

“Changing the Definition of Success in Military Interventions”
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I have been asked to talk today about the development challenges faced in interventions and post-interventions.

Unsurprisingly, this topic is inextricably linked to issues of security. The scope for effective development in interventions is more strongly shaped by security than any other single factor. There are all too many recent examples of this. In Kabul, with the benefit of the UN stabilization force, there has been a mini-boom of economic activity in the post-Taliban era. Traveling outside of Kabul, however, is a different story. Robberies and murders are commonplace. International aid organizations, in particular, have been targeted – with violent attacks on development workers occurring each week.

The tenuous security situation in Iraq has also been well documented. The bombing of the UN headquarters and sabotage against key infrastructure have clearly undercut development efforts. Tellingly, 5 months after Saddam’s ouster, the number of aid organizations operating in Iraq has been declining. Typically, post-conflict situations at this stage are experiencing a major upsurge in the numbers and types of development agencies going in.

The overriding influence security has on development isn’t just a trait of US-led military interventions, of course. Wide swaths of Liberia and eastern Democratic Republic of Congo have been inaccessible for years due to the threat of violence. Even after ceasefires have been negotiated in these countries, aid organizations only dare to tread outside the major urban areas at the mercy of militia leaders.

This is the post-intervention development environment of the early 21st century. The better we understand this environment, the more effective will be our intervention efforts.

Beyond the insecurity, understanding the contemporary intervention context means explicitly recognizing that nearly all recent interventions have occurred in failed states. This means that the humanitarian and security crises we face in interventions are acute *symptoms* of a deeper phenomenon - *political disintegration*. Whether they ultimately crumble from within, or as a result of external pressure, the political systems in these countries lack legitimacy. The political institutions that exist are largely focused on perpetuating the cronyistic, predatory, and criminalistic methods that are both a means and an ends of their rule. The state has been effectively hollowed-out. Therefore, when an intervention is undertaken in such contexts, *we should recognize from the outset that this will necessarily be a state-building exercise.*

Yet, to most people intervention means military intervention. By approaching an intervention on primarily a military basis, however, as important as that dimension is,

there is a tendency to overlook the fact that, ultimately, it is a *political reconstruction* process that is required.

This is more than simply a definitional issue. It greatly shapes how the intervention is undertaken and its prospects for a successful outcome.

So what makes an intervention successful? The question cuts to the core of a fundamental tension observed in recent interventions. Military and some political leaders frequently want to define the objective of the intervention as narrowly as possible: “regime change,” “securing a capital city,” “opening up corridors of humanitarian assistance.” This is understandable. The more narrow the objective, the greater extent to which its attainment remains within the control of these actors. Narrow objectives are also attractive in that they are seen to protect against “mission creep.” They reduce the risk of getting bogged down and shorten the steps to an exit strategy.

This all sounds highly reasonable and desirable. Yet, when we take into consideration why these interventions are occurring in the first place – *the political disintegration of failing states* – we see that a narrow objective is inadequate. Planning as if it is, overlooks the types of resources and capacities that are required to be successful.

Nonetheless, the focus on the military aspect of an intervention remains very common. The intervention in Afghanistan is regularly described as a success for toppling the Taliban. President Bush’s speech on the U.S.S. Abraham Lincoln marking the end of major hostilities in Iraq was widely viewed as the conclusion of a successful military intervention. Just on Monday this week, in justifying the departure of U.S. troops from the coast of Liberia, Pentagon spokesman Lt. Dan Hetlage said, “Our mission - to facilitate ECOMIL efforts to stabilize Monrovia and create conditions for humanitarian relief efforts to resume, that mission - has largely been accomplished.”

However, these military triumphs did not make for successful interventions. Indeed, as many had predicted going into these interventions, the military aspect, as dangerous as it was, was just the prelude to...“the hard part.” *Rather, success for an intervention in a collapsed state is the creation of viable political, economic, judicial, and security structures – what I will refer to as political stability.* In other words, the domestic political structures that emerge after an intervention need to be sufficiently robust to allow for the withdrawal of international military forces without the country disintegrating once again.

This definition of success is a much taller order than that of the traditional definition.

