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Abstract: Military doctrine on stability operations reflects a "planning-school" approach, which assumes rebuilding the capacity of weak or failed states is a matter of preparation and technique. This article argues the problems of stabilization are not just those of process; they reflect deep-rooted philosophical differences surrounding the viability of these operations and the approaches used. When it comes to state-building, military doctrine lacks a basis in an uncontested "theory of victory."

Stabilization is out of fashion. Burned by experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan, Western states have little appetite for engagement in complex nation-building tasks. But, if the international community is serious in its commitment to provide political solutions to such crises as in Syria, it will be difficult to avoid confronting the problems of stabilization experienced in the recent past. For example, the motion passed by the British parliament giving agreement to air attacks in Syria also identified explicitly military action as "only one component of a broader strategy to bring peace and stability to Syria," and this commitment "underlines the importance of planning for post-conflict stabilization and reconstruction."[1]

Western militaries have responded to the challenges of the last decade and a half with a process of doctrinal revision. For example, the United States produced a specific doctrine for stability operations in 2008, revising it in 2014; the latest iteration of the United Kingdom's doctrine for stability operations was published in March 2016.[2] In theory, this process of learning lessons should ensure future operations go much more smoothly than those of the past. This article contends this is likely not to be the case. Colonel Charles Callwell noted in his 1906 treatise on small wars, "Theory cannot be accepted as conclusive when practice points the other way."[3] The difficulty for military doctrine is there is no

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1 UK Parliament, "MPs Approve Motion on ISIL," December 2, 2015, http://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2015/december/mps-debate-motion-on-isil-in-syria/ (accessed May 18, 2016).

2 US Department of the Army, *Field Manual 3-07, Stability* (Washington, DC: Headquarters Department of the Army, June 2014), http://armypubs.army.mil/doctrine/DR_pubs/dr_a/pdf/fm3_07.pdf; and UK Ministry of Defense, *Joint Doctrine Publication 05, Shaping a Stable World: The Military Contribution* (Development, Concepts and Doctrine Center, March 2016), https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/516849/20160302-Stable_world_JDP_05.pdf.

3 Colonel C. E. Callwell, *Small Wars: Their Principles and Practice, Third Edition* (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska, 1996), 270.

consensus on the practice of complex nation-building. This is evident in the many debates outlined in the literature on peacebuilding, such as the one featured in the previous issue of this journal.

Military doctrine on stability operations reflects predominantly a "planning-school" approach.[4] Consciously or unconsciously, this approach assumes rebuilding the capacity of weak or failed states is a matter of preparation and technique. It is about planning, inter-agency cooperation, and a whole-of-government approach. It assumes success is a matter of the right principles and the right techniques. It reflects a rationalist, problem-solving approach. Military doctrine on stabilization reflects Western liberal assumptions on how these operations should be conducted. However, as the wider literature on peacebuilding illustrates, there is a sustained argument surrounding the validity and viability of Western liberal approaches to international intervention.[5]

For some commentators, stabilization operations require fundamentally different approaches if they are to be successful. For others, the notion external interventions can create functioning democratic states is not viable. In consequence, the whole enterprise rests on uncertain foundations. Put another way, the challenges of stability operations and stabilization are not the result of the wrong strategy or the wrong techniques, tactically or operationally. Instead, the difficulties derive from fundamental uncertainties about whether such operations can be done at all.

This article is divided into three parts. The first part looks at the "planning-school" approach that underpins military doctrine on stability operations, highlighting some of the key strands associated with this perspective. Next, the article examines the views of those who reject fundamentally the viability of liberal approaches to intervention. Finally, the article addresses the views of those who believe complex nation-building interventions can be executed effectively, but with radically different philosophical approaches required. While the notion that complex nation-building operations are difficult is hardly new, military organizations continue to believe revised doctrines can provide a solution. Ultimately, this article concludes, despite the development of more sophisticated doctrines for stability operations, there continues to be a lack of an uncontested "theory of victory" for them: a clearly understood consensus on how success can be achieved. On that basis, no matter how rigorous military learning processes are, future military performance in such operations is unlikely to improve radically, and policy-makers need to expect less from such operations.

