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## The Case for an Army Stability Professional

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## The Case for an Army Stability Professional

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**ABSTRACT:** The US Army is unprepared to occupy and stabilize territory because it does not adequately educate active-duty officers to do so. One way to professionalize the Army's ability to carry out military government and stability operations is to develop active-duty functional area officers who can advise commanders and integrate staff planning for these operations. This article analyzes case studies, doctrine, and commentary to envision specialized staff officers with foreign language proficiency, cultural skills, advanced academic abilities, and a strong professional ethic. These officers would enhance the Army's competence in stabilizing territory to achieve American policy objectives.

**Keywords:** stability, civil affairs, military government, professional studies, foreign language

Governing people and territory during and after large-scale combat is as important to the Army's mission as defeating enemies on the battlefield. At times, a commander may be directed to impose military government, exercising "executive, legislative, and judicial authority over a foreign territory," as was the case in Germany and Japan after World War II.<sup>1</sup> In other cases, the Army may be the only organization in a conflict zone able to provide security and stability by performing government functions, as in Sicily, Italy, and France during major campaigns of World War II.

The Army has attempted to advance American policy goals through military government and stability operations throughout its history. Its doctrine, organization, training, leadership, education, and personnel structure, however, have seldom been adequate for the task. As one example, during their first occupation of Germany during and after World War I, Americans faced the threat of renewed hostilities with a major land power, risks of insurgency, a pandemic, and social unrest inflamed by food scarcity, economic volatility, and Russian political influence.<sup>2</sup> A report of this experience observed that it "is extremely unfortunate" officers

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1. Department of Defense (DoD), DoD Directive (DoDD) 2000.13 (Washington, DC: DoD, 2017), 11.

2. Irvin L. Hunt, *American Military Government of Occupied Germany, 1918–1920: Report of the Officer in Charge of Civil Affairs, Third Army and American Forces in Germany* (Washington, DC: US Government Printing Office, 1943), 64.

are not trained to administer civilians before they are required to do so in wartime, calling it a “lesson [that] has seemingly not been learned.”<sup>3</sup>

The Army should establish an active-duty officer career field that can provide stability expertise to conventional forces at the brigade, division, and corps levels, as well as at higher echelons. These officers would use critical foreign language skills, advanced academic knowledge, and unique military experience to enable the Army to win wars and sustain peace.

## Background

Many of the Army’s occupations and stability operations have been characterized by poor planning, insufficient training, and unfounded expectations of spontaneous success. The Army’s first attempt, the occupation of Montreal in 1775, was an “unmitigated disaster” due largely to the ineptitude, cultural ignorance, and religious bigotry of American officers and the unruliness of American soldiers.<sup>4</sup> During the Mexican-American War, General Winfield Scott (who had practiced law in civilian life) set a precedent of restoring civil order after combat through the respectful treatment of civilians and military-adjudicated punishment for crimes committed by local civilians and occupying soldiers.<sup>5</sup> In 1863, President Abraham Lincoln issued “General Orders No. 100: Instructions for the Government of the Armies of the United States in the Field” (known as the Lieber Code after its main author, Francis Lieber) to guide the conduct of Union soldiers toward combatants and noncombatants during the American Civil War.<sup>6</sup> The occupation of the Southern states during Reconstruction was unique, as “never before or since have large numbers of Americans been forced to endure the stigma of defeat and submit to military occupation and government.”<sup>7</sup> In all these cases, “no special training or indoctrination was considered necessary” for civil administration.<sup>8</sup> The Army benefited from officers with civilian skills acquired prior to their service but made no coordinated effort to develop, organize, or apply these skills to military problems.

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3. Hunt, *American Military Government*, 64.

4. Stanley Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come and Sorry to See Them Go: A History of U.S. Army Tactical Civil Affairs/Military Government, 1775–1991* (Fort Bragg, NC: US Army Special Operations Command History and Archives Division, 1994), 1–2.

5. Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 35–36.

6. Laurie R. Blank and Gregory P. Noone, *International Law and Armed Conflict: Fundamental Principles and Contemporary Challenges in the Law of War* (New York: Wolters Kluwer, 2016), 46.

7. Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 67.

8. Harry L. Coles and Albert K. Weinberg, *Civil Affairs: Soldiers Become Governors*, United States Army in World War II Special Studies, Center of Military History (CMH) Pub. 11-3 (Washington, DC: CMH, 1986), viