



Enhancing Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations

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Americans and Europeans must consult much more closely if they are to develop the cohesion necessary for effective stabilization and reconstruction (S&R) operations, along with shared concepts and capabilities that are needed as the very minimum for success.

Central to the analysis is the need for an agreed transatlantic definition of what has become known as the Comprehensive Approach (or Whole of Government Approach), whereby civilian and military personnel work together from across different parts of a single government and from among different governments towards a stabilization and reconstruction end-state. Unfortunately, such is the complexity of making such approaches work at the national level that a real danger exists that transnational coordination will be adversely affected.

To permit an effective EU–NATO (and also EU–U.S.) relationship, we recommend the early establishment of an EU–NATO Working Group on the Comprehensive Approach to harmonize better the EU’s Crisis Management Concept (CMC) with NATO’s Concerted Planning and Action (CPA). The Working Group should consider how such a reciprocal arrangement for mutual support can be established during S&R operations. We also call on greater efforts to modernize the NATO Strategic Concept and similar efforts at the EU to review the European Security Strategy (ESS) with respect to S&R. We propose a direct relationship between the U.S. State Department (and other U.S. government agencies) and the EU to promote a dialogue with international organizations (IO) and non-governmental organizations (NGO) that are increasingly important to mission success. This effort should be explicitly linked to the Early Recovery initiative of the Secretary-General of the

United Nations (UN). It is important that the transatlantic effort be seen to support the multilateral effort.

The legitimizing (and operational) role of the United Nations is important. For that reason, a stronger UN role in promoting political reconciliation at the outset of S&R operations should be welcomed. To that end, mainly within the context of Afghanistan, we focus on three elements: a) legitimization and authorization of missions; b) a possible UN role in achieving political reconciliation on the ground; and c) developing a common concept of operations, doctrines and civil–military structures that could be established as standard operating practices with parties outside the transatlantic partnership, especially including UN partners. We stress that current concepts of S&R tend to comprise too many goals covering the broad sweep of security, development, and governance, but place insufficient emphasis on seeking early reconciliation of the different parties to a conflict.

For the foreseeable future, with the exception of some British and French capabilities, Europeans will only have a limited advanced expeditionary stabilization capability and capacity. Indeed, S&R operations are particularly challenging for Europeans because they require both a mass of forces and forces that can maneuver. The military component is vital to credible presence in-theatre and to provide protection for non-military elements of S&R. Consequently, while the United States has at times tended to over-militarize S&R operations, Europeans have often tended to over-civilianize them. Leadership of S&R operations through the EU and its various mechanisms is still in its infancy. However, emerging concepts for S&R operations, while encouraging, are as yet not properly supported

This paper draws on the extensive discussions of a Euro–Atlantic working group of experts that met on May 9, 2008 in Washington, DC; June 23, 2008 in Breda, Netherlands; and October 20, 2008 in Brussels. The general thrust—although not necessarily every word and finding—was endorsed, in their own name only, by:

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with adequate capabilities and capacities and tend to remain too focused on institutional shape, structure, decision-making and reporting procedures. The reverse might be said for the United States, which has a high level of military capability (although profound weaknesses in governmental civilian capacity) but inter-agency disputes and stovepiping. It should be noted that Canada has a long tradition with its pioneering of the 3D concept (Defense, Diplomacy and Development), including through its deployable civilian elements, CANADEM.

We stress that all parties to an S&R operation be as clear as possible from the outset about the objective. Self-delusion or denial of the need for change as an S&R operation evolves must be avoided, since almost inevitably the balance between stabilization ‘S’ and reconstruction ‘R’ will, and indeed should, shift in the course of operations, with the emphasis of efforts moving progressively from a military to a civilian focus. Indeed, while sound campaign

planning is vital to the generation of a security continuum, only realistic, relevant and effective metrics can measure true progress towards an agreed end-state. Such an objective must itself involve reducing the military role in S&R as soon as is practically possible, bearing in mind, of course, that protecting civilian agencies and individuals can still require a significant military role.

With regard to Afghanistan more specifically and most urgently, the period 2009–2011 will be a critical time for both the NATO-led International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and the U.S.-led Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF). NATO’s 2008 Bucharest summit laid out a clear mission end-state covering security, reconstruction, development, and governance—the so-called security package. Unfortunately, S&R efforts remain inadequately coordinated and at times incoherent, making it difficult to tie stated strategy and actual progress together.