The "Planning-School" Approach

Military organizations need doctrine. Doctrine comprises "what is believed officially to be contemporary best military practice."[6] Doctrine reflects a distillation of the lessons of past operations. For this reason,

4 Rory Stewart and Gerald Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 2011), xvii.

5 As an example, see Charles J. Sullivan, "State-Building: America's Foreign Policy Challenge," *Parameters* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 51-65; and M. Chris Mason, "Nation-Building is an Oxymoron," *Parameters* 46, no. 1 (Spring 2016): 67-79.

6 Paul Latawski, *Sandhurst Occasional Papers No. 5 – The Inherent Tensions in Military Doctrine* (Camberley, UK: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst, 2011), 9.

the Soviet strategist A.A. Svechin (1878-1938) referred to it as "the daughter of history."[7] Doctrine plays a crucial role in interpreting history for a military organization, providing intellectual guidance on how to solve military problems and a common framework of thinking.[8] It ensures military problems do not have to be addressed each time from first principles.

For some, the value of having a specific doctrine to conduct large-scale state-building operations might be open to question. The strategist Colin S. Gray has noted, "Stability operations, the demand for them and the provision of new capabilities to perform them well, are the downstream product of larger decisions on foreign policy and strategy."[9] At the moment, Western foreign policymakers seem keen to avoid generating the demand for such operations. Even if President Obama has asserted "isolation is not an option," he has also labelled interventions to deal with terrorism as "naive and unsustainable." His focus instead is on building the capacity of local partners.[10]

Circumstances evolve over time, and it cannot be presumed these kinds of operations will not be needed in the future. For example, the United States has a long history of trying to resist involvement in complex nation-building activities, but at some point it has been dragged into them because contexts change and government policies have been altered. The consequence of ignoring the potential need for such operations has been military organizations that have been left, as was the case in Bosnia in the 1990s, conducting "roll-your-own" campaigns, trying to adapt techniques and generate solutions "in contact."[11]

Nor are there necessarily easy alternatives to nation-building. Light-footprint interventions have advantages and, for some, interventions, such as in Mali in 2012, are the way to go. As one commentator has noted, "If you are looking at future military interventions, it will not be like Iraq and Afghanistan."[12] Light-footprint interventions are no silver bullet, and they may only mitigate the worst outcomes, rather than achieve positive success.[13] As the light-footprint operation in Libya has demonstrated, even overwhelming short-term military success in no way guarantees light-footprint operations will achieve longer-term stability.[14]

This reflects, in part, the paradox inherent in land power—putting extensive "boots on the ground" gives the greatest opportunity to

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7 Charles Grant, "The Use of History in the Development of Contemporary Doctrine," in *The Occasional Papers No. 30 – The Origins of Contemporary Doctrine,* ed. John Gooch (Camberley, UK: Strategic and Combat Studies Institute, September 1997), 7.

8 Christopher Tuck, *Understanding Land Warfare* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 35.

9 Colin S. Gray, "Stability Operations in Strategic Perspective: A Skeptical View," *Parameters* 36, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 4.

10 The White House, Remarks by the President at the United States Military Academy Commencement Ceremony, May 28 2014, https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/05/28/remarks-president-united-states-military-academy-commencement-ceremony.

11 William Flavin, "US Doctrine for Peace Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 15, no.1 (February 2008): 40.

12 Vivienne Walt, "What Mali's Crisis Means for the Future of Western Military Intervention," *Time*, October 29, 2012, http://world.time.com/2012/10/29/what-malis-crisis-means-for-the-future-of-western-military-intervention/ (accessed May 5, 2015).

13 Fernando M. Luján, *Light Footprints: The Future of American Intervention* (Washington, DC: Center for a New American Security, March 2013), 13.

