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FOSTERING STABILITY:

UNDERSTANDING COMMUNITIES IN COMPLEX ENVIRONMENTS

THE TACTICAL CONFLICT ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK (TCAPF)

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Prior to joining the JMRC staff, Dr. Derleth was the Senior Stability Advisor at United States Agency for International Development (USAID). He led the team which created an interagency assessment tool which helps identify sources of instability, design programming to diminish them, and measure the effectiveness of the programming. This work was incorporated into US Army and NATO doctrine and USAID Policy Guidance. He also participated in senior-level interagency task forces which developed and implemented multi-faceted counter-terrorism programs in the Sahel and East Africa. Dr. Derleth has deployed to numerous conflict areas, including Afghanistan, Colombia, Iraq, the Horn of Africa, West Africa, and Uganda.

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Dr Derleth graduated magna cum laude from the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. He has M.A. degrees from the American University and the University of Maryland and earned his Ph.D. from the University of Maryland in 1990. He is the recipient of two Fulbright Lectureships (Bulgaria 1992-1994 and China 1999-2001), a Fulbright Senior Specialist award (Uganda, 2002).

FOREWORD

The world - or at least the western world - has drawn a line under 'unsatisfactory' overseas interventions. Where ten years ago the academic-security debate was about 'Stabilisation', 'Capacity building' and 'Counterinsurgency', the spotlight - and the budget - has moved on.

Dr James W. Derleth, Honorary Fellow at SSI, has served us a timely reminder that understanding - hard won in blood and treasure - is all too quickly lost. I am pleased to introduce his relevant paper which is in the spirit of our applied strategy ethos. Comments are most welcome.

SIR PAUL NEWTON

DIRECTOR, STRATEGY AND SECURITY INSTITUTE

INTRODUCTION

The last 20 years have seen significant and unprecedented changes in the international system. Changes in logistics, media, and technology and the speed at which they have occurred, have diminished national and geopolitical boundaries, transforming the way individuals, companies, and states interact. These groups are being replaced by networks which range from sponsoring terrorism to identifying human rights abuses. While this process has lifted millions out of poverty, increased life expectancy, and created a global middle class, there have also been less beneficial consequences. They include a large and growing gap between rich and poor, the manipulation of social media to influence policy, declining access to resources and arable land, and increasing instability which has led to more than 50 million internally displaced people and refugees. Consequently, multi-national companies (MNCs) and governments are faced with a complex and challenging environment which has increased the number, diversity, and potency of challenges.

While there have been numerous commercial, government, and military attempts to understand the local environments where they operate, they have been ad hoc and too often, ineffective. A key reason has been an inability to understand the local environment in order to create a baseline which can be used to measure the impact or the effectiveness of their activities. This problem is reinforced by metrics that either have little relevance or don't improve decision making. In contrast to previous eras, local instability has significant national, regional and international ramifications and impact. This situation has been amplified by the growth of interconnected networks and a 24/7 media.

This environment requires a change in the way we think about and foster stability, how we identify the networks which facilitate and mitigate conflict, how we measure the effectiveness of activities which attempt to foster stability, and how these activities and networks impact society. A simple, standardized, population based, data driven, analytical tool which generates understanding from numerous sources of data (perceptions, cultural, scientific) is required. This paper defines stability, examines why conflict and instability occur, describes the challenges to mitigating it, reasons why most previous attempts have failed, and how the use of the techniques and tools of the Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF) creates more effective stabilization programming for commercial and governmental entities in complex and dynamic contemporary environments.

WHAT IS STABILITY?

Since there is no internationally recognized definition of stability, organizations have created definitions which reflect their world-view or mission. They range from the narrow "normal economic activity and nonviolent politics"[1] to "political systems which are representative and legitimate, capable of managing conflict and change peacefully, and in which human rights and rule of law are respected, basic needs are met, security established and opportunities for social and economic development are open to all."[2] A more useful definition is "conditions which the local populace regard as legitimate, acceptable, and predictable."[3] At the very minimum, an understanding of local conditions should include the level or potential for violence; the functioning of governmental, economic, and societal institutions; the general adherence to local laws, rules, and norms of behaviour; and whether investment--be it development or commercial, can make a difference. Since the environments where MNCs and governments operate differ culturally, economically, and

politically, there is a need to integrate local perspectives regarding both local sources of instability and solutions to them. Too often, outsiders' erroneous assumptions are used to determine whether an area is stable. For example, if a community has never had electricity, the lack of electricity would not likely foster instability. However, if a neighboring community obtains electricity, the lack of electricity could be a source of instability. Now that we have a definition of stability, let's examine the dynamics which foster instability.

WHY INSTABILITY AND CONFLICT?

Regardless of whether one uses a broad or narrow definition of stability, in order to stabilize an area, the factors fostering conflict must first be identified. As with stability, there is no universally recognized definition of conflict. However, conflict is closely associated with change. Change can be a powerful positive force if it creates new opportunities, expands access to scarce resources, improves livelihoods, fosters equality, facilitates security, etc. However, it can also foster conflict if only a few benefit. In other words, conflict can be the result of change which is not equitable.