We call for a renewed common vision of the political (governance), social, and economic track, reinforced by a shared level of ambition and backed up by the requisite unity of effort and level of resources, civilian as well as military. Therefore, if the Coalition is to make significant progress in S&R during the next two years (critical because of the European electoral cycle and declining popular support for the Afghanistan mission) some basic demonstrable objectives will have to be achieved. But without a common view of what is to be done and how to do it, across the S&R spectrum, it will be hard to generate sufficient progress or even to translate progress when it occurs into renewed political support back home. This requires significant commitment of people and resources, especially in the civilian sectors, to make possible serious progress toward reducing support for the insurgency and increasing support for government and governance at all levels of Afghan society. An Afghan–Afghan political dialogue will be essential. Particular effort should be invested to return to Afghan political and social life disaffected elements of the Taliban, as has reportedly already been initiated under Saudi auspices. An end to insurgency ultimately must rest on a political base.

There needs to be a major effort to develop and build upon the potential for EU–NATO synergies.

Whether in Afghanistan or in any other environment, reconstruction efforts require years if not decades, major financial resources, and a lot of staying power. People are the critical ground, and life fundamentals are the critical focus: education, improved public and personal health, job creation, and effective policing and justice. Effective rule of law is and must be a top priority. Security is a means to an end, and in Afghanistan the S&R role of regional partners through the UN in areas such as reconciliation and the training of police will be vitally important.

The campaign plan for Afghanistan must therefore be based on a realistic time frame that clearly identifies what needs to be done by 2011 and what will be required thereafter. Such a plan must be reinforced by a shared strategic narrative that is honest about the current position (positive and negative), a vision of success and of end-states, and the nature and extent of challenges ahead.

An Agenda for Action

1. Establish a strategic framework for S&R operations: North Americans and Europeans, working through NATO and the EU, as appropriate, need to create means for harmonizing views, reconciling differences of perspective and approach and, in the process, determining where and when to cooperate in undertaking S&R operations.

2. Design a basic methodology for S&R operations: Key to S&R success is helping local states enhance the performance of state functions, whether at a national, regional/provincial, or local level. Key actors will need to “buy in” to the goal of state building from the outset of an intervention. One possibility would be to foster agreement on a compact between a country’s leadership, its citizens, and outside states and institutions. As clear a conceptual understanding as possible is needed, early on in S&R efforts, of the relationship between different efforts and their sequencing throughout the security continuum—security, governance, reconstruction and development.

3. Understand the constraints of S&R operations: The limits of S&R also need to be understood to the extent possible. If carried out without sufficient political support at home, international interventions can undermine the rationale and legitimacy of such operations. This can exacerbate rather than alleviate insurgencies. Furthermore, in some circumstances, potential tensions between counterinsurgency operations and S&R operations can actually undermine state-building capacities. Most important, S&R operations cannot substitute for what states, their leaders, and their peoples are prepared to do on their own behalf; nor can they be effective without both sensitivity by outsiders to local attitudes, beliefs, practices, and requirements and adequate “buy in” by in-country leaderships and populations.

4. Greater cohesion and synergy must be generated from the EU–NATO relationship: NATO and the EU each has unique capabilities and both have much to contribute to S&R operations. As of now, however, there is very little relationship between the two institutions, politically or functionally, in this important area. There needs to be a major effort to develop and build upon the

potential for EU–NATO synergies covering S&R operations. This includes re-structuring investment so that the most effective balance can be achieved between military, diplomatic, intelligence, and development efforts. It includes concerted efforts to remove political impediments to EU–NATO cooperation. And it includes building practical cooperative mechanisms for the full range of S&R operations that can maximize the value of what the two institutions can achieve together.

As part of this transformation of relations, it would be useful for the EU and NATO jointly to assume responsibility for building a cadre of civil–military experts committed to promoting S&R interoperability. This could possibly be part of a new centre of excellence, perhaps a new civil–military staff college that could also contribute to lessons learned and to harmonization of S&R and Security Force Reform concepts and doctrines. The Berlin Plus agreement enables the EU to have access to NATO military assets and capabilities for European–led operations. The EU should likewise be prepared to offer its civilian crisis management capabilities in support of NATO operations. An EU–NATO Working Group should be created to consider how such a reciprocal arrangement for mutual support could be established during S&R operations. This should include a reservoir of law enforcement capacity, working closely with the UN and providing access to police trainers, prison service professionals, and judges, as well as public administrators and utilities and infrastructure engineers.