14 Adrian Johnson and Saqeb Mueen, eds., *Short War, Long Shadow: The Political and Military Legacies of the 2011 Libya Campaign, Whitehall Report 1-12* (London, UK: Royal United Services Institute, 2012).

influence local people. Precisely because of this, it also exposes troops to the highest risks.[15] Mitigating risk in intervention operations can therefore mitigate against achieving the most ambitious outcomes. It would be dangerous to assume complex nation-building operations will never reoccur. As analysts at RAND have noted, "If future wars will not look exactly like Iraq, many of them are still likely to resemble Iraq more than they will the great wars of the 20th century."[16]

Whatever their initial objectives, international efforts in Iraq and Afghanistan became exercises in liberal peacebuilding, the dominant intellectual framework currently applied to post-Cold War policies and practices of post-conflict intervention. They were large-scale interventions by external actors, with the objective of promoting long-term, stable peace using multi-dimensional activities across political, economic, security, and social sectors. They became associated, particularly, with the idea of state-building: the foundations of long-term stable peace lay in giving war-torn societies effective national governance. They assumed liberally constituted states were internally more peaceful, prosperous, and humane, and sustainably so, and therefore focused on building states that featured liberal democracy, the rule of law, and the promotion of human rights—and that were market-orientated, centralized, and secular. These operations proved to be problematic, and militaries have attempted to learn from their failures, generating new concepts and techniques for achieving their goals.

These responses assumed liberal peacebuilding could work. Based on this assumption, the principal question for militaries became what sorts of techniques and practices could best deliver liberal peacebuilding goals. The answer reflected an assumption that complex nation-building required a capacity to deliver on a hierarchy of themes: the provision of security; humanitarian relief; governance; economic stabilization; democratization; and development, covering the immediate needs of the crisis (such as personal protection and access to food and clean water) through to longer-term initiatives designed to deliver stable political and economic development, including security sector reform, the building of local political parties, and the promotion of economic growth.[17]

This approach has been reflected in the actual development of military doctrine in the US Army's Field Manual 3-07, *Stability Operations*, and the United Kingdom's Joint Warfare Publication 3-40, *The Military Contribution to Stabilization*. In performing complex state-building tasks effectively, contemporary military doctrine highlights the importance of host-nation ownership; legitimacy; a whole-of-government approach; effective multi-national coordination; understanding of the human terrain; and flexibility and adaptability in approach.[18]

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15 Tuck, *Understanding Land Warfare*, Chapter 1.

16 Christopher S. Chivvis, Olga Oliker, Andrew M. Liepman, Ben Connable, George Willcoxon, and William Young, *Initial Thoughts on the Impact of the Iraq War on US National Security Structures* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2014), 19.

17 James Dobbins, Seth G. Jones, Keith Crane, and Beth Cole DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building* (Santa Monica, CA: Rand, 2007).

18 *Guiding Principles for Stabilization and Reconstruction* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace, 2009); Andrew S. Natsios, "The Nine Principles of Reconstruction and Development," Parameters 35, no 2 (Autumn 2005): 4-20; and Angel Rabasa, John Gordon IV, Peter Chalk, Christopher S. Chivvis, Audra K. Grant, K. Scott McMahon, Laurel E. Miller, Marco Overhaus, and Stephanie Pezard, *From Insurgency to Stability – Volume I: Key Capabilities and Practices* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2011).

Doctrine is supposed to be "what is taught, believed, and advocated as what is right (i.e., what works best)."[19] But, is success in peacebuilding activities simply a matter of getting the right principles and honing tactical and operational methods?

Building Democratic States: Can it be Done?

What if liberal peacebuilding cannot be done reasonably? For one perspective, termed in some quarters the "critical approach," complex nation-building operations, such as those conducted in Iraq and Afghanistan, are fool's errands. They are too complex a task to be executed effectively, irrespective of the methods one uses.[20] For this reason, attempts at peacebuilding are at best irrelevant and at worst counter-productive.

For some peacebuilding literature, the proof for this perspective lies in the empirical evidence. If one examines external interventions in the past, one struggles to find concrete evidence of success. Some writers have examined UN peacebuilding efforts. In general, and drawing on the wider peace-support literature, there are three benchmarks used to measure success in such operations: violence reduction, violence containment, and conflict settlement. The first measures the success with which an operation reduces armed violence; the second, the success with which violence is prevented from spreading to neighboring countries; and the last measures an operation's effectiveness in removing the underlying causes of an armed conflict.[21]

