation plans for tactical and operational capacity building that build upon and integrate institutional efforts. Similarly, in an ideal world, tactical capacity-building activities would be preceded by engagements at the institutional level that serve to develop or enhance partner defense strategies in order to ensure the right tactical capabilities are targeted for further improvement, or to develop financial and human resource or logistics capabilities to ensure that they can be sustained and manned. In practice, however, tactical capacity-building activities may be seen as options to address near-term requirements, meaning that waiting for institutional capacity-building efforts to take hold may not be seen as an acceptable luxury. These challenges point to the need for more strategic, long-term approaches to security cooperation planning that seek to align the nature and timing of long-term and short-term activities around a viable theory of change.

DIB is also often distinguished from mainstream defense security cooperation by its practitioners or implementers. Mainstream defense security cooperation activities are primarily implemented by personnel of individual U.S. military units who are available to deploy for such activities or who are present in a partner nation because of their assigned duty stations, training rotations, planned exercises, or other responsibilities. In some cases, contract personnel implement such activities, though they are often civilians with prior service in related military units. Meanwhile, DIB activities are implemented by a mix of civilian DOD personnel, military personnel with relevant experience, and contracted subject matter experts.

It is a fundamental prerequisite of successful DIB programming that implementers have direct experience and/or subject matter expertise in the chosen focus area at the appropriate level in the institution. Even more importantly, implementers need to have an understanding of how systems or processes work across levels and then be able to determine which aspects of this knowledge are relevant to the often very different circumstances of

the partner nation. While this principle sounds simple and obvious, in practice it creates challenges. For example, one of the most common needs—at all three levels of DIB—is logistics capacity, a fundamental military capability. Yet, while the U.S. Armed Forces maintain substantial logistics capacity across the military, most logisticians work at the tactical level and have scant experience with the institutional processes associated with a highly functional national or operational logistics enterprise. While the military offers tremendous logistics expertise, most logisticians are not ideal DIB implementers. On the other hand, civilian and contractor subject matter experts who may have had little experience working within military units, or working through U.S. military institutional structures, may find it difficult to navigate partner military organizations. This disconnect, without careful management, can lead to missed opportunities and well-intentioned planners and implementers talking past each other due to their mismatched experiences.

Finally, DIB is often distinguished from mainstream defense security cooperation by the requirements it creates on the relationship between the United States and its partners. While defense planners generally make every effort to involve partners in the planning and implementation of security cooperation activities, especially those designed to advance specific partner military capabilities, the truth is that these activities often risk becoming transactional and unidirectional in nature. They involve the donor (the United States) handing over to the recipient an article (a weapons system, a piece of equipment) or a service (training, education, information). DIB, on the other hand, must be bidirectional, mutual, and non-transactional in order to achieve enduring results. It asks partners to commit to a process that will result—if successful—in the partners making targeted, systemic changes to their own processes, policies, and practices.

In that regard, DIB is situated more closely within the practice of foreign aid and development assistance, which, in recent years, has increasingly embraced a principle of "country ownership," established in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness and the 2008 Accra Agenda for Action, as a critical best practice. Country ownership fundamentally entails a relationship built upon mutual collaboration between donors and recipients of development assistance, ensuring that the recipient nation both prioritizes areas of focus and takes steps internally to develop solutions. As the Accra Agenda for Action elaborates, "Developing countries will systematically identify areas where there is a need to strengthen the capacity to perform and deliver services at all levels – national, sub-national, sectoral, and thematic – and design strategies to address them. Donors will strengthen their own capacity and skills to be more responsive to developing countries' needs."[12]

Country ownership is one of several principles DIB shares with development assistance. Underlying the similarity between DIB and development assistance is a value-neutral approach to empowering partner nations to self-sufficiently govern and meet critical citizen needs. In practice, the similarities in approach have yielded similar principles for success that tailor the way each discipline is applied.