However, it is only by broadening, rather than narrowing, our scope in these interventions that we will be able to properly size up the issues at hand and approach them with the comprehensiveness they require. These issues are integrated. While the expertise needed to address the security, socio-economic, judicial, and political challenges to a successful intervention fall among a variety of entities – they must be addressed in an integrated manner if any dimension is to be effective. In other words, the broader definition

provides a framework from which the more narrow components can be effectively addressed. Starting from a narrow approach, however, risks excluding some of the key actors needed for a successful outcome. Unfortunately, in my view, in recent years there has been a decline in cooperation and integration across these sectors compared to the trend seen during the 1990s. Further indication of this compartmentalized outlook is the manner in which President Bush's \$87 billion supplemental request for Iraq has been considered by Congress. Only the \$20 billion component for reconstruction has been challenged as potentially dispensable.

Establishing a clear definition of success in interventions is imperative if we are to see a more stable and peaceful world. At this juncture in history, collapsed or collapsing states pose a persistent threat to international stability – and are the most likely precipitants of future interventions. This instability is typically manifest in civil conflict, which over the past decade has comprised 9 out of 10 of the world's armed conflicts. Civil conflicts – and their tragic humanitarian and development consequences - nearly always arise in weak, autocratic states. Furthermore, when left to fester, these conflicts spill over into their neighbors. As we look over the horizon, it doesn't require great imagination to envision situations in which new interventions will soon be needed – be they in Burma, North Korea, Haiti, Zimbabwe, or elsewhere. Simply put, the problem of effectively undertaking interventions isn't going away any time soon. We need to get better at addressing them. This will require more clearly defining what we are doing: building legitimate institutions that will enable a country to govern itself in a secure and welfare-enhancing manner.

Recognizing that political stability is the goal going into these interventions frames how a whole series of related issues affecting *development effectiveness* are approached. Five of the most important, in my view are:

- Expanding the Security Bubble. As little development progress is possible without security, clearly this must be the starting point for any effective intervention. Recognizing that interventions are nearly always taking place in societies shaped by autocratic political forces should orient the security structure of an intervention. Groups that benefited disproportionately under the cronyism of the old regime are going to be loathe to give it up – they have a lot to lose. Armed resistance by loyalist militias, rather than exceptional, should be expected. So should be the tactic of targeting development workers. Those privileged under the previous system realize that their prospects for regaining power are much greater under anarchic conditions than if the lives of most citizens are improving. These forces have ruled by coercion and therefore will instinctively use fear to reach their ends. Counter-insurgency and intelligence-gathering capacities as well as extended geographic coverage are required to deal with these expected threats – all within the broader aim of creating a secure-enough environment to allow development and investment to proceed. As part of this, a community policing capacity, by providing a human face to the security dimension of an intervention, will better engage and build trust with the general population. The establishment

of such rapport will, in turn, help to isolate those bent on violent resistance to the intervention.

- **Building Early Momentum.** Successful interventions hinge significantly on their timeliness. In all interventions, there is a window of opportunity following the cessation of major combat. A previous (again typically autocratic) leadership has been removed. The coercive measures and predatory political and economic structures they employed have been displaced. Among the general population - whether due to defeat, war-weariness, awe of a superior military force, or merely a strategic withdrawal – there is typically a period of cooperation and openness to change. Similar openings have been documented after major natural or economic disasters: there is widespread recognition that the old ways have failed. Consequently, there is unprecedented willingness to take far-reaching reforms. Former Polish Deputy Premier, Leszek Balcerowicz described this, in the context of the East European transition away from communism. He called it “the period of extraordinary politics” where cooperation among a wide spectrum of individuals and groups is possible.

This period, however, is of limited duration. It is either channeled in a positive direction, or the old, familiar norms reassert themselves. Entrenched interests – or political opportunists – will sense the power vacuum and try to fill it. Simultaneously, as the period of crisis begins to fade, and given that the general public has only been exposed to coercive, unaccountable, and exploitative institutions, these same features are likely to emerge in the reconstituted political system. Furthermore, in contexts that have been defined by autocratic rules, political control is synonymous with personal security and prosperity. Political exclusion amounts to constant vulnerability and economic hardship. In an intervention context typified by such norms, the incentives to take matters into one’s own hands preemptively are immense. This is why it is imperative that an international intervention move in decisively with a clear post-conflict plan.