Liberal peacebuilding has ambitious objectives that focus, especially, on the last of these three goals. But it is difficult to find examples of unequivocal success in this regard. For example, operations in El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Guatamala succeeded in ending the civil wars there, but the imposition of economic liberalization and structural adjustment programs produced many negative second- and third-order effects. These included a growth in urban poverty; increases in the wealth gap between rich and poor; higher levels of violent criminality; and increasing political tensions. Similarly, operations in Cambodia and Timor-Leste ended fighting, but the political settlements achieved did not succeed in embedding liberal democracy in those countries.[22] Where successes have occurred, local actors, not external intervention, seem to lie at the heart of the success.[23]

Other writers have examined the historic record of military occupations designed to promote nation-building or to embed significant political change. Looking at 24 case studies beginning in 1815, the political scientist David Edelstein found only seven major successes: the occupation of France in 1815, and six other occupations clustered around

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19 US Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication 1 (March 25, 2013), ix.

20 The concepts of "problem-solving" and "critical approaches" are identified and explored in Nicolas Lemay-Hebert, "Review Essay: Critical Debates on Liberal Peacebuilding," *Civil Wars*, 15, no. 2, (June 2013): 242-252.

21 Paul F. Diehl and Daniel Druckman, (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2010), 28-67.

22 Jacob Bercovitch and Richard Jackson, *Conflict Resolution in the Twenty-First Century: Principles, Methods, and Approaches* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2012), 178.

23 Pierre Englebert and Dennis M. Tull, "Postconflict Reconstruction in Africa: Flawed Ideas about Failed States," *International Security* 32, no. 4 (Spring 2008): 106-139.

the end of World War II (Germany, Italy, Japan, West Austria, North Korea, and the Ryukyu Islands). He concluded the key sources of success were exogenous. They did not relate to the doctrine of the occupiers, but instead to the strategic context. He also noted, in particular, the role common external threats can play in helping the intervener and the host population to define a community of interest (in the case of Germany, for example, the threat posed by Communism).[24] Or, as Ann Hironaka discusses in her book *Neverending Wars*, the problem might be that since the end of World War II the international community has become a slave to the idea states cannot be allowed to fail. As a result, international efforts have been trying to sustain through intervention policies that do not deserve to exist—"zombie states." Historically, states have risen and fallen; often the former has been tied to the processes of the latter.[25] Interventions fail because they provide life support for political structures that are dead in their current form.

A second angle of attack on the viability of liberal peacebuilding efforts derives from the argument that liberal political and economic systems are culturally specific. Liberal peacebuilding is often presented as a neutral, non-partisan and non-ideological intervention. It often uses the language of "common sense" and humanitarianism, offering to intervene in a dispassionate manner; it is presented as a value-free, practical task.[26] Critics of this view argue these assumptions lead to the imposition of generic templates that do not fit the complex realities extant in each particular context.

History demonstrates there is no single route to liberal democracy, and recent Western attempts to create liberal democracies have tried to impose a generic technical template onto a process that is slow, organic, and the product of complex local conditions. For example, European state formation has not conformed historically to top-down neo-liberal approaches. European states were created through a lengthy process of contestation, often violent in nature. They have not developed according to a single template, but have instead followed different paths shaped by differing contexts. Local elites, rather than external agents have often been decisive, and the outcomes have often been contingent and unexpected.[27]

Moreover, state reconstruction is "inherently political in nature (rather than a neutral or technical process)."[28] Focusing on the problem of ethno-centrism, these commentators argue Western approaches ignore local customs that might have the potential to mobilize more grass-roots legitimacy than alien Western forms of government. Tradional conflict-resolution methods include a focus on consensus decision-making and compensation or gift exchanges to ensure reciprocal and harmonious

24 David M. Edelstein, "Occupational Hazards: Why Military Occupations Succeed or Fail," *International Security* 29, no. 1 (Summer 2004), 49-91.

25 Ann Hironaka, *Neverending Wars: The International Community, Weak States, and the Perpetuation of Civil War* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2005).

26 Roger Mac Ginty, *No War, No Peace: The Rejuvenation of Stalled Peace Processes and Peace Accords* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 3-4.

27 Jonathan Goodhand and Mark Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding: Statebuilding and Transition in Afghanistan - An Introduction," *Central Asian Survey* 32, no. 3 (October 29, 2013): 242.

