# Forced to Govern: Armed Statebuilding Operations and the Limits of Military Effectiveness

Adam Wunische

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**Forced to Govern: Armed Statebuilding Operations and the Limits of Military Effectiveness**

Adam Wunische

Advisor: Professor Gerald Easter, Ph.D.

The U.S. military is asked to perform statebuilding operations far more often than it engages in conventional warfare against opposing uniformed state militaries. The U.S. military has engaged in 13 major armed statebuilding operations during and since WWII, along with numerous smaller operations throughout the world, and the most optimistic measures of success are less than 50 percent. Why, despite statebuilding being the most common task it is asked to perform, is U.S. military performance in statebuilding operations still so poor. This puzzle cannot be answered by current research on military effectiveness since this body of research focuses exclusively either on a military's effectiveness in conventional combat, or on a military's effectiveness in the conventional combat aspects of non-conventional operations. This gap is detrimental since militaries are frequently asked to perform a wide range of missions far beyond conventional operations. The U.S. military consistently resists statebuilding operational tasks when conducting such operations and consistently dismantles what little statebuilding capacity it does build following the statebuilding operation. This dissertation takes a novel approach by disaggregating between the three statebuilding tasks the U.S. military identifies as tasks it should be able to perform in statebuilding operations, building infrastructure, building and training local security forces, and building and supporting local governance. It finds that the military actually performs well in some statebuilding tasks and poorly in others. This dissertation presents the Primary Mission Theory to explain this divergence in effectiveness, which argues that militaries will preference those tasks that contribute to what they consider to be their primary mission, which is almost always conventional combat. Thus, statebuilding tasks will be preferenced only if they can also contribute to conventional combat capabilities. I trace the historical development statebuilding institutions within the U.S. military and conduct case studies on operations in Afghanistan and Vietnam in support of the presented theory.

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# Acronyms

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|---|---|
| ANA | Afghan National Army |
| ANDSF | Afghan National Defense and Security Forces |
| ARVN | Army of the Republic of Vietnam |
| CAP | Combined Action Program |
| CATS | Civil Affairs Training Schools |
| CERP | Commander's Emergency Reconstruction Program |
| CIA | Central Intelligence Agency |
| CIDG | Civilian Irregular Defense Group |
| COIN | Counterinsurgency |
| CORDS | Civilian Operations and Revolutionary Development Support |
| CPA | Coalition Provisional Authority |
| DoD | U.S. Department of Defense |
| DoS | U.S. Department of State |
| FARC | Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia |
| ISAF | International Security Assistance Force |
| MAAG | U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam |
| MACV | Military Assistance Command-Vietnam |
| MSUG | Michigan State University Vietnam Advisory Group |
| OEF | Operation Enduring Freedom |
| PA | Principal and Agent |
| PKSOI | Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute |
| PROVN | Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam |
| PRT | Provincial Reconstruction Team |
| RED HORSE | Rapid Deployable, Heavy Operational Repair Squadron, Engineer |
| RMK-BRJ | Raymond International and Morrison-Knudsen, and Brown and Root and J.A Jones Construction |
| SCA | Soviet Civil Administration |
| SFA | Security Force Assistance |
| SFAB | Security Force Assistance Brigade |
| SIGAR | Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction |
| SMG | School of Military Governance |
| START | Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (Canada) |
| TFBSO | Task Force for Business and Stability Operations |
| USACE | U.S. Army Corps of Engineers |
| USAID | United States Agency for International Development |
| USASF | U.S. Army Special Forces |

## Chapter 1: Forced to Govern

### Introduction

I graduated early from high school in 2005 so I could enlist in the U.S. Army. I had always expected to go to college after high school, but the terrorist attacks on 9/11 changed everything. Instead of worrying about what subject to major in, I was worried I would miss the wars if I waited to join until after college. I did not miss the wars. Instead, my entire adult life has been defined by the wars; first by participating in them, then by studying them, and finally by analyzing and teaching them. Wars are not supposed to be generational endeavors, they are supposed to be decisions of last resort and then, if chosen, executed as quickly and efficiently as possible to try to contain the immense destruction and suffering. The wars were expected to be quick, but instead they dragged on for years and became known as the forever wars.

Previous generations of American soldiers certainly had their lives defined by the wars they participated in, but the wars do not continue for the entirety of it. Why was that different for our generation? Why was the U.S. military able to capture Baghdad in three weeks, but the Iraqi army they trained over the subsequent *decade* were unable to present even the façade of resistance to a much smaller and poorly trained Islamic State force moving on Mosul in 2014? The U.S. military is exceptionally good in conventional operations but bad at achieving success in armed statebuilding operations, even by optimistic measures. This disparity exists despite the fact that the U.S. military is asked to perform unconventional and statebuilding operations far

more than conventional operations.[1] Why, then, are they so ineffective at actually conducting statebuilding operations?

The U.S. military is frequently observed engaging in a vicious cycle that leaves itself unprepared for statebuilding operations once they begin. Consider the following from a 2018 RAND report: "The U.S. military found itself unprepared for stabilization in both Afghanistan and Iraq and then expanded its focus and spending enormously as the U.S. Department of Defense directed the military to develop proficiency in a wide range of stabilization tasks."[2] Why? The U.S. was engaged in statebuilding operations frequently under President Clinton and before that Vietnam was one of the largest armed statebuilding operations ever. The professional culture of the U.S. Army was established during the Civil War.[3] Statebuilding was a vital part of the Civil War and WWII. Thus, statebuilding should be deeply engrained in its culture and practices. The U.S. military should have been well prepared for such operations. The report goes on to say one of the key findings was a "common pattern of *forgetting* that stabilization is a vital function that must be performed across the range of military operations."[4] This forgetting leads to institutional atrophy, and by the time the institutions are rebuilt the conflict has advanced to a point that the institutions have fewer options to impact the outcome. The U.S. military had built a wide array of competent institutions that could build infrastructure, train local security forces, and support local governance. By the time the operations began in Afghanistan and Iraq, few of

[1] Richard F. Grimmett, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2010," *Congressional Research Services,* March 10, 2011.

[2] Robinson, Linda, Sean Mann, Jeffrey Martini, and Stephanie Pezard, Finding the Right Balance: Department of Defense Roles in Stabilization. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2441.html. iii.

[3] Long, Austin. The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK. Cornell University Press, 2016. 35.

[4] Robinson, Linda, Sean Mann, Jeffrey Martini, and Stephanie Pezard, Finding the Right Balance: Department of Defense Roles in Stabilization. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2018. https://www.rand.org/pubs/research_reports/RR2441.html.

these institutions still existed and were once again built from scratch as they were in Vietnam (and post-WWII before that).

Despite a frequent and clear awareness among military and civilian leaders, the U.S. military still finds itself unprepared for statebuilding operations and even resists statebuilding innovations during these operations. Military effectiveness scholarship has been primarily concerned with explaining effectiveness in conventional battles. This work is extremely important but militaries, especially since the end of WWII, have been asked to perform a wide variety of tasks far beyond merely conventional warfare. The military being used for domestic and international statebuilding has a long history throughout the world. They are asked to build states, deliver humanitarian aid, and even to provide support in domestic policing and internal statebuilding at home, among many others. This lack of attention comes with significant consequences. Very important questions are left unanswerable whenever the military steps out of this conventional arena. The U.S. military, in particular, has been asked to perform statebuilding tasks far more often than conventional warfare tasks, and yet it performs poorly in these tasks relative to others and still primarily trains, equips, and organizes almost exclusively for conventional battles.[5] Why is the U.S. military, and many others, so resistant to the performance of statebuilding tasks. This is especially puzzling considering U.S. military doctrine identifies the tasks they should be effective at in such operations, building infrastructure, security force assistance, and governance assistance.[6]

Three puzzles need to be explained in understanding the primary question posed above: Why, if the U.S. military is frequently asked to perform statebuilding operations, do they

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[5] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.
[6] U.S. Department of the Army, Stability, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, June 2014).

perform so poorly? 1) Why, even when conducting ongoing statebuilding operations and under intense civilian pressure to perform well at statebuilding, does the military still devote less effort and resources to those tasks specific to statebuilding? 2) Why does the military allow the cyclical process that results in atrophying statebuilding capacity during peacetime only to leave themselves unprepared for the next statebuilding operation? 3) When looking at the three tasks identified above, the military's performance is significantly different between the tasks. Why, then, is the U.S. military good at some statebuilding tasks and bad at others?

## U.S. Armed Statebuilding Operations Cases

Armed statebuilding operations are military operations that seek to build a functioning state, or the components of a state, as part of a broader military/civilian effort during a time of war or immediately following hostilities. They are "armed" because the armed forces play a primary role in the operation. This is different from UN peacekeeping where the armed aspect of their involvement is intentionally minimalized. Generally, although not always in the case of civil wars or territorial expansion, these operations occur outside the intervening state's territory. Significant scholarship has focused on statebuilding, but few have focused specifically on military operations intended to accomplish this goal. The U.S. military refers to the types of tasks involved in armed statebuilding operations as "stability operations" in official doctrine.[7] According to this doctrine, the U.S. military should be able to perform five tasks as part of stability operations: the delivery of humanitarian aid, the provision of security, the building of infrastructure, the building of local security forces, and the building of local governance

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[7] U.S. Department of the Army, Stability, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, June 2014). An earlier publication of the same manual referred to the activity as "stability operations". U.S. Department of the Army, Stability Operations, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, October 2008).

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organizations. Infrastructure, security forces, and governance are vital components of the state

and thus are the statebuilding tasks the military recognizes it needs to be able to perform.

Humanitarian assistance and providing security (or occupying security) does not contribute to the

state and are temporary functions.

The U.S. military has engaged in a large number statebuilding operations in foreign

countries in which at least one of the three tasks was performed.[8] I narrow this large universe of

cases to focus on major and comprehensive efforts by including only cases in which there was an

ongoing conflict or within 2 years of the end of hostilities according to the Correlates of War

project.[9] This study is interested in *armed* statebuilding operations in which a military engages in

statebuilding in a conflict or post-conflict environment. This narrows the universe of U.S. cases

to 13. The cases, shown in Table 1, demonstrate the nature of the three tasks and how they relate

to the military. Every single case included infrastructure since the military possesses internal and

robust infrastructure capabilities. Fewer cases (11) involve security force assistance, and even

fewer (4) involve any form of governance assistance. The most comprehensive statebuilding

efforts where all three tasks were undertaken with *substantial* effort at each were the post-WWII

cases of German and Japan, Vietnam, and then the post-9/11 cases of Afghanistan and Iraq. This

list is not the universe of cases in which the U.S. military engages in these tasks. The U.S. Army

Corps of Engineers is constantly active around the globe on a variety of projects and the Global

War on Terror has spawned a significant number of SFA missions throughout the world in

environments that do not rise to the level of inclusion in the Correlates of War dataset. Again,

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[8] Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013: 218-219.; Owen IV, John M. *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010*. Vol. 123. Princeton University Press, 2010.; and Richard F. Grimmett, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2010," *Congressional Research Services,* March 10, 2011.
[9] *Sarkees, Meredith Reid and Frank Wayman (2010). Resort to War: 1816 - 2007. Washington DC: CQ Press.*

their exclusion is because this study is interested in the conduct of armed statebuilding operations, which is statebuilding in the context of war or post-war environments. These outliers are addressed in more detail in Chapter 6.

**Table 1: U.S. and U.S.-Led Armed Statebuilding Operations Since WWII**

| Case | Begin | End | Era | Timing/Type of War | Infra. | SFA | Gov. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Iceland | 1941 | 2006 | WWII | Interstate | X | | |
| Italy | 1943 | 1955 | Post-WWII | Post-Interstate | X | X | |
| West Germany | 1945 | 1955 | Post-WWII | Post-Interstate | X | X | |
| South Korea | 1945 | 1953 | Post-WWII | Post-Interstate/ Interstate | X | X | X |
| Japan | 1945 | 1952 | Post-WWII | Post-Interstate | X | X | |
| Dominican Republic | 1965 | 1966 | Cold War | Intrastate | X | X | |
| South Vietnam | 1962 | 1973 | Cold War | Interstate/ Intrastate | X | X | X |
| El Salvador | 1979 | 1992 | Cold War | Intrastate | X | X | |
| Colombia | 1989 | 2016 | Cold War | Intrastate | X | X | |
| Somalia | 1993 | 1995 | Post-Cold War | Intrastate | X | | |
| Afghanistan | 2001 | 2021 | Post-9/11 | Interstate | X | X | X |
| Philippines | 2000 | 2001 | Post-9/11 | Post-Intrastate | X | X | |
| Iraq | 2003 | 2010 | Post-9/11 | Interstate | X | X | X |

The United States has deployed its military abroad hundreds of times since 1798 and many of these deployments included at least some tasks that constitute some aspect statebuilding.[10] In 2018 alone, the United States was conducting security force assistance (SFA) missions in seven countries in the Western Hemisphere, 21 in Africa (including Seychelles in the

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[10] Grimmett, Richard F. "Instances of use of United States armed forces abroad, 1798-1999." Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 1999.

Indian Ocean), 15 in the Middle East and Central Asia, six in Europe, and 12 in South and Southeast Asia.[11]

The most optimistic measure of success and failure in statebuilding operations was presented by Paul D. Miller. His assessment includes operations by both the U.N. and the U.S. military from 1898 to 2012 and places successes at 50 percent, failures at 37.5 percent, and uncertain outcomes at 12.5 percent. Success is measured as continued progress in at least 4 of 5 categories 10 years after the conclusion of the statebuilding operations, like no resumption of conflict with over 1,000 battle deaths per year, no genocide, and the continuation of constitutional democracy. Even with the inclusion of U.N. operations that are arguably not "armed" statebuilding operations and vast investments in personnel and resources, some in excess of the post-WWII reconstruction of Europe, the probability of a successful outcome is the same as flipping a coin.[12] Removing UN cases make the probability of success even lower.

Other measures that focus on the U.S. military since 1945 places success at 40 percent, failure at 40 percent, and uncertain outcomes at 20 percent.[13] The measure of success for Rebecca Patterson's study was if the country remained free of war and if they remained a democracy 10 years after the departure of U.S. forces. The two uncertain outcomes were the post-9/11 operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. Iraq became a clear failure after publication of the book with the 2014 collapse following the invasion of the much smaller Islamic State forces and Afghanistan currently seems unlikely to succeed as the Afghan government continues to lose

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[11] Stephanie Savell. "Where we fight: US counterterror war locations 2017-2018." *Costs of War Project: Watson Institute for International & Public Affairs at Brown University.* https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/US%20Counterterror%20War%20Locations%2C%202017-18%2C%20with%20Smithsonian%20and%20CoW%20attributions.pdf

[12] Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012.* Cornell University Press, 2013: 16.

[13] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War.* Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 36.

ground to the Taliban.[14] The primary question that motivates this study is why, despite statebuilding being the most common task it is asked to perform, is the U.S. military performance in statebuilding operations still so poor.

Historically, statebuilding has been internally driven, violent, and very long. Attempts at external, expedited statebuilding operations have increased significantly since WWII. This shift is driven by the post-WWII trend away from conquest and annexation and towards conquest and reconstitution of independent and (hopefully/optimistically) allied states. The trend is driven by a change in international norms, but primarily by the rise of nuclear weapons and the reduction in the value of industrial production capacity resulting in conquest and annexation being less profitable and desirable.[15]

### A New Theory is Needed

Explaining effectiveness in armed statebuilding operations is constrained less by the flaws in existing theories and more by the simple paucity of studies that have asked similar questions. Existing scholarship either looks at statebuilding generally but not from the military's perspective, or scholarship looks at military effectiveness in battle but not in statebuilding. The result is an inability to effectively assess or explain the performance of the military in armed statebuilding operations. This study seeks to address this gap by studying the military's performance in these tasks. Primary Mission Theory is presented as a theory to explain the military's behavior in armed statebuilding operations.

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[14] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Addendum to SIGAR's January 2018 quarterly report to the United States Congress," SIGAR, January 30, 2018, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Addendum_2018-01-30qr.pdf.

[15] While Liberman shows that conquest can still be profitable, he acknowledges that such circumstances are rare and difficult to achieve. Liberman, Peter. *Does conquest pay?: the exploitation of occupied industrial societies*. Vol. 74. Princeton University Press, 1998.

Primary Mission Theory provides an explanation for why the U.S. military's performance at statebuilding tasks remains poor and largely ineffective despite the clear and consistent demand for such competence and substantial resources and civilian pressure directed towards the U.S. military improving its statebuilding capacities. Civilian pressure, a key component of a military's ability to innovate, has, at times, pushed significantly for the military to improve statebuilding performance. During operations like those in Vietnam or Afghanistan/Iraq, resources where high for statebuilding operations. Therefore, organizational interests to maintain high budgets that would normally push towards expensive conventional training and organizing doesn't always exist. Finally, previous studies have found that the military is in fact flexible during these operations and innovates to improve its statebuilding competencies.[16] However, once these operations end, these competencies are quickly and enthusiastically jettisoned in favor of conventional competencies, thus leaving them once again unprepared for the next statebuilding operation.

Some scholars and researchers have recognized that U.S. foreign policy has become increasingly militarized over the years, meaning the military frequently finds itself tasked with duties traditionally reserved for civilian agencies.[17] A better understanding of how the military performs in non-conventional warfare tasks throughout the spectrum of foreign policy activities will contribute to a better understanding of when a military option should and should not be used. This would be an improvement from the current debate of what strategies should be used after an operation has already begun. The Primary Mission Theory presented in more detail in chapter 2 argues that militaries will preference those tasks that contribute to the primary mission

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[16] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

[17] Adams, Gordon, and Shoon Murray, eds. *Mission creep: the militarization of US foreign policy?*. Georgetown University Press, 2014.

as that particular military views it. For most militaries this will be viewed as conventional combat. While some tend to criticize the general ability of the military to engage in statebuilding operations, Primary Mission Theory argues that the military will actually be very good at some statebuilding tasks and very bad at others. This is because tasks like building infrastructure that are important to armed statebuilding operations are also very important to conventional combat, so the military sees a significant interest in cultivating these capabilities rather than resisting. Other tasks, like building local governance, is vital for armed statebuilding operations but contributes nothing to conventional combat. Primary Mission Theory is thus more effective at understanding military effectiveness in these armed statebuilding operations than those previously offered.

**The Significance of Armed Statebuilding Operations**

In Vietnam, the U.S. military was presented with an acute dilemma; train the Vietnamese forces to address the unconventional insurgency or train them to address the conventional threat of a North Vietnamese invasion. It was an impossible choice in which the U.S. leadership decided to address the conventional threat first since they viewed this as the more acute and timely threat. In this context, the choice seems logical and well intentioned. However, the U.S. military has consistently made this choice in armed statebuilding operations even when the threat of an external conventional invasion was wholly absent. The same choice was made to preference the construction of a conventional military force in both Iraq and Afghanistan. Why? Neither of these countries faced any real threat of foreign conventional invasions and were actively engaged in internal insurgencies while under U.S. security guarantees. In this light, the

choice to preference conventional forces in South Vietnam seems less a rational calculation and more institutional inertia.

These types of patterns emerge frequently. The U.S. military (and all militaries generally speaking) prefers a certain type of mission, conventional combat against uniformed opposition. It is highly effective at preforming the tasks to enable success in these types of operations, and the majority of its resources, training, and institutional capacity are dedicated to performing these tasks at high levels. However, these operations constitute an extreme minority of the missions asked of the military by political leaders. More often than not, the U.S. military is asked to perform unconventional combat missions like counterinsurgency, stability, and statebuilding operations. Comparatively, the U.S. military performs poorly at the tasks require for success in these missions. "… even as the U.S. Army has been asked time and time again carry out nation-building tasks, its focus has remined on firepower and maneuvers – two critical elements of large-scale ground war."[18]

The United States appears to be engaging in this cycle again as it shifts focus to great power competition with China. Indications of this cycle can be seen to be operating today. The 2017-2018 National Security Strategy and the subsequent National Defense Strategy sets aside focus on the ongoing unconventional conflicts in exchange for a sole focus on great power competition and threats to regional security.[19] However, even with this strong doctrinal focus on near-peer powers, there is a paucity of evidence that a pivot is actually occurring. Training missions continue throughout the African continent, the largest concentration of contingency

[18] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 2.

[19] The White House. "National Security Strategy of the United States of America." December 2017. https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/NSS-Final-12-18-2017-0905.pdf; and The Department of Defense. "National Defense Strategy of the United States of America: Sharpening the American Military's Competitive Edge." 2018. https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/2018-National-Defense-Strategy-Summary.pdf

operations forces and funds remains in the Middle East, and the initiation of new regime change conflicts remain a possibility that would almost certainly require stability and statebuilding operations. Although the military performs poorly at statebuilding operations, historical trends suggest they will be performing another one shortly.

The U.S. military has shown an incredible ability to adapt, both from above and from below, in every type of mission it's given, but this innovational improvement is never retained with statebuilding tasks.[20] A military's investment in training, organization, equipment, technology, and doctrinal innovation can have a significant impact on a military's battlefield effectiveness. The Egyptian military performed poorly in the 1967 Arab-Israeli War and then performed much more effectively in 1973 War.[21] Similarly, Saddam's military performed poorly during the early stages of the Iran-Iraq War, made several adjustments, and then produced several units that performed at high levels of effectiveness.[22] After all the effort dedicated to improving the U.S. military's ability to conduct counterinsurgency, stability operations, or armed statebuilding operations, they seem to be no better at it than they were when trying to reconstruct the post-Civil War South. Why is the U.S. military able to adjust and retain effectiveness in conventional combat tasks but unable to improve in non-conventional statebuilding operations?

The choice to consistently avoid dedicating precious resources to statebuilding tasks is not as arbitrary or irrational as it may seem at first. The U.S. military will consistently find itself unprepared for a wide range of challenges that go beyond statebuilding, like counterinsurgency, proxy wars, gray zone competition, and other forms of competition less than war. However,

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[20] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

[21] Talmadge, Caitlin. *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes*. Cornell University Press, 2015.

[22] Talmadge, Caitlin. *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes*. Cornell University Press, 2015.

effectiveness and efficiency are so intricately linked in military strategy that they are rarely

discussed in isolation or treated as distinct concepts, especially in the U.S. context. In business,

inefficiency just means your profit margins are thinner. In military strategy, any effort becomes

exponentially more difficult, adversaries identify weakness to exploit, and chance takes a toll.

What this means is that an inefficient military strategy more often leads to a failure to achieve

objectives rather than just paying a higher price for those objectives.

What this all means for a military that is being forced to engage in statebuilding while

also being the primary organization responsible for defending against foreign conventional

threats is that it cannot afford to be a jack of all trades and a master of none. Many national

security experts argue that the U.S. military can deter great power war with China while also

engaging in countless peripheral conflicts through non-conventional tasks like statebuilding and

counterinsurgency. The U.S. military can certainly engage in statebuilding and

counterinsurgency but doing so needs to be recognized for the substantial choice that it is. If the

U.S. consistently engages and trains for non-conventional conflict, they will be masters of none,

and more importantly they will not be the masters of great power conventional conflict. Military

leaders know this, and they therefore resist developing statebuilding capabilities, they jettison

statebuilding capabilities once they are no longer needed, and they resist civilian pressure by

acquiescing to development of some statebuilding capacities only if they can later be directed

towards conventional combat as well.


## Primary Mission Theory

The current military effectiveness literature mostly disregards the military's role in

statebuilding operations, and therefore scholars, policy makers, and analysts have a very poor

understanding of what explains their effectiveness in the various tasks that occur during an armed statebuilding operation. I argue that military effectiveness in statebuilding tasks is determined by the extent to which individual tasks related to statebuilding can also contribute to the military's primary mission as they see it. This is driven by structural constraints on the military that determine incentives, priorities, and beliefs. Militaries will commit resources, training, and preference to those tasks which contribute to the primary mission and divert resources from those that do not. For the U.S. military, the primary mission is viewed as conventional combat. This means the military will be effective at statebuilding tasks that also contribute to primary mission tasks, like offensive and defensive operations. Those tasks that do not contribute to this primary mission will not be institutionalized between wars and conflicts and will be under resourced during statebuilding operations. The ability to perform tasks that do contribute to conventional combat will be built and prioritized within the military and can then be redirected to statebuilding once such a mission begins. However, those tasks that do not contribute directly to this primary mission will not be institutionalized between conflicts and under resourced. This means the capability has to be built quickly after the operation has already begun, and institutions will be dismantled after the operation and institutional memory will be lost.

Primary mission means those missions that the military and civilian elites view as the most important function, their reason for existence. This is often articulated in public documents, such as the periodic publications of the National Security Strategy written by the White House and the National Defense Strategy written by the U.S. Department of Defense. These preferences are also articulated in less public or formal ways, like internal doctrine and documentation. It is also articulated in the organization of the internal structure of the military and the resources

allocated to various units. Budgets are also a high-cost, and therefore very credible, indication of what the military is willing to direct its resources to and what it is not. All of these sources indicate the preference of the military towards a primary mission of fighting in conventional combat.

A U.S. Marine Corps officer that deployed as a Civil Affairs Officer to both Afghanistan and Iraq from 2004 to 2006 said that there was focus prior to deployment on building and supporting governing institutions. However, they often found this focus difficult to maintain once the unit was deployed and facing violent attacks. The officer said there was a tendency among these units to revert back to what they know best and what they viewed as the more important mission, fighting for control of territory.[23] Resources and personnel are then reallocated to this primary mission at the expense of the other tasks.

Initially, this inability to effectively adjust to statebuilding operations seems irrational. During the Vietnam war, and many other similar wars, it's often noted that, "the military viewed proxy wars as a diversion from their main priority."[24] Why then does the military chose not to actually fight the type of war they are currently engaged in? Fixation by the military on conventional combat is not entirely irrational. There are strong norms that push militaries towards organizing for conventional warfare. These norms at times force irrational behavior, but the norm itself is grounded in very rational and realist considerations. Conventional warfare presents the biggest potential threat to a state relative to other forms of unconventional warfare. Organizing for conventional warfare is more predictable for militaries and helps justify larger budgets.

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[23] Interview, U.S. Marine Corps Officer, April 10, 2019.
[24] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 183.

Primary Mission Theory, therefore, produces the following expectations about a military's statebuilding effectiveness:

*The military will be highly effective at building infrastructure.* Infrastructure is integral to conventional offensive and defensive operations. Infrastructure is key to success in conventional combat, from the ancient Romans to the modern era, for mobility, logistics, and defensive structures, and denying the same to the enemy. This has also been consistent throughout history. The Roman military consistently contained engineers that built defensive structures, siege devices, and roads to help the military move and maneuver through its environment. These engineers also completed civil projects when possible.[25]

*The military will demonstrate mixed effectiveness at security force assistance.* The ability to train new soldiers is integral the military's conventional mission, but there is a misalignment between how the military needs to train itself and how it needs to train the militaries of small and failed or exceptionally weak states. Most states that are targeted for armed statebuilding operations need small, specialized forces that can engage internal threats in counterinsurgency and counterterrorism. They also cannot sustain a large military structured similarly to a modern western military. Thus, the military will specialize in a type of training that is ineffective for the types of militaries being built.

*The military will be highly ineffective at building and supporting local governing institutions.* The ability to build and support governing institutions contributes very little to the military's primary mission and doing it well would drain substantial resources from other organizations within the military. Occupation and controlling a local population are important, but this is a different operation and task. Consequently, this task is only performed under the

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[25] Southern, Pat. The Roman army: a social and institutional history. ABC-CLIO, 2006.

pressure of an ongoing mission and receives comparatively less resources. Institutions are usually cobbled together in an ad hoc manner with lower quality soldiers after an operation has already begun. Once the mission is officially complete the institutions recently organized to address governance are dismantled and the military's internal organizations are again refocused on the primary mission.

## Research Methods

This research uses a variety of methods to investigate the dynamics of armed statebuilding operations. This study draws upon a wide variety of primary and secondary sources for analysis. These include historical first-hand accounts from participating military personnel in the various operations, declassified Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) and Department of State (DoS) documents, interviews conducted of living participants in the Iraq and Afghanistan operations, and numerous quantitative data sources like surveys and geospatial maps produced by both government agencies and private and non-governmental organizations.

The overarching design seeks first to disaggregate the military's contribution to statebuilding operations. Previous studies on the subject often study civilian and military efforts in statebuilding as a black box, a singular effort by a singular actor. This limits our ability to understand the military's role in statebuilding operations. Additionally, this study isolates the three tasks of infrastructure building, security force assistance, and governance assistance and observes varying performance at each. While previous studies on armed statebuilding operations tend to be pessimistic about the military's performance with few exceptions, isolating the three tasks shows significant variance in military performance within statebuilding operations. In line

with the task isolation, this study traces the historical development of institutions within the U.S. military starting from WWII to test the institutional prioritization expectations of the Primary Mission Theory.

The Afghanistan case study is designed to test the expected outcomes of Primary Mission Theory. Most conflict zones are data deserts since collecting quality longitudinal data is a dangerous and expensive undertaking. However, international attention and the overall length of the conflict as allowed for the collection of relatively more data. Changes in infrastructure can be observed through nighttime light maps produced from satellite scans, something that was not possible for more historical conflicts like Vietnam or the post-WWII cases. The Asia Foundation has produced a sub-national survey of the Afghan people from 2006 to 2019. This allows for the longitudinal observance of locals' views on governance legitimacy at the national and sub-national levels. Additionally, the creation of the Special Inspector General for Afghan Reconstruction and academic and policy attention paid to Afghanistan has created an abundance of readily available primary source data. This study also uses a hard case study analysis in which a case is selected that should be very difficult for producing the outcomes expected by the Primary Mission Theory. More than any other case, Vietnam had most forces pushing the military towards sufficient dedication towards armed statebuilding operations.

**Plan for the Dissertation**

Chapter 2 lays out in detail Primary Mission Theory. Many of the forces that drive Primary Mission Theory are well established in various literatures covering bureaucratic biases, organizational behavior, and military effectiveness. These forces are reviewed. However, some of the forces that lead to the dynamics of Primary Mission Theory are unique to military

organizations being asked to perform statebuilding tasks. These unique forces are explained in Chapter 2, which include the nature of military organizations and the differing severity of threats between conventional warfare and statebuilding operations, as well as the nature of warfare making the division of resources among numerous types of tasks highly costly and risky.

Primary Mission Theory sets certain expectations about the potential outcome of armed statebuilding operations, but it also expects that military organizations will behave in certain ways with regards to decisions about institutional design. It expects that institutions with dual use, that is those that can contribute both to statebuilding and conventional combat, will receive requisite manning and material during an operation, whereas single use institutions that only contribute to statebuilding will only be given minimal resources during a statebuilding operation and will be quickly dismantled after said operation. Chapter 3 established high confidence in this prediction by tracing the historical development of institutions in the U.S. military that are dedicated to specific statebuilding tasks from WWII onward. The methodological importance of this chapter is significant. The case studies that follow are *positive* cases of armed statebuilding operations. *Negative* cases also need to be studied to ensure methodological rigor. Does the military behave as expected outside of positive cases of armed statebuilding operations? Chapter 3 traces institutionalization patterns through periods of armed statebuilding operations and periods outside of armed statebuilding operations.

Chapter 4 explores the Afghanistan case. This case is vital for testing Primary Mission Theory because the availability of sub-national data that is unique. There is a wide array of data that is available for Afghanistan that sets it apart from more historical cases and other modern cases like Iraq. This sub-national data allows for high-quality methods like within case comparison. This enables the study to answer important questions on outcome, like explaining

the differences in governing legitimacy between provinces to see if any of these differences were the result of the military's statebuilding strategies.

Chapter 5 explores the Vietnam case. Vietnam is important because it presents a hard case for Primary Mission Theory. Compared to other U.S. armed statebuilding cases, Vietnam had far more forces united towards the adoption of a comprehensive statebuilding effort by the military. The operation, unlike the post-WWII or post-9/11 cases, did not have a conventional war that preceded it, and therefore was always an unconventional statebuilding operation. The U.S. president at the beginning of the operation was enamored with unconventional warfare and enabled the military to fund such efforts. Statements and written doctrine before and during the conflict confirms the military was well aware that Vietnam was an unconventional statebuilding operation and thus required a statebuilding strategy. The military pursued a conventional military strategy, nonetheless, confirming the power of the Primary Mission Theory.

Chapter 6 concludes by exploring some of the limitations of Primary Mission Theory. The main case studies look at comprehensive cases, where major operations were undertaken and all three statebuilding tasks were performed. The U.S. military performs far more statebuilding operations than these and some minor cases of statebuilding operations are explored where only one of the three tasks is performed. The United States is not the only country to engage in armed statebuilding operations, although the United States represents the overwhelming majority of such operations. Some non-U.S. statebuilding operations are explored. Finally, the implications of Primary Mission Theory for military strategy and strategic analysis are considered.

## Chapter 2: Primary Mission Theory

### Primary Mission Theory: Explaining Divergent Performance

Primary Mission Theory says that a military will view a certain type of mission as their primary mission and will give priority to those internal institutions that are vital for the accomplishment of the primary mission to the detriment of all others. This is driven by structural constraints on the military that determine incentives, priorities, and beliefs. Militaries will commit resources, training, and preference to those tasks which contribute to the primary mission and divert resources from those that do not. Militaries are good at infrastructure tasks not because they are important for statebuilding operations, they are good at it because it contributes to the primary mission of conventional combat. It just happens to also be useful for statebuilding operations. The importance of each task to conventional military operations is shown in Table 1 below and the impact this will have on the subsequent predicted performance.

**Table 1: Summary of Institutionalization Mechanisms**

|  | *Contribution to Conventional Combat* | *Institutional prioritization* | *Predicted Effectiveness* |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Infrastructure* | Significant | Substantial | High |
| *Security Force Assistance* | Indirect | Mixed | Mixed |
| *Local Governance* | No Value | Ad Hoc and Inconsistent | Low |

Individuals, inside and outside of the military, can have competing visions about what the priorities of the organization should be. A military is a vast bureaucracy that is influenced by a

significant number of actors and structural influences, it cannot be treated as a unitary actor with independent and singular opinions and actions. Organizations are also known to be generally change resistant.[1] When civilian leaders of the military diverge from this vision of what the military ought to do, they will pressure military officials to change. All organizations resist change, but militaries especially will resist change in specific ways depending on what civilians are trying to change. If the military views the changes being demanded as a departure from what they view as their primary mission, they will engage in various forms of resistance. If outright resistance fails, especially during times of war, the military will resort to passive forms that comply with the orders given but do not fully commit to the change, like assigning less important soldiers to the new mission, or other forms that look like compliance but in reality, is merely the appearance of compliance with real effort continuing to be directed towards the primary mission. Even efforts to change that are initiated internally are similarly resisted.[2]

In this way, the conception of the primary mission for the military acts as a filter. See Figure 1. It takes in civilian pressures to change, assesses whether this is consistent or inconsistent with their perceived primary mission, and then acts accordingly. Those tasks civilians are asking of the military that are consistent with the primary mission will be met with less resistance. Whereas those tasks that are inconsistent with the primary mission will be met with more resistance.

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[1] See for example: Kier, Elizabeth. *Imagining war: French and British military doctrine between the wars*. Vol. 153. Princeton University Press, 2017.; Austin Long also clearly lays out the debate on organizational innovation, Long, Austin. *The soul of armies: Counterinsurgency doctrine and military culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016.

[2] For a clear example of this see Chapter 5 on Vietnam and the bottom-up innovation that occurred and how these units efforts were ultimately undermined in favor of the conventional war effort.
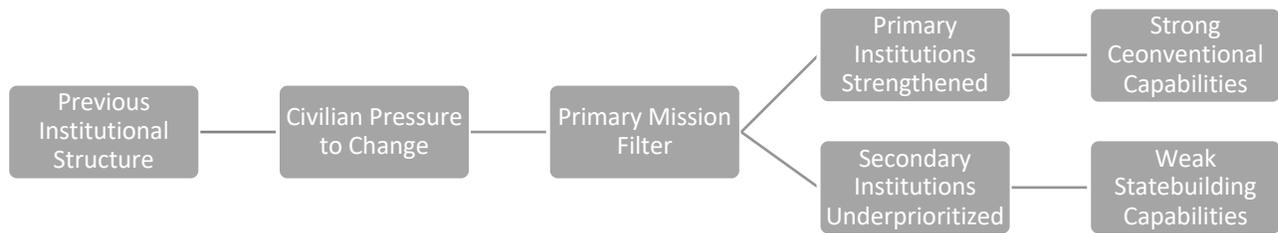
**Figure 1: Conception of Primary Mission as a Filter Against Civilian Pressure**

There are a number of mechanisms already identified in previous studies on how militaries organize themselves. These include bureaucratic forces, cultural forces, military responses to perceived threats, and civilian pressure. Primary Mission Theory utilizes many of these forces in explaining the mechanisms that lead to its predicted outcomes. However, it adds a strategic military consideration and revises certain assumptions about previous theories. Ultimately, it is the structure that surrounds the military that determines many of these forces. These other mechanisms are insufficient in themselves to explain outcomes.

**Civilian Pressure**

Militaries, along with most organizations, are change-resistant entities. They resist change, and this in turn reduces uncertainty and risk. This also inhibits adaptation to new challenges and threats. Therefore, change is possible but only under certain conditions and often at a slow pace. How militaries innovate is a matter of debate. Some argue that militaries can change if their civilian masters pressure them to do so.[3] However, the preference given to tasks and innovation directed from civilian leadership is, by itself, insufficient in explaining innovation

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[3] Austin Long provides a comprehensive overview of the debate in the literature. Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016.

for armed statebuilding operations. Frequently, the pressure to change by civilians results in changes that are merely performative. When civilians pressure the military to improve their statebuilding capacity, institutions are created, but these are under resourced and under prioritized. They are often assigned personnel with less training where the most valuable personnel are assigned to conventional combat units and missions. If civilian pressure alone is sufficient, we would expect more priority be given to statebuilding tasks when being pressured to do so during statebuilding operations, or at least similar prioritization or resistance to all tasks based on civilian preference. This is not the case.

**Bureaucratic forces**

Bureaucratic factors refer to the organizational preferences of the military as a cause of its behavior and institutionalization. The mechanisms that drive these theories are budgetary concerns, institutional prestige, path dependence, and inter-agency competition.[4] These theories argue that interests and actions are determined by the structure of bureaucracy or by the interests of individuals within this structure. For example, an officer in the Air Force will prefer procuring more aircraft relative to an officer in the Army because they will seek the interests of the suborganizations they are in. Bureaucratic explanations for outcomes were most famously utilized by Graham Allison's analysis of the Cuban Missile Crisis.[5] Militaries will seek larger budgets, branches within the military will compete with each other, and organizations and leaders will seek prestige. These mechanisms are insightful for military effectiveness in

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[4] Snyder, Jack. *The ideology of the offensive: Military decision making and the disasters of 1914*. Vol. 2. Cornell University Press, 1989.; Zelikow, Philip, and Graham Allison. *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. Vol. 2. New York: Longman, 1999.
[5] Allison, Graham T., and Philip Zelikow. *Essence of decision: Explaining the Cuban missile crisis*. Vol. 327, no. 729.1. Boston: Little, Brown, 1971.

statebuilding. However, these theories are insufficient on their own. They're limited in explaining which tasks will and will not become well-resourced and institutionalized.

These arguments say those missions and tasks that secure larger budgets will be preferenced. However, infrastructural capabilities do not secure large budgets, they do not contribute to a military's prestige; and yet every military gives high preference to infrastructural capabilities. Similarly, if budget space is the sole driver for behavior, then we would expect the U.S. Army to seek to absorb and institutionalize all of the governance and security force assistance capabilities and use them to argue for and justify a larger share of the budget. The shedding of these institutions following the conclusion of statebuilding operations is inconsistent with a purely bureaucratic explanation.

**Cultural forces**

Military culture, in the context of military effectiveness, is offered as an explanation as to why some militaries are more effective in particular types of conflicts at certain times relative to others. When these arguments are independent of theories explaining military endurance and capacity, they are essentially arguments about the military's ability to innovate.[6] The more a military is able to adapt to new threats and challenges, the more effective it will be in achieving its objectives. Austin Long's arguments show that a military's culture will result in differing levels of adaptation to new challenges, such as counterinsurgency operations.[7]

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[6] Military effectiveness theories that focus on cohesion and endurance draw heavily on cultural explanations and characteristics of social groups within the military. See for example: Lyall, Jason. *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War*. Princeton University Press, 2020.; and Castillo, Jasen J. *Endurance and War: The National Sources of Military Cohesion*. Stanford University Press, 2014.

[7] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016.

Culture theories also argue that a military's culture is derived from its formative experience, the experience of the particular conflict and context in from which they can draw a continuous lineage to. The professional culture of the U.S. Army was established during the Civil War.[8] It was also heavily impacted during WWII since that is the point at which a continuous standing army came into existence for the United States. Statebuilding was a vital part of the Civil War and WWII. Thus, statebuilding should be deeply engrained in its culture, but it is not. The U.S. military should be well prepared for statebuilding but instead continuously fails to prepare for, and execute, such operations.

**Perceived Threats**

This line of argument is the counter to the above theories about civilian pressure and interference. They argue that militaries can change independent of civilian pressure if they perceive a substantial threat to their organization. Militaries themselves will innovate in the face of new challenges that opposing militaries, or the threat environment, present them.

This theory is similar in many ways to Primary Mission Theory. However, it doesn't explain performance in statebuilding operations completely. It is observed in later chapters that the military during armed statebuilding operations responds to the new threat of counterinsurgency and stability. These changes occur from civilian pressure to complete the mission they have been given, and it is also driven by a bottom-up process of innovation by units responding to the threats they are presented with.[9] However, the institutions created, and the tactics being used, are not preferred universally to levels the theory would predict. Bottom-up

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[8] Long, Austin. The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK. Cornell University Press, 2016. 35.

[9] See for example: Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

innovation that runs counter to the perceived primary mission is ultimately suppressed or dismantled. Similar to the limitations of the above theory, many of the institutions set up in response to statebuilding operations are frequently under prioritized, under resourced, and undervalued. If the simple presence of a threat was enough to explain military change and innovation, then these institutions, like Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), should have been given equal priority. The doctrinal documents coming out at the height of the Afghanistan and Iraq wars were arguing exactly that. However, they were still under-prioritized because they did not contribute to the primary mission. Resources were constantly pulled from these statebuilding tasks to bolster conventional capabilities, even at the height of the statebuilding efforts.

### What Primary Mission Theory Explains

Existing theories therefore fall short of explaining effectiveness in armed statebuilding operations. As a result, Primary Mission Theory offers explanatory power in such operations that has been missing. The theory explains why different statebuilding institutions are given different priorities during a statebuilding operation and why they are institutionalized at different levels of priority. It explains why certain statebuilding capacities are maintained between wars, whereas others are not. These explanations therefore allow scholars and analysts to better explain and anticipate ultimate outcomes in armed statebuilding operations.

**Inconsistent Institutionalization During statebuilding operations**

Primary Mission Theory explains the passive, and sometimes very active, resistance to building statebuilding capabilities. Previous scholarship has shown that the military is capable of

innovating during these operations and building statebuilding-task specific institutions. However, not all internal institutions within the military are created, or treated, equal. While more traditional warfighting institutions, like the U.S. Army Special Forces, were growing substantially during these operations, non-traditional warfighting institutions like PRTs were created in an ad hoc nature, lacked sufficient resources to grow effectively, and were often staffed with less trained and less experienced National Guard soldiers. Primary Mission Theory explains this discrepancy. The U.S. military will build statebuilding institutions under conditions of increased civilian pressure, but the military engages in passive resistance. It does not fully commit to being good at statebuilding and views the mission as a temporary distraction before they can then recommit to their preferred tasks.

## Atrophy of Capacity Between Statebuilding Operations

Armed statebuilding capacity for the U.S. military improves and atrophies in repetitious cycles. They train for conventional near-peer adversaries, are asked to perform low-intensity statebuilding operations, and then return to focusing on near-peer adversaries once the statebuilding operation winds down.[10] In 2009, then U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert Gates advocated for the military to pragmatically focus on current stability operations (U.S. military doctrine refers to statebuilding operations and related tasks as stability or stabilization operations) in Afghanistan and Iraq rather than on preparing for a future hypothetical war with China. "Where possible, what the military calls kinetic operations should be subordinated to

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[10] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

measures aimed at promoting better governance, economic programs that spur development, and efforts to address the grievances among the discontented, from whom the terrorists recruit."[11]

DoD Directive 3000.05, release in 2005, declared that "stabilization is a necessary complement to joint combat power at the tactical, operational, and strategic levels."[12] However, in the years following the official ends of the Iraq (2010) and Afghanistan (2014) conflicts, there has been an effort to refocus the U.S. military from training and preparing for wars with smaller adversaries that include counterinsurgency and statebuilding operations to training and preparing for wars with near-peer adversaries that would ultimately include higher intensity conflict against an opposing uniformed military.[13] The first line of the summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy says, "The Department of Defense's *enduring mission* is to provide *combat-credible* military forces needed to deter war and protect the security of our nation [emphasis added]."[14] The summary goes on to say that difficult choices should be made, and in that environment conventional combat is prioritized and stability operations are ignored. In fact, there is not a single mention of stability operations. The process of this cycle is illustrated in Figure 2.

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[11] Gates, R. M. (2009). A Balanced Strategy-Reprogramming the Pentagon for a New Age. *Foreign Affairs*, *88*, 29.
[12] Department of Defense, "Directive 3000.05: Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations." (2005) *https://fas.org/irp/doddir/dod/d3000_05.pdf*
[13] Trump, Donald J. *National security strategy of the United States of America*. Executive Office of The President Washington DC Washington United States, 2017.; Mattis, Jim. *Summary of the 2018 national defense strategy of the United States of America*. Department of Defense Washington United States, 2018.
[14] US Department of Defense, "Summary of the 2018 National Defense Strategy of the United States of America." (2018)
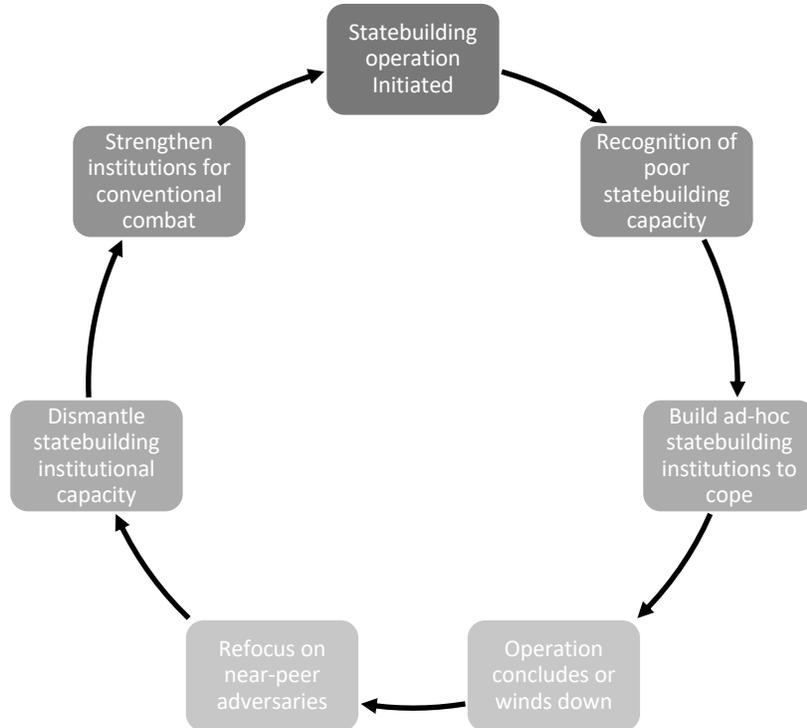
**Figure 2: Cycle of Institutional Capacity**

Those institutions that perform tasks that can contribute to both conventional and statebuilding tasks fare quite well under these conditions, like infrastructure. Institutions like the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers or the U.S. Navy SeaBees find a usefulness under statebuilding operations building civilian infrastructure and related construction projects. They are also vital to conventional combat of ensuring the construction and security of sea and land lines of communication for the delivery of supplies and logistics. They therefore avoid the inter-war dismantling faced by other institutions that contribute to statebuilding tasks.

In the absence of Primary Mission Theory, this cycle seems illogical. Why would an organization dismantle the institutions that perform its most frequently required tasks and therefore leave itself vulnerable at the outset of almost every post-WWII conflict? Because statebuilding is not what the military thinks it should do and diverting resources from those tasks that contribute to the bigger threat is even more illogical and is poor strategy.

**Overall Effectiveness in Statebuilding Operations**

Primary Mission Theory increases our understanding of why militaries perform poorly in statebuilding operations. Most of the institutions necessary for the wide array of tasks that need to be performed will be improperly funded and prioritized, thus leaving the operation deprived of vital capacity and institutional memory. Institutional capacity varies substantially between the statebuilding tasks. Great effort is placed into cultivating and maintaining the ability to manipulate infrastructure. This is not a new phenomenon. While these infrastructure capabilities of the Roman Army were developed out of military necessity, they were often put to civilian uses.[15] This is similar to the dynamics observed today.[16] Comparatively less institutional capacity is devoted to security force assistance and almost no institutional capacity is devoted to governance building. Civil affairs units are often cited as a governance capacity, but they generally focus on maintaining order in occupied territories, which is temporary and thus not statebuilding.