The typical pattern of intervening incrementally may result in missing this vital window, when momentum can be multiplied. A robust show of force, quick hitting humanitarian assistance, and a more equal distribution of economic opportunities will all send unmistakable signals that there has been a break from the past and that the new direction will be more rules-based, equitable, and transparent.

- **Jobs as a Stabilizing Force.** A key step in stabilizing a country is reestablishing a sense of normal routine as quickly as possible. For many people, this means getting back to work – be it in the formal or informal sector. An intervention should give high priority to maintaining or stimulating employment, however possible. While the economic stimulus this generates is clearly an advantage, the main objective of a jobs mobilization strategy is its stabilizing contribution. In the short term, this may require subsidizing certain sectors. In many formerly autocratic societies, the bulk of employment is in the public sector. State

enterprises and ministries should thus be supported, at least initially and minus the top patronage-based leadership, even if financially inefficient.

In many developing countries, the agricultural sector comprises over 50% of household employment. Investing attention and resources into ensuring this sector has the inputs, equipment, and support it needs to continue functioning can also be highly stabilizing.

In countries with high levels of unemployment, public work schemes - addressing sanitation, maintenance, or repair of infrastructure - should be initiated. Again, for the short-term, the tasks undertaken are less important than reestablishing routines and engaging a restive population, particularly its young men.

In the same vein, to the extent that a domestic military force exists, enlisted men should be paid and deployed in public works activities. In countries dominated by militias, this would be coupled with organizing generous and timely demobilization packages. In many cases, the young men, (or children), serving as foot-soldiers have few skills. Their motivation for fighting is mostly financial – propped up by psychological manipulation. Providing these fighters with an alternative helps to defuse this potentially destabilizing factor in an intervention. This also separates militia leaders (or warlords) from their main base of support.

All of these initiatives – job creation, public work schemes, community organizing, demobilization - are those in which development workers have invaluable experience and expertise. Given the scale and geographic dimensions of such operations, the timely deployment and coordination of development agencies will greatly increase an intervention's likelihood of stimulating employment and establishing constructive routines.

- Decentralization and Devolution of Power. Achieving the objective of political stabilization also involves considering the spatial dimensions of an intervention. There is often an instinct to focus the majority of an intervention's efforts on the capital city and at the national level. However, if we again consider the autocratic context from which these crises have emerged, we will recognize that it has often been the *over-consolidation of power* in the center that has led to the grossly inequitable and unaccountable circumstances that have precipitated the instability in the first place. An intervention strategy that decentralizes decision-making and the allocation of resources can help redress this imbalance and contribute to stability. Such a strategy can get resources closer to communities. It can also help to break-up the established top-down, centrally controlled culture.

Furthermore, a decentralized approach empowers a broader array of individuals. We see time and again in these interventions that even if public institutions are not functioning, individuals working in fields such as health, agriculture, small business development, law, and social services, among others are highly committed to helping their compatriots – often at great risk to themselves. These

are the people the development dimension of an intervention should be working with as early on as possible. Yet, too frequently, mobilizing these public-service professionals, even on an ad-hoc basis, is put on the back-burner until national political structures have been organized. I contend that the sequence should be reversed. Giving these development-oriented professionals a platform from the start enables the timely targeting of resources to communities where they are needed while empowering an often neglected, though highly valuable, cadre of individuals. The positive momentum and stabilizing effect this creates will, in turn, contribute to the reconstitution of a more accountable political system.

In terms of the political reconstruction, starting at the local level and working up gives communities experience with representative government before the national political structures become set. These local jurisdictions will then be in a much stronger position to stand up for their constituents and act as a check on national authorities when they come to power. For that matter, by first establishing representative political structures at the local level, the door is opened to the emergence of popular leaders outside of the traditional political hierarchy.

- **Civil Society as a Building Block for State-Building.** Another legacy of an autocratic government is a weak civil society. Few independent associations are likely to exist. Individuals and organizations have learned that taking initiative to address issues of concern, even if they are non-political in nature, can be dangerous. Extensive networks of surveillance by the ruling party have bred distrust, fear, and a reticence to speak openly. Communities have little experience in addressing collective action challenges. In short, development efforts in post-interventions often encounter passive and disorganized local communities – exactly the opposite of what is needed for participatory development. And, as development practitioners have long known, it is the participatory element that enables the appropriate prioritization of community needs, local ownership of an initiative, project sustainability, and the community empowerment needed to address future challenges. For a development response to be effective in a post-conflict environment, therefore, much attention is required to stimulate and build a viable civil society at the local level. Not only will this contribute to more effective development but it will also create a valuable mechanism for holding public officials accountable and enforcing transparency.