Conflict is usually preceded by instability. While instability can come from many sources, there is a consensus that if certain factors are present, conflict is likely.[4] Key factors include grievances, key actors with means and motivation, and events which bring them together. Instability starts with frustrations (grievances). They are based on popular perceptions of unmet expectations or that their interests are being threatened. Noteworthy, grievances by themselves do not lead to instability. One billion people earn less than $2 a day. Are they frustrated? Perhaps. Do they all pick up weapons and foster violence? No. Why? Because either they don't have the means to turn their frustrations into violence or the

existing local institutions (societal or state) can address the grievances. Therefore, key actors are also required for instability. These are people with the means (weapons, money, etc.) and motivation to mobilize the population and turn their grievances into violence. The final ingredient is an event. Events by themselves are neutral – they simply occur. How they are leveraged determines whether events create a window of vulnerability leading to instability or whether they create a window of opportunity that fosters stability. For example, if an election is perceived as fair, it will foster legitimacy and stability. If it is perceived as fraudulent, it will foster instability.

Just as certain factors foster instability and conflict, there are also factors fostering stability. These factors, also called resiliencies, are the processes, relationships, and institutions that allow society to function and regulate itself peacefully. They enable people to meet their needs and defend their interests through non-violent means. Examples include ethnic or religious group cohesion, an open political process, NGOs providing services, a functioning and legitimate legal system, etc. Resiliencies foster economic growth, equitable access to social services, improve security, and facilitate government support. This helps prevent grievances from fostering instability. And just as there are key actors who use grievances to foster instability, there are key actors who use resiliencies to foster stability. An example could be a religious leader encouraging the peaceful resolution of a land dispute between two groups. As noted above, events are neutral actions which can mitigate or foster instability and conflict. As an illustration, the 2004 tsunami in the Pacific (an obviously negative event), changed the relationship between insurgents and the government in Aceh, Indonesia. Insurgents from the Free Aceh Movement temporarily agreed to a truce and cooperated with the government to help address the urgent
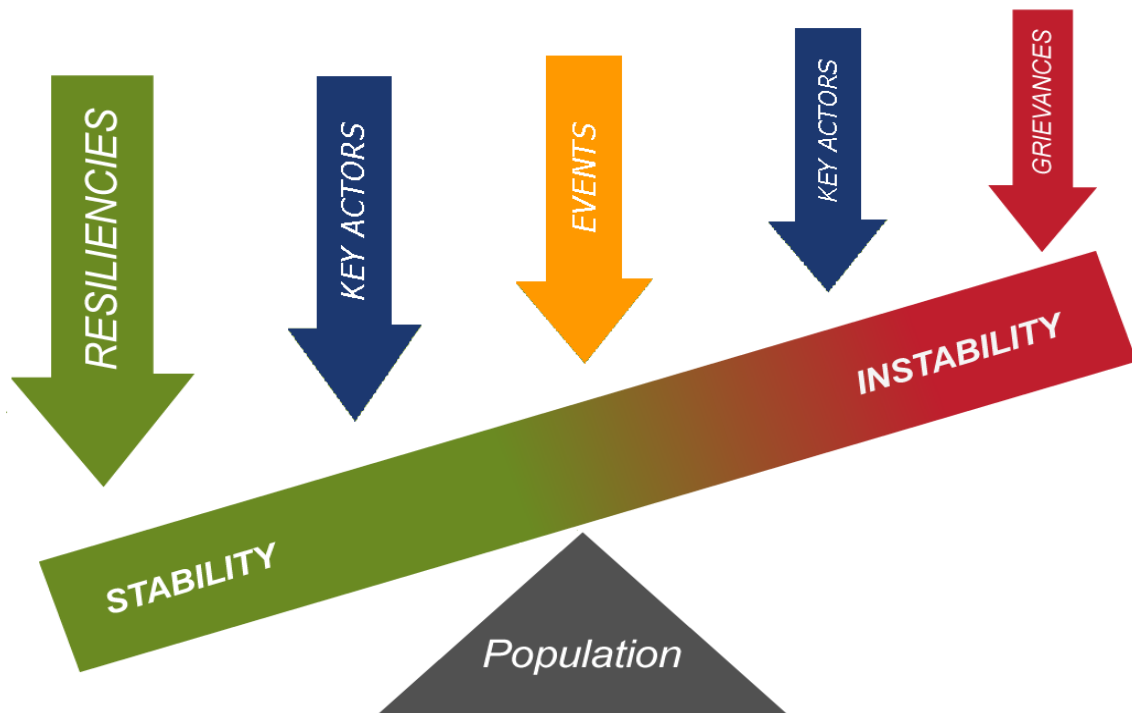
Figure 1. Conflict dynamic

humanitarian needs of the population. This cooperation led to dialogue and eventually to a peace agreement that ended a 30-year insurgency. This conflict dynamic is illustrated in Figure 1.

While these factors are the focal point of internal conflict, regional and international forces have become increasingly important. By providing money, weapons, recruits and/or eroding the authority and legitimacy of societal and state institutions, these forces can foster and/or accelerate domestic instability.

It is important to note that instability and conflict are extremely complex phenomenon. They don't occur simply because there is poverty, ethnic divisions, or competition over the distribution of natural resources. Nor do they happen only where societal and state institutions are ineffective. Instability and conflict occur when factors at multiple levels come together and reinforce each other. They

are ultimately the product of deep grievances, economic and political competition, irresponsible political leadership, weak and unaccountable institutions, and regional and global forces. In summary, instability occurs when the factors fostering instability overwhelm the ability of society or the government to mitigate them. Therefore, to prevent conflict or stabilize an area, it is imperative to first identify the grievances, resiliencies, key actors, and upcoming events in order to reinforce positive factors and mitigate negative ones.