For example, in addition to country ownership, both DIB and development assistance have developed approaches built upon the understanding that improving a partner

nation's capacity for governance fundamentally involves political action in addition to technical assistance. Reform efforts must overcome not just technical shortfalls, but deeply entrenched interests that benefit from the status quo despite its inadequacy for serving citizens generally. As Thomas Carothers, an expert on developing democratic governance capabilities, has written:

> *Governance shortcomings often directly serve the interests of power holders. The lack of meritocracy allows leaders to reward political followers and cement their bases of support. The weakness of the bureaucracy diminishes the risk that an independent source of authority might limit or even threaten the prerogatives of the ruling elite. Inefficient and opaque policy processes provide opportunities to insert special favors for powerful interests . . . In these situations the primary governance challenge is unavoidably political: forging a basic societal consensus on the form and legitimacy of the state.*[13]

This understanding generates two important lessons for undertaking assistance to improve governance capacity. First, such assistance should be prefaced by an informed political economy analysis. It should evaluate the political dynamics relating to a capacity targeted for reform, identify actors who will lead reform efforts and those who are likely to undermine them based on their entrenched interests, and develop strategies for navigating the political dynamics in order to advance reforms. Second, such assistance requires sustained political engagement with senior partner-nation leaders in order to develop and maintain the top-level support for reforms that is necessary to overcome entrenched interests.

Another key principle is that governance assistance should look for solutions that represent the best fit with a partner nation's own capacities, culture, personnel, and resources, rather than seeking to impose a donor nation's own way of doing things or one-size-fits-all best practices. As Carothers has also noted, "attempting to install best practice institutions that lack any real relationship to their local context is likely to spark unintended consequences and could even hinder institutional development. In response to these challenges, governance experts have increasingly embraced the idea of 'best fit' rather than best practice."[14] Some of the more prominent failings in previous DIB experiments have fallen short precisely because they neglected this principle. For example, anecdotes have long circulated about military officers in Afghanistan seeking to develop a budgeting system in the Afghan Ministry of Defense based on the Pentagon's own Planning, Programming, Budgeting, and Evaluation (PPBE) system—that is, seeking to adapt an incredibly complex system designed to balance requirements of numerous components and agencies across a budget of over half-a-trillion dollars to meet the needs of a ministry that has a budget the size of an average big-city school district in the United States.

A number of other key principles—such as donor transparency, the importance of monitoring and evaluation, and the integration of governance assistance with assistance

in other areas—have also informed both DIB and development assistance practices. These shared principles suggest a deep affinity between DIB and development assistance. Moreover, many touchstones of development assistance—such as country ownership and the preference for "best fit" over "best practice"—are not only currently shared with DIB, but are also applicable to traditional security cooperation, even if they are less uniformly adopted. The point is not to establish hard walls between the disciplines, but to suggest that DIB is unique as a discipline in practice because it brings prominent characteristics of traditional security cooperation and development assistance together—both in harmony and creative tension.

One way to describe this unique aspect of DIB is to understand DIB as the ongoing attempt to reconcile the tension between U.S. and partner security goals and U.S. and partner governance goals. As Nicole Ball notes, partner nations engaged in security sector reform often experience it as a tension between two competing goals: improving security sector governance—implies greater effectiveness, accountability, transparency, and respect for the rule of law—and pursuing security against domestic and foreign threats, which too often convince governments of the necessity of excess, secrecy, and shortcuts. Security sector reform, according to Ball, works best when it enables partners to have both; that is, when security sector reform efforts can "identify the areas where a development approach to security and justice reform overlaps with security work and how the two can become mutually reinforcing, rather than pulling in opposite directions. It is with this effort that what is truly unique in the SSR concept—the emphasis on democratic governance of the security sector—can be realized."[15] The additional element brought by DIB is the goal of identifying areas where these two goals can be mutually reinforcing in concert with another goal: empowering the contribution of a partner nation's defense sector to address national security interests shared by both the partner and the United States. A recent RAND study brings these three mutually reinforcing poles into focus:

> *Effective security institutions, as well as professional and accountable military forces, provide the conditions that make it possible to deter extremism and combat transnational threats. DIB also creates a virtuous circle by reinforcing the country's ability to provide security to its citizens and the region as a whole. For instance, having legitimate and accountable security institutions reduces the risk of abuses against the civilian population and repression of ethnic and religious minorities, which can provide fertile ground for radicalization and extremism, whether homegrown or transnational. DIB also increases a partner nation's security—by reducing internal tensions—and legitimacy by providing security to its neighbors. In this way, DIB objectives can form useful "stepping stones" for other U.S. strategic objectives.[16]*

In addition, DIB is distinguished from development assistance—and even other security sector reform efforts outside the defense sector—in the unique challenges it routinely

confronts. Improving governance within the defense sector involves building capacity in key areas that generally are not found outside the defense context; it involves challenges unique to the defense sector that involve distinctive power relationships, relations with the citizen population, and responsibilities under domestic and international law. For example, in general, in no other sector of government might an organization maintain a workforce that is, in part or in full, conscripted into service. The dynamics involved in enabling a partner military to better manage a conscripted force, or to transition from a conscripted force to a volunteer force, are unique. Addressing policies and accountability under international humanitarian law in a context often involving warfare with irregular or unlawful insurgent forces and the blurred lines between such forces and civilian populations is similarly unique to the defense sector. Moreover, many of the core focus areas, particularly within military services and operational commands, are rarely replicated outside of defense sectors: take, for example, force readiness or military operational planning.

