

Briefing Memo

The purpose of this column is to respond to reader interests in security issues and at the same time to promote a greater understanding of NIDS.

A “briefing” provides background information, among others. We hope these columns will help everyone to better understand the complex of issues involved in security affairs. Please note that the views in this column do not represent the official opinion of NIDS.

**Armed Force’s Contribution to Peace Support Operations (PSOs)
Debates over ‘Oil-spot Strategy’**

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Introduction

Since the end of the Cold War, contribution to Peace Support Operations (PSOs) has become increasingly important as a new mission for armed forces. PSOs by armed forces cover all the way from peace-enforcing interventions in domestic and regional conflicts to establishing democratic institutions and shoring up market economies, as well as post-conflict humanitarian, reconstruction, and development assistance. Armed forces are expected to extend their combat and logistics support capabilities to PSOs. However, armed forces were not designed with contribution to these objectives in mind. The primary mission of armed force is to use soldiers and firepower against an enemy, and to win battles with minimum loss. Military logistics and rear echelon support organizations are created to ensure efficient implementation of it. In recent years, Military Transformation and the Revolution in Military Affairs (RMA) have greatly advanced the modernization of armed forces and are leading to great leaps forward in combat capabilities. But these reforms do not point in the same direction as the expectations for PSOs that have been built up during the same period.

In these first few years of the 21st century, there were cases of PSOs being launched while military intervention was still in progress, as well as cases of armed intervention by international society in states supporting terrorism or beset by humanitarian crises. As a result, while PSOs are supposed to be eliminating attacks through the use of armed forces in the course of their implementation, one PSO methodology that has been proposed in recent years is the so-called “oil-spot (ink-spot) strategy.” This strategy was devised as an occupation zone policy during the Vietnam War, and its roots can be traced back to the colonial wars of the

19th century. Now it is attracting renewed attention. Here follows a short introduction of the debate regarding the “oil-spot strategy” as a PSO method.

Mind the Gaps

Even as military modernization was making rapid advances following the end of the Cold War, contribution to PSOs was also being positioned as a major mission for armed forces. While these are both issues deeply related to operations, there has rarely been any debate regarding their relationship each other. Nevertheless, the following two issues have been raised in view of the military operation against Iraq in 2003, and the ensuing stabilization and reconstruction operations.

(1) Direction Gap

First, the reality is that the US forces of today modernized by Military Transformation and the RMA are not necessarily prepared for PSOs. As has been pointed out by former US Defense Secretary Melvin Laird, this problem can be dated back to the period immediately after the end of the Cold War, when none of the high ranking officials in the US Department of Defense were able to predict that PSOs would become one of the military’s main mission areas in the 21st century. In particular, the strategy put forward by former Defense Secretary Donald Rumsfeld, which called for a combination of information technology (IT), precision-guided weapons, and special forces to end a combat in a short period of time (the so-called Rumsfeld Doctrine), was not concerned with the long view of what to do for a PSO after a main combat was completed. In other words, the direction of military modernization was not the one needed for PSOs.

For example, post-conflict economic reconstruction after the end of the Cold War, like that seen in Iraq’s post-war reconstruction, has been more complex than that during the Cold War, mainly because the character of conflicts has changed, particularly since the beginning of the 21st century. Mary Kaldor has termed conflicts in the post-Cold War international society to be “new wars” characterized by societal relationships in the midst of globalization, or in other words, community confrontations based on tribal and religious identities. The method used by the warring groups participating in these “new wars” is guerrilla tactics. Guerrillas in the past were apt to control a region and its population while avoiding battle with regular enemy forces. However those in the “new wars” aim to dominate the population by excluding anyone with a differing identity. Identity differs from ideology in that it is often innate, and since it cannot be changed easily, exclusion of differing identity means driving out people who are members of such groups (opposition forces).

Concerning the Iraq stabilization and reconstruction issue, stabilization operations by the Coalition of the Willing have taken on moping up operations of remnant hostile forces, coupled with a tinge of confrontation based on identity. Moreover, armed groups opposing the coalition use terror as a resistance tactic. In the case of Iraq, in other words, a “new war” described by Kaldor has continued to flare after the end of a conventional war. While the US forces have responded with a modernized army, the problem is whether units built to perform capably in conventional war can function effectively in peace-enforcing interventions or PSOs when a “new war” is going on. A direction gap exists here.