CHALLENGES TO FOSTERING STABILITY

Local conflicts, abandoned or unprofitable investments and increasing national and international instability demonstrate the difficulty in executing effective stability programming.[5] There are numerous reasons for this situation. They include: broad theoretical descriptions of "stability" which

lack practical relevance; the inability to differentiate between development and stability; the lack of stabilization education or training; programming based on assumptions rather than analysis; an incomplete understanding of the operating area and popular perceptions; the failure of MNC and government operations to benefit the local population; and irrelevant stability metrics that measure outputs, not impact.

The wars in Afghanistan and Iraq fostered interest in the development of stabilization doctrine. In 2008 the US Department of Defense (DoD) issued Field Manual 3-07 (Stability Operations). It defined stability operations as the "various military missions, tasks, and activities conducted outside the United States in coordination with other instruments of national power to maintain or reestablish a safe, secure environment, provide essential government services, emergency infrastructure reconstruction, and humanitarian relief."[6] In 2009 the U.S. Institute of Peace published a civilian perspective entitled "Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction."[7] However, neither of these documents provided a framework which explained "how" to stabilize an area.

The conflation of humanitarian assistance and development with stability is another challenge. Since they haven't been trained in stabilization, most implementers believe if they improve the level of development in an area, e.g. provide potable water, educational opportunities, health care, infrastructure, etc., the area will become more stable. For example, one of the first things military personnel in unstable areas conduct is a "needs assessment."[8] It should therefore come as no surprise that mistaken assumptions lead to ineffective programming. When a US Agency for International Development Field Program Officer who served in Afghanistan was asked what stabilization meant to him, he said "good

development in an unstable environment." This is patently wrong for three reasons: time, focus, and location. Humanitarian assistance usually has a short time frame (30 to 90 days) and is focused on basic survival needs (food, water, shelter, security) which have been significantly impacted by natural or man-made disasters. Development is a long-term endeavor which seeks to alleviate the problems which limit sustainable societal improvements. Examples include healthcare, education, infrastructure, etc. Development activities generally take place in stable environments. In contrast, stabilization is a medium-term process which is focused on identifying and mitigating sources of instability. It takes place in unstable environments in conditions (e.g. insecurity, endemic corruption, a war economy, limited governmental legitimacy), which are usually significantly different than those in disaster or stable environments. Research clearly shows that implementing development programing in an unstable environment without properly understanding that environment often fosters more instability.[9]

Another challenge is the lack of civilian or military stabilization education and training. Consequently, groups trying to stabilize an area rely on their previous experience which was likely focused on overcoming development challenges or providing humanitarian relief. Education and training in identifying sources of instability, developing activities to mitigate them, and creating indicators for measuring local stability are just a few of the critical tasks required to conduct effective stability operations. Without the requisite training, people fall back on what they know best, development, humanitarian assistance, or for the military, enemy centric operations.

The lack of stability education and training leads to stability "assumptions." These include beliefs such as poverty equals instability, jobs foster stability, projects win

"hearts and minds" and extending the reach of the government fosters stability. An examination of over 175,000 projects in Afghanistan found these assumptions to be false.[10] Why? Because of the uniqueness of an unstable environment. For example, it is commonly believed that if there are more jobs, there will be fewer people fostering instability. However, this depends on whether the lack of jobs is fostering instability. In agrarian areas, there are often a large number of "formal" unemployed who work the land. Thus high levels of unemployment are the norm, and do not foster instability. One study which examined unemployment in Bagdad and Mindanao found there was a POSITIVE correlation between employment and instability.[11] This is because people with jobs could more easily support their families, giving them more time to foster instability by attacking government forces. The point is we can't make assumptions about instability programming. We need to identify the sources of instability and then create programs to mitigate them.

Successful stability programming requires a deep understanding of the local population. This includes identifying the major social and cultural groups (wealthy, poor, educated, illiterate, tribes, etc.); their interests and values; the formal and informal mechanisms used to resolve societal conflicts; and key influencers and the means they use to foster instability or stability. A crucial component is identifying local attitudes and behaviour. What might seem to an outsider to be irrational behavior may be entirely rational to the indigenous population.[12]

Closely associated with an understanding of the local population is ensuring that it benefits from activities in its area. If the population does not 'buy in' to a project or it is not clear how they will benefit, they are likely to be at best ambivalent to it and at worst, have an incentive to disrupt it. Some MNCs have implemented Corporate Social Responsibility

(CSR) programs to mitigate risk and ensure they are in compliance with corporate and international standards. The aim of CSR, as first elaborated by R. Edward Freeman, is to ensure a company's actions encourage a "shared value" for all stakeholders, i.e. the company, employees, consumers, and communities.[13] However, there is considerable evidence that the current practices of many MNCs fail to provide shared value. For example, the extractive industry sector is rife with examples of projects stalled, stopped, or abandoned because stakeholders were not significantly engaged and trust was weak.[14] Everyone knows that it is more difficult to rebuild trust than to create it. MNCs, governments, and militaries face similar challenges when trying to stabilize an area, i.e. understanding local communities and fostering partnerships with both the host country government and local communities. To be effective, these partnerships must be based on terms and outcomes which provide mutual benefit, arrived at through a transparent process. Only in this way will long-term stability be fostered.

