

The Role of Security in Development

James Dobbins

Security is both a prerequisite for, and a critical aspect of development. At high levels of insecurity, development is impossible. Indeed the opposite takes place. Economies fail, states go into negative economic growth; societies lose cohesion, levels of health, education and professional capacity regress.

Even in comparatively peaceful societies, security is an important component of development. High levels of crime and corruption impose a heavy burden upon both economic and political activity. Inefficient security structures divert resources, provide inadequate security, and themselves become sources of crime, corruption and abuse. Reform of the security sector is thus an essential aspect of almost any development program.

To be effective, such reform must be comprehensively designed. The best-trained and lavishly equipped police force will soon be corrupted if judicial and penal institutions are not of comparable quality. Without courts to try malefactors, and prisons to hold them, police will be left with the choice of either releasing criminals, or punishing them extra-judicially. Recourse to either will quickly undermine the integrity of the force.

Defense development is a critical component of security sector reform. The military is generally the most powerful institution within any national security apparatus, and thus the one most capable of dominating all the others. Competent police and professional judges are unlikely to remain so in any state dominated by a corrupt military. Unprofessional militaries will become abusive, and actually add to the societies' insecurity. Incompetent militaries burden the exchequer, while providing inadequate defense against external and internal threats.

In the aftermath of the Cold War, defense development programs were instituted throughout Eastern Europe as part of the process of preparing the states of that region to join the North Atlantic Alliance and the European Union. These programs focused upon institutional reform, rather than military equipment. The emphasis was upon establishing civilian run defense ministries, developing systems of transparent budgeting; enunciating clearly defined national defense strategies and assuring democratic accountability. These largely successful experiences are relevant to defense development in other regions of the world.

In some instances, security may need to be imported before development can take place. This is the role of international peacekeepers. Their prime function is to provide security to societies no longer able to do so on their own. Since the end of the Cold War the number of such missions has grown exponentially. From 1945 to 1989, the United Nations launched on average, one new peacekeeping mission every four years. Over the past sixteen years, it has launched over forty, or an average of one new operation almost every six months. The duration of such missions has also increased. As a result, the UN has on occasion mounted as many as two-dozen such missions simultaneously.

A study by Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler looked at the cost and effectiveness of various policy options to reduce the incidence and duration of civil wars. It found that

post conflict military intervention is highly cost effective – in fact, the most cost effective alternative examined.¹ The historical record demonstrates that unless peacekeeping forces are deployed as part of the international community's overall response, most societies emerging from conflict return to it within a few years, no matter how much money, advice, or other forms of assistance they may receive. By contrast, the majority of post-conflict societies where peacekeepers have been deployed have remained at peace after the international troops have finally withdrawn.

The effects of such successful interventions can also be measured in the sharp overall decline in deaths from armed conflict around the world over the past decade. During the 1990's deaths from armed conflict were averaging over 200,000 per year. In 2003, the last year for which figures exist, this number had come down to 27,000, representing more than an 80% decrease in deaths directly attributable to civil and international conflict.²

The cost of UN nation building tends to look quite modest, particularly when compared to the cost of larger and more demanding American-led operations. At present the United States is spending some \$4.5 billion per month to support its military operations in Iraq. This is more than the UN spends to run all 17 peacekeeping of its current peacekeeping missions for a year. The cost for one year of US operations in Iraq thus could approach the cost for every UN peacekeeping operation from 1945 to the present day.

At present the international community is divided into several distinct categories of countries. There are those who decide to launch international peacekeeping missions, those who pay for them, those who man them, and those who host them. The decision to launch such missions is made by the UN Security Council, and in particular by its permanent members. The missions are funded primarily by the world's wealthier states. They are manned, in contrast, by some of the world most populous states, to include India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, and more recently China, each of whom contribute more manpower than any developed state. And of course the recipients are among the worlds poorest countries, predominantly in Africa.

This division of labor makes some sense. The powerful decide. The rich pay. The populous man. The poor receive. At the same time, these distinctions can become invidious, and do not always produce the optimal results. The powerful countries often set unrealistically ambitious goals for interventions in which they do not intend to risk their own troops. The rich countries stint financial support to missions where their forces are not exposed. Reliance upon contingents from populous but relatively poor countries holds down the manning costs of UN operations, but also denies these UN missions some of the capabilities that only more lavishly equipped Western forces possess.

¹ Paul Collier and Anke Hoeffler, "The Challenges of Reducing the Global Incidence of Civil War", Center for the Study of African Economics, Department of Economics, Oxford University, Copenhagen Challenge Paper, April 23, 2004, p. 22.

² Jean-Marie Guèhenno, "Giving Peace a Chance," in *The World in 2005* (London: The Economist, 2004), p. 3; Human Security Report 2004 (London: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

Western troops form a much smaller share of UN forces today than forty, or even ten years ago. As a result, Western militaries are denying themselves invaluable experience in the conduct of stability operations, reducing the UN's prospects of success and thereby making the need for more costly and more controversial Western led interventions more likely. The United States has led the way in this form of burden shirking. Other European governments have followed suite. Of the nearly than 60,000 UN troops deployed around the world in July of this year a total of ten were Americans. Twenty-five were German. Eight were Dutch and two Belgian. Canada scores somewhat better, with two hundred and eight soldiers currently wearing blue helmets, but this is still considerably less than one half of one percent of the total. Canada, a country long thought of as a leader in the field of international peacekeeping, thus ranks thirty-fifth on the list of contributors, falling below not just Tunisia, Niger and the Philippines, but Benin, Togo, and Namibia.

Institution building is the most critical and difficult mission in security sector development. In the absence of competent and accountable institutions, soldiers and police, no matter how well trained and equipped, will become sources of abuse, and insecurity. In cases where such institutions have ceased to function, or become irremediably abusive, the international community may need to step in to provide security and to direct the activities of local security forces.

