

Postconflict Problems

by Adam B. Siegel

The successful transition from intervention to long-term peace has proven a challenge in recent complex humanitarian emergencies. This author offers a sensible path to follow.

Amidst the numerous international security problems of this past decade and, probably into the next millennium, one of the most intractable is the challenge of successfully transitioning from a cease-fire in an internal conflict to a long-term solution absent the continued presence of international forces. Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, Kosovo, and East Timor each highlight some of the problems that the international community has faced and is facing in postconflict societies.

Failure to deal with the full breadth of these problems can lead to a muddled result (if not outright failure) from an international intervention. Without concerted civil-military, multiorganizational efforts, the international community can face the unpalatable choice between an indefinite international military presence or conflict resumption.

The operational environments found in areas such as Somalia and Kosovo are sometimes referred to as complex humanitarian emergencies. Complexity, perhaps, is the key element that the international community must confront in molding responses to these situations. The international community (and the United States as part of it) must find a better way to address the complex problems of postconflict societies. Such an approach will improve consideration of how (and if) to intervene. This article postulates a framework for structuring civil-military interventions to foster long-term stability absent the continued presence of an international military force.

While it is certainly possible (and sometimes helpful) to develop lists of tens (if not hundreds) of critical ar-

reas to focus on with hundreds (if not thousands) of derived tasks, the path toward long-term stability might best be referred to as "SOLES." In brief, the international community needs to consider both in order and in an integrated fashion:

Settlement
Order
Legality
Economy
Society

Settlement refers to some form of agreement for conflict cessation. The settlement not only sets the basis and mandate for international intervention, it must also provide some form of framework for developing society after hostilities have ceased. In most postconflict situations, the settlement is at best a starting point for a process of reconciliation and political negotiation that could last decades. Such settlements can be agreed to between warring parties (such as the Dayton Peace Accords for Bosnia) or imposed by international community (such as in Germany and Japan following World War II).

Order refers to the requirement to lay in place a basis for preventing renewed armed conflict and to reduce (if not minimize) the role of armed violence within society. Defending or imposing order may involve "cease-fire" lines (such as in Bosnia), but also some degree of cantonment of combatant forces and equipment. It is likely to require some degree of demobilization and disarmament of various armed groups.

Following closely on the heels of establishing order come the demands for developing and fostering *legality*. Cultivating legality in a society is nei-

ther a clear-cut nor, necessarily, a fast-paced process. Legality refers to the need to develop the entire justice system (police, prosecutors, courts, and jails) and to foster in society the development of legal norms (for such issues as property rights). In the immediate aftermath of a conflict, policing might be the most critical and visible requirement, but the other aspects cannot be left aside—as they have been in many recent operations. Improving the justice sector and fostering legality and legal norms are never-ending processes that continue in even the most fully developed societies. An international intervention must concern itself with beginning this process and providing a firm basis for the society to maintain progress when the intervention ends.

While some form of *economy* exists even within the worst periods of conflict, a war economy does not provide the basis for long-term stability within the international system. Thus, international interventions must concern themselves with rebuilding and restructuring the economy of the postconflict society. This could be phrased as the imperative and process of moving from a focus on emergency lifesaving to creating the basis for people to live the good life. A healthy economy clearly builds on the previous three items, as without order and legality (including a basis for adjudicating property rights issues civilly), the economy will not thrive absent international aid.

Putting a cop on the beat (establishing law and order) and providing a means to put food on the table (economy) are, at best, necessary components for long-term stability but are not alone sufficient for such

stability. The overall *society* must be fostered. While “democratization” has received much attention in recent years, the international community has incorrectly focused on elections as a major indicator of democratic achievement. However, as Cambodia, Haiti, and Bosnia show, elections are perhaps milestones in a long process rather than an end game. Such elections are meaningless without a system and process that has legitimacy with the people. Democratization’s true aim should be the development of a social and governing structure that allows people a reasonable path toward individual happiness and provides accepted means for resolving interpersonal and intergrouping (ethnic or otherwise) disputes without resorting to violence.

While, to some extent, SOLES provides a basis for thinking chronologically, each element is interrelated. Clearly, focusing solely on establishing order when developing a settlement will undermine efforts to develop long-term stability just as seriously as creating arbitrary end dates for the international military force’s presence. Such artificial deadlines to end international involvement have proved counterproductive from Beirut to Sarajevo. Instead, the international community should develop a concept of a desirable and achievable end state—and then determine what seems necessary to achieve that goal.