Another significant challenge is the lack of stability focused metrics. In 2009, US Department of State led a process to create an "Integrated Civilian-Military Support Plan for Afghanistan." It included eleven "Transformative Effects" which if attained, would mean Afghanistan is stable! To measure progress along the way, each Transformative Effect has a series of measurable "Main Efforts" (95 in total) at the community, province, and national level."[15] If there are 95 main efforts, in reality there is no main effort. In addition to using a significant amount of staff time and field resources to simply gather the requisite data, the more important problem was that most of the Main Efforts were output indicators (Measures of Performance). In other words, they measure whether an activity has taken place not whether an area is stable. There were two main reasons for this situation. First, many

people don't understand the difference between impact (Measure of Effect) and output indicators. Second, sources of instability are local, whereas the performance measurements are often regional or national.[16]

None of the higher-level stability operations plans in Afghanistan attempted to identify local sources of instability before developing Lines of Operations or stability MOEs. Depending on their experience, mandate, and/or funding source, NGOs and government entities implemented a broad range of programs which had nothing to do with instability. Some of these programs even fostered instability as they created a valuable asset in an unstable environment. As an illustration, Combined Joint Task Force: Horn of Africa (JCTF-HOA) initiated a well drilling program because they assumed more access to water would foster stability. In contrast, it fostered fighting between pastoralists and farmers for control of this precious resource.

In summary, assumptions about instability-- rather than the collection and analysis of data to identify sources of instability, determined programing. This is a recurring problem as plans and indicators are often created either by people who don't understand stability operations or by policy-makers who conflate their values and experiences with what locals consider important. In summary, there are numerous challenges to effective stabilization programs. The next section examines how to mitigate them.

STABILITY OPERATIONS PROGRAMMING

Effective stability programming requires a methodology focused on identifying and diminishing local sources of instability, **NOT** addressing the perceived "needs" of the population. Most developing countries have a myriad of needs. Individuals or groups fostering instability aren't usually building roads, providing health care, or digging wells.

Yet they are able to gain support in the population. What explains this phenomenon? Spoilers are able to take advantage of the population's grievances because they understand the local community. Grievances are issues a significant percentage of *locals* - not outside experts - identify as important to their community. Examples of erroneous assumptions in Afghanistan included the lack of potable water, educational opportunities, or infrastructure; insecurity; corruption; etc. For example, in some areas of Afghanistan the Taliban gained support because they provided Sharia courts to deal with crime and local disputes, both major grievances.[17] As a member of the Afghan Parliament noted: "… people go to them [Taliban] because their justice is quick and seen as more effective than normal justice."[18]

Therefore, to stabilize an area, practitioners must be able to identify, prioritize, and diminish sources of instability (SOI). Sources of instability are usually a small subset of priority grievances. They are SOIs because they (1) directly undermine support for local authorities, (2) increase support for spoilers, or (3) otherwise disrupt the normal functioning of society. SOIs must be identified through an analytical process. Noteworthy, analysis often finds that the actual source of instability is only tangentially related to a grievance cited by the community. For example, although locals might cite the lack of water as a grievance, analysis might show the underlying source of instability is competition between two tribes over a borehole. The lack of water and tribal tensions are two very different problems which require two very different solutions.

SOIs cannot usually be addressed by a simple infrastructure project, e.g. building a road. However, a road may be a part of the solution. For example, if two tribes are hostile, getting them to cooperate in the process of building a road may help resolve the SOI. Note the infrastructure project is incidental to

the problem. It's the **process** of cooperating to build the road that is important. Another example: if the government's failure to maintain an irrigation system is being turned into a SOI by spoilers, a project that simply brings in an outside contractor to fix the canals will not necessarily increase support for the government. Why? If the government cannot maintain the repaired canals, then it will continue to be seen as ineffective, increasing popular frustration. Instead, the project should be conducted by the community--with government support--in order to increase the government and/or society's capability and capacity to maintain the canals in the future. In summary, the goal of stability programming is identifying and targeting the local sources of instability. Only after an area is stable can practitioners address needs through traditional development assistance. To foster stability, there is an obvious need for a simple, standardized, framework which identifies and mitigates local sources of instability.

THE TACTICAL CONFLICT ASSESSMENT AND PLANNING FRAMEWORK (TCAPF)

Recognizing the need for a comprehensive framework for civilian and military practioners, the Office of Civil-Military Cooperation at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) created the Tactical Conflict Assessment and Planning Framework (TCAPF). It draws from the Theory of Change which is based on the premise that in order to increase stability in an area, the causes of instability must be identified and mitigated.[19] TCAPF is based on five premises:

1. Instability occurs when the factors fostering instability overwhelm the ability of the government or society to mitigate them
2. A standardized, replicable, data-driven methodology is necessary to identify sources of instability

3. Local population perceptions are crucial to identifying causes of instability
4. Stability programming must be constantly monitored, with changes in the environment integrated back into programming
5. Measures of effect based on behavioral change are the only true indicators of success[20]

Through a five-step process (collection, analysis, design, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation), TCAPF identifies sources of instability, designs programs to mitigate them, and measures the effectiveness of the programming in stabilizing an area.

Collection

The first step is to gain a stability-focused understanding of environment. At least three types of information are required to understand an area:

- Operational[21]
- Cultural (major groups, their interests, conflict resolution mechanisms, key influencers and the means they use to foster stability or instability)
- local perceptions (crucial to understanding how spoilers gain and maintain support)

TCAPF uses surveys, social media and technology to gather and analyze cultural factors, information about the local environment, and local perception data from a wide variety of sources across key population segments. One of the most effective ways of gathering perceptions is the Tactical Conflict Survey (TCS). The TCS is a simple, four-question survey. When used consistently with a representative population sample, it helps identify grievances, how spoilers use them to gain support, and

creates a baseline from which to measure change over time. The later is especially important. As Lord Kelvin famously said: "to measure is to know."