28 Feargal Cochrane, *Ending Wars* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008), 170.

relations between groups.[29] However, critics argue liberal interventions have tried to freeze in place political arrangements that do not reflect the underlying social patterns of the host population and which are therefore unsustainable. As one exasperated Afghan explained to a Westerner:

> You are listing all the problems in Afghanistan—and heaping up buzzwords like "tribalism" and "corruption." But actually, these words have no connection to Afghan reality. You are trying to force Afghan reality into your theory—cutting the suit to fit the cloth.[30]

Thus, a state is not just a formal apparatus of government. A state is an assembly of forces, institutions, relations, actors, practices, and boundaries. Like the roots of a plant, much of the state is not immediately visible; and in ignoring this, Western interventions, in effect, have been trying to graft the stem of one plant onto the roots of another.[31]

A final perspective on the inherent implausibility of Western liberal interventions argues it entails too many internal contradictions. The principles of liberal peacebuilding cannot be reconciled and inevitably produce contradictory and unwelcome outcomes. For example, can one reconcile the need for persistence in such operations with the need to maintain legitimacy? On the one hand, writing on liberal approaches to statebuilding emphasizes the need for long-term external engagement in order to build peace effectively in failing states: it cannot be done quickly.[32] But, inevitably, the long-term presence of foreigners tends to alienate the local population, stoke a nationalist backlash, and undermine the legitimacy of the operation. Rory Stewart notes the fundamental problems caused by the peacebuilding intervention by foreigners, commenting, "The Afghans disliked the US-led intervention because it was a US-led intervention, and no change in tactics would alter that fact."[33] Thus, the longer one stays, the less legitimate a given intervention is likely to be.

Alternatively, can one reconcile the need in a weak or failed state for a large-scale infusion of resources, with the need to encourage local ownership of the state-building process? Building the capacity of failed states requires huge resources, resources that are beyond the means of the host-nation government to produce. For example, 80 percent of the Afghan government's official expenditures are from foreign aid.[34] This scale of aid can undermine local ownership. It discourages local government from generating its own fiscal resources. It encourages the development of "rentier" states, in which the key form of wealth creation is skimming off foreign transactions, and it distorts the local economy, creating a "war-and-aid economy" marked by pervasive and entrenched corruption.[35]

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29 Kenneth Menkhaus, "Somalia: Governance vs. Statebuilding," in *Building States to Build Peace*, ed. Charles T. Call with Vanessa Wyeth (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2008), 187-216.

30 Stewart and Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?*, 11.

31 Goodhand and Sedra, "Rethinking Liberal Peacebuilding," 243.

32 US Department of the Army, Field Manual 3-07, x.

33 Stewart and Knaus, *Can Intervention Work?,* xxii.

34 Kevin Sieff for *The Washington Post* in Kabul, "Afghan Economy Faces Serious Revenue Shortfall as State Undertakes Transition," *The Guardian*, April 22, 2014, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/apr/22/afghanistan-economy-revenue-budget-shortfall.

35 Astri Suhrke, "Statebuilding in Afghanistan: A Contradictory Engagement," *Central Asian Survey* 32, no. 3 (October 22, 2013): 275-276.

These contradictions also extend into other principles. How does one reconcile the need for peace with the need for justice and reconciliation? Reaching a political settlement may require cooperation with individuals and groups that have been, or are perceived to have been, complicit in serious human rights violations. In Cambodia, for example, reaching a peace settlement required negotiating with the Khmer Rouge, a group responsible for millions of deaths. Is peace reached through such deals likely to be viewed as just by those who suffered at the hands of such perpetrators? Can one have reconciliation without the sense of justice?[36] Equally, can the need to promote physical security be reconciled with the need to sustain the legitimacy of an operation? Here, the argument is that a focus on security leads inevitably to militarized approaches to peacebuilding in which military responses then crowd out non-military peacebuilding strategies.[37] Liberal peacebuilding then segues into a counterinsurgency strategy augmented by reconstruction tools, diluting and confusing its purpose. The needs of security may, for example, result in the arming of militias (as was the case in Afghanistan) but these militias may undermine the host state's monopoly on the means of coercion and strengthen non-state actors.[38] There is no clear-cut way of getting around these problems. The complex methods and objectives associated with liberal peacebuilding operations cannot help but impede one another.