Task complexity also impacts the military's ability to perform the various tasks. Infrastructure is the simplest task to complete because it is impacted by external factors to the smallest degree and is not relatively complex. Outside of supply and security issues, very little impacts the ability of the military to build a road. Comparatively, security force assistance is much more complex because of the external factors that determine its success outside of the military's inputs. Tribal conflicts can weaken the local military's cohesion. Local governance power struggles and insecurities can result in the government seeking to weaken or divide the

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[15] Southern, Pat. The Roman army: a social and institutional history. ABC-CLIO, 2006.
[16] Strock, Carl A. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History." Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2007.

local military.[17] It is also determined by the overall security situation. Governance building is by far the most complex. This relationship is illustrated in Figure 3.
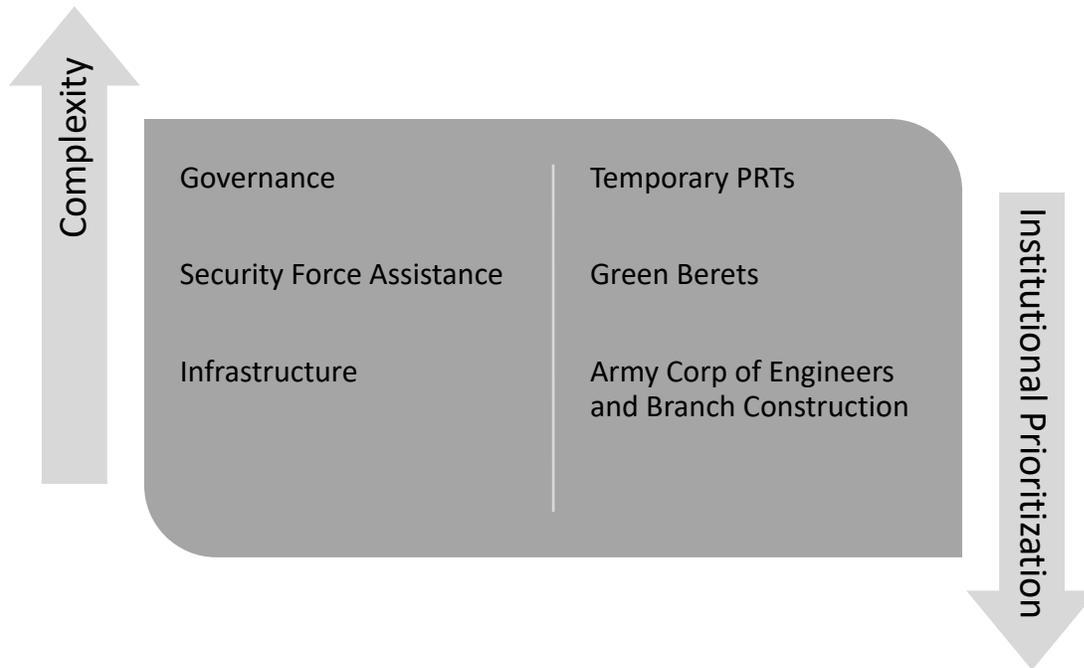


**Figure 3: Inverse Relationship Between Complexity and Institutional Capacity**

This relationship makes differences in the ability to complete various tasks nonlinear. Governance is the most complex but is also given less preference in resources and institutionalization. Thus, governance building is exponentially more difficult than building infrastructure. To deal with governance, temporary PRTs were set up for Afghanistan and Iraq, which were dismantled when the wars officially ended. Civil Affairs are often tasked with governance, but they come from varied civilian backgrounds before entering military service

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[17] See, for example: Quinlivan, James T. "Coup-proofing: Its practice and consequences in the Middle East." *International Security* 24, no. 2 (1999): 131-165.; and Lyall, Jason. *Divided Armies: Inequality and Battlefield Performance in Modern War*. Princeton University Press, 2020.

and, at various times during Iraq and Afghanistan, comprised entirely of less-trained reserve soldiers. One Civil Affairs Officer noted that in 2004, 100% of Civil Affairs units were comprised of reservists.[18]

Security force assistance is less complicated than governance, but more so than infrastructure. The primary soldiers responsible for this mission were U.S. Army Special Forces, but they are tasked with a dual mission, training local forces and conducting special operations. To make up for this labor shortfall, other units trained for conventional warfare are often tasked to perform SFA missions. Infrastructure, by far, is the least complex tasks, but consistently has dedicated institutions in both wartime and peacetime to deal specifically with infrastructure and nothing else. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers traces its history back to the American War of Independence, and each branch has dedicated construction units. In the U.S. Navy they are known as the SeaBees, which even have a monument dedicated to their service history near Arlington National Cemetery in Virginia. Other military statebuilding professions are not given the same treatment.

### The Primary Mission is Almost Always Conventional Warfare

The primary mission of most militaries, most of the time, is perceived to be conventional warfare. Some states occasionally recognize the adoption of a guerilla force structure is actually better for their defense and deterring invasion, but strong forces push most to adopt conventional doctrine and force structures, nonetheless. This does not mean that conventional warfare is guaranteed to be perceived as the primary mission or that this cannot change over time. Strong civilian pressure or changes in the threats faced by a military can force subtle, and sometimes not

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[18] Interview, U.S. Marine Corps Civil Affairs Officer, April 10, 2019.

so subtle, changes to their perceived mission. The important point though is that the strong forces mentioned in this section make such pressure for change inefficient or ineffective, and most states will default to conventional combat as the primary mission.

Most militaries, and especially the U.S. military, overly fixate on the battle as the sole purpose of a military and the only activity that decides wars. U.S. Army culture especially views the battle as the primary activity of war; and, therefore, the primary aim of a military is to win battles. U.S. Army professional education preferences Jomini, who was similar to Napoleon in his view that the battle is the primary objective of war, over strategists like Clausewitz who view the battle as subordinate to the political objectives of war.[19] This institutional bias is not the only reason the U.S. military, and others, prefer conventional warfare as the focus for training and organizing. The perceived severity of threats emanating from conventional warfare, international norms that favor conventional high-tech militaries, and organizational bureaucracy and competition over budget share and prestige all push militaries to view or perceive their primary mission to be preparation and execution of conventional warfare.

It is impossible to explain why the primary mission of most militaries is viewed as conventional warfare without a clear understanding of the concept 'conventional warfare.' The concept is usually left to common assumptions rather than rigorously defined and is often heavily influenced by western conceptions of what is and is not acceptable forms of warfare.[20] This bias in the use of the concept also alludes to how international norms preference a certain way of organizing a military along western, developed models.

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[19] Jomini, Baron De, "The Art of War," Translated by G. H. Mendell and W. P. Craighill, El Paso Norte Press, 2005.; Howard, Michael, and Peter Paret. *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War*. Princeton University Press, 1984.
[20] Duyvesteyn, Isabelle. "The concept of conventional war and armed conflict in collapsed states." In *Rethinking the nature of war*, pp. 76-98. Routledge, 2005: 79.

Most place conventional war as the space between the use of unconventional weapons like nuclear, chemical, or biological on one end of the spectrum and combatants being non-state actors like terrorists or guerilla insurgents on the other side of the spectrum. "In an 'ideal' case of conventional war, two armies go to battle in a front manner, but sometimes it is the case that one of the sides is not organized as an army for the total duration of the conflict."[21] Stephen Biddle uses this conceptualization of conventional warfare in his influential book, *Military Power.*[22]

> By 'conventional warfare' I mean combat fought between military forces on or over major land masses. I thus exclude war at sea, and strategic bombing against civilian targets.[23]

Another complication is that the conception of what is acceptable, 'normal' warfare and what is not is inconsistent over time. New weapons emerge in warfare, are proclaimed to be barbaric and beyond civilized warfare, and, if they are effective, eventually are adopted by the world's militaries and become accepted as normal, conventional weapons.[24]

Conventional warfare is based on three component parts, the type of actors involved, their conduct in war, and the weapons used. Conventional warfare excludes non-state actors and is therefore an activity engaged in between uniformed militaries from internationally recognized states. Recent scholarship has noted that non-state actors are increasingly able to acquire the technology and skills necessary to employ conventional tactics.[25] This, however, only covers one aspect of conventional war, the conduct. It is thus outside the bounds of conventional warfare. Conventional warfare excludes most forms of conduct except the competition over territory by

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[21] Balcells, Laia. *Rivalry and Revenge: the Politics of Violence During Civil War* Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press, 2017: 10.

[22] Stephen D. Biddle. *Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle*. Princeton University Press, 2004: 6.

[23] Biddle, Stephen D., and Stephen D. Biddle. *Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle*. Princeton University Press, 2004: 6.

[24] For example, see: Price, Richard M. *The chemical weapons taboo*. Cornell University Press, 2018.; and Ellis, John. *The social history of the machine gun*. JHU Press, 1986.

[25] Biddle, Stephen. "The determinants of nonstate military methods." *The Pacific Review* 31, no. 6 (2018): 714-739.

land forces. Objectives can stretch far beyond the mere conquering of territory, but in conventional warfare the taking of territory is the primary currency through which political objectives are purchased. Therefore, contemporary conventional warfare involves land forces employing the Modern System as described by Stephen Biddle for the purposes of taking and holding territory. Guerilla style tactics that simply seek to inflict casualties and then retreat before the adversary has time to respond is beyond the boundaries of conventional warfare. Finally, conventional warfare excludes weapons at both the high and low end of the intensity spectrum. Chemical, biological, and nuclear weapons are all considered beyond conventional warfare, even if used at the tactical level in support of conventional objectives. Indirect weapons at the low end of the spectrum like suicide bombings, roadside bombs, or other guerilla or terrorist tactics are excluded. Conventional warfare, therefore, generally entails the use of medium- to high-tech weapons whose general purpose is in support of conventional tactics of taking and holding territory.

Based on this, the definition of conventional warfare can be stated as a form of controlled, organized violence by force of arms between uniformed state actors for the purposes of achieving some political objective through the taking and holding of territory without the use of guerilla or terrorist tactics or the use of chemical, biological, or nuclear weapons.

**Threat Intensity**

The threats emanating from the type of warfare in which conventional combat is characteristic are substantially more significant to the state relative to non-conventional conflicts. Non-conventional combat is the weapon of the weak when it falls on the low end of the spectrum, and is primarily the realm of deterrence, not conduct, when on the higher end of the

spectrum. Terrorism and guerilla style tactics are a threat but are employed by actors *because* of their weakness and almost never threatens the existence of a state. Nuclear weapons, along with chemical and biological, are viewed primarily as a civilian political matter, and the purpose of the military for such weapons is merely to deliver.

Militaries, therefore, view competence in conventional combat as more important to the security of the state and themselves. Conventional warfare, from the perspective of the military, constitutes the greatest potential threat to the security of the state and one the military alone can address. Lose a statebuilding war and a state can simply accept some increased terrorism risk and come home. Lose a conventional war against a near-peer adversary and the odds of losing your country are significant, or the loss of a vital interest at the very least. Therefore, organizations charged with the security of the state will preference this bigger threat first and foremost.


**International Norms**

International norms also push militaries to organize for conventional, high-tech conflict. The first occasions of countries fielding large, standing and capital-intensive militaries was by the European polities that were creating the first states.[26] Both the modern state, and the corresponding military that came with it, were exported around the word through European colonialism. It was also spread by emulation as polities sought to discourage the spread of colonialism into their territory, like Thailand (known as Siam at the time).[27] Conventional standing armies then were spread globally through the need to resist other conventional standing armies and to also bestow upon the state that possessed it the accompanying prestige. International law, like the Hague conventions on the regulation of warfare and the 1863 Lieber

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[26] Tilly, Charles. *Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1992*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1992.
[27] Baker, Chris, and Pasuk Phongpaichit. *A history of Thailand*. Cambridge University Press, 2014.

Code that outlawed unconventional, or guerilla style, warfare.[28] The presence of this norm and the influence it holds is evident in the large number of countries that field conventional, standing, high-tech militaries that do not have the capital resources to support such an army or that do not face the type of security environment that would require it.

**Organizational bureaucracy and competition**

Organizational bureaucracy and competition also push militaries to preference conventional combat. This type of warfare brings higher levels of prestige and, along with it, bigger relative shares of the overall budget. Organizations create path dependences and tend to bend towards their own biased interests. Organizing for conventional battle has organizational benefits in terms of prestige and relative budget shares.

There are also internal dynamics that make the adoption of non-conventional tasks very difficult and costly. Because the primary mission for most militaries is conventional warfare, talent within the military is more likely to prefer those jobs most closely related to conventional warfare. Those with combat experience gain major advantages in the promotion systems as those not involved in direct combat are considered to be lesser soldiers. This was a major argument for the integration of women into combat roles. Because women were excluded from combat occupations, they faced a major disadvantage relative to their male colleagues for higher end promotion who were more likely to have combat experience.[29]

> *In the United Kingdom, British female officers are significantly disadvantaged in terms of promotion because of the exclusion from the combat arms and their under-representation in the combat support arms. Overwhelmingly, the senior ranks in the British army are dominated by officers who are from these arms and*

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[28] Farrell, Theo. "Global norms and military effectiveness: the army in early twentieth-century Ireland." in Risa Brooks, *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness.* Stanford University Press, 2007.
[29] King, Anthony. *The combat soldier: Infantry tactics and cohesion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.* OUP Oxford, 2013.

> *it is very difficult to be promoted beyond one-star rank from combat service*
> *support branches.*[30]

Accordingly, major incentives were required to attract talented officers to the Security Force

Assistance Brigades (SFABs) when they were formed because of the fear that joining the units

would damage their personal careers since they were not directly involved in combat roles. The

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) said of the promotion

problems in SFABs, "Adviser roles continue to be seen as not career enhancing in the military,

which contributes to high attrition rates — up to 70 percent for the 1st SFAB."[31]


### Understanding and Measuring Military Effectiveness

What makes a military better or worse is an interesting question in its own right, but the

consequences of the answer to that question could not be more significant. Those militaries that

are ineffective risk losing battles at best and losing their country at worst. Therefore, substantial

effort has been made to understand what dynamics impact the effectiveness of militaries. Most

think of the primary mission of their military as fighting and winning conventional battles.

Historically, this is primarily what they have been tasked to do. Modern international norms push

states to build large conventional militaries even when it does not make strategic sense for their

particular circumstances.[32] However, since WWII, the rise of the international norm of not

changing borders by force, and the adoption of nuclear arsenals among many world powers,

conquest of others' territory is increasingly uncommon. Competition below the level of

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[30] King, Anthony. *The combat soldier: Infantry tactics and cohesion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries*. OUP Oxford, 2013: 414.

[31] Kyle Rempfer, "Army SFABs need to offer more incentives to staff and retain troops, watchdog says," *The Army Times*, July 30, 2019, https://www.armytimes.com/news/your-army/2019/07/30/army-sfabs-need-to-offer-more-incentives-to-staff-and-retain-troops-watchdog-says/.

[32] Farrell, Theo. "Transnational norms and military development: Constructing Ireland's professional army." *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 63-102.

conventional warfare in the so-called gray zone is the most likely form of warfare, especially in armed statebuilding operations. If conquest does occur, that territory is no longer absorbed into the conquering states sovereignty but is instead rebuilt to the intervenors liking and reestablished as an independent state. In this environment, militaries are increasingly asked to perform a wide range of tasks to build states, not just win the preceding battles. Therefore, it is exceedingly important to advance our knowledge of what makes militaries effective at statebuilding operations.

**Narrow Understanding of Military Effectiveness**

Military effectiveness is consistently defined as a military's ability to fight other militaries. This is so much the case that combat power and fighting power are often used in place of military effectiveness. Prominent studies on military effectiveness are often studies of what makes militaries good at combat. "Combat power is the ability to destroy the enemy while limiting the damage that he can inflict in return."[33] Risa Brooks asked, "Why are some states, at sometimes, better able to translate their basic material and human strengths into fighting power?"[34] However, militaries are tasked to do more than simply fight. Even when fighting is asked of them, the end of the fighting is usually just the beginning of a military operation in a country or conflict. They provide humanitarian assistance, disaster relief, engage in military diplomacy, and conduct good will training missions, among many other tasks and activities.

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[33]  Allen R. Millett and Williamson Murray, Military Effectiveness, Vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).
[34] Risa A. Brooks. "Introduction: The Impact of Culture, Society, Institutions, and International Forces on Military Effectiveness" in Risa Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley. *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

Brooks also says that "… few scholars of international relations have examined a key component of military power, that of effectiveness."[35] Very little attention is given to military effectiveness as it relates to conventional combat, even less is given to tasks outside of this primary mission. This oversight is puzzling. Very rarely is conventional victory sufficient to achieve all political objectives being sought in a conflict in the modern era.

International norms of sovereignty and the integrity of already established national borders has resulted in the necessity of reconstructing failed states rather than dividing conquered territory among the victors. On the topic of failed and collapsed states, Marina Ottaway said, "while historically such states simply disappeared, divided up into smaller units or were conquered by a more powerful neighbor, collapsed states are now expected to be rebuilt within the same international borders thanks to the intervention of multilateral organizations and bilateral donors."[36] This dynamic of the modern era has resulted in states asking their militaries to rebuild the territory they conquer, rather than simply occupying it.[37] The tasks involved in each are substantially different. Occupations generally require providing security and policing and administering a territory. Statebuilding demands much more, like reconstructing infrastructure, training up indigenous security forces, and building and organizing local governing institutions that can operate independently. As such, it is more important than ever to understand military effectiveness in statebuilding operations.

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[35] Risa A. Brooks. "Introduction: The Impact of Culture, Society, Institutions, and International Forces on Military Effectiveness" in Risa Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley. *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness*. Stanford University Press, 2007: 2.

[36] Ottaway, Marina. "Rebuilding state institutions in collapsed states." *Development and change* 33, no. 5 (2002): 1001.

[37] Jackson, Robert H., and Carl G. Rosberg. "Why Africa's weak states persist: The empirical and the juridical in statehood." *World politics* 35, no. 1 (1982): 1-24.

War is the continuation of politics by other means.[38] Trying to understand war independent of politics is meaningless. It is the political objectives that make a brutal and inhuman affair morally justifiable rather than violence for the sake of violence. Similarly, understandings of military effectiveness that only focus on the combat phase, and not the myriad phases employed to achieve the political objectives are of limited use. Defeating the German and Japanese militaries was one step along the path of reconstructing their countries, initiating democratic regimes, and integrating them into the international order as allies. The U.S. military was conventionally overwhelming in Vietnam, but failures at statebuilding led to an overall strategic failure. Going back even further, during the U.S. civil war, the Union North triumphed militarily over the Rebel South. However, the political victory fell short as the South was allowed to reconstitute a system of black suppression and subordination once the reconstruction force pulled out. Only the more limited political objective of preserving the union was achieved.

Furthermore, this oversight is unfortunate considering the U.S. military has conducted armed statebuilding operations far more frequently than conventional operations.[39] The current military effectiveness literature mostly disregards the military's role in statebuilding operations, and therefore scholars, policy makers, and analysts have a very poor understanding of what explains their effectiveness in the various tasks that occur during an armed statebuilding operation. If scholars do focus on non-conventional combat operations for military effectiveness, this is usually focused on counterinsurgency operations and not the myriad of other statebuilding tasks, which is still focused on kinetic tasks of seeking and destroying and more closely mirrors conventional combat procedures and tactics.

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[38] Howard, Michael, Peter Paret. *Carl Von Clausewitz: On War*. Princeton University Press, 1984.
[39] Barbara Salazar Torreon and Sofia Plagakis, "Instances of Use of United States Armed Forces Abroad, 1798-2019," Congressional Research Services, July 17, 2019, https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/R42738.pdf.

Early explanations of military power were predicated on the comparison of raw resources that were possessed by various countries, resources like population size, raw mineral resources, industrial capacity, and economic output. Latter theories began incorporating more complex explanations, like technology in the offense/defense balance theory.[40] More sophisticated versions of this definition incorporated conceptions of efficiency.

> *Military effectiveness is the process by which armed forces convert resources into fighting power. A fully effective military is one that derives maximum combat power from the resources physically and politically available. Effectiveness thus incorporates some notion of efficiency. Combat power is the ability to destroy the enemy while limiting the damage that he can inflict in return.[41]*

The latest iteration of this theory by Michael Beckley brings in considerations of per capita economic wealth, innovation, and immigration.[42] Beckley argues that great power competition and war is best predicted not by the gross production of a country and their raw resources, but rather by production and resources relative to their population size. For example, China must divert more resources than the United States to policing and providing for their own large population relative to the United States. The United States, therefore, can divert more resources to competition and war than China.

Since the publishing of Biddle's *Military Power,* the emphasis has been not just on material resources but on how countries utilize these resources to employ the modern system in battle.[43] The modern system involves small unit maneuvers with covering fire and combined arms, which in turn requires those units to be capable of performing complex tasks. Those

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[40] Jervis, Robert. "Cooperation under the security dilemma." *World politics* 30.2 (1978): 167-214.

[41] Allan R. Millett, Williamson Murray, and Kenneth H.Watman. "The Effectiveness of Military Organizations." In Allan R Millett and Williamson Murray. "Military Effectiveness Volume I: The First World War." Cambridge University Press, 2010: 2.

[42] Beckley, Michael. *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World's Sole Superpower.* Cornell University Press, 2018.

[43] Stephen D. Biddle. *Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle.* Princeton University Press, 2004.

military units that employ the modern system diminish the lethality of their opponent and increase their own lethality, tipping the balance against adversaries that do not employ such a system. For example:

> The creation of military power only partially depends on states' material human resources. Wealth, technology, and human capital certainly matter for states' ability to create military power. Equally important, however, are how a state uses those resources.[44]

Biddle demonstrates that theories that explain military power in terms of possession of material capability can only explain war outcomes approximately 60% of the time.[45] For Beckley's theory, the country with the net resource advantage performs much better in international disputes. Beckley shows that "Gross flow indicators … perform little better than a coin toss at predicting the winners and losers of these conflicts."[46]

Armed statebuilding operations are much more complex, and thus predicting outcomes is far more difficult. For armed statebuilding operations, every failure of statebuilding is a failure of the more powerful state since the target state is likely to be a fragile or failed state or was severely weakened by losing the preceding war. Not only do adversaries utilize tactics that are designed to negate the power disparity, but the task being performed is far more complex and not easily solved by the simple use of force.

**Measures of Military Effectiveness**

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[44] Risa A. Brooks. "Introduction: The Impact of Culture, Society, Institutions, and International Forces on Military Effectiveness" in Risa Brooks and Elizabeth Stanley. *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness*. Stanford University Press, 2007: 1.

[45] Biddle, Military Power: 21.

[46] Beckley, Michael. *Unrivaled: Why America Will Remain the World's Sole Superpower*. Cornell University Press, 2018: 31

Measures of military effectiveness have been based on either battlefield outcomes, the organizational practices of the military, or the ability of officers and soldiers to perform their assigned tasks. Subsequent works, however, have utilized more universal, broad definitions.

1) **Battlefield outcomes.** Reiter and Stam state that "winning wars is about winning battles."[47] Although they say that competency at winning battles is insufficient to guarantee winning the war, this is taken as their definition. Similarly, Biddle and Long use battle outcomes as a measure of military effectiveness because, "whereas wars can be won by militarily ineffective but highly resolute states, success in battle requires military effectiveness."[48]

2) **Organizational practices.** Talmadge explains that the ability of militaries to translate state power into military power as being predicated on the specific organizational practices of the military. "These practices, related to promotion patterns, training regimens, command arrangements, and information management in the military, serve as the critical link between state resources and battlefield power."[49]

3) **Performance of assigned tasks.** Pollack explains military effectiveness as "the ability of soldiers and officers to perform on the battlefield, to accomplish military missions, and to execute the strategies devised by their political-military leaders."[50] Pollack is referring specifically to the skills of soldiers to perform assigned tasks, rather than looking only at the

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[47] Reiter, Dan, and Allan C. Stam. "Democracy and Battlefield Military Effectiveness." *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 42, no. 3 (1998): 260.

[48] Biddle, and Long. "Democracy and Military Effectiveness: A Deeper Look." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 48, no. 4 (2004): 527.

[49] Caitlin Talmadge. *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes*. Cornell University Press, 2015: 1.

[50] Pollack, Kenneth M. *Arabs at War: Military Effectiveness, 1948-1991*. Studies in War, Society, and the Military. Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2002: 4.

outcomes of operations or missions. Reiter's definition also requires the measurement of assigned tasks.[51]

4) **Resource Utilization.** Brooks, discussed further below, defines military effectiveness as, "the capacity to create military power form a state's basic resources in wealth, technology, population size, and human capital."[52] Brooks utilizes the measurement of both attributes of the organization itself and its performance on the battlefield.

While most scholars use the general term, military effectiveness, some specify the type of military effectiveness they are studying. Talmadge opts to use the more specified term of *battlefield effectiveness.* This is particularly useful in clarifying that Talmadge is interested in a military's ability to perform in medium-intensity combat in which rival militaries compete for territory.[53] Talmadge operationalizes battlefield effectiveness as the ability of units to perform basic tactics and the ability to conduct complex operations. Talmadge identifies the tasks which modern militaries must be able to perform as basic tactics like being able to operate their equipment and use cover and concealment, and the ability to conduct complex operations that involve small-unit-level initiative and command-level coordination.

Dan Reiter, although also focused primarily on conventional combat, presents an effective definition that is broad enough to incorporate into the study of armed statebuilding operations. Reiter says military effectiveness is "the degree to which militaries can accomplish at acceptable costs the goals assigned to them by political leaders."[54] From this, scholars can then distinguish which tasks are being observed for their specific research questions. Those interested

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[51] Reiter, Dan, ed. *The Sword's Other Edge: Trade-offs in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness*. Cambridge University Press, 2017.
[52] Brooks, Creating Military Power: 9.
[53] Caitlin Talmadge. *The Dictator's Army: Battlefield Effectiveness in Authoritarian Regimes*. Cornell University Press, 2015: 5.
[54] Reiter, Dan, ed. *The Sword's Other Edge: Trade-offs in the Pursuit of Military Effectiveness*. Cambridge University Press, 2017: 4.

in battlefield effectiveness can look specifically at tasks related to medium intensity conflict, and those interested in statebuilding operations can look specifically at tasks related to statebuilding operations. Thus, the best way to define military effectiveness that does not unnecessarily limit its applicability, is the ability of the military to perform the tasks assigned to it by political leaders at acceptable costs. This definition also makes clear the deficiency of the military effectiveness literature writ large. Studying only a small portion of the tasks assigned to the military by political leaders leaves the majority of tasks unstudied.

**Table 2: Measures of Military Effectiveness**

|  | *Focused on Performance* | *Not Focused on Performance* |
|---|---|---|
| *Focused on Institutions* | Organizational Performance | Organizational Practices |
| *Not Focused on Institutions* | Battlefield Outcomes | Null |

**Measuring Effectiveness in Statebuilding Operations**

The definition of military effectiveness focuses on individual tasks that are assigned to the military to be performed. Therefore, effectiveness for this study is disaggregated between the three tasks that is asked of the U.S. military in FM 3-07 *Stability* that contribute to statebuilding, and it is observed at two levels.[55] Effectiveness is measured separately for infrastructure, security force assistance, and governance assistance. These are the tasks in FM 3-07 that contribute to the local state. Additionally, effectiveness is measured at a basic level of simple completion of a task

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[55] U.S. Department of the Army, Stability, Field Manual 3-07 (Washington, DC: Department of the Army, June 2014).

and at a higher level of achieving intended outcomes. Both are necessary to understand military effectiveness. It is important to study more than just the highest-level war outcomes, or the outcomes of entire statebuilding operations. One can be effective, execute the tasks well, and still miss the outcome due to unforeseen forces outside effectiveness issues. Stephen Biddle does the same by trying to explain the outcome of individual battles rather than the outcome of wars, which is determined by more than just military effectiveness.[56]

**Two Levels of Effectiveness**

This study observes effectiveness at two levels. The first looks at the tactical level, effectiveness is simply the ability to complete the task at the micro level. It is observing the military's simple completion of a task, and the institutional capacity for each task, regardless of its contribution to the broader operations or objectives. For infrastructure, this asks if military units were able to build roads, construct schools, and repair electrical grids, among others. This does not account for the overall impact of those projects, just the military's ability to complete the tasks. For security force assistance, this asks if military units were able to train units, help build the local force and command structure, and assist in fielding these units. This does not account for whether these units were effective at securing the county or winning the conflict, just that the military was able to train the local forces. For governing institutions, this asks if they were able to stand up governing institution at the local and national levels and assist in their operation. This does not account for the effectiveness or legitimacy of these institutions, just that they were established and assisted.

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[56] Biddle, Stephen D., and Stephen D. Biddle. *Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle.* Princeton University Press, 2004.

The second looks at the strategic level of effectiveness and determines the extent to which each of the three tasks achieved their intended objectives with regards to the broader political goals. For infrastructure, were schools used, roads utilized, and electrical grids effectively integrated into the population centers that needed them. For security force assistance, how effective were the trained units? Were they able to provide security and conduct complex operations? For governing institutions, how legitimate were they viewed by the local populations? Were they able to administer effectively? How much was corruption a problem? Were the institutions effectively integrated into the national system as designed?

## Statebuilding

Many previous writings on the topic covered here consistently miss-label the type of operation they are trying to understand. Nation-building has been the favored term to describe foreign interventions that sought to rebuild the country and to transfer sovereignty back to indigenous actors, especially during the 1990s. President George W. Bush frequently criticized the activity of "nation-building" as a candidate.[57] While most tacitly accepted this misnomer and incorporated the terminology into scholarly work, nations are very different from states and almost never are foreign military interventions actually attempting to build nations. The goal of these missions is to rebuild a central bureaucratic organization to administer the territory, deliver goods and services, and to monopolize the legitimate use of violence within their borders. This is a state.[58] A nation on the other hand, is an imagined community that share a sense of common

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[57] Bush, George W. Presidential Candidate Debate October 11, 2000. https://www.c-span.org/video/?c4315725/george-w-bush-nation-building
[58] Tilley, Charles. "Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990-1990." (1990).

identity, usually through a common ethnicity, language, or origin story.[59] These communities also either possess a state or aspire to possess a state.

To advance an understanding of military effectiveness in statebuilding operations, it is necessary to understand whether or not the U.S. military's tasks in FM 3-07 stability operations manual correspond with what is known about how states are formed and strengthened. In other words, how consistent are the U.S. military's self-prescribed statebuilding tasks with what is actually needed to build a state?

**External Statebuilding**

State building can occur internally by local actors, or it can occur externally through foreign interventions. External statebuilding is the type of interest here. The expansion of the modern state outside of the European continent created some of the first examples of external statebuilding in the form of colonialism. However, this process was very different from the internal statebuilding experience in Europe and came with varying levels of success. External statebuilding has been attempted frequently since, occasionally in conjunction with foreign imposed regime changes or promotions, occupations, or through cooperation between alliance countries (like the assistance from the United States to Iceland during WWII to deter German moves against the strategically placed island).[60]

External statebuilding has increased significantly since the end of the Cold War. The primary intervening agent has been the United States, but the Soviet Union and others have also

[59] Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. Verso Books, 2006.
[60] For example, see: O'Rourke, Lindsey A. *Covert Regime Change: America's Secret Cold War*. Cornell University Press, 2018.; Owen IV, John M. *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010*. Vol. 123. Princeton University Press, 2010.; Finnemore, Martha. *The purpose of intervention: Changing beliefs about the use of force*. Cornell University Press, 2004.; Edelstein, David M. "Occupational hazards: Why military occupations succeed or fail." *International Security* 29, no. 1 (2004): 49-91.

launched such operations. The reasons for the rise of statebuilding operation are many, but this is primarily due to great power competition during the period and the increasingly strong international norm of not changing borders through military force. States now, instead of being annexed into the conquering country, now must be rebuilt and returned to indigenous sovereignty.

The internal statebuilding process in Europe, and in the other regions it occurred successfully, was a very long and violent process. Traditional centers of power did not give up their control easily and the centralization of power and coercion was resisted, often violently, by the populations the state sought to control. For an armed statebuilding operation, the intervening state often does not have the patience or resources to commit to such a violent decades-long, sometimes centuries-long, project. Therefore, armed statebuilding operations seek to move political development at hyper-speed while also lacking legitimacy as an external actor engaged in an occupation and under disadvantageous conditions. Both the British from 1914 to 1932 and the United States after 2003 sought to expedite the construction of strong administration in Iraq. The British depended on coercion by aircraft and neglected the construction of other necessary institutions.[61] The United States did not commit enough troops early in the operation to secure Iraqi territory (along with de-Bathification and disbanding the Iraqi Army) and led to a breakdown of administrative capacity.[62] External statebuilding operations have seen few successes because of these inherent limitations.[63]

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[61] Cleveland, William L. *A history of the modern Middle East*. Routledge, 2018.
[62] Dodge, Toby. "Iraq: The contradictions of exogenous State-Building in historical perspective." *Third World Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (2006): 187-200.
[63] Paris, Roland, and Timothy D. Sisk, eds. *The dilemmas of statebuilding: confronting the contradictions of postwar peace operations*. Routledge, 2009.

Given what the state is and how it is formed, how does this line up with the three tasks the U.S. military is asked to do during statebuilding operations? Although it is not a necessary condition, most statebuilding operations occur in failed states. Either the state was weak and fragile through internal or external processes and the outward effects of this fragility justified the intervention or the intervention itself first defeated the military and overthrew the regime thus creating a failed state. Some statebuilding tasks are conducted in states that have not yet failed but their fragility is a concern. However, countries that are the target of all three statebuilding tasks simultaneously are always failed states.

**Infrastructure and the State**

Infrastructure is vital to the power of the state. States that lack infrastructure lack the ability to access their population and to deliver goods and services. States without infrastructure, importantly, also lack the capacity to extract resources from their territory and population. This significantly hinders the ability of the state to monopolize the legitimate use of forces within a given territory, a necessary condition of being a state. James C. Scott argued that the limitations of transportation in certain areas of Southeast Asia made the expansion of the state beyond the lowland valleys impractical, therefore the taking of slaves and moving them into the territory already controlled by the state became a major objective of war and statebuilding.[64] One of the reasons that strong states were constructed in Europe and not Africa was the prohibitive costs of building the infrastructure necessary for the states in Africa to penetrate the periphery, whereas

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[64] Scott, James C. *The art of not being governed: An anarchist history of upland Southeast Asia*. Nus Press, 2010.

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this was relatively easier to do in the smaller and more permissible landscape of western

Europe.[65]


**Security Forces and the State**

Security forces are perhaps the most vital feature of a state. The very definition of a state

is an organization that monopolizes the claim to the legitimate use of force within a given

territory. A state cannot exist without agents of coercion, usually in the form of both police and

the military. It is so important, that one of the most prominent theories of the state inexorably

links state making with war making.[66]

> *A ruler's creation of armed force generated durable state structure. It did so both*
> *because an army became a significant organization within the state and because*
> *its construction and maintenance brought complementary organizations –*
> *treasuries, supply services, mechanisms for conscription, tax bureau, and much*
> *more – into life.[67]*

War continues to be a vital component of statebuilding today and outside of the European

experience. Losing a war often leads to the destruction of the state but fighting and winning a

war today does not by itself lead to state construction. Often other factors are required to be

present, like core ethnic homogeneity and fighting a war for revolution.[68] States can often

survive upheaval and civil unrest, but state failure is guaranteed (especially in a revolution) when

the agents of coercion, the security forces, defect or desert.

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[65] Herbst, Jeffrey. *States and power in Africa: Comparative lessons in authority and control*. Princeton University Press, 2014.

[66] Tilly, Charles. "Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990–1990." In *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*, pp. 140-154. Routledge, 2017.

[67] Tilly, Charles. "Coercion, capital, and European states, AD 990–1990." In *Collective Violence, Contentious Politics, and Social Change*, pp. 140-154. Routledge, 2017: 70.

[68] Taylor, Brian D., and Roxana Botea. "Tilly tally: War-making and state-making in the contemporary third world." *International Studies Review* 10, no. 1 (2008): 27-56.

## Governance and the State

Governance is also vital for a state. The institutions and organizations that comprise the state are necessary to make decisions, carry out those decisions, and to penetrate society and extract resources. This is evident in the expansion of the state in every region of the world.[69] Governance in general is a necessary condition for the existence of a state, but it is also the case that poor governance is an indication of a fragile or failed state. States begin to fail when governments exploit their populations and engage in predatory behavior rather than extract at sustainable levels and reinvest in production and the prosperity of society.[70]

## Alternative Theories

Previous scholars who have looked at armed statebuilding operations have at times address very similar questions as the one studied here, and at other times have address isolated phenomenon within the broader context of armed statebuilding operations. Generally, these studies fall into one of two categories; they either address the question of effectiveness in statebuilding operations and do not focus on specific actors (especially not the military) attempting to build states, or they focus on one possible task that could be incorporated into a broader statebuilding operation. For example, Paul D. Miller's study on armed statebuilding operations does not distinguish between military and civilian actors, it also does not distinguish between state actors and international organizational actors.[71] Conversely, some studies focus on a singular task within these operations, like security force assistance. These studies fixate on

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[69] Scott, James C. *Seeing like a state: How certain schemes to improve the human condition have failed*. Yale University Press, 1998.

[70] Bates, Robert H. "The logic of state failure: learning from late-century Africa." *Conflict Management and Peace Science* 25, no. 4 (2008): 297-314.

[71] Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013: 218-219.

particular tasks or phenomena in isolation from other tasks that can be conducted or are being

conducting in parallel.

The result of this is that enumerating clear alternative theories to the one presented here is

not simple or straight forward. Thus, below I present both the general theories of statebuilding

operations as well as the theories that have focused on the tasks I study here. For the specific task

theories, only governance and security force assistance are presented since previous work has

omitted the importance of infrastructure building to the success of armed statebuilding

operations.


**General Theories of Statebuilding Effectiveness**

While many scholars have written on similar topics covered here, only two previous

works look at sufficiently similar questions to the one raised here to be considered truly

competing theories. The first is "The challenges of Nation-Building" by Rebecca Patterson, and

the second is "Armed Statebuilding Operations" by Paul D. Miller.[72] Patterson's work is focused

on explaining innovation, or the military's ability to adapt to new challenges as the U.S. military

is trained for conventional combat but is nonetheless asked to repeatedly conduct statebuilding

operations. Miller is focused on explaining outcomes. Miller's work argues that states can fail in

different ways and the strategy of the intervenor should be tailored to the type and severity of a

specific state's failure. Important gaps are left despite these works.

Patterson's work is important in understanding how the U.S. military innovates to address

new challenges. The opening puzzle is similar to the one presented here, why is the military so

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[72] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.; and Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013: 218-219.

poor at statebuilding despite being routinely asked to perform it. Patterson's main contribution, an important one, explains how innovation can occur from the bottom up as units on the ground attempt to find new ways of conducting operations. What the Primary Mission Theory contributes to this understanding is why such important innovation is resisted during the operations and then cast aside once the specific statebuilding operation winds down. The U.S. military is most often forced to develop internal statebuilding capacities at the outset of every statebuilding operation, and innovation within such an operation cannot explain why this happens.

Miller's work more closely resembles the research question presented here. Miller argues that there are five different dimensions of state failure and that the statebuilding effort needs to address the specific type of failure.[73] For example, if a state is suffering a collapsed economy but still has a functioning security apparatus and infrastructure, then state builders should focus their efforts on rebuilding the economy and tailor it to the degree of failure. State failure types, according to Miller, include security, legitimacy, capacity, prosperity, and humanity.

Key questions about armed statebuilding operations remain unanswered by this study. The change to the definition of the state is too restrictive in what can and cannot be considered armed statebuilding. Miller believes that a state is no longer a state if it does not protect the humanitarian rights of its citizens. Legitimacy is a vital component of the state, the state must be the legitimate actor in a given territory, but legitimacy is not necessarily tied to the protection of humanitarian rights. States can violate many human rights and still be states and be viewed as legitimate by a majority of the population. Cambodia engaged in genocide in the 1970s and the state still existed. It only ceased to exist when Vietnam invaded, and Vietnam invaded because of

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[73] Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013: 218-219.

Cambodian incursions into their territory, not because Cambodia was violating human rights. More recently, Myanmar committed atrocities against the Rohingya minority, but the majority Buddhist population largely agreed with these actions. Thus, the Myanmar state did not lose legitimacy among the majority of their population for their inhumane actions. Similarly, legitimacy cannot be treated as synonymous with democratic governance, it is not.[74] Miller recognizes that legitimacy comes from heavily contextual and diverse sources, but then uses democracy as the sole measure of legitimacy, nonetheless.

The figure below shows Miller's coding of outcomes for all of his cases.[75] The coding would suggest that statebuilding operations, on the whole, are at least marginally successful. However, Miller does not distinguish between UN-led operations and US-led operations. The difference should be controlled for. The UN is an international organization and likely to be viewed as more independent and impartial relative to a U.S. invasion. Additionally, UN operations are less likely to be as heavily militarized as a U.S. led operation. These are significant differences and result in significantly different conclusion about the likelihood of success in a statebuilding operation.

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[74] Gilley, Bruce. *The right to rule: how states win and lose legitimacy*. Columbia University Press, 2009.; and Beetham, David. *The legitimation of power*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013.
[75] Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013: 16 and 205-227.
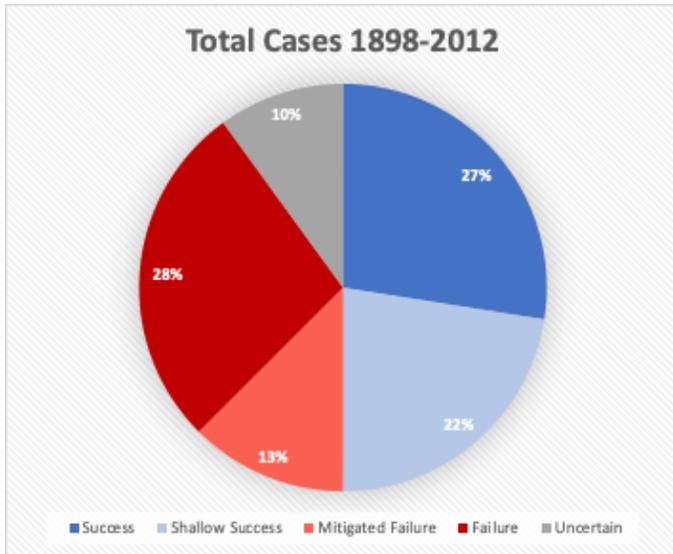
**Figure 4: Outcomes for all of Miller's cases**

When these cases are separated, the difference is obvious. Miller only coded UN cases as uncertain, and the breakdown resembles the much more optimistic picture of all cases combined. However, as expected, U.S. cases are much more likely to fail. U.S. led operations have historically been less likely to succeed than UN operations and coding them together, or treating them both as *armed* statebuilding operations, is inappropriate.
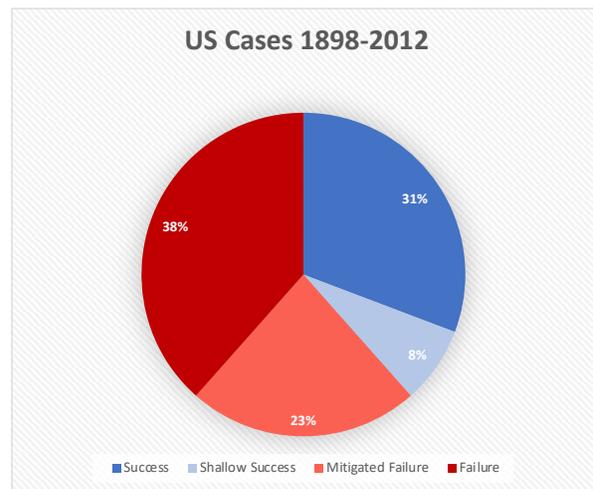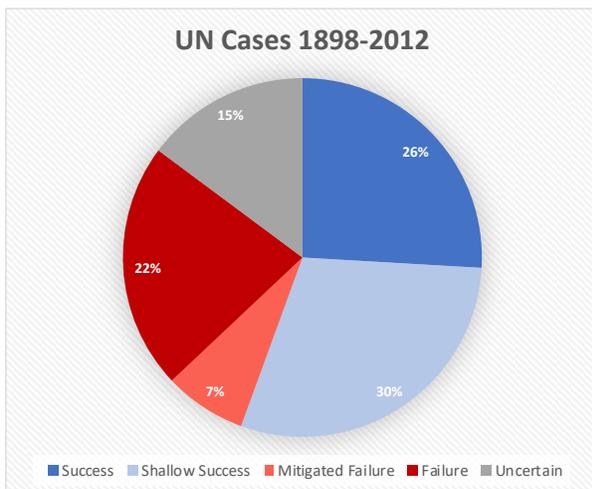


**Figure 5: Comparison of UN and US cases**

These research design issues limit the usefulness of the theory and conclusions. Miller argues that changes in strategy are what is needed to be more effective at statebuilding operations, but this assumes such changes in strategy are possible. It assumes that the actors involved are either willing or able to just behave in different ways. Primary Mission Theory argues that the military behaves in certain ways because of overwhelmingly strong structural conditions that determine the small spectrum of potential behaviors from which to choose from. The U.S. military, at various times, was well aware of the fact that its approach to statebuilding operations needs to be fundamentally different from its approach to conventional war, this was especially the case during the Vietnam war. It nonetheless opts to conduct conventional operations anyway and resist the diversion of talent and resources to statebuilding tasks despite strong civilian pressure and clear recognition of the type of war they were facing. Even when some lower-level units successfully innovate for statebuilding operations, the military resists the broader implementation of their lessons learned and will even forcefully reassign such units to conventional tasks.

**Security Force Assistance Theories**

Security force assistance is frequently employed independently of broader armed statebuilding operations. States often see the employment of trainers and advisors as a way to achieve the same foreign policy objectives that would require a larger deployment of their own forces. Therefore, states see it as war or foreign policy on the cheap. However, these cheap operations, and even SFA missions that were historically expensive, have produced marginal outcomes. Additionally, these missions have often failed to achieve objectives, failed to produce

liberal and humanitarian reforms, and at times have even led to humanitarian crises and the prolongation of hostilities.[76]

These programs are sometimes called partner capacity building, train and assist programs, or security sector reform, among others. This form of engagement in foreign policy has become a vital part of U.S. strategy since WWII.[77] In recent years, and especially during the Cold War, many of these programs have resulted in catastrophic failures. When the Islamic State advanced towards Mosul in 2014, the stronger, more numerous, better equipped Iraqi army collapsed without much of a fight.[78] By that point, the United States had spent over $26 billion to help build up Iraq's police and military alone (not to mention the many U.S. lives lost in the process).[79] U.S. forces had to redeploy to the region after the official withdraw from Iraq to engage ISIS.[80] This is problematic since the strategy is intended to save the principal state blood and treasure by not having to use their own forces to fight the conflict.

The current literature can broadly be placed into two groups based on their general arguments. The first makes a divergent interest argument. These works center around the fact that the interests of the client state do not always align with the interests of the patron state. Some argue that the nature of the relationship and the types of likely states receiving assistance

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[76] Seth G. Jones, Peter Chalk, Olga Oliker, Rollie Lal, and C. Christine Fair, *Securing Tyrants or Fostering Reform?: US Internal Security Assistance to Repressive and Transitioning Regimes* (Santa Monica: Rand Corporation, 2006).; Douglas Gillison, Nick Turse, and Moiz Syed, "The Network: Leaked Data Reveals How the U.S. Trains Vast Numbers of Soldiers and Police With Little Oversight," *The Intercept,* 10 July 2016 https://theintercept.com/2016/07/13/training/.; Government Accountability Office, "DOD Should Fully Address Security Assistance Planning Elements in Global Train and Equip Project Proposals," May 2018, https://www.gao.gov/assets/700/692152.pdf.
[77] Chester J. Pach, *Arming the free world: the origins of the United States military assistance program, 1945-1950* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books, 1991).; Robert D. Ramsey, *Advising Indigenous Forces: American Advisors in Korea, Vietnam, and El Salvador* (Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006).
[78] The Guardian. "Iraq army capitulates to Isis militants in four cities." https://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/jun/11/mosul-isis-gunmen-middle-east-states (Accessed April, 28th 2017).
[79] Security Assistance Monitor. Data on Iraq. http://securityassistance.org/data/program/military/Iraq/2000/2016/is_all/Global (Accessed April, 28th 2017).
[80] Helene Cooper. "U.S. to Send 600 More Troops to Iraq to Help Retake Mosul from ISIS." https://www.nytimes.com/2016/09/29/world/middleeast/obama-troops-iraq.html (Accessed April, 28th 2017).

mean that interest misalignment is almost guaranteed. The second body of work argues that there

are structural limitations. Local capacity to support the forces being built, the local government

structure, and other conditions determine the effectiveness of the forces being trained.

Stephen Biddle argues that the problem is a misalignment of interests between the

principle and agent (PA). The most likely recipients of SFA are those most likely to have

divergent interests from the United States. "As with any other PA problem, SFA is thus subject

to agency loss as a consequence of interest asymmetry, information asymmetry, moral hazard

and adverse selection; unfortunately, the particular circumstances of SFA promote agency losses

that are much larger than many SFA advocates expect."[81]

Ladwig III argues that interests will be divergent *because* of the position of the regime

relative to that of the United States. The client regime will have interests in regime security, not

just external security or defeating an insurgency. The client regime will often prioritize the

maintenance of power. This will undermine many of the needed reforms like improving the

military chain of command, reforming economic practices, or building broad and multiethnic

governing coalitions.[82] Similar to this argument, Savage and Caverley argue that military training

increases the power of the military relative to the civilian government since human capital cannot

be shifted during coup-proofing.[83]

Even if there is enough interest alignment between governments, the structural limitations

of target countries will limit effectiveness. Afghanistan for example, has neither the human

capital nor the tax revenues to support a modern military, especially not one with more than

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[81] Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. "Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018): 97.

[82] Ladwig III, Walter C. "Influencing Clients in Counterinsurgency: US Involvement in El Salvador's Civil War, 1979–92." *International Security* 41, no. 1 (2016): 99.

