Civilian Surge: Key to Complex Operations[1]

Hans Binnendijk

The United States today manifestly lacks adequate civilian capacity to conduct complex operations—those operations that require close civil-military planning and cooperation in the field.[2] Examples of complex operations abound and include operations for stabilization and reconstruction (S&R), humanitarian and disaster relief, and irregular warfare and counterinsurgency. Troubled operations in places like Iraq, Afghanistan, and New Orleans underscore that point. Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff General Peter Pace and Secretary of Defense Robert Gates both focused attention on this need and transferred defense dollars into civilian programs. The 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review dedicated a chapter to "building partner capacity." At least two-dozen recent studies document aspects of the civilian capacity problem and recommend remedies. Various directives and statutes have been issued in the past few years that begin to provide partial solutions. And yet there has been no comprehensive review of all elements of this national need. This book is intended to fill that gap. Its main conclusion is that current efforts to build a civilian response capacity for complex operations are unfinished and that the Obama administration needs to dedicate additional attention and resources to complete the task.

Capabilities Lost

Four decades ago in Vietnam, the U.S. military had a strong civilian partner to work with in what was then called pacification. Programs of the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) were important components of the Civil Operations and Revolutionary Development Support (CORDS) program. CORDS

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[1] By Hans Binnendijk. This is an updated version of the executive summary of *Civilian Surge: Key to Complex Operations*, edited by Hans Binnendijk and Patrick M. Cronin.

[2] The definition of complex operations has changed over time—sometimes including combat, sometimes excluding it, sometimes encompassing disaster relief, sometimes not, and usually focusing only on missions overseas. For example, the Center for Complex Operations Website states that "stability operations, counterinsurgency and irregular warfare [are] collectively called 'complex operations.'" This book adopts a more expansive definition that includes humanitarian assistance and disaster relief, at home and abroad.

operations were relatively successful against the Viet Cong, but were trumped in the end by North Vietnamese regular forces in a massive, conventional invasion. In the wake of the fall of South Vietnam, U.S. military and civilian components let this important capacity to conduct complex operations lapse.

Attempts to avoid repeating the Vietnam experience produced restrictive guidelines governing American military interventions and assistance to foreign governments. Doctrines associated with former Secretary of Defense Caspar Weinberger and General Colin Powell that emphasized decisive use of overwhelming force had the unintended consequence of undermining skills required for smaller engagements. Military skills associated with stabilization and reconstruction operations withered, while America's Armed Forces became extremely proficient in high-intensity, net-centric warfare. A culture developed within the military that deferred to civilian partners to conduct what came to be known as "phase 4" or postconflict operations.

Rather than develop the capacity to fulfill this role, civilian departments and agencies, in the face of a strong cost-cutting mood in Congress, saw their skills and resources decline. USAID was compelled to reduce its Foreign Service and Civil Service staff from about 12,000 personnel during the Vietnam War to about 2,000 today. The United States Information Agency (USIA), which had more than 8,000 personnel worldwide in 1996, was decimated and forced to merge with the State Department. The State Department itself was underresourced and understaffed, sometimes having to forego any new intake of Foreign Service Officers. Other civilian departments of government had few incentives to contribute workers to national security missions.

Filling the Gap

Some reconstruction capabilities were inherent in the forces that invaded Iraq, but their mission was to capture Baghdad, not to engage in stabilization and reconstruction. Commander of U.S. Central Command General Tommy Franks made it clear that he had planned only for the invasion, not for postconflict operations. That mission was left to civilians reporting to the Secretary of Defense, but their number was small, their time to plan limited, and their resources negligible. Hence, in May 2003, when civilian and military skills were needed to manage postinvasion operations in Iraq, those skills were in short supply.

In January 2004, National Defense University published *Transforming for Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations*, which identified a "stabilization and reconstruction gap." It called on the military to adapt and develop the skills needed to fill this gap. Reluctantly at first, and under the pressure of two insurgencies, America's Armed Forces did eventually adapt. In 2005, Department of Defense Directive 3000.05 declared that stability operations were a core U.S. military mission to be accorded priority comparable to combat operations. Army occupational specialties were shifted to this new core mission by the tens of thousands. New joint operational concepts and field manuals were written on stability operations, counterinsurgency, and irregular warfare. In October 2007, the leaders of the Navy, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard issued a new Maritime Strategy that announced another important change in focus: "We believe that preventing wars is as important as winning wars." Operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere have created a large cadre of officers and enlisted personnel with some of the skills needed for complex operations.