(2) Time Gap

While the direction gap is a strictly military issue, the “time gap” issue is related to both the modernized military and to civilian organizations such as development aid institutions. Hans Binnendijk and Stuart E. Johnson argue the effect of Military Transformation on PSOs basing on the cases intervened by US forces. The main point of their discussion can be summarized as follows: As demonstrated by US forces in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), Military Transformation makes it possible to definitively end conflicts in a short time during military interventions. The problem, however, lies in what happens after a military intervention. Where Military Transformation enabled US forces in particular to complete military interventions in a short period of time, the process leading to civilian organization-guided reconstruction remains unchanged from past practice.

In conventional warfare, invasion forces strike enemy troops in outer area first then roll forward on to capital area. In this process, enemy troops will be destroyed sequentially from peripheral to center. After the enemy capital has fallen, any residual enemy forces have little capability for action and cannot do much to destabilize security. Modernized armed forces, on the other hand, use precision-guided weapons for repeatedly attack the enemy’s critical sites (command centers, communication facilities, logistics bases, etc.) toward the goal of a quick victory (fall of capital city). However, this method of defeating enemy forces leaves a large number of residual forces intact. This means that, even after operations move to the PSO stage, intervening foreign forces are confronted with destabilization of security by residual enemy forces. As a result, even after battle phase due to military intervention has ended, foreign armed forces must continue to occupy an area to ensure post-conflict stabilization and security. Moreover, stabilization and security maintenance must be carried out parallel to reconstruction activities in the political and economic sectors. This can allow civilian organization-guided reconstruction to start earlier, and can shorten the period needed by foreign forces to ensure stabilization and security.

From Mopping-up Operations to Reconstruction of Key Areas—The ‘Oil-spot Strategy’

Stephen Biddle of the US Council on Foreign Relations has asserted that resistance to the Iraq stabilization campaign implemented mainly by US forces was primarily due to Sunni Muslims determined to protect their own identity. The four provinces where the Sunni faction is concentrated shares 85% of the total armed terror and attacks, while the remaining 14 provinces where 60% of the population lives accounts for no more than 15% of the total. This comes close to Kaldor’s description of the “new war.” In addition, in regards to the economic assistance and democratization efforts in Iraq, Biddle notes that the identity confrontation is not solely between the Sunni and the US military, but threatens to break out between the Sunni faction, the Shia faction, and the Kurds, as well. Therefore, while economic assistance can have the effect of moderating tensions between communities composed of differing identities, an instantaneous effect cannot be expected. Moreover, too-hasty democratization in conditions where such identity confrontations exist can lead to situations where opposing factions engage in unnecessary mutual recriminations for votes with the effect of making the confrontation even worse.

Taking those into account, Biddle has introduced a proposal by Andrew F. Krepinevich, Jr., that calls for an “oil-spot strategy” in place of the mopping-up operations currently being going on. This calls for reconstruction of key areas ahead of other regions, with concentration of armed forces and development assistance at those locations, to completely exclude attacks from hostile armed groups in order to proceed with reconstruction and development. By using armed force to forcibly suppress attacks from enemy forces, a PSO can be started during the armed intervention or while the conflict is continuing, thus shortening the time gap. Above all, specific examples of successful post-conflict reconstruction can be shown to the local population, so that support for the PSO can steadily spread out to surrounding regions like an oil-spot spreading on cloth. Of course, transformation of an attack-oriented stabilization operation targeting armed groups into a purely defense-oriented one cannot be expected to improve the situation. The main objective for the reconstruction of key areas described here is to disassociate the ordinary population from the armed insurgents. However it is impossible for US forces or for the newly organized Iraqi Army to guarantee security across all of Iraqi territory at this stage. Therefore the objective area to maintain security from attacks by armed insurgents should be limited to critical locations. Then, over time, the secure areas will spread outward. On the other hand, there are three objections that can be raised regarding this strategy. First, as Krepinevich notes, it requires the long-term participation of US forces, and it is doubtful whether US policy leaders or US public opinion will tolerate this. The next objection, as already discussed above, is that modernized US forces are not necessarily suited to this kind of mission. And a final objection, as Biddle points out, is that it is probably more

desirable for this kind of mission to be assigned to military units organized with the local population than to rely on foreign military units.