Ultimately, therefore, DIB is truly a unique discipline that brings together critical elements of traditional defense security cooperation, broader security sector reform, and development assistance. It is a narrow discipline that focuses on a discrete set of objectives, actors, and capabilities. By holding in balance the objectives and best practices of all three disciplines, DIB generates opportunities to achieve and sustain fundamentally transformative defense objectives in cooperation with partners around the world.

The Way Ahead

Defense institution building, like security sector reform, is a young discipline that continues to experiment, fail at times, and learn. There is much work to be done to identify what works in most cases and what does not, where different models are needed, and how to overcome challenges and mitigate risks. This need is particularly glaring given the relative paucity of international experience with DIB. Only a few actors, such as the governments of the United Kingdom and France, have undertaken ministerial advisory efforts that are rooted in SSR and address many of the functional areas of DIB; the list is not long. NATO's Partnership Action Plan for DIB has not yet taken root as a major influence on the efforts of NATO members and partners to lead defense institution reform. As the discipline matures, it will need to make room for other actors, to embrace and harness their efforts, and to maintain a robust capacity for self-examination to identify better ways of approaching shared challenges.

Another critical gap is the misunderstanding, relatively low prioritization, and lack of integration of DIB in relation to traditional security cooperation and security assistance efforts. The dominant model of security cooperation, both within the United States and among other security exporters, is focused on providing military equipment and operational training to tactical military units in partner nations, and is rarely informed by or subordinated to efforts to build institutional capacity. As a recent report commissioned by the UK's Department for International Development found, often "many of the most critical reform issues, notably the impact of the programme and the sustainability of any

effect, are treated by the military as strategic-operational level issues to be addressed at a political level. They are often not considered from the outset by programme level planning processes."[17] Such efforts risk setting partners up to fail. As military force planners in the United States and other high-end militaries know well, developing a military capability requires that the full military system—from the ministerial down to the tactical level—adapt to embrace the new capability; simply inserting a new piece of equipment without the concomitant systemic adaptation often means the equipment is unlikely to be maintained, supported by the right personnel, or employed effectively. To address this shortcoming, a critical task is educating policy makers and security assistance planners within the security sectors of the United States and other security providers on the role, purpose, and implementation of DIB. A second key task is developing more precise, repeatable models for merging "train and equip" programs with DIB; that is, models for holistic approaches to military assistance that account for the full range of requirements associated with building legitimate, affordable, effective, and sustainable military capabilities.

Ultimately, a model that effectively integrates unit-level capacity building with institution building may require a fundamental shift in the way the United States and many other security exporters approach security sector assistance. Rather than seeking to address defense institution and broader whole-of-government issues after plans to provide tactical military capabilities have already been developed or initiated, it may require turning this model on its head: starting with whole-of-government approaches to developing effective governance institutions, including in the defense sector; identifying and analyzing shared security objectives that may guide further capacity building; and then planning the development of tactical capabilities as direct outgrowths of this strategic alignment. There are numerous disincentives standing in the way of such a transformation, however, and even minor shifts in that direction require the reorientation of a wide array of actors. That is not to say that such an approach, which holds the potential for far more successful outcomes, should not be pursued.

These challenges notwithstanding, DIB is a nascent discipline with great promise, both for improving the ability of the United States and other security providers to achieve strategic national security objectives, and to empower partners to more effectively, accountably, and transparently govern their defense sectors so as to enhance the security of their own citizens. In the increasingly complex security environment that has thus far characterized the 21st century, DIB's potential is rivaled only by its necessity.

Taxonomy of DIB Focus Areas

This annex presents a taxonomy of core focus areas across the three levels of engagement for defense institution building (DIB): the ministerial, military headquarters, and operational levels. The taxonomy is intended to identify critical functions at each level that may be important areas of focus for institutional capacity-building efforts; it is not a task list. It is also important to note that many identified functions are not rigidly confined to one level, while many functions identified at different levels may be present in a single organization.