[83] Savage, Jesse Dillon, and Jonathan D. Caverley. "Foreign military training and coup propensity." *University of Melbourne* (2015).

300,000 personnel. The military the international community has built in Afghanistan will never be supported absent outside funding, which defeats the purpose of building partners to do your job for you. Much of what the RAND Corporation has produced on this subject makes similar points.[84] Giustozzi and Quentin argue that attempts to impose western models on countries that lack educational and structural conditions similar to western countries are bound to fail.[85] Daniel Byman argues that it is the structural conditions that cause the misalignment of interests.

> *U.S. allies that are fighting al-Qaida-linked insurgencies often have four categories of structural problems that explain some of their distinct interests and lead to particular challenges against insurgents: illegitimate (and often repressive) regimes; civil-military tension manifested by fears of a coup; economic backwardness; and discriminatory societies. Because of these problems, allies frequently stray far from the counterinsurgency ideal, both militarily and politically.*[86]

Berg argues that security sector reform is more likely when the ruling coalition is fragmented. Conversely, unified leadership is less likely to accept reforms that have the effect of limiting the regimes power. Leaders that rely on multiple factions are more likely to accept reforms that limit the power of political factions. This is similar to arguments above about divergent interests but is uniquely tied to structural conditions. "Understanding the evolution of the governance of security forces requires looking beyond the tactics and strategies pursued by external actors through a deeper examination of political constraints and opportunities."[87]

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[84] Long, Austin, Stephanie Pezard, Bruce Loidolt, and Todd C. Helmus. *Locals Rule: Historical Lessons for Creating Local Defense Forces for Afghanistan and Beyond*. Rand National Defense Research Inst Santa Monica CA, 2012.; McNerney, Michael J., Angela O'Mahony, Thomas S. Szayna, Derek Eaton, Caroline Baxter, Colin P. Clarke, Emma Cutrufello, Michael McGee, Heather Peterson, and Leslie A. Payne. *Assessing security cooperation as a preventive tool*. Rand Arroyo Center Santa Monica CA, 2014.; Paul, C., Clarke, C.P., Grill, B., Young, S., Moroney, J.D., Hogler, J. and Leah, C., 2013. *What Works Best When Building Partner Capacity and Under What Circumstances?*. Rand Corporation.

[85] Giustozzi, Antonio, and Peter Quentin. *The Afghan National Army: sustainability challenges beyond financial aspects*. Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2014: 1.

[86] Byman, Daniel L. "Friends like these: Counterinsurgency and the war on terrorism." *International Security* 31, no. 2 (2006): 81.

[87] Berg, Louis-Alexandre. "From weakness to strength: The political roots of security sector reform in Bosnia and Herzegovina." *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 2 (2014): 149.

In Biddle's 2005 article, he questions the assumptions that explain why the Afghan model of war worked. One assumption was that U.S. special forces and air power were so overwhelming that the Taliban didn't stand a chance. This would imply that this model could be applied with similar success anywhere. A counter to this assumption was that local conditions were deterministic, and that the quick Afghan victory was a fluke. Biddle argues that only an ally that equals their enemy in skill and motivation will be able to complement U.S. support sufficiently.

> *Inept or ill-motivated allies cannot realize the potential of U.S. airpower and SOF against competent enemies, whether in the first world or anywhere else. As many prospective allies are even less skilled than their state opponents, this implies many fewer opportunities for the model to produce Afghanistan's results.*[88]

**Building Local Governance Theories**

These theories generally fixate purely on regime change operations, but they often bring in governance selection and building during statebuilding operations that follow. Theories on governance building post-conflict fit into three categories based on what mechanisms are most significant in determining outcomes. First, the interveners' inputs are the determining factor. Success is determined by strategy, how many troops are committed, or how much resources are dedicated to the effort. Second, local conditions are the most important factor. Little of what the intervenor does will matter if amenable preconditions are not present in the host country. Finally, the interaction between international and local actors is what determines success. Success will be unlikely if international actors attempt to set up a governing arrangement that fundamentally undermines the power of the most important local actors as this will incentivize them to engage in spoiling behavior and undermine the operations. Successful operations will therefore be a

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[88] Biddle, Stephen D. "Allies, airpower, and modern warfare: The Afghan model in Afghanistan and Iraq." *International Security* 30, no. 3 (2006): 162.

negotiation between international and local actors on setting up a governing structure that incentivizes buy-in from local actors.

This debate has important implications for the Primary Mission Theory of armed statebuilding operations presented here. It is argued that the military places less importance on those missions that are also most complex and more dependent on preexisting conditions. Understanding how these interact is, therefore, important. Current research frequently looks to the predominance of either strategy or preexisting conditions. "A key question is therefore whether democratization outcomes after intervention are the product of deliberate policy choices by interveners or a function of how hospitable local conditions are to democratic change."[89] Recent literature is suggesting that the two interact to produce outcomes.


*Intervenor Strategy*

Some theories have argued that the choices made by external intervenors has the most impact. Stephen Krasner, in alluding to the assumption that choices matter, said, "occupying powers cannot escape choices about what new governance structures will be created and sustained."[90] Roland Paris argued that the choices intervening powers make in setting up new regimes is determined by what governing scheme the intervenor itself has.[91] When General Petraeus returned from his command in Iraq in 2005 he re-wrote the Army's counterinsurgency manual, FM 3-24.[92] A prominent feature in this manual was achieving legitimacy of the new

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[89] Downes, Alexander B., and Jonathan Monten. "Forced to be free?: Why foreign-imposed regime change rarely leads to democratization." *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): 93.
[90] Krasner, Stephen D. "Sharing sovereignty: New institutions for collapsed and failing states." *International security* 29, no. 2 (2004): 86.
[91] Paris, Roland. "Global Governance and Power Politics: Back to Basics." *Ethics & International Affairs* 29, no. 4 (2015): 407-418.
[92] Army, U. S., and Marine Corps. "FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency." *Washington, DC: Headquarters of the Army* (2006).

government in the eyes of the population. The field manual for stability operations was also developed around the same time, FM 3-07. The development of doctrine for these operations assumes that the choices made in the operation will affect the outcome.

Lyall and Wilson argue that the reduction in counterinsurgency (COIN) effectiveness following World War I was the result of the mechanization of forces, which facilitated the shift from foraging armies to isolated, armored force structures.[93] This reduced the interactions between the occupiers and the occupied. The loss of intelligence gathering abilities meant that force was no longer applied discriminately, and the occupiers would lose the support of the local population more quickly. Lyall and Wilson are arguing that tactical choices reduce the effectiveness of intervening militaries.

The more general military strategy literature frequently argues that operations are won or lost based on how much resources are committed and how they are employed.[94] It was a fundamental assumption that more troops can subdue an insurgency when the U.S. government ordered troop surges in Iraq (2007) and Afghanistan (2009). The idea that COIN operations can be planned by simply calculating the needed ratio of troops per 1,000 people is prominent, despite the poor empirical support for such claims.[95] This concept has been extensively debated and even finds itself in official U.S. military doctrine (FM 3-24, Counterinsurgency Field Manual). Even when the search for this all-important ratio gets sophisticated, including factors like land size and accounting for fighting-aged males, it is always based on the assumption that policy or tactical choices can impact the outcome of an intervening operation.

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[93] Lyall, Jason, and Isaiah Wilson. "Rage against the machines: Explaining outcomes in counterinsurgency wars." *International Organization* 63, no. 1 (2009): 67-106.

[94] For example, see: Stephen D. Biddle. *Military power: Explaining victory and defeat in modern battle*. Princeton University Press, 2004.

[95] Friedman, Jeffrey A. "Manpower and counterinsurgency: Empirical foundations for theory and doctrine." *Security Studies* 20, no. 4 (2011): 556-591.; Krause, Peter JP. "Troop levels in stability operations: what we don't know." *MIT Center for International Studies Audit of the Conventional Wisdom* (2007): 07-02.

*Preexisting conditions*

Preexisting conditions that impact outcomes focus on socioeconomic development, ethnoreligious heterogeneity, and prior experience with democracy. "States that are economically underdeveloped, ethnically heterogeneous, or lack prior experience with representative government face serious obstacles to democratization, and even outsiders with good intentions are typically unable to surmount these barriers no matter how hard they try."[96] These primary preexisting conditions also demonstrate the literature's assumption that building states means building democracy.

Research on counterinsurgency has also revealed that local preexisting conditions have a major deterministic affect. Insurgencies are more likely to succeed if they are hierarchical organizations and have rural and rough terrain in which to operate.[97] A large number of studies on insurgencies, political violence, and civil wars have found geography to play a significant causal role.[98] Rough terrain in which to hide is not the only factor, the occurrence of natural resources, proximity of national borders to the conflict zone, and total geographic size have all been shown to impact the outcome of a civil war.[99] Additionally, non-material preexisting conditions, like whether the opposing terrorist or insurgent group is religious also matters. It has been shown that religious terrorists groups have a much higher survivability rate than non-

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[96] Downes, Alexander B., and Jonathan Monten. "Forced to be free?: Why foreign-imposed regime change rarely leads to democratization." *International Security* 37, no. 4 (2013): 94.

[97] Connable, Ben, and Martin C. Libicki. *How insurgencies end*. Vol. 965. Rand Corporation, 2010.

[98] For example, see: Lohman, Andrew D., and Colin Flint. "The geography of insurgency." *Geography Compass* 4, no. 8 (2010): 1154-1166.; and Schutte, Sebastian. "Geography, outcome, and casualties: A unified model of insurgency." *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 59, no. 6 (2015): 1101-1128.

[99] Buhaug, Halvard, and Scott Gates. "The geography of civil war." *Journal of Peace Research* 39, no. 4 (2002): 417-433.

religious groups.[100] Regardless of whether studies emphasize strategic choices or preexisting

conditions, most recognize that both play a role in determining outcomes to some extent.

*Interaction between strategy and preexisting conditions*

Edelstein's study on occupations found that occupations are more likely to be successful

when the occupying force commits large amounts of troops and stays for the long-term.[101]

However, both of these policy choices incite nationalism and resentment towards the presence of

foreign troops in their homeland. The only way to mitigate the effects of these policy choices is

the presence of certain structural conditions. 1) If the society and infrastructure is decimated, the

people will recognize the need for the occupation. 2) If there is a strong external threat, the

people will similarly recognize the need for the occupation. 3) If the occupiers have a credible

exit strategy, the people are less likely to have a negative response to the occupation.

Regime type selection is also a good example of the interaction between strategy and

preexisting conditions. Interventions by the United States and the United Nations tend to

prioritize the building of democratic institutions and regimes. Partly, this is used to legitimize

interventions, especially in cases like the U.S. invasion of Iraq in 2003 that did not receive UN

approval. However, democratization is not something easily imported and depends to a

significant degree on local conditions, many of which are accounted for in theories like

Edelstein's and Downes and Monten's above. The choice does not need to be democracy,

however, and authoritarian regimes have frequently followed foreign interventions. Therefore,

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[100] Jones, Seth G., and Martin C. Libicki. *How terrorist groups end: Lessons for countering al Qa'ida*. Vol. 741. Rand Corporation, 2008: 36.
[101] Edelstein, David M. *Occupational hazards: Success and failure in military occupation*. Cornell University Press, 2011.

regime type selection of the intervening state can play a role, and the outcome is heavily dependent on preexisting conditions.[102]

## The Need for Primary Mission Theory

All of the previous theories have made important contributions to their respective questions. Many of these previous theories, however, have fallen short of explaining military performance in statebuilding operations, or they do not attempt to explain military performance specifically. The specific question being asked in this study has yet to be seriously addressed. Previous work has failed to explain why, despite a clear awareness among military and civilian leaders of the divergent demands of a statebuilding operations relative to a conventional military operation, militaries still fail to adapt to statebuilding demands, resist the adaptation, and/or jettison hard won capabilities once the operation winds down.

Most importantly, military effectiveness literature has fixated on militaries in conventional combat despite the consistent utilization of militaries for operations other than conventional combat. This has resulted in a gap in our understanding of military effectiveness in the more common non-conventional operations that militaries engage in. Such a gap has resulted in the frequent repetition of the belief that the U.S. military can effectively perform well at both conventional and statebuilding tasks. It is continually asked to perform operations it is not prepared to execute. The need for Primary Mission Theory is both clear and vitally important.

## Conclusion

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[102] Chandler, David. "The state-building dilemma: good governance or democratic government?." In *State-Building*, pp. 86-104. Routledge, 2007.

Military effectiveness has received attention by a large number of scholars and strategists, especially recently. However, this attention has been primarily focused on the military's ability to win battles in conventional warfare. Increasingly since at least WWII, the U.S. military has been asked to perform tasks that extend far beyond those tasks involved in conventional battles. They are asked to build states, deliver humanitarian aid, among many others. This weak understanding of how the military specifically performs during armed statebuilding operations comes with substantial consequences.

U.S. foreign policy has become increasingly militarized over the years, and a better understanding of how the military performs in non-military tasks throughout the spectrum of foreign policy activities will contribute to a better understanding of when a military should and should not be used. The Primary Mission Theory presented in this chapter argues that militaries will preference those tasks that contribute to the primary mission as that particular military views it. For most militaries this will be viewed as conventional combat. While some tend to criticize uniformly the ability of the military to engage in statebuilding operations, Primary Mission Theory argues that the military will actually be very good at some statebuilding tasks and very bad at others. This is because tasks like building infrastructure that are important to armed statebuilding operations are also very important to conventional combat. Other tasks, like building local governance, is vital for armed statebuilding operations but contributes nothing to conventional combat. Primary Mission Theory is thus more effective at predicting outcomes in these armed statebuilding operations than those previously offered. Most importantly, the theory expects that the military will never divert the resources and effort necessary to be effective at statebuilding operations.

## Chapter 3: Evolution of Statebuilding Institutions in the U.S. Military

### Introduction

Primary Mission Theory predicts a specific way in which a military will organize itself, a specific force structure. Of the three statebuilding tasks, those institutions that focus on infrastructure will be well established, resourced, and supported. Those institutions that focus on training foreign militaries will not be well prioritized but will have some structure within the military and can be ramped up quickly when the need arises. Those institutions that focus on building foreign governance capabilities will receive almost no prioritization, will only come into existence when the specific need arises, and will be quickly dismantled once the specific need fades. This chapter demonstrates these force structure patterns within the U.S. military. Whereas subsequent case studies focus on what these institutions are able to accomplish during an operation, this chapter focuses on how the U.S. military prioritizes its own force structure to be able to engage in statebuilding operation tasks.

A 2020 report on the state of U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) procurement efforts found that planners wanted more weapon systems than their current budget could afford.[1] This report was followed by press coverage stating, "The Pentagon can't afford all the weapons it wants…"[2] All militaries must make hard choices about which efforts and strategies get funded and which do not, even in the richest military in history. The U.S. Military cannot fund every project, weapons system, or institution it thinks it would plausibly need in some potential

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[1] Govini, "The 2020 Federal Scorecard," 2020, https://www.govini.com/the-2020-federal-scorecard/.

[2] Marcus Weisgerrer, "The Pentagon can't afford all the weapons it wants, new report says," *Defense One*, June 9, 2020, https://www.defenseone.com/business/2020/06/pentagon-cant-afford-all-weapons-it-wants-new-report-says/166034/.

conflict, despite it having the largest budget of any military in the world. It cannot even do this for current conflicts. The problem is further exacerbated by the nature of war. Any task, whether easy or difficult, is made exponentially more difficult in the fog of war. Clausewitz called this friction.[3] In today's modern military, bureaucratic battles frequently play out as military and civilian leaders decide what is, and what is not, to be funded and prioritized. As just one example, consider this quote from a Congressional Research Services report on the funding of security force assistance (SFA) missions and units:

> *The training, organizing, and equipping of U.S. forces to conduct SFA competes for scarce fiscal and personnel resources among the services. Some critics of SFA attest that committing to this capability within the services detracts from their ability to conduct traditional combat roles.[4]*

The purpose of this chapter is to demonstrate three things in support of Primary Mission Theory. First, it shows that priorities given to each of the three tasks vary throughout the cycle between war and peace. This divergent prioritization in turn effects the institutionalization of those tasks and the subsequent ability of the military to perform those tasks during the next armed statebuilding operation. Second, it shows that the priority given to each task is commensurate with that task's ability to contribute to conventional combat operations. Third, the low priority given to the most difficult statebuilding tasks, like governance assistance, inhibits the military's ability to conduct statebuilding when an operation begins. Only after initial stages are they able to eventually stand up most statebuilding capabilities, at which point the conflict has advanced and the task is even more difficult.

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[3] Howard, Michael, and Peter Paret, eds. *Carl von Clausewitz on war*. Princeton University Press, 1984.
[4] Livingston, Thomas K. "Building the capacity of partner states through Security Force Assistance." Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2011: Summary.

**Table 1: U.S. Military Statebuilding Institutions Since WWII**

|  | Permanent Institutions | Temporary Institutions |
|---|---|---|
| *Infrastructure* | - Army Corps of Engineers<br>- Naval Construction (SeaBees)<br>- Army Combat Engineers<br>- Air Force Construction (RED HORSE) | |
| *Security Force Assistance* | - Army Green Berets<br>- Security Force Assistance Brigades | - Combined Action Program<br>- Civilian Irregular Defense Groups<br>- Repurposed Combat Units |
| *Governance* | | - School of Military Governance<br>- Repurposed Civil Affairs<br>- Provincial Reconstruction Teams<br>- CORDS |

Not all statebuilding tasks are performed by statebuilding task-specific institutions like the ones listed above. For less intensive statebuilding operations, and for early stages of an operation before institutions can be set up, personnel from standard combat institutions are simply asked to do a different job from what they were trained and originally assigned to do. For example, "From 2002 to 2005, American PRTs were gathered from forces already in Afghanistan."[5] These ad hoc groups would eventually be institutionalized, but the process was first initiated with soldiers from other institutions filling the role. For the purposes of analysis here, only those statebuilding organizations that reached a high level of institutionalization are considered since it is seeking to assess institutional histories. Chapters 4 and 5 consider institutions and ad hoc efforts as a combined effort in a specific armed statebuilding operation.

There are a number of institutions that were developed for the purposes of supporting the U.S. military's stability operations capabilities but do not focus on the three statebuilding tasks.

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[5] Honore, Russel L., and David V. Boslego. *Forging provincial reconstruction teams*. ARMY (1ST) FORT GILLEM GA, 2007: 85-86.

Similarly, there are some institutions that are directed towards statebuilding or stability operations but not in actually conducting them. The Human Terrain Teams were an innovation to help improve the military's stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan. However, these teams were not intended to contribute to statebuilding efforts. They were intended to help local U.S. commanders understand with greater clarity the social and cultural environment in which they operated. The U.S. Army Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute was established under the U.S. Army War College. This institute, first founded in 1993, is intended to collect, research, and disseminate lessons learned from stability operations. Their funding and existence have been under persistent threat, especially after the 2017 National Security Strategy prioritized great power competition over statebuilding operations.[6] Other institutions that were built to contribute to statebuilding were both ad hoc and multinational, and therefore not only a U.S. military institution. The Multinational Security Transition Command was established to train the Iraqi forces. U.S. forces contributed to this effort by contributing training personnel and financing without standing up a new institution within their own ranks.

**Tools, To What End?**

Primary Mission Theory predicts that militaries will build and invest in tools that contribute to their primary mission as they see it. Because of internal and external structural constraints, for most countries this is conventional combat.[7] However, once this tool is created it can be put to whatever purpose is required by current missions. For example, building

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[6] The White House, *National security strategy of the United States of America*. Executive Office of The President Washington DC Washington United States, 2017.; War on the Rocks Staff, "Save the U.S. Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute: An Open Letter," *War on the Rocks*, August 8, 2018, https://warontherocks.com/2018/08/save-the-u-s-armys-peacekeeping-and-stability-operations-institute-an-open-letter/.

[7] Farrell, Theo. "Transnational norms and military development: Constructing Ireland's professional army." *European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 63-102.

infrastructure is significantly important to the completion of conventional tasks, but many militaries have put this capability to both military and non-military use as required and available. Primary Mission Theory does not say that militaries cannot successfully complete non-conventional combat tasks, just that institutions dedicated to tasks that do not contribute to the primary mission will not be properly prioritized and resourced.

The Ancient Roman Army provides an excellent example of this. The Roman Army maintained robust infrastructure capabilities because of its importance to their military operations. Infrastructure was important for the protection of the forces during expeditionary operations. "Many army units in the eastern provinces of the Empire were quartered in cities, but in Europe and North Africa they built their own forts."[8] Infrastructure was also important for the Army to quickly deploy to the periphery and control the frontiers of the empire.

The most common construction was that of camps to protect the army overnight. Many of these encampments survive throughout the frontier regions of the Empire, especially in modern day Scotland and Wales. "… soldiers in peacetime practiced building such temporary camps."[9] Larger forts were constructed to control strategic locations during specific campaigns. This also included various barriers along the frontier to define the borders of the empire and deter incursions. Among the most famous of the building skills of the Roman army was roads.

> *The army also built the roads that linked all the forts. These were carefully surveyed and often laid out in long straight stretches. The roads themselves were well engineered. A strip of ground was cleared and sometimes a bed of turf was first laid. Over this was a layer of large stones, gradually thinning to a skim of gravel on the surface. The roads were flanked by ditches to allow water to disperse. Even today in Scotland some small quarries from which the gravel was extracted to make or resurface the roads are still visible beside them.*[10]

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8 Breeze, David J. *The Roman Army*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016: 3.
9 Breeze, David J. *The Roman Army*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016: 111.
10 Breeze, David J. *The Roman Army*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016: 121-122.

The capability for the Army to construct infrastructure was clearly a vital military necessity. However, once the capability existed, it could be applied to non-military missions when not constructing for the Army. The Army engineers and construction workers frequently engaged in civil projects. "In the middle of the second century, Nonius Datus, a surveyor in the Third Augustan Legion in Africa, surveyed a civilian aqueduct at the city of Saldae."[11] A similar pattern is shown in a review of institutional capacity in the U.S. Military. One prominent example is the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, which traces its origin to the construction of field fortifications and other similar projects during the American War for Independence. However, throughout its existence, it has been one of the primary actors in domestic statebuilding within the United States.[12] The review of the institutional histories of the three tasks bellows shows this dynamic clearly.

**Methods**

This section utilizes a congruence testing method to demonstrate the institutional capacity predictions of Primary Mission Theory. The theory argues that those institutions that complete tasks that contribute to the primary mission of conventional combat will be prioritized and sufficiently resourced, those that do not will be under prioritized and under resourced and frequently cease to even exist between conflicts. The first task then is to assess the degree to which each task contributes to conventional combat. Once the contribution to conventional combat is assessed, the institutional histories for each task are assessed with a focus on their contributions to operations and their changes during inter-war periods.

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[11] Breeze, David J. *The Roman Army*. Bloomsbury Publishing, 2016: 118.
[12] A Brief History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Beginning to 1815."
https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Brief-History-of-the-Corps/Beginnings/

## Contribution to Conventional Combat

**Infrastructure**

The ability of the military to manipulate the physical space in their area of operation is a fundamental skill. This is primarily the case because the quality of infrastructure impacts the ability of logistics to complete their mission. Every military operation is critically dependent on the logistics that deliver people, materials, and resources to the necessary location. Many have identified the necessity of logistics, and the infrastructure that underpins it. "Clearly, soldiers who run out of food, fuel or ammunition will cease to fight, and to the German troops who spent December outside Moscow in summer uniforms or the American soldiers of Task Force Smith who faced 33 North Korean tanks with only six rounds of effective armor-piercing ammunition, the importance of logistics would seem straightforward."[13]

Unlike the other two statebuilding tasks performed by the U.S. Military, infrastructure is vital to conventional combat operations. Its existence can enable rapid maneuvers during offensive operations, and it can also enable quick reinforcements to stop such operations. The ability to quickly manipulate it, by either destroying it or building it, can bestow battlefield advantages. Bridges are of particular importance in this scenario. If one of the belligerents needs to cross a river to attack, destroying the bridges that enable that will dramatically reduce the risk of attack. Similarly, if a belligerent assumes its adversary cannot cross a river and therefore leaves that flank unguarded, quickly spanning that river to allow a rapid crossing grants a decisive advantage. Infrastructure is important.

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[13] Kane, Thomas M. *Military logistics and strategic performance*. Routledge, 2012: 2.

Modern militaries depend upon lines of communication. Lines of supply, resources, reinforcements and also actual communications with commanders. Sea lines of communication are a primary concern of the navy, which are maintained by naval patrols, and engineers maintaining vital naval infrastructure like ports. On land, land lines of communication are also handled by engineers. Because of this need, army engineers are trained to build and maintain a wide range of infrastructure; roads, transportation hubs, refueling stations, airfields, base infrastructure, and much more.

Since the capacity exists throughout the war/peace cycle, the ability to build infrastructure can be put to use almost immediately in any conflict or operation. Unlike other statebuilding tasks, the requirements to increase infrastructural capacities during war time is substantially less demanding. Often, training schools already exists. This is in contrast to tasks like governance, where personnel are either not trained at all, or are trained in a newly created school by inexperienced instructors like the School of Military Governance established during the mobilization for WWII.[14]

Even projects during war time come to have dual civil/military use. During WWII, the British occupied Iceland because of the strategic importance of the sea lines of communication that flow through the two gaps between Greenland, Iceland, and the United Kingdom. Control of these water ways are of vast strategic importance. The British were eventually replaced by U.S. forces. The United States completed a number of infrastructure projects intended to improve the allies' ability to conduct operations from the island and protect the gaps. These projects included the dredging of the main maritime port near Reykjavik, the building of a naval and submarine base, and an air base. All of these ports and bases are still in operation today and were vital in

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[14] Philip C. Pete Cooper, (1996) The Engineer in War and Peace: From Guadalcanal to Main Street. Gateway press, inc. LOC call number TA140.C65 A3 1993 FT MEADE.

transforming Iceland from one of the poorest countries in Europe before the war to one of the

wealthiest after.[15]

Infrastructure is not only vital for tactical and operational success, but also for the general

security of entire countries. In the late 19th Century in Afghanistan, ruler Abdur Rahman Khan

was able to do what many could not in Afghanistan, he consolidated central control, extracted

large amounts of resources for the state, and built a modern army. However, he refused to allow

extensive infrastructural development of his country.

> *The increased tax burden was not offset by government investment in education,*
> *infrastructure, or communications, which were transforming neighboring Iran and*
> *India at the end of the nineteenth century… The amir feared that any economic or*
> *transport development would only make the country vulnerable to outside*
> *interference.[16]*

The wisdom of Rahman's reasoning at the time notwithstanding, his fears proved well founded.

In 1979, the Soviet Union used the infrastructure developed by foreign powers (specifically the

highway that circumnavigates the whole country) to rapidly deploy troops throughout the

country in a matter of hours.

Infrastructure's importance is also frequently cited in works on military strategy. Donald

Stoker explained the importance of infrastructure while discussing how geography can place

constraints on warfare. After explaining how oceans, rivers, and mountains can limit military

operations, Stoker says:

> *Physical geography can also apply to man-made geographical features that act*
> *as constraints, though these are more likely to affect operations. Roads, ports,*
> *railways, cities, canals, and their level of development have a direct effect upon*

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[15] Thorhallsson, Baldur, Sverrir Steinsson, and Thorsteinn Kristinsson. "A Theory of Shelter: Iceland's American
Period (1941–2006)." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43, no. 4 (2018): 548.
[16] Barfield, Thomas. *Afghanistan: A cultural and political history*. Vol. 36. Princeton University Press, 2010: 152-
153.

*the means that will be needed, as well as the type of force required. A less developed theater of operations will make it more difficult to operate.*[17]

Important in this passage, is recognition of the importance of the level of development. The existence or non-existence of infrastructure is important, the quality of that infrastructure is of equal importance.

The building of infrastructure is so important, institutions that fulfill this mission are even memorialized in prominent ways. Below is an image of a monument to U.S. Naval Construction, known as the SeaBees. It is prominently located near Memorial Bridge in Arlington, Virginia between Arlington National Cemetery and the Lincoln Memorial. There is also a SeaBee Museum in Port Hueneme, California. Institutions that fulfill the missions of governance building are not similarly honored. The Green Berets are frequently depicted in monuments and memorials, but this is primarily due to their special operations capabilities, not their training capabilities.

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[17] Stoker, Donald. *Why America Loses Wars: Limited War and US Strategy from the Korean War to the Present.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019: 103.

Naval Construction Memorial near Arlington National Cemetery and the Potomac River in Northern Virginia. Photo taken April 11, 2019.

Another factor that is indicative of the importance placed on the building of infrastructure to the ability to wage war is the prominent positions achieved by engineers within the military. The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers began its continuous existence in 1802 at the same time as the establishment of the West Point Military Academy. From its founding until 1866, the country's most prestigious military academy was continuously headed by an engineering officer.[18] Furthermore, engineer is one of the official career classifications that an officer can receive. Others include infantry, artillery, military policy, and transportation. There is no similar designation for building local governance or even security force assistance.

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[18] A Brief History of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. "Beginning to 1815." https://www.usace.army.mil/About/History/Brief-History-of-the-Corps/Beginnings/

**Security Force Assistance**

There is a connection between the ability to train the tasks required for combat and the ability to conduct conventional combat operations, but this connection is indirect. Training is vital to the conduct of conventional combat operations when it involves training themselves to complete these tasks. Training is consistently prioritized as the military persistently struggles to achieve and maintain high levels of readiness.[19] Because of this need, the military maintains a vast institutional capacity dedicated exclusively to training. The United States Training and Doctrine Command is one of the U.S. Army's largest commands. Vast compounds exist in several locations throughout the United States, like the National Training Center, that frequently rotates vast numbers of military personnel through their programs to train them how to complete their various tasks.

Thus, the U.S. Military should be exceptional at training, both based on the theory's prediction that its contribution to conventional combat capabilities necessitate its prioritization and because of the vast institutional capacity that exists to conduct the task and conduct it well. However, there are four problems that arise in the local context in which these operations take place. 1) This capacity exists for the training and readiness of the U.S. military and diversion towards foreign militaries is resisted because doing so would undermine its ability to perform conventional combat, something Primary Mission Theory says it will not allow to happen. Essentially, it diverts vital capacity from one's own military. 2) The U.S. military primarily trains a large, modern, western-style military in the performance of conventional combat. This model is seldom, if ever, appropriate for the militaries they are tasked to train during an armed statebuilding operation. These countries primarily need small forces that can be sustained on

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[19] Betts, Richard K. *Military readiness: Concepts, choices, consequences*. Transaction Publishers, 1995.

very limited resources and are specialized to go after insurgencies using special operations tactics.

3) Significant cultural and language barriers inhibit the ability to train units. The simple form of this problem, communication in a different language, can be solve through language training. The complex form of this problem, misunderstanding cultural norms and offending practices, is not so easily solved. 4) Training foreign forces is more complex than training your own. The U.S. military is a large conventional and non-conventional force with vast capabilities designed to deploy abroad against foreign adversaries. However, most SFA missions need to train only unconventional forces to go after insurgents and terrorists within their own borders. Training a conventional military to conduct internal missions is a strategic mismatch and unlikely to succeed. There are also problems of internal politics and principal agent problems.[20] Because of these factors, the capacity of the U.S. military to train is rarely translated into successful security force assistance.

The U.S. military should be very good at training other military forces, since training their own forces is a vital function of the military infrastructure and contributes significantly to their ability to fight and win wars. The military is constantly engaged in training new forces that enter the organization, as well as training forces before they deploy. The infrastructure and expertise to train is vast because of its importance to the organization. Complexity and diversion of resources are of particular importance for the institutional design of the U.S. military.

*Complexity*

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[20] Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. "Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018): 89-142.

The U.S. military is a large, professional organization largely designed to stop or deter foreign conventional adversaries. It is utilized to accomplish more than this, to varying degrees of success, but it is primarily built to fight external, uniformed militaries. Therefore, the vast majority of the U.S. military's training capacity is directed towards building an organization to accomplish this mission. However, the needs of those foreign militaries they train are vastly different from the needs of the U.S. military. Their capacity to operate and maintain expensive high-tech systems also varies. This leads to poor strategies.

The needs for most militaries that are trained by U.S. SFA are internal, not external. This is especially the case for the larger armed statebuilding operations, like Iraq and Afghanistan. The presence of the U.S. military and accompanying security guarantees ensures that external invasion is of little concern to militaries being trained by the U.S. Their primary concerns are internal. Fighting insurgencies, terrorist organizations, or destroying foreign supported militant opposition. This was even the case for much of the Vietnam war. Even though North Vietnam's ultimate aim was reunification, the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces primary concern was internal insurgents and the support from North Vietnam that had infiltrated into the South.

Frequently, U.S. SFA missions have either attempted to prevent the need to insert U.S. forces in the first place or have attempted to secure political progress and allow the withdrawal of forces already there. Since the latter is the context in which SFA occurs as part of an armed statebuilding operation, it is the focus here. Under such circumstances, the SFA mission has often been underprioritized early in a conflict. The United States never planned for SFA before or even during the first few years of Operation Enduring Freedom in Afghanistan. Then when the U.S. was attempting to expedite withdrawal, the SFA mission faced unrealistic time constraints

and pressures.[21] The original plan in Afghanistan called for a 10-week training course. The low quality of recruits resulted in calls for a 6-month training course. This follow-on training was never adopted, and the quality of the forces suffered as a result.[22]

Regardless of whether the smaller Salvador model (small group of special forces trainers) is employed or the larger FM 3-24 model (comprehensive SFA involving conventional forces) is employed, it is unlikely that the United States, or any other state, can overcome the problems of the principal agent problem. The patron state will always have interests and priorities that diverge from that of the United States. Many leaders in the states receiving SFA will have an interest to insulate themselves from a military coup and will undermine military effectiveness using coup-proofing measures.[23] There is also an interest in not completing the war against internal terrorist groups to ensure U.S. money and assistance continue to flow.[24] Essentially, "…neither small nor large US deployments will suffice to outweigh the effects of misaligned interests or imperfect monitoring and enforcement."[25]

*Diversion of Capacity*

Directing resources towards the training foreign forces is a zero-sum game, if a U.S. trainer is training foreign forces, they cannot train U.S. forces and there is a finite number of personnel dedicated to training. The limited ability to divert resources are especially acute in

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[21] Scott Sigmund Gartner, "Differing Evaluations of Vietnamization," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 29, no. 2 (1998): 243-262; Robert Jervis, "The Politics of Troop Withdrawal: Salted Peanuts, the Commitment Trap, and Buying Time," *Diplomatic History* 34, no. 3 (2010): 507-516.

[22] Kelly, Terrence K., Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker. *Security force assistance in Afghanistan: identifying lessons for future efforts*. Rand Corporation, 2011: 22.

[23] Quinlivan, James T. "Coup-proofing: Its practice and consequences in the Middle East." *International Security* 24, no. 2 (1999): 131-165.

[24] Bapat, Navin A. "Transnational terrorism, US military aid, and the incentive to misrepresent." *Journal of Peace Research* 48, no. 3 (2011): 303-318.

[25] Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. "Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018): 106.

times of war, which is when SFA will occur in conjunction with many other missions as part of a large armed statebuilding operation. This fear of diverting the best soldiers to non-essential or less important missions is common within the military. In fact, FM 3-24 expresses concern over this dynamic in foreign forces as well. The manual preferences the training of conventional forces and advises against pulling good soldiers away for elite units. "Elite units tend to divert a large share of the best leadership and remove critical talent from the regular forces."[26]

Especially following 9/11, the military was engaged in increasing the overall force size which means training new recruits and increasing the operational tempo with more deployments overseas which means vast increases in pre-deployment training. The indigenous capacity to train forces is already being stretched by new demands of the U.S. forces engaged in the armed statebuilding operation, that available personnel that can be diverted towards training foreign forces is rare.

**Governance Assistance**

Building local governance contributes essentially nothing to conventional combat. The U.S. military often trained officers and civil affairs units in what it called military governance. However, this trained units to administer conquered territory, not to build indigenous governance. There is a substantial difference between governing a foreign territory yourself, and working with local and international organizations to initiate, build, develop, and cultivate local governing institutions that are capable of administering a territory once the occupation has ended. The distinction is between occupational control of a territory and building local governing institutions that continue to exist independently once the occupation ends. These functions

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[26] FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency, 6-38 and 142-282.

sometimes get confused for the same thing or assumed that the performance of occupation falls under the category of building local governance. These are two different things and the focus here is on building local governance, since this is the only one that contributes to the building of a state.

Building local governance is such a long-term project that conventional combat is all but guaranteed to have concluded long before this becomes necessary or feasible. What is necessary for conventional combat is local population control. Under the requirement, militaries will engage in governance, that is, they will serve as the governors of the territory they control during an occupation. Resources have been dedicated to fulfilling this mission, like the U.S.'s School of Military Governance set up in the lead-up to WWII. However, this does not build sustainable local institutions, since these governing institutions leave when the army does. Building local governance, on the other hand, receives little attention, only become institutionalized in ad hoc organizations after an operation has already begun, and is quickly dismantled following the operation.

As part of a military campaign, building local governance is mostly a new phenomenon. Since the end of the WWII, the international norm of not changing national borders by force has made conquest very rare. Under conquest conditions, new territories can just be incorporated into existing governing structures. However, after an intervention now, attempts to legitimize any use of force usually requires intervening states to rebuild a state within the existing borders of the former failed state. Thus, governance, while not a primary mission of militaries, is nevertheless sometimes asked of militaries. Because of this dynamic, the U.S. military never prioritizes, and is never really asked to prioritize, governance building capacities until after the mission has already begun.

Some argue that governance building is, in fact, a major contributor to the ability of the military to accomplish its objectives.

> *As demonstrated by the U.S. military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, achieving favorable war termination requires more than defeating the enemy on the battlefield. Across the U.S. government, agencies have recognized the requirement to develop capabilities that address the myriad of tasks found during combat and post-conflict environments.*[27]

Again, the disconnect is in the distinction between occupational governance and building local governance, which is used interchangeably in most of the military strategy literature. For conventional combat, occupational governance is vital depending on the circumstances and the political objectives being sought. The inability to control to population of held territory increases the costs and resources necessary to hold that territory, which will divert resources from other missions, usually the taking of additional territory.

Therefore, occupational governance is vital for conventional combat. Civil Affairs officers are expected to control civilian populations in occupied territories so that military operations are not impaired by civil unrest.[28] However, building local governance is only important for militaries after conventional combat has ended and political leaders seek expanded objectives of statebuilding as a part of war termination. Instead of breaking off after the defeat of an opposing military, like the first Gulf War, local governance will be asked of the military only if political leaders seek a broad statebuilding operation.

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[27] Ford, Charles A. *Military Governance and War Termination*. Army Command and General Staff Coll Fort Leavenworth Ks School of Advanced Military Studies, 2011: ii.

[28] Colonel Joseph P. Harris, "Selection and Training of Civil Affairs Officers," *Public Opinion Quarterly 7,* no. 4: The Occupation of Enemy Territory (Winter 1943).

## Historical Development of Institutions

A clear pattern emerges when the historical timeline of each statebuilding institution is mapped. See Figure 1. Major armed statebuilding operations that occur either during a major war or immediately following a major war, births new statebuilding institutions into existence to fill capability gaps. This is a clear indication that these statebuilding capabilities rarely exist prior to the initiation of such operations. However, what happens to these institutions during the operation and, most importantly, what happens after, is highly illustrative of the mechanisms of the Primary Mission Theory at work. Some institutions barely survive the duration of the statebuilding operation while others become prized components of the broader military organization for decades, sometimes centuries.

Infrastructure is clearly prioritized well above the other tasks. It either exists before a major operation begins or is created to fill a war time need, and they are not dismantled following the conflict. This results in a circumstance where the military is well prepared to build infrastructure *before* a statebuilding operation begins. SFA is far less prioritized, but the military occasionally finds such capabilities useful for other operations, thus some are maintained. They still find themselves needing to fill a capacity gap every time a major statebuilding operation begins. Governance capacity is almost non-existent throughout the history of the U.S. military. It is always dismantled after the conflict, and it is always created after the statebuilding operation has actually began. The only exception was the School of Military Governance, which was more about occupying rather than governance assistance.
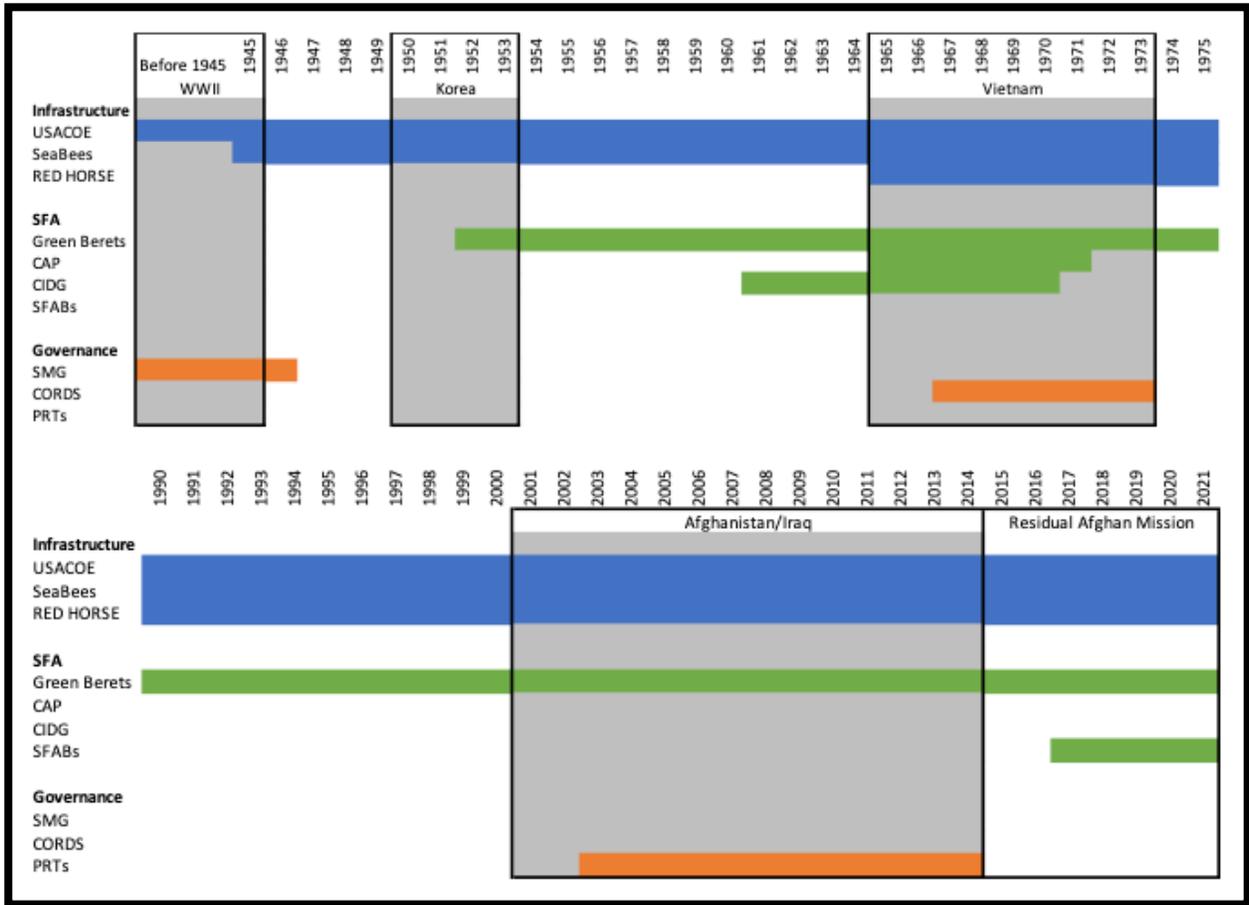
**Figure 1: Timeline of Statebuilding Institutions**

**Infrastructure**

The most prominent institution dedicated to infrastructure in the U.S. Military is the Army Corps of Engineers. The Corps of Engineers has been involved in extensive projects throughout the world, has been an integral part of every U.S. war, and has contributed significantly to the development of the U.S.'s domestic infrastructure. Each branch maintains its own infrastructure capabilities. Naval construction is referred to as the SeaBees. Air Force construction is known as the RED HORSE units. The army also has a well-established combat

engineer career specialty, known as Sappers, who are responsible for manipulating infrastructure during combat operations.

The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers traces its history back to the war for independence from the British. There is also a strong alignment, unlike the other two tasks, between civilian and military professionals that complete the same tasks. Military engineer Philip C. Pete Cooper wrote the following regarding his experience in WWII:

> *I was also particularly gratifying to me to be a part of a military unit during World War II which recruited its personnel from the skilled ranks of construction and public service oriented agencies and trained them in the military aspects of war, in such a way as to have them perform critical support services for the fighting units in the forward areas, so vital to our ultimate victory.*[29]

Equivalency like this does not exist for security force assistance and governance. After the war, Cooper had a successful career in the same field as his military experience working throughout Maryland as a civil engineer. Attempts were made to recruit law enforcement officials and local government officials to build security forces and governance institutions. However, these professions vary significantly relative to military and civilian engineers. Cooper goes on to say that most of the 1,200 men in his unit were recruited for their construction experience and that as a result they were generally of an older age than other units.

*U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE)*

The construction of infrastructure is so vital to the conduct of conventional war, that when the Continental Congress organized the Continental Army, they provided for a position of Chief Engineer.[30] Congress struggled to pay its bills to finance the war but believed a

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[29] Philip C. Pete Cooper, (1996) The Engineer in War and Peace: From Guadalcanal to Main Street. Gateway press, inc. LOC call number TA140.C65 A3 1993 FT MEADE: xxi.
[30] Strock, Carl A. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History." Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2007.

construction capability vital enough to provide for it. Engineering and construction capabilities proved vital for the Colonist's war effort. In the first major battle of the U.S. war for independence, the British occupation showed how important this skill is. British garrisons occupied the city of Boston and the Continental Army, led by George Washington, had surrounded the city. The British maintain significant leverage by maintaining control of the waterways and the high ground surrounding the city, preventing the American's the ability to shell the city with the few artillery pieces they had. The final move that forced the British to make the decision to evacuate the city was due to a nighttime maneuver and the rapid construction of defensive positions by the Americans.

On the night of March 5th, 1776, Washington ordered several thousand men and cannons sized from Fort Ticonderoga to take up position on Dorchester Heights overlooking the city. The men worked non-stop through the night to move into position and to construct defensive fortifications to deter or prevent a British counterattack. Innovation from the engineers was required to accomplish this construction overnight.[31] The British awoke to an American fort within shelling range of their position in Boston. The British General is reported to have said, "My God, these fellows have done more work in one night than I could make my army do in three months."[32] The advantageous position forced the British to withdraw from Boston and ended British activities in New England. The ability to manipulate infrastructure was a vital factor.

After the war, USACE capabilities were demobilized with the rest of the Continental Army. The continuous history of the USACE began in the early 19th century. Engineers were

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[31] Strock, Carl A. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History." Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2007.
[32] McCullough, David. *1776*. Simon and Schuster, 2005: 93.

asked to run the U.S. military academy and did so exclusively for most of the academy's early history. The USACE played a vital role in the War of 1812. They constructed fortifications in harbors and the entrances to vital water ways. These fortifications faced repeated attacks from the British Navy and were vital during the war.[33]

The USACE also proved themselves vital to the conduct of wars during the American Civil War. Engineers from the Corps were instrumental in the abilities of armies to move about effectively in the expansive and, at times, underdeveloped landscape. Floating bridges were an innovation by the Corps that helped in this mobility. Similar contributions to army mobility were made during WWI. Hundreds of miles of railroad were constructed to move men and material to the western fronts in France. Similarly, Corps engineers were vital for facilitating the landings at Normandy and for building the infrastructure, like hospitals and housing, for the more than 4 million soldiers stationed throughout the Pacific and European theaters of operation.

Between these major wars, the engineers were not demobilized this time but instead turned inward. They were instrumental in the domestic American statebuilding effort and expanding westward. Engineers helped professionalize exploration after the Lewis and Clark expedition. They were also primary actors in many of the country's early engineering marvels, including the construction of canals, improving water ways, lighthouses, and building major ports.[34] They helped conduct surveys for the construction of a vast amounts of railroads. This is very similar to the Roman experience. Roman engineers' primary purpose was to build fortifications for army garrisons. Since this did not occupy all their time, they were employed to other non-military tasks. This included building roads, waterways, and other infrastructure. Their

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[33] Strock, Carl A. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History." Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2007.
[34] Strock, Carl A. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History." Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2007.

purpose was to serve a vital military role, but because the capacity existed, they were also directed towards internal or frontier statebuilding.

Their internal statebuilding effort (or civil works), for which the USACE is famous for, actually has its roots in military necessity. Civilian leaders, following the British invasion during the War of 1812, developed a plan to improve the country's national defensive capabilities. The strategy that was developed included a call for improved harbors and transportation systems that would better allow for the quick concentration of military forces against an invading enemy. By 1819, the USACE was directing its resources and expertise towards civil statebuilding projects.[35]

In the 1820's, the USACE was authorized by Congress to improve waterway infrastructure. They also contributed to work on constructing levees and locks to manage flooding and changing grades in river ways. This experience led directly to an engineering marvel in the early 20th century, the Panama Canal. The USACE did not directly build the canal, but many of the engineers that contributed to the project came from the Corps. Throughout the 20th century, the USACE focused not only on infrastructure, but also on disaster relief and prevention. Before the creation of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), and later the Department of Homeland Security (DHS), the USACE was called upon to provide clean up and rebuilding after disasters. They were also utilized to build new infrastructure to prevent certain disasters, like their flood prevention efforts along the Mississippi River following the Great Mississippi Flood of 1927. Today, the USACE contributes to the military abroad through the construction of various fortifications, barracks, and other forward facilities. The Corps also contributes substantially to post-war reconstruction.