An oil-spot strategy that involves major participation by military units consisting of members of the local population can be expected to moderate the inter-identity tension that amplifies the destabilization of post-conflict security. Moreover, since it minimize the participation of foreign military units, wining the public support of home will become much easier for the country that dispatches armed forces for PSOs. The key here is determining whether military units consisting of members of the local population can acquire the capability to execute the oil-spot strategy in a short enough time. This is an issue of Security Sector Reform (SSR).

PRT and ‘Oil-spot Strategy’

The Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT), a concept that first made its appearance in post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan, and which was also later introduced into Iraq reconstruction activities, is similar in nature to the above-described oil-spot strategy. Both strategies incorporate a military sector and a reconstruction and development sector, and both pursue security and reconstruction and development efforts at the same time. In addition, neither one makes any attempt to develop uniform reconstruction activities nationwide, but instead puts priority on stabilization operations and reconstruction and development in specific areas, the results of which are then heralded to the population in surrounding regions in order to secure the support of local populations for reconstruction activities. Possible secondary effects include smaller troop deployment by foreign military units and improved cost effectiveness for PSOs.

However, the PRT and the oil-spot strategy, which is described by Biddle, exhibit some differences as below. First, the PRT military sector is not equipped with anything except small arms for self-protection. The reason for the arms restriction of PRTs is rooted in its action concept, which calls for the military sector to keep in step with the reconstruction and development sector, although they sometimes remain under separate command structures. The reconstruction and development sector places importance on acceptance by the local population, and is therefore concerned that arms in the military sector be limited to the minimum required for self-protection so as to avoid unnecessary aggravation of the local population. This is similar to the principles adopted by UN Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs). By contrast, the oil-spot strategy aims for perfect security in the targeted region, which means that the involved armed forces must be reasonably strong. Its aim is to show to the local people that reconstruction and development is building on the foundation of security success, thereby to win their trust.

Another difference is the use of military units that consist of members of the local population. In a PRT, it is assumed that military activities will be carried out by foreign military units, with the development and training of local military units usually being carried out independently of the PRT reconstruction activity, as a part of SSR. Biddle, however, asserts that the oil-spot strategy requires utilization of military units consisting of local population. In other words, SSR is assumed to be a stage prior to reconstruction and development, or to have been put into practice at an early stage of it, and is therefore a prerequisite for the oil-spot strategy.

Desirable Response

Although PSO is one of the main missions for armed forces in the post-Cold War period, new problems have become apparent with military modernization and “new wars.” With stabilization operations in Iraq taking on an ever-longer time frame, Krepinevich and Biddle have proposed the oil-spot strategy as a solution. The key to making the oil-spot strategy a success is, first of all, to present local populations with examples of success in both ensuring security and reconstruction and development at as early a stage as possible. These actions can be expected to shorten the strategy’s time gap.

In order to make the oil-spot strategy be successful, a suitable response from the armed forces of donor countries is necessary. On this point, European countries have experienced in PSOs dispatched to Africa. At the present time, however, activities by European armed forces are at the SSR support stage, where education and training support to improve PSO capabilities is provided to the armed forces of African countries. Since SSR is not an easy activity, donor countries must also be prepared to create and nurture a local armed force that is trustworthy in both operationally and ethically, how long it may take. Establishment of military discipline is particularly essential for winning the heart and minds of the ordinary population, as well as for maintaining relationships with the development aid institutions and other civilian organizations that will be joining in the oil-spot strategy. Moreover, structures to provide SSR need to be strengthened. In addition to the creation of units with modernized equipment and an emphasis on mobility and strike capabilities, armed forces of donor countries should also establish special units for PSO and SSR missions. These units will be required to provide highly specialized education and training at home. Furthermore, the police and judiciary, development aid institutions including international organizations, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) should cooperate to supply education and training as needed, and should enhance regular exchange for the smooth implementation of the oil-spot strategy. These can help alleviate the direction gap, and can also have the effect of narrowing the time gap by hastening the start of reconstruction assistance.

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