The critical approach argues liberal peacebuilding is pointless—either it cannot work or the context has to be a very particular one for it to succeed. For some hyper-critics of liberal peacebuilding, it is designed not to work. As an exercise in "imperial nation-building" or "Empire-Lite," doctrines of liberal peacebuilding are simply mechanisms to legitimize the creation of neo-imperial zones of political and economic influence.[39] On that basis, alternative strategies may be required: allowing conflicts to continue until they reach a natural conclusion (sometimes euphemistically called "indigenous state reconstruction efforts"); or varieties of non-liberal intervention, such as permanent trusteeship or direct international government; or empowering strong local leaders; or reliance on traditional or indigenous practices of peacemaking and governance, such as tribal assemblies.[40]

Building Democratic States: Are We Doing It the Right Way?

If there was a consensus surrounding the critical approach to liberal peacebuilding, the conclusions would be negative, but at least clear: do not do it. This would make it clear doctrines for such activities would largely be irrelevant; however, this consensus does not exist. An alternative approach, the "problem-solving" approach, takes a different view. It argues peacebuilding can be done if a radically different approach is

36 For a discussion of the problems of *jus post bellum*, see Larry May and Elizabeth Edenberg, eds., *Jus Post Bellum and Transitional Justice* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

37 See Astri Suhrke, "Waging War and Building Peace in Afghanistan," I*nternational Peacekeeping* 10, no. 4 (September 20, 2012): 478-491.

38 Suhrke, "Statebuilding in Afghanistan," 279-281.

39 Michael Ignatieff, *Empire Lite: Nation-Building in Bosnia, Kosovo and Afghanistan* (London: Penguin, 2003).

40 Perhaps the most famous expression of this view is Edward N. Luttwak, "Give War a Chance," *Foreign Affairs* 78, no. 4 (July/August 1999), https://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/1999-07-01/give-war-chance; and Stephen D. Krasner, "Sharing Sovereignty: New Institutions for Collapsed and Failing States," *International Security* 29, no.2 (Fall 2004): 85-120.

taken. Looking at the problems experienced in Iraq and Afghanistan, this perspective would argue the difficulties experienced there are not because of intervention, but because intervention was conducted in the wrong manner. This approach also argues critical perspectives undervalue the successes of liberal peacebuilding and present alternatives that do not work.

Recognizing liberal peacebuilding interventions have rarely been complete successes, proponents still argue, on balance, they have caused more good than harm. Acknowledging the difficulties in counter-factual assessment, Roland Paris still argues, for example, that where peacebuilding has taken place, the evidence suggests "these countries are probably better off than they would have been without such missions."[41] Bosnia provides a good example. While the results there have been more problematic than hoped for, external intervention has still achieved many worthwhile objectives, not least the fact that Bosnians are no longer killing one another.

Most countries that have hosted liberal peacebuilding interventions are no longer at war. Ending armed conflict matters. In Africa, countries that are not peaceful experience five years less life expectancy, 50 percent more infant deaths, and have 15 percent more of the population undernourished.[42] Liberal interventions have also achieved many other worthwhile goals—in Bosnia, external intervention helped in a progressive reversal of ethnic cleansing.[43] Supporters of peacebuilding argue ceasing to engage in such interventions would condemn many millions of people to substantially worse conditions.

At the same time, advocates of intervention argue the alternatives to liberal peacebuilding interventions often are not really alternatives. There is a reason why such interventions have evolved over time, and it is more than casually related to the limitations of other options. For example, the idea we need to "give war a chance" assumes it is politically acceptable to do this, but this may not always be the case. The British government, which was very lukewarm on intervening in Bosnia, did so because of domestic public pressure. At the same time, as the conflicts in Syria, Iraq, and Libya today demonstrate, conflicts have all kinds of destabilizing ripple effects, and they do not necessarily end swiftly.