Organizational structure notwithstanding, the functions identified in the taxonomy are critical to effective defense sector governance.

Ministerial Level

The critical goals of DIB at the ministerial level are to ensure that a partner nation's defense ministry is able to effectively perform oversight and ensure the effectiveness, transparency, and accountability of its military activities; align policies, strategies, and investments of the defense enterprise with those of the national government; set the direction of the development and employment of the military through clear, executable policy and budgetary guidance; and ensure unity of effort across disparate elements of a defense enterprise. To achieve these goals, DIB at the ministerial level focuses on five major competencies: resource management; human resource management; strategy, policy, and planning; acquisition and logistics; and rule of law. Each of the five major competencies is defined below.

Resource Management

The ability of the host-nation (HN) defense sector to plan, allocate, execute, and account for resources in support of national defense through the nation's armed forces. Resource management includes capacities to budget, conduct analysis of short- and long-term budgetary requirements, effectively allocate resources in alignment with strategic priorities, execute budgets through effective program management, contracting, and acquisition, conduct analysis of expenditures, and audit expenditures.

Human Resource Management

The ability of the HN's defense sector to identify, assign, develop, and maintain the required civilian and military workforce to achieve national defense objectives. For a host nation, according to a manual produced by NATO's Building Integrity program, "The goal of the defence personnel management system is to ensure that the right numbers of people with the right mix of skills and experience are in the right positions to provide for defence outputs—current operations, future capabilities, command and control, etc."[18] The same manual notes that, for a personnel management system to perform effectively:

> *it must perform two complementary functions . . . :*
>
> *1. Determine human resource requirements, based on future defence requirements and force plans. These include short-term requirements to meet the needs of the current force, mid-term (5-6 year) requirements for the evolving force, and long-term (15+ year) requirements for meeting long-term development goals.*
> *2. Manage and develop people—as individuals and in aggregate—to maximize the human resources available to meet requirements. This requires systematic efforts*

*to attract, train, motivate, assign, promote and retain personnel to ensure an
available pool of personnel with needed professional competencies (knowledge,
skills and experience).[19]*

Critical capabilities in this area thus include the ability to establish human resource
requirements, establish and maintain viable civilian and military career paths, ensure
successful policies and processes for recruiting and retention of civilian and military
personnel, provide sufficient professional education and development, maintain objective
and transparent promotion processes, determine and plan for appropriate compensation
and benefits, maintain objective and transparent performance management or evaluation
systems, and ensure fair and transparent recourses for redressing personnel grievances.

Strategy, Policy, and Planning

The ability of a host-nation defense sector to develop and oversee defense and military
strategies, plans, and policies that identify and prioritize defense objectives, direct when
and how to commit military forces, provide for the management and oversight of both
military and civilian elements of the defense sector, and develop plans that align available
ways and means to desired ends.

The policy function entails the ability of a ministry to engage in national level,
interagency policymaking, as well as to clearly articulate policies governing the specific
functions of the defense sector. Such policies will define missions and objectives, identify
and direct the means through which the defense sector pursues such objectives, and
assess and seek to mitigate risks associated with those objectives. The policy function
also includes engagement with foreign partners to seek agreements, develop common
practices, share information and planning assumptions, and otherwise collaborate to
achieve mutual objectives.

Strategy and planning entail "the intelligent identification, utilization, and
coordination of resources (ways and means) for the successful attainment of a specific
objective (end)."[20] Strategy, too, has both interagency and defense-specific dimensions;
the effective ministry of defense should be able to work through interagency processes
toward the development of national security strategies while translating national guidance
into specific defense strategies (that is, the application of defense sector ways and means
against identified objectives) that account for both broad national defense interests and
specific regional or functional challenges. Planning is the translation of these strategies
into specific plans that sequence, coordinate, and integrate activities and resources to
achieve desired end states, as well as the assessment and mitigation of risks associated
with alternative courses of action; at the ministerial level, planning requires direction to
and oversight of military planners to ensure that military plans are developed, maintained,
and assessed in support of identified, prioritized defense objectives.

Acquisition and Logistics

The ability of a host-nation defense sector to acquire new defense capabilities, to maintain existing capabilities, to move forces, equipment, and supplies within and between areas of operation, to maintain necessary infrastructure, to manage supply chains and risks thereto, and to provide medical support to defense personnel.

More specifically, acquisition at the ministerial level requires appropriate policies and management frameworks to support effective identification and articulation of specific requirements and performance specifications associated with desired military capabilities, cost analysis and life-cycle support planning, and mechanisms (such as contracting) to acquire weapons systems, equipment, support systems, and services in support of the missions of a country's armed forces and defense institutions. Logistics is "a nation's capability to plan for, gain access to, and deliver forces and materiel to required points of application." The two go hand-in-hand, and are often lumped together under the category of logistics. NATO's *Logistics Handbook*, for example, provides an expansive definition addressing both capabilities:

> *The science of planning and carrying out the movement and maintenance of forces. In its most comprehensive sense, the aspects of military operations which deal with:*
> - *design and development, acquisition, storage, movement, distribution, maintenance, evacuation and disposal of materiel;*
> - *transport of personnel;*
> - *acquisition or construction, maintenance, operation and disposition of facilities;*
> - *acquisition or furnishing of services; and*
> - *medical and health service support.*[21]

While logistics is a critical capability at all three levels of DIB activity, at the ministerial level its focus is on ensuring the policies and processes necessary to maintain effective acquisition and logistics systems, allocating resources to achieve acquisition and logistics requirements, ensuring management frameworks to maintain program accountability within the acquisition and logistics systems, and address the integration of defense logistics systems (including supply chains) with national logistics systems. Moreover, at the ministerial level, logistics often demands an ability to make arrangements for multinational cooperation, such as ensuring viable lines of communication to support foreign deployments, including through seeking necessary agreements with allied or partner nations. Finally, in certain circumstances, it entails the ability to receive, host, and support foreign forces deployed to ensure the partner nation's security.

Rule of Law

The ability of a HN defense sector to ensure the accountability of armed forces to national authorities; ensure the adherence of armed forces to domestic and international law and treaty obligations; administer an effective, fair, transparent, and timely system of military justice or to ensure military personnel are accountable to a national justice system; provide military leaders with the tools to ensure accountability of military personnel to a clearly defined chain of command; and provide direction and oversight to the conduct of military justice activities, such as investigation and detention. The United Nations defines rule of law as:

> *A principle of governance in which all persons, institutions and entities, public and private, including the State itself, are accountable to laws that are publicly promulgated, equally enforced and independently adjudicated, and which are consistent with international human rights norms and standards. It requires, as well, measures to ensure adherence to the principles of supremacy of law, equality before the law, accountability to the law, fairness in the application of the law, separation of powers, participation in decision-making, legal certainty, avoidance of arbitrariness and procedural and legal transparency.* [22]

This core focus area is essentially the application of the United Nations definition to the institutions of the defense sector; however, in the defense sector, the principle of accountability through a clearly defined chain of command becomes a primary means through which armed forces are directed and held accountable in adherence to the law. Capabilities in this area serve to enhance public trust in the defense sector, maintain good order and discipline among military units, establish clear policies governing the circumstances under which military units apply instruments of force, enforce justice, and ensure that armed forces are employed strictly in support of national policies and laws.

Military Headquarters Level

The critical goals of DIB at the military headquarters level are to translate ministerial-level policy and guidance into military policies and orders; to ensure that a partner nation's military services are able to form, train, equip, sustain, develop, and direct operating units within military forces; to organize those operating units most effectively and efficiently to perform assigned missions; to integrate units across services through joint staffs or other mechanisms; and to provide appropriate guidance to military personnel regarding the execution of assigned responsibilities. To achieve these goals, DIB at the military headquarters level focuses on four major competencies: personnel management; force development; logistics; and command accountability. Each of the four major competencies is defined below.

Many militaries, including the United States military, choose to divide the functions identified within this level into two distinct organizational levels. Joint or general staff models often assume the function of translating ministerial-level policy and guidance into military policies and orders, while headquarters organizations of individual military services are charged with organizing, training, and equipping forces. However, many other militaries lack general or joint staffs, and combine the functions into single organizations.

Total Force Management

The ability of the HN military's organizational structures and processes to support recruitment, mobilization/demobilization, the distribution of resources, and other efforts that support the forming and reforming of units. Total force management involves many of the same functions as human resource management at the ministerial level; however, specific tasks, activities, and challenges may take a much different shape in a military context. Total force management may involve determining the balance of volunteer forces versus conscripts, managing and developing conscripted forces, blending military and civilian workforces within a service, planning for the mobilization and deployment of forces for combat, integrating reserve forces into active duty status, and other challenges unique to the military context.

