

The United States Military as an Agent of Development: Counterinsurgency  
Doctrine and Development Assistance

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## ABSTRACT

The United States' national security objectives emphasize preventing terrorism through economic and social development in fragile states. Helping to create economic prosperity and legitimate and politically accountable institutions of governance in weak states poses many complex challenges that the international development community and US civilian aid agencies have struggled to address. New US military counterinsurgency doctrine defines "Phase Zero" non-combat development activities as a core military mission equal in importance to that of its combat missions. The US military lacks the development expertise to effectively engage fragile states, as demonstrated by its record in Iraq. The result is a narrow, instrumental understanding of the relationship between security and development that ironically undermines, rather than strengthens, a coherent and effective strategy for dealing with failed states.

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# The United States Military as an Agent of Development: Counterinsurgency Doctrine and Development Assistance

by Carol Messineo, October 2010

## INTRODUCTION

The United States national security strategy has identified weak states as vectors for regional and global destabilizing forces and as major sources of threats to US security.

According to this strategy, transnational terrorism emanating from the “ungoverned spaces” of weak or failed states threatens US territory and overseas interests while disease, war, illicit trade, and poverty undermine the global markets and global stability that are US objectives. Therefore, this thinking goes, the United States must engage in “nation-building” with “failed” or failing states as a key element of its own security strategy. To this end, foreign assistance, both economic and military, is viewed as an important and effective instrument of soft power (U.S. President 2006 and 2002; DOD 2008).

In 2005 Secretary of Defense Donald Rumsfeld issued Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 that set out a new military mission to “advance US interests and values” through non-combat efforts that include establishing “a viable market economy” and “democratic institutions” in fragile states (DOD 2005, 2). The directive emphasizes that stability operations are no longer secondary to combat operations, but are a core US military mission, *even in peacetime*, that requires priority equal to offensive and defensive combat operations in order to prevent terrorist attacks.

Two publications provide US military forces with the rationale and operational strategies of nation-building as an element of US national security: the 2007 *The U.S. Army and Marine Corps Counterinsurgency Field Manual 3-24* (COIN manual), and the 2008 *Field Manual 3-27, Stability Operations* (stability operations manual) (U.S. Department of the Army, 2008a and

2007). The COIN manual calls for armed forces to integrate security, economic development, and institution capacity-building as strategies to subdue counterinsurgencies. It emphasizes the importance of protecting civilians, isolating insurgents from potential indigenous support, and funding local development projects in an attempt to “win hearts and minds” that might otherwise support anti-US agenda.

Since 2002 the United States has shifted significant responsibility for US bilateraOfficial Development Assistance (ODA), by definition non-military in nature, to the purview of the US Department of Defense, from 5.6 percent in 2002 to 23.6 percent in 2005 to 8.3 percent in 2008 (Table I) (USAID 2010).

**Table I: Department of Defense share of US bilateral official development assistance (ODA) (\$US billions)**

	2005	2006	2007	2008
US Bilateral ODA	\$25.6	\$21.2	\$18.9	\$31.2
DOD Bilateral ODA	\$6.0 (23.6%)	\$4.2 (20.0%)	\$3.6 (18.7%)	\$2.6 (8.3%)

Source: USAID 2010

Through the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP), military field commanders have responsibility for aid projects including project selection, contract award, and oversight as well as for on-the-spot disbursement of cash for condolence payments and other reparations. As of July 2010, CERP funding for Iraq (\$3.84b) and Afghanistan (\$2.64b) amounted to \$6.46 billion (SIGIR 2010, SIGAR 2010).

The DOD is involved not only in providing development assistance in conflict settings but also in weak states seen as potential breeding grounds for terrorism. The US military has adopted nation-building as a new *pre*-combat Phase Zero, the operational phase of a soft power mandate to stabilize and secure weak states where terrorism might emerge. In 2007 Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace testified to the House Armed Services Committee:

Our struggle against violent extremists requires that we fight people who hide in countries with whom we are not at war. In many cases, the best way to do this is by augmenting the capacity of those countries to defeat terrorism and increase stability—helping them overcome problems with their borders and eliminate terrorist safe havens. (U.S. Congress. House of Representatives. House Armed Services Committee 2007)

Since 2007 a new unified military command, the United States Africa Command or AFRICOM, has conducted Phase Zero operations in Sub-Saharan Africa. In addition to training African security forces, AFRICOM has attempted to “win hearts and minds” through civilian development projects (Ploch 2009).