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[35] Strock, Carl A. "The U.S. Army Corps of Engineers: A History." Office of History, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. 2007.

*SeaBees: Naval Construction*

Naval Construction Battalions, named the SeaBees, trace their origin to the buildup to WWII. The first SeaBee units were formed on January 5th, 1942.[36] The navy has always been heavily dependent on ports and related infrastructure for effective operations. The SeaBees were created in the lead-up to WWII because of the specific need to build or repair infrastructure as operations advanced into new territory throughout a theater of operation.[37] The navy and marines needed construction units that could keep pace with their advances and keep the logistics flowing, while also being able to operate in a combat environment. Hence the motto of the SeaBees, "We Build, We Fight."[38] The SeaBees participated in every major amphibious landing of WWII. Over 300,000 men served with the SeaBees, in addition to almost 8,000 civil engineer officers. Following WWII, the ranks of the SeaBees were reduced substantially, but not completely. They had some residual duties in the Pacific and in Cuba. They also participated in missions in Antarctica around 1955.

After the United States entered the Korean War, SeaBees were quickly re-mobilized. The base at Davisville was reestablished in 1951. The primary function of the SeaBees in Korea was the construction and maintenance of airfields throughout the peninsula. They were also instrumental in the amphibious landings at Inchon. The SeaBees constructed causeways with floating pontoon bridges within hours of the landings. They were also tasked with the construction of a major naval base in the Philippines at Cubi Point during the war. Civilian contractors turned down the job because of the enormity of the task. Cubi Point opened in 1956

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[36] Transano, Vincent. "History of the Seabees." *Naval Historical Center. http://www. history. navy. mil/faqs/faq67-1. htm* (2000).

[37] Philip C. Pete Cooper, (1996) The Engineer in War and Peace: From Guadalcanal to Main Street. Gateway press, inc. LOC call number TA140.C65 A3 1993 FT MEADE: 87.

[38] Transano, Vincent. "History of the Seabees." *Naval Historical Center. http://www. history. navy. mil/faqs/faq67-1. htm* (2000).

and included a two-mile runway, a pier that could handle the Navy's largest aircraft carriers, cost

$100 million, and moved more earth than the Panama Canal project.[39]

The SeaBees expanded their mission substantially during the Vietnam War.[40] They were

among the first U.S. troops on the ground when the first arrived at the beach at Chu Lai. The

SeaBees were tasked with far more than just building and maintaining airstrips like in Korea.

They were tasked with constructing basses and logistics facilities throughout the country. They

were tasked with building remote operating bases for special forces. There were 10,000 SeaBees

serving in the Navy when direct U.S. involvement in the war began in 1965. At the peak of the

U.S. presence, there were over 25,000 men serving in naval construction throughout 22

battalions. Almost $100 million worth of construction projects were completed by SeaBees

throughout Vietnam.[41]

During this time, the SeaBees began construction of a massive base complex in the

middle of the Indian Ocean, named Diego Garcia. Base construction at this location began in

1971. The project took 11 years to complete and costs approximately $200 million. The base can

accommodate the Navy's largest ships and the Air Forces larges aircraft. The base played a

major logistics role in the 1991 Persian Gulf War. Later, during Operation Iraqi Freedom and

Operation Enduring Freedom, SeaBees contributed again with construction projects that helped

facilitate operations in each country.

The primary function of the SeaBees is for military needs. However, because the tool

existed in an environment with vast needs extending beyond direct military necessity, they have

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[39] Transano, Vincent. "History of the Seabees." *Naval Historical Center. http://www. history. navy. mil/faqs/faq67-1. htm* (2000).

[40] Philip C. Pete Cooper, (1996) The Engineer in War and Peace: From Guadalcanal to Main Street. Gateway press, inc. LOC call number TA140.C65 A3 1993 FT MEADE: 87.

[41] Transano, Vincent. "History of the Seabees." *Naval Historical Center. http://www. history. navy. mil/faqs/faq67-1. htm* (2000).

often been tasked to non-military jobs when available. Philip C. Pete Cooper was an engineer

assigned to a naval construction unit during WWII. Cooper said of the SeaBees mission:

> *Even though there were many instances where the Seabees were in active combat*
> *situations, their prime mission was in support of the Marines, as they fought their*
> *way from Guadalcanal to Tokyo, to supply the combat forces with ammunition,*
> *fuel, living quarters, highways, airfields, hospitals, food, and all the other*
> *supplies and services needed for the war effort. An equally important function, so*
> *often overlooked, was the strong bond of friendship they forged with the native*
> *populations.* ***Where there was hunger, they brought food; where fear, trust;***
> ***where chaos, order. I salute the 88th Naval Construction Battalion and Seabees***
> ***everywhere. It has been said that we can do anything, anywhere, at any time –***
> ***the impossible just takes a little longer.*** [boldface original][42]

In Vietnam, naval construction was also diverted to civil projects once the primary

logistics and infrastructure projects were completed for the military mission. Not only were they

tasked with more general-purpose construction for the military on bases, like recreation facilities,

but they were also a primary part of the peace building mission to win hearts and minds. They

built civil infrastructure for civilian villages and completed numerous projects in coordination

with the United States Agency for International Development. The SeaBees today are maintained

at approximately 10 active battalions, which only accounts for 33% of all available naval

construction personnel (an additional 66% are reservists).

*Rapid Engineer Deployable, Heavy Operational Repair Squadron, Engineer*

Air Force construction is, relative to the Navy's SeaBees, a new institution. This is due

less to the importance of infrastructure and more to the relative short history of the Air Force as

an organization. The Army Air Corps was the predecessor to the Air Force, which became its

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[42] Philip C. Pete Cooper, (1996) The Engineer in War and Peace: From Guadalcanal to Main Street. Gateway press, inc. LOC call number TA140.C65 A3 1993 FT MEADE: 87.

own military branch in the 1947 National Security Act.[43] The Air Force utilized a number of temporary infrastructure units and capabilities early in its history. By 1965, it had formed a permanent institution dedicated to infrastructure, known by its acronym as RED HORSE units.[44]

The need for a dedicated construction capability came during the Vietnam war. The Air Force established temporary construction units to fill the need. These were called Primary Base Emergency Engineer Force teams. These temporary institutions were quickly strengthened and formalized to become a permanent fixture of the Air Force's force structure. By 1965, there were nearly 1,000 airmen permanently assigned to the RED HORSE units. Rather than being dismantled similar to other statebuilding institutions established during the Vietnam war, the RED HORSE infrastructure capabilities was retained and strengthened.[45] These units were viewed as a primary capability for conventional operations. Today, the Air Force maintains approximately 4 active-duty squadrons, 6 reserve squadrons, and 8 national guard squadrons. Similar to the Army Corps of Engineers, their primary purpose is to support conventional combat operations during wartime, but they are frequently utilized for civil project domestically and internationally in peace time.[46]

**Security Force Assistance**

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[43] Wolk, H.S., 1997. *The Struggle for Air Force Independence, 1943-1947*. Air Force History & Museums Program.

[44] Wheeler, Jon A. *An Historical Analysis of the Development of RED HORSE (Rapid Engineer Deployable, Heavy Operation Repair Squadron, Engineering)*. Air Force Inst of Tech Wright-Patterson AFB OH School of Systems and Logistics, 1987.

[45] Wheeler, Jon A. *An Historical Analysis of the Development of RED HORSE (Rapid Engineer Deployable, Heavy Operation Repair Squadron, Engineering)*. Air Force Inst of Tech Wright-Patterson AFB OH School of Systems and Logistics, 1987.

[46] Carpenter, Randy A. *An Analysis of the Potential Use of Red Horse Capabilities and Training Activities to Perform or Accelerate Air Force Environmental Cleanups*. Air Force Inst Of Tech Wright-Pattersonafb Oh School of Engineering, 1992.

The early stages of the Cold War saw the first concerted efforts by the United States to achieve foreign policy objectives by training other countries' militaries. The United States provided early training for the Turkish and Greek militaries to resist the possibility of a Soviet advance on those countries. By 1949, there were over 500 trainers in Greece and over 400 trainers in Turkey.[47] The Foreign Assistance Act was passed in 1948 codifying the provision of security force assistance by the United States. The Mutual Defense Assistance Act of 1949 created authorization to train and advise NATO member countries. The Mutual Security Act of 1954 placed oversight over the quickly growing security force assistance industry and bureaucracy.[48]

Modern SFA capabilities in the U.S. Military originated in the 1950s and 1960s when the United States began training and equipping militaries in Latin America and Southeast Asia.[49] Both the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) and most military special forces units trace their origins to the Office of Strategic Services which conducted covert operations during WWII.[50] Under a program called 'security assistance', agencies throughout the U.S. government began contributing to both military, economic, and diplomatic support to the security apparatuses of foreign countries. For the military's part, however, training and advising missions became primarily a mission for the special operations community, specifically the U.S. Army Special Forces (known as the Green Berets).

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[47] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. security sector assistance efforts in Afghanistan." June 2019: 2. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-39-LL.pdf

[48] Kelly, Terrence K., Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker. *Security force assistance in Afghanistan: identifying lessons for future efforts*. Rand Corporation, 2011.

[49] Livingston, Thomas K. "Building the capacity of partner states through Security Force Assistance." Congressional Research Service, Library of Congress, 2011.

[50] Kean, Sam. The Bizarre Ways America's First Spy Agency Tried to Overthrow Hitler." *The Atlantic*. July 9, 2019. https://www.theatlantic.com/science/archive/2019/07/how-oss-tried-defeat-hitler-world-war-ii/593455/

The Vietnam war had profound impacts on U.S. security force assistance. Significant

legislation was passed that altered the SFA bureaucracy. The creation and growth of the Green

Berets also occurred at this time. The 1980s saw an 84 percent increase in security assistance

through that decade. The statebuilding efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan again fundamentally

altered the U.S. SFA efforts.[51] During the 1990s, the United States also provided SFA to

countries in Eastern Europe that were formerly members of the Warsaw Pact.[52] Around this time,

in the late 1990s and early 2000s, SFA to Colombia significantly increased under *Plan Colombia*

that would eventually make Colombia one of the largest recipients of U.S. SFA in the world.[53]

Due to restrictions placed on the mission by the U.S. government on how many U.S. personnel

could be in the country, Colombia's SFA mission was primarily executed by special forces

soldiers.

The United States worked with Germany (until 1949), South Korea (until 1950), Japan

(until 1951), and Austria (until 1955) following WWII to help reconstruct and build their

militaries. The United States had advisors during WWII working with the Nationalist Chinese.

The United States also worked with countries during the war to improve their military

capabilities. Following this period, the United States conducted SFA operations in the

Dominican Republic (1965-1966), Vietnam (1961-1974), Lebanon (1982-1984), Panama (1989-

1994), and Somalia (1992-1994).[54] The United States also had advisory groups working in

Turkey and Greece following WWII. The United States conducted other SFA operations with

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[51] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. security sector assistance efforts in Afghanistan." June 2019: 5. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-39-LL.pdf

[52] Wuestner, Scott G. Building Partner Capacity/Security Force Assistance: A New Structural Paradigm. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.

[53] Instituto de Estudios Políticos y Relaciones Internacionales. 2001. *El Plan Colombia y La Internacionalización del Conflicto.* Editorial Planeta Colombiana, Bogotá.

[54] Wuestner, Scott G. Building Partner Capacity/Security Force Assistance: A New Structural Paradigm. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009.

less clear contributions and timelines, like those conducted in Latin America, specifically

Colombia and El Salvador. SFA Operations were also conducted in the Balkans starting in 1994.

Since the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001 in the United States, SFA operations

have increased exponentially. In 2018, the Costs of War Project estimated there were 65 ongoing

U.S. SFA operations under the umbrella of counterterrorism operations throughout the world.[55]

*Green Berets*

U.S. Army Special Forces (USASF), unlike special forces units like the Navy Seals and

Delta Force, have a dual mission. They are specialists in proxy warfare and their mission is to

seek out, train, and support guerilla forces in other countries. Their other mission is to conduct

kinetic operations like ambushes, hit-and-run, and sabotage, especially against forces that oppose

those they are training.[56] So, while they are specialists in SFA, their efforts and resources are

divided between that mission and the mission to conduct their own kinetic operations.

The Office of Strategic Services was demobilized in 1945. The USASF began in 1952

with the formation of the 10th Special Forces Group.[57] They were originally envisioned as

saboteurs to be employed behind enemy lines in the event of a hypothetical WWIII. They were

generally viewed as inconsequential by commanders in the conventional army.[58] The Green

Berets would eventually establish their position within the Army bureaucracy during efforts

surrounding the Vietnam War. They were first active in the region, specifically in Laos, in 1959.

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[55] Watson Institute of International and Public Affairs, Brown University. "Costs of War Project."
https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/
[56] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.
[57] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.
[58] Celeski, Joseph. *The Green Berets in the Land of a Million Elephants: US Army Special Warfare and the Secret War in Laos 1959-74.* Casemate, 2018.

They were tasked with training the Laotian resistance forces against the communists.[59] This operation was the first true test of the USASF concept of inserting into and impacting wars for independence. The question was could they be effective training a guerilla force and have an impact in a country independent of conventional military forces.[60]

Their role, size, and experience would expand vastly as the war in Vietnam expanded. The Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program was started by CIA, but the Green Berets executed the majority of the program.[61] The purpose of this program was to organize and train local militias in the countryside of Vietnam capable of resisting communist insurgents. By 1962, approximately 1,000 villagers were trained under the program from 28 villages.[62] Eventually, these remote villages that had been trained and built defenses, known as hamlets, came under heavy attack from communist forces intent on destroying them. Because they were in remote locations, conventional forces were often unwilling or unable to respond to coordinated attacks. The special forces began to expand the other side of their dual mission to respond. Mobile Strike Forces, or Mike teams, were formed within the special forces units to be able to quickly respond to sieges themselves.[63] During this time, the special forces also become relied upon for recovery missions of American and allied prisoners of war. This is also in addition to their own

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[59] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.

[60] Celeski, Joseph. *The Green Berets in the Land of a Million Elephants: US Army Special Warfare and the Secret War in Laos 1959-74.* Casemate, 2018.

[61] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.

[62] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.

[63] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.

unconventional warfare operations, intelligence gathering operations, civil affairs and

psychological operations, and other supporting operations.[64]


*Security Force Assistance in Vietnam*

Two temporary SFA institutions were initiated for the Vietnam operation, the Combined

Action Program (CAP) and the Civilian Irregular Defense Group (CIDG) program. Both were

temporary institutions intended to fill specific gaps in capabilities for the Vietnam war, and did

not survive the end of that particular statebuilding operations. Several existing institutions

diverted personnel to these organization in order the fill the gap quickly. Primarily, these were

personnel from the CIA and the U.S. Army Green Berets.

The CAP program paired a 14-person U.S. marine platoon with a 30-person Army of

Vietnam (ARVN) unit. These paired units were lauded for their effectiveness. The ARVN forces

benefited from marine experience and fire support, and the marines benefited from ARVN

knowledge and information gathering capabilities. CAP began in 1965 when official combat

operations in Vietnam began for the United States and combat marines were introduced to the

operation. By 1966, CAP units grew to 57 and reached 79 by 1967.[65] The CAP program was

allowed to atrophy, however, as North Vietnamese incursions into the south became more

common marines were pulled away for conventional operations. The CAP program ended two

years before U.S. involvement in Vietnam ended in 1973, with the last CAP units being

dismantled in 1971.[66]

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[64] Simpson III, Charles M., and Robert B. Rheault. *Inside the Green Berets: The first thirty years, a history of the US Army Special Forces*. Presidio Press, 1983.
[65] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017.
[66] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

The CIDG program began as a covert operation under the CIA with help from U.S. Army special forces. As a result, the CIDG program began several years before U.S. combat operations officially began in 1965. Training under the program began in 1961. The program expanded quickly from 1,000 local Vietnamese personnel in the program in April 1962, to over 23,000 by the end of 1962. The program was eventually moved to the overt side and placed under the U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV). At this point, the military started to shift the mission of CIDG trained forces to more conventional tasks in support of their conventional goals. Under these pressures placed on it by MACV the CIDG program would eventually collapse, ending before the CAP program in 1970.[67]

*Security Force Assistance Brigades (SFABs)*

The SFABs are the newest addition to the force structure of the U.S. Army. The first SFAB was stood up in February 2017 and deployed to Afghanistan in 2018, with the expectation that six brigades will eventually be stood up, with the addition of a headquarters. The development of the new units began in 2016.[68] Initially, there was concern that the SFABs were fulfilling a redundant function, since Green Berets were already an Army unit that specialized in training foreign forces. The intent behind the conventional training brigades was that they would train large scale conventional forces. The Green Berets then would be freed up to focus on conducting their own mission and training other special forces units, like the Commandos in Afghanistan.

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[67] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014.

[68] Jared Keller. "The 1st SFAB's Afghan deployment is a moment of truth for the Global War on Terror." *Task & Purpose*. January 22, 2018. https://taskandpurpose.com/sfab-train-advise-assist-afghanistan

The units are an attempt to permanently institutionalize the ad hoc institutions set up for training and advising missions during the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. The difference between earlier versions and the SFABs is the amount of resources being dedicated to the effort. The SFABs are almost entirely commissioned and non-commissioned officers, they go through a rigorous selection process before entering the units, they operate in small teams of about 12 personnel, they have their own logistics elements, go through specialized training (i.e., language), and the Army offers signing bonuses for those that join.

If the SFABs are maintained, it would be a substantial departure from previous cycles for the U.S. military. Previously, SFA capabilities were either limited to the Green Berets or the capability was dismantled following the operation. This would be the first time the capability was maintained on a large scale. It coincides with the Global War on Terror that sees the U.S. military actively engaged throughout the world rather than demobilizing after war. However, the future viability and survivability of these units is in question. The Army still struggles to maintain the readiness of the units due to low interest in joining and low levels of retention. "The [Security Force Assistance] brigades are selected along elite criteria but have struggled to attract and retain soldiers over fears these assignments won't help their careers…"[69]

The SFABs are unique in that they would be the only SFA institution to survive the operation they were originally constructed to address. However, it is most likely that their survival post Afghanistan and Iraq is a result of what they could potentially provide for conventional combat. The SFABs are staffed with senior non-commissioned officers and junior officers with very minimal junior enlisted personnel. In the event of a major conflict with a near-

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[69] Christopher Woody. "The Army wants to send its newest units worldwide, but the top watchdog in Afghanistan says it's struggling to find enough troops to do the job." *Business Insider.* September 5, 2019. https://www.businessinsider.com/army-considering-deploying-sfab-to-africa-asia-despite-troop-concerns-2019-9

peer adversary, the military would need to absorb a vast number of junior enlisted personnel to fill in the ranks. These SFAB officers and non-commissioned officers could be used to command these new soldiers. Essentially, the SFABs provide a conventional capability of rapid expansion in the event of great power war.

*Ad Hoc Institutions*

Despite the fact that the U.S. Military maintains some institutions to complete the SFA task, these institutions are still insufficient for most the missions they are called upon to complete (especially in the post-9/11 era). Thus, ad hoc institutions are still needed once statebuilding operations are already underway. This comes in the form of either the vast expansion of existing institutions, diluting quality, or by creating new institutions with no prior training or institutional memory. "Despite that record, the military continues to ignore the lessons of the past. The Army has created ad-hoc war time SSTR [Stability, Security, Transition, and Reconstruction] capabilities with no real joint or interagency backbone or lasting capability."[70]

**Governance Assistance**

Tracing the historical development of the military's institutions that contribute to governance is difficult considering analysts and scholars frequently conflate military governance of territory that has been conquered (often referred to as occupation) and the building of indigenous governance institutions as the same thing, military governance. For example, prior to military campaigns in WWII, the United States established the School of Military Governance in Virginia. However, this was to train officers in the administration of conquered territory, not to

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[70] Wuestner, Scott G. Building Partner Capacity/Security Force Assistance: A New Structural Paradigm. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009: 7.

train them in the building of local institutions. This conflation is important to remember in the historical development of governance capabilities in the U.S. military. Understanding the historical development of occupation capacity is nonetheless important since these institutions are usually the first to transition into governance building roles once the military is asked to perform the task.

Even with occupation governance serving as an important role for conventional combat, it is often still viewed as less vital than other tasks that contribute more immediate results. Thus, like other tasks not viewed as contributors to the primary mission, occupation governance is often under resourced and under prioritized.[71] "By the 1940s the United States Army had been conducting civil affairs operations for nearly a century; yet American military government was usually established reluctantly as an afterthought."[72] Occupation governance has been a feature of U.S. military operations since the war for independence onward, but there have been few efforts to institutionalize this effort and prioritization has been limited.

*The School of Military Governance and Civil Affairs*

The U.S. military administered occupied territory in essentially every war it has been engaged in. The confederate South was occupied and administered after the Civil War.[73] Former Mexican territory was administered by the military following the Mexican-American War.[74] Even WWI, where the United States disengaged and retrenched after, still saw the United States

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[71] Patterson, Rebecca. "Revisiting a School of Military Government: How Reanimating a World War II-Era Institution Could Professionalize Military Nation Building." *Kauffman Foundation Research Series: Expeditionary Economics* 3 (2011).
[72] Storey, Scot N. *Rebalancing Army Civil Affairs: The Key to Military Governance.* Army War Coll Carlisle Barracks PA, 2012: 6.
[73] Heather Cox Richardson. *West from Appomattox: The Reconstruction of America after the Civil War.* New Haven: Yale University Press, 2007.
[74] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan.* McFarland, 2017.

administering territory.[75] Leading up to WWII, there was a period of time from the declaration of war until large-scale engagement from the United States. The School of Military Government was authorized to be built in Charlottesville, Virginia in December of 1941 and began training six months later. This was the beginning of Civil Affairs as a permanent profession in the U.S. Army.

The School of Military Government expanded throughout the course of WWII, eventually opening on 10 campuses across the country and training over a thousand officers mostly from the U.S. Army, but also officers from other branches and other countries.[76] The training these officers received was extensive but limited to administration and did not included construction of indigenous institutions. "The students were being trained to serve as the administrative and advisory assistants to military governors with a thorough curriculum that covered government and administration, legal affairs, government finance, money and banking, natural resources, agriculture, industry and commerce, labor, public works and utilities, transportation systems, communications, public health and sanitation, public safety, education, and public welfare."[77]

Eventually, as the program grew, it became known as the Civil Affairs Training Schools (CATS). This expansion still did not concern itself with anything more than administering occupied territories. It was designed for expediency in the immediate aftermath of taking territory, not the long-term reconstruction of indigenous institutions.

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[75] Edelstein, David M. *Occupational hazards: Success and failure in military occupation.* Cornell University Press, 2011: 5.

[76] Patterson, Rebecca. "Revisiting a School of Military Government: How Reanimating a World War II-Era Institution Could Professionalize Military Nation Building." *Kauffman Foundation Research Series: Expeditionary Economics* 3 (2011).

[77] Patterson, Rebecca. "Revisiting a School of Military Government: How Reanimating a World War II-Era Institution Could Professionalize Military Nation Building." *Kauffman Foundation Research Series: Expeditionary Economics* 3 (2011): 7.

> *[The CATS] were far less concerned with the high-level regional and national planning for which the SOMG graduates one day would be responsible. Instead, the civilian-run program would focus its curriculum more on the day-to-day work of running an occupied city or town; therefore, the students spent more time studying the individual nations that the United States expected to occupy and their characteristics.*[78]

Following WWII, the shift towards demobilization and deterrence with regards to the Soviet Union, Civil Affairs continued to exist but was a shadow of its former self. Civil Affairs officers were relegated predominantly to the reserves, rather than being on active duty and training consistently.[79] For every subsequent war since WWII, when Civil Affairs were needed in large numbers, they needed to be called up from the reserve units. Comparatively, units that contribute significantly to conventional combat can be sufficiently allocated from active-duty units, at least in the early stages of the conflict.

*Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS)*

The CORDS program began several years after the initiation of combat operations by the United States in Vietnam. The program was officially established in 1967 and was intended to be heavily civilianized effort at governance assistance but was ultimately dominated by the military as it was placed under the MACV command structure. CORDS brought together numerous U.S. and Vietnamese run governance programs in an attempt to coordinate and more effectively implement the programs.[80] Prior to the establishment of CORDS, governance efforts were under the Office of Civil Operations and this office was chronically understaffed and underfunded. The

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[78] Patterson, Rebecca. "Revisiting a School of Military Government: How Reanimating a World War II-Era Institution Could Professionalize Military Nation Building." *Kauffman Foundation Research Series: Expeditionary Economics* 3 (2011): 9.
[79] Russell R. Hula, "Stability Operations and Government: An Inherently Military Function," in *Short of General War: Perspectives on the Use of Military Power in the 21st Century* (Carlisle, PA: Department of the Army, 2010).
[80] Gentile, Gian P. "Vietnam: Ending the Lost War." *Between War and Peace: How America Ends Its Wars* (2011): 259-80

CORDS program was praised for its efforts to combine and coordinate between different programs and agencies. However, their effect was minimal due to the consistent diversion of resources and personnel to conventional combat tasks. The program was abolished in 1973 as U.S. combat involvement in Vietnam ended.[81]

*Provincial Reconstruction Teams*

Governance building, as opposed to solely occupation governance, became a significant task during Operation Enduring Freedom and Iraqi Freedom, and the majority of the Civil Affairs officers assigned to this task again came from the reserves early in the conflict. Ad hoc institutions were also established to meet the demand the military was unprepared for. The primary institution responsible for governance building in Afghanistan and Iraq was the provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs). Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF) initially focused on combat operations and tracking down the Taliban and Al Qaeda members. The International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) did not extend much beyond Kabul. Rebuilding the Afghan state was essentially left to the UN and they were under resourced. President Bush spoke frequently that so-called nation-building was not a job of the U.S. military, and as such, the early mission in Afghanistan focused on hunting enemy combatants rather than statebuilding. According to Seth Jones, then secretary of defense Donald Rumsfeld "argued that deploying a peacekeeping force outside of Kabul would be unnecessary and would divert resources from the broader American campaign against terrorism."[82] Eventually, only after the U.S. military had committed itself to a war in Iraq, it became clear that statebuilding efforts would have to expand

[81] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013.
[82] Jones, Seth G. 2010. In the Graveyard of Empires: America's War in Afghanistan. New York: Norton Publishing: 113.

if the United States were to prevent Afghanistan from slipping back into civil war. Prior to the

establishment of PRTs, Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells and U.S. Army Civil Affairs

Teams–Afghanistan supported humanitarian assistance, relief, and reconstruction efforts in

Afghanistan.

In the summer of 2002, U.S. focus shifted to "spread the ISAF effect" throughout the

country. PRTs were a primary component of this expansion.

> *PRTs combine military and civilian personnel from various governmental*
> *agencies, including diplomats, specialists in economic development, and a few*
> *representatives of the Afghan Ministry of Interior. Their mission is to extend the*
> *authority of the Afghan central government, promote and enhance security, and*
> *facilitate humanitarian relief and reconstruction operations.*[83]

PRTs are the primary vehicles for stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan.[84] They were

essentially the vehicle through which a functioning Afghan state was to be constructed and

expanded throughout the territory. The first PRT was established in Gardez province in January

of 2003. Although all the PRTs that would be established had the same stated mission, the

structure, command, strength, and priorities varied based on location and country in command.

By 2005, there were 20 PRTs operating in Afghanistan, with 13 of them operated by the United

States.[85] Three years later, there were 50 PRTs operating in Afghanistan and Iraq, with 25 in

each country and the United States operating 12 and 22 in each country respectively.[86] At its

peak in Afghanistan, there were 33 different PRTs operated by 15 different countries.[87]

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[83] Dziedzic, M., and K Michael. 2005. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Military Relations with International and Nongovernmental Organizations in Afghanistan.* Washington: United States Institute of Peace: 3-4.

[84] Farrell, Theo. 2010. "Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009." Journal of Strategic Studies 33 (4): 567-594.

[85] Dziedzic, Michael J. *Provincial reconstruction teams and military relations with international and non-governmental organizations in Afghanistan*. DIANE Publishing, 2009.

[86] Abbaszadeh, Nima, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Meghan Nutting, Nealin Parker, and Taya Weiss. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams: lessons and recommendations." *Research Paper, Princeton, NJ: Woodrow Wilson School of Public & International Affairs* (2008): 12.

[87] Forsberg, Carl. 2009. "The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar." Institute for the Study of War.

**Conclusion**

According to Primary Mission Theory, the perceived primary mission of a military will set certain preferences. For most militaries during the modern era, this perceived primary mission is conventional combat. Conventional combat presents the largest potential threat to both their country and their organizations. International structural constraints exert pressure towards the building of conventional, high-tech militaries regardless of strategic realities of an individual country. In a world of limited resources these preferences will drive decisions about what institutions will, and will not, be built and maintained. Especially in military organizations, the allocation of resources and the determination of organizational structure is a high-stakes endeavor.

Resources do not always remain constant, however. There are periods of boom and bust, especially for the U.S. military that is frequently cycling in and out of conflicts and wars. The fact that many of these conflicts require some degree of statebuilding has resulted in a frequent cycle of statebuilding capacity building within the military, followed by statebuilding capacity atrophy. While many have attributed this to 'forgetting', or otherwise irrational behavior, Primary Mission Theory presents the explanation that this behavior can be entirely rational, especially for the U.S. military. It is unreasonable and impractical to ask the military to do multiple things that require entirely different skills, force structures, personnel, and equipment. It is unreasonable to completely reconstruct the very nature of the organization every 10 years when a statebuilding operation comes up. Short of this, asking the military to do both things is essentially asking the military to be bad at both. With the attempt to impose this impossible paradox on the military, the military choses instead to either passively or actively resist the

reallocation of resources and efforts towards statebuilding, because they view conventional war as always more important than statebuilding.

The historical tracing of statebuilding task-specific institutions within the U.S. military supports this conclusion of Primary Mission Theory. Only those institutions that can *both* contribute to statebuilding and conventional combat are prioritized and those that cannot are passively supported during pressure to perform statebuilding and quickly dismantled after. During a statebuilding operation, the military willingly accepts resources to build conventional capabilities under the pretext of statebuilding.

# Chapter 4: Afghanistan: Ad Hoc and Ineffective



**Figure 1: Provinces of Afghanistan**

## Introduction

The U.S. statebuilding operation in Afghanistan began in 2001 following the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent invasion of Afghanistan. Much of the statebuilding effort came to an end in 2014 when the United States officially ended combat operations in the country, although many efforts to strengthen and buttress the Afghan state continue. Early efforts gave little thought to the construction of a state and primarily focused on the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the pursuit of Al Qaeda members. The U.S. statebuilding effort grew at

significant rates as the Taliban reconstituted and the security situation began to deteriorate around 2006, eventually becoming one of the most expensive and comprehensive statebuilding operations in history.[1]

Consistent with Primary Mission Theory, those tasks that are maintained in peace time because they contribute to conventional combat operations were available to be quickly employed at the outset of the operations, whereas those not maintained in peace time were ad hoc, under resourced, and began long after the operation was initiated. Furthermore, the U.S. military was reluctant to divert any substantial resources too far from conventional combat operations. Even infrastructure, which is consistently well maintained, was primarily diverted to projects that benefited conventional operations and those projects that did not contribute were either overtly or passively resisted. Even when civilian pressure was at its height around 2009-2010, the U.S. military was still reluctant to divert too much away from conventional operations to more unconventional counterinsurgency tasks.

Ultimately, infrastructure and security force assistance were able to achieve some level of tactical success. Infrastructure's strategic success was limited due to the deteriorating security situation and not because of gaps in capabilities on the part of the U.S. military. Security force assistance resulted in strategic failure because of an inability to translate the vast U.S. military training capacity from training themselves to training the Afghans in a foreign context. Governance assistance struggled to make even marginal tactical gains and made no impact towards strategic success.

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[1] Neta C. Crawford, "United States Budgetary Costs and Obligations of Post-9/11 Wars through FY2020: $6.4 Trillion," *The Costs of War Project,* November 13, 2019, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/files/cow/imce/papers/2019/US%20Budgetary%20Costs%20of%20Wars%20November%202019.pdf.

**Testing Infrastructure in Afghanistan**

Infrastructure building in Afghanistan was generally successful at the tactical level of analysis. Infrastructure was vastly improved during the U.S. presence there in both quality and quantity. At the strategic level of analysis, this vast improvement in infrastructure greatly increased the state's ability to access and extract from society. This access and extraction began to be rolled back as the conflict progressed and non-state groups increased the amount of territory they either controlled or contested. Essentially, infrastructure gains were negated by political and security failures.

As expected by Primary Mission Theory, infrastructure capabilities in Afghanistan were valued only to the extent they contribute to the primary mission of conventional operations. Anything viewed as a distraction or diversion of resources from this mission was underprioritized if not actively resisted. As an illustrative example, when briefing commanders in Afghanistan on the effectiveness of the Commanders Emergency Reconstruction Program (CERP), which was the primary funding mechanism for the military to engage in infrastructure projects, military officials who did not know if the program was effective would rather tell their commanders that it was working for their military counterinsurgency strategy, if not for development and legitimation of the Afghan government more generally. "[We] would regularly tell COMISAF [Commander, ISAF], 'CERP is a terrible development tool, but it's a great stabilization tool,' but we never knew if it was true."[2]

During the surge in Afghanistan, and the subsequent shift in counterinsurgency strategy towards winning hearts and minds, infrastructure enjoyed somewhat of a boost in terms of how commanders viewed its contribution to the primary mission. Instead of being viewed primarily as

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[2] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 100.

just a way to improve roads and thus improve military units' ability to traverse the battlefield, it was now viewed as a way to increase local buy-in from civilians for the government and the U.S. occupation. But even this shift was insufficient to significantly alter the U.S. military's view of what its primary mission was, conducting strikes against the Taliban and Al Qaeda targets, and clearing and holding territory. Personnel were not trained to do development work, institutions were not supported for their civilian-centric roles, and problems predictably arose.

> *The GAO, DOD IG, and Army Audit Agency attributed some of the bureaucratic dysfunction to poor training, but there was another layer to the problem that was often overlooked by outside observers. According to one senior CA officer, 'When I would ask RC-E CERP managers to explain the impact of a specific project being considered, I was often told, it might work, as its justification. None of them had development backgrounds; they were only concerned with preventing waste, fraud, and abuse at the most simple level.' Personnel were not only ill-prepared to document and implement projects, they were also sometimes unprepared to properly conceptualize projects.[3]*

Most tasks, even conventional combat planning itself, was problematic for the Afghan case. The biggest difference between the tasks, however, is that infrastructure suffered the least from this case wide shortfall. Infrastructural efforts suffered from inconsistency in unity of effort, but this inconsistency was mostly when infrastructure was applied to more civil needs rather than military needs.


**Methodology**

Relative to the other two tasks, measuring and assessing the building of infrastructure is far less complicated. The tactical level of assessment is simply the degree to which the military built, and enabled the building of, infrastructure in Afghanistan. This is slightly complicated by the fact that a great number of actors contribute to infrastructure construction, including Afghan

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[3] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 104.

firms and foreign contractors. As observed by the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), "The U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) was the lead agency for these efforts, but a range of other U.S. institutions played a role, including the Departments of Defense, Commerce, Treasury, and State, the Overseas Private Investment Corporation (OPIC), the U.S. Trade and Development Agency, the U.S. Trade Representative, and the U.S. Geological Survey."[4] To the degree that it is possible, the contributions from the military are disaggregated from non-U.S. Military contributions for the purposes of analysis here.

The strategic level of analysis is the degree to which this infrastructure allowed the state to penetrate and extract from society throughout its territory. This analysis draws on qualitative measurements of changes in infrastructure levels in Afghanistan over time. Additionally, it draws on reports, analysis, and research conducted on Afghanistan related to infrastructure efforts.

**Building Infrastructure in Afghanistan**

Infrastructure building in Afghanistan saw significant contributions from civilian agencies relative to other areas like security force assistance. It even saw contributions from states not involved in the military effort, like India and Iran.[5] However, the military contributed significantly since it maintains strong institutional capacity for such activities during both war time and peacetime. The U.S. military maintains significant capacity to perform certain tasks even when those tasks are not needed. This allows them to surge quickly to meet demand where

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[4] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: VIII.
[5] Department of Defense, "Report to Congress: Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, December 2019, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Jan/23/2002238296/-1/-1/1/1225-REPORT-DECEMBER-2019.PDF.

other organizations, like the state department, would take years to just train the personnel necessary to take on additional tasks they were not already doing. By 2015, the U.S. military had spent over $9 billion on infrastructure alone from just one fund dedicated to building up the Afghan Special Forces.[6] That $9 billion contributed to 382 projects for the Afghan National Army and 730 for Afghan National Police.[7] "While stabilization was often framed as the civilian component of COIN [counterinsurgency], the military also spent considerable resources on stabilization programming."[8] Much of this stabilization programing involved government assistance and building infrastructure. Overall, infrastructure in Afghanistan was improved and expanded significantly since the beginning of the war in 2001.

The DoD contributed a significant amount of effort and resources on infrastructure, primarily those which were deemed vital to the military and security mission, like communications networks for the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) that also benefited the civilian population. However, insufficient coordination and communication between civilian and military agencies, as well as between different intervening countries significantly hindered progress and outcomes.[9] Again, these issues plagued the completion of all tasks in Afghanistan, just less so for infrastructure. Generally, DoD took an interest in infrastructure because the poor state of roads and communications lines hindered their own security operations and those of the ANDSF. Civilian agencies took an interest in infrastructure because the poor state of those same assets hindered economic development and foreign

[6] Department of Defense, "Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, June 2015, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_1225_Report_Final.pdf.

[7] Department of Defense, "Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, October 2014, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/Oct2014_Report_Final.pdf.

[8] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 91.

[9] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: ix.

investment. Consequently, DoD focused efforts on infrastructure the contributed to their ability to traverse and communicate on the battlefield. Only later did they take an interest in public works as a part of their hearts and minds counterinsurgency strategy.

A great deal of infrastructure was built in Afghanistan by the military through CERP. This program was the primary mechanism through which the military funded and engaged in public infrastructure work. Additionally, the Task Force for Business and Stability Operations (TFBSO) contributed significant funds to reconstruction and was under the DoD. Additionally, significant resources were spent on base construction and related infrastructure projects.[10] The CERP concept was originally used in Iraq and authorized in Afghanistan in 2003.[11] There were 15 authorized categories for which CERP funds could be used. These included irrigation, agriculture, electricity, and transportation.[12] They excluded projects primarily for entertainment or personal rewards.

During the surge around 2009-2012, the CERP program expanded significantly from small grants for emergency and security needs to broad based and significant projects in infrastructure, agriculture, and even for small businesses and entrepreneurship.[13] Beginning in 2009, CERP funds were authorized for use towards private business in the form of micro grants. While USAID and international funds were directed towards infrastructure for the purposes of economic development generally, CERP funds were directed towards infrastructure and economic development in specific ways that altered the security environment. "Micro grants

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[10] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 2.

[11] Emergency Supplemental Appropriations Act for Defense and for the Reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan, 2004, Pub. L. No. 108-106, § 1110 (2003).

[12] DOD, DOD Financial Management Regulation: Commander's Emergency Response Program, April 2005, chapter 27, pp. 3–5.

[13] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 48.

were for the explicit purpose of increasing economic activity, particularly in areas where small

businesses had suffered because of insurgent violence."[14]
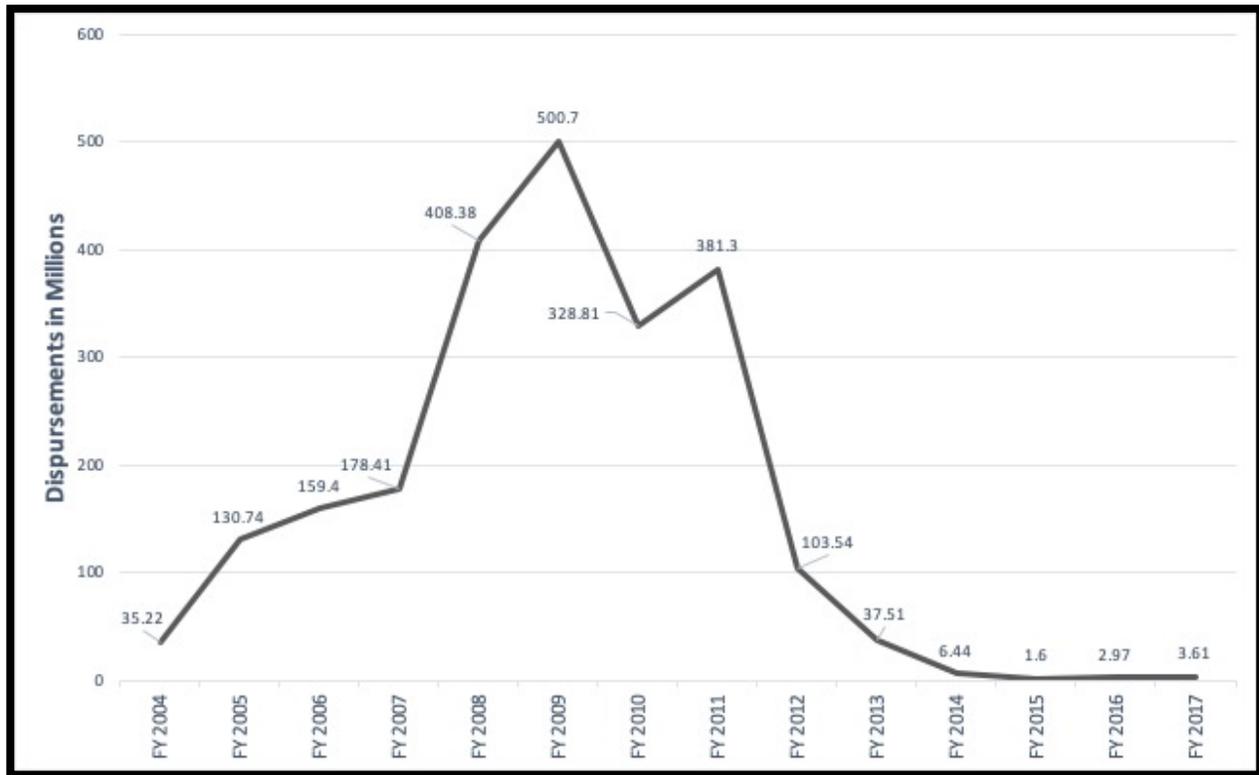


**Figure 2: CERP Disbursements from FY2004 – FY2017[15]**

TFBSO was similar to CERP, in that the concept was created in the Iraq war and then

imported to the Afghan context. Also similar to CERP, the primary purpose was to directly alter

the security environment. The stated purpose was to "promote economic stabilization in order to

reduce violence, enhance stability, and restore economic normalcy."[16] TFBSO was not

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[14] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 48.
[15] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 95.
[16] TFBSO, "Task Force for Business and Stability Operations FY 2011 Report on Activities," December 2011: p. 1.

specifically focused on infrastructure, but its activities naturally involved infrastructure. Specifically, one of its priorities was to develop extractive capabilities of the state to take advantage of Afghanistan's mineral deposits. Ultimately, TFBSO's contributions were limited because they were a temporary agency and faced the threat of defunding each year, which limited the ability of the organization to plan and implement long term projects or activities.[17] TFBSO was a project that was far removed from conventional combat operations relative to other similar mechanisms. As a result, more than most mechanism and projects, TFBSO was consistently under prioritized and resourced.

In addition to completing and funding their own reconstruction projects, the expertise in construction of the U.S. military was leveraged to train their Afghan counterparts in building and maintaining their own infrastructure. Although this effort did not begin until advanced stages of the conflict. Their first priority was in service of their own country's primary mission. Engineers in the U.S. military helped train members of the Construction and Property Management office, the General Staff Engineers and the National Engineer Brigade all under the Ministry of Defense, as well as the Facilities Department under the Ministry of Interior.[18] DoD has a consistent and ready supply of infrastructure experts and practitioners that can easily surge to meet this demand. This was not the case with the other tasks attempted in Afghanistan. One of

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[17] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 49.

[18] Department of Defense, "Report to Congress: Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, June 2020, https://media.defense.gov/2020/Jul/01/2002348001/-1/-1/1/ENHANCING_SECURITY_AND_STABILITY_IN_AFGHANISTAN.PDF.; Department of Defense, "Report on Enhancing Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, June 2015, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/June_1225_Report_Final.pdf.

the earlier efforts in these training efforts was the establishment of the Afghan National Army Engineer School in 2010.[19]

Consistent with the expectations of Primary Mission Theory, the military was able to involve itself in infrastructure building very early on in the conflict because it maintains the institutional capacity between wars. It did not require a long readjusting and training period to create new units to perform functions similar to previous statebuilding operations. The military's priority, especially early on, was focused on contributing to that infrastructure which contributed to their ability to conduct conventional operations. Roads and telecommunications improved the ability of themselves and their Afghan partners to move and communicate on the battlefield. The military was far less interested in infrastructure for general state and economic use early on.

However, as the military shifted focus to counterinsurgency and civilian pressure for a quick conclusion to the conflict increased. The military began to shift focus to infrastructure development for more general state and economic use. Because infrastructure between wars is only prioritized to the extent it contributes to conventional combat, the U.S. military was unprepared for the requirements of more general economic development. They were able to quickly begin work on those projects that contributed to their ability to maneuver on the battlefield. They were capable of then transitioning this capacity to civilian projects more generally but both overtly and passively resisted the diversion of such capacity to non-conventional combat needs.

**Assessment Results**

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[19] Ronald A. Reeves, "Afghan National Army Opens Engineer School in Mazar-e-Sharif," *Defense Visual Information Distribution Service*, December 8, 2010, https://www.dvidshub.net/news/61564/afghan-national-army-opens-engineer-school-mazar-e-sharif.

Vast improvements were made to infrastructure in Afghanistan during the statebuilding operation. The relative improvement was all the more significant due to the poor state of infrastructure in the country when the operation began in 2001 after the nearly 30 years of inter- and intra-state conflict that had preceded it. Of particular importance for the statebuilding effort was the improvements in telecommunications infrastructure, allowing rapid improvements in accessibility and business potential in the country. The high pressure placed on rapid progress resulted in many poorly managed projects that preferenced completion over quality or basic functionality. Additionally, the increasing intensity of the war took a toll on the infrastructure that had been built. Infrastructure capabilities were highly effective in Afghanistan, but frequently undermined by corruption, waste, and war-related destruction, limiting its impact on the overall statebuilding operation.

*Tactical Level Assessment*

By 2013, as U.S. and coalition forces were shifting more responsibility to the Afghans and declaring an official end to combat operations, significant progress had been made in infrastructure development.[20] From 2002 to 2013, 5,430 kilometers of national, regional, and provincial roads had been constructed.[21] One of the major projects that was completed during the occupation was the Ring Road that circumnavigates Afghanistan and connects all the major cities, originally built by the Soviets prior to their own invasion.[22] After decades of Soviet

[20] Department of Defense, "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, November 2013, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf.

[21] Department of Defense, "Report on Progress Toward Security and Stability in Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*, November 2013, https://dod.defense.gov/Portals/1/Documents/pubs/October_1230_Report_Master_Nov7.pdf: 105.

[22] Rubin, Barnett R. *The fragmentation of Afghanistan: State formation and collapse in the international system*. Yale University Press, 2002.

occupation and civil war, the Ring Road was significantly degraded. By as early as 2004, a major portion of Ring Road reconstruction was completed, connecting the capital Kabul with the major southern city of Kandahar. By 2012, nearly the entire Ring Road had been either completed or reconstructed.[23] The United States only funded the portions from Kabul to Kandahar, and from Kandahar to Herat in the East. Iran, the Islamic Development Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank funded the northern portions.

Telecommunications infrastructure increased significantly during the U.S. statebuilding operation. Cellular subscriptions went from approximately 0.1 per 100 people in 2002 to 66 per 100 people in 2016.[24] Telecommunications infrastructure was primarily funded privately. However, the bulk of the initial investment in telecommunications came from the U.S. military. The DoD contributed approximately $2.5 billion in 2002 in support of Afghan information and communications technology, "primarily to provide networked communications support for the ANDSF."[25] Again, as expected by Primary Mission Theory, the primary interest in infrastructure building capacity was the extent to which it contributes to conventional combat operations.

The Afghanistan Country Director for the Asia Development Bank said that, "better infrastructure can strengthen economic growth, enlist improved mobility to energize commerce and agriculture, and boost government revenues available for development spending."[26] Infrastructure development throughout the occupation was important for both increased revenue and capabilities for the state. The best indicator of significant improvement in infrastructure in

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[23] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 35.
[24] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 69.
[25] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 70.
[26] Samuel Tumiwa, "Infrastrucutre Development Key to Afghanistan's Growth – ADB," *Asia Development Bank*, April 3, 2019, https://www.adb.org/news/infrastructure-development-key-afghanistans-growth-adb.