Force Development

The ability of the HN military's systems to develop its forces through development, testing, and fielding of materiel and non-materiel capabilities required in support of strategy; to develop doctrine, provide professional military education, ensure funding and personnel to support such capabilities; developing budgetary analysis and input to ministerial functions in support of such capabilities; and to maintain necessary physical infrastructure and installations. Force development determines what functional capabilities are required to meet assigned missions and objectives, and undertakes the development, maintenance, assessment, and integration of those capabilities. Such capabilities include materiel, systemic, and personnel elements.

Logistics

The ability of the HN military's systems to provide logistical support across the military institution through the maintenance and assurance of the supply chain and a national distribution system, the establishment of policies and systems to support strategic planning for sustainment and distribution, and the establishment and maintenance of sufficient personnel, units, and organizations to meet national logistics requirements.

Differentiating logistics at the military headquarters level from logistics at the ministerial or operational level is critical. *Figure 3*, adapted from Henry Eccles's classic *Logistics in the National Defense*, provides a visual differentiation of logistics roles at various levels.[23] At the military headquarters level, the fundamental task of logistics is the application of national- and ministerial-level guidance, resources, policies, and direction

to develop and sustain logistics systems designed to support service-specific military units and capabilities, and to integrate those systems into a joint logistics system that supports the application of joint military power.

Figure 3: The Levels of Planning in Logistics[24]
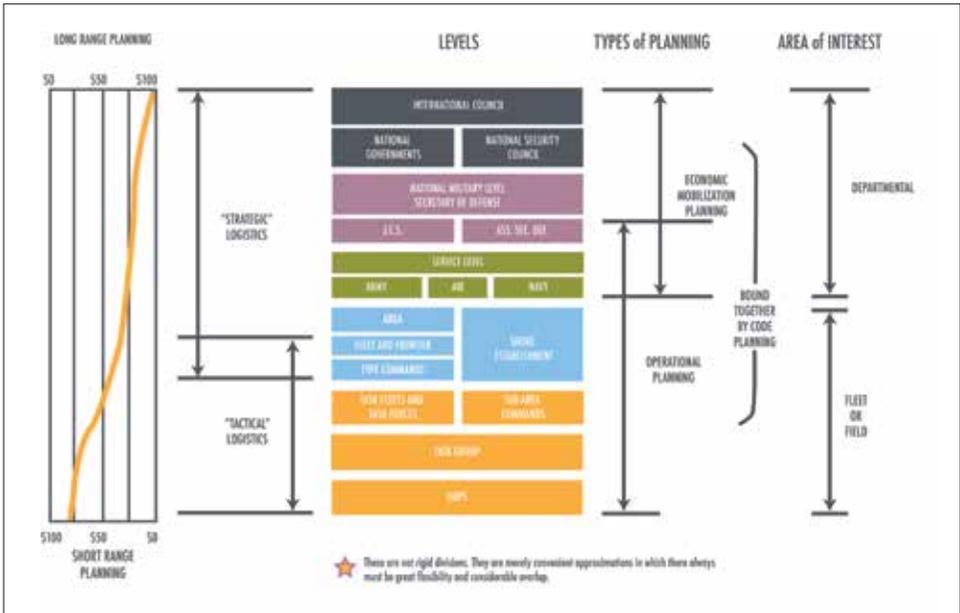
Command Responsibility and Accountability

The ability of the HN military to maintain a clearly established chain of command within and among its units, to select and replace command staff, to establish mechanisms for effective communication and coordination across units, to ensure personnel accountability, and to set policies and guidance that ensure the adherence of military personnel and units to the rule of law. Maintaining order and discipline is an inherent responsibility of any military officer serving in a command capacity; however, the ability of a military commander to do so depends on an institutional architecture of standards, regulations, procedures, tools for accountability, and the like. As a former U.S. Air Force Chief of Staff summarized, "standards must be uniformly known, consistently applied and non-selectively enforced. Accountability is critically important to good order and discipline of the force. And, failure to ensure accountability will destroy the trust of the . . . public."[25] The command responsibility and accountability function includes, where applicable, the maintenance and application of a military justice system and other disciplinary frameworks.