These trends present several problems: First, the expectation that development assistance can transform developmentally challenged states into stable, free market democracies ignores historic limits of aid’s effectiveness. Second, the US military lacks the expertise to address the structural sources of underdevelopment, alienation, and instability in fragile states. Third, development assistance in the service of a donor’s national security and geopolitical interests may not accord with a pro-poor agenda that may ultimately lead to greater human security.

#### THE LIMITS OF AID’S EFFECTIVENESS

How transformative is development assistance? Current discourse refers to development as an instrument of “soft power” or “smart power” within a “toolkit” for global engagement that enhances US interests. But the metaphor of development assistance as a tool to be utilized rather handily to achieve a desired effect lacks empirical support. Over the ten-year period 1998-2007, 37 countries *each* have received economic assistance from the United States ranging from a low of \$811 million (Mexico) to \$26.2 billion (Iraq). Despite this economic assistance from the United States and coupled with considerable assistance from other donor nations, all but one remain on “alert” or “warning” status for state failure per the 2009 Failed States Index<sup>1</sup> (Table I).

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<sup>1</sup> In 2009, 38 states scored in the Index’s “alert” range (90 or above), 93 states scored in the “warning” range (above 60 to below 90), 33 states scored in the “moderate” range (above 30 to below 60), and 13 states scored in the “sustainable” range (below 30). The Index evaluates Israel with the West Bank. (Fund for Peace 2009)

**Table II: Top recipients of US economic aid (millions, current \$US)**

Rank		ODA from all DAC Countries					Failed States Index 2009			
		US Aid	Net ODA (\$)	Net ODA as % of		Per Capita Net		Rank*	Risk Score	Watch Status
				GNI (recipient)	1998	2007	ODA (\$)			
1	Iraq	26,162.5	46,214.9	--	--	5	--	6	108.6	Alert
2	Russia	9,222.3	..	--	--	--	--	71	80.8	Warning
3	Afghanistan	8,555.6	12,053.1	--	38.98	--	--	7	108.2	Alert
4	Israel	7,161.5	..	--	--	--	--	..	..	..
5	Egypt	6,272.5	10,060.8	2.28	0.84	28.9	13.83	43	89	Warning
6	Colombia	6,038.7	4,796.4	0.17	0.36	4.34	16.43	41	89.2	Warning
7	Sudan	3,662.8	6,557.9	1.92	5.07	6.29	52.22	3	112.4	Alert
8	Jordan	3,580.0	4,277.9	5.29	3.05	89.41	92.51	86	77.9	Warning
9	Pakistan	3,552.4	7,083.8	1.71	1.54	8	13.81	10	104.1	Alert
10	Ethiopia	3,435.7	7,434.5	8.25	13.21	10.63	32.59	16	98.9	Alert
11	Indonesia	2,436.7	12,012.8	1.39	0.22	6.24	3.96	61	84.1	Warning
12	Peru	2,312.8	3,869.6	0.9	0.26	19.75	9.12	93	77.1	Warning
13	Kenya	1,962.4	4,266.2	2.97	4.89	13.97	35.24	14	104.4	Alert
14	India	1,850.0	6,892.7	0.39	0.12	1.63	1.23	87	77.8	Warning
15	Bolivia	1,830.4	4,637.5	7.59	3.68	79.33	50.09	51	86.3	Warning
16	Uganda	1,765.3	6,074.3	9.96	14.89	28.52	56.7	21	96.9	Alert
17	Ukraine	1,650.4	757.5	--	0.3	--	9.04	110	69.7	Warning
18	South Africa	1,419.9	4,409.2	0.39	0.3	12.24	16.94	122	67.4	Warning
19	Haiti	1,376.1	2,267.1	10.74	11.45	49.16	72.99	12	101.8	Alert
20	Mozambique	1,311.8	8,510.6	25.8	24.44	60.07	83.19	72	80.7	Warning
21	Philippines	1,305.8	5,316.1	0.9	0.41	8.23	7.29	53	85.8	Warning
22	Ghana	1,258.1	5,187.2	9.57	7.77	37.68	50.47	124	66.2	Warning
23	Nigeria	1,239.1	19,144.9	0.69	1.26	1.72	13.22	15	99.8	Alert
24	Georgia	1,218.0	1,648.5	5.48	3.72	43.18	86.42	33	91.8	Alert
25	El Salvador	1,151.7	1,706.1	1.53	0.45	30.78	14.48	90	77.2	Warning
26	Bangladesh	1,119.7	5,943.2	2.55	2.06	8.56	9.6	18	98.1	Alert
27	Bosnia/Herz	1,085.7	3,923.7	18.38	2.89	260.04	119.75	63	83.3	Warning
28	Tanzania	1,073.4	9,684.2	12.07	17.48	30.8	68.31	70	81.1	Warning
29	Armenia	1,054.4	1,329.8	9.93	3.69	62.46	113.9	101	74.3	Warning
30	Mali	995.0	3,165.1	13.61	13.7	36.63	82.71	83	78.7	Warning
31	Zambia	932.0	5,704.7	11.54	9.96	35.06	81.08	60	84.2	Warning
32	DRC	912.3	10,217.1	2.15	13.33	2.59	19.89	5	108.7	Alert
33	Angola	890.3	2,787.1	6.41	0.52	24.75	14.03	55	84.6	Warning
34	Guatemala	886.3	2,539.7	1.21	1.35	21.78	34.04	76	80.6	Warning
35	Honduras	853.6	3,269.2	6.34	3.99	53.18	65.36	91	77.2	Warning
36	Liberia	819.1	933.4	22.43	124.71	92.5	192.5	34	91.8	Alert
37	Mexico	811.0	691.4	0.01	0.01	0.2	1.08	98	75.4	Warning