The process of change came much more slowly on the civilian side. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee took the lead, passing several versions of the Lugar-Biden Bill, which created offices and funding at the State Department to begin to meet the need. That legislation was finally enacted late in 2008 as part of the National Defense Authorization Act. In 2004, stimulated by the introduction of the Lugar-Biden Bill, the State Department had created a new office, Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), which in turn drafted a new National Security Presidential Directive 44 that named State as the lead agency for reconstruction and stability operations overseas. S/CRS made heroic efforts to organize and develop civilian capabilities for complex operations, but the new office was underfunded, understaffed, and unappreciated within the State Department. Whereas the Department of Defense (DOD) had dedicated tens of thousands of military personnel to these operations, S/CRS had a staff of fewer than 100, most of them detailees. Important efforts by Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice to pursue "transformational diplomacy" were also underfunded.

Inevitably and necessarily, DOD was forced to fill the overall gap with military resources and personnel and with private contractors. Traditionally civilian functions were increasingly performed in Iraq and Afghanistan by DOD. Foreign assistance was provided through the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP). Provincial reconstruction teams (PRTs), usually dominantly military, implemented local reconstruction projects. Civil Affairs units previously relegated to the Reserve

Component and seldom called to Active duty became front-line coordinators. Public affairs, too, became a province of the military, with new strategic communication efforts and military information support teams doing what USIA had done in an earlier era. Human terrain teams, guided by cultural anthropologists, provided the kinds of important insights traditionally provided by State Department experts.

These DOD efforts became global. All regional commands developed small interagency civilian cohorts within the command, usually called Joint Interagency Coordinating Groups. In two cases, U.S. Africa Command and U.S. Southern Command, major efforts are ongoing to strengthen civilian capabilities within the commands that are under State Department deputies, yet still ultimately serve under military commanders. Legislation was enacted to make global DOD authority to train and equip allies using DOD rather than State Department funds, thereby reducing State Department policy oversight.

A New Capabilities Imbalance

The imbalanced growth of military and civilian capabilities for complex operations in 2005–2008 caused several problems that underlined the call by DOD leaders for increased resources for their civilian counterparts. First, the imbalance created the impression internationally that American foreign policy was being "militarized." Second, military personnel performed functions that civilian counterparts with greater training and reach-back to civilian agencies could perform much more effectively. Third, many in the military came to believe that only DOD is at war, not the Nation. Fourth, civilian voices in interagency policy discussions carried less weight because they lacked operational resources. Fifth, as a result, civilian agencies began to balk at the dominant role played by DOD. And sixth, as the prospect of future defense budget constraints became clearer, and ground forces focused almost exclusively on irregular warfare,[3] some analysts grew concerned that inadequate attention was being paid to preparing for major combat operations.

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[3] Department of Defense, *Irregular Warfare Joint Operating Concept*, version 1.0, September 11, 2007, defines *irregular warfare* as: "A violent struggle among state and non-state actors for legitimacy and influence over the relevant populations. Irregular warfare favors indirect and asymmetric approaches, though it may employ the full range of military and other capabilities, in order to erode an adversary's power, influence, and will." Available at <www.dtic.mil/futurejointwarfare/concepts/iw_joc1_0.pdf>.

Broad Policy Options

The Obama administration has several broad options to consider with regard to building civilian capacity for complex operations:

- It can follow policies that seek to limit the need for complex operations and not develop S&R capacity much further. But while it may be able to avoid wars of choice, like Iraq, there will likely be other contingencies, small and large, where benign neglect may not be an option.
- It can continue to let DOD shoulder the main burden, with military personnel performing essentially civilian functions, augmented, where necessary, by DOD civilians. But this does not resolve the issues of balance and effectiveness noted above.
- It can rely more on civilian contractors. But, as chapter 7 suggests, there are limits to the use of contractors, and the United States may already be exceeding those limits.
- It can accelerate efforts to build the capacity of civilian agencies by providing additional resources, creating new authorities, and changing existing interagency structures.

