

Addressing the Problem of Failed States

A New Instrument

BY JOHN E. HERBST

The problem of failed states and ungoverned spaces is not new. Since the appearance of the first civilizations in Mesopotamia, Egypt, China, and India, there have been frontiers and wildernesses without governance. Naturally, these spaces often represented a grave threat to neighbors. Over 2,000 years ago, the Chinese built the Great Wall to keep out intruders from the Eurasian steppes, and over 1,600 years ago, the Romans built a complex defensive system to demarcate and defend its borders in Germany and England.

In the past, ungoverned spaces posed a problem only for immediate neighbors. But today, failed states, failing states, and ungoverned spaces may pose a security threat to states around the world. This was brought home on September 11, 2001, when a terrorist group launched the most lethal attack on the United States since Pearl Harbor from a safe haven thousands of miles away. This was a global wakeup call announcing a new era in international relations. The hopes entertained after the Berlin Wall fell in 1989 for a “New World Order” or an “end of history” were not to be.

Indeed, the post–Cold War world has turned out to be disorderly and dangerous. According to the *Failed States Index 2009*, there are no fewer than 40 failing states today, many of which are the source of the world’s worst problems of instability and violence. The challenge posed by failed states and ungoverned spaces will last a generation or more. This is a consequence of paradoxical tendencies within the international system. On the one hand, globalization, the extraordinary interconnectedness of economies and societies around the world, will likely grow as advances in communications and transportation continue. Yet while our national societies and economies are interacting ever more closely, there are centrifugal tendencies pulling states apart. The emergence of 15 independent countries from the demise of the Soviet Union and 7 from the breakup of the former Yugoslavia are the clearest examples. But so too are the European nationalist obstacles to further integration within the European Union, as well as the separatist movements in places such as the Caucasus, northern Iraq, Kashmir, and Africa, with its hundreds of ethnic groups distributed among 53 states.

Ambassador John E. Herbst is the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization at the U.S. Department of State.

Globalization, driven by the information revolution, has accelerated the decline of central authority, making it harder for authoritarian rulers (or media elites) to monopolize the interpretation of events or to prevent their citizens from communicating and organizing on taboo subjects. For instance, protests in Iran following the presidential election last summer would have been hard to sustain were it not for the networking capacity offered by Twitter.

Globalization has also enabled the emergence of the phenomenon that Thomas Friedman calls super-empowered individuals and groups—that is, individuals and groups with the means to influence global affairs from inside or outside government. The Internet and the near-free ability to communicate with anyone anywhere on the globe at any time allow individuals to unite for economic and political purposes or, as we know too well, for jihadist purposes. The ability of al Qaeda, for instance, to network through the touch of a few buttons with terrorists from the Philippines to Pakistan to the Arabian Peninsula to Western Europe would not be possible without globalization.

Ungoverned spaces may become centers for terrorist activities, narcotrafficking, and piracy. For all these reasons, the international community must concern itself with unstable states. In fact, it has. In the 20 years since the end of the Cold War, there have been 41 peacekeeping missions run under United Nations (UN) auspices alone in contrast to the 16 that the UN ran between 1945 and 1989. But peacekeeping operations are only part of the equation. They keep combatants at bay or provide security so that a country may resume development, but peacekeeping operations do not address the problems of failed governance, nor do they help states develop capacity for efficient governance. This is the realm of peacebuilding.

To address the problem of ungoverned spaces, the United States has begun to develop new instruments of national security. These instruments take advantage of all aspects of government power, creating a whole-of-government approach. In the best of circumstances, they will mobilize assets from our broader society (such as nongovernmental organizations and volunteers), and, as Secretary of State Hillary Clinton notes, “create partnerships aimed at solving problems” with allies and friends around the world.

We have learned in Iraq and Afghanistan that the U.S. Armed Forces are quite efficient in dealing with the military threat emanating from failed states and that they will assume responsibilities far afield from their core competencies to fill the gap between peacekeeping and peacebuilding, if necessary. But we have also learned that the failure to stabilize through development of a competent, responsible state government results in temporary military victory, but with a prolonged struggle for stability.