Afghanistan during the occupation is an analysis of nighttime light maps between 2001 and

2013, shown in Figures 3 and 4 respectively below.
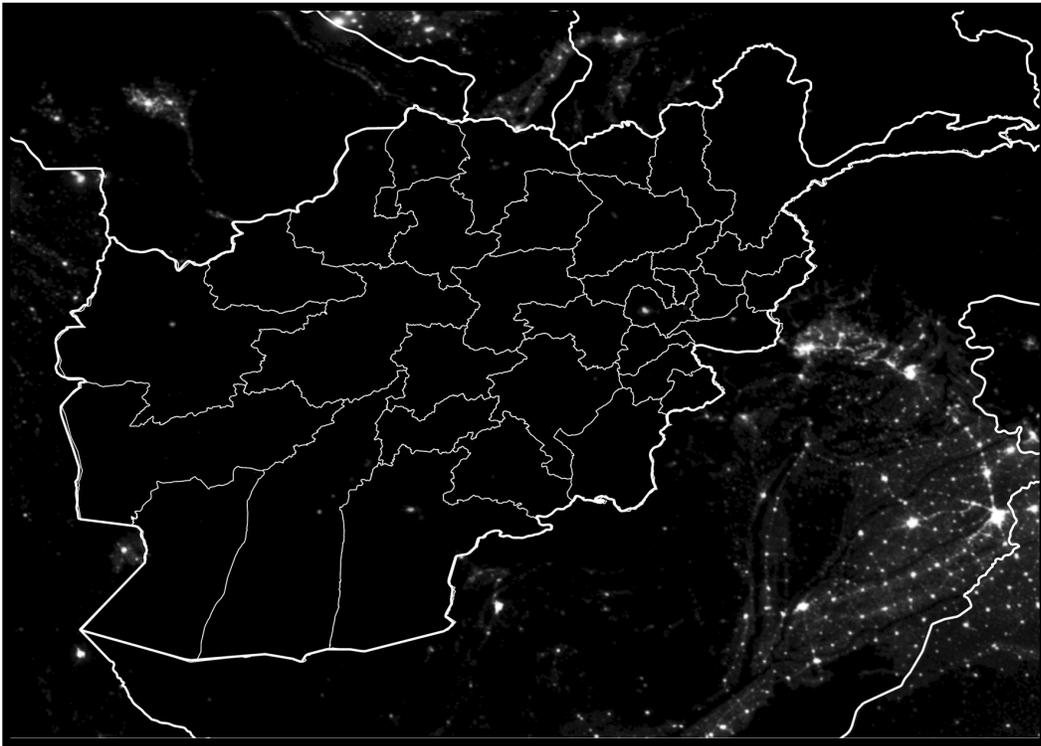


**Figure 3: Afghanistan Nighttime Light Assessment – 2001**
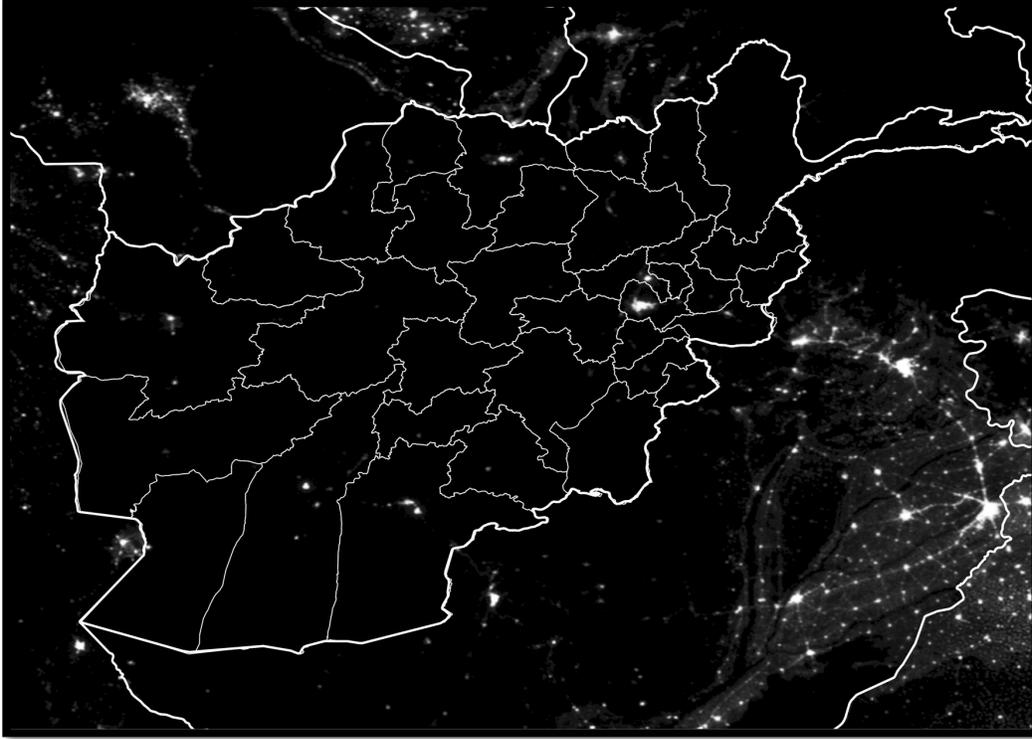
**Figure 4: Afghanistan Nighttime Light Assessment – 2013**

Nighttime light can be an effective proxy indicator of economic activity and infrastructure presence.[27] Primarily, it requires that electricity being delivered to the lit area that requires major projects like power generators and plants, along with the infrastructure to deliver it. It is also a good indicator since delivery of electricity is likely paralleled by roads and other infrastructure. As the maps show, there was vast improvement in infrastructure in Afghanistan between 2001 and 2013. Light was mostly confined to a few major cities in 2001, including Kabul, Helmand and Lashkar Gah (the two major southern provincial capitals), Herat in the West, and Mazar-i-Sharif in the North. By 2013, Kabul city has expanded to consume a major portion of Kabul province. In addition to the major provincial capitals, light is also present in the

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[27] Mellander, Charlotta, José Lobo, Kevin Stolarick, and Zara Matheson. "Night-time light data: A good proxy measure for economic activity?." *PloS one* 10, no. 10 (2015): e0139779.

surrounding areas of these capitals and a significant number of minor cities are now visible at night.

*Strategic Level Assessment*

Throughout the reconstruction project in Afghanistan, quality was frequently sacrificed for the purposes of quantity or showing quick results. However, the measures used for success were often superficial, like the number of schools built rather than the number of students actually utilizing those schools. "Administrator Natsios argued that much of the failure surrounding infrastructure construction stemmed from the rush to show progress on development projects that would inherently be slow and messy, but sustainable and completed with Afghan buy-in."[28]

Funding for CERP expanded significantly throughout the life of the program as the military shifted focus to counterinsurgency, from $40 million in 2004 to $550 million by 2009.[29] As expected by the Primary Mission Theory, CERPs contribution to infrastructure and development was secondary to the primary objective of serving military priorities. CERP was only useful so long as it advanced the military objective as they saw it. "The increase in U.S. forces during the 2009–2012 period and the advent of a modified counterinsurgency strategy affected most aspects of coalition activity in Afghanistan, and CERP was no exception."[30] CERP went from being an instrument intended to improve development and stabilization to an instrument of the military's COIN strategy, more narrowly defined. The program originally was

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[28] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Private Sector Development and Economic Growth: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," April 2018: 34.
[29] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 92.
[30] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 92.

placed under U.S. Central Command (CENTCOM), which is responsible for commanding the whole of U.S. military operations in the Middle East and Central Asia. After the surge, CERP was placed under the specific command in Afghanistan, U.S. Forces Afghanistan (USFOR-A).[31]

The new directed purpose of CERP was to be used after a local U.S. commander had cleared an area of insurgents to rebuild and hopefully win local buy-in for the U.S. occupation and Kabul government. "In this way, the military came to regard the spending of money itself as a 'weapon system.'"[32] This designation of money as a weapon system was not an exaggeration. In 2009, the U.S. military in Afghanistan produced a document intended to serve as guidance for use of funds under the CERP program called "Money as a Weapon System – Afghanistan."[33] Despite the effort of military leaders to direct CERP's function to serve military ends, its utility was somewhat limited relative to traditional military means. Thus, the program lacked an overarching and consistent strategy, was frequently underprioritized, and there was no effective monitoring and evaluation regime to insure effective implementation of the program.

Poor monitoring and evaluation and questions raised over the effectiveness of the program led to the program being formally reviewed in Congress. "In September 2009, following congressional scrutiny of CERP, the CENTCOM commander sent a memorandum to the commanders of USFOR-A and Multi-National Force-Iraq instructing them to establish and use more refined project evaluation and validation criteria for CERP in order to "preserve the program as a key non-kinetic COIN tool."[34] Because senior leaders viewed the CERP program as

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[31] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 93.

[32] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 93.

[33] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 96.

[34] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 97.

a weapon similar to kinetic weapons, guidance on monitoring and evaluating performance of

CERP programs was given as if they were monitoring other weapons systems; similar to

something like a "battle damage assessment." This method of monitoring did not translate well

to something as complex as infrastructure and development projects, especially not at the level of

its strategic impact. "Interviews with personnel who attempted to develop metrics revealed they

struggled to devise methods to measure a project's impact on the counterinsurgency fight."[35]

The Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction conducted an overview of

analysis and research of the impact of CERP. Broadly, SIGAR concluded that the program had

no impact on violence in the areas in which programs were implemented. Some studies found

that CERP decreased violence, but this was usually only consistent for small projects under

$50,000 and in areas already controlled by the government. In contested districts, CERP

programs were shown to actually increase violence.[36]

The CERP program provides a clear demonstration of the limited strategic impact

infrastructure had in Afghanistan, especially that which was directed or constructed by the

military specifically. However, the beginning point for infrastructure in Afghanistan was as close

to a blank slate as one can get in the 21st century. Decades of conflict and poor management by

the Taliban regime resulted in extreme decay and atrophy of the infrastructure in Afghanistan.

Improving the infrastructure from this point was far easier than doing the same in any other

similarly sized country. The statebuilding function of infrastructure is to increase economic

activity and enable the state to penetrate society. The inhibiting force against this in Afghanistan

was more the increasing strength of insurgent forces than it was an inability to actually build the

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[35] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018: 97.
[36] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction, "Stabilization: Lessons from the U.S. Experience in Afghanistan," May 2018.

infrastructure. The map in Figure 7 below shows that the Government of Afghanistan (GoA) was increasingly unable to control major portions of the territory, preventing the state from penetrating those regions and areas, regardless of available infrastructure.

**Testing Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan**

The conduct and performance of the U.S. military in training and advising the Afghan National Defense and Security Forces (ANDSF) was widely consistent with Primary Mission Theory. The military possessed the expertise to effectively train the ANDSF, but the ability to train themselves was not effectively translated into the ability to train others and was not tailored to the unique context of Afghanistan. This inability was exacerbated by the fact that the U.S. military trains for conventional combat against foreign powers, whereas Afghanistan needed security forces for internal control. However, because the capability is only valued to the extent it contributes to the U.S. military's ability to perform conventional operations, utilizing this capacity for other purposes proved difficult. The strategy of building a military in their own image was ill-suited to the conditions in Afghanistan which required protection against an internal insurgency, not an external invasion. Training resources were prioritized for the training of U.S. forces and those allocated towards training the ANDSF were either of a lower quality or inconsistently applied.

The U.S. military was ill-prepared for the task when the operation started. Partially, this was the result of the complexity of training a foreign force with unfamiliar languages and cultural dynamics. "Training did not expose advisors to Afghan systems, processes, weapons, culture, and doctrine."[37] Additionally, a major part of the problem was that the military maintain

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[37] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. security sector assistance efforts in Afghanistan." June 2019: XII. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-39-LL.pdf

few foreign training institutions prior to the war and made little effort to prioritize it during the war. "The U.S. government was ill-prepared to conduct SSA [Security Sector Assistance] programs of the size and scope required in Afghanistan."[38] Ultimately, the complexity of the problem and the low priority given to addressing it interacted to produce the result of marginal tactical success and strategic failure.

> *In Afghanistan, where literacy rates are low and education is limited, it was nearly impossible to recruit the necessary staff. Instead, U.S. advisors often performed critical functions themselves, such as developing policy, budgets, and human resources, and managing the design of the forces—rather than actually advising Afghans on how to do it. Moreover, the U.S. military had limited to no capability to train its own military officers on how to advise at the ministerial level, which resulted in untrained and underprepared U.S. military officers advising the highest echelons of both ministries.[39]*

**Methodology**

The tactical level of assessment for security force assistance seeks to measure the degree to which the U.S. military was able to train personnel, assist in building structures, and assist in establishing basic operating procedures and doctrines. The security force assistance mission in Afghanistan, like many similar missions conducted by international forces in the country, was consistently plagued by poor measurement and monitoring and evaluation regimes. An example of this was an attempt to rate the readiness of trained ANDSF military units. This method was so plagued by shortcomings of inaccuracy and counting of "ghost soldiers" as to be entirely useless. Therefore, the information available on the quality of troops produced is insufficient for such a study. As a result, the primary measures for success or failure at the tactical level is based on the

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[38] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. security sector assistance efforts in Afghanistan." June 2019: IX.  https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-39-LL.pdf
[39] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. security sector assistance efforts in Afghanistan." June 2019: X.  https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-39-LL.pdf

structures of the military produced, the number of personnel trained, and the types of units they built (e.g., conventional versus special forces units).

The above shortcomings make the strategic level of assessment even more important. This level of assessment for security force assistance seeks to determine the degree to which the military was able to accomplish the objectives given to it by its political leaders. These objectives were to secure the population from violent non-state actors and to conduce offensive operations against Taliban held territory. This measure of military effectiveness is consistent with other scholars' measures of military effectiveness and discussed in previous chapters.[40]


## Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan

Consistent with Primary Mission Theory, the U.S. military had significant training capabilities prior to the initiation of the statebuilding operation, but this was tailored to training themselves. Therefore, a massive surge effort was still required to fill the demand of training foreign forces. Additionally, even when effort was placed into SFA, there was passive resistance. Few forces were reallocated to the new role, those that were allocated were of lower quality than those dedicated to conventional operations, and the existing institutional capacity biased the effort into trying to create an Afghan army in the image of the U.S. army that was ill suited to conditions and missions in Afghanistan.

The initial invasion of Afghanistan following the 9/11 terrorist attacks was focused primarily on the overthrow of the Taliban regime and the destruction of the Al Qaeda terrorist network operating in the country. These initial political objectives did not require the reconstruction of an Afghan state and thus very little effort was directed toward any statebuilding

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[40] Brooks, Risa. *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

tasks. SFA was given a very low priority relative to pursuing Taliban and Al Qaeda members. Initial plans, formed in 2002, called for 70,000 soldiers to comprise the new Afghan National Army (ANA). As the security situation began to deteriorate, plans quickly revised these force strength goals to eventually asking for 200,000 ANA soldiers (along with another 100,000 other security forces).[41]

The U.S. military focused primarily on conventional forces and did not allow enough training time to produce quality soldiers. The United States did not start training special forces soldiers until long after the training of conventional forces began and did not recognize they needed to be the primary effort until a surge in training around 2016. See Figure 5 below. "Increases in the ANSF were authorized, but no fundamental reexamination of the types of forces needed, how they operate together (if at all), and how they work with other important governmental functions, such as the judiciary and corrections systems or traditional forms of justice and security provision, were considered until very recently, if at all."[42]

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[41] Terrence K. Kelly, Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker, Security force assistance in Afghanistan: identifying lessons for future efforts, (Rand Corporation, 2011): XV.
[42] Terrence K. Kelly, Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker, Security force assistance in Afghanistan: identifying lessons for future efforts, (Rand Corporation, 2011): XVI.
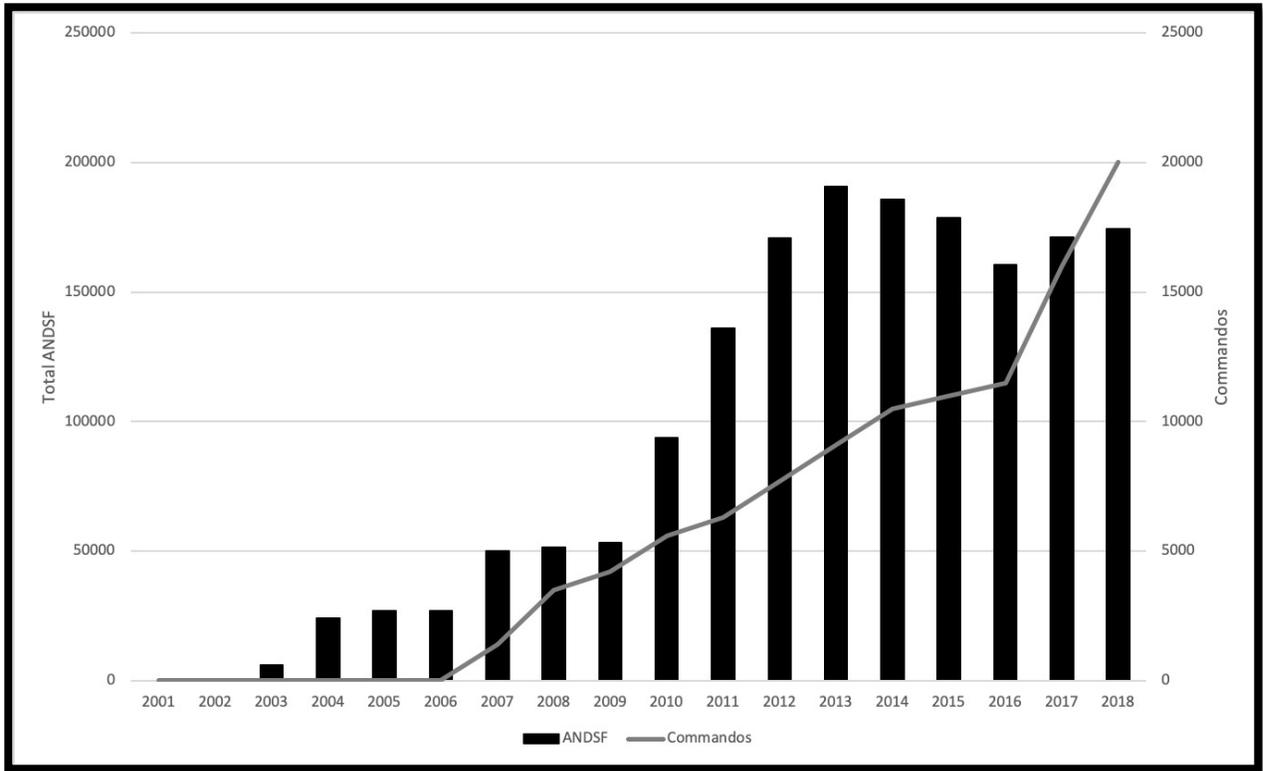
**Figure 5: Conventional Afghan Military Growth Versus Special Forces**

Although Afghanistan is uncapable of maintaining a large conventional military and its strategic environment demands a small specialized and elite force structure tailored to degrading an internal insurgency rather than repelling a foreign invasion, the U.S. was primarily interested in building a conventional military in its own image. The Taliban resurgence began around 2005, but the training of special forces soldiers did not begin until 2007.[43]

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[43] Tom Bowman, "Taliban Resurgence Strains Alliance in Afghanistan," NPR, 2008, https://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=18125911.; International Institute for Strategic Studies, "Military Balance," (2002-2018).
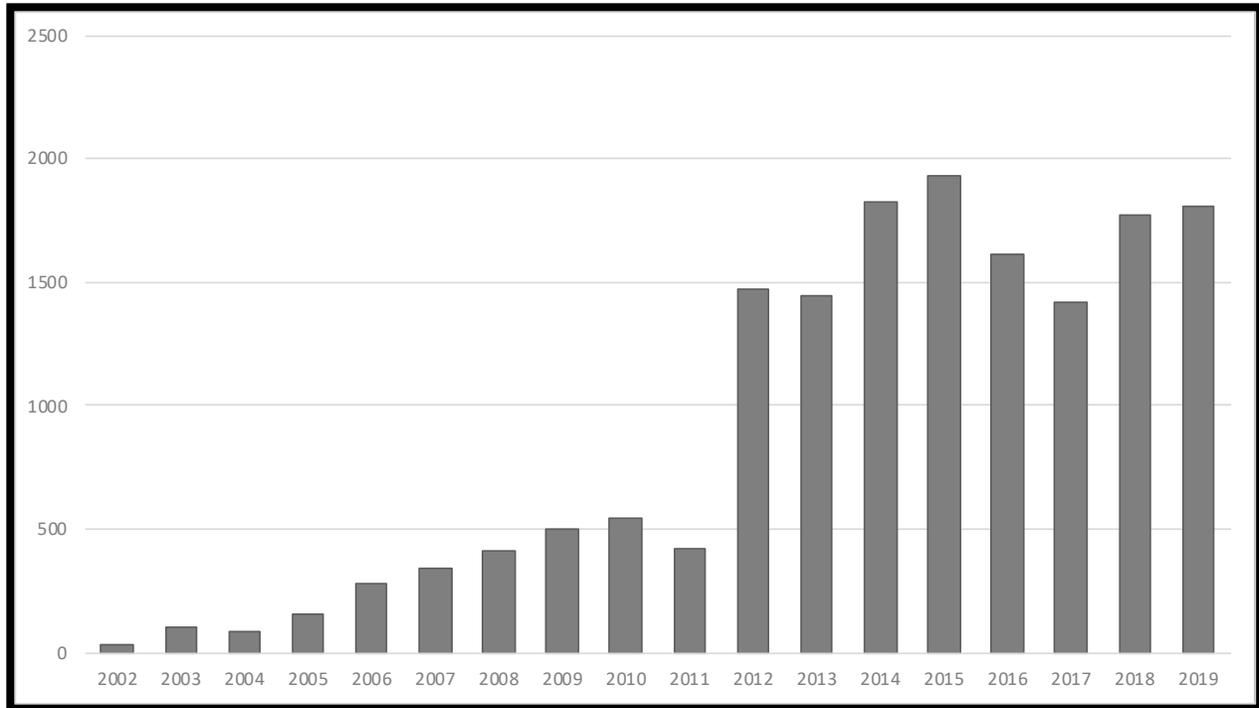
**Figure 6: Violent Events in Afghanistan[44]**

Afghanistan faced significant structural and pre-existing limitation that inhibited the ability of the U.S. military to construct a competent Afghan army. However, strategic choices exacerbated these limitations rather than mitigated them. The U.S. attempted to create a large conventional military better suited to deterring and countering a foreign invasion. This creates an expensive and vast force structure that the Afghan economy was always going to be incapable of supporting and sustaining independently. "The main problem with Western assistance to the ANA has been its tendency to import external models into a country which lacks the structural and educational capacity to implement them."[45]

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[44] National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), Global Terrorism Database, 2019, Retrieved from https://www.start.umd.edu/gtd.

[45] Antonio Giustozzi and Peter Quentin, The Afghan National Army: sustainability challenges beyond financial aspects, (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2014): 1.

Furthermore, this type of military is inept at the type of fighting that the Afghan army needed to do. A large conventional military is less effective at targeting insurgent forces and executing complex operations to take territory from non-uniformed fighters and target hidden and mobile guerrilla leaders. Training a small number of highly capable forces is less resource intensive. This is evident in the time it took to train the conventional ANA relative to the commandos and their respective capabilities. Vast resources were dedicated to training a conventional ANA that took years before they ever actually contributed to combat operations, and even then, they were very ineffective at it. The first contributions to combat operations did not come until 2005, even then they were only partially committed to these operations until 2010.[46] "By August 2011, just one ANA battalion was rated able to operate independently, that is, without being accompanied by ISAF troops, but still supported by ISAF mentors, ISAF logistics, ISAF maintenance, ISAF medical evacuation, etc."[47]

The drivers of the decision to focus on conventional forces was not exclusive to international norms, the U.S. military's bias towards, and familiarity with, conventional combat, was also driven by the assumption that taking quality soldiers from conventional units to man the commando formations would decrease the effectiveness of the conventional units. Again, revealing the assumption that quantity was more important than quality. According to one report to Congress, "… The U.S. military must analyze the impact that removing the potential cadre of promising leaders will have on the conventional forces." That same report also recognized that, "while the elite units have performed admirably, the conventional units have struggled."[48]

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[46] Antonio Giustozzi and Peter Quentin, The Afghan National Army: sustainability challenges beyond financial aspects, (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2014): 1.

[47] Antonio Giustozzi and Peter Quentin, The Afghan National Army: sustainability challenges beyond financial aspects, (Afghanistan Research and Evaluation Unit, 2014): 11.

[48] SIGAR, October 2017 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 14.

The U.S. military was consistently motivated by the preference of the institutions to serve conventional military needs that it was unable to transition into serving the Afghans in an Afghan context. A clear demonstration of this comes from the writing of Afghan military doctrine. All militaries need written doctrine that guides their strategic vision and creates a unity of effort across the entire organization. U.S. advisors sought to develop such doctrine for the ANDSF. However, rather than study what was required for these forces in their specific context, they took their own existing doctrine developed for a global superpower that engages in great power competition and translated them into Dari for a small, land-locked power facing an insurgency. "To the extent that the ANA had written doctrine, it was the US Army's one since manuals were translated without much thought or editing."[49] This again demonstrates that statebuilding tasks are only prioritized the extent to which they contribute to conventional combat.

## Assessment Results

The tactical level assessment shows a basic competency in training and building a military. Vetting and recruitment of new soldiers was conducted, training facilities and programs constructed, and new units with centralized command structures were fielded. Producing a military almost entirely from nothing with almost all external resources to over 200,000 personnel is certainly an accomplishment. However, the strategic level of analysis shows that this impressive production was of little strategic value. The ANDSF were able to secure large population centers with Taliban only being able to gain control of these centers for short periods. After a long delay in beginning the training of commandos, eventually these forces were

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[49] Antonio Giustozzi, *The Army of Afghanistan: A Political History of a Fragile Institution*, Hurst, 2015: 206.

deployed in sufficient numbers to conduct offensive operations against Taliban held territory. However, the strategic mismatch between the instinctual drive to build a conventional army in the U.S.'s image and the ineffective systems grafted onto it by the U.S.'s standard operating procedures, the ANDSF is incapable of achieving the political objectives given to it by Kabul. By the time combat operations officially ended for the United States in 2014 and security responsibilities were handed over to the ANDSF, Taliban forces held more territory than at any point since 2001 and was continuing to gain ground.[50]

*Tactical Level Assessment*

Assessment of the U.S. military's ability to conduct SFA at the tactical level show mixed results. They were able to train a military force and field it. However, the quality of these forces was limited, the fielding of units was consistently delayed, and they continued to be dependent on the United States for logistical and intelligence support after the official end of combat operations in 2014.

Early efforts at training Afghan security forces were led by U.S. army special forces. Initially, basic training for the ANA was 10-weeks long. This length of time is an indication of the extent to which the U.S. military was relying on its own experience training itself to train the conventional ANA, U.S. army basic training last 9-weeks. The estimate for how long it would train the poor-quality of recruits that were available, however, was approximately 6-months. This

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[50] Sources: SIGAR, "Addendum to SIGAR's January 2018 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction,*" January 30, 2018, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Addendum_2018-01-30qr.pdf.

extended training period was never established, showing the low priority security force assistance received – especially early in the operation.[51]

While the early SFA mission fell primarily to the special forces, which would indicate a high priority for the mission since special forces troops are few in number and resource intensive to train and field, the task was eventually handed off to the conventional 10th Mountain Division under Task Force Phoenix. However, the mission was eventually handed off again, this time to the National Guard. This was intended to free up higher quality active-duty troops for service in Iraq.[52]

This strategy to focus on quantity over quality resulted in the fielding of a very poor quality of forces. The resulting defeats on the battlefield, along with other systemic problems like corruption, led to a high level of desertions and retention problems, further exacerbating poor performance.[53] Early in the SFA mission the illiteracy rate was approximately 60% for new recruits. However, this number had increased to 80% as early as 2005.[54] The result of this poor strategy was a steady increase in Taliban control of the country every year after the United States handed control over to the Afghan government in 2014.[55]

The Afghan Commandos have been an exception to the poor performance of the broader, conventional ANA.[56] The Commandos have been the only functional units in the Afghan

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[51] Terrence K. Kelly, Nora Bensahel, and Olga Oliker, Security force assistance in Afghanistan: identifying lessons for future efforts, (Rand Corporation, 2011): 22.

[52] SIGAR, October 2017 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 18-20.

[53] Antonio Giustozzi, "Auxiliary force or national army? Afghanistan's 'ANA' and the counter-insurgency effort, 2002–2006," Small Wars and Insurgencies 18, no. 1 (2007): 53.; Obaid Younossi, Peter Dahl Thruelsen, Jonathan Vaccaro, Brian Grady, and Jerry M. Sollinger, The long march: building an Afghan National Army, (Vol. 845, Rand Corporation, 2009): 16 and 19.

[54] Kelly, Bensahel, and Oliker, Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan, 40.

[55] Taimoor Shah, and Rod Nordland, "Taliban Gain Ground in Afghanistan as Soldiers Surrender Their Posts," The New York Times (2016).

[56] Military Times, "No Easy Task: Making Afghan Special Forces," 2013, https://www.militarytimes.com/2013/03/29/no-easy-task-making-the-afghan-special-forces/.

security forces, and subsequently have been relied upon heavily since the handover over of combat operations in 2014. However, the training and construction of the Commando units did not even begin until 2007, well after the Taliban resurgence began.[57] The U.S. and Afghan governments have both long viewed the training of the ANA as a vital part of securing the country. However, the most competent fighters, the Commandos, were only a small priority. After the handover in 2014, the Commandos importance to the security of the country became clear. Although conventional ANA strength has plateaued, the Commandos have been growing at increasing rates. The ANA Special Operations Command Headquarters was created in 2011 to facilitate the increased number of special operations recruits.[58]

Support for the Commandos, although it has increased over time, remains very low relative to the degree to which they are relied upon to do the actual fighting. Afghanistan never needed a conventional army that is better suited to deterring or stopping a foreign invasion, they had U.S. security guarantees that deterred this threat for them. What they needed was a military that was highly specialized and mobile, one that is better suited to go after internal threats like terrorists and insurgents. Even after this recognition increased as the United States stepped back and the Afghans became more responsible for these missions, support remained low. In 2017, the Commandos comprised less than 10 percent of the whole ANA, but "they do from 70 percent to 80 percent of the actual fighting."[59]

Recognition of the importance of the Commandos would eventually lead to an increased investment in growing the force, although far too late in the conflict to have a more meaningful

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[57] SIGAR, October 2017 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 41-42.; Ann Scott Tyson, "Afghan Commandos Emerge," Washington Post, 2008, http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2008/04/18/AR2008041803423.html.

[58] SIGAR, October 2017 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 85-87.

[59] Helene Cooper, "Afghan Forces are Praised, Despite Still Relying Heavily on U.S. Help," The New York Times, 2017, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/08/20/world/asia/afghanistan-military-strategy.html.

impact. Around 2016, plans were developed and announced to double the size of the

Commandos from 17,000 to 34,000 and the plan would take four years and cost approximately

$200 million.[60] As important as this realignment is, it is far from sufficient. Total U.S.

investment in the Afghan security forces far out paces this small reinvestment in the

Commandos.

*Strategic Level Assessment*

      Assessment of the U.S. military's ability to conduct SFA at the strategic level shows

nearly an abject failure to accomplish its objectives. The mission was only able to achieve some

marginal successes in the Commandos, who are the only units in the ANDSF capable of

conducting offensive operations. However, their development began too late for them to be

effective in suppressing the Taliban to acceptable levels and they were still dependent on some

U.S. support for logistics and intelligence after the end of combat operations in 2014.

> *The SSA mission in Afghanistan lacked an enduring, comprehensive, expert-designed plan that guided its efforts. As a result, critical aspects of the advisory mission were not unified by a common purpose, nor was there a clear plan to guide equipping decisions over time.[61]*

      In the early stages of the SFA operation in Afghanistan the security situation steadily

deteriorated. With the objective being the creation of a western-style conventional military, the

security situation dictated that quality of training be sacrificed for the purposes of putting bodies

in the field. Very little consideration was given to the quality of these troops, just that they show

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[60] Shashank Bengali, "The U.S. is Backing a Plan to Create Many More of Them," Los Angeles Times, 12/10/2017 http://www.latimes.com/world/asia/la-fg-afghanistan-special-operations-20171209-htmlstory.html#nt=oft12aH-3gp2.; Josh Smith and James Mackenzie, "Afghans Plan to Double Special Forces from 17,000 as Threats Grow," Reuters, 2017, https://www.reuters.com/article/us-afghanistan-specialforces/exclusive-afghans-plan-to-double-special-forces-from-17000-as-threats-grow-sources-idUSKBN16Z32A.

[61] Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction. "Divided Responsibility: Lessons from U.S. security sector assistance efforts in Afghanistan." June 2019: XII.  https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-19-39-LL.pdf

progress by fielding them in large numbers. Faced with a worsening security situation, the fact

that they were fielding poorly trained troops led to predictable battlefield failures. This in turn

contributed to poor retention rates. John Sopko, Special Inspector General for Afghanistan

Reconstruction (SIGAR) chief, said, "As security deteriorated, efforts to sustain and

professionalize Afghan security forces became secondary to meeting immediate combat

needs."[62]

Even with the poor level of training, the U.S. Government was substantially increasing

the amount spent on training these forces, from \$362.7 million in 2003 to \$1.736 billion in

2005.[63] This drastic increase in funding failed to even deliver proportionally larger numbers of

ANA troops deployed. Such a military is resource intensive and requires a substantial amount of

logistical, intelligence, and other support to maintain. This is called the teeth to tail ratio. For

every soldier you have on the front lines actually engaging in the fight (the teeth), you need a

substantial amount of personnel and resources behind them (the tail) supporting the logistical

network around the country, or globe, and providing non-combat services like intelligence,

medical evacuation, vehicle maintenance, and air support.

The United States, and only a few other countries, can support these kinds of militaries

capable of foreign expeditionary missions because of their sizable economies, industrial bases,

and military specific expenditures. Most countries, even many of those that ineffectively choose

the wrong force structure, cannot afford to maintain such a military.[64] Afghanistan in particular,

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[62] CSIS, "SIGAR John Sopko: Lessons from Developing Afghanistan's Security Forces," 2017,
https://www.csis.org/events/sigar-john-sopko-lessons-developing-afghanistan%E2%80%99s-security-forces.
[63] United States Government Accountability Office, "GAO-08-661 - Afghanistan Security: Further Congressional
Action May Be Needed to Ensure Completion of a Detailed Plan to Develop and Sustain Capable Afghan National
Security Forces," *Report to Congressional Committees*, June 2008,
https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/GAOREPORTS-GAO-08-661/pdf/GAOREPORTS-GAO-08-661.pdf.
[64] Farrell, Theo. "Transnational norms and military development: Constructing Ireland's professional army."
*European Journal of International Relations* 7, no. 1 (2001): 63-102.

lacks almost every condition needed to maintain such a military. Afghanistan, and the SFA operation in support of it, failed to field a large military in the early years of the operation in large part due to the inability to deliver logistics in support of it and keep it in the field. Many of the recruits lacked basic literacy or spoke different languages, and many lacked a basic education.[65]

Because effort was being placed in trying to stand up the wrong kind of military and not being able to accomplish it, Taliban forces faced essentially no resistance when they began to return to villages and towns throughout Afghanistan around 2004.[66] This made constructing the ANA even more difficult and they began to face increasingly high casualty rates. This was not enough to force a strategic realignment. The assumption was almost always to rely on the construction of a modern, western-style military.[67]

[65] Kelly, Bensahel, and Oliker, Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan, 35.
[66] Kelly, Bensahel, and Oliker, Security Force Assistance in Afghanistan, 39.
[67] SIGAR, October 2017 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress, 4.
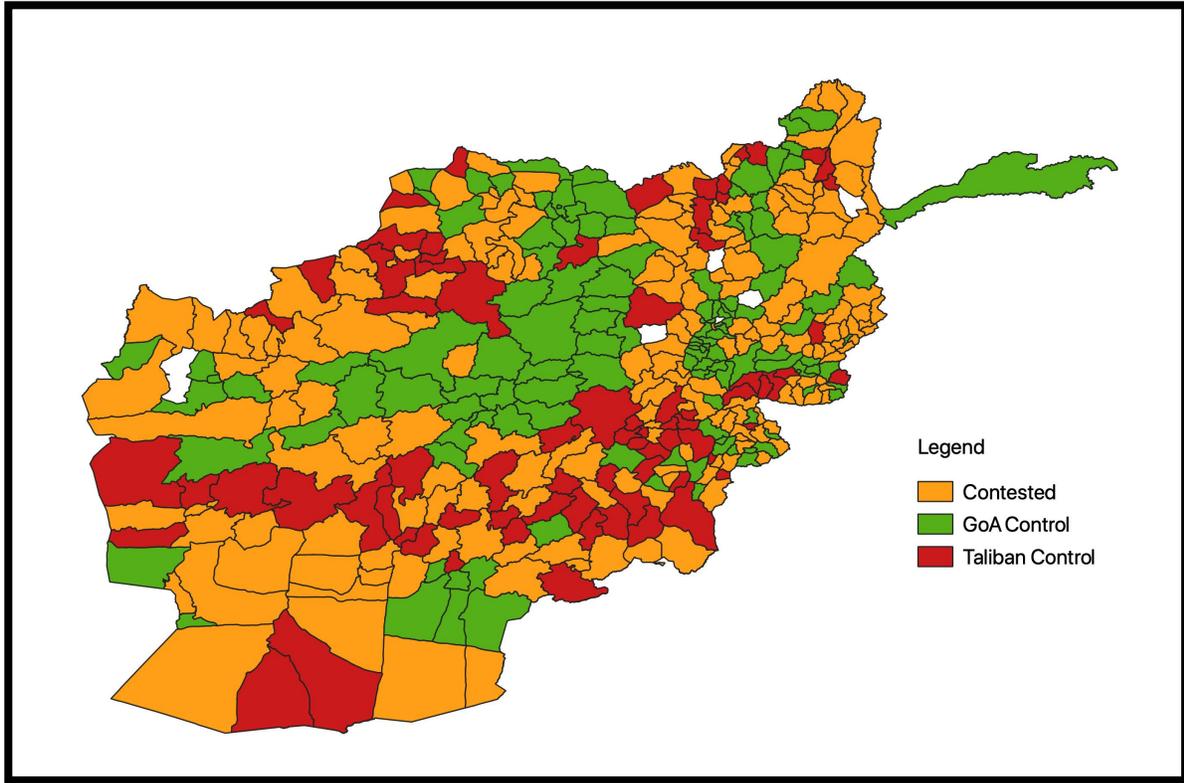
**Figure 7: Afghanistan Status of Districts – December 2019[68]**

### Testing Governance in Afghanistan

As the statebuilding operations began in Afghanistan, the U.S. military had no existing

institutional capacity to provide governance assistance. With the initial effort, units that seemed

most closely related to governance assistance were tasked with the job. This meant assigning

soldiers that were trained in the occupational governance of territory were now trying to build

indigenous institutions, two things that require significantly different skills and resources. As the

operation progressed and civilian pressure to perform statebuilding increased, the military

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[68] Sources: SIGAR, "Addendum to SIGAR's January 2018 Quarterly Report to the United States Congress," *Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction,*" January 30, 2018, https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/quarterlyreports/Addendum_2018-01-30qr.pdf.; and FDD's Long War Journal, 'Mapping Taliban Control in Afghanistan,' https://www.longwarjournal.org/mapping-taliban-control-in-afghanistan.

created ad hoc institutions to fill the role. This job was, eventually, primarily performed by the

Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs). Table 1 below shows which provinces has a PRT

operating and which country was predominantly in command. There was a significant increase in

attention paid to PRTs around 2008-2009 as they reached their peak operations in the country.

Since then, there has been far less attention and analysis. The result is a broken and inconsistent

record of the timeline and location of the various PRTs. This is the only comprehensive timeline

of PRTs from their establishment in 2003 to their closures in 2013.

The PRTs started late, were not given enough priority once they did start, and were

quickly dismantled once official combat operations ended. As a result, their impact was minimal

according to subsequent analysis and statements from local Afghans. An interviewed of a local

Afghan journalist in 2010 is illustrative.

> *local people never consider the PRTs as a body to be supporting the local*
> *government. They think this it is a body representative of the foreign troops in*
> *Kabul. In practical to, as far as I know and I have seen the operations, they are*
> *not cooperating the way that they have written in their strategy papers and online,*
> *their websites and whatever you find. In practical they have their own projects,*
> *their own purposes, and they very little consider the suggestions of the provincial*
> *government.*[69]

There are no military units trained to do such work, so they were staffed by soldiers

trained to do other tasks. The lack of preexisting institutional capacity meant that early

governance assistance was nearly non-existent. Performing such tasks takes quality soldiers

away from conventional operations. Therefore, subsequent efforts to perform the task were

resisted by the U.S. military, or it was handed off to poorly trained or lower quality soldiers. The

result was a poor performance across the tactical and strategic level of analysis.

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[69] Christie, Ryerson. "The pacification of soldiering, and the militarization of development: contradictions inherent in provincial reconstruction in Afghanistan." *Globalizations* 9, no. 1 (2012): 64.

# Table 1: PRTs and Command Country by Province and Year[70]

| Province | PRT Name | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 | 2006 | 2007 | 2008 | 2009 | 2010 | 2011 | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Badakhshan | Feyzabad | | | Germany | Czech | Czech | Czech | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | | | |
| Badghis | Qaleh-ye Now | | | | Spain | Spain | Spain | Spain | Spain | Spain | Spain | Spain | Spain | |
| Baghlan | Pol-e Khomri | | | Netherlands | Netherlands | Netherlands | Hungary | Hungary | Hungary | Hungary | Hungary | Hungary | Hungary | |
| Balkh | Mazar-e Sharif | | US | UK | UK | Sweden | Sweden | Sweden | Sweden | Sweden | Sweden | Sweden | Sweden | |
| Bamyan | Bamyan | | US | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | New Zealand | |
| Daykundi | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Farah | Farah | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Faryab | Meymaneh | | | UK | Norway | Norway | Norway | Norway | Norway | Norway | Norway | Norway | Norway | |
| Ghazni | Ghazni | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Ghor | Chaghcharan | | | | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | Lithuania | |
| Helmand | Lashkar Gah | | | US | US | UK | UK | UK | UK | UK | UK | UK | UK | |
| Herat | Herat | | US | US | Italy | Italy | Italy | Italy | Italy | Italy | Italy | Italy | Italy | |
| Jowzjan | Sheberghan | | | | | | | | | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | |
| Kabul | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Kandahar | Kandahar | | | US | Canada | Canada | Canada | Canada | Canada | Canada | US | US | US | |
| Kapisa | | | | | | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Khost | Khost | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Kunar | Asadabad | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Kunduz | Kunduz | | US | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | Germany | |
| Laghman | Mihtarlam | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | | | | |
| Logar | | | | | | | | Czech | Czech | Czech | Czech | Czech | Czech | |
| Nimroz | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Nangarhar | Jalalabad | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | | |
| Nuristan | Nuristan | | | | | | | US | US | US | US | | | |
| Paktia | Gardez | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Paktika | Sharana | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| Panjshir | Panjshir | | | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | | |
| Parwan | Bagram | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | South Korea | South Korea | South Korea | South Korea | |
| Samangan | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Sar-e Pul | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Takhar | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Uruzgan | Tarin Kowt | | | US | US | US | Netherlands | Netherlands | Netherlands | Netherlands | US | US | US | |
| Wardak | Wardak | | | | | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | Turkey | |
| Zabul | Qalat | | | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | US | |
| **Total PRTs** | | 0 | 6 | 18 | 22 | 24 | 26 | 27 | 27 | 28 | 27 | 26 | 23 | 0 |

## Methodology

The tactical level of analysis assesses the degree to which the military assisted in building governing structures, extending the institutional reach of Kabul, and in helping those institutions provide goods and services. Importantly, the contribution of the U.S. military needs to be disaggregated from the general efforts from the United States and international donors. Simply measuring the growth of institutional capacity would combine indigenous processes with external efforts and contributions. The primary assessment must be based on the extent to which U.S. military institutions contributed to the building and extension of state power into the

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[70] Information and accuracy are approximate and based on a body of information from official government reports, military reports and information, open-source information, and first-hand knowledge. Many less authoritative reports provide contradictory information so assessing exact dates of command is difficult.

provinces. The strategic level of analysis assesses the degree to which these efforts generated legitimacy in both the local and national governments.

**Governance Assistance in Afghanistan**

Institutions focused on infrastructure within the U.S. military could quite easily be shifted to building infrastructure in Afghanistan. This is not a significant departure from their intended purpose in conventional operations. Shifting training institutions towards SFA was less of an equivalent transition. The training capacity existed, but not for the specific contexts required. Governance assistance is an exponential departure from intended institutional capacities relative to infrastructure and SFA. Not only did the institutions created have a difficult time working within the Afghan context, but they had to be created from scratch after the operation had begun. Governance assistance for the U.S. military in Afghanistan was never considered before the war, was consistently underprioritized once the war began, and was systematically dismantled after combat operations officially ended in 2014.

When governance assistance efforts began after the initial phases of the war were over in 2002, there was an effort to push the personnel determined to be already doing work most closely related to governance assistance into completing that task. Like many wars before it, in Afghanistan that meant pushing Civil Affairs units and National Guard/Reservists into governance assistance roles. Civil Affairs units seem like a natural fit for the role, they cite their origin to the military governance schools set up prior to the invasions of Europe and the Western Pacific during WWII. However, both the governing units of WWII and the Civil Affairs units today are not designed to build indigenous governing capacity but to administer territory after being conquered. They are not intended to be state builders but occupiers. National Guard and

reservist soldiers were pushed into the roles because they have civilian jobs and are only soldiers part-time. This was thought to qualify them to build civilian governance capacity.

Once the initial overthrow of the Taliban regime was over in late 2001, ISAF did not extend much beyond Kabul. Rebuilding the Afghan state was essentially left to the UN and they were under resourced. President Bush spoke frequently that so-called nation-building was not a job for the U.S. military, and as such, the early mission in Afghanistan focused on eliminating Taliban and Al Qaeda fighters rather than statebuilding. Then Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld, when asked about ISAF and U.S. forces expanding outside Kabul, said it would essentially be a waste of time and resources.[71] Eventually, only after the U.S. military had committed itself to a war in Iraq, it became clear that statebuilding efforts would have to expand if Afghanistan was to prevent slipping back into civil war.

Prior to the establishment of PRTs, a number of more ad hoc institutions chaotically attempted governance assistance. These included Coalition Humanitarian Liaison Cells and U.S. Army Civil Affairs Teams–Afghanistan, which supported humanitarian assistance, relief, and reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Even after the establishment of PRTs, coalition forces had multiple vehicles that engaged in governance assistance, like "Village Stability Operations", which created redundancies and damaged unity of effort.

The first PRT was established in Gardez province in January 2003. This means that from approximately November 2001 when the Taliban fell, to January 2003, almost no governance assistance was occurring by the military on the ground in Afghanistan. Even after the first PRTs were stood up, it would take years before they were engaging locals in a substantial way and at scale across the country. Although all the PRTs that would be established had the same stated

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[71] Jones, Seth G. *In the graveyard of empires: America's war in Afghanistan*. WW Norton & Company, 2010: 113.

mission, the structure, command, strength, and priorities varied based on location and country in command. The intended purpose of the PRTs were to extend the authority of Kabul into the provinces. They combined military and civilian personnel and were often influenced by the particular goals and objectives of the country in command.[72] PRTs eventually became the primary vehicles for stabilization and reconstruction in Afghanistan.[73] They were essentially the vehicle through which a state was to be constructed and expanded throughout the territory. The PRTs reached a peak in funding and prioritization around 2009. After 2009, much of the prioritization and resources were increasingly shifted to conventional military needs.[74]

A clear indication of the ad hoc and chaotic nature with which these PRTs were set up and run is the fact that each country that operated a PRT did so with slightly different priorities and strategies, and even attempts to measure success and failure were poor and inconsistent. It's been said about Italy's PRT in Herat:

> *There are no distinct and objective metrics used to assess the performance of the Italian PRTs in Iraq and Afghanistan. While both PRTs maintain some standard information on projects (number, type, expenditures), this input-based information does not provide useful measures of effectiveness of PRTs and their operations.[75]*

Common measures of success included literacy rates, infection rates, or school attendance. These numbers often lack context and the very fact that they are the sole measure of outcomes for many of these PRTs means that the projects are completed under questionable

[72] Dziedzic, Michael J., and Col Michael K. Seidl. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams and Military Relations with International and Nongovernmental Organizations in Afghanistan. (report, United States Institute of Peace, 2005): 3-4.

[73] Farrell, Theo. "Improving in war: military adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009." *The Journal of Strategic Studies* 33, no. 4 (2010): 567-594.

[74] Interview with civilian advisor to military commander, March 20, 2019.

[75] Abbaszadeh, Nima, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Meghan Nutting, Nealin Parker, and Taya Weiss. "Provincial reconstruction teams: lessons and recommendations." In *Woodrow Wilson School Graduate Workshop on Provincial Reconstruction Teams, Washington, DC*. 2008: 37.

conditions or well below acceptable standards in the interest of inflating performance metrics to show results. Building schools has little impact if you do not have teachers to staff them or if girls are being systematically excluded.

> *Consequently, quality control is spotty at best. Widespread anecdotal accounts describe large-scale corruption. The most common are tales of tribal elders absconding with money meant for the community's project. In some cases, money is suspected to have gone to insurgents.*[76]

As the official end of combat operations approached, PRTs began to be shut down, whereas other institutions focused on statebuilding like naval construction units moved back to their home bases ready for follow-on assignments. Some marginal capacity for governance assistance survived the end of combat operations, like the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute (PKSOI) that was intended to maintain institutional memory and knowledge on how to conduct such operations.[77] However, this effort operates on a very small budget and has been threatened to be cut, nonetheless.

## Assessment Results

Governance assistance produced poor results at the tactical level of analysis, and even poorer results at the strategic level of analysis. At the tactical level, governance assistance institutions needed to be built from nothing, soldiers that staffed them were not trained to do the work, and they were consistently underfunded and underprioritized. At the strategic level, there is no indication that the governance assistance efforts by the U.S. military had anything but a

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[76] Malkasian, Carter, and Gerald Meyerle. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How do we know they work?*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009: 35.