This book recommends pursuing the fourth course of action. What capacity to build, how much of it, and how to organize and manage it are at the center of this volume.

The issue of addressing the imbalance in executive branch capabilities was highlighted by Presidential candidate Barack Obama, who pledged "to increase both the numbers and capabilities of our diplomats, development experts, and other civilians who can work alongside our military." The Obama administration will have the opportunity to retool the U.S. Government for the 21st century and strengthen America's civilian capacity to meet a wide array of complex global challenges.

This Study

The title *Civilian Surge* is not intended to convey the idea that the need for this civilian capacity is short term. In fact, a sustainable capacity is required. The book was written by a team of experienced analysts drawn primarily from National Defense University. Chapters were prepared under the general direction of the editors. While

there is some duplicate and occasionally contradictory advice, compelling findings and recommendations emerge. Each chapter concludes with a set of findings, the most important of which are summarized below. Neither the findings nor the analysis that supports them necessarily reflects the views of National Defense University, the Department of Defense, or any other department or agency of the U.S. Government.

Major Findings and Recommendations of the Study

- Complex operations encompass 6 broad categories of missions, with 60 associated tasks, 48 of which in 5 categories are probably best performed by civilians. This chapter finds that 5,000 deployable, active-duty government civilians and 10,000 civilian reserves would be needed to perform these 48 tasks on a sustained basis in one large, one medium, and four small contingencies. In today's global security environment, structuring civilian and military capabilities to meet this 1–1–4 standard is prudent. This requirement substantially exceeds current executive branch planning assumptions, which call for 2,250 active-duty civilians and 2,000 civilian reservists.

- Lead agency and lead individual approaches are inadequate to deal with complex missions involving multiple departments and agencies. It is recommended that the use of "empowered cross-functional teams" with sufficient authority and resources to control departmental and agency activities within the scope of specific mandates. The National Security Council's oversight role also needs to be strengthened.

- DOD has adjusted well to its new, complex missions since 2003. In anticipation of constricting defense budgets, DOD needs to invest in high-end military capabilities.; As a result, DOD needs its civilian partners to build up their capacity to conduct complex operations. Recently, DOD has enhanced its authorities to deploy its own civilians, should other departments fail to deliver. DOD plans to organize and train these personnel should be more closely coordinated with similar planning by the State Department.

- The State Department concentrate on developing "S&R–savvy" diplomats, who should be plugged directly into "seventh-floor" executive crisis management

activities. It is also recommended that key interagency planning and operational functions should be moved out of the State Department to a new interagency coordinator, allowing it to more strategically target its resources for diplomatic readiness needs in underserved regions. Taken together, the findings==lead to the conclusion that a new, empowered cross-functional interagency team should inherit several of the functions of S/CRS.

- USAID should be the operational agency charged with training and equipping civilians for complex missions. This will require doubling its personnel strength and endowing it with new authorities akin to those associated in the past with the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and new funding to reimburse other agencies that provide personnel for overseas deployment. USAID also will need to undergo a significant cultural change. To promote that change, and to reflect its new mission, USAID might be renamed the Agency for Development and Reconstruction (USADR). The reconstituted USAID/USADR might have two basic divisions, one for each major function.

- Domestic civilian agencies and the Intelligence Community have significant skills that would prove most useful to the successful completion of a complex operation. But overcoming bureaucratic, structural, and cultural barriers of domestic agencies may require special legislation. Domestic civilian agencies should be given a statutory mission to participate in overseas complex operations, just as many of them now have with respect to domestic contingencies, as well as modest budget increases to tie their new responsibilities into existing capacity deployment programs. The Intelligence Community is preoccupied with counterterrorism operations, and additional assets are needed to enable greater contributions to complex operations.

- The use of contractors in U.S. military operations has been a constructive factor since the Revolutionary War. But the ratio of contractors to military personnel is at an all-time high, with the consequence that Federal departments and agencies are losing core competencies, contractors are not well supervised, and cost efficiencies may be less than estimated. It is recommended that dropping the presumption that favors outsourcing civilian tasks in complex operations, instead increasing the government civilian workforce in some agencies and improving

contractor oversight.