The TCS questions were specifically designed to provide stability-relevant information with a minimum amount of effort.[22] Note that they are open-ended questions, which are much more informative than a typical survey that uses closed-ended questions such as "Do you have enough water – yes or no?" "How do you feel about your district government – good, bad, or indifferent?" "How do you feel about the local police – good, bad, or indifferent?" The questions can be modified, removed, or supplemented depending on the area. For example, if you were using the TCS in a Syrian refugee camp, you could remove Question One.

Instead of having to anticipate all the possible issues and associated questions/answers that might be important in a community, these four open-ended questions allow the local population to identify what is important to them. This means we can ask fewer questions, making the TCS a more useful tool in an unstable environment and minimizing survey bias and respondent fatigue. Note an implicit "Fifth question" after each of the others is "Why?" This follow-up leads to a more in-depth conversation and deeper understanding of the local grievances and key actors. Since being implemented in 2007 the TCS has been used by non-government organizations, development organizations, and NATO military formations in numerous areas of the world.[23]

Analysis

As anyone who has been to a doctor knows, until the malady is diagnosed, the doctor can't proscribe an effective treatment. Similarly, to implement effective stability programming, we need to understand what is causing instability. The Analysis phase of TCAPF uses the information gathered in the collection phase to identify and prioritize the local sources of instability. The unique analytical methodology also identifies resiliencies which can help mitigate the SOIs. This process is very
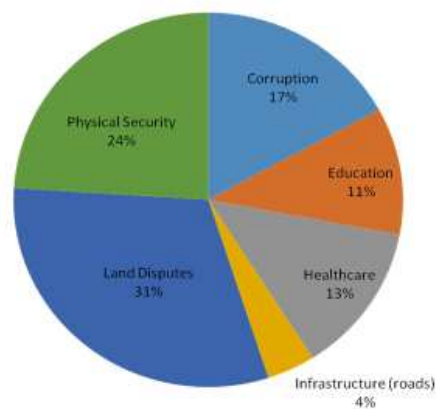

Figure 2. Tactical conflict survey

different from simply identifying societal needs or obstacles to development.

Design

After identifying the sources of instability, the next step in the TCAPF process is to design activities to mitigate them. This is accomplished through a series of "filters." The first filter is "Stability Fundamentals." This means an activity must, for example, **measurably:**

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1. Increase support for the government
2. Decrease support for spoilers
3. Increase institutional and/or the community's ability to solve societal problems

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If a proposed activity fulfills these three "Stabilization Fundamentals," the next filter- "Stabilization Principles," is applied.[24] These are widely accepted best practices which include local ownership, capacity building, sustainability, selectivity, assessment, results, partnership, flexibility, and accountability. Too often field personnel implement "feel good" projects or even worse, projects to show they did "something." Unless activities are designed to mitigate sources of instability, at best they will have no effect on stability and at worse, they will increase instability.

Implementation

Even if practitioners identify the local sources of instability and design appropriate mitigating activities, the way activities are implemented play a crucial in determining whether they will foster stability. For example, giving projects to one faction in a community will cause resentment from others, fostering instability. Funneling money through the wrong contractors or corrupt officials may contribute to instability.[25] Large influxes of cash in an area can foster inflation and corruption. The

lure of inflated salaries may also draw farmers from their farms, teachers from schools, and doctors from clinics—leading to more instability when the projects end.

Monitoring and Evaluation

To determine their effectiveness, practitioners must be able to not only measure whether their activities were implemented, but also whether they fostered stability. Therefore, it is necessary to track three levels of assessment: Measure of Performance (MOP), Measure of Effect, (MOE) and Overall Stability.

- MOP – identifies whether activities have been completed. For example, if the objective was to "increase police support in the community," an activity might include police training. The MOP for this activity would be "police trained." Note this only determines if an activity has been completed, not whether the police have more support in the community.

- MOE – assesses whether the stability objective(s) has been achieved. Continuing the police example, a Measure of Effect might be more information provided to the police by the population.

- Overall Stability – helps determine whether the net effect of the activities improved stability in the area. A basket of standardized stability-focused indicators - which can be augmented by a few context area specific indicators - gives practitioners a good idea if an area is becoming more stable.

Noteworthy, the number of indicators is not as important as what is being evaluated.[26] Since the goal is to prevent conflict or stabilize an unstable area, metrics should focus on "indicators of change" which show whether

the populations' behavior has changed.[27] Crucially, this information must be continually collected and analyzed over time. This allows field personnel to create a baseline and measure the impact of activities. A one-time gathering of perceptions is meaningless as they will change as a result of events, activities, etc. In summary, TCAPF uniquely combines data analysis, qualitative assessment, and forecasting capabilities with data visualization techniques to identify sources of instability, mitigate them, and prevent their reoccurrence.

TCAPF IN ACTION

TCAPF has been employed by civilian, government, and military entities in areas as varied as Afghanistan, the Philippines, Nigeria, and Sudan. The following case studies demonstrate its effectiveness as a unique, analytical, comprehensive, replicable methodology.