[77] Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, U.S. Army War College, https://usawc.org/peacekeeping-stability-operations-institute-pksoi-2/.

superficial impact. There was no discernable impact on the legitimacy of the provincial or national governments.

*Tactical Level Assessment*

Early governance assistance efforts in Afghanistan were essentially non-existent. Aside from the UN directed effort to build the framework for the new regime at the Bonn conference, no effort was being made within Afghanistan to establish this government and extend its authority outward from Kabul. This is primarily because of the factors predicted by Primary Mission Theory. The U.S. military had no institutional capacity before the war to perform such tasks, and when forced to perform these tasks in Afghanistan the institutions set up were ad hoc, under-resources, and weak on human capital. As a result, U.S. and coalition officials relied on warlords to establish the authority of Kabul. Essentially, they attempted to co-opt and incorporate former warlords and local power brokers into the new system through title changes. Warlords became generals and secretaries in the Ministry of Defense, powerful officials in the Ministry of the Interior, or high-ranking officials in the Karzai administration.

This strategy had the effect of building a façade of a Kabul dominated state structure that extended its institutional capacity throughout the country. In reality, state authority outside Kabul was little more than a weak consensus among powerful warlords that could easily switch allegiances based on the personal self-interest of the powerful individuals. The system of keeping the previous warlord and patronage system in place was a Kabul that could dictate few orders to the periphery and local administration that was directed by corrupt officials. The retribution against former Taliban fighters and the exploitation of powerless civilians was largely the basis

upon which the Taliban were able to reconstitute their power and position when they began their resurgence in 2006 and 2007.[78]

Once attention shifted to counterinsurgency for the U.S. military, more effort was placed into making the PRTs successful. This focus allowed for some improvement in governance capabilities, reinforced significantly by the fact that these local governments being supported by the PRTs had millions in foreign aid money to hand out. This created a similar façade effect as did the reliance on warlords. District and provincial governments received buy-in, but only when they had money to feed into the patronage system. Two problems with this, is that it was not robust buy-in but merely performative in order to ensure funds would flow, and what little buy-in existed was dependent on the continued flow of foreign financial aid since domestic Afghan tax revenue could not sustain such high levels of funding.

*Strategic Level Assessment*

Some PRTs experienced marginal successes, but much of this was driven by circumstance and personalities that were able to make things happen in difficult circumstances. These successes were not standardized across the whole governance assistance system. An example of this is with the PRT in Khost province around 2008. The State Department representative for the PRT in that province, Kael Weston, asked for a specific response to the distribution of aid. Weston "pressed tribal leaders and village elders to cooperate with the Afghan police and the Afghan government on security matters in return for projects."[79] This strategy was more likely to succeed than some of the other strategies attempted, like the hopes of creating attention and recognition around provincial governance efforts by inviting media to

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[78] Giustozzi, Antonio. *The Taliban at War: 2001-2018*. Oxford University Press, 2019.
[79] Malkasian, Carter, and Gerald Meyerle. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How do we know they work?*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009: 14.

ribbon cutting ceremonies in a country that is largely illiterate.[80] However, the effort is still dependent on the continued flow of foreign aid to sustain.

This massive effort in Khost, which involved a large surge in money being paid out for projects, did provide a legitimacy bump for the Khost Provincial Council. When asked how much confidence they have in their Provincial Council, Khost residents answer with 89% saying either a great deal of confidence or a fair amount of confidence in 2007, and 71% saying the same in 2008. The confidence level fluctuates between high 60s and low 70s for the next few years, never approaching the previously achieved 89%. After 2014 when the United States began to draw down, this number dropped down to mid-50s and high-40s for the next four years.[81] This temporary statebuilding success was dependent on the continued flow of money and patronage, which could not be translated into genuine statebuilding.

Additionally, the high rates of confidence in the provincial councils that are observed in Khost are largely the result of a popular provincial governor. The same report above also claims that the governor, "… is experienced, intelligent, active, and seen as trustworthy by both the people and coalition forces, promotes good governance."[82] We see similar bumps in confidence with other popular officials or warlords, like Abdul Rashid Dostum in Balkh province in the North. What this analysis of Khost province suggests is that local conditions were more consequential in generating legitimacy for the government than anything that was contributed by the U.S. military.

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[80] Malkasian, Carter, and Gerald Meyerle. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How do we know they work?*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009: 12-15.

[81] Survey data analyzed from: The Asia Foundation, "Survey of the Afghan People," 2006-2018, https://asiafoundation.org/where-we-work/afghanistan/survey/.

[82] Malkasian, Carter, and Gerald Meyerle. *Provincial Reconstruction Teams: How do we know they work?*. Strategic Studies Institute, 2009: 12.

Analyses of other regions of Afghanistan show the same. To demonstrate this, confidence in provincial governments is systematically analyzed in the North and South. In order to control for pre-existing structural conditions, two provinces each have been chosen from three different regions. These provinces are compared in the context of their region, rather than in the context of the whole country. This design controls for regional disparities like ethnicity, geography, population densities, issues related to bordering countries, and poppy cultivation.

This assessment seeks to measure the level of legitimacy achieved in a given province. Answers to survey questions produced by the Asia Foundation are used as indicators of provincial legitimacy. Survey data collected by the Asia Foundation starting in 2006 is separated by region, and then by province. Descriptive statistics are gathered on responses to the following question: How would you rate your confidence in your provincial council? Analyzing this question quantitatively gives us a measure of the people's opinions of their specific province, isolating the performance of that province's PRT (specifically, their ability to generate legitimacy for the Afghan state within that province). Once the descriptive statistics are gathered, they are compared to the region as a whole. All of this is considered in the context of the strategy of PRTs and military tactics/missions in each province. The North averages higher levels of confidence in provincial councils while the south tended to have lower levels of confidence in provincial councils. See Figure 8.

In the north, Balkh and Kunduz provinces are analyzed. In Kunduz, the Germans utilized a highly integrated PRT command structure with both a civilian and a military officer sharing command. In Balkh, the Swedish model was similarly structured with a focus on cooperation between civilian and military leaders. The security situation of the north was relatively secure and allowed for focus on capacity and governance over security. In the south, Helmand and

Kandahar province are analyzed. The UK began with a military centric PRT in Helmand and changed to a civil-military hybrid around 2008. Canada utilized a civil-military hybrid model for their PRT in Kandahar.
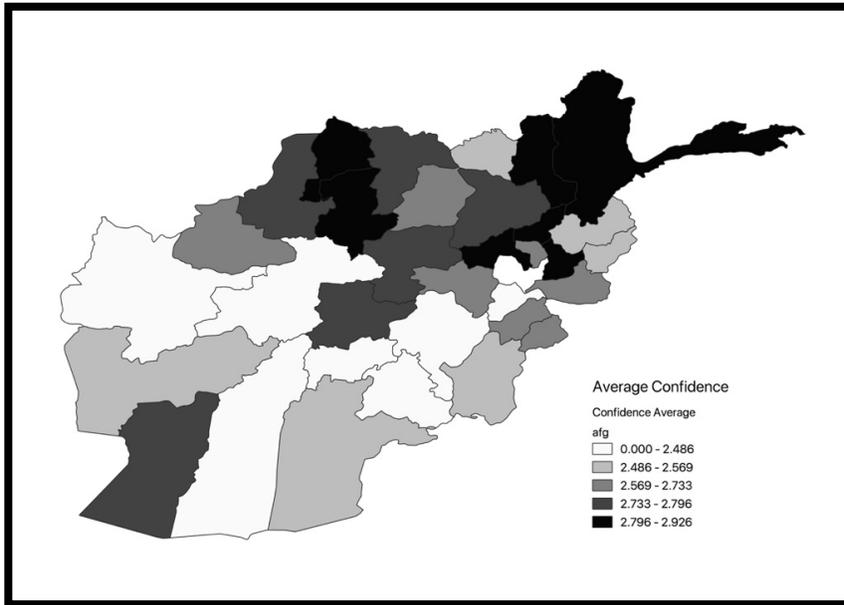


**Figure 8: Confidence levels in Afghanistan 2006-2018 (Kabul Province excluded)**
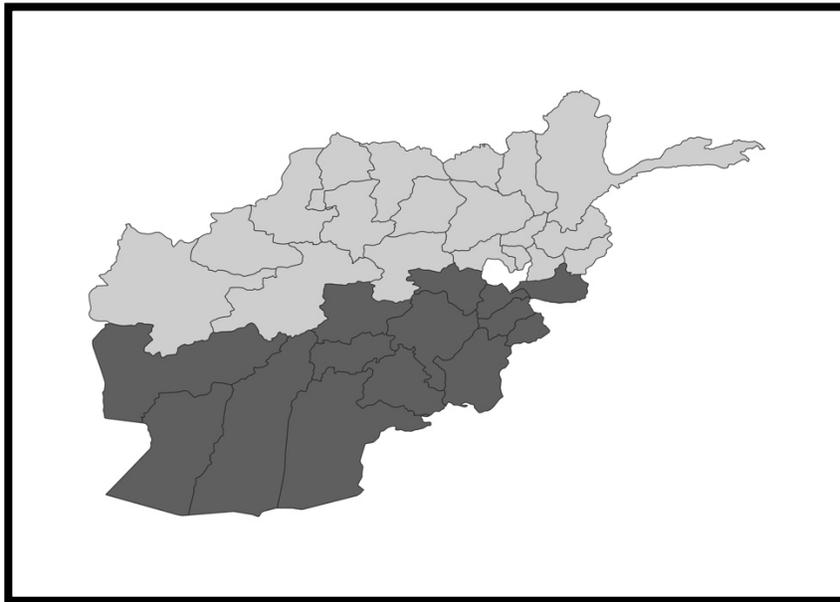


**Figure 9: North/South Regional Division**

*Northern Region: Balkh and Kunduz*

Kunduz province is selected because it is an outlier in the north with one of the lowest confidence rates in the region. The north generally has high confidence levels relative to other regions. Kunduz is compared to Balkh province for several reasons. Both provinces host major cities as their provincial capitals, Kunduz city and Mazar-e-Sharif. They both have an international boarder and are geographically close. Understanding why legitimacy was so low in Kunduz can provide insight into what is driving legitimacy more generally.

Among all the provinces of the north, Kunduz is somewhat unique. Although the bulk of the Taliban's Pashtun support is isolated in the south and southeast, Kunduz city has a sizable Pashtun population surrounding it. While pockets of Pashtun populations around the north is not unusual, it is unusual to be around a major city. Prior to the U.S. invasion in 2001, Kunduz served as the Taliban's major outpost in the north as they continued their campaign against the Northern Alliance. The city of Kunduz experienced heavy fighting during the civil war and resisted the rise of the Taliban until it was seized in 1997. After the fall of the Taliban, the large Pashtun population meant that the Taliban had a ready supply of potential support surrounding the city.[83]

As the Taliban pushed back into the country, and eventually up into the north, Kunduz became a major target. In the relatively peaceful north, Kunduz experienced heightened levels of attacks. Many of the personalistic networks that dominated the insurgency after the U.S. intervention were those that dominated prior to it.[84] These same groups could also rely on

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[83] Wormer, Nils. 2012. "Afghanistan Analysts Network." German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Accessed May 30, 2016. http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/wrm_2012_the_networks_of_Kunduz.pdf.
[84] Giustozzi, Antonio. *The Taliban at War: 2001-2018*. Oxford University Press, 2019.

previously established networks of support. "All of them could fall back on existent networks that had persisted over time when they re-emerged in Kunduz province."[85]

Kunduz was a part of ISAF's initial expansion out of Kabul in 2003. Germany approved the deployment of troops for a PRT in Kunduz in October of 2003 and almost immediately sent an initial force to the area. By 2012, ISAF had 2,500 troops serving in Kunduz province, about half were German.[86] The model that the Germans built in Kunduz was significantly different from the one the U.S. initially established there.

Formally, the PRT was a civilian reconstruction team with a military protection element. Both civilian and military elements worked on the same level with a similar political objective in mind. PRT Kunduz has a dual civil-military command, with the civilian commander coming from the Foreign Ministry. Germany held a similar belief to early U.S. policy; in that they should maintain as small a military footprint as possible. Germany's footprint in the region increased only once the insurgency picked up in the north around 2007. By 2008 the PRT was comprised of around 470 troops. The civilian element was comprised of around 15 individuals from various agencies.[87]

The city of Mazar-e-Sharif is located in Balkh province, which borders Kunduz province. Much like Kunduz, Mazar-e-Sharif is a large city with strategic significance. Unlike Kunduz, Mazar-e-Sharif saw a certain level of peace and security following the withdraw of Soviet forces. The city was conquered by General Dostum and he was able to displace competing warlords and

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[85] Wormer, Nils. 2012. "The Networks of Kunduz: A History of Conflict and their Actors, from 1992 to 2001." German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Accessed May 30, 2016. http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/wrm_2012_the_networks_of_Kunduz.pdf: 2.

[86] Wormer, Nils. 2012. "Afghanistan Analysts Network." German Institute for International and Security Affairs. Accessed May 30, 2016. http://www.swp-berlin.org/fileadmin/contents/products/fachpublikationen/wrm_2012_the_networks_of_Kunduz.pdf.

[87] Gauster, Markus. 2008. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan." Columbia International Affairs Online. January 16. Accessed May 9, 2016. https://www.ciaonet.org/attachments/14541/uploads: 25.

their networks for some time. "During this war Dostum carved out an autonomous zone in the north based upon the holy shrine town of Mazar i Sharif."[88] Dostum was betrayed in 1997 and fled to Turkey in 1998. It was during this time that Mazar-e-Sharif was exposed to the characteristic violence and destruction of the Afghan civil war. However, Mazar-e-Sharif was one of the first cities to be freed from Taliban control in 2001.

Dostum returned to Afghanistan in early 2001 to help the hard-pressed Northern Alliance. When news of the attacks on New York and Washington spread, Dostum anticipated that the United States would respond with force and reached out to the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) to offer his support. Dostum's forces were augmented by CIA operatives, Special Forces A-Teams, and Air Force ground controllers. Dostum helped liberate the city of Mazar-e-Sharif in a very short amount of time. "In recognition of his contributions to making the new post-Taliban Afghanistan possible Dostum was named Deputy Minister of Defense and later Chief of Staff of the Afghan army."[89] Furthermore, several important regional headquarters for the central Afghan government were established in Mazar-e-Sharif, including for the Afghan police and army. Relations between Dostum and the Afghan central government get complicated as the Taliban insurgency increases. However, his presence and his connections in Mazar-e-Sharif established order early and helped maintain them over the long-term.

Command of PRT Mazar-e-Sharif (PRT MeS) was officially handed over to Sweden in 2006 from the British, with the British taking command of combat operations in the region at the same time. At the time of the change of command, Sweden had around 250 troops in Afghanistan. The majority of them were assigned to PRT MeS, with others assigned to combat

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[88] Williams, Brian Glyn. 2010. "General Dostum and the Mazar i Sharif Campaign: new light on the role of Northern Alliance warlords in Operation Enduring Freedom." Small Wars & Insurgencies 21 (4): 613.
[89] Williams, Brian Glyn. 2010. "General Dostum and the Mazar i Sharif Campaign: new light on the role of Northern Alliance warlords in Operation Enduring Freedom." Small Wars & Insurgencies 21 (4): 628.

operations in Mazar-e-Sharif and some assigned to Kabul.[90] The Swedish PRT attempted a comprehensive approach, focusing on security, governance, and development. Along with the military component, there were several civilian advisors assigned to PRT MeS. These included representatives from political, development, and police agencies from both the Swedish and Finnish governments. The U.S. State department and USAID were also represented.

The strategies taken by the PRTs in Kunduz and Balkh provinces were very similar. Because of the security situation compared to other regions, the PRTs focused on capacity and governance rather than emphasizing security. They fully integrated civilian and military elements of the PRT. Their military elements favored a light footprint, and their civilian elements could meet frequently with local officials. However, outcomes were significantly different. Support for the provincial council in Kunduz was universally more negative than the rest of the region (except for one instance of a more positive response and five instances of similar responses). Because of the similarity of the PRTs and the military mission in the area (all of Regional Command North was commanded by the Germans), this divergence in outcomes can only be explained by the variance in the structural conditions present in the two provinces. Much higher levels of legitimacy were enjoyed by the provincial government in Mazar-e-Sharif.

> *State-building efforts often occur in contexts marked by the breakdown of long-established and widely accepted political roles. Under such conditions, personalistic relations can provide the basis for new institutional forms. Comparativists, for example, have readily noted cases in which charismatic authority and patrimonialism have shaped institution-building processes.[91]*

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[90] NATO. 2006. "UK Forces Handover Command of Mazar-e-Sharif PRT to Swedish Control ." North Atlantic Treaty Organization. November 17. Accessed May 9, 2016. http://www.nato.int/ISAF/docu/pressreleases/2006/Release_16Mar06_016.htm.
[91] Easter, Gerald M. 1996. "Personal Networks and Postrevolutionary State Building: Soviet Russia Reexamined." World Politics 48 (4): 557.
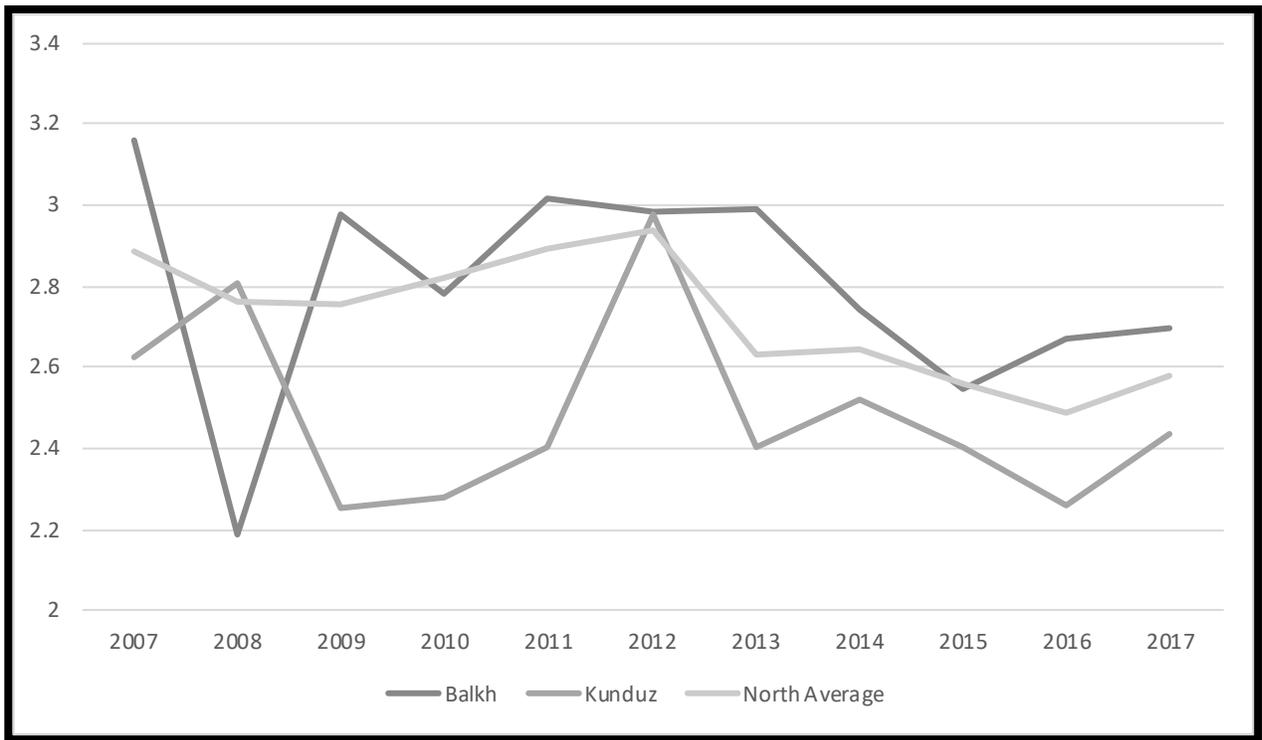
**Figure 10: Confidence in Provincial Council: Northern Provinces**

The order established by the Taliban was rapidly swept aside and Mazar-e-Sharif, unlike Kunduz, had a strong, charismatic leader that quickly stepped in and replaced the old order. Mazar-e-Sharif was the home of General Dostum. During the civil war, he was able to consolidate his control over the city and eliminated rival warlords and their support networks. Eventually he was supplanted by the Taliban only to be swept back into power following the U.S. intervention. Because of his early support and success, Dostum was integrated into the official ranks of the Afghan central government. Support for Dostum was translated into higher levels of support for the Afghan central government. Dostum was also a traditional and legendary enemy of the Taliban and was able to secure relative peace and prosperity for Mazar-e-Sharif.

Events unfolded quite differently for Kunduz. During the civil war, no one group or network was able to consolidate control. Once the Taliban pushed into the north, they used Kunduz as a base of operations and built networks of support in the region. This was facilitated by the large Pashtun diaspora that lived in and around the city. Once the Taliban began their resurgence into the region, they could draw upon these support networks. Violence was thus higher in Kunduz than in any other province in the north. Furthermore, unlike Mazar-e-Sharif, their hatred for the Taliban was less entrenched. Conditions for statebuilding were less amenable in Kunduz than they were in Balkh.

Similar strategies and tactical choices in these two provinces show the strength that local conditions have on the prospects of statebuilding operations. They were similar provinces facing fairly similar security situations following the U.S. intervention. The two PRTs employed similar strategies. The only difference of consequence was the power brokers' network and their ability to consolidate control. This enabled stability and the distribution of goods from Kabul through an established patronage system. The PRT and governance assistance cannot account for the difference.

*Southern Region: Kandahar and Helmand Province*

Similar to the case selection in the North, Kandahar and Helmand are both very similar, border each other, and show important differences in local government legitimacy. A major difference between the two was that Helmand bore the brunt of a major U.S. military surge

around 2011.[92] Analysis of the South shows how military occupations can undermine their own statebuilding objectives through unintended consequences.

The PRT in Kandahar was created in December of 2003 by the U.S. The Canadians took command in 2005 and face initial coordination issues when they did.[93] Canada improved their approach for their PRT over time. They have attempted to better coordinate the various agencies working for the PRT, known as a "whole of government approach." Furthermore, Canada established the multi-agency Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START) to coordinate all of Canada's operations in Afghanistan.[94] START is "intended to provide a platform for prompt, government-wide response to the challenges of preventing and responding to crises, including coordination of military and civilian activities in post-conflict operation."[95] The PRT was headed by a nine-member board of directors, each board member representing an agency within the PRT. The security situation in Southern Afghanistan had required that the PRT be commanded by a military officer. The PRT's stated main objectives center around local capacity building.

Canada has been involved in OEF since they deployed almost 3,000 troops to Kandahar in February 2002. Canada also contributed soldiers to the NATO-led ISAF mission in Kabul

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[92] Kathy Gilsinan, "Afghanistan After America: A Surge in Troops, and Poppy Production, in Helmand," *World Politics Review*, February 12, 2014, https://www.worldpoliticsreview.com/trend-lines/13565/afghanistan-after-america-a-surge-in-troops-and-poppy-production-in-helmand.

[93] Abbaszadeh, Nima, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Meghan Nutting, Nealin Parker, and Taya Weiss. 2008. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams." Princeton University. January 01. Accessed March 29, 2016. https://wws.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/news/wws591b.pdf; Perito, Robert M. 2005. "The U.S. Experience with Provincial Reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan: Lessons Identified." United States Institute of Peace. October 1. Accessed March 29, 2016. http://www.usip.org/publications/the-us-experience-provincial-reconstruction-teams-in-afghanistan-lessons-identified.

[94] Abbaszadeh, Nima, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Meghan Nutting, Nealin Parker, and Taya Weiss. 2008. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams." Princeton University. January 01. Accessed March 29, 2016. https://wws.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/news/wws591b.pdf.

[95] Patrick, Stewart, and Kaysie Brown. 2007. Greater than the Sum of its Parts? Assessing 'Whole of Government' Approaches to Fragile States. New York: International Peace Academy.

starting in August 2003. A car bomb killed Glyn Berry, a Canadian diplomat, in August of 2005.

Following the incident, Canada reassessed their role in Afghanistan. The number of personnel

assigned to the PRT were reduced from 250 to 120 and all civilian members were withdrawn

from the country. Canada began to recommit to their PRT mission in April of 2006, redeploying

civilians and bringing the total number of personnel to 380. This new arraignment included

representatives from several Canadian civilian agencies, including one member from the U.S.

Department of State and USAID each. This PRT contingent shared space with 2,500 (in 2006)

Canadian troops under OEF.[96]

> *Due to an active insurgency in Kandahar Province, reconstruction has proven
> difficult. Canadian troops have shifted from their traditional peacekeeping role to
> a more militaristic role in an attempt to counter the insurgency. After years of
> engagement in the province, OEF and now ISAF have been unable to stabilize the
> region and remove or even appreciably minimize the threat from insurgents. As a
> result, very little development has taken place in Kandahar since 2001.*[97]

The United States established a small PRT in Helmand in 2004 with limited resources

and capacity. The UK took command of this PRT in 2006. The UK officially handed control of

Helmand's capital, Lashkar Gah, over to Afghan officials in 2011.[98] According to Foreign

Secretary William Hague, "The UK has put a particular emphasis on the sustainability of its

reconstruction work in Helmand to ensure our investment continues to deliver benefits into the

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[96] Abbaszadeh, Nima, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Meghan Nutting, Nealin Parker, and Taya Weiss. 2008. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams." Princeton University. January 01. Accessed March 29, 2016. https://wws.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/news/wws591b.pdf.

[97] Abbaszadeh, Nima, Mark Crow, Marianne El-Khoury, Jonathan Gandomi, David Kuwayama, Christopher MacPherson, Meghan Nutting, Nealin Parker, and Taya Weiss. 2008. "Provincial Reconstruction Teams." Princeton University. January 01. Accessed March 29, 2016. https://wws.princeton.edu/sites/default/files/content/docs/news/wws591b.pdf.

[98] United States Central Command. 2016. *Coalition Countries.* March 29. http://www.centcom.mil/en/about-centcom-en/coalition-countries-en.

future."[99] When the British officially took command of the PRT in Helmand, they were taking over for a small U.S. PRT and "the British PRT was staffed by a handful of civilians from the Stabilization Unit, the Foreign Office, and the Department for International Trade."[100]

The whole of UK operations in Afghanistan were coordinated by a central committee in London and the PRT was composed of civilian and military elements. Civilians deployed along with military elements during the initial takeover in 2006, but the military led the effort. Initial efforts focused on counterinsurgency. The focus was on kinetic (conventional military) operations to establish a strong presence relative to the Taliban. Local politicians were consulted to identify targets and problem areas. However, this strategy began to shift as early as the spring of 2007. By the fall of 2007 the UK was engaged in a complete review of the mission's strategy. In 2008, "The Helmand Road Map" was approved and placed a higher-ranking civilian in charge of the PRT that officially outranked the highest-ranking military official in the UK's mission. The reconstruction effort in Helmand thereafter was civilian/political led.

It was around this time that the UK's military strategy in the region was also adapting. Their strategy was shifting towards a "hearts and minds" mentality. This shift was criticized by many as too little, too late.[101] However, PRT Helmand after the 2008 shift was considered one of the most civilianized PRTs in the country with over 50 civilians. It was also considered well-funded compared to other PRTs.

[99] Hague, William. 2014. "Afghanistan: Closure of the Helmand Provincial Reconstruction Team." *The Government of the United Kingdom.* March 20. Accessed April 29, 2016. https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/afghanistan-closure-of-the-helmand-provincial-reconstruction-team.

[100] Farrell, Theo. 2010. "Improving in War: Military Adaptation and the British in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, 2006–2009." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 33 (4): 567-594.

[101] Farrell, Theo, and Antonio Giustozzi. 2013. "The Taliban at war: inside the Helmand insurgency, 2004–2012." *International Affairs* 89 (4): 845-871.

*Southern Region*

One clear pattern emerges when Helmand and Kandahar are compared to the whole of the south. Helmand before 2011 is consistently more negative than the rest of the south, and Helmand after 2011 is consistently more positive than the rest of the south. Whereas Kandahar shows no pattern of variance with the rest of the south. Before 2011, survey results for confidence in provincial councils in Helmand province only returned 2 results (out of 4 years) that were more positive than the average for the south. However, during and after 2011, survey results returned 12 positive results in 5 years. Outlook for the country as a whole is even clearer; between 2006 and 2010, the people of Helmand always held more negative views, while during and after 2011 they always held more optimistic views. Something happened in 2011 that caused this shift, and this shift cannot be explained by divergent reconstruction efforts or a difference in the strategies taken by the UK and Canadian PRTs.
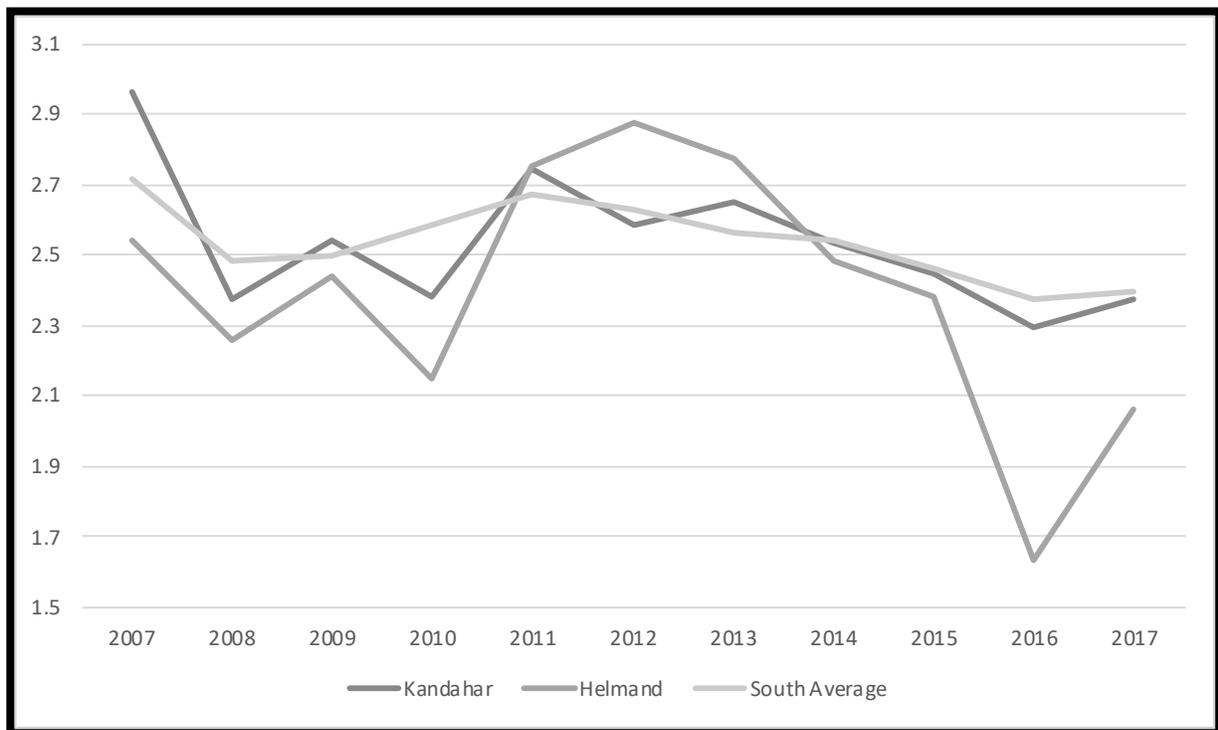


**Figure 11: Confidence in Provincial Council: Southern Provinces**

The shift in the UK's strategy in Helmand province occurred in 2008. Compared to 2007, the people of Helmand had worse opinions of their provincial government in 2008. 2009 saw a slight improvement from the year before, but they saw a relatively greater change towards the negative in 2010. If the change in the PRT's strategy actually resulted in positive outcomes, we would see a longer trend in improving perceptions towards the provincial government since the shift was maintained over the years rather than reversed. Instead, the changes fluctuate between better and worse changes over time, with no fundamental changes in the PRT's strategy after 2008. So, what does explain the 2011 shift?

NATO officially ended combat operations on December 28th, 2014. However, the end of combat operations was preceded by a gradual drawdown of forces. The announcement of a drawdown and the handing over of authority began in 2011, the same year we see a shift in Helmand's confidence in their provincial councils. The announcement to withdraw forces was preceded by a troop surge that saw a significant push to establish the government's control over districts in the south. Because the south was a major focus for the Taliban, it also became the major focus of ISAF and NATO efforts to destroy the Taliban movement.

However, this in itself is not sufficient to explain the difference. If the large footprint of coalition forces fomented resentment among the population, or if the large Pashtun populations in the south were traditionally sympathetic to the Taliban cause and they maintained that support, the announcement of NATO's withdraw would improve the populations outlook. However, this should be consistent across the south, and it's not. The key to the difference is consistent with what some scholars have theorized about foreign occupations and statebuilding operations, specifically David Edelstein.[102] Edelstein argues that occupations are more likely to succeed the

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[102] Edelstein, David M. 2008. Occupational Hazzards: Success and Failure in Military Occupations. Ithaca: Cornell University Press.

longer they last and the larger the footprint of the occupier, but that both of these factors induce resentment among the population and can undermine the success of the occupation unless certain mitigating factors are present.

Turning Edelstein's theory towards southern Afghanistan, a clear prediction should emerge. Since we see a significant shift towards a positive outlook in Helmand Province beginning with the announcement of a withdraw, that this occurs within the same time period as all other provinces in the south, and that a similar shift does not occur in other provinces with the same intensity as in Helmand Province, we should expect a larger military footprint in Helmand relative to the other provinces in the south. This is exactly the case, especially leading up to the withdraw beginning in 2011.

During the initial period after the fall of the Taliban, local communities essentially governed themselves. The military presence certainly was not big enough to take on this role at the time. Local warlords who had been pushed out prior to the US-led intervention returned under the pretense of being President Karzai's allies. This, combined with corruption and gaps in security meant that when the Taliban returned between 2004 and 2006, they were able to present themselves as the just ones. The British did not arrive in Helmand until 2006 as ISAF expanded its reach from Kabul. According to Farrell and Giustozzi, this British force was just small enough to be ineffective but large enough to antagonize the local population.[103] 2007 saw an adjustment on the part of the British military's COIN tactics towards a more population-centric strategy. This appears to have had no impact on the populations outlook for Helmand Province, or the nation as a whole.

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[103] Farrell, Theo, and Antonio Giustozzi. 2013. "The Taliban at war: inside the Helmand insurgency, 2004–2012." International Affairs 89 (4): 845-871.

Up until this point, the occupation's footprint in both Kandahar and Helmand was relatively similar. However, with the election of President Obama and the decision to send a troop surge to Afghanistan, Helmand province started to receive disproportionate attention by international forces. Even though the number of attacks from 2001 to 2011 were either the same or higher in Kandahar than in Helmand, ISAF decided to send the larger contingent to Helmand. The number of ISAF troops had doubled during the surge with the arrival of a Marine expeditionary brigade, bringing the total number to around 20,000 troops in Helmand Province alone. U.S. General Stanly McChrystal designated the south as having a major strategic significance for the whole of the war in Afghanistan, and Helmand was chosen as the focus of the south. "Debate within ISAF headquarters over whether to concentrate on Helmand or Kandahar first was settled in favor of Helmand, on account of the already massive US Marine Corps (USMC) and British military presence in the province."[104]

Not only was Helmand chosen first, but it was also chosen first repeatedly. While numbers were drastically increasing in Helmand, the Canadians in Kandahar were in the middle of a strategic retreat. The Canadians were withdrawing from certain districts in Kandahar Province in order to focus their efforts on higher priorities, such as Kandahar city. The number of NATO and ISAF troops in Kandahar were simply too insufficient to maintain a presence, much less provide security, in the whole of Kandahar province. Even as the Taliban were moving into positions around Kandahar city in 2008 and 2009, the majority of ISAF resources were still being focused on Helmand and the border regions.

By the end of 2009, with a NATO presence in significantly less territory, and with high levels of enemy entrenchment already occurring in key areas, those meager forces that were

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[104] Farrell, Theo, and Antonio Giustozzi. 2013. "The Taliban at war: inside the Helmand insurgency, 2004–2012." International Affairs 89 (4): 845-871.

assigned to Kandahar were inadequate. "During this critical period, ISAF focused its resources in southern Afghanistan on fighting in Helmand and border interdiction."[105]

In February of 2009, the U.S. Department of Defense announced the deployment of two additional brigades to the south. In a move that was characteristic of the disparity of attention and resources given to each province, one full brigade deployed to Helmand, while the other was to be split between Kandahar and Zabul Provinces (preferencing Helmand once again). Furthermore, in anticipation of this new deployment, the still over-stretched Canadians refocused on an increasingly small area of Kandahar and Kandahar city. "ISAF 's Regional Command South Headquarters has prioritized the fight in Helmand and severely under-resourced Kandahar province, despite the Quetta Shura Taliban's focus on Kandahar."[106] This larger footprint explains the differences in legitimacy seen in the analysis.

Because the heavy footprint created resentment in Helmand province, the people of Helmand were happy to see the foreign troops leave even though the Afghan security forces were incapable of providing for their security. Conservative estimates at the beginning of 2016 showed that the Taliban controlled or contested 20% of the country at the time.[107] Helmand's opinions towards the Taliban and other combatants are also telling. In general, 2015 survey results show that people in Helmand feared *any* armed organization significantly more than people of other provinces in the south (including Taliban, International, and Afghan National Forces). Furthermore, the people of Helmand are more willing to negotiate with the Taliban than the south as a whole.[108] This is significant. The people of Helmand are now more willing to talk

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[105] Forsberg, Carl. 2009. "The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar." Institute for the Study of War: 47.
[106] Forsberg, Carl. 2009. "The Taliban's Campaign for Kandahar." Institute for the Study of War: 55.
[107] Almukhtar, Sarah, and Karen Yourish. 2016. "More Than 14 Years After U.S. Invasion, the Taliban Control Large Parts of Afghanistan." The New York Times. April 19. Accessed May 4, 2016. http://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2015/09/29/world/asia/afghanistan-taliban-maps.html.
[108] The Asia Foundation. 2015. Afghanistan in 2015: A Survey of the Afghan People. Accessed April 26, 2016. http://asiafoundation.org/afghansurvey/data/.

with the Taliban even though violence has significantly increased since 2012 and that for the first time in the war (beginning in 2012 and continuing to 2015) the number of attacks in Helmand outnumber those in Kandahar.

The provincial reconstruction teams started late, were not given enough priority once they did start, and were quickly dismantled once official combat operations ended. Tactically they were able to achieve some marginal gains, but this was primarily driven by the distribution of goods which bought superficial and temporary support. The early reliance on local power brokers strengthened and legitimized power structures that existed outside of the state's control, limiting the long-term potential of governance assistance.

**Conclusion**

Primary Mission Theory predicts that a military should be capable of building infrastructure early in the initial stages of a conflict and sustain such capabilities throughout the operations. Initial efforts will focus on areas that contribute the most to their ability to operate in the battle space, because the most important factor is the extent to which such capabilities contribute to conventional combat. Once this ability is improved, they will be more willing to divert effort to more civic projects that have less overt military benefit. In Afghanistan, there is little deviation from this expectation. Construction efforts began almost immediately but was primarily focused on base infrastructure for themselves and the construction of roads that allowed them to more effectively move on the battlefield. They then began to focus on necessary infrastructure to help the Afghans operate in the battle space, further improving roads and indigenous telecommunications infrastructure. After this, effort then shifted to more general

civics projects. However, even this was only justified once it was thought to be an important part of the military mission they were being forced into, counterinsurgency.

The U.S. military was highly effective at building infrastructure in Afghanistan. The vast improvements can somewhat be attributable to the poor state of Afghan infrastructure before the war and the flood of civilian and aid organization money and effort that supplemented the military effort, but early efforts and continuing efforts in insecure areas was enabled by the fact that the military maintains significant internal construction capabilities. These efforts dramatically improved the Afghan state's ability to access and penetrate society, although this ability eventually began to erode as insurgent forces began controlling and contesting more territory.

Primary Mission Theory predicts that a military will have robust training capabilities for security force assistance but that these capabilities will only be reluctantly diverted away from training their own people, if diverted at all, and that such capabilities will default to training strategies best suited for themselves rather than for the foreign military they are attempting to train. The initial stages of the Afghan operation saw almost no security force assistance. Once the need to train a larger Afghan military was clear, the default resulted in the U.S. military attempting to build and train an Afghan military in their own image, going so far as to provide manuals and doctrine that was directly translated into Dari from U.S. manuals and doctrine. It was not until after the Taliban had reconstituted that there was any effort to train special forces for an insurgency. Even when this was finally recognized, resources were still preferenced for the U.S. military's own operations. More poorly trained reservists and National Guard soldiers were often tasked with the security force assistance tasks and most of the institutions built up during years of operations were quickly dismantled as the conflicts wound down.

Initial security force assistance efforts were hampered by the belief that a large Afghan security force just was not necessary. Once efforts began, the military was successful in producing at least the framework for an Afghan Army. The training and quality were consistently sacrificed for the sake of producing quantity quickly. Even when the ANA began to take shape and take on responsibilities it was structured incorrectly for the challenges it faced. It was built in the U.S.'s image and little effort was placed on tailoring training for the Afghan context. Because of a reluctance to dedicate the appropriate level of personnel and time, quality suffered, and strategic success was always out of reach.

Primary Mission Theory predicts that no institutional capacity will exist for governance assistance once a statebuilding operation begins, and such capacity will only be built reluctantly and in an ad hoc nature. Furthermore, this capacity will be quickly jettisoned as the operation approaches an end and focus is diverted. No effort was made towards security force assistance in Afghanistan when the operation began. Once effort was directed towards such tasks it was a patchwork of groups and institutions that attempted the task with a patchwork of personnel from other organizations or tasks. Eventually, efforts were somewhat consolidated under provincial reconstruction teams, but these remained small and mostly under resourced. Once official combat operations ended in 2014, the teams ceased to exist.

Governance assistance efforts were only really able to produce façades rather than functioning and legitimate state institutions. The power and legitimacy that was produced was fleeting and built on local power brokers (which could turn away from the state whenever they choose to) and money, which ceases as soon as the flow of external donor money stops. Legitimacy for governing institutions was mostly a result of traditional patronage networks that distributed goods and resources and the state was unable to transition this into a genuine state in

which the only legitimate source of force and violence was Kabul. This in turn hindered the

development of the other two tasks.

## Chapter 5: Vietnam: Irresistible Forces

### Introduction

Circumstances surrounding the Vietnam war were such that military commitment to non-conventional statebuilding operations should have been easily achieved. The military recognized the uniqueness of Vietnam early and often.[1] The Kennedy administration recognized the importance of non-conventional efforts and was heavily focused on encouraging and pressuring the military to do exactly that. Additionally, the Vietnam conflict for the United States did not begin as a conventional war that required the military to transition to statebuilding after conventional operations had concluded. It was always a statebuilding conflict, unlike other major statebuilding operations like Afghanistan, Iraq, Germany, or Japan that were initiated following a conventional campaign.

Essentially, Vietnam is a hard case for Primary Mission Theory. If there was any case in which forces were unified behind the military being able to justify, and effectively engage in, statebuilding, it was Vietnam. Both civilian and military leaders recognized the supremacy of statebuilding tasks over more conventional military strategies. Thus, it should have been very easy for the U.S. military to engage in operations that its own leaders, reports, and doctrine said was necessary and that civilian leaders both recognized and were willing to pay to make it happen. Despite all of this, the military still systematically favored a conventional military strategy of attrition to the detriment of statebuilding efforts.

> *The two facets of the overall mission, military preparedness and the physical processes of state building, competed for resources and emphasis over the next*

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[1] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 15-37.

*several years… By the mid-1960s, this military buildup overwhelmed all other efforts in Vietnam.[2]*

Even though the current mission was in Vietnam, the ongoing competition with the Soviet Union was still ever present. At any point the U.S. military could be asked to engage in conventional combat against a near-peer adversary, that this fact could not be ignored. The U.S. military is frequently criticized for the mismatch between its chosen strategy and the conflict at hand. However, insights from Primary Mission Theory show that while there was a mismatch and not all of the reasons for this mismatch were rational, the military is placed in an impossible position. They are essentially asked to restructure, retrain, and retool for a statebuilding operation, all the while still being expected to defend against a near-peer adversary and defeat them in combat if necessary. Doing both well at the same time is impossible and because near-peer competition presents the greatest threat to the military's primary responsibility of defense and survival of the state, conventional competencies must always be protected and maintained.

The U.S. military recognized that Vietnam needed a new kind of warfare, but genuine efforts to that effect were suppressed and leaders did little more than pay lip service to anything but conventional combat. The term "pacification" was often used to describe governance assistance efforts in Vietnam, although the term was used liberally and often without clear distinction. "Originally used to describe a comprehensive strategy for achieving American political and military objectives in South Vietnam, it now often served as no more than a catchall expression for either the nonconventional, or alternatively, the nonmilitary aspects of the war."[3] General Westmoreland was heavily criticized for his conventional preference, but even when

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[2] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 9.
[3] Clarke, Jeffrey J. *Advice and support: The final years, 1965-1973*. Vol. 91, no. 3. US Government Printing Office, 1988: 171.

Westmoreland was replaced by the more unconventional thinking Abrahams, very little actually changed. "Kissinger described Abrams as a senior military officer stuck in the 'routine' of conventional warfare."[4]

Civilian leaders also clearly recognized that Vietnam needed a new kind of warfare. As noted in Chapter 3, the U.S. Army Green Berets are the primary institution that performs security force assistance (SFA). The Green Berets mission of SFA matured during Vietnam and their ranks ballooned because of President Kennedy's strong support for unconventional statebuilding operations. Green Beret training and education today occurs at the John F. Kennedy Special Warfare Center and School at Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Kennedy clearly and frequently articulated the importance and significance of unconventional and statebuilding tasks as a vital part of Soviet containment. At a speech to graduates at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point, Kennedy said, "… new in its intensity, yet ancient in its origin – war by guerrillas, subversives, insurgents, assassins, war by ambush instead of by combat; by infiltration, instead of aggression, seeking victory by eroding and exhausting the enemy instead of engaging him."[5] Statebuilding was to be the solution to this new kind of war.


**Debates Over Statebuilding in Vietnam**

A significant challenge in assessing armed statebuilding in the Vietnam case is that both civilian and military leaders at the time, and subsequent researchers and scholars, primarily viewed the conflict, not as a statebuilding operation, but as a counterinsurgency operation. The language and focus shift in the post-Cold War era towards building institutions, establishing a

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[4] Gian P. Gentile, "Vietnam: Ending the Lost War," in Moten, Matthew, ed. *Between War and Peace: How America Ends Its Wars*. Simon and Schuster, 2011: 273.
[5] Daddis, Gregory A. *Withdrawal: Reassessing America's Final Years in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2017: 1.

ruling regime, and economic development, but in Vietnam, the language was about pacification and counterinsurgency. While Vietnam is primarily viewed as a counterinsurgency operation, it was most certainly an attempted statebuilding operation. All of the statebuilding tasks that the U.S. military says it should be able to conduct in such an operation were conducted in Vietnam. Infrastructure was the primary statebuilding effort during the war. Security force assistance was also a major effort especially after the strategy shifted to "Vietnamization" under President Nixon. To a lesser extent than Afghanistan and Iraq post-2001, governance was an issue that was delt with by the U.S. military mission to Vietnam through the CORDS program. Thus, in addition to the Vietnam case serving as an ideal hard case for Primary Mission Theory, the assessment of Vietnam here is unique to most previous treatments in that it is primarily focused on the military statebuilding efforts rather than counterinsurgency efforts alone. While there are clear overlaps between these two efforts, important aspects of the U.S. military activity in Vietnam are missed when only looking at counterinsurgency efforts exclusively.

Not everyone buys into the narrative that the military was stubbornly resistant to fighting a new kind of war and consistently preferenced conventional warfare. This debate is illustrative and Primary Mission Theory offers an answer to the disagreement. Daddis, in particular, notes that Westmoreland consistently understood the political nature of the conflict and that social and economic revision was vital for victory. Essentially, Westmoreland understood that Vietnam was a statebuilding operation and not a conventional war, and he constructed a statebuilding strategy in accordance with that view. Daddis argues that the failure was not in waging a conventional war in an unconventional setting, but an issue of the right strategy just not being enough. Armies can employ the right strategy and still lose, and sometimes structural conditions are too strong to overcome by manipulating inputs. Daddis is right that Westmoreland, and many others,

understood what kind of war they were fighting, and they did construct a statebuilding strategy. The problem was that they focused too heavily on the conventional side of the strategy and neglected the non-conventional elements of the strategy. Daddis writes, "The lure of battle was ever present in Vietnam and destructive military operations too often nullified social and political progress within the country-side's rural villages."[6]

Essentially, both sides of this debate are right in part, and wrong in part. Daddis is right that Westmoreland, and the broader military, understood what kind of war he was asked to fight and constructed a strategy that incorporated statebuilding and counterinsurgency elements. However, the other side is also right because conventional warfare was still consistently preferenced. Money and resources were dedicated to statebuilding tasks, but it was consistently less than what was devoted to conventional war fighting and institutions designed for statebuilding were understaffed and under prioritized. Those military units that were making significant progress in pacification and statebuilding were often ignored, redeployed to conventional tasks, and their innovation was never scaled up to other units to maximize the impact.