- How the Federal Government might organize itself to educate and train the many civilians needed for future complex missions needs to be assessed. Efforts to provide this education were initiated in the 2006 Quadrennial Defense Review but have stalled, in part because the demand for new educational programs has not been fully articulated or resourced and is resisted by those departments and agencies in which education has little traditional support. It is recommended that the incoming administration direct efforts to define and develop the learning elements of the emerging national security operations. This will require dedication and a commitment to resourcing across the executive branch and will call for the establishment of a new academic entity for this purpose, possibly at National Defense University.

- The total cost of the required civilian capacity discussed in this study to be about $2 billion annually. Some of these costs are already embedded in current executive branch budget requests. New approaches, such as a combined national security budget presentation, may be needed to enhance congressional support for these funds.

- How the needed civilian capacity should connect to its military counterpart in an overseas operation must be considered. We conclude that important efforts at civil-military integration and cooperation have taken place within the confines of the military, but that these do not address the fundamental problem of the absence of civilian infrastructure to lead U.S. efforts during complex operations. It is recommended that the creation of new regional Ambassadors' Councils, surge capacity to absorb interagency influx at key Embassies, and easier civilian access to military transportation and materiel during a crisis.

- Homeland security events, such as the response to Hurricane Katrina and management of the consequences of a major terrorist attack, are also complex operations that require collaboration and skill sets similar to those needed in overseas operations. DOD will likely never be the lead agency in the homeland, given constitutional and legal constraints. Issues of state sovereignty and the unique relationship between a governor and a state's National Guard—in other than Title

10 status—preclude a traditional command and control relationship, even within the uniformed community. Add Federal/state/local/tribal, and even private-sector entities to the mix, and complexity goes off the chart. Nonetheless, the synergies between homeland and overseas complex operations need better development to take full advantage of the similarities.

- Overseas complex operations are seldom undertaken by the United States alone, and that the civilian capacities of other nations should be harnessed at an early stage. Key international institutions include the United Nations, North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, the European Union, the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund. Recent experience in Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan indicates that coordination among these institutions has been inadequate, and that a "comprehensive approach" is needed. NATO is seeking to develop such a comprehensive approach with the European Union, but Turkey and Cyprus tend to veto such cooperation within their respective organizations, to the detriment of ongoing operations. A major effort is needed to address this problem.

- Connecting with nongovernmental organizations and a broad representation of local actors is critical to success in complex operations. In fact, unless we are able to engage effectively with indigenous populations, we cannot achieve the political, social, and economic goals for which the military was committed in the first place. The study highlights six key steps to promote engagement with local actors. Success may depend on early engagement and planning, enabled by open communications networks with maximum sharing of unclassified information with civilians, an area that needs more emphasis.

Managing Complex Operations

The chart below brings several of these findings and recommendations together to depict how complex operations might be more effectively managed in the future. The current lead State Department role in interagency coordination and planning is replaced by an "interagency coordinator," a strong, empowered, cross-functional interagency team that reports to the National Security Council. A senior member of the National Security Council is responsible for overseeing this coordinator and

field operations. The Departments of Defense and State make major financial and personnel contributions to empower the interagency coordinator.

A reconstituted, enlarged, and refocused USAID/USADR would be the main operational agency to train and equip for complex operations. It would have FEMA-like authorities and resources to reimburse other agencies for their contributions to a specific operation. Domestic civilian agencies and departments would receive new authorities, budgets, incentives, and responsibilities to participate, working closely with the agency. The civilian reserve corps and contractors would report primarily to USAID/USADR and, in certain cases, to domestic agencies.

Overseas, the regional role of the State Department would be strengthened, and ambassadors would be in charge of operations in time of peace and deterrence (phases 0, 1, and 5). Military commanders would take the lead in time of conflict (phases 2 and 3). Command arrangements are most difficult in the immediate postconflict stage (phase 4); during this phase, close personal cooperation is required between the ambassador and the combatant commander. Command should shift to civilian leadership as soon as significant combat operations have ended, as decided by the President with the recommendation of the National Security Advisor.