Stabilizing Helmand Province, Afghanistan

In 2006, the British 52nd Infantry Brigade was notified it would deploy to Helmand. Identifying the reasons for the difficulties faced by previous units in stabilizing the province, the Brigadier commanding 52 Bde knew that they could not be successful without a comprehensive and detailed understanding of the operating environment, particularly the challenge of gaining data from communities that could be geo located. Because of a dearth of reliable information on the non-security aspects of the environment, a significant gap between the perceptions of the International Security Assistance Forces (ISAF) operating in the area and the local population was identified. For example, civilian deaths, often referred to as "collateral damage" by ISAF, were having numerous negative consequences. Civilian deaths decreased popular support for the Afghan Government and the ISAF. Consequently, expensive development projects had no

impact in stabilizing the area. To mitigate this situation, a messaging campaign had been developed. However, it had no discernible impact because it had the wrong messages/images, targeted the wrong audience, and didn't include any measures of effect. In essence, the military and civilian entities had lost sight of their end state, i.e. stabilizing the area. They didn't understand the environment and consequently, most of their activities had little or no impact.

To address this 52 Brigade decided the "Population was the Prize." In order to stabilize Helmand, the Task Force had to understand the population and gain its support. Thus "influence" became the focal point of all of its operations. Central to this approach was a thorough understanding of the operational environment. Detailed population perception data from the TCS provided this information. Without coherent and relevant data, field personnel are often forced to implement programming based on the views of senior officials in capital cities or corporate headquarters who conflate their values and experiences with what locals consider important. This was the case in Helmand. Within a month of their arrival, TCAPF allowed 52 Brigade to begin to identify the sources of instability which were then geo plotted. This led to a two-pronged campaign strategy based on mitigating SOIs (which differed throughout the province) and executing influence operations accompanied by precise messaging to foster behaviour changes. Within three months, the Bde was able to accurately capture and view the effects of their activities, e.g. increasing support for the Afghan Government and decreasing support for insurgents. An improvement in stability was identified both through changes in people's perceptions and through changes in their behaviour (people moving back to their villages, more civilian road movement, decreased security incidents, etc.).[28] Recognizing its value,

TCAPF became an ISAF training requirement for all NATO forces deploying to Afghanistan. For some combat units, TCAPF was their primary means of obtaining meaningful data and from the communities they sought to influence. As a recent book about the UK's involvement in Afghanistan noted, TCAPF was the best effort by a British brigade in Helmand to understand the population on whose behalf they were fighting.[29]

Empowering Communities in the Philippines

In 2015 an NGO working in the Abubakar region of Maguindanao Province, the Philippines, was rebuilding villages which had been damaged in fighting between government security forces and the Moro Islamic Liberation Front (MILF). Realizing that instability was threatening their program, they asked IMPL.Project, a US based NGO specializing in Conflict and Stabilization, to implement a stabilization program to support their rebuilding work. Using TCAPF, IMPL. Project quickly identified some interesting dynamics: twice as many girls were attending school as boys, there was a lack of livelihoods because the community had experimented with new crops which had failed, cattle and horse rustling were growing, and there was increasing fighting between clans. Analysis found these issues were linked. Desperate farmers had taken their sons out of school, hoping the extra labor would increase profits. The out-of-school youth, depressed about their bleak futures, would use methamphetamines at night. To support this habit, the boys stole horses and cattle from neighboring villages, fostering clan violence.

Identifying the lack of livelihoods as the underlying source of instability, IMPL Project worked with the community to mitigate this challenge. The first step was to strengthen local resiliency by creating a livelihoods cooperative. Since farmers were losing significant income as a result of a dilapidated agricultural infrastructure needed to dry and store their crops, IMPL.Project and the cooperative identified a solar dryer as a way to minimize crop loss. This project resulted in farmers selling additional crops. These profits led to a 60% increase in micro-enterprises. More importantly, farmers stopped removing their boys from school, cattle and horse rustling decreased, and local religious council (Ulama) reported reduced clan violence.

The real test of both stability and desired impact came in December, 2016 when a Philippine military offensive pushed an Islamic State affiliate, the Maute Group, out of a neighboring municipality. They sought safe haven in Abubakar, but as the Conflict Opportunity Cost Model suggests, the community turned them away. Abubakar was stable and thriving and the community didn't want to undermine its progress.[30] This is a good example of using TCAPF to identify sources of instability, working with the community to mitigate them, and increasing community resiliencies to foster long-term stability. These examples demonstrate the effectiveness of TCAPF in both unstable and conflict environments.

THE BENEFITS OF TCAPF

The Tactical Conflict and Assessment Framework was designed by practitioners to prevent and/or mitigate conflict, foster stability, and measure impact. It is unique because it:

1. distinguishes between needs, grievances, and sources of instability

2. provides a common understanding of local sources of instability

3. is focused on mitigating the sources of instability, improving the effectiveness of programming

4. is data driven, standardized, and uses population-centric, behaviorally based evaluation criteria which can be geo

located and entered into in relational databases

5. uses data to measure impact

6. creates a baseline which allows the effectiveness of stability programming to be measured over the short, medium and long term

7. fosters continuity, mitigating the desire to "reinvent the wheel"

8. empowers field personnel who can use quantifiable TCAPF data to influence higher-level planning and decision-making

9. reduces required staff and resources as they are focused on stabilizing an area, rather than implementing ineffective projects

10. greatly improves the effectiveness of strategic communications. Because TCAPF identifies the issues which matter most to the population, it helps identify strategic communication themes which resonate with the population. What is a better message than "We understand your grievances and here is what we're doing to address them"

Overall, TCAPF greatly improves the effectiveness of conflict and stability programming operations because it is based on a detailed understanding of the local environment, not assumptions about it.

