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Bridging the “Post-Conflict Security Gap”

**Notes from the comments of Joseph J. Collins, Robert Perito
& Joanna Spear**

Dr. Joseph Collins began his remarks by stating that post-conflict security is an important concept that is in the headlines every day. At the same time however, the concept of post-conflict security is somewhat misleading. In an ideal world, war is followed by peace and conflict is followed by post-conflict. In the real world, bigger wars are often followed by smaller wars. Moreover, during smaller wars, ongoing reconstruction efforts may be taking place alongside the fighting and peacekeeping. Paradoxically, post-conflict situations may in fact be more complex than conflict situations. It is often assumed that some activities are germane to one phase of conflict. For example, that fighting belongs to the conflict phase, whereas relief, reconstruction and peacekeeping activities belong to the post-conflict phase. However, relief and reconstruction efforts often take place during the conflict just as fighting often continues during the so-called post-conflict phase. Humanitarian assistance planning was an important part of the preparation for the conflict phase of the wars in both Afghanistan and Iraq. Currently in Afghanistan, relief workers, peacekeepers and war-fighting combatants often operate within the same area. This may be the ultimate post-conflict reality today.

Dr. Collins described many of the effects of this modern-day blending of conflict and post-conflict phases. First, there is a collision between soldiers and aid workers where each appears to be more and more in the way of the other. Many in the aid community insist on the application of classic rules where peace meant the end of war. Soldiers, for their part often find themselves dealing with issues like irrigation and food supplies that are not covered by their field manuals. There is therefore a need for more adaptable aid workers and soldiers with mentalities that take them beyond the skirmish lines.

Second, security building and reconstruction activities are interactive and simultaneous. They do not, however, attract similar amounts of media coverage. Compare the difficulties of, for example, a reporter covering a car bombing and covering the national health care system in a developing country just coming out of war. Media coverage of two recent car bombings in Iraq has failed to highlight the fact that both bombings missed their intended targets. At the same time, little attention has been paid to the fact that one hundred per cent of Iraq's healthcare units are currently up and running at somewhere between ninety and one hundred per cent of pre-war effectiveness. Similarly, there is little awareness that eighty-two thousand Iraqis are currently working with coalition forces, or that ninety per cent of Iraqi schools are now open with two hundred and fifty thousand Iraqi teachers back in their jobs and on the pay roll. As a result, the success of reconstruction efforts can become hostage to the media. While guerillas may be unable to hold terrain, they can certainly monopolize headlines. Progress in Iraq and Afghanistan has been smothered by news stories of bombings and sadly, pictures of dead soldiers.

Dr. Collins focused the remainder of his remarks on U.S. efforts to build security in post-conflict Afghanistan. In Afghanistan, a variety of different instruments have been used to provide security. First, coalition military forces currently number about twelve thousand strong and are successfully countering a renewed enemy offensive. Approximately twenty-two of thirty-two provinces in Afghanistan now have good standards of security relative to threats of terrorism. It is more difficult to assess the lives of the people because it is only when police forces and systems of criminal justice are in place that relevant statistics and measurements become available. Therefore, at the moment it is difficult to judge scientifically what safety is like for the people of Afghanistan.

Second, security sector reconstruction has become an important part of more general reconstruction efforts. This is an important development given that during the first Tokyo donor conference, donors pledged between five and six billion dollars to Afghanistan, yet not one penny was pledged for reconstruction inside the security sector. Security sector reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan are primarily concerned with the army and police. Today, the army is approximately ten battalions strong and made up of about fifty-five hundred people, though this number is likely to rise to twelve thousand by the June 2004 elections. More important than these numbers however, is the fact that these soldiers have already proven themselves to be quite effective on the battlefield and are very popular among the people. It is expected that there will be five thousand police in Afghanistan by December 2003 and twenty-six thousand by June 2004, with most having been trained in the provinces.

Dr. Collins suggested that the key to security sector reform in Afghanistan is for the people to provide for their own security. Because this is a long-term solution, peacekeepers in the form of the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) have been deployed to meet short-term and medium-term security needs. ISAF is currently about fifty-five hundred strong and is deployed in an area of about two hundred and fifty square miles in and around Kabul. ISAF will hopefully expand under NATO command as a new Security Council Resolution has provided for. However, this will depend on contributions of forces and volunteers. Alongside ISAF, civil-military Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) have been created to enhance security, facilitate reconstruction and further the interests of the central government. Four out of the nine PRTs anticipated to be in place by February 2004 are currently up and running, each consisting of between fifty and two hundred people. Each PRT will cover between three and five provinces in Afghanistan with sub-PRTs developing as appropriate.