Primary Mission Theory predicts that when asked to perform statebuilding operations, the military will prioritize conventional tasks and will minimize the effort and resources diverted to statebuilding tasks. This is what happened in Vietnam. Daddis argues that a military in Vietnam fixated on conventional tasks misses the mark. However, in his own discussion of military doctrine of the time Daddis writes, "The very title of Field Manual (FM) 31-16, Counterguerrilla Operations, indicated that many officers often conflated terms like insurgent, guerrilla, and revolutionary… Doctrine thus urged commanders to 'orient their efforts continually on the

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[6] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: xxi.

destruction or neutralization of the guerrilla rather than the terrain.'"[7] This recognizes the

uniqueness of non-conventional warfare but still preferences the conventional aspects of it, the

pursuit and destruction of an enemy force in battle. As another clear example of a willingness to

engage with non-conventional ideas without actually committing to serious realignments of

strategy or actions, Daddis writes:

> *True, officers serving in Vietnam tended to emphasize military considerations*
> *over political ones. True, the army's faith in military force to solve political*
> *problems too often went unquestioned. Nonetheless, uniformed leaders*
> *demonstrated a genuine willingness to study the unconventional side of war even*
> *while they were maintaining their proficiencies in conventional war.*[8]

**Preferencing the Conventional**

The conventional military preference was even apparent before combat operations

officially began in 1965. In 1963, the U.S. Operations Mission gave $203 million in economic

aid to Vietnam. Of that, $184 million went to Vietnam's military budget and only $9.4 million

went to economic and social development.[9] "Milton Taylor, an economist for the Michigan State

University Vietnam Advisory Group (MSUG), found that the American aid program had

emphasized military concerns too heavily."[10] MSUG was eventually forced out of the country

because of their critical assessments, at which time even greater percentages of aid were directed

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[7] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 25.
[8] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 36.
[9] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 129.
[10] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 135.

towards the Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN).[11] As the situation deteriorated, the already tilted focus on the conventional military effort became even more pronounced.

> *The uncertainty following the removal of Diem proved a particularly important factor in stalling all other efforts aimed at reform and development. Numerous programs were shelved and/or ignored as aid resources moved to remedy the most pressing problems with the experiment. Not surprisingly, those problems centered on military solutions to security problems and political illegitimacy.[12]*

The U.S. military, for most of the operation in Vietnam, was nearly singularly focused on conventional operations and statebuilding was viewed as either a distraction or wholly unnecessary. This conventional effort was not merely the result of one commander in General Westmoreland. When Westmoreland was replaced, his replacements largely continued his strategy. This occurred despite an early, and recurring, recognition that statebuilding was in fact necessary and prudent. President John F. Kennedy, shortly after being elected believed insurgency in small countries to be a major national security threat and set up an interagency special group on counterinsurgency that included representatives from the Department of Defense (DoD), the Department of State (DoS), and the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). The doctrine produced was enumerated in National Security Action Memorandum 182. The memo stated that, "the U.S. must always keep in mind that *the ultimate and decisive target is the people* [emphasis original]."[13] General Westmoreland said in 1966 that, "It is abundantly clear that all political, military, economic, and security (police) programs must be completely integrated in order to attain any kind of success in a country which has been greatly weakened by prolonged conflict."[14]

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[11] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 138.

[12] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 177.

[13] National Security Action Memorandum 182, "Counterinsurgency Doctrine," August 24, 1962: 6-8.

[14] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 179.

Even suborganizations recognized that Vietnam required something different from conventional strategies. "Army doctrine therefore emphasized the importance of reform while stressing that military force was only part of counterinsurgency…"[15] Marine Corps doctrine largely echoed that of Army doctrine of the time and recognized an insurgency as the symptom of political and economic grievances that cannot be solved through conventional military operations alone. "Commanders must realize that operations against guerrillas will seldom solve the problems of the area in which they occur."[16] Austin Long's study on counterinsurgency doctrine notes a substantial divergence between written doctrine and behavior during Vietnam, saying, "Yet at the same time, public comments by some senior officers betrayed a hesitance to fully embrace the implications of the written doctrine."[17] The U.S. military, and the U.S. government more generally, was perfectly aware of the need for statebuilding and the limits of conventional strategies in such a conflict but the military overwhelmingly and consistently chose to preference conventional strategies, nonetheless.

The distribution of aid spending in Vietnam is a telling account of preferences in the overall statebuilding operation. Many historical accounts of U.S. involvement in Vietnam note that military projects and organizations received the bulk of total U.S. spending there.[18] "From 1955 to 1959, military aid was four times greater than economic and technical assistance, and of the nearly $1 billion in counterpart funds, more than 78 percent went for military purposes."[19] However, these accounts are contradicted by tabulations that measure aid earmarked for

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[15] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 107.

[16] U.S. Marine Corps, *Operations against Guerrilla Forces,* FMFM-21, August 1962: 72.

[17] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 109.

[18] Milton C. Taylor. "South Viet-Nam: Lavish Aid, Limited Progress." *Pacific affairs* 34, no. 3 (October 1, 1961): 242–256.

[19] Herring, George C., and George C. Herring. *America's longest war: the United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986.

economic and development purposes and those earmarked for military assistance. Figure 1 below shows that the large preference for military assistance over economic development did not become significantly pronounced until combat operations began. Neither of these accounts are incorrect. Early economic and development assistance was fairly even with military assistance before 1967, but funds under this early economic and development assistance was still distributed with a military preference in mind. For example, a large portion of early development money was spent on the primary and secondary road systems in the South, a project that was consistently justified on the grounds of its necessity to military strategy. Both the Vietnamese and American militaries needed to quickly move personnel and material around the country to fight the war, creating a national network of infrastructure was necessary to accomplish this. Thus, much of the economic and development assistance still went to military projects.
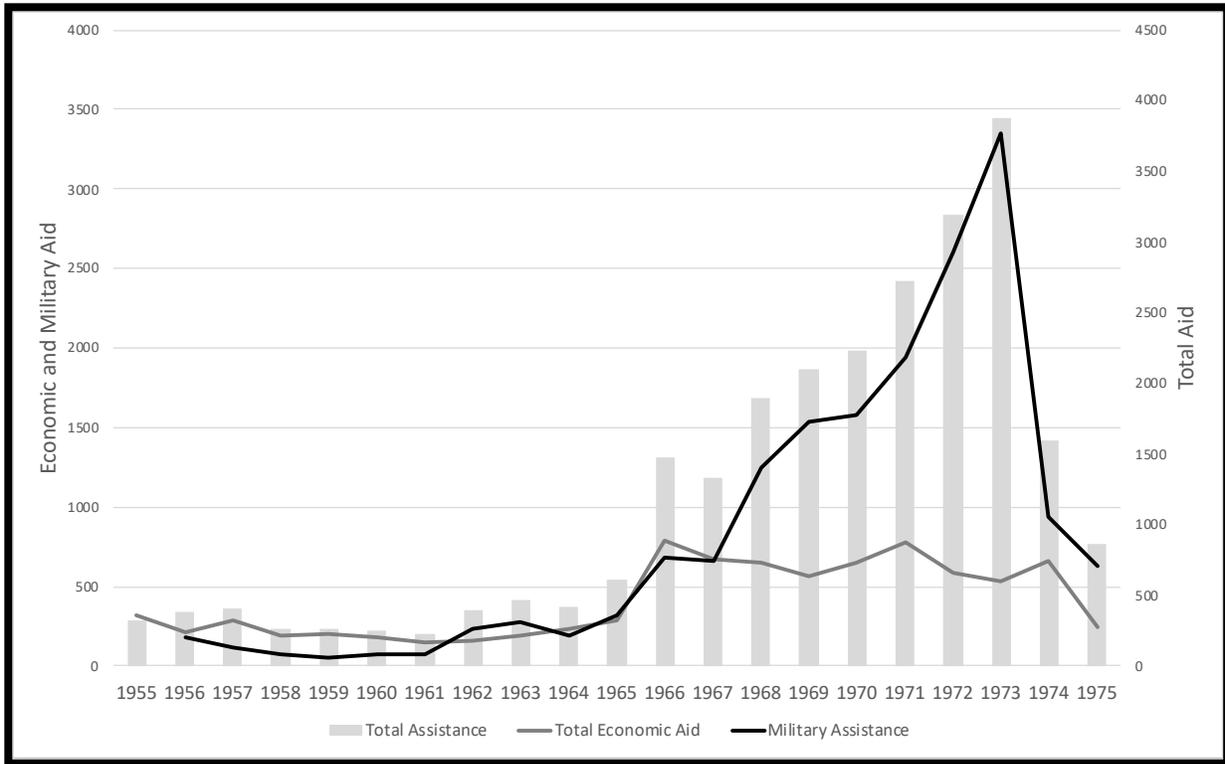
**Figure 1: Economic aid and military assistance in Vietnam**[20]

 

      A significant portion of the debate over military performance in Vietnam,

understandably, is over to what extent the military was able to innovate for counterinsurgency.

While counterinsurgency is categorically different from the statebuilding dynamics studied here,

there are some similarities in the requisite tasks and in their divergence from conventional

combat. Both counterinsurgency and statebuilding require a military to absorb substantial costs

in shifting tactics, techniques, organizational structure, and equipment for a different kind of

operation. The adoption of air mobility prior to combat operations in Vietnam, and its extensive

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[20] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 147.

use during, is an illustrative example of how innovation is resisted for both counterinsurgency and statebuilding by the military.

Air mobility was an operational concept developed in the U.S. military beginning around the mid-1950s that relied heavily on organic, or internal rather than relying on the Air Force, rotary wing aircraft to transport large military units around the battlefield. It was originally developed with a nuclear European battlefield in mind. The U.S. Army believed air mobility would be the only way to remain effective on such a deadly battlefield by quickly moving forces great distances. The concept was then adapted to the counterinsurgency needs of Vietnam. Air mobility is often used as an example of how the military was in fact capable of embracing innovation for counterinsurgency as a counter to criticism that the military was unwilling or unable to innovate.

> *Greater battlefield mobility enabled massing of forces and firepower at a decisive point, which had great appeal, but bombing and shelling communities killed scores of innocent people and alienated the population. Nevertheless, the U.S. military was determined to use its greatest asset, firepower, to fight the war in Vietnam, regardless of the implications for the Vietnamese people. Air mobility could also be used in the European theater – the focus of Army leadership as well as congressional budgetary outlays.[21]*

The capability was not developed for counterinsurgency but for their primary mission to fight near-peer militaries on the European battlefield. It was used for counterinsurgency because it was available, regardless of its effectiveness or efficiency. Other necessary tools of counterinsurgency were resisted and not developed because there was no conceivable way for them to contribute to a conventional war. The development of air mobility provided budgetary incentives, requiring larger budgets to be allocated to the Army relative to the requisite budget changes of other counterinsurgency changes. Air mobility units were easily organized into

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[21] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 181.

traditional military structures, that of large battalion and brigade sized fighting units. It easily fit

into traditional military assumptions about how to organize to fight. Essentially, air mobility was

not developed because it contributed to counterinsurgency capabilities. It was developed because

it contributed to conventional combat capabilities and could at the same time placate civilian

pressure to adapt to the current counterinsurgency reality.

> *Yet, even as the U.S. Army embraced air-mobility in Vietnam, it actively sabotaged the plans of both civilian and some military principals to sustain counterinsurgency operations via population security. Rather than merely shirking change, the Army sought to mislead deliberately by creating the appearance of accepting the mission of counterinsurgency. It created manuals and training courses for counterinsurgency, and claimed to be highly interested. Thus, in practice, the Army's commitment was tantamount to a smokescreen.* [22]

### Testing Infrastructure in Vietnam

The infrastructure improvement project in Vietnam undertaken by the United States was

one of the most expansive and resource intensive efforts of its kind. Much of this was borne out

of necessity, and in particular a military necessity. As U.S. involvement in Vietnam increased,

the military faced significant logistical barriers to the conduct of their operations. Significant

amounts of personnel and supplies needed to be brought ashore and distributed throughout the

country. Decades of war and colonial mismanagement made this task nearly impossible with the

infrastructure that existed within Vietnam. To facilitate the logistical needs of the growing

military mission, the entire infrastructure network from ports to roadway arteries to local villages

was either renovated or created to facilitate the movement of military personnel and supplies

throughout the country.

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[22] Stulberg, Adam N., Michael D. Salomone, and Austin G. Long. *Managing defense transformation: agency, culture and service change.* Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007: 157.

The majority of this effort was channeled through commercial contractors that used civilian U.S. and Vietnamese labor. However, a significant portion was conducted by uniformed U.S. military personnel. Importantly, both the civilian and military effort was focused on the needs of the military first. Chapter three demonstrated how U.S. military institutions dedicated to infrastructure in Vietnam focused on building ports and military installations first. After these projects were completed, only then did they turn a substantial portion of their attention to civil projects for Vietnamese locals. The infrastructure building project in Vietnam was substantial and effective, but fixated on conventional military needs above statebuilding needs, limiting its statebuilding impact.

**Methodology**

Similar to the methodology used for the Afghanistan case, the tactical level of assessment is simply the degree to which the military built, and enabled the building of, infrastructure in Vietnam. This is slightly complicated by the fact that a great number of actors contribute to infrastructure construction, including Vietnamese firms and foreign contractors. Significant portions of the infrastructure in Vietnam built during U.S. involvement in the country was done through private contractors. This is similar to infrastructure efforts in Afghanistan. The U.S. military institutions responsible for infrastructure contributed significantly, and civilian efforts were tied to military necessity. To the degree that it is possible, the contributions from the military are disaggregated from non-U.S. Military contributions for the purposes of analysis here.

The strategic level of analysis is the degree to which this infrastructure allowed the state to penetrate and extract from society throughout its territory. This analysis draws on qualitative

measurements of changes in infrastructure levels in Vietnam over time. Additionally, it draws on reports, analysis, and research conducted on Vietnam related to infrastructure efforts.

**Building Infrastructure in Vietnam**

The U.S. military operation in Vietnam officially began in 1965. This was the year that marine combat troops first deployed to Vietnam. Prior to this, the U.S.'s role in Vietnam was an advisory mission and the direct involvement of the U.S. military was limited. Prior to this, substantial effort was already placed into the building up of Vietnamese infrastructure. This primarily was channeled through U.S. contractors. However, because the Vietnamese infrastructure was in such a state of disrepair, substantial infrastructure building still needed to be conducted once the U.S. military began conducting statebuilding tasks in 1965. Around 1959, "in the arena of public works involving canals, roads, bridges, and telecommunications, infrastructure was either nonexistent, destroyed, or in disrepair."[23] Between 1963 and 1965 the range of options to build a South Vietnamese state were becoming narrow. As the military option increasingly became viewed as the only option, infrastructure projects became substantial and a necessary prelude to the introduction of combat troops to South Vietnam. However, much of this effort focused first on that infrastructure that was vital for conventional U.S. combat operations before any real resources were diverted to true statebuilding infrastructure. "By the time the Johnson administration decided to escalate the war, the U.S. mission had already outstripped the capacity of southern Vietnam to receive it."[24]

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[23] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 89.
[24] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 155.

Even before direct U.S. involvement, the primary infrastructure effort was being diverted to military needs. Vietnam saw a construction boom in 1962 and 1963, much of which was to accommodate the growing size of the ARVN. It was also necessary to accommodate increase U.S. military advisor forces, strategic hamlets, and increasing military operations in rural areas.[25] As early as 1962, large portions of the construction began to be funneled through American construction firms, primarily Raymond International and Morrison-Knudsen (RMK). Of the $700 million in additional allocation that Congress earmarked for preparatory work for an increased U.S. involvement, $100 million was exclusively for construction.[26]

Ultimately, the bulk, approximately 90 percent, of the U.S. funded construction in Vietnam was completed by private contractors. RMK was eventually joined by Brown and Root and J.A. Jones Construction (BRJ). Together, RMK-BRJ was the exclusive construction contractor for the U.S. in Vietnam. U.S. Army construction, the Navy SeaBees, and Air Force Base Engineering Emergency Forces completed the rest of the projects. Even with heavily favoring commercial enterprises for infrastructure development in Vietnam, the preference was first, and always, for the military utility of the effort. "The RMK-BRJ negotiated a cost-plus-fixed-fee contract via the U.S. Navy and sped up work on an array of construction projects aimed to quickly prepare Vietnam below the seventeenth parallel for a major U.S. military presence.[27]

Even with the dominant share of construction projects going to private companies, military needs were supreme to all other economic or development considerations. As such, it was the military that designed and implemented plans for a nation-wide integrated

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[25] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 140.

[26] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 158.

[27] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 159.

infrastructure.[28] It began with the construction of numerous deep-water ports, of which Vietnam was severely lacking. During the initial build-up of American forces, transport ships for material good could sit idle at sea for weeks or months because of an inability to find port space. Next was an emphasis on airfields that could handle jet engines and a nation-wide network of primary and secondary roadways.

In mid-1965, the Johnson administration made a major push to promote economic development of South Vietnam. The effort was intended to both win international and local South Vietnamese support for the effort, and also to induce Hanoi to the negotiating table. The effort was only briefly successful on the former, and not successful at all on the later. The push included plans to completely remake the Mekong delta area into a massive economic engine and engage in other forms of economic development throughout the country. The speech that articulates the plan won the administration brief approval for the operation in Vietnam. However, the development side of the operation quickly succumbed to military concerns and financing for economic development quickly decreased.

> *Though successful in the short term, the president's speech and the development initiative more generally did not change the complexion of the conflict. The administration had not waited around to figure this out; escalation still raced ahead.[29]*

**Assessment Results**

*Tactical Level Assessment*

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[28] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 161.

[29] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 173.

The infrastructure building effort in Vietnam was one of the most ambitious undertakings of its kind, ever. The increase in the infrastructural capacity of Vietnam between the beginning of U.S. involvement and its peak effort around 1967 is astounding. The early efforts focused on establishing the ability of the U.S. military to connect the Vietnamese territory with its vast logistics network. Therefore, the ability to deliver goods to shore and transport them around the country were the focus of early efforts. The port infrastructure around Saigon exponentially expanded its capacity during the U.S. construction effort. Early Saigon port facilities were designed to handle about 1.5 million tons per year. By 1966, the port facilities were bringing in about 5 million tons annually.[30] Similar increases in capacity also occurred at port facilities around the country, in Cam Ranh Bay, Da Nang, Nha Trang, Qui Nhon, and Quang Ngai.[31]

In line with the preference that infrastructure primarily contribute to conventional military operations, the infrastructure work in Saigon resulted in a sprawling military complex around the port facilities and newly renovated and expanded airfield that could now accommodate heavy military aircraft. The complex became known as the "Little Pentagon" and housed all of the Military Assistance Command-Vietnam (MACV) offices and tens of thousands of soldiers. "In this sense, the completion of work on the base in 1967 represented a crucial step in the larger plan to create a modern, national military infrastructure that would link the disparate parts of southern Vietnam and render them defensible."[32] Despite the fact that American and Vietnamese, military and civilian officials praised the massive construction projects undertaken

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[30] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 192.

[31] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 192.

[32] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 198.

as a boon for the South Vietnamese people and economy, the purpose was always to support the conventional military operations and were always tailored to their needs.

*Strategic Level Assessment*

The biggest question in assessing the quality of infrastructure assistance to Vietnam is the extent to which gains in infrastructure building were offset by one of the most intense bombing campaigns in history. "Vietnam War bombing thus represented at least three times as much (by weight) as both European and Pacific theater World War II bombing combined, and about fifteen times total tonnage in the Korean War."[33] Most assessments of this time criticize military efforts having offset any political, security, or economic gains made in the statebuilding effort. Some provinces in Vietnam were bombed far more than others. Only 11 of Quang Tri Province's 3,500 villages were not bombed.[34] Miguel and Roland's research found that bombing intensity was not significantly related to poverty traps in that area, something we would expect to see if bombing substantially damaged infrastructure.[35] However, Miguel and Roland test U.S. bombing against economic performance in 1999. Bombing certainly took a substantial infrastructure toll, but their research indicates that these regions were able to recover over the long-term. As for the near-term, subsequent research has found that the effects of U.S. bombing were myriad but consistently negative for U.S. statebuilding efforts. U.S. bombing increase insurgent activity, and undermined local governance and statebuilding activity.[36] Essentially, conventional military

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[33] Miguel, Roland. "The Long-Run Impact of Bombing Vietnam." *Journal of development economics* 96, no. 1 (September 2011): 2.
[34] Project RENEW Report. "A Study of Knowledge-Awareness-Practices to the Danger of Postwar Landmines/Unexploded Ordnance and Accidents in Quang Tri Province, Vietnam", 2004, www.vietnam-landmines.org.
[35] Miguel, Roland. "The Long-Run Impact of Bombing Vietnam." *Journal of development economics* 96, no. 1 (September 2011): 1–15.
[36] Dell, Melissa, and Pablo Querubin. "Nation building through foreign intervention: Evidence from discontinuities in military strategies." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 133, no. 2 (2018): 701-764.

coercion strategies and hearts-and-minds statebuilding strategies operated in opposition to each other.

The vast resources and effort to build infrastructure in Vietnam was obviously able to produce significant results in the road coverage, port facilities, airports, and other major infrastructure improvements. However, as the infrastructure improvements moved along, so did the destruction caused by the increasing severity of the war. The quantitative improvements in infrastructure were consistently undermined in the impact it could have because of the increasing threat of hostile forces and the consistent destruction of newly created infrastructure throughout the country. "One of the reasons the paradox of construction and destruction ran parallel everywhere in southern Vietnam without arousing much interest beyond congressional investigative committees is precisely because the military effort garnered so much attention."[37]

> *The overall system of funding also favored the military and related programs. Congress authorized $1.4 billion for construction in Vietnam, for example, in the 1966 military budget, while the issue of refugees, the most visible manifestation of the destruction, received $22.5 million, of which all but $3 million as actually designated for Agency for International Development (AID) salaries, equipment, and logistics. The Vietnam Builders spent lavishly with little oversight, principally because that effort made the war possible. And the war, policy makers believed, was the only way to stay on in southern Vietnam and to avoid having to face the failure of the project.[38]*

### Testing Security Force Assistance in Vietnam

Security force assistance in Vietnam was a monumental undertaking and received the bulk of the attention and resources of the statebuilding effort. It provides another clear example

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[37] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 183.

[38] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008: 183-184.

of the U.S. military resisting the pressure to divert resources from conventional operations towards the statebuilding effort. There was some clear examples of effective innovation and institutional learning with some units shifting well to statebuilding tasks. However, many of these efforts were undermined or dismantled before they could be brought to scale. The U.S. marines are praised for effective pacification efforts, but they were quickly reassigned to conventional missions. U.S. army special forces (Green Berets) shifted away from conventional operations towards security force assistance and then back to conventional operations, resulting in the collapse of the programs they were directing and the forces they were training.[39]

A report was published during the Johnson administration called the Program for the Pacification and Long-Term Development of Vietnam (PROVN) and it criticized Westmoreland's way of war. Its main finding stated that the security of local villagers in rural South Vietnam was paramount and all other military operations should be secondary. Consistent with expectations of the Primary Mission Theory, the report had little, if any, impact on the behavior of the military. "What is most striking about this period in terms of the Army is the deviation from written doctrine made in the statements of senior Army officers and in the actions of advisers on the ground."[40]

SFA in Vietnam began before combat operation officially began in 1965, thanks to the covert capabilities of the CIA and a modest advisory mission from the U.S. military. This is also a product of the uniqueness of the Vietnam operation being a statebuilding operation *before* it was a conventional operation. Quick expansion of the ARVN forces began following the Tet

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[39] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 180.
[40] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 114.

Offensive in 1968, and a CIA net assessment of North and South forces indicated that this expansion completed in 1973 with a total armed forces manpower of 460,000.[41]

**Methodology**

The tactical level of assessment for security force assistance seeks to measure the degree to which the U.S. military was able to train personnel, assist in building structures, and assist in establishing basic operating procedures and doctrines. Poor information and biased evaluation methods means a simple evaluation on the quality of troops produced is insufficient for such a study. As a result, the primary measures for success or failure at the tactical level is based on the structures of the military produced, the number of personnel trained, and the types of units they built (i.e., conventional versus special forces units).

The above shortcomings make the strategic level of assessment even more important. This level of assessment for security force assistance seeks to determine the degree to which the military was able to accomplish the objectives given to it by its political leaders. These objectives were to secure the population from violent non-state actors and to conduct offensive operations against insurgent held territory. This measure of military effectiveness is consistent with other scholars' measures of military effectiveness and discussed in previous chapters.[42]

**Security Force Assistance in Vietnam**

Early U.S. efforts at security force assistance in Vietnam were directed by the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Many of these early programs would eventually become the

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[41] Central Intelligence Agency, "Net Assessment of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Military Forces," April 10, 1972, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp80t01719r000300100002-9: 8.
[42] Brooks, Risa. *Creating military power: The sources of military effectiveness*. Stanford University Press, 2007.

responsibility of military special forces units. By at least 1963, the majority of military and paramilitary CIA programs had been turned over to the DoD.[43] As these programs expanded, so too did their complexity and the variety of actors involved in implementing them. A primary tool through which the United States engaged in security force assistance was the Combined Action Program (CAP). This program would pair a 14-person U.S. marine platoon with around 30 ARVN counterparts. They would be assigned to a village composed of several dispersed Hamlets. The program grew to 57 platoons in 1966, and 79 in 1967.[44]

The program was relatively effective, and as such the marines often get significant credit for more effectively adjusting to the non-conventional nature of the Vietnam statebuilding operation. The marines would eventually be pulled away from the program from commanders that viewed statebuilding as a distraction. During the time of CAP, however, the ARVN soldiers benefited from the marine's firepower and experience and the marines benefited from quality information gathered through the ARVN forces.[45]

There is a consistency in the Vietnam operation with which the U.S. military fixated on conventional combat despite the obvious demand for statebuilding and intense civilian pressure. "President Kennedy urged Army leaders to develop a COIN program, yet the Army continued to focus its efforts on conventional warfare, which stressed big-unit operations, and massive applications of firepower."[46] Even after a COIN doctrine was developed, Army leaders chose not

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[43] Central Intelligence Agency, "CAS Station Covert Action Activity in South Vietnam," May 8, 1963, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/0005557359.

[44] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 105.

[45] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 104.

[46] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 186.

to implement it, at least not honestly and to scale.[47] Even after the publication of the PROVN

study, which very starkly criticized Westmoreland's reliance on conventional strategies, no one

directly challenged Westmoreland on his strategy, not even the Joint Chiefs of Staff.[48]

Despite PROVN being an attempt to bring all government agencies in line with a

consistent strategy in Vietnam and being authored in part by military personnel, the report was

overtly resisted by the military, especially the Army. Army officers refused to authorize its

distribution and its conclusions were disputed by Westmoreland. "In short, PROVN was an

attempt to bring operations in Vietnam in line with written doctrine that failed because it ran

counter to the essence of U.S. Army culture."[49] Stated another way, it ran counter to the U.S.

military's perceived primary mission of conventional operations.

Even the metrics used to gauge success and performance heavily preferred

conventional over statebuilding tasks. The measures included body counts and battalion days in

the field. Important for the battalion days in the field metric was the fact that search and destroy

missions counted for this metric whereas pacification, stabilization, and statebuilding missions

did not.[50] Additionally, although the special forces were best able to adapt to the unconventional

circumstances, few if any were tapped for senior leadership roles outside of the special forces

community. A typical example of a successful special forces commander was that of Francis

Kelly, who commanded the Fifth Special Forces Group in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967. Kelly

was sent to the National Guard following his command and retired shortly after that as a colonel

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[47] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 186.
[48] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 189.
[49] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 116.
[50]Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 117.

in 1972.[51] An unimpressive career trajectory despite the successful command of a brigade sized element in wartime.

The U.S. marines were a unique bright spot in the battle between conventional preferences and unconventional realities in Vietnam. They were uniquely effective at adapting to the statebuilding realities of the operation they found themselves in. They were among the first to effectively work with local villagers and militias to build their unconventional capabilities. Unlike the army, they were more willing to actually implement the new counterinsurgency doctrine as written, focusing on generating economic opportunities and self-sufficiency for villages. The success of the marines, however, was limited by two factors. The first was the limited personnel and resources of the marines relative to the army. Their successes were difficult to replicate at scale because they just did not have the manpower to do so. The second was the increasing conventional threat from the North Vietnamese beginning early 1966.

As the North Vietnamese Army began large scale excursions across the demilitarized zone into South Vietnam it was the marines who were largely taken off their unconventional statebuilding tasks to address the rising conventional threat. This move of the marines north and focusing on conventional operations greatly diluted the combined unconventional statebuilding effort as the need for such efforts continued to increase.[52] From that point on, marine resources were divided between conventional operations near the border with the north and statebuilding operations in the south with the quality of marines increasingly being diluted by the increase in draftees and recruits that could not meet normal enlistment standards. Their statebuilding effectiveness, likewise, became similarly diluted.

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[51] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 119.
[52] Long, Austin. *The Soul of Armies: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Military Culture in the US and UK*. Cornell University Press, 2016: 123-124.

Where Austin Long sees sub-cultural differentiation with how the marines and U.S. army special forces were able to better adapt to the unconventional war they were presented with, for this study it shows how the perception of what a primary mission is can vary. This perception can vary at the top level for the military as a whole, but it can also vary within subunits of the military. The marines and army special forces were unique organizations that had slight variations on what they perceived to be their primary mission. However, army special forces were always subordinate to the wider army and significantly limited in their relative resources and potential impact. Furthermore, as the security situation deteriorated, they were pulled from their preferred statebuilding role to contribute more to the wider army's preference of countering conventional threats. The marines too face this issue. Although they were able to focus efforts on more statebuilding tasks, their impact was superseded by the senior military leaderships' perception that the conventional threat was always more important.

When the ARVN was created from the remnants of the Vietnamese National Army, The U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group (MAAG) debated the most desirable force structure for the new army. The debate centered around whether the ARVN should concentrate efforts and resources more on conventional tasks or non-conventional tasks.[53] Both the Americans and the ARVN were facing two distinct threats that required two distinct force structures. Eventually, the debate settled on the compromise that the ARVN would be structured for both missions. U.S. military advisors early on recommended the division of the ARVN into two forces, one focused on deterring an invasion from North Vietnam and the other focused on domestic security against the insurgency, a territorial force. Other units were formed to address domestic political turmoil

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[53] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam.* Oxford University Press, 2013: 149.

in the South. In the late 1950s, the Self-Defense Corps and the Civil Guard were formed to address these domestic issues and received significant funding from the U.S. mission.[54]

Much of the priority and emphasis went to the conventional units that the U.S. military was more familiar with in terms of equipment and training needs. The territorial forces, on the other hand, were consistently under resourced and under prioritized. The Self-Defense Corps in particular were especially poorly equipped and trained. One report from 1964 observed that portions of the Self-Defense Corps was "equipped only with primitive weapons such as clubs and spears."[55] Daddis explains the poor equipping and training of the territorial forces because of president Diem's efforts at regime security.[56] Diem did not want highly trained and well-equipped forces that could instead be used to overthrow his regime rather than fight the insurgency. This certainly played a role but cannot explain the disparity entirely. There is little reason to think that territorial forces posed a threat, but regular ARVN units did not. If Diem was intentionally limiting fighting capacity for regime security, his incentive is to engage in this limitation throughout the armed forces. The biggest difference, then is the low preference attached to the territorial forces by U.S. military assistance.

In February of 1961, the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) drafted, and had approved, a plan for counterinsurgency in South Vietnam. The plan did reflect a nuanced understanding of what was required in this non-conventional conflict, but the plan still fixated on the military aspects.

> *Of the plan's four major tasks, only one related to security; the other undertakings included political, economic, and psychological measures. Without*

[54] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 46.

[55] Farmer, James. *Counterinsurgency: Principles and Practices in Viet-Nam*. No. P-3039. RAND CORP SANTA MONICA CA, 1964.

[56] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 149.

> *question, military operations remained at the core of the JCS plan. So too did South Vietnam's armed forces.*[57]

Daddis goes on to say that by 1962, MAAG officers were convinced that all roads to success ran through the ARVN. Despite a clear recognition of the importance of non-military needs, military means were still preferenced.

U.S. security force assistance to South Vietnam took on new urgency with the announcement of "Vietnamization" under President Nixon. During the first few months of his presidency, he believed there was a military solution to the war. As this optimism waned, the "madman" theory of victory was replaced by Vietnamization, the belief that U.S. interests could be secured by an increased effort to train up Vietnamese forces to hold the line against the North Vietnamese in place of the U.S. forces.[58]

The U.S. military developed several new programs and institutions to assist in the training of local defense forces, including the Civilian Irregular Defense Groups (CIDG) and the Combined Action Platoons that combined 12 U.S. marines and 24 Vietnamese Popular Force militiamen. Similar to efforts in Afghanistan, initial efforts at SFA were fixated on developing conventional capabilities within the ARVN. Only latter were attempts made to improve their unconventional capabilities through specialized units and paramilitary units. Also, like Afghanistan, these efforts came too late in the development of the conflict to have any real impact.

U.S. Army Green Berets played a significant role in the Vietnam statebuilding operation once the focus shifted to building unconventional capabilities. However, even the special forces,

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[57] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 151.

[58] Gian P. Gentile, "Vietnam: Ending the Lost War," in Moten, Matthew, ed. *Between War and Peace: How America Ends Its Wars*. Simon and Schuster, 2011: 259.

which have a dual operational and training mission, needed to adjust to the new circumstances that preferenced the training mission over conducting their own strike operations. The Green Berets were able to achieve some early successes in SFA and statebuilding more generally. They partnered early with the CIA to begin the CIDG program that worked first with the Rhade tribe of the Central Highlands. This success was quickly expanded and began to incorporate Vietnamese special forces throughout 1962.

This was all accomplished with a relatively small force of about 24 special forces teams and a few CIA personnel. In April of 1962, there were about 1,000 local Vietnamese personnel under the CIDG village defense program. By the end of 1962, there were over 23,000. The program had grown so much it was no longer classified as covert, the CIA participation ended, and the program was transferred completely under the control of the U.S. military. The transfer of the program to MACV resulted in a significant shift from development and self-defense for the villages involved in the program. MACV stopped development programs and saw the personnel as potential contributors to offensive operations. MACV attempted to move the defense forces from unconventional, small forces to greatly expanded conventional forces. Similar to their mistakes in Afghanistan of preferencing quantity over quality, MACV attempted to rapid expand the number of personnel in the program and utilize them for conventional operations, for which they had neither the training nor the equipment to carry out.

Even the Green Berets were gradually pushed out of SFA and statebuilding, and back into support for conventional and offensive operations. "Over time, the Army changed the focus of Special Forces units from pacification efforts to offensive operations, making them less effective at nation-building."[59] Once this reorganization occurred, the security force assistance

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[59] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 180.

programs they were assigned to atrophied and collapsed. "Under MACV control, the village defense program piloted by the Special Forces collapsed."[60]

**Assessment Results**

SFA in Vietnam saw some marginal successes. The U.S. military was able to construct the corpus of a local military organization in Vietnam. The effectiveness of this organization, however, was severely lacking. Aside from occasional successes in the field from select units, the organization was unable to perform to the level it needed to. Some U.S. units were able to effectively innovate and train and support effective units. These efforts were frequently undermined or halted all together. Successes from a few Vietnamese forces were therefore unable to be scaled up to the point of having a strategic impact. Thus, at the tactical level of assessment, the massive flow of resources and training were able to create at least the auspices of a modern military organization. The unwillingness or inability to commit enough resources and personnel to the type and scale of training necessary resulted in a failure to translate tactical level successes into strategic level effectiveness.

*Tactical Level Assessment*

The U.S. SFA effort in Vietnam built up South Vietnamese forces from around 150,000 in 1956, to its eventual authorized force strength of over 1 million around 1970.[61] A net assessment conducted by the CIA in 1972 indicated that 460,000 troops were in the ARVN or

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[60] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 180.
[61] Collins, Brigadier General James Lawton Jr. *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1974: 123.

the Vietnamese Marines. The other roughly 500,000 troops were part of the Regional Forces, the

Popular Forces, and the Vietnamese Air Force and Navy.[62]

The CAP program was one of the more effective efforts at SFA in Vietnam. The program

grew steadily through 1967 but was prevented from growing large enough to have strategic

effect and eventually allowed to atrophy. Westmoreland prevented this growth because of a

misalignment with his strategic vision.

> *In the end, Westmoreland never put the CAP concept fully to the test and
> ultimately vetoed the strategic concept. Perceived as a competition with "the Big
> War," CAP was never allocated the manpower resources it required, and, lacking
> a grand strategic direction, its local successes were never able to be replicated on
> a larger scale.[63]*

All of the programs in Vietnam, including CAP, and the massive flow of resources, enabled the

rapid expansion of the security forces of Vietnam. Police paramilitary forces went from 60,000

in 1967 to over 120,000 in 1971.[64] The territorial militia increased their manpower over the same

period to about 500,000 in 1971.[65]

While these numbers are impressive, they only tell part of the story. Peak manpower

came around 1971, but the Tet offensive came in 1968. The Tet offensive changed the dynamics

and priorities of everyone involved in the war. By this point, ARVN forces were facing the dual

threat of the insurgency and conventional incursions from North Vietnamese forces. "The entire

pacification program went on hold as the allies fought to keep the Communists from taking

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[62] Central Intelligence Agency, "Net Assessment of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Military Forces,"
April 10, 1972, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp80t01719r000300100002-9.
[63] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to
Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 106.
[64] Andrade, Dale, and James H. Willbanks. "CORDS/Phoenix: counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam for the
future." *Military Review* (2006): 84.
[65] Andrade, Dale, and James H. Willbanks. "CORDS/Phoenix: counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam for the
future." *Military Review* (2006): 84.

entire cities."[66] This mass of ARVN forces came too late to have strategic effect, even if they were effective fighting forces, which they were not. Even assessments of these numbers which tries to present the SFA effort in a positive light must recognize these shortcomings. "What effect did all of this have on the security situation? Numbers alone do not make for successful pacification, but they are a big step in the right direction."[67] Renewed effort was placed into SFA following the Tet Offensive, but the effort was too late and still had to divide its resources with the conventional war effort.

*Strategic Level Assessment*

The U.S. military was able to build up a major security structure from very little. In the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq in the 2000s and 2010s, the type of military did not match the threat they faced. The military instinctually built a conventional military to face an unconventional threat. In Vietnam, the security force they were building at least faced a significant threat of foreign invasion, whereas Iraq and Afghanistan did not. When presented with the dilemma of how to address both a conventional external threat and an unconventional internal threat, the U.S. military's primary emphasis was conventional. Therefore, ARVN forces were built for a conventional conflict. "The basic problem was that the army was trained for the wrong mission… Confronting the near-impossible task of building from scratch an army capable of performing two quite diverse missions, the MAAG naturally leaned toward the conventional warfare with which it was most familiar."[68] Compounding the problem was the fact that although

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[66] Andrade, Dale, and James H. Willbanks. "CORDS/Phoenix: counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam for the future." *Military Review* (2006): 86.
[67] Andrade, Dale, and James H. Willbanks. "CORDS/Phoenix: counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam for the future." *Military Review* (2006): 85.
[68] Herring, George C., and George C. Herring. *America's longest war: the United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975.* New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986: 71-72.

they were built for a conventional mission they were almost all committed to the pacification

mission as there was little trust that any force but the U.S. military could address the

conventional threat.[69] So ARVN was built for a conventional mission and then tasked with

pacification.

Measurement of success become a major point of contention in the Vietnam operation.

Military and civilian leaders (mostly the Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara) favored the

body count over any attempt to measure a "hearts and minds" approach. The body count method

had the advantages of being easily calculated and understood. Population centric approaches

could not be easily quantified and were even hard to explain to others. This fight over how to

measure success or effectiveness highlights the military command's preference for pursuing a

conventional war in Vietnam.

> Ewell [U.S. Army Major General in command of the 9th Infantry Division]
> explained, "I guess I basically felt that the 'hearts and minds' approach can be
> overdone." "In the 9th Division," he wrote, "we always stressed the military
> effort." By and large, the Army high command shared Ewell's point of view.[70]

One of the ways to measure pacification was developed by marine Major General Lewis Walt.

Walt essentially created an index indicator that measured the pacification of a village based on

five factors: degree of development of the New Life Program, Vietnamese establishment of local

governance, Vietnamese establishment of security, destruction Viet Cong infrastructure, and

destruction of enemy units. If a village scored enough points across all indicators, it would be

declared pacified.[71] The veracity of this methodology and institutional biases aside, even

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[69] Collins, Brigadier General James Lawton Jr. *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1974: 128.

[70] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 106.

[71] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 106-107.

sophisticated methods attempting to measure pacification still could not resist the allure of body

counts. Walt's index was criticized on the basis that a village could achieve enough points to be

declared pacified even if there was no change in Viet Cong infrastructure.

Qualitative assessments of the quality of the ARVN forces were also critical of the

ultimate effectiveness of SFA efforts in Vietnam. "None of these deficiencies in the officer corps

or among other South Vietnamese leadership groups can be easily eradicated, and one of them –

Corruption – is probably as rampant today as it ever was."[72] This CIA net assessment identifies

that preexisting conditions and structural constraints probably limited the potential of any SFA

program, even if the SFA programs had been appropriately resourced and prioritized.

Consistent with the overall problem of knowing that unconventional and statebuilding

strategies were necessary, but preferencing conventional operations nonetheless, SFA focused

too heavily on training ARVN to conduct conventional operations. General Maxwell Taylor

commented after a visit to Vietnam in 1961 that,

> *... by and large, training and equipment of the Vietnamese armed forces are still*
> *too heavily weighted toward conventional military operations. There has*
> *undoubtedly been a shift towards guerrilla and counter-guerrilla training, but it*
> *has not gone far enough. Even the Rangers are not adequately trained or*
> *equipped for sustained jungle warfare.[73]*

Military advice to the Vietnamese was always split between the demands of a dual mission. The

Vietnamese and their American partners needed to deter an invasion from North Vietnam while

also combating an active insurgency in the south. MAAG recommended early in August of 1950

that the ARVN be 150,000 strong and split between four conventional divisions and six non-

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[72] Central Intelligence Agency, "Net Assessment of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Military Forces,"
April 10, 1972, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/document/cia-rdp80t01719r000300100002-9: 14.
[73] Maxwell Taylor, Letter to President Kennedy, November 3, 1961, available in FRUS, vol. 1, Vietnam 1961,
document 210, https://history.state.gov/historicaldocuments/frus1961-63v01/d210/.

conventional security forces to deal with the insurgency.[74] Despite a clear understanding that the

non-conventional counterinsurgency aspect of the operation was important, there was still a

fixation on the conventional side. "While MAAG staff planners surveyed possible invasion

routes into South Vietnam (their main concern), they concurrently developed ARVN training

programs for counterinsurgency operations."[75] Even with the formation of local and domestic

security forces in the late 1950s, the purpose of the organizations was for MAAG advisors so

that conventional ARVN forces would not be distracted and could focus on the North

Vietnamese threat.[76]

Even with the massive buildup of forces, desertions remained a major limiting factor for

ARVN. "In 1967 the South Vietnam armed forces desertion rate had been reduced to 10.5 per

thousand, but efforts to lower this figure still further were unsuccessful."[77] The same CIA net

assessment cited above assessed that the South Vietnamese forces suffered from a sever

leadership deficit. "On the South Vietnamese side, there are leadership problems of a different

kind, which at least until recently have been considerably more severe than those of the North."[78]

Ultimately, the entire SFA effort in Vietnam was only able to produce a few small units that

were capable of conducting effective military operations. These were the ARVN Marines, the

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[74] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 45.
[75] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 45.
[76] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 46.
[77] Collins, Brigadier General James Lawton Jr. *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1974: 91.
[78] Central Intelligence Agency, "Memorandum: Net Assessment of North Vietnamese and South Vietnamese Military Forces," 12 April, 1972, https://www.cia.gov/readingroom/docs/LOC-HAK-537-7-19-8.pdf.

Rangers, and the Airborne forces.[79] These forces were too small to impact the strategic direction of the conflict.

## Testing Governance in Vietnam

By the time the U.S. military became seriously involved in Vietnam, a political regime already existed that the United States sought to preserve and strengthen. Scholars would call such an operation a regime promotion, rather than a regime change.[80] This point is appropriately challenged by some historians that say only the façade of a state existed in the South Vietnam territory since long before U.S. military involvement.[81] These arguments say then that an entirely new entity was constructed from top to bottom. These arguments are legitimate and point to important dynamics that existed. The operation can still be placed under the category of regime promotion since the state that was attempting to be built was within the structures of this façade. It was an exceedingly weak state, but the state was not overthrown first before the statebuilding operation began.

As such, discussion about governance assistance in Vietnam tend to focus on the local level promotion rather than higher level design of the central government or advising that was happening in Saigon. However, for the military's part, there is actually little difference in their governance assistance between Vietnam and Afghanistan, between regime promotion and regime change. There is significant difference for the United States as a whole between these two types of operations, but the military has little, if any, involvement in high-level governance design. The

[79] Clarke, Jeffrey J. *Advice and Support: The Final Years. The U.S. Army in Vietnam*. Washington D.C., Center of Military History, U.S. Army, 1988; Collins, Brigadier General James Lawton Jr. *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1974.
[80] Owen IV, John M. *The Clash of Ideas in World Politics: Transnational Networks, States, and Regime Change, 1510-2010*. Vol. 123. Princeton University Press, 2010.
[81] Carter, James M. *Inventing Vietnam: the United States and State Building, 1954-1968* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2008.

military did not contribute to conversation at the Bonn conference about the makeup and design of the central Afghan government. Their primary role was the extension of Kabul's authority and power out into the provinces, which mirrors closely with their role in Vietnam.

A primary effort in the extension of Saigon's control to the provinces was the Agroville program. This was a land redistribution program that sought to resettle the Vietnamese peasantry that was widely dispersed across the land into concentrated farming communities. However, the military, and even the United States in general, was largely absent from this project. President Diem sought to control the program to maintain autonomy over decisions regarding the program.[82]

Another primary mechanism in governance building in Vietnam was the Strategic Hamlet Program, which sought to mirror British colonial efforts in Malay by relocating geographically dispersed Vietnamese into defensible centralized villages. This program faced a similar fate to the Agroville program. Vietnamese did not want to be relocated, they were not compensated for their labor in building the villages and were not compensated for the relocation to poorer land that had not been improved over generations.[83] Additionally, the U.S.'s involvement in the program on the ground level was limited. By 1963, it became clear that the numbers of those living in these Hamlets were being inflated by the South Vietnamese government in order to deceive the United State.[84]

Governance assistance finally came under military command with the creation of the Civilian Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS), which was stood up in

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[82] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 97.
[83] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 100.
[84] Dougherty, Kevin, and Robert J. Pauly Jr. *American Nation-Building: Case Studies from Reconstruction to Afghanistan*. McFarland, 2017: 101.

1967. Although there was an attempt to effectively blend civilian and military agencies into CORDS, the program was heavily militarized. Similar to governance assistance efforts in other operations, the effort in Vietnam failed to produce strategic effects and was plagued by failures at even the most basic levels.

**Methodology**

The tactical level of analysis assesses the degree to which the military assisted in building governing structures, extending the institutional reach of Saigon, and in helping those institutions provide goods and services. Importantly, the contribution of the U.S. military needs to be disaggregated from the general efforts from the United States and international donors. Simply measuring the growth of institutional capacity would combine indigenous processes with external efforts and contributions. The primary assessment must be based on the extent to which U.S. military institutions contributed to the building and extension of state power into the provinces. The strategic level of analysis assesses the degree to which these efforts generated legitimacy in both the local and national governments.

**Governance Assistance in Vietnam**

The U.S. operation in Vietnam up to 1965 was primarily and advisory role. It was only after March of 1965 that combat troops were introduced to Vietnam and the United States began engaging in its own offensive operations. Even then, statebuilding efforts were poorly organized and executed. It was not until 1967 that statebuilding efforts were consolidated under the

CORDS program. Prior to this, statebuilding (or pacification) efforts were poorly conducted and primarily conducted under the Vietnamese government.[85]

The U.S. military developed several ad hoc institutions in an attempt to address the demands of statebuilding in a conflict largely viewed through a conventional lens. However, many of these efforts, as expected by Primary Mission Theory, were under resourced, underutilized, and often came too late in the conflict. Of the few successful innovations that took place in Vietnam, they were not recognized and expanded to scale. "Unfortunately, their [statebuilding] efforts were not replicated on a large scale and were largely ignored by the Army."[86]

Early in the Vietnam conflict, before the United States entered an overt war, civilian agencies lead the attempted statebuilding operation. As the situation deteriorated for South Vietnam and the United States, the use of military force increased, and the military took a more leading role in the statebuilding effort.

> *Key military leaders believed that if they increased the number of troops in theater, killed more Vietcong, and dropped more bombs, then victory would be theirs. Unfortunately, few efforts focused on political or economic development; the military saw their role as solely conventional war fighting and ignored the civil considerations.[87]*

A primary mechanism through which the U.S. military engaged in governance assistance was the CORDS program.[88] The program was started in 1967 and the "Revolutionary" in the name was eventually changed to "Rural." The CORDS program was under the military chain of command

[85] Gian P. Gentile, "Vietnam: Ending the Lost War," in Moten, Matthew, ed. *Between War and Peace: How America Ends Its Wars*. Simon and Schuster, 2011: 267.

[86] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 179-180.

[87] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 186.

[88] Honn, Mandy, Farrah Meisel, Jacleen Mowery, Jennifer Smolin, and Minhye Ha. "A Legacy of Vietnam: Lessons from CORDS." *InterAgency Journal* 2, no. 2 (2011): 41-50.

but had civilians assigned to various positions within. This effort was similar to that of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) of Iraq and Afghanistan. They attempted to unify the government's efforts to extend the control and legitimacy of the South Vietnamese government throughout the provinces to help limit the local support available to the insurgency. They focused on local development, governance assistance, and also the establishment of local police forces.