SUMMARY

To stabilize an area or prevent instability from fostering violence, two things must happen. First, local sources of instability must be identified and mitigated. Second, local resiliencies must be recognized and strengthened. Both are predicated on understanding the environment from the perspective of community which lives there. Just like the human body, communities' respond to changes in the environment. Therefore, to facilitate stability, communities need to be monitored and assessed regularly. The days of conducting a survey and then waiting 12 months to remeasure are gone. A simple, fast, technological feedback loop integrated into an inclusive planning framework which identifies reactions to actions taken and pinpoints course corrections is required. Because of its emphasis on societal engagement and metrics which can measure the impact of activities in terms of environmental, financial, governmental, and social returns, TCAPF is an especially valuable tool for impact investors and company CSR programs.

TCAPF is the only comprehensive, behaviorally focused, data-driven, population-centric instability and conflict framework which has been used successfully in numerous environments. Its success is result of making the local population, the people most effective by instability and conflict, the focal point for understanding and actions. This facilitates more effective decision-making, as decisions are based on understanding rather than assumptions. While specifically providing guidance for NATO forces in Afghanistan, the words of a General Stanley McChrystal could apply to MNCs or governments working anywhere in the world: "understand the local grievances and problems that drive instability and take action to redress them."[31]

NOTES

[1] U.S. institute for Peace and U.S. Army's Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute define stability as "Ending or preventing the recurrence of violent conflict and creating the conditions for normal economic activity and nonviolent politics." *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction.* United States Institute for Peace, Washington DC: 2009, 14.

[2] United Kingdom, Stabilisation Unit. *The UK Government's Approach to Stabilisation.* London: Stabilisation Unit, 2014.

[3] United States Army, Army Doctrinal Publication 3-07: Stability Operations (Washington, DC: Department of the U.S. Army, 2012.

[4] See U.S. Agency for International Development, Office of Conflict Management and Mitigation, *Conducting a Conflict Assessment: A Framework for Analysis and Program Development* (2004) and the World Bank's *Conflict Assessment Framework* (2002).

[5] In 2007, an analyst noted "the United States is still struggling to craft the strategies, mobilize the resources, and align the policy instruments it needs to help reform and reconstruct failing, failed, and war-torn states." Ten years later, little has changed. Patrick Stewart, "The U.S. Response to Precarious States: Tentative Progress and Remaining Obstacle to Coherence," *Center for Global Development* (July 2007) http://www.cgdev.org/content/publications/detail/14093/ (accessed January 17, 2011).

[6] United States Army, The U.S. Army Stability Operations Field Manual (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2009), viii.

[7] U.S. Institute of Peace, Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction (Washington DC: The U.S. Institute of Peace Press, 2009).

[8] This assessment is called SWEAT-MSO (sewer, water, electricity, academic, trash-medical, security, and other). Department of the Army, *FM 2-24.2, Tactics in Counterinsurgency.* (April 2009), 7-21.

[9] Wilder, Andrew, and Paul Fishstein, *Winning Hearts and Minds? Examining the Relationship between Aid and Security in Afghanistan.* Feinstein International Center, Tufts University. http://fic.tufts.edu/assets/WinningHearts-Final.pdf (accessed February 20, 2017).

[10] Ibid.

[11] Berman, Eli, et al. *Do Working Men Rebel? Insurgency and Unemployment in Afghanistan, Iraq, and the Philippines* Journal of Conflict Resolution. 55 (4), 496-528. http://scholar.harvard.edu/files/michael-callen/files/do_working_men_rebel.pdf (accessed February 20, 2017).

[12] Andrew Mackay and Steve Tatham, "Behavioural Conflict - From General to Strategic Corporal: Complexity, Adaptation and Influence", The Shrivenham Papers No. 9., December 2009, p. 12. https://www.files.ethz.ch/isn/110724/SP_9.pdf (accessed April 23, 2017). See also Dan Ariely, "Predictably Irrational", New York: Harper-Collins, 2008.

[13] Freeman, R. Edward and Jeanne Liedtka, "Corporate Social Responsibility: A Critical Approach." Business Horizons Vol. 34, Issue 4, July–August 1991: 92–98.

[14] "Changing the Game: Communications and Sustainability in the Mining Sector." International Finance Corporation, 23 October 2013: 7.

[15] Karl W. Eikenberry & Stanley A. McChrystal. *United States Government Integrated Civilian-Military Campaign Plan for Support to Afghanistan.* (August 2010) http://www.comw.org/qdr/fulltext/0908eikenberryandmcchrystal.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011).

[16] Tip O'Neill, a former Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, would certainly agree. He used to note "All politics are local."

[17] Alissa J. Rubin. "Expanding Control, Taliban Refresh Stamp on Afghan Justice." *New York Times,* October 7, 2010. http://www.nytimes.com/2010/10/08/world/asia/08taliban.html (accessed January 17, 2011) or Emma Graham-Harrison. "Weak Afghan Justice Bolstering Taliban" *Reuters,* December 17, 2010. http://in.reuters.com/article/idINIndia-53620620101216 (accessed January 17, 2011).