5. Establish a stronger and more direct EU–U.S. security relationship built on S&R operations: The EU and U.S. should look jointly at a range of initiatives. These include: reviewing the roles of economic aid in conflicts, to help donors better tailor their efforts; expanding rule of law aspects of S&R operations; creating ‘super-civilians’, with a particular emphasis on how best to improve the role of the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General—a Special Representative able to speak on behalf of all outside states and institutions engaged in S&R operations; building the capacity of the UN and regional institutions in pursuit of effective stabilization and reconstruction, possibly in conjunction with the G7; and understanding the potential roles and functions of

IOs and NGOs during S&R operations—including dialogue with responsible organizations in both the IO and NGO communities about their planning and what tasks they regard as central to their mission in such environments.

6. Reconcile S&R operations with counterinsurgency operations: Hitherto the contrast between S&R and counterinsurgency has had more to do with contrasting political and military methods than dealing with different threats. There needs to be a search for common ground between the often overly–militarized approach of U.S. forces and the overly–political approach of many European forces.

The choice of strategic narrative needs to be better linked to progress, performance, and publics.

7. Reinvigorate relations with the United Nations: Over time, S&R operations need to be de–Westernized by involving regional powers under the aegis of the UN. This can help remove the potential stigma of “neo–colonialism.” European states will almost certainly require that all S&R operations henceforth be conducted under a UN Security Council mandate, with support from regional institutions. Capacity building of the UN, as well as a joint EU–U.S. approach to empowering regional institutions such as the African Union (AU), should be central to a generic U.S.–EU S&R concept.

8. Launch a strategic narrative to re–legitimize S&R efforts: The choice of both the strategic narrative and the language therein needs to be better linked to progress, performance, and publics. Too often a government is given credit for progress for which it is not responsible or damned for being weak and irresolute, the benchmarks having been set at the level of Western governance and government. North Americans and Europeans also need to explain to their own peoples and other nations the nature of S&R operations. A flourishing media is a central function of good governance.

9. Give the Comprehensive Approach substance and meaning: The Comprehensive Approach/Whole of Government Approach is central to the success of S&R operations. These are

complex undertakings. Civilian and defense ministries must be required to work together and this effort should be designed to reinforce transnational organization and effect. This will require overcoming intra-government rivalries and contrasting cultures and doctrines, and fostering unity of effort. Host countries must be able to deal with a relatively limited number of points of contact. The Comprehensive Approach needs to include a new cadre of elite civilian and military planners and commanders able to plan, direct, and manage operations as a single team. To that end, an EU–NATO Working Group on the Comprehensive Approach should be established to harmonize civilian and military efforts during S&R operations built on a Comprehensive Capability Planning Process. NATO’s Allied Command Transformation should be tasked to lead this effort, on behalf of both NATO and the European Union.

Success in Afghanistan requires efforts that relate to neighboring countries as well.

10. Create a compelling rationale for engagement in Afghanistan: Most European countries sent troops to Afghanistan—all 26 NATO allies have troops there—in few cases because of concern about a direct impact on their national security as opposed to concerns about relations with the United States: the aftermath of 9/11; the fact that few Europeans were prepared to become engaged in Iraq; and the need to be reassured about continued U.S. commitment to European security. None of these arguments will be sufficient to sustain the commitment of several of the NATO allies. A politically sustainable rationale needs to be a compound of legitimate concerns about the potential for a renewed spread of terrorism; inherent problems of instability in Afghanistan and neighboring Pakistan; the potential for at least relative success of S&R efforts; and support for the continuing strategic role and leadership of the United States in the region, in the Greater Middle East, and elsewhere in the world, including Europe. The rationale can also draw upon the benefits of pursuing a Comprehensive Approach, where contributions from some European countries can be denominated more in non-military instruments and activities, especially in the critical areas of governance, reconstruction, and development.