Before the establishment of CORDS in 1967, civil governance assistance was under the Office of Civil Operations. Consistent with Primary Mission Theory, this office was understaffed and under resourced for the tasks it was responsible to perform. With the creation of CORDS, a civilian with the rank of ambassador was placed in charge and more resources flowed to governance assistance. Both civilian and military efforts fell under CORDS, but the director of CORDS reported directly to the military commander of MACV, which was General Westmoreland at the time. Because president Johnson's policy of the time was for the commander of MACV to be the singular manager of U.S. efforts in Vietnam, CORDS was heavily militarized. The ambassador in charge of CORDS had military staff under them and the whole organization was completely incorporated into the MACV command structure.[89] 25 of the provincial advisors for CORDS were military personnel, with 19 being civilian personnel.[90] At the provincial level, CORDS staff were responsible for military and logistic issues, agriculture, education, local administration, and public health.[91]

While this reorganization was an impressive feat, it still paled in comparison to the conventional military effort and continually fell short of the requirements of governance

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[89] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 128-129.
[90] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 130.
[91] Andrade, Dale, and James H. Willbanks. "CORDS/Phoenix: counterinsurgency lessons from Vietnam for the future." *Military Review* (2006): 77.

assistance in Vietnam. "The sheer breadth of pacification requirements, however, constrained the capacity of Americans in the field. In short, reorganization could accomplish only so much."[92] Additionally, "too often in South Vietnam, American military operations sill worked as cross purposes with pacification."[93] Despite Westmoreland's enthusiastic support for the CORDS program and concept, conventional military priorities still won out.

## Assessment Results

Some successes were achieved in governance assistance, but many of these successes had dual security purposes like building up local police. Metrics used to assess the success of these programs often showed progress, but the methodology of such measures were questionable and likely did not reflect reality. Much of the governance work was undermined by sources outside of the military and broader U.S. effort, like corruption of top Vietnamese officials. However, corruption at the local governance level was also enabled to a large extent by U.S. practices. The large flow of money and resources without much oversight enabled a high level of corruption. Additionally, so much emphasis was diverted away from the "other war" that very little effort was actually directed towards governance efforts.

### Tactical Level Assessment

Building up the local police became a major component of the governance assistance operations. Local police training is partly security force assistance but is also a primary component of extending governance since it is a vital component of governance at the local

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[92] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 130.
[93] Daddis, Gregory. *Westmoreland's war: Reassessing American strategy in Vietnam*. Oxford University Press, 2013: 131.

level. The CORDS program was able to significantly increase the number of uniformed national police forces from 75,000 in 1967 to 114,000 by 1972.[94] The program found less success in more traditional governance assistance. Officials interviewed after the operation about the conduct of CORDS conceded that the pressure to show quick results had the effect of selecting easy and secure areas for "pacification" rather than areas that needed more effort and would take more time to show results. The effect of this was an ineffective and inefficient distribution of resources and effort.[95]

*Strategic Level Assessment*

Comprehensive and sub-national polling of the views of Vietnamese during the statebuilding operation do not exist like they do for the Afghanistan operation. The measures used by the U.S. to gauge the success of pacification exist but are too faulty to be useful here. Thus, gauging success at the second level of assessment requires the identification of proxy indicators for legitimacy. The outcomes of many programs identified many legitimacy problems and certain proxies can be used to assess the likely presence or absence of legitimacy for the South Vietnamese government.[96] The governance assistance mission in Vietnam struggled to produce any increase in legitimacy for a government which already had a low baseline of legitimacy with the local population. Programs intended to protect the local population and show

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[94] Honn, Mandy, Farrah Meisel, and Jacleen Mowery. "A Legacy of Vietnam: Lessons from CORDS." *The Simson Center*: InterAgency Journal Vol. 2, Issue 2, Summer 2011.; Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, U.S. Assistance Programs in Vietnam, Hearings Before the Subcommittee of the Committee on Government Operations, House of Representatives, July 15, 16, 19, 21 and August 2, 1971, Government Printing Office, Washingotn, DC, 1971, p. 19.

[95] Honn, Mandy, Farrah Meisel, and Jacleen Mowery. "A Legacy of Vietnam: Lessons from CORDS." *The Simson Center*: InterAgency Journal Vol. 2, Issue 2, Summer 2011.

[96] Gilley, Bruce. *The right to rule: how states win and lose legitimacy*. Columbia University Press, 2009.; Beetham, David. *The legitimation of power*. Macmillan International Higher Education, 2013.

the value of the Saigon government to them often undermined the very intended purpose through shortsighted actions. A clear example of this was the strategic hamlet program. Intended to consolidate villagers into defensible concentrated settlements, the program impoverished the population by moving them off valuable agricultural lands, forcing them to build up new farms and villages and failed to compensate them for any of these depravations.

Another clear indication of low legitimacy of the government was the high rates of desertions among the ARVN. Significant efforts were made following the Tet Offensive in 1968 to rectify the desertion problem. Despite the massive effort by the military and the resources dedicated to it, desertions remained a problem up until the collapse of South Vietnam.[97]

Corruption was a persistent problem that governance assistance was unable to subdue. The corruption at the national level is well known and documented, but corruption at the local level was also widespread and unaddressed. "… Corruption in the central Vietnamese government and among higher-level Vietnamese officials was harmful to the overall operations, but corruption at the local levels was most destructive for development work."[98] This same report goes on to identify low morale and low wages as the primary driver of local level corruption.

## Conclusion

The U.S. statebuilding operation in Vietnam is a hard test case for Primary Mission Theory. All of the conceivable forces that are likely to exist in favor of statebuilding existed in

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[97] Collins, Brigadier General James Lawton Jr. *The Development and Training of the South Vietnamese Army, 1950-1972*. Washington D.C.: U.S. Army, 1974: 91.
[98] Honn, Mandy, Farrah Meisel, and Jacleen Mowery. "A Legacy of Vietnam: Lessons from CORDS." *The Simson Center*: InterAgency Journal Vol. 2, Issue 2, Summer 2011.

the Vietnam case. The mission did not begin as a conventional war, it was always an unconventional statebuilding operation. The military, in statements from leadership, their organizational decisions, and in written doctrine, always recognized the unconventional nature of the operation. The President in the early stages of the war was enamored with unconventional war, gave it the highest priority, and enabled the military to make the necessary adjustments. Ultimately, this was not enough for the military to make sufficient adjustments. "In the end, the military fell back upon its traditional, institutional repertoire."[99] The military favored the conventional, nonetheless.

The CORDS system was an impressive attempt at intergovernmental coordination. The U.S. marines effectively engage the local population to build security cooperation and institutions. The U.S. Army special forces expanded their numbers and their role. Programs were instituted that specifically targeted statebuilding objectives. None of these programs and efforts were given sufficient effort, personnel, or resources. The marines were pulled from their statebuilding successes to fight near the demilitarized zone. CORDS was organized to be dominated by the military and their conventional preferences. Consistently throughout the war, funding clearly indicated a preference for conventional well over unconventional.

In Vietnam, specifically, the proclivity towards the conventional can be seen as driven or justified on the grounds of conventional warfare threats being the primary driver of the U.S. military. The Soviet threat and the prospect of open land warfare against a powerful conventional Red Army consistently influenced manpower, weapon acquisition, and organizational structure choices throughout the conflict. The U.S. military knew it needed to reorganize for statebuilding in Vietnam, but the changes that

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[99] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 192.

were made were only those that could also improve their fighting capabilities in a hypothetical Western European conflict. Vietnam was also unique from those statebuilding operations in Afghanistan and Iraq, in that the threat of foreign conventional invasion was real and, in later stages of the conflict, actually occurring. This was not different, however, from statebuilding operations post-WWII where the threat of further Soviet expansion was on the minds of those in the United States and those in defeated countries.

There is also clear institutional inertia and biases that drove this outcome. Preparing soldiers for conventional combat and organizing and equipping for said combat, is fundamentally different than training for statebuilding. Conventional combat requires the training of mass killers, prepared to compartmentalize their own humanity and to dehumanize their perceived adversaries. Historically, small portions of combat troops actually engage in killing on the battlefield. Military leadership is aware of this and constantly try to make as many soldiers as possible into killers who will act on any order. This is the polar opposite of the skill sets required to implement the type of statebuilding begin attempted in Vietnam, one of building trust, confidence, and legitimacy. Such interactions with the local population require different training, different habits, different equipment, different everything. When presented with this choice, the military chose to maintain conventional capabilities and divert as little as possible to statebuilding capabilities.

> *The Army's proclivity for high-intensity warfare detracted further from political, economic, and security integration. All of these factors contributed to the overall ineffectiveness of the U.S. Army in Vietnam.*[100]

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[100] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the US Army from World War II to the Iraq War*. Rowman & Littlefield, 2014: 182.

What, then, does this mean for militaries asked to perform statebuilding operations? If all the forces were aligned in support of statebuilding operations and the military still chose conventional capabilities and operations. When will the military ever divert enough energy and capabilities to statebuilding? Much of the statebuilding literature is fixated on what makes militaries effective on the conventional battlefield. A better understanding of what determines effectiveness in the wider range of unconventional tasks they are asked to perform allows for a better assessment of what civilian leaders should and should not ask of the military. Any consideration of initiating a war that will ultimately require armed statebuilding must take into consideration the resistance the military will have in performing such tasks.

**Chapter 6: Conclusion**

Primary Mission Theory's logical conclusion is that the world's militaries are unlikely to ever divert enough attention and resources to statebuilding to do it effectively and consistently. There will only be a few exceptions to this since most militaries view conventional warfare as their primary mission. This is significant because militaries cannot ignore their role to play in such endeavors in the modern era. Leaders can choose not to conquer and control foreign countries, but if leaders are to ask the military to conquer territory in an era that dissuades annexation, militaries must engage in statebuilding. Achievement of political objectives are unlikely otherwise. Despite the desire to leave perceived civilian matters to the civilians, military strategy is inextricably linked to statebuilding. The desire to sequence or isolate different tasks in Vietnam has shown the ineffectiveness of such efforts.[1] Seeking security through military might ignores the impact this will have on local government legitimacy. "… by early 2002 Washington was not only engaged in nation-building [statebuilding] in Afghanistan, but the Pentagon had begun planning the military invasion of Iraq and the State Department had begun developing plans (officially known as the 'Future of Iraq Project') for post-war nation-building there (plans, however, that the Pentagon ignored after the fall of Baghdad)."[2]

Primary Mission Theory is more broad than previous theories of armed statebuilding operations. Unlike other scholars who have studied armed statebuilding operations, this study is not confined by a particular type of statebuilding, liberal international statebuilding.[3]

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[1] Paul Miller thoroughly addresses the fallacy of sequencing tasks. Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013.

[2] Mark T. Berger, "From Nation-Building to State-Building: the geopolitics of development, the nation-state system and the changing global order," in Berger, Mark T. From Nation-Building to State-Building (London: Routledge, 2008): 1-22.

[3] See for example: Miller, Paul D. *Armed state building: confronting state failure, 1898-2012*. Cornell University Press, 2013.

Consequently, this study is not unnecessarily confined to a liberal, western conception of what a state is, and therefore what armed statebuilding is. This allows for the comparison of a broader set of cases, like the comparison of the armed statebuilding operations in North and South Korea following WWII. Despite this broader scope, there are still limits to the scope and applicability of Primary Mission Theory.

The first limit is the theory's generalizability outside of the U.S. military. Most of the cases of armed statebuilding operations are cases of U.S. interventions. There are few modern examples outside of this. There are indications that the generalizability of Primary Mission Theory extends beyond the U.S. military. The ancient Roman military demonstrated similar institutional prioritization patterns as expected by the theory, most modern militaries organize for conventional warfare despite security situations better served by unconventional organizations as predicted by the theory, and the few cases of non-U.S. armed statebuilding operations shows that different perceptions of the primary mission result in different prioritization patterns as predicted by the theory. However, without more non-U.S. cases, it is difficult to achieve sufficient levels of confidence to claim a broader scope.

The second limit is that this study focuses on studying comprehensive cases of armed statebuilding operations, which is not the universe of armed statebuilding activities. Militaries, especially the U.S. military, frequently engages in the activities required during an armed statebuilding operation outside of comprehensive operations that require all three tasks simultaneously. It is important for the theory to explore the extent to which the key expectations still hold in these less-than-comprehensive operations. The remainder of this chapter attempts to define this scope, explore possible applicability outside of this scope, and analyze the implications of Primary Mission Theory on military strategy.

## Tasks in Isolation

The cases selected for analysis in this study were cases of U.S. statebuilding operations in which effort was comprehensive and all three tasks were being conducting in the same operations more or less simultaneously. This is not, however, the only instances in which the U.S. military engages in statebuilding operations. The U.S. military is frequently deployed in support of partner countries and engage in just one of the three tasks. While there are no true examples of governance assistance in isolation, the military's involvement in this activity is saved only for the most intensive operations, there are many examples of the U.S. military engaging in infrastructure building and security force assistance in isolation. A brief exploration of these operations further confirms many of the assumptions and hypotheses of the Primary Mission Theory.

One of the most consequential differences between operations consisting of a single task and comprehensive operations involving all three tasks is the level of state failure. Comprehensive operations are essentially always failed states. Either a preceding conventional invasion overthrows the local state prior to being constructed anew (i.e., Afghanistan and Iraq), or the exceptional weakness of the state justifies the comprehensive intervention to prop up the fledgling state (i.e., Vietnam). For smaller operations, the state is often stronger than those that receive comprehensive operations and thus it is much easier to focus efforts on the individual statebuilding task.

## Infrastructure in Iceland

U.S. military engagement in the construction of infrastructure is extensive, both internationally and domestically. The case of the U.S. effort in Iceland during WWII is

illustrative. Most U.S. cases of armed statebuilding operations were either abject failures, mitigated failures, or they were only marginal successes (the substantial financial and human costs of which undermined the value of such success). Cases such as Iceland demonstrate that statebuilding does not always require a Marshal Plan sized effort and can, under the right conditions, be significantly beneficial for national security relative to the costs involved. Ultimately, it demonstrates the importance of assessing *when* the U.S. should or should not initiate such an operation in the first place, rather than trying to argue the best strategy *during* such an operation.

Most are surprised to even hear there was a U.S. occupation of Iceland at all. Iceland is located in the North Atlantic in a position of significant strategic value. It forms the center of what is called the Greenland, Iceland, UK (GIUK) Gap, the narrow sea lanes one must control in order to ensure free movement of naval and merchant vessels in the North Atlantic. During WWII, there was concern on the allied side that Germany would seek to control Iceland and use the advantageous position to deny naval resupply from the United States to the United Kingdom. The United Kingdom occupied the island first to dissuade the Germans from making such a move and the United States took over responsibility for the security of the island on July 7th, 1941.[4] The GIUK Gap was also a strategic asset during the Cold War, since the Soviet's Atlantic fleet was required to sail through the Gap to reach open waters. The United States did not close its last base in Iceland until 2006.[5]

The occupation of Iceland, and all related activities, was a purely conventional military consideration, denying the Germans a strategically advantageous naval position. This intent was

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[4] Zimmerman, John L. "A Note on the Occupation of Iceland by American Forces." *Political Science Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (1947): 103-106.

[5] Thorhallsson, Baldur, Sverrir Steinsson, and Thorsteinn Kristinsson. "A Theory of Shelter: Iceland's American Period (1941–2006)." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43, no. 4 (2018): 539-563.

made clear by the release of a statement by the United States after taking over defense of the island that the presence of any German or Italian forces in the Western Atlantic or within 50 miles of Iceland's shores would be considered a hostile act and would justify response by the U.S. armed forces.[6] However, occupation of the island required improvements to the existing infrastructure to allow for such an operation. Among the first of the U.S. forces to arrive on the island was one division of infantry, two antiaircraft regiments, a regiment for harbor defense, and an engineer regiment, along with some other smaller logistics and support units.[7] Original plans called for 2,200 engineers to arrive first to Iceland to ensure the necessary infrastructure was built in time for the later arrivals.[8]

The plan for the United States to replace British forces in Iceland with approximately 30,000 troops and their requisite supplies and equipment was no simple task, especially with war appearing closer and limited naval shipping capacity being diverted elsewhere. The Navy made the necessary transport ships available, but the main port in Reykjavik was too shallow. Early trips could be accommodated even with the poor infrastructure conditions, but eventually the port needed renovations and improvements to accommodate the expanded operation.[9] Additionally, thousands of living quarters needed to be constructed to house all the troops. Some of the remains of these makeshift structures are still visible today and preserved as historical sites in Iceland.

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[6] Zimmerman, John L. "A Note on the Occupation of Iceland by American Forces." *Political Science Quarterly* 62, no. 1 (1947): 103-106.

[7] Fairchild, Byron. *Decision to Land United States Forces in Iceland, 1941*. Vol. 70. Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990.

[8] Fairchild, Byron. *Decision to Land United States Forces in Iceland, 1941*. Vol. 70. Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990.

[9] Fairchild, Byron. *Decision to Land United States Forces in Iceland, 1941*. Vol. 70. Center of Military History, United States Army, 1990.

Remains of Camp Hopkins and Camp Rising memorial in Hafnavegur, Iceland. Photo taken October 3rd, 2018.

The U.S. military constructed Keflavík airport to facilitate operations related to the occupation. When WWII ended, the United States sought a permanent basing agreement with Iceland. Iceland, preferring neutrality with U.S. security guarantees, declined. Instead, Iceland granted the United States access to the now civilian Keflavík airport with only civilian staffing.[10] As the Cold War intensified and the Korean War broke out, Iceland reconsidered its neutrality. Iceland joined NATO in 1949 and granted the United States military basing rights in 1951. The infrastructure effort also built a submarine naval base and included substantial improvements to roads and other infrastructure. The effect of the minor occupation and statebuilding effort in Iceland was significant, both for U.S. national security interests and Iceland's interests. "By the

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[10] Thorhallsson, Baldur, Sverrir Steinsson, and Thorsteinn Kristinsson. "A Theory of Shelter: Iceland's American Period (1941–2006)." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43, no. 4 (2018): 539-563.

end of World War II, Iceland had been transformed from one of Europe's poorest countries to one of the world's wealthiest."[11]

Why was the statebuilding effort in Iceland so successful? Primarily, it was the result of preexisting conditions, not strategy. Iceland was already a well-established state. Legally, it did not have full sovereignty at the time but was considered and independent state under the Danish crown. The Icelandic parliament, the Althing, is one of the longest continuously running deliberative governing bodies in the world having been established in 930.[12] Many statebuilding operations fail due to resistance to the occupation or the rise of ethnic tensions and eventually an insurgency. Iceland recognized the need for the occupation because they feared a German attack and preferred Allied occupation to a German invasion.[13] Iceland is also an exceptionally homogenous society, eliminating any possibility of ethnic or religious tensions. This homogeneity was evident in Iceland's successful demand of the United States not to station black soldiers in Iceland.[14] Essentially, the timing and the conditions of the Iceland statebuilding operation were overdetermined for success. Strategy could have been poorly developed and even more poorly implemented and the external forces were such that success would still have been likely. The strength of external factors in determining success in statebuilding operations should force an examination, not of the strategies employed in statebuilding operations, but of the decision-making process that elects to initiate these types of operations in the first place.

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[11] Thorhallsson, Baldur, Sverrir Steinsson, and Thorsteinn Kristinsson. "A Theory of Shelter: Iceland's American Period (1941–2006)." *Scandinavian Journal of History* 43, no. 4 (2018): 548.
[12] Jensdóttir Hardarson, Sólrun B. "The'Republic of Iceland'1940-44: Anglo-American attitudes and influences." *Journal of Contemporary History* 9, no. 4 (1974): 27-56.
[13] Edelstein, David M. *Occupational hazards: Success and failure in military occupation*. Cornell University Press, 2011.
[14] Ingimundarson, Valur. "Immunizing against the American other: Racism, nationalism, and gender in US-Icelandic military relations during the Cold War." *Journal of Cold War Studies* 6, no. 4 (2004): 65-88.

**Security Force Assistance in Colombia**

U.S. military engagement in security force assistance (SFA) is only slightly less extensive than their engagement in infrastructure building, in stark contrast to governance assistance (which does not even always occur in the comprehensive cases). SFA has always been a common feature of U.S. foreign policy, especially since WWII. However, the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the subsequent legal authorities granted under the umbrella of the Global War on Terror has enabled a vast expansion of the activity. A significant difference between infrastructure and security force assistance is that infrastructure is frequently employed outside of military diplomacy. Security force assistance is much more connected directly to military strategy and the intent to strengthen weak states' security apparatuses so they can pursue military operations (usually counterterrorism or counterinsurgency in nature) so the external state can avoid a costly introduction of its own soldiers into the conflict.

Those analysts and experts that advocate for SFA operations argue it is a 'war on the cheap' option, replacing one's own troops for the troops of some foreign country.[15] The quick victory in Afghanistan in 2001-2002 which relied primarily on local fighters and U.S. special forces and airpower was seen as vindication of this light footprint strategy. The subsequent failed attempt to build a security force in Iraq draws the utility of this strategy into question. Recent research has found that, for the United States, these SFA operations often fail due to the principal agent problem.[16] The agent in the foreign countries almost always wants something different than the principal, the United States, so the security forces built do not pursue the interests of the

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[15] See Biddle, Macdonald, and Baker for an overview of this line of argument. Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. "Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018): 89-142.

[16] Biddle, Stephen, Julia Macdonald, and Ryan Baker. "Small footprint, small payoff: The military effectiveness of security force assistance." *Journal of Strategic Studies* 41, no. 1-2 (2018): 89-142.

United States or fearful power brokers seek to undermine the effort to build a security force that could threaten their own power.

There are certain factors that can alleviate the effects of the principal agent problem, alignment of interests and strong leverage on the part of the principal. For the purposes of identifying the outer bounds of Primary Mission Theory, it is necessary to identify when the principle's military is actually employing the correct strategy in building the agents security forces. Even if leverage and conditionality of assistance can alleviate the dynamics of the principal agent problem, if the United States is attempting to build a conventional military against an unconventional adversary failure is still likely. Tactical success in this scenario will still result in strategic failure, as occurred in many of the comprehensive statebuilding operations, particularly Vietnam and Iraq.

Since, as Primary Mission Theory expects, the U.S. military almost always trains foreign militaries for *conventional* war, it is necessary to identify the circumstances under which they train for *unconventional* warfare. Two conditions are almost always present when the U.S. military actually trains appropriately for an unconventional threat. 1) The basic structures of a military are already present, and they are not forced to build from nothing but only need to improve in certain capabilities and skills. 2) The ruling regime is either secure enough to not be threatened by the increased power and effectiveness of the armed forces, or the insurgent forces pose such an existential and pressing threat that the increased power and effectiveness of the armed forces is an acceptable risk comparatively. This eliminates the either overt or passive resistance to their training and equipping activities from the local ruling government.

Colombia is an outlier to the expectations of Primary Mission Theory and a clear success. The implementation of the peace deal has been difficult, as peace deals always are, but the

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improvement in the Colombian armed forces was a clear cause in the changing circumstances on the battlefield that led to the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) coming to the negotiating table in a weak position. The U.S. effort was undertaken by a small force of advisors and the capabilities they sought to build were appropriately focused not on conventional capabilities, but on unconventional capabilities of counterinsurgency, leadership raids, and counternarcotics. The capabilities forced the insurgent forces into territorial losses, revenue losses, and weaken cohesion and coordination with the frequent loss of leadership to Colombian special forces raids. A clear indication of the improvement of the capabilities of the Colombian armed forces was the shift in the insurgent forces away from conventional attacks on fixed positions towards more guerilla style and indirect terrorist attacks. Successful insurgency movements tend to start with indirect attacks when they are weak, towards more direct attacks against armed forces as the gain strength. Figure 1 shows that as U.S. SFA substantially increases in 2000, the number of total insurgent attacks decreases and the percentage of attacks that employ terrorist tactics also increases.
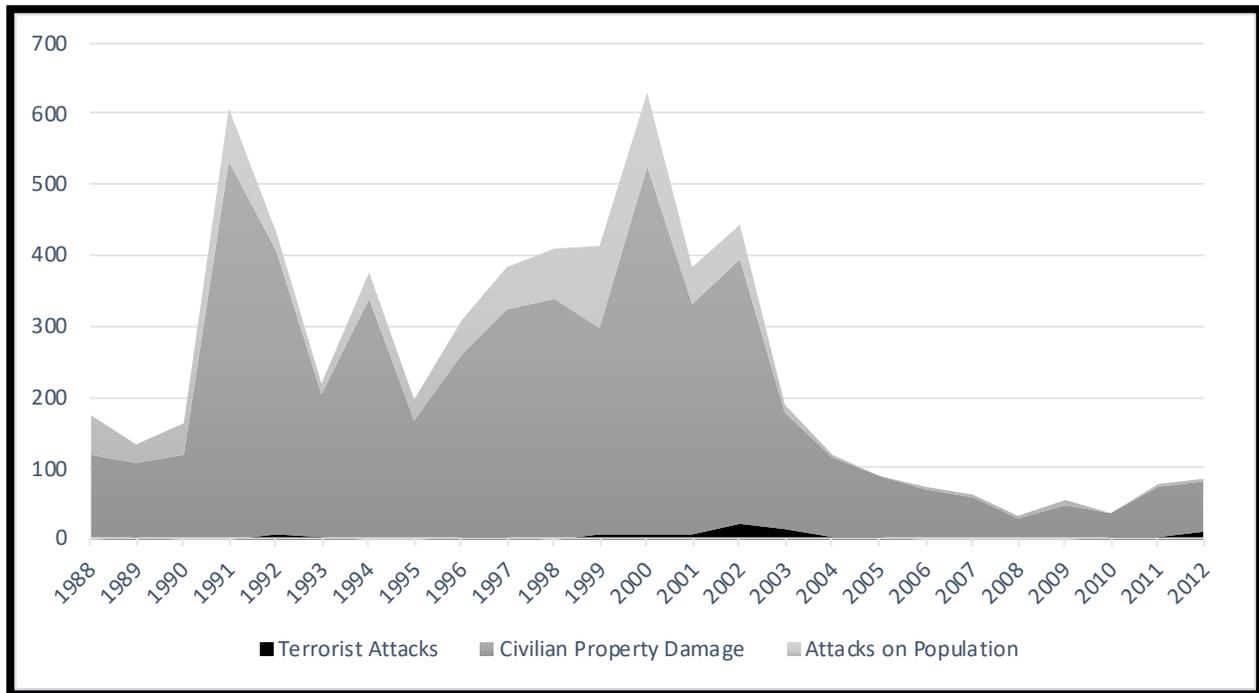
**Figure 1: Types and Level of Violence in Colombia 1988-2012**[17]

U.S. involvement in the support and training of the Colombian armed forces has a long

history, beginning with the U.S. Army Rangers playing a key role in establishing the Lancero

training facility in the 1950s. "…beginning in 1952, Colombian officials realized that they

needed to remodel the military establishment to cope with its new domestic security and state-

building missions. Colombian officers turned to the United States for assistance."[18] U.S.

presence in the country has been almost continuous since.[19] However, the primary effort came

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[17] Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica, *Las Dimensiones y Modalidades de la Guerra.* Accessed April 13th 2018. http://www.centrodememoriahistorica.gov.co/micrositios/informeGeneral/index.html

[18] Coleman, Bradley Lynn. "The Alliance Transformed: US-Colombian Security Cooperation, 1950-1960." In *Security Assistance U.S. and International Historical Perspectives: The Proceedings of the Combat Studies Institute 2006 Military History Symposium.* eds Kendall D. Gott and Michael G. Brooks. Fort Leavenworth: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006: 373.

[19] Long, Austin, Todd C. Helmus, Rebecca Zimmerman, Christopher M. Schnaubelt, and Peter Chalk. *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond: Challenges and Best Practices from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia.* Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015: 59.

through *Plan Colombia* in the early 2000s, especially following the 9/11 terrorist attacks in the

U.S., which justified new efforts to strengthen various countries' counterterrorism forces.

In July 2000, President Clinton signed legislation to give more than $1.3 billion in aid to

Colombia and its neighbors over the next two years. About 75% of this aid, known as Plan

Colombia, was for military and police assistance, including training. As a result of this program,

U.S. military aid to Colombia had increased six-fold since 1997—to $1.5 million a day by 2002.

Prior to Plan Colombia, U.S. SFA almost exclusively focused on the police. As part of the

counternarcotics effort, the United States had trained elite airborne police squads, known as

Jungle Commandos, or *Junglas*. The Colombian military was excluded from U.S. SFA at this

point because the United States focused on anti-drug efforts, a mission that the Colombian

military had previously rejected.[20] However, in order to gain access to SFA, the Colombian

military agreed to stand up new, specifically anti-drug units that the United States desired.[21]

While much of the aid focused on military equipment (such as Black Hawk and Huey

helicopters), a large portion went to the creation, equipping, and training of three new 950-man

counternarcotics battalions in the Colombian Army.[22]

This was all accomplished with substantial limits placed on the number U.S. personnel

allowed in the country. U.S. Special Forces trainers and contractors allowed in country at any

given time was capped at 400 and limited to training missions.[23] "…the majority of the

Colombian security forces never saw an American trainer."[24] Thus from the beginning, and in

[20] Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, Occasional Paper 34, 2009: 22, 47-50.
[21] Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, Occasional Paper 34, 2009: 61-62.
[22] Moyar, Mark, Hector Pagan, and Wil R. Griego. *Persistent Engagement in Colombia.* Tampa, MacDill Air Force Base, FL: Joint Special Operations University Press, 2014: 17.
[23] McDermott, Jeremy. "USA Faces Colombian Dilemma." *Jane's Intelligence Review*, 2003: 21.
[24] Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, Occasional Paper 34, 2009: 110.

order to maximize these efforts, the training effort focused almost exclusively on the elite forces. From the late 1990's and the beginning of Plan Colombia, the primary focus of the US-Colombian partnership was the forming of an elite Counter Narcotics Brigade.[25]

Alexandra Nariño, who is a Dutch national who fought with the FARC and played a key role in the Cuba negotiations, was interviewed by the Journal of International Affairs. The Journal asked why the negotiations beginning in 2011 were so different from the failed round of negotiations from 1999 to 2002. Among other factors like the establishment of regional organizations that could serve as impartial actors in the negotiations, Nariño attributes the differences in success to the increased pressure from the Colombian military. Nariño contends that the FARC and other leftist elements was never in a position of having "almost been defeated." However, she does say, "… the war against the insurgency has increased, too, with Plan Colombia and Plan Patriota, the latter of which was carried out by former President Alvaro Uribe Velez."[26]

The U.S. military defied the limitations of Primary Mission Theory for Security Force Assistance in Colombia. The other cases in which this happens, like in Colombia, show that doing so is often the result of preexisting conditions rather than a conscious strategy choice. The Colombian military was already well established; thus, it was reasonable to rely solely on U.S. special forces to do the training, rather than bringing in more conventional units to fill the demand of training up an entirely new military organization. Vietnam showed that these sub-

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[25] Long, Austin, Todd C. Helmus, Rebecca Zimmerman, Christopher M. Schnaubelt, and Peter Chalk. *Building Special Operations Partnerships in Afghanistan and Beyond: Challenges and Best Practices from Afghanistan, Iraq, and Colombia*. Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2015: 63; Robert D. Ramsey III, *From El Billar to Operations Fenix and Jaque: The Colombian Security Force Experience, 1998-2008.* Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, Occasional Paper 34, 2009: 53-54, 70.

[26] "Prospects for peace: negotiations with FARC: an interview with Alexandra Nariño." *Journal of International Affairs* 68, no. 1 (2014): 221+. *Academic OneFile* (accessed August 16, 2018). http://link.galegroup.com.proxy.bc.edu/apps/doc/A396527053/AONE?u=mlin_m_bostcoll&sid=AONE&xid=797b9 e56.

organizations can have divergent perceptions of their primary mission relative to the broader military. This increases the likelihood that special forces trainers will focus on training for unconventional special forces. The Colombian government was also in a position to be accepting of U.S. SFA efforts, decreasing the resistance to such efforts. Outside of these pristine conditions, the limitations of Primary Mission Theory remain difficult to break away from.

## North and South Korea: The Effect of Differing Primary Missions

Most militaries view their primary mission as conventional combat, since this is both the source of the biggest potential threat and more comfortable for conservative military norms and traditions. International structures and norms also favor the construction of expensive, high-tech conventional militaries. However, not all militaries come to view conventional combat as their primary mission. The Soviet military faced significantly different domestic and international structures and therefore came to view its primary mission as something very different than did its U.S. counterparts. This divergent view of their primary mission is evident in areas outside of comprehensive statebuilding operations. Adam Casey argues this divergent structure and primary mission view resulted in a divergent SFA strategy. As a result, Soviet client militaries that underwent SFA have never staged a coup, whereas western SFA clients frequently engaged in coups.[27]

If Primary Mission Theory is correct, a different view of what a military's primary mission is should have deterministic effects on how that military views statebuilding tasks. These outliers provide insight into the power of Primary Mission Theory and how non-conventional focused militaries will diverge on armed statebuilding performance.

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[27] Casey, Adam E. "The Durability of Client Regimes: Foreign Sponsorship and Military Loyalty, 1946–2010." *World politics* 72, no. 3 (2020): 411–447.

**South Korea**

At the conclusion of WWII in the Pacific, U.S. focus and attention were fixated on Japan. A small contingent of U.S. forces were sent to Korea, initially intended to facilitate the repatriation of surrendered Japanese forces. Eventually, the demands of statebuilding would expand this mission.[28] The United States pursued a strategy to replace the Japanese imperial government with an independent democratic and capitalist regime. By September of 1945, there were 25,000 U.S. soldiers stationed in Korea.[29] Rising tension with the Soviet Union began to focus U.S. attention on building a strong Korean military to counter Soviet pressure, with the ultimate hope of a unified Korean peninsula allied with the United States. The United States military did continue with statebuilding tasks, however, working to rebuild the economy, establish a justice system, and strengthen the education system.[30]

In 1948, the United Nations sponsored elections and the Republic of Korea was established. At the same time, the 50,000 U.S. troops that were in the country began to withdraw. By 1950, only 500 U.S. soldiers remained as advisors to train the South Korean military.[31] Eventually, the U.S.'s view of the importance of Korea would shift as the grand strategy of communist containment took shape in the late-1940s.[32] By the time North Korea invaded the South, the U.S. no longer viewed the Korean peninsula as expendable. Thus, the United States committed to the war with North Korea. "The forces charged with nation-building [statebuilding]

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[28] Edward Grant Meade, American Military Government in Korea (New York: King's Crown Press, 1951).

[29] Richard W. Stewart, ed., American Military History, vol. 2 (Washington, DC: Center of Military History, 2005).

[30] Peter Lowe, The Origins of the Korean War, ed. Harry Hearder, Origins of Modern War (London: Longman, 1986).

[31] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-Building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the U.S. Army from World War II to the Iraq War* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015.

[32] Gaddis, John Lewis. *Strategies of containment: a critical appraisal of American national security policy during the Cold War*. Oxford University Press, 2005.

did not receive any specialized training, nor was there any grand plan for how the military would go about transforming South Korea."[33]

## North Korea

Whereas the United States abandoned its plans to completely restructure South Korea into a democratic and capitalist regime in favor of short-term military security concerns, the Soviets in the North saw a socialist style revolution and their immediate security concerns as related. The Soviets spent the entirety of 1945 to 1950 indoctrinating the North Korean military. They quickly worked to rebuild North Korea in their image to serve as a client state.[34] Soviet-trained communist party members were placed into positions of power, including the North Korea leader Kim Il Sung.[35]

The Soviet Army in North Korea was given significant freedom to make decisions about the statebuilding operation. The Russian army in the East initially viewed its primary mission as a war with Japan. As Japan surrendered and the 25th Army was sent to Korea, they quickly adjusted to this new primary mission. Militaries that only view their primary mission as conventional warfare, at this point, would exhibit passive resistance to any attempt to force them into statebuilding tasks. For the Russian army, their primary mission was conventional warfare, but it was also a revolutionary army and statebuilding fit well with that mission. Because of this, their behavior once that statebuilding operation began in North Korea diverges significantly from frequent behavior observed of the U.S. military. "Despite their initial lack of preparedness, the

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[33] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-Building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the U.S. Army from World War II to the Iraq War* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015: 173.

[34] James F. Schnabel, Policy and Direction: The First Year, vol. 3, ed. Maurice Matloff (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1992).

[35] James F. Schnabel, The Joint Chiefs of Staff and National Policy, 1945– 1947, vol. 1 (Washington, DC: Office of Joint History, 1996).

Soviets undertook significant steps to address the political, economic, and security needs of the

North Koreans."[36]

Soviet military personnel were quickly sent to every major population center in the

country and established local governing organizations. The Soviet Civil Administration (SCA)

was established within the military to deal with the immense task.[37] "The level of organization of

the SCA in North Korea demonstrates an extremely high level of sophistication and

demonstrates the intensity of involvement the Soviet Union planned to have in the development

of North Korea."[38] A U.S. delegation to the North at the time seemed surprised that the Soviets

were committing resources to North Korea rather than simply extracting resources.[39]

The Red Army showed a significant interest in remaking Korean society and constructing

a security force and government in the Soviet image. What explains the difference, the divergent

view on what the military's primary mission is. The Red Army, imbued with a communist,

evangelical ideology viewed their primary mission as building client states in order to spread the

communist revolution.[40] The communist party in Moscow exercised significant control over the

Red Army, placing political officers within its ranks. The Soviet Union pursued what Huntington

called subjective control, where loyalty to that party was preferred over independence and

meritocracy.[41] The variance in commitment made this difference clear. The United States at its

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[36] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-Building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the U.S. Army from World War II to the Iraq War* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015: 171.
[37] Andrei Lankov, From Stalin to Kim Il Sung: The Formation of North Korea 1945– 1960 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2002).
[38] Patterson, Rebecca. *The Challenge of Nation-Building: Implementing Effective Innovation in the U.S. Army from World War II to the Iraq War* Lanham, Maryland: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015: 171.
[39] Van Ree, Erik. *Socialism in One Zone: Stalin's Policy in Korea, 1945-1947*. Berg Publishers, 1989.
[40] Colton, Timothy J. "Perspectives on Civil-Military Relations in the Soviet Union." *Soldiers and the Soviet State, Princeton University Press: Princeton* (1990).
[41] Huntington, Samuel P. *The soldier and the state: The theory and politics of civil–military relations*. Harvard University Press, 1981.

peak before the war committed 50,000 to govern 20 million people in South Korea. The Soviets committed between 220,000 and 250,000 to govern about 10 million in North Korea.[42]

## German and Japanese Exceptions?

Are the Germany and Japan post-WWII cases an exception to Primary Mission Theory? The answer to this question has significant implications. It was reported that L. Paul Bremer studied the post-WWII reconstruction of Germany and Japan in preparation for his assumption of command of the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) that governed Iraq after the U.S. invasion.[43] The cases, because of their successful outcomes, are employed as rhetorical tools to argue that success is possible. It was also the nature of the success that so many cite these cases as examples for the potential of current operations. Germany and Japan were not just rebuilt economically, they were quickly integrated into the U.S. alliance system as strong partners against the Soviet Union. Why would we not want to replicate this success in other countries?

Scholarship on occupations has correctly noted the significant divergence in circumstances for the post-WWII cases relative to all other cases of occupation or even armed statebuilding operations since these cases.[44] Armed statebuilding operations are unique endeavors, they attempt to take failed states and force them to govern in a way amenable to the intervening state. What makes the post-WWII cases unique from an armed statebuilding operation perspective is the reason why they were failed states in the first place. They failed because they lost the war that *they themselves initiated*. Prior to being failed states, then, they

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[42] Henry Chung, The Russians Came to Korea (Washington, DC: Korean Pacific Press, 1947).

[43] Dobbins, James, Seth G. Jones, Siddharth Mohandas, and Benjamin Runkle. *Occupying Iraq: A history of the coalition provisional authority*. Vol. 847. RAND corporation, 2009: xl.

[44] Edelstein, David M. *Occupational hazards: Success and failure in military occupation*. Cornell University Press, 2011.

were already industrialized and functional states. This then made the subsequent statebuilding operation much easier, since rebuilding on a foundation that had already existed is easier than building from nothing. This is significantly different form the Cold War containment operations or the post-Cold War preemptive operations since these all took place in states that had already failed from their own weaknesses, the invasion was perceived as necessary because of state weaknesses enabling terrorism activity or the perception that they will behave recklessly, or because the state weaknesses was perceived as making them vulnerable to communist revolutions. The circumstances that exist in these states are far less amenable to armed statebuilding operations than the post-WWII cases.

The circumstances that lead to the initiation of the conflict can have an impact on success and failure, but it does not have a similar impact on the behavior of the military. Behavior remained consistent within the U.S. military regardless of whether the armed statebuilding operation was initiated after defeating a great power competitor that launched a war of conquest, if the operation was always a statebuilding conflict intended to contain the spread of communism, or if the war was initiated by the U.S. itself justified as a preventive war. First-hand accounts from officers that attended the School of Governance and were expected to provide governance assistance in Germany and Japan shows how little they actually contributed to governance assistance rather than temporary occupational order.[45] This is consistent with behavior in every other armed statebuilding operation.

The conduct of the military did not diverge significantly from its conduct in subsequent armed statebuilding operations. The successful outcome then cannot be attributed to something

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[45] Hazard, Thomas Pierrepont, 1892- *Civil affairs, an experiment in reconstruction*. Library of Congress, [Peace Dale? R.I.] c1949. 95 l. 28 cm. D769.309 .H39

the military did, or even U.S. policy. The difference was the local conditions and the international environment in which the operations occurred. Germany and Japan should not be held up as examples of how a military can be successful at armed statebuilding operations, but only as how local conditions and international circumstances can have a deterministic impact on success and failure regardless of strategy or policy on the part of the intervenor.

<div align="center">

**The Unsolvable Proxy War Paradox**

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The story of armed statebuilding operations is one of many failures and cognitive dissonance. Those involved in a particular conflict will recognize it requires non-conventional strategies and tactics, and then employ conventional strategies and tactics, nonetheless. On the surface, this is irrational. However, military organizations face an unsolvable paradox with regards to armed statebuilding operations. Previous scholars and analysts of armed statebuilding operations have believed this paradox to be easily solvable, which is contradictory to the very definition of a paradox.[46] In military strategy, efficiency and effectiveness are so intrinsically linked, the two words are frequently not differentiated. They should be distinguished, as they mean different things, but the difference is often ignored. To do something effective in war, it almost always must be efficient. Napoleon's invasion of Russia was effective until a lack of efficiency depleted the vast majority of his forces, at which point he was no longer effective.[47] Thus, the paradox is that training and preparing for conventional, high-intensity warfare requires different training, equipment, and force postures relative to non-conventional statebuilding operations. Organizing to engage in one, exposes one to risks in the other.

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[46] John Vrolyk, "Insurgency, not war, is China's most likely course of action," *War on the Rocks*, December 19, 2019, https://warontherocks.com/2019/12/insurgency-not-war-is-chinas-most-likely-course-of-action/.
[47] Tarle, Eugene. *Napoleon's invasion of Russia, 1812*. Pickle Partners Publishing, 2018.

Many organizations can effectively and efficiently do multiple things, but militaries are unique. They must do one thing better than any other in the world. They cannot afford to do multiple things somewhat well. The tight link between effectiveness and efficiency means the military cannot simply to both. As the insurgencies in Afghanistan and Iraq made it clear quick victories were out of reach, a flood of research and analysis appeared in the late 2000s early 2010s attempting to put forward plans for reorganizing the military to cope with the reality of statebuilding operations and their divergence from the necessary skills of conventional combat.[48] However, it is not easy to train for either of these tasks. Scholarship on the difficulty with which militaries sought to adapt from one type of conventional force structure to another conventional force structure during WWI demonstrates how difficult this is.[49] Adjusting to a force structure that does both should be unthinkable.

When viewed at the grand strategic level, this paradox creates problems for policy. If the military commits all of its resources to deterring, and winning if necessary, conventional near-peer competitors, those competitors will simply commit its resources to proxy conflicts that its adversary is not prepared to counter. Many stop there and simply argue that proxy war capabilities must be maintained in an era of great power competition. The nature of a paradox, however, means that committing resources to proxy conflict then creates greater exposure at the conventional level. Nuclear weapons are often presented as a reason why the paradox can be solved because conventional war between nuclear powers is unlikely, but how safe is this assumption? Nuclear armed states have fought conventional wars without escalation to the use of

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[48] For example, see: Szayna, Thomas S., Derek Eaton, and Amy Richardson. *Preparing the Army for Stability Operations: Doctrinal and Interagency Issues*. Rand Corporation, 2007.; Bensahel, Nora, Olga Oliker, and Heather Peterson. *Improving capacity for stabilization and reconstruction operations*. Vol. 852. Rand Corporation, 2009.; and Brownlee, Jason. "Can America Nation-Build?" *World politics* 59, no. 2 (January 2007): 314–340.
[49] King, Anthony. *The combat soldier: Infantry tactics and cohesion in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries*. OUP Oxford, 2013.

nuclear weapons before.[50] Committing to one or the other necessarily means exposure somewhere and committing to both means exposure in both.

Some might attempt to solve this paradox by simply extricating the military from such operations and delegating its tasks to civilian or non-governmental organizations. To some extent this is certainly feasible. The U.S. Department of State prior to the 9/11 statebuilding operations was the primary actor involved in security force assistance. So, for some tasks in some circumstances these tasks can be removed from the military, diluting somewhat the consequences of the proxy war paradox. However, absent a fundamental reshaping of patterns of U.S. foreign policy established over the past century, the U.S. military will remain a primary actor in armed statebuilding operations if the operations are selected for initiation. "The military will play a substantial role in many U.S. stabilization and reconstruction missions, either because military forces have been deployed to end violence or because they have been party to the violence in the first place."[51]

In statebuilding operations, this dynamic is often recognized but goes unheeded. "Confronting the near-impossible task of building from scratch an army capable of performing two quite diverse missions, the MAAG [U.S. Military Assistance Advisory Group Vietnam] naturally leaned toward the conventional warfare with which it was most familiar."[52]

Prior to major commitment to Vietnam, the National Intelligence Estimate of August 1954 made clear that the likelihood of establishing a strong, functioning government in Saigon was poor.[53] Why then was the decision made to attempt statebuilding in Vietnam, nonetheless?

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[50] Dixit, Jyotindra Nath. *India-Pakistan in war and peace*. Routledge, 2003.
[51] Bensahel, Nora, Olga Oliker, and Heather Peterson. *Improving capacity for stabilization and reconstruction operations*. Vol. 852. Rand Corporation, 2009: 5.
[52] Herring, George C., and George C. Herring. *America's longest war: the United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986: 71-72.
[53] National Intelligence Estimate 63-5-54, "Post-Geneva Outlook in Indochina," August 3, 1954, USVN, Book 10, 692.

Scholarship and commentary often fixate on the question of what strategy should be employed or why the current strategy is not working. Comparatively (surprisingly) far less time and effort are spent on actually considering if the likelihood of success and the costs necessary to expend for success are worth the potential benefits. "Dulles admitted that the chances of success might not exceed 1 in 10. On the other hand, he and the president agreed that to do nothing risked the probable loss to communism of a vital area."[54]

This line of thinking was based on the prominent theory of the time, dominoes theory. If one country falls to communism, the ideology will spread across borders via contagion. This theory was almost certainly exaggerated as it overestimated the extent to which communist revolutions were driven by an internationalized ideology or the intervention of foreign powers rather than by local conditions. Subsequent research has called into question the domino theory that was so pivotal in the justification to commit to Vietnam despite pessimistic outlooks.[55] Domino theory was used to justify major intervention into Vietnam, other theories, metaphors, or analogies have been required to justify subsequent statebuilding operations despite overwhelming evidence their likelihood of success is extremely low. Without these metaphors to justify intervention, it is difficult to see the benefit of costly statebuilding operations, especially when militaries will resist the operations.

## Conclusion: Implications

The anomalistic cases of Germany and Japan demonstrate how little military strategy or policy can determine the outcome of an armed statebuilding operation relative to the local

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[54] Herring, George C., and George C. Herring. *America's longest war: the United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975*. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1986: 57.
[55] Slater, Jerome. "The domino theory and international politics: The case of Vietnam." *Security Studies* 3, no. 2 (1993): 186-224.

conditions and international circumstances. The U.S. has *never* been successful in armed

statebuilding operations outside of the pristine preexisting conditions following WWII. This

suggests that determination of whether to initiate an armed statebuilding operation should be first

made on whether the local and international conditions make such an operation even feasible.

Further determination can then be made based on the typical calculations of costs, benefits, value

to national security, humanitarian concerns, responses from adversaries and regional powers, and

potential of second and third order affects.

The discussion of the conventional/proxy war paradox in great power competition

similarly suggests that feasibility of armed statebuilding operations should be considered first

before more traditional considerations. "… outside governments can better recognize when little

or nothing can be done and instead devote their resources to conflicts that can be solved."[56] If the

rise of China is to define U.S. grand strategy in the decades to come, Primary Mission Theory

should encourage an evaluation of which conflicts should and should not be initiated. A rapidly

growing volume of scholarship suggests that many of the statebuilding, proxy, and

counterinsurgency conflicts the United States once viewed as the indispensable battleground in

the Cold War and the post 9/11 era are not only dispensable but also not solvable and should not

be viewed otherwise in the era of U.S.-China competition.

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[56] Byman, Daniel. *Keeping the peace: lasting solutions to ethnic conflicts*. JHU Press, 2002: 43.