While it may not appear clear at first glance, the military component of an international intervention should have responsibilities across the SOLES spectrum. In some elements, the military will play the lead role and, in others, it will play a supportive role. The extent to which the military leads or supports will, of course, change over time. If the process is successful, the military’s role will diminish over time across the board to the point that a standing international military presence is no longer required.

Again, every aspect of SOLES involves the military. The military should provide professional expertise in supporting development of a

settlement. Order is, especially in initial periods, a predominately military role, with the need to provide enough force to dissuade formerly warring parties from returning to outright armed conflict. But many of its requirements are not so clearly tasks for international military forces. Key to a successful demobilization effort, for example, are efforts to engage the demobilized soldiers in productive economic roles. Providing training in commercially viable skills and finding jobs are a form of social work for demobilized combatants that is not an appropriate role for an international military force.

In terms of legality, the military will have no choice but to provide initial justice sector (policing and jails) capabilities or else face the potential for continued (or even increased) disruption in the civilian society. In terms of economic development, the military’s role is multifaceted. Simply by deploying,

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the military force will have economic impact and provide a “shot in the arm” for a troubled economy (such as through hiring local support staff; e.g., translators. This hiring, however, needs to be controlled to avoid undermining long-term development.). In addition, the military can more directly support economic development. It can, for example, procure goods locally and help local businesses develop the capacity to provide such goods (through, for example, assisting renovation of a bakery to provide bread to the force). In developing the society, such as in democratization efforts, the international military force has roles. These can include psychological operations or civil affairs support for education efforts or, even more fundamentally, providing an example of military subordination to civilian authority. The above are just the briefest of examples of how a mili-

tary force should and will play a role in all aspects of achieving long-term stability. All of the examples above have occurred in recent military operations but, all too often, haphazardly and not part of a long-term, civil-military plan.

Thus, the key aspect to this entire concept is that such interventions must be viewed and pursued as civil-military partnerships. This is not just a question of interagency (within a government), but between nations, with the international community, and with the fullest possible involvement of the local population and local governing structures. For a variety of reasons, military forces have tended to focus on “the military’s mission” and its success or failure without focusing on the broader environment in which the military is operating. It is counterproductive simply to assert that the military fully achieved its mission and that others (“politicians,” “civilian organizations,” “the media”) are to blame for failures as some have argued about Vietnam, Somalia, Bosnia, and elsewhere.

Instead, the focus should shift to a view that these operations have overall objectives, in which individual elements (such as the military force) have tasks. Thus, rather than focusing on some form of limited military mission, military planners would better serve the overall intervention by delineating the tasks that are predominantly military, those in which the military should play a supporting role, and those for which the military is a poor choice. The military must work with partner organizations to determine burden-sharing arrangements to achieve international objectives in the postconflict society.

In examining intervention requirements over time, the military should have a more significant role across the entire spectrum of tasks early in the intervention. Few partner organizations or entities have the institutional character to be able to respond as quickly or robustly to the emergency of an intervention as military forces can. Thus, the military element of the intervention will have little choice but to fill in gaps while waiting for other

international elements to become effective on the ground. Rather than decry others' failures, military leaders would better serve the Nation by focusing on how best to support overall requirements rather than attempting to fence off tasks due to potential "mission creep.

In addition to realizing that no organization succeeds absent the success of the overall operation (thus, a civil-military, multiorganizational, multinational partnership), we must recognize that successful following of the SOLES roadmap requires that the international community make a long-term commitment. Sadly, for a variety of imperatives, too often artificial deadlines or arbitrary milestones (such as holding elections) have provided the basis for ending international involvement rather than the achievement of objectives that support long-term stability. While a major military force might be able to leave after a relatively short time (within several years, if not months) after start of an inter-

vention, international military and civilian involvement within the society should be viewed as a process quite likely to extend for decades.

The nature and cost of the intervention and involvement will change over time. In general, the highest costs will be in the initial periods since, not surprisingly, the military's role will be front-loaded. (Military forces are very expensive relative to other aspects of international interventions.) For example, the military force might initially provide basic policing and prisons. An international police (such as United Nations Civilian Police (UNCIVPOL)) element might then transition in, relieving the military of day-to-day responsibilities. The UNCIVPOL should support training of an(l transition to a local, indigenous police force. International elements might provide on-the-ground policing for only months, but international training and support might end up lasting (decades to assist development of local police capabilities and sophistication.

Perhaps the most fundamental question underpinning international interventions and approaches to them is to ask ourselves: What are we trying to achieve? At the core, international interventions should aim to finish leaving behind a society that is unlikely to require such an interven-ti(n again. If, in the development of postconflict interventions, the international community begins to focus on a long-term roadinap based on SOLES, then interventions could end sooner while leaving behind a society able to stand on its own two feet.

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