11. Develop shared understandings over the level of ambition, unity of command, and unity of effort required for success in Afghanistan: In Iraq, U.S. predominance in the Coalition has enhanced unity of command and effort with obvious benefits as lessons learned are implemented. Afghanistan demonstrates the consequences of a relative lack of such unity. The Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT), for example, cannot be “one size fits all,” but they tend to be too diffuse in their organization and effort—and too inadequately staffed and funded—to provide sufficient overall effect. It is not always clear where they fit into the overall ISAF campaign design, what they are supposed to achieve, and how such achievements are to be measured. The European Union should take on much greater responsibility in non-military areas of Afghanistan S&R, including for many if not most of the PRTs. The EU’s Crisis Management Concept (CMC) should be further developed with that specific goal in mind. The EU should also appoint a senior representative in Afghanistan to coordinate non-military efforts and European countries should provide much greater resources, including in critical areas of governance, reconstruction, and development. Within NATO, the practice of “costs lie where they fall” should be revised in order to permit more equitable burden-sharing.

12. Create a regional framework for S&R: It has become clear that success in Afghanistan requires efforts that relate to neighboring countries as well. Most important is Pakistan. Helping it to stabilize its frontier areas must become a high priority, along with significant support for the central government. This will require substantial resources; it will also require much greater efforts to coordinate Afghan and Pakistani policies. ISAF leadership needs to foster such relations, and all regional countries need to be engaged to the extent possible. This includes Iran, which played a critical role in the defeat of the Taliban in 2001 but which has since been sidelined at U.S. insistence. Diplomatic initiatives in all these areas should be launched jointly by North Americans and Europeans.

13. Create Government Assistance Teams (GAT): Beyond NATO and partner countries directly engaged in Afghanistan, the wider international community has shown little inclination

to improve S&R performance. This is particularly the case where it has proved difficult to link the needs for aid and development to contributing countries' national interest. One approach in Afghanistan might be to create a common model in place of the current PRTs. Such Government Assistance Teams would be tailored to specific scenarios but would involve a function-led common understanding of how to approach key S&R tasks and thus permit a better audit trail to be established. To that end, each GAT could be organized around several task groups: a military–security group, a rule of law group, an economic assistance group, a police training group, a religious affairs group, an agricultural assistance group, a customs and border control group, an infrastructure group, etc. Such an approach could also help produce common funding aimed at better supporting the efforts of poorer countries engaged in S&R operations.

14. Review political alternatives: Where possible, political reconciliation of all significant parties to a conflict must begin at the outset of an S&R operation: in fact, the military effort must always be subordinate to the political objective (and track) for S&R operations, and the political track cannot be allowed to take second place to the military effort. Thus, the potential for political reconciliation in Afghanistan should be thoroughly canvassed, under the leadership of the Afghan government and consonant with the long-term interests of the Afghan people. There should also be continued efforts to reintegrate elements of the Taliban who have been either “economic warriors”

or who are not tied to radical Islamist ideology. Beyond that, consideration should be given to the potential for dialogue between the Afghan government and Taliban leaders. Such an approach carries obvious risks; but it might in time produce benefits in terms of a potential halt to fighting, while preserving critical elements of Afghanistan's ability to chart its own course within the outside world.

Today, there are forty to sixty states that can be characterized as failed or fragile states in which the gap between *de jure* sovereignty and *de facto* capabilities is stretched to the point of fracture. While much greater effort must be made to prevent the collapse of such states, the need to intervene to restore sound governance is likely to remain. Properly organized and funded stabilization and reconstruction operations can lead effectively and efficiently to a desired end–state consistent with American and European values. This is no longer a choice, it is a necessity whose urgency can no longer be ignored let alone denied.

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The CSIS Brzezinski Chair is conducting a two–year Global Dialogue Between the European Union and the United States based on five small Euro–Atlantic working groups on broad questions of stabilization and reconstruction (S&R), energy security, climate change, challenges in the world economy, and concepts for converging security strategies. For each of these groups, our goal is to develop a shared European–American approach and identify the institutional and practical dimensions of a set of transatlantic best practices that will both support mutual interests and elaborate a governance structure that better reflects the diffusion of interests in the international system. CSIS thanks the European Commission for its support of this project.

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An expanded report on Enhancing Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations, written by Julian Lindley-French, is also being released by CSIS in the context of this project.

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