Interventions that put more emphasis on rebuilding structures than empowering local communities are bound to face limited success. Indeed, in contexts of ongoing insecurity, an overemphasis on infrastructure is highly vulnerable to acts of sabotage. (The \$9.4 billion the U.S. is proposing to spend on building new electrical and water systems in Iraq would appear to be particularly susceptible in this regard). Dispersed investments in people and communities at the local level, on the other hand, while less prominent, have a higher likelihood of being sustained. In the meantime, they are simultaneously engaging the general population, giving them more control over their futures, and dissipating whatever popular support for the perpetrators of violence that may exist.

There are, of course, many other issues to consider from a development perspective in a post conflict setting. The key theme I am highlighting is that interventions must be comprehensive to be successful. When we consider the nature of the problems and the context that warranted the intervention in the first place, nation-building-*lite* is bound to fail. Responding in a piecemeal or compartmentalized manner will produce limited results. Creating a stable political situation requires an *integrated* intervention – involving military, political, economic, and humanitarian dimensions among others. No one sector can achieve a successful outcome on its own.

By highlighting these topics, I am also trying to underscore that interventions involve *building institutions*. I realize that makes many people uncomfortable. Either it is too ambitious, too presumptuous, or perceived as some form of neo-colonialism. Yet, if we recognize that success is dependent on reconstituting failed states, then building viable institutions is indispensable.

Approaching interventions comprehensively raises a number of general policy questions. I'll touch on just a few:

- Resources. Undertaking more timely and comprehensive development operations in conflict and post-conflict interventions will require a significant commitment of resources. More than financial resources, this entails augmenting the capacity of the UN, bilateral agencies, and NGOs to quickly mobilize on a national scale. The incremental build-up we typically see in humanitarian and development activities during a post-conflict situation is out of sync with the front-loading of investment that can maximize the window of opportunity that exists early on in an operation.

The issue of resources raises the question of how much industrialized and middle-income countries are committing to their military and development assistance budgets to prepare for such interventions. As has been well documented, development spending has been on the decline since the end of the Cold War. Yet, if one accepts that state failures are going to continue to occur – and in the process precipitate significant regional and global security concerns - then the rationale for committing more resources and capacity to these contingencies is warranted. Even if a country is philosophically opposed to committing combat troops in an intervention, there remains an enormous need for police and stabilization forces as well as reconstruction resources.

- Planning for Post-Interventions. One of the “advantages” of interventions is that they allow for a certain degree of planning beforehand – a luxury not available in most natural disaster situations. In Iraq, for example, there was a full year of lead-up to the war available for post-intervention planning. This planning window makes the front-loading of financial and human resources during the post-conflict stage of an intervention feasible. Recognizing that success is a matter of achieving political stability and that the post-conflict phase is at least as difficult as the combat phase, warrants greater up-front planning and prioritizing for these

initiatives than has been the case. Naturally, interventions will need to adapt to events on the ground. However, this isn't something that we can just "make up as we go along," once the combat phase is over.

- International commitment. While there is a wide variance in the level of complexity of interventions, it is important to acknowledge that the costs of intervening effectively are high. This reality should enter into the debate about whether or not to undertake an intervention in the first place. Logically, only those interventions that the international community is willing to see through to a successful outcome should be undertaken. This raises the question of how many interventions the global community can simultaneously support at any one time. These sorts of trade-offs have not been seriously enough considered.

In conclusion, the demands of conflict and post-conflict intervention are one of the leading security challenges of our time. Improving the development dimension of interventions is intrinsically interrelated to doing the other facets of the intervention well. Successful interventions are costly and challenging. However, in my view, the security, political, humanitarian, and economic *benefits* of intervening effectively are far greater.

The continued advance of democracy and the declining numbers of civil conflicts around the world hold out the prospect of a future where the need for such interventions is significantly reduced. How we frame the interventions we undertake in the current era, that is how we define success, will go a long ways towards influencing how quickly we reach that more stable future.