A New Instrument

The responsibility for developing this new instrument of peacebuilding has been vested in the Secretary of State, who has tasked the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) to take on this responsibility. The Secretary has charged S/CRS with three broad tasks:

- ❖ developing a civilian response capability
- ❖ developing a whole-of-government response to stability operations
- ❖ ensuring civilian-military integration.

To meet these objectives, S/CRS has led an interagency process that is creating a Civilian Response Corps (CRC) made up of Federal employees and American citizens with the

necessary skills to undertake reconstruction and stabilization activities for countries that have no functioning government, or a poorly functioning one. The CRC will be made up of engineers, lawyers, judges, corrections officials, diplomats, development experts, public administrators, public health officials, city planners, border control officials, economists, and others from seven civilian U.S. Government departments and an agency: the Departments of State, Agriculture, Commerce, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Justice, and Treasury, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), and state and local governments and the private sector.

The CRC will also be made up of three distinct elements—the active, standby, and reserve components—enabling the United States to scale up for major stabilization missions and to scale down in periods of less demand. The active component is composed of 250 Federal employees whose full-time job is to train for and deploy to stability operations. The active component will focus on critical initial interagency functions such as assessment, planning, management, administration, logistics, and resource mobilization and will deploy within 72 hours of a decision. The active component represents the U.S. Government’s first responders, who will pave the way for a successful, coordinated, larger civilian intervention.

The standby component, with additional subject matter expertise, provides critical reinforcement and followup for the active component. The initial 2,000 standby component members are current Federal employees with other full-time jobs across the above mentioned Federal departments and agency. They will train 2 to 3 weeks a year and will be ready for deployment within 30 to 60 days of a decision, with 10 to 25 percent of them deployable at any one time.

The 2,000-member reserve component will provide a pool of state and local government and private sector professionals with expertise and skills not readily found within the U.S. Government, such as municipal administration, policing, and local governance. Reserve component members will sign up for a 4-year commitment. Each reserve member will be required to train for 2 weeks a year and will have an obligation to deploy for up to 1 year if needed. Up to 25 percent of reserve component members will be available to deploy within 2 months of the decision.

This Civilian Response Corps of 4,250 would enable the United States to continuously deploy between 900 and 1,200 members to simultaneously staff a large stabilization mission, such as Afghanistan, and a medium-sized crisis, such as Kosovo in the late 1990s, while still retaining a response capacity for smaller crises.

To date, funds for the CRC have been appropriated under the Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2008 (P.L. 110–252) and under the State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Act of 2009 (Div. H, P.L. 111–8). These funds have allowed S/CRS and USAID to initiate the recruitment, hiring, training, and equipping of the active and standby components. Between January 2008

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and May 2009, 56 CRC members have deployed to 11 countries, including Afghanistan, and we are on target to have 250 active members and 1,000 standby members ready to deploy by the end of 2010.

Of course, it is not enough to have the right people. They also need to be in the right place at the right time, with the skills, knowledge, equipment, and organization to get the job done.

To ensure that the peacebuilding effort is successful, a new Interagency Management System (IMS) for Reconstruction and Stabilization was created in coordination with 15 departments and agencies across the U.S. Government. The IMS outlines the roles, responsibilities, and processes for mobilizing and supporting interagency reconstruction and stabilization operations. In concert with the planning framework—a template for planning at the strategic and policy level, as well as at the Country Team level—the IMS provides for whole-of-government, civilian-military planning and coordination in Washington, DC, at combatant commands, and in the field.

The IMS was designed to be flexible to meet the particular requirements of stabilization operations with regard to required skills, size of the teams, and specific tasks and activities. The IMS is also designed to be used in engagements with or without military operations. It is not intended, however, to respond to political and humanitarian crises in otherwise stable countries that are regularly and effectively handled through current organizations and systems.

Planning is a critical element of stability operations, and S/CRS has focused on development of a planning shop unique to the U.S. Government. Unlike military planning, S/CRS has the ability to knit together the efforts of the whole government and to express the guidance of policymakers, identify tradeoffs to decisions, define milestones and endstates, and analyze resource requirements and sequencing programs. S/CRS planners have already led interagency planning efforts and produced strategic and

implementation plans for Sudan, Haiti, Kosovo, Georgia, and Bangladesh.