Alternatives to liberal interventions also have their own difficulties. Non-liberal interventions may be difficult to sell domestically. Direct international government looks very much like neo-colonialism, with all the problems of legitimacy that entails (and is often a version of liberal peacebuilding). Supporting local authoritarian leaders because they can enforce stability was a staple of the Cold-War period that, as the evidence of President Mobutu in Zaire and President Siad Barre in Somalia demonstrates, often produced negative outcomes in the long term. As for relying on traditional or indigenous practices of peacemaking and governance, the recurrent difficulty here is, if these were strong enough

41 Roland Paris, "Saving Liberal Peacebuilding," *Review of International Studies* 36, no. 2 (April 2010): 352.

42 Ibid., 352.

43 Marcus Cox, "Bosnia and Herzogovina: The Limits of Liberal Imperialism," in Call, *Building States*, 256-257.

to be effective, there would not be serious armed conflict in the state in the first place.[44]

The problem for military doctrine is the lack of agreement concerning whether liberal state-building interventions are, or are not, a viable tool of policy. If they are, then having a doctrine for conducting them is important; if it is the latter, then no amount of tactical- or operational-level military excellence will deliver the desired results. But the situation is even more complex. Even writers who argue liberal peacebuilding is a viable option if it is conducted in the right way cannot agree on how these operations should be conducted.

One constructive critique of current approaches argues ambitious peacebuilding can work if democratization needs are downgraded in importance in peacebuilding efforts. Instead, first priority should be placed on developing the institutional capacity of the host nation government. This "institutionalization-before-liberalization" perspective notes democracy and free markets are adversarial and conflictual phenomena. Processes of political and economic liberalization, therefore, can exacerbate social tensions and undermine stability in the short and medium terms.

Weak democracies find it difficult to manage the cut-and-thrust of market liberalism. For example, in Iraq democratization reinforced sectarian identities. In order to overcome this problem in the future, this perspective argues liberal interventions should ensure elections take second place to strengthening the host government institutions: the judiciary, police, legislative, and executive frameworks. Only when a state has the ability to manage, through peaceful means, the conflicts caused by democracy should political liberalization be pursued.[45]

The difficulty with this approach is, without elections, peacebuilding may quickly lose its legitimacy; it risks establishing authoritarian regimes, not representative ones. In particular, it is argued the "institutionalization-before-democratization" approach will not end the destabilizing power struggle within a host nation. It will simply relocate it to the institutions of government, as each faction seeks to exert control over the new regime.[46]

An alternative perspective argues the real problem with liberal peacebuilding efforts is they are too centralized and too top down. They have focused too much on centrally coordinated activities directed towards local elites, crushing true local participation from the wider population and emasculating locally driven reforms.[47] For example, in Kosovo from 1999, some have argued international efforts undermined the emergence of Kosovar civil society and created conditions of dependency. In doing so they built obstacles to democracy, self-government,

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44 Roland Paris, "Alternatives to Liberal Peace?" in *A Liberal Peace? The Problems and Practices of Peacebuilding,* ed. Susanna Campbell, David Chandler, and Meera Sabaratnam (London, UK: Zed Books, 2011), 162-166.

45 Roland Paris, *At War's End: Building Peace After Civil Conflict* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

46 Chandra Leckam Sriram, "Transitional Justice and the Liberal Peace," in *New Perspectives on Liberal Peacebuilding,* ed. Edward Newman, Roland Paris, and Oliver P. Richmond (New York, NY: United Nations University Press, 2009), 120-121.

47 John Paul Lederach, *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies* (Washington, DC: United States Institute of Peace Press, 1999), 44-55.

and reconciliation. Success requires we adopt emancipatory approaches to intervention in which the interveners play the roles of counsellors or therapists, facilitating self-knowledge and supporting reconciliation and healing at the grass-roots level.[48]

But here, too, there are difficulties. It may be politically impossible to engage with certain constituencies in this way. In 2001, for example, the US government could not have sanctioned bringing the Taliban into this type of transformatory peacebuilding process. Moreover, this approach assumes there are grass-roots organizations to work through. One problem with this assumption is armed conflicts often undermine the structures of local society so there is no guarantee there are coherent grass-roots actors to work with. In addition, these local actors are likely to be politically and/or morally compromised—militias, warlords, or other partial participants to the conflict. Do we work with them, thus legitimizing them? Or, do we exclude them, creating potential spoilers to any agreements? Finally, do these emancipatory approaches provide answers to difficult issues such as economic development, humanitarian crises, or security sector reform?[49]