Sources: US Overseas Loans & Grants (Greenbook), OECD Stat, and the Fund for Peace 2009

\* The Failed States Index ranks 177 states.

Research suggests that for countries lacking an established climate of good governance, aid is not conducive to reform. A World Bank study that examined aid's impact on recipient

countries from 1975–2000 found no evidence that aid promotes democracy in countries where it is not already well-established (Knack 2004, 251). The top ten recipients of US economic assistance 1998-2008<sup>2</sup> all score in the lower range of Governance Indicators<sup>3</sup>, ranging from minus 2.64 to plus 0.49 (Table III). Only Jordan, a lower-middle income economy, has shown consistent improvement across the five indicators. The record suggests that development assistance is not the robust stimulus to “transformational change” towards democracy, rule of law, and stability in failed states that are the objectives of National Security Strategies 2002 and 2006.

**Table III: Governance Indicators of the top 10 recipients of US aid, 1998 and 2008**

	Political Stability & Absence of Violence/Terrorism		Control of Corruption		Rule of Law		Voice & Accountability		Government Effectiveness	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008	1998	2008
	Afghanistan	-2.55	-2.64	-1.91	-1.64	-1.71	-2.01	-2.04	-1.26	-2.27
Egypt	-0.27	-0.67	-0.28	-0.67	-0.06	-0.09	-0.85	-1.19	-0.55	-0.37
Colombia	-1.62	-1.66	-0.70	-0.25	-0.76	-0.50	-0.54	-0.26	-0.46	0.13
Sudan	-2.05	-2.44	-1.00	-1.49	-1.57	-1.50	-1.75	-1.77	-1.08	-1.41
Jordan	-0.21	-0.32	0.10	0.41	0.39	0.49	-0.37	-0.71	0.00	0.27
Pakistan	-1.34	-2.61	-0.83	-0.77	-0.73	-0.92	-0.74	-1.01	-0.65	-0.73
Ethiopia	-0.75	-1.79	-0.55	-0.66	-0.72	-0.60	-0.84	-1.30	-1.12	-0.43
Indonesia	-1.39	-1.00	-1.16	-0.64	-0.72	-0.66	-1.04	-0.14	-0.85	-0.29
Peru	-0.78	-0.84	-0.28	-0.26	-0.64	-0.74	-0.57	0.02	0.09	-0.30
Kenya	-1.04	-1.25	-1.13	-1.01	-1.11	-0.98	-0.87	-0.16	-0.71	-0.60

Sources: UNDP, World Development Indicators, World Governance Indicators 2009; Kaufman et al 2009

The effectiveness of US aid as a catalyst in stimulating economic growth and social wellbeing is also arguable. Among the top ten recipients of US development assistance 1998 to 2008, all except Colombia have seen improvements in their Human Development Indicator (HDI) and increases in per capita Gross National Income (GNI) (Table IV). However employment-to-population ratios have remained flat (except for Colombia) and unemployment

<sup>2</sup> This top ten excludes Russia and Israel, which for various reasons are outliers and Iraq, which will be discussed in the case study that follows.