Dr. Collins concluded that the U.S. has also recently committed an additional \$1.2 billion to accelerate economic and security reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan, and is calling on other nations to make declarations of renewed funding by Fall 2003. Political developments including the constitutional loya jirga in December 2003 and elections during the summer or fall of 2004 are also going to be of crucial importance to the reconstruction of Afghanistan.

Robert Perito began his remarks by noting that in the immediate aftermath of September 11th, author Thomas Friedman said that the terrorist attacks did not mark a major intelligence failure, but rather a major failure of the imagination. Mr. Perito added that the first challenge to bridging the post-conflict security gap is revising our thinking about post-conflict environments.

Prior to the end of the Cold War, conflicts were generally fought between states and battles took place between armies. Peacekeeping usually involved the deployment of unarmed observers along some kind of a boundary agreed upon during peacemaking. The role of peacekeeping forces was to maintain that boundary and ensure that no parties to the conflict crossed the line. In 1992, then UN Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali issued his *Agenda for Peace* which divided peace operations into three linear stages: peacemaking, followed by peacekeeping/peace enforcement, followed by peacebuilding. The problem with this linear construct however, was that it provided a map that did not fit the territory after 1992. Following the Cold War, the nature of conflict changed and interstate conflict was replaced by intrastate conflict. In an era of “failed states” the international community was increasingly called upon to intervene not only to provide public order, but also to take over many of the basic functions of governance. Mr Perito referred to his experiences with UNOSOM II in Somalia. At that time, there were major peace conferences going on (peacemaking), military engagements being fought (peace enforcement), and a program in place to train a new police force (peacebuilding), all happening simultaneously. It is therefore not possible, as some seem to believe, to separate these parts and do one without doing the others. For example, one can’t engage in peace enforcement while not also being involved in nation building.

Robert Perito argued that in order to be able to think differently about post-conflict environments, it is necessary to define the problems that are leading to conflict. In previous peace operations and stability operations the problem has been variously defined as the result of: a humanitarian emergency; political and religious extremism; an absence of democracy; or the need for economic reconstruction. In Somalia and in the UNPROFOR phase of Bosnia, for example, the UN attempted to provide humanitarian assistance without resolving the conflict. In both cases, this strategy resulted in prolonged conflict. In Bosnia, according to High Representative Paddy Ashdown, “We thought that democracy was the highest priority and we measured it by the number of elections we could organize.” In Afghanistan, while the problem was viewed as a need for economic reconstruction, it is too dangerous for aid workers to move far beyond the capital. In actuality, the core problem in post-conflict environments has been one of establishing security and dealing with violence and lawlessness normally caused by civilians rather than military forces.

Mr. Perito suggested a possible solution to this challenge of establishing and maintaining security in post-conflict situations. In his pre-departure press conference on December 17, 2000, Bernard Kouchner, a senior UN official in Kosovo, said the “lesson of Kosovo” was that “peacekeeping missions need to arrive with a law-and-order kit composed of trained police, judges and prosecutors and a set of security laws. This is the only way to stop criminal behavior from flourishing in the postwar vacuum of authority.” Paddy Ashdown came to a similar conclusion for Bosnia saying that, “In hindsight we should have put establishing rule of law first. Everything else depends on it: a functioning economy, a free and fair political system, the development of civil society and public confidence in police and courts.” The import of these statements is two fold. First, the current doctrine, which views establishing rule of law as part of phase three “peacebuilding” is wrong. Establishing the rule of law is an immediate requirement for peace enforcement and is essential to creating security. Second, international intervention forces must include elements that constitute a rule of law mission, that is, constabulary forces, police, judicial teams and corrections officers. These elements must be present immediately

following the end of major combat operations. International rule of law forces must be present to act when local authorities are unavailable, unable or unwilling to perform their functions. Specially trained and equipped military and constabulary forces must be available to deal with looting and lawlessness and to protect vital infrastructure. Police and judicial authorities must be ready to deal with criminal activity and provide law enforcement. The first necessity for the intervention force is to break the cycle of impunity for those who commit acts of violence. The international intervention force must be able to provide local citizens with personal security and evidence that crimes and acts of violence will not be tolerated. If this does not take place, then additional aspects of the reconstruction process may be delayed, or will not take place. Instead, “spoilers” may be able to consolidate their positions and engage in terrorism and acts of violence to obstruct the peace process.