[18] Karim Talbi. "Shadow Taliban government rules Afghans' lives" *AFP,* January 26, 2010. http://www.google.com/hostednews/afp/article/ALeqM5gWl9u3ZojrsONNK4l9tiX5TViJyA (accessed January 17, 2011).

[19] This framework is based on Theories of Change literature. The key premise is that problems must first be identified in order to apply the expertise needed to solve them. While this seems obvious, too often programs are based on untested assumptions and approaches. Therefore, it is important to base activities on observable results, e.g. changes in behavior. See Schon, Donald. *The Reflective Practioner.* New York: Basic Books, 1983 and Ilana Shapiro, *Extending the Framework of Inquiry: Theories of Change in Conflict Interventions.* Berghof Handbook Dialogue, number 5, Berghof Center for Constructive Conflict Management, 2006.

[20] A behavioral approach uses quantitative and qualitative social science methodologies to understand groups, measure their current behavior, identify motivations, and predict future behavior.

[21] A useful tool to collect and organize operational information about an area is the PMESII framework. PMESII stands for Political, Military, Economic, Social, Infrastructure, and Information. This framework helps practioners identify key factors in each area and understand their relevance to local stability.

[22] Here is the rationale behind the four discrete questions:

1. In developing countries, the majority of people make their living from agriculture. As a result, their land is their livelihood, their wealth, and their future. Unlike developed states where large portions of the population move every year (15% in the US); people in developing countries only move if there is a very compelling reason to do so. Thus this question gives us insight into potential sources of instability that may be driving people from their homes, or into improving conditions that may enable people to return.

2. Notice that Question #2 is different than, "What do you want?" or "What do you need?" Unfortunately, those two questions reflect our usual approach to stabilization or conflict resolution. When we ask those questions, the typical response is a wish list of several items; it's like Christmas for the village in which you ask that question, and you are playing Santa Claus. In contrast, when we ask about the most important problems facing a specific population in a village or town (particularly in a clan-based, tribal society in which community is much more important than

the individual), we tend to get a much shorter and more focused set of responses which reflect actual grievances, not just wishes.

3. This question gives us insight into who is influential in the community and who people trust to address their problems. This effectively replaces a much longer list of closed-ended questions, "Do you trust the government?" "Do you trust the police?" etc. It also identifies key interlocutors we would not anticipate – e.g. local merchant, schoolteacher, etc.

4. Finally, we not only ask the local population to identify their biggest problems in Question #2, but we ask them in Question #4 to prioritize those problems– rather than us deciding for them what should be done first. This not only prioritizes things, but acts as a check on Question #2. If there is a discrepancy, we follow up again with the "Why" question to make sure we really understand the priority grievance(s) of the community.

[23] As an example of the latter, a US Marine battalion employing TCAPF in Helmand Province, Afghanistan, was surprised to learn that after security, the second or third biggest grievance (based on TCS Question #4) was the lack of cell phone coverage. The battalion commander said "this is something we had never thought about, as we considered phones a luxury." However, when cell phone coverage kept coming up in the Tactical Conflict Surveys, the commander made his patrols focus on the 'why?' They discovered that for the local population, cell phones were their primary means of swift and reliable communication. Without cell phone coverage, it could take a couple of days to find out about the security situation in a neighboring area and/or whether attacks might have injured family members. This caused a lot of anxiety and fostered a perception of insecurity, even though security was often not an issue. The battalion commander noted "without using the TCS to understand the population's perceptions, and especially the 'why,' we would never had known about this concern, understood why it was a concern, or done anything about it. For the population, cell towers were more important than jobs or clinics. The cell towers gave the population a perception of security and the ability to tell others about it. Without this baseline view of security, nothing else we did mattered in terms of popular support for us or the government." Interview with the author, Nawa District, Helmand Province, Afghanistan, May, 2009.

[24] "Stabilization Principles" was coined by the former USAID Administrator, Andrew Natsios. See Andrew Natsios, "The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development" *Parameters* 35, (Autumn, 2005): 4-20.

[25] Trusted local partners understand which individuals, organizations, and businesses should be avoided when implementing stabilization activities. The TCAPF process identifies these partners, which can change over time.

[26] David Kilcullen, "Measuring Progress in Afghanistan" (U.S. Military Manuscript, Kabul, 2009), 7.

[27] Church, Cheyanne and Mark Rodgers, "Designing for Results: Integrating Monitoring and Evaluation in Conflict Transformation Programs." Washington, DC: Search for Common Ground, 2006.

[28] Richard Wardlaw. "52 BDE's use of TCAPF" Presentation given at Quantico, VA, October 2008. LTC Wardlaw was in charge of Reconstruction and Stabilization for the British 52 Brigade during their Nov 2007 – April 2008 deployment in Afghanistan.

[29] Theo Farrell, "Unwinnable, Britain's War in Afghanistan 2001 – 2014" Penguin Random House, 2017, 212 – 214.

[30] The Opportunity Cost Model is based on the premise that instability and conflict will be reduced when it is "more costly" for spoilers to gain support from the community. Just as a healthy organism is more resistance to disease, a thriving community is less likely to support spoilers. See Böhnke, J.; Köhler, J.; Zürcher, C. (2015). Assessing the Impact of Development Cooperation in North East Afghanistan 2007-2013. Final Report. Bonn/Berlin: Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development.

[31]Stanley A. McChrystal. *ISAF Commander's Counterinsurgency Guidance.* August 25, 2009. http://www.nato.int/isaf/docu/official_texts/counterinsurgency_guidance.pdf (accessed January 17, 2011).