<sup>3</sup> Governance Indicators that estimate the strength of a country’s democracy, rule of law, political stability, and ability to deliver services and control corruption generally range from minus 2.5 to plus 2.5, with higher values corresponding to better outcomes.

rates have remained high (except for Pakistan which has seen a 0.6 percent decrease). Each country has a burgeoning youth population with greater unemployment than that of the general population. Aggregate increases in prosperity as measured by GNI per capita have not been broadly shared as shown by indicators of income inequality. Taken together, these factors suggest that despite some improvements in health, education, and aggregate income, opportunities for upward economic mobility remain limited and essentially unchanged over the ten year period. While these broad indicators do not adequately assess the impact of foreign assistance on the economic and social wellbeing of these countries, which are affected by many factors, they do indicate that aid has not been “transformative.”

**Table IV: Changes in selected indicators for the top ten recipients of US aid**

	HDI		GNI per Capita (current \$)		% Population below Age 30		Employment-to-Population Ratio, M/F, % (est)		Youth Unemployment Rate, M/F, age 15-24		Unemployment Rate, M/F		Gini		Richest 10% to Poorest 10%	
	1998	2008	1998	2008	1995	2005	1998	2007	1998	2007	1998	2008	2008	2008	2008	2008
Afghan.	..	0.352	..	..	73.08	73.63	56.2	55.7	..	..	..	8.46 (2005)	..	..	..	..
Egypt	0.612	0.703	1170	1800	66.54	63.61	42.0	42.4	23.1	34.4 (2005)	8.2	8.7	32.1	7.2	..	..
Colom.	0.85	0.807	2550	4660	63.43	58.01	54.8	63.2	30.0	21.1	15.0	11.7	58.5	60.4	..	..
Sudan	0.343	0.531	320	1130	70.44	68.72	47.2	47.3	..	..	..	..	..	..	..	..
Jordan	0.729	0.77	1590	3310	73.14	67.65	39.0	38.9	..	..	15.8 (2001)	12.7	37.7	10.2	..	..
Pakis.	0.453	0.541	470	980	69.53	67.39	47.6	51.0	10.5	7.5 24.9 (2006)	5.7 8.2 (1999)	17.0 (2006)	31.2	6.7	..	..
Ethiopia	0.252	0.414	130	280	71.71	71.59	76.8	80.7	..	..	..	..	29.8	6.3	..	..
Indone.	0.679	0.734	670	2010	62.49	56.32	61.7	61.5	19.9 (2000)	25	5	8 6.7 (2007)	39.4	10.8	..	..
Peru	0.729	0.806	2220	3990	64.94	60.16	62.3	68.3	13.7	14.3	7.8 9.8 (1999)	..	49.6	26.1	..	..
Kenya	0.463	0.572	440	770	74.74	73.25	71.9	73.2	..	..	..	..	47.7	21.3	..	..

Sources: UNDP; World Development Indicators; World Population Prospects 2008 Revision; MDG Database 2009 Update; ILO KILM 6<sup>th</sup> Edition

Many factors limit the effectiveness of development assistance as a “tool of soft power” to strengthen fragile states. Constraints to economic development may arise from internal problems such as lack of capacity, poor governance, resource dependence, and demographic pressures to global economic trends, trade policies, and environmental threats. Resistance to



reforms in governance may arise from efforts to protect sovereignty from outside interference or from inherent tensions and trades-offs in a country's political climate that drive the agenda of its leadership. Reforms that do not emerge from a slow process of historically grounded, country-specific evolution fail to take root.

#### THE US MILITARY'S PRIORITIES AND INSTRUMENTS IN DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE

How well does the US military "do" development? The Development Assistance Committee of the Organization of Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC) has identified Principles of Good Engagement with Fragile States (2005a). This section will highlight a few examples of where the U.S. military's priorities and instruments in development assistance diverge from these principles, putting its performance at odds with its own purported goal of nation-building.

The term *whole of government* permeates the US military's 2008 manual on stability operations, which it defines as "an approach that integrates the collaborative efforts of the departments and agencies of the United States Government to achieve unity of effort toward a shared goal" (U.S. Department of the Army 2008a, 1-4).<sup>4</sup> This definition accords with OECD-DAC guidance that donor nations *promote coherence between donor government agencies* (2005a). The COIN manual describes eliminating the causes of insurgency as a complex and enormous task that requires political and military leaders to "recognize that the Armed Forces cannot succeed in COIN alone" (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 2). The US military's stated goal—integration and coordination of US government agencies in an effort to achieve unity of effort in a particular stabilization operation—has not been achieved. Brainard has identified over 50 US agencies that play a role in some aspect of US development assistance

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<sup>4</sup> The major departments involved in reconstruction and stabilization are the Department of State, the Department of Defense, the U. S. Agency for International Development, the Department of Justice (the Federal Bureau of Investigation, and the Drug Enforcement Agency), the Department of the Treasury, and the Department of Transportation.