Mr Perito explained that while the U.S. has the world’s finest military, it is poorly prepared to provide a civilian partner to the military, that is, to provide civilian personnel that can perform these security functions in post-conflict environments. No single U.S. government department has responsibility for post-conflict stability operations. In fact, no government department has post-conflict stability as its core mission. A recent report by the RAND Corporation points out that the State Department and the Department of Defense have treated each new peace and stability operation as if it were the first one encountered and as if it were going to be the last. Lessons learned by those who conducted previous missions are often ignored or not drawn upon by those responsible for current missions. Despite more than a decade of experience in post-conflict stability environments the U.S. does not have civilian constabulary forces. The U.S. remains the only country in the world that relies on commercial contractors to staff its civilian components to police operations. No Federal agency has the mandate to organize and train civilian judicial teams of government prosecutors, judges or corrections officers to assist in restoring the rule of law in post-conflict societies. As a result, the U.S. must rely almost exclusively on the U.S. military, or on the provision of foreign forces, which may not be forthcoming or may be extremely slow to deploy.

Mr Perito suggested that establishing a secure environment following the end of major combat operations or military intervention requires the development of an integrated U.S. Stability Force. This Stability Force must have properly trained and equipped civilian components that are able to deploy quickly and provide the military with an effective civilian partner. Civilian components must include security forces and law enforcement experts, as well as effective civilian constabulary units. Constabulary forces fill the gap in the force continuum between the military and the civil police. In Kosovo, the UN and NATO both deployed highly mobile, company-size constabulary units that operated independently or in combination with other forces. Constabulary forces are equipped with armored vehicles and heavy weapons and can fight as light infantry, if required. Their primary function is civil disorder management and they are highly trained and properly equipped with non-lethal weapons for crowd control. They are also trained and equipped to perform police functions and can engage in law enforcement. In Kosovo, UN Special Police Units had military firepower, police skills and law enforcement authority. Of particular importance was their ability to conduct high-risk arrests of organized crime figures and to conduct counter terrorism operations. A U.S. Stability Force should also include regular civilian police forces. Like the UN Police in Haiti, Kosovo and East Timor, they should have full police powers that would enable them to carry weapons, make arrests and

engage in criminal investigations. Police would be responsible for providing a broad range of services, including traffic control, public security and community policing.

Mr. Perito explained that the constabulary and police cannot function effectively without the other two parts of the “justice triad,” namely courts and prisons. The U.S. must be able to quickly deploy teams of lawyers, judges, court administrators and corrections officers for service in post-conflict operations. These teams would have authority to act independently and could decide to handle sensitive cases on their own without referring them to local authorities. Their primary mission would be to insure accountability for human rights violations, provide guidance on dealing with war criminals, provide training and assist with reform of the local justice system. Corrections officers would supervise the handling of prisoners, oversee the release of those imprisoned for political offenses, insure the humane treatment of prisoners and help rehabilitate prison facilities. For Iraq, a U.S. Stability Force would probably include a civilian constabulary of two thousand five hundred personnel and civil police of between four thousand and six thousand personnel. If used wisely, such a force could have significant impact.

Mr. Perito suggested that creating a U.S. Stability Force will be challenging, however its contribution to creating post-conflict stability would more than justify the effort. Problems may include getting started, obtaining new legislative authority and funding, finding a location for such a force in the Federal Government, and most importantly, galvanizing leadership and political will necessary to establish and administer a stability force. Nevertheless, such a force would join together all of the elements required to effectively achieve sustainable security under a single, unified authority, and would create an effective civilian partner for the U.S. military. It would close the security gap that has plagued previous peace operations by providing for a smooth transition from fighting to institution building. A U.S. Stability Force would establish police and judicial authority from the outset, thus freeing the military to perform its primary functions and speeding its withdrawal. It would establish rule of law as a platform from which the other aspects of political, economic and social reconstruction could go forward in an environment conducive to achieving success. Finally, it would provide the U.S. with a force that could partner with similar forces from other countries or international organizations.