Operational Level

DIB's focus is most robust at the ministerial and military headquarters levels; it is at those levels where most systemic mechanisms supporting the effective management and

accountability of the defense sector are located. However, there is a focused set of capabilities at the operational level that are also critical to well-functioning military institutions, and these capabilities may benefit from defense institution building efforts as well. It is worth noting that in some, especially smaller, militaries, functions at the military headquarters and operational levels are often found in the same organization. The critical goals of DIB at the operational level are to ensure that a partner nation's military units are able to plan for, mobilize, deploy for, sustain, and assess military campaigns and major operations, and to demobilize and recover from such operations. To achieve these goals, DIB at the operational level focuses on four major competencies: readiness; command and control; logistics; and operational planning. Each of the four major competencies is defined below.

Readiness

The ability of the HN military's systems to provide the key elements needed to identify, achieve, and sustain a level of training readiness to meet operational requirements for its units, to establish and maintain physical infrastructure necessary to support training requirements (e.g. training ranges), and to ensure that each unit maintains the requisite personnel and equipment necessary to meet operational requirements. In essence, readiness is determined at the level of individual operational units, and depends on the extent to which each unit has the personnel, equipment, and training to enable it to carry out operational responsibilities when required. As retired Army Colonel Richard Dunn has written:

> To fight effectively, the armed forces must be manned, equipped, and trained to operate under dangerous, complex, uncertain, and austere conditions— often with little warning. They require the right personnel operating the right equipment with the right training to win . . . . Readiness is like a three-legged stool. The personnel, equipment, and training legs need to be balanced and in sync to support the load.[26]

Readiness, as a core institutional function, refers to the systemic capability to address each of these three legs across a military's units. A well-functioning readiness capability does not necessarily ensure that all units are ready at all times; rather it manages requirements and risks associated with training, personnel, and equipment according to projections of likely operational requirements.

Command and Control

The ability of the HN military's commands to exercise effective command and control during operations; to direct force maneuver, intelligence, fires, and force protection; and to hold personnel accountable to a clearly established chain of command. The concept of command generally implies the effective expression of will by a military officer assigned authority over other military personnel. The function of command, in the institutional

context, however, extends beyond the expression of will: it requires established chains of command, regulations that shape the expression of authority, clear delineation of responsibility, and tools and procedures to enforce authority, order, and discipline. Control is, by nature, systemic: it "implies the personnel, facilities and procedures for planning, directing and co-ordinating [sic] resources in the accomplishment of the mission. It implies standard operating procedures (SOPs), rules of engagement (ROEs), regulations, military law, organizational structures, policies, equipment—in short, all those structures and processes (including cybernetic processes) put in place by the military to facilitate the accomplishment of its mission in a safe and efficient manner."[27]

Logistics

The ability of the HN military's systems to provide logistical support to operationally deployed military units and personnel, including fielding, distribution, and maintenance relating to critical equipment, personal gear, and provisions such as food and fuel; and to establish and maintain lines of communication. Operational logistics encompasses the activities and resources necessary to undertake military campaigns and major operations. According to U.S. Marine Corps doctrine, "Operational-level logistics links strategic resources with tactical units and enables force closure [that is, ensuring sufficient personnel are in place to carry out assigned tasks], sustainment, reconstitution, and redeployment of forces…Operational logistics supports expeditionary operations."[28]

Operational Planning

The ability of the HN military's operational commands to establish, maintain, execute, and assess coherent, resource-informed plans for responding to contingencies and for conducting steady-state activities. Operational planning is well defined in the U.S. Army's treatment of the concept of "operational art" in its Field Manual on Operations (FM 3-0). It is, according to the Field Manual, "the application of creative imagination by commanders and staffs—supported by their skill, knowledge, and experience—to design strategies, campaigns, and major operations and organize and employ military forces. Operational art integrates ends, ways, and means across the levels of war." In this conception, operational art "requires three continuous, cyclic activities": identifying and framing the mission, formulating an operational design to achieve the mission, and refining the design based on assessment and additional information. As the U.S. Army defines it, "Operational design is the conception and construction of the framework that underpins a campaign or major operation plan and its subsequent execution…Through operational art, commanders and staffs develop a broad concept for applying the military instrument, including landpower, and translate it into a coherent, feasible design for employing joint forces. This operational design provides a framework that relates tactical tasks to the strategic end state. It provides a unifying purpose and focus to all operations."[29]

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