(2007). Although the Department of State is designated lead agency to coordinate all US reconstruction and stability operations and all foreign assistance programs, in practice there is a current vacuum in the State Department and in the US's civilian development assistance agencies due to a "general failure of the US to invest in non-military instruments of global engagement" (Patrick and Brown 2007, 2; Center for Strategic and International Studies 2007). In recent years as the DOD's responsibility for aid has increased, the capacity of US civilian development assistance agencies has diminished in relative terms. Not only is DOD one of the largest US aid agencies (Radelet 2008) but during the Bush administration its "authority, responsibilities, and resources [grew] as U.S. civilian diplomatic and developmental capacities [eroded]" (Center for Strategic and International Studies 2007, ix).

Efforts to create a coordinated interagency "whole of government approach" to reconstruction—as defined by the military's stabilization manual—have been ineffective. In 2004 the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) was formally created under the aegis of the Department of State to coordinate all reconstruction activities in Afghanistan and Iraq. Due to funding delays, the S/CRS has remained marginalized within the State Department. Lack of accountability and a "balkanized approach" continue to characterize the multi-billion dollar reconstruction efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan, according to Congressional testimony on February 22, 2010, by the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction:

The balkanized approach to [stabilization and reconstruction operations], born from the departmentalization of a unified mission, continues; no single agency has purview over the full spectrum of civilian-military stabilization and reconstruction operations, and thus meaningful accountability is missing. Rule of Law programs are divided among Defense, State, and Justice. Governance is handled by USAID, State, and Defense, as well as by myriad contractors and international organizations. Economic development is similarly divided among State, Defense, Commerce, the World Bank, and USAID. "Stove-piping" is the word — and the reality. (U.S. Congress Senate Committee on Appropriations 2008).

Failure to implement effective “whole of government” approach to the US’s foreign aid weakens US foreign assistance strategy in several ways. The OECD-DAC urges donors to *take context as the starting point* (2005a) so that engagement with fragile states is informed by careful analysis with input from all government agencies with appropriate expertise, ensuring that development initiatives are adapted to each state’s unique conditions, capacity constraints, and “the political incentives and institutions that affect the prospects for reform” (Department for International Development 2005, 14). In the absence of such analysis, over-ambitious, unsustainable programs may burden institutions within fragile states and may exacerbate contentious social and political tensions. Cross-sectoral planning also is required if donors are to *mix and sequence aid instruments to fit the context*, as the OECD-DAC urges (2005a). In Iraq and Afghanistan, the US military has focused development assistance on infrastructure improvements and short-term delivery of services designed to win the allegiance of the local people. However, fragile states require a mix of aid instruments (such as humanitarian aid, support for civil society, project support, and general budget support) designed and sequenced to address challenges that evolve as the context changes.

The OECD-DAC urges donor states to *align with local priorities and/or systems* (2005a) to avoid weakening recipient country institutions through competing parallel, donor-led systems. Ideally programs should be recipient-led and developed in partnership with host governments or where governments lack capacity or will, with what the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DfID) calls “drivers of change” such as regional governments, civil society, and the private sector. In practice, there is no formal consultation process directing the military’s dispersal of aid. Instead, the COIN manual advises field commanders to regularly conduct and update village surveys, to seek the advice of trusted local opinion-makers, and to

engage with women who control social networks, through small, targeted social and economic programs. In the stability operations manual, goals for community participation and ownership are articulated—“encourage community leaders to participate,” “work with the host nation government,” “make this effort a genuine partnership”—but beyond encouraging “face-to-face meetings,” the means of achieving these goals are left to the ingenuity of field commanders (U.S. Department of the Army, 2008a, 1-8, 4-4, C-2).