While military forces are, thus, often an essential element in peace building, they do not themselves promote the changes that make any intervention worthwhile. Rather, in providing a secure environment, they allow the civil elements of any intervention the opportunity to promote political and economic reform.

In such circumstances, security, prosperity, and political reform are interdependent. Most programmatic objectives can be achieved only if others are as well. Yet money must be allocated, projects sequenced, and targets set, ideally against some hierarchy of objectives. Unfortunately, such allocations normally result not from strategic choice but from the predilections of donor bureaucracies, and their various domestic constituencies.

Terminology also influences priorities. The international community does not dispatch peacekeeping forces in order to make societies prosperous, but rather to make them peaceful. It is the Security Council that authorizes peace-building missions, not the Economic and Social Council. As soon as the initial conflict stage is over, however, the subsequent mission is often characterized as one of "reconstruction," which implies an emphasis on physical rebuilding, economic development, and improving local infrastructure.

Prosperity, democracy, and security are indeed linked, but largely in the opposite direction. Security is a prerequisite for both democracy and economic growth. Even in the absence of external economic assistance, security in the aftermath of conflict will almost always lead to some level of economic growth. Conversely, economic assistance in the absence of security will produce neither security nor growth. Democracy has been shown to enhance long-term stability and thus make peace self-sustaining, while also creating the opportunity for sustained economic growth. Conversely, security and increased prosperity, in the absence of democracy, are not a formula for long-term stability. They do not ensure the international community's

bottom line objective: to help the target nation remain peaceful over the long term. These considerations suggest that the prioritization of tasks in a post-conflict environment should be establishing security, promoting political reform, and supporting economic development, in that order of importance.

To take this one level of specificity further, the past sixty years of U.S. and UN nation building suggests that, resources should be prioritized against the following hierarchy of tasks:

- Security: Supplying peacekeeping, law enforcement, and security sector reform
- Humanitarian and relief efforts: Return of refugees and response to potential communicable disease outbreaks, large-scale famine, and other acute health concerns
- Governance: Providing the local administration with the resources (e.g. money) and advice needed to provide basic public services, and the beginning of longer term capacity building
- Economic Stabilization: Establishing a stable currency and providing a security and regulatory framework in which local and international commerce can resume
- Democratization: Building political parties, free press, civil society, and a legal and constitutional framework for elections
- Development and Infrastructure: Agricultural assistance, infrastructure improvements, financial markets, privatization

This is not to suggest that these tasks should be approached sequentially, but rather that available resources should be distributed among them based on the recognition that if higher order objectives are not met, lower order achievements will ultimately prove transitory.

Faster economic growth can facilitate the achievement of security and political objectives. But the inhabitants of societies in conflict generally do not kill each other because they are unemployed. Rather, they are unemployed because they are killing each other. Neither infrastructure improvement nor large scale employment-generating schemes are likely to yield short-term benefits commensurate with their cost. The long-term benefits of infrastructure improvements can normally be realized and funded through the international financial institutions that exist for the purpose.

There are of course exceptions to these general guidelines. For instance, the employment of former combatants should be regarded as a security task, not merely an economic or development priority. These individuals may be among the least deserving members of society, and are probably also among the least promising recipients of vocational training. But their employment must be among the intervening power's highest priorities. In the absence of employment programs to keep demobilized combatants off the streets, crime rates will soar, political and economic reforms will lag, economic growth will be retarded, and the return to conflict will become more likely.

While the United Nations is the lead agency in most international peace building missions, the international financial institutions and bilateral donors play essential, and often excessively independent roles. The UN has recently moved toward more integrated missions, putting all activities by the UN family of agencies under the oversight of the Secretary General's local representative. The Secretary General has also proposed the creation of a Peace-building Commission, which would bring together members of the Security Council, the major financial contributors, and the major troop contributors (the powerful, the rich and the populous) with the major international financial institutions and regional organizations like NATO and the African Union that are also active on the field.

In light of these considerations, G-20 leaders should recognize that:

- Security is both a prerequisite for and a critical aspect of development.
- Security sector reform is an essential component for any development program
- Such programs need to be pursued comprehensively, to include judicial and penal, as well as police reform.
- Defense development also an important component of security sector reform.
- Security assistance programs should emphasize institutional reform over issues of military proficiency and equipment, to include the development of civilian defense ministries, transparent budgeting, clearly enunciated national defense strategies, and democratic accountability.
- In many post conflict societies, security will need to be imported, in the form of international peacekeepers.
- In the absence of such international interventions, many societies emerging from conflict will soon descend back into it.
- Developed nations should resume contributing manpower as well as money to UN peacekeeping operations. These nations dispose of unique military capabilities, which are sometime essential for the success of such operations.
- Successful peace-building requires a careful prioritization of effort, focusing first upon establishing a secure environment, then meeting immediate humanitarian needs, resuming normal economic activity, restoring and strengthening local governance, and promoting democratic reform. Longer-term development, to include large-scale improvements in local infrastructure, should normally have a lower priority until these immediate needs are met.
- The role of the United Nations as lead agency in most such operations should be strengthened. The Secretary General's local representative should have oversight over all UN family agency operations, should act as the *primus inter pares* among all international and bilateral donor representatives, and should be consulted in the allocation of economic and development assistance from any source.
- The Secretary General's proposal to establish a Peace-building Commission should be supported and adequately resourced.

James Dobbins was the Clinton Administrations special envoy for Somalia, Haiti, Bosnia, and Kosovo, and the Bush Administrations first envoy for Afghanistan. He currently heads the International Security and Defense Policy Center at the RAND Corporation, and is the lead author of the two volume RAND History of Nation Building.