For others, liberal interventions of the future should take the form of "hybrid solutions" or "cosmopolitan interventionism." Here the idea is that liberal approaches should be blended with local institutions, making for a more nuanced and context-sensitive approach to intervention. This might involve working through tribal organizations or using local conflict-resolution methods, where appropriate.[50] As reasonable as this approach sounds, there is no consensus it works.

In many respects, this was the strategy adopted in Afghanistan. The problems there demonstrated two key weaknesses. First, the strategy assumed the intervening party in a country understood how local politics works. Often, however, this understanding is faulty and based on stereotyped, overly romantic images of traditional societies.[51] Second, local players have their own agendas, and they use the resources and opportunities provided by intervention for personal gain. No matter the means used to engage with local players, many players will always manipulate the processes to benefit themselves. For example, the establishment of an interim government and constitution in Afghanistan in 2001 followed the broad processes and mechanisms of the Loya Jirga, which is rooted in Afghan traditions. But, warlords used their participation in the process to reconstitute a ruling order based on tribal elements and strongmen that legitimized the positions of existing local and regional powerholders. Another example was the establishment of the Afghan Local Police, a militia force raised to fight the Taliban. It was

48 Oliver Ramsbotham, Tom Woodhouse, and Hugh Miall, *Contemporary Conflict Resolution* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2008), 227-229.

49 Ibid., 224.

50 William Maley, "Statebuilding in Afghanistan: Challenges and Pathologies," *Central Asian Survey* 32, no. 3 (2013): 255-270.

51 Jaïr van der Lijn, "Imagi-Nation Building in Illusionstan: Afghanistan, Where Dilemmas Become Dogmas, and Models are Perceived to be Reality," *International Peacekeeping* 20, no. 2 (June 19, 2013): 180-181.

intended to be controlled by local Shura's and tribal leaders. In fact, the militia was subverted by local warlords.[52]

Conclusion

Military doctrine for stabilization operations is dominated by the planning-school approach. General Sir David Richards, Britain's then Chief of the Defense Staff, commented in 2009 about Afghanistan, "It is doable if we get the formula right, and it is properly managed."[53] As this article has identified, there is no guarantee of success. The problems of stabilization are not just those of process. They reflect deep-rooted philosophical differences surrounding the viability of such operations and the approaches that might be used. Militaries, as problem-solving organizations, have focused necessarily on the tactical and operational techniques, processes, and structures to perform liberal intervention tasks. This focus in no way guarantees future operations will be more successful than those in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The practical evidence for the best way to rebuild shattered nations remains ambiguous. Examination of the debate within the critical and problem-solving schools indicates it might be impossible to conduct complex peacebuilding effectively—except through luck or very specific conditions; or that it might be possible to do so only if a different general approach is adopted, though there is no consensus on what that might be. When it comes to state-building, military doctrine lacks a basis in an uncontested "theory of victory:" a clear sense of how one goes about successfully constituting a liberal state through external intervention. Because of this lack of an objectively verifiable strategy for successful nation-building, we cannot assume the problems that bedevilled the operations in Iraq and Afghanistan will not be repeated again. Improved tactical and operational stabilization techniques for the future, in the context of these difficulties, may simply mean it will take longer to lose.

52 Amin Saikal, "The UN and Afghanistan: Contentions in Democratization and Statebuilding," *International Peacekeeping* 19, no. 2 (April 20, 2012): 223-224; and Aziz A. Hakimi, "Getting Savages to Fight Barbarians: Counterinsurgency and the Remaking of Afghanistan," *Central Asian Survey* 32, no. 3 (October 23, 2013): 388-405.

53 Sean Rayment, "General Sir David Richards: 'We Can't Afford to Lose the War in Afghanistan'," *The Telegraph,* October 4, 2009, http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/afghanistan/6258025/General-Sir-David-Richards-We-cant-afford-to-lose-the-war-in-Afghanistan.html.