The OECD-DAC urges donor countries to *move from reaction to prevention* (2005a) in an effort to resolve the root causes of instability before a crisis is reached, to strengthen regional-problem solving organizations, and to help “fragile states themselves to establish resilient institutions which can withstand political and economic pressures” (OECD 2005a, 2). Through AFRICOM the US military exercises its Phase Zero soft power mandate through an instrumental use of development assistance in order to prevent terrorism against the United States from incubating in the fragile states of Sub-Saharan Africa (Ploch 2009). The Combined Joint Task Force/Horn of Africa<sup>5</sup> (CJTF/HOA), based at Camp Lemonier in Djibouti aims to integrate diplomacy, defense, and development efforts through collaboration with US government civilian agencies and the governments of host countries. The CJTF/HOA conducts projects designed to win hearts and minds; its recent projects include digging wells in villages, distributing shoes, and building a school cafeteria (CJTF/HOA 2009). Commenting on Phase Zero, Stewart Patrick has asserted, “the U.S. military is wholly unequipped to expertly address the structural sources of underdevelopment, alienation, and instability in target countries” (Patrick 2007).

The OECD-DAC urges donors to *focus on state-building as the central objective*, resting upon three pillars: [1] “the capacity of state structures to perform core functions; [2] their

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<sup>5</sup> The Combined Joint Operating Area (CJOA) consists of Sudan, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Djibouti, Somalia, Kenya and Seychelles.

legitimacy and accountability; and [3] ability to provide an enabling environment for strong economic performance to generate incomes, employment and domestic revenues” (OECD 2005a, 2). The importance of these three pillars is acknowledged by US military doctrine that guides stability and reconstruction activities in regions before, during, and post conflict. The doctrine sets ambitious objectives for stability operations within five areas: security; rule of law; social wellbeing; governance; and economic sustainability. However, the means of attaining these objectives are not stated nor are the complexities that fragile states encounter in achieving these objectives acknowledged. The COIN manual’s “Guide for Action” characterizes COIN operations as “armed social work” (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 299), but lacks guidance on specific steps that field commanders should take in the conduct of this social work. The COIN manual states that ideally both political and cultural advisors should be assigned at the company level, but realistically, due to personnel shortages, field commanders must improvise and:

... select a political and cultural advisor from among their troops. This person may be a commissioned officer, but may not. The position requires someone with ‘people skills’ and a feel for the environment. (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 291).

The 389-page COIN manual devotes three one-page tables to advice on how to rebuild and deliver essential services, establish institutions of law and governance, and revitalize and develop bottom-up economic activity. When restoring and building basic services, the manual directs commanders to be prepared to plan a macro assessment identifying national-level, long-term needs as well as a micro assessment identifying short-term, local needs, but no analytical assessment tool is provided (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 169). Commanders are directed to “work with the host nation to strengthen the economy and quality of life,” “to create an environment where business can thrive,” and “to work with the host nation to reduce unemployment to a manageable level” (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 173). They are told

“to encourage the host nation to develop and empower competent and responsive leaders,” and “to help (or encourage) the host nations to remove or reduce genuine grievances, expose imaginary ones, and resolve contradictions, immediately where possible,” although “accomplishing these tasks may be difficult” (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 172). These complex and often intractable issues, reduced to “tasks” in the military’s how-to manuals, have challenged development efforts for decades, leading skeptics to question whether aid and outsiders are capable of promoting positive development outcomes in fragile states. Yet the COIN manual expects field commanders to achieve ambitious development goals based upon no more than chapter’s worth of very general guidance, often in environments where active war fighting is occurring in parallel.

Directive 3000.05 brought the complex issues of fragile states to the purview of the Department of Defense along with *recognition of the political-security-development nexus*, as urged by the OECD-DAC (2005a). The new COIN doctrine acknowledges the failure of military power alone to win asymmetrical warfare. Former Commander of the Multi-National Force-Iraq, General David Petraeus issued COIN guidance to troops that defined the Iraqi people as the “decisive terrain” to be secured (2008). For long-term success in counterinsurgency, not only must the safety of local populations be ensured and their basic needs be met, but also economic, social, and political conditions must be established that pull people’s allegiance away from insurgents and toward a government recognized as legitimate. In the case of Iraq and Afghanistan (and historically in other countries as well) US military forces are not deployed as peacekeepers but as a combatant occupying force intent upon advancing US security interests, a role that complicates the political-security-development nexus. Army doctrine asserts that war-fighting operations and efforts to secure local populations may occur *simultaneously*, a practice

that has resulted in civilian casualties even as schools and hospitals are rebuilt, creating resentment of the US military and undermining the fundamental counterinsurgency rationale to “win hearts and minds.”