In Afghanistan, S/CRS civilian planners have produced operational plans for Regional Command East, its component brigades, and Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), as well as for U.S.-led PRTs in the west and south. S/CRS pioneered the creation of the Integrated Civilian Military Action Group (ICMAG) at the U.S. Embassy in Kabul, which is responsible for ensuring that all elements (civilian and military) of American operations are fully integrated—a key concept of the Interagency Management System. S/CRS planners in the ICMAG are also directing the first-ever integrated planning effort for Afghanistan.

Getting Help

As the United States builds the capacity to stabilize countries in crisis or heading toward crisis, it is important to remember that Washington cannot and should not try to address problems of failing and failed states alone. The sheer number of such states, in addition to the complexity of these crises, is a problem that requires a global response. It is therefore critical that the United States

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develop civilian and whole-of-government capacity in conjunction with other like-minded states. It is also critical to develop an international network of partners who share that vision.

There are now at least 14 countries with civilian capacity and whole-of-government approaches similar to that of S/CRS, including Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. The efforts of some of these partners are quite impressive; a number have budgets higher than that of S/CRS. Australia, for example, has created an expeditionary police force that numbers over 700 and has been used to promote stability in East Timor, New Guinea, the Solomon Islands, and the Marshall Islands.

S/CRS has also been working to build international reconstruction and stability capacity by reaching out and engaging with large potential stakeholders, such as Brazil, China, India, and South Africa, who already participate in regional or UN peacekeeping efforts. Furthermore, S/CRS is working with the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, European Union, Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe, UN, and African Union on stabilization issues. The long-term goal is to increase the number of countries and regional organizations with stabilization capabilities and to seek partnerships as specific crises emerge. By building relationships with partners willing to take on stabilization work in areas important to them, S/CRS is both promoting stability and reducing the burden on the United States.

Prevention as Stabilization

Responding to crises, however, is only half of the equation. The best goal is to avoid conflict or destabilization in the first place by maintaining an active conflict prevention program. S/CRS has already made two significant contributions to that goal: the development and application of the Interagency Conflict

Assessment Framework (ICAF), and the allocation and management of over \$300 million in funds since 2006 under the Section 1207 transfer authority, which authorizes the Department of Defense to transfer funds to the Department of State for reconstruction, stabilization, and security purposes.

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Team reach a shared understanding of a country's conflict dynamics and build consensus on potential entry points for additional U.S. support for conflict prevention and transformation. To date, the ICAF has been used at our Embassies in Bangladesh, Cambodia, and Panama, and Washington-based assessments have been done on the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Tajikistan, and most recently Pakistan.

Funds transferred under Section 1207 authority have been used to restore or maintain peace and security with the larger goal of avoiding the need to deploy U.S. troops. Projects or activities funded under Section 1207 are selected through an interagency process. Since fiscal year 2006, this funding has supported successful programs in 19 countries. For example, the Haiti Stabilization Initiative reestablished a Haitian police presence in the Cité Soleil slum after a long absence and engaged the local populace in labor-intensive infrastructure projects. In Colombia, 1207

funds reestablished a secure central government presence in the Macarena region, which has served as a model for bringing together civilian and military efforts to provide services to citizens recently liberated from the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia.

Commitment Fulfilled

The United States is now committed to addressing the complex, long-term challenges of ungoverned spaces, and failed and failing states. The President has directed, Congress has authorized and funded, and the State Department, in cooperation with its interagency partners, is executing the work required to fulfill that commitment. That effort is fraught with obstacles—some substantive, some bureaucratic—and the 5 years since the creation of S/CRS have been both frustrating and rewarding; but the civilian capability to both lead and cooperate in stability operations and to forge integrated U.S. efforts in such operations is no longer theoretical; it is well on its way to full realization. One can read whole-of-government plans and study the interagency reconstruction and stabilization doctrine. Training classes are being held every month. Coordination across the U.S. Government and with international partners is happening every day. Most importantly, the CRC is funded, being built, and starting to deploy.

Once we build this new capability, we must use it wisely. We should only engage where our interests are on the line, success is achievable, and we have the clear support of the American people. To succeed, our engagement and objectives must be sensitive to the culture of the area. With this understanding, sustainable peacebuilding is within reach. [PRISM](#)