Dr. Joanna Spear focused her comments on international efforts to build security in post-conflict environments. She explained that the first question to be asked when thinking about bridging the post-conflict security gap is “who is to be secured?” The answer to this question is less obvious than it might seem. UN operations, for example, generally focus on securing the general population. Yet security problems in post-conflict environments are often associated with combatants and other parties to the conflict. An example of this can be found in the case of Liberia, when peacekeepers intervened but the two sides that were supposed to have been disarmed proceeded to engage in heavy fighting. This represents a dilemma in post-conflict environments where the local population is generally concerned with micro level insecurity (i.e., the fear of being attacked or raped), but the overall settlement is concerned with macro level insecurity, such as parties to the conflict reassembling to spoil the peace process or threatening a coup. This results in two different levels of insecurity which are difficult, although not impossible, to tackle simultaneously. Often choices are made about whether micro level or macro level insecurity is the bigger problem. Another feature of contemporary conflicts is “entrepreneurs of violence,” that is, individuals who profit from the continuation of war. The

model suggesting that development must take place at the same time that conflict is raging is therefore problematic. Reconstruction efforts can become the target of predation and can actually perpetuate the conflict further. It is difficult to judge when a conflict is really winding down and when it is safe and good to begin reconstruction.

Dr. Spear suggested that another element of the question “who is to be secured” concerns the different attitudes to force protection of the peacekeepers. These different attitudes can affect how the post-conflict security gap is filled. In the UN context, for example, it is interesting to compare the relatively timid attitude of Japanese peacekeepers in Cambodia with the robust attitude of Russian peacekeepers in Bosnia and Kosovo. It is also interesting to compare British and American efforts at post-conflict peacebuilding in Iraq. By May 3 2003, British soldiers in Iraq were already out of their body armor, patrolling on foot and interacting with the local population. They had also set up a local police force and council for reconstruction. In August however, six military police officers were assassinated. The British response was to drop leaflets saying that there would be no retribution because that would be to behave like Saddam Hussein. Instead, they would wait until delegations from the town came to discuss how they could restore good relations with the people. This response successfully stabilized the situation. Despite these positive efforts, British tactics and strategies have changed in Iraq, particularly due to attacks on their barracks. The British are now employing many of the counter insurgency techniques learned from their experiences in Northern Ireland. This poses the question, “if the British are so good at peacekeeping why are they being attacked so often?” Robert Fisk answers this question by pointing out that Iraqis do not differentiate between good and bad peacekeepers, rather, they view all peacekeepers as an occupying force. Nevertheless, it is important to remain aware of different cultural traditions of peacekeeping. Different attitudes to force protection have even percolated down to the private security market in Iraq, where different American and British security models are both available.

Dr. Spear explained that disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) has been an important component of past post-conflict peace operations. Of these three strategies, reintegration perhaps matters most. In areas where there is little or no arms control, and weapons are extremely cheap and readily available, disarmament has primarily symbolic meaning. It is more important to bring about a situation in which individuals do not feel the need to obtain or use weapons because they feel secure.

There are recurring dilemmas in UN efforts to engage in DDR, and unfortunately, there is also a lack of a learning curve between missions. One of these dilemmas is whether to prioritize victims or perpetrators. There is an obvious interest in securing justice for victims as well as providing them with the rule of law to enable them to function effectively. At the same time however, aggressors have the potential to undermine peace. Different answers have been offered to this dilemma. During the UN peace operation in Mozambique however, Aldo Ajello suggested that it is most important to placate those who have guns.

A second dilemma for DDR is timetabling. Effective DDR probably demands a three to four year timetable, yet political and financial imperatives make such a timetable extremely difficult to implement. If people are not properly reintegrated it is easy for them to drift back into being “entrepreneurs of violence.”

A third dilemma is the question of whether to retain existing security forces to provide protection from micro insecurity. This option is extremely tempting, yet pre-existing forces may have been perpetrators of violence during the conflict. Policing is another important element of the micro insecurity dilemma and is an area in which UN practice is extremely underdeveloped. Experience with UN peace operations suggest that there is such a difference in policing styles between nations that simply bringing different nationalities of police officers together can be problematic. Moreover, the UN is often poor at understanding the societies where it undertakes operations. For example, it may fail to understand what societal rules govern guns and combatants in different countries. An innovative idea might be to deploy ‘crack squads’ of anthropologists into the field to aid the international community in working with different societies.

A fifth dilemma in post-conflict peace operations is the temptation to take over state functions. Doing so may deprive people of ownership and a stake in keeping their own peace.

Dr. Spear concluded that the key to resolving post-conflict security problems is trust. Trust can be promoted in a variety of ways, for example, through transparency, radio broadcasts and verification. It is also crucial to reduce post-conflict game playing over disarmament, demobilization and reintegration – especially by spoilers. Finally, it is important to remain aware that the post-conflict security gap is notoriously difficult to close. In Sierra Leone, for example, UNAMSIL forces seemingly reconstructed traditional forms of authority, yet in the wake of a number of coup attempts there were large outflows of people from the capital for fear that the war was re-starting.