The OECD-DAC also warns well-meaning donors to *do no harm* (2005a) but deploying the military in development initiatives contains the seeds of harm. “Some of the best weapons for counterinsurgents do not shoot.” These words in section 1-153 of the COIN manual allude to humanitarian and development assistance as “weapons” of transformation and indeed, army publications refer to “money as a weapons system” or MAAWS:

While security is essential to setting the stage for overall progress, lasting victory comes from a vibrant economy, political participation, and restored hope. Particularly after security has been achieved, dollars and ballots will have more important effects than bombs and bullets. This is a time when “money is ammunition.” Depending on the state of the insurgency, therefore, Soldiers and Marines should be prepared to execute many nonmilitary missions to support COIN [counterinsurgency] efforts (U.S. Department of the Army 2007, 49).

These nonmilitary missions encompass a broad array of construction and service-delivery projects: maintaining security and essential services. However, using humanitarian and development assistance as a “weapon system” places in jeopardy those who deliver aid as well its civilian recipients and the projects themselves. In the battle over “hearts and minds” insurgents have every reason to target the “weapon system” that seeks to alienate the population from them.

The US military has distributed \$53.8 billion in Iraq and \$51.5 billion in Afghanistan as of 2010 for reconstruction (SIGIR 2010; SIGAR 2010). The influx of reconstruction money has been complicit in the culture of corruption that exists among government officials, local businesses, foreign contractors, and, in some cases military personnel, undermining the legitimacy of institutions of state and commerce. Out of 180 states on its Corruption Perceptions

Index 2009, Transparency International ranks Iraq 176 and Afghanistan 179 (Transparency International 2009). Rampant public dishonesty corrodes the legitimacy of the state in the eyes of its citizens and reduces the income available to families for food, clothing, and education. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) has found that 52 percent of Afghan adults paid one or more bribes totaling over \$2.5 billion during a recent 12-month period. The average bribe amounted to US\$152 in a country where per capita GDP is \$425 per year (UNODC 2010).

In circumstances of state fragility, the OECD-DAC urges donors to *act fast* in order “to take advantage of windows of opportunity and respond to changing conditions on the ground” (OECD 2005a, 4). Among US agencies, the US military is uniquely situated to respond on short notice with manpower and equipment, especially in circumstances where security is tenuous. The Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) is a program aimed at “winning hearts and minds” in which regimental combat teams in Iraq and Afghanistan bypass normal requisition channels to select projects, award contracts, and disburse cash reparation payments on-the-spot. As a result of CERP, significant cash has entered Iraq and Afghanistan’s local economies: as of mid-2010, \$3.84 billion for Iraq and \$2.64 billion for Afghanistan (SIGIR 2010; SIGAR 2010). The hope is that immediate, visible results from CERP projects may build momentum for future success but in many cases local institutions lack the absorptive capacity to maintain the programs and facilities funded by CERP. Audits conducted by the Special Inspector General for Iraq suggest that the resultant short-term, often ill-conceived projects fail to yield lasting capacity-building results for the local populace and institutions. According to the OECD-DAC “a plethora of discreet, short-term, uncoordinated projects” does not lead to successful development and therefore the OECD-DAC couples its advice to act fast with a qualifier: *remain engaged long*



*enough to give success a chance.* The OECD-DAC warns, “development is complex process that is not amenable to quick inputs and outputs” (OECD 2005a) and short-term, *ad hoc* responses are unsuccessful in building economic viability and government capacity. While economic assistance levels have remained high over the term of US engagement in Iraq and Afghanistan, the nature of military deployments creates challenges when putting this assistance to work in a way that yields long-term economic and social improvements. Tours of duty end for key personnel, troops and resources are shifted to new operating areas as military needs change, and overall security may deteriorate rapidly.

#### THE US MILITARY’S COMMITMENT TO POVERTY REDUCTION

Does the US military’s use of development assistance in the service of US national security and geopolitical interests’ accord with the pro-poor agenda that may ultimately lead to greater human security? The claim that poverty creates instability and gains popular support for counterinsurgents is embedded in the US military’s counterinsurgency doctrine. However, efforts at “promoting bottom-up economic activity, rebuilding infrastructure, and building indigenous capacity for such tasks” (DOD 2005, Section 4.5.1.) have not been realized in practice. In practice, as it pursues day-to-day stabilization activities, the military does not distinguish between humanitarian and development assistance (Brigety 2008). Aid on these terms includes vaccinating livestock, providing dental care, and building schools and health clinics. As a result, the purported goal of strengthening institutions through programs that include host country-defined goals and active collaboration with local people yields in practice to more easily managed discrete gestures of goodwill.

Audits of reconstruction programs in Iraq show the inability of the US military to address poverty meaningfully. There is no evidence of formal programs to increase local skills and competence and to transfer technical know-how. Because military planners fail to seek Iraqi

input, many projects have faulty designs that fail to meet local needs, maintenance requirements that exceed the technical skills of local people, and supply chains that are unreliable.

CERP provides US commanders in Iraq with unique discretionary authority over significant funds. According to a *Washington Post* article (Monday August 11, 2008, “Money as a Weapon,” Dana Hedgpeth and Sarah Cohen), generals with experience in Iraq consider CERP reconstruction projects to be an effective “hearts and minds” tactic, leading to a decline in violence and creating employment for potential insurgents, or as one marine colonel is quoted in the *Post* article as saying, “CERP allows you to develop our answer to al-Qaeda.” However, the evidence that CERP is successful remains anecdotal. A GAO audit concluded that there are no performance metrics in place with which to evaluate the outcomes of CERP projects.

One observer described a Navy Seabees well digging operation in Kenya near its border with Somalia that occurred over five months in 2007 at a cost of \$250,000. Although no water was produced, the well-digging was deemed successful because:

With chaos inside Somalia threatening the stability of the region and enabling the rise of extremism, using U.S. military assets to perform a humanitarian mission serves a dual purpose. It shows the face of American compassion to a skeptical population while also giving the military an eye on activity in the area. Winning hearts and minds with an ear to the ground is the new American way of war (Brigety 2008, 2 emphasis added).

Thus, the criteria for success is not positive outcomes for the people of Kenya but rather a valorized display of US compassion, as well as an opportunity to keep an eye on restless locals. This anecdote illustrates how the instrumental use of aid to advance US security objectives distorts the practice of development assistance. As Robert Picciotto has written:

In this new [post 9/11] security context, the aid industry is once again under pressure to further the geopolitical interests of rich countries. Not surprisingly, these interests do not always match the priority demands of poverty reduction” (Picciotto et al 2007, 156).

Instead of pro-poor development as a central objective, it becomes a by-product of “efforts to create conditions that advance U.S. goals” according to the U.S. Army’s stabilization manual. The irony is that unless development is effective, the real sources of instability that threaten US interests cannot be resolved. As Stephen Browne has written: “Development is about lengthy, localized, idiosyncratic change” (2006, 6). Not even the world’s most costly military force can overcome that fact.

## CONCLUSIONS

After 9/11 the United States government linked its own security to the wellbeing of weak or failed states in the belief that these states breed terrorism ripe for export to American shores. Therefore, this thinking goes, the United States must engage in “nation-building” with “failed” or failing states as a key element of its own security strategy. To this end, foreign assistance, both economic and military, is viewed as an important and effective instrument of soft power. US military doctrine has assumed a mandate to protect US security through development efforts both in US war zones (Iraq and Afghanistan) and in the fragile states of Sub-Saharan Africa where the US has no combat operations. The military’s development efforts aim to establish the US version of democracy and free market capitalism in fragile states. Using resources that the DOD is able to command relative to other US agencies, the military has moved to fill a gap in US development assistance efforts in fragile states.

However, the military’s priorities and instruments for engagement with fragile states suggest that adding development assistance to the US military’s arsenal of soft power diverts focus and funds from strategies—and the agencies that best implement them—of long-term poverty reduction into short-term measures intended to win hearts and minds. The military pursues development initiatives that suit US security objectives but are poorly suited to the local conditions, culture, history, and capacity of the host country. Development assistance that does

not produce results will hardly transform weak states into stable, free market democracies that no longer pose a threat to US interests. Wielding humanitarian and development assistance as a weapon is not a shortcut to security for anyone.

Historian William Appleman Williams identified the downward spiral that has beset efforts to advance US economic and security interests through political and economic reforms in developing countries:

“First: [the US] undertook to initiate and sustain drastic, fundamental changes in other societies. [...] Second: the United States identified itself as a primary cause of such changes. [...] Third: the United States wanted to stop or stabilize such changes at a point favorable to American interests. [...] Fourth: the effort to control and limit changes according to American preferences served only to intensify opposition within developing countries.” (Williams, 2009: 66, 67).

The complex challenges to development that fragile states present are not readily amenable to solution by outsiders. Instead of relying on its military, the US should commit itself to working collaboratively with the international donor community and as partners with those people and institutions within fragile states that are engaged in positive efforts to bring stability and prosperity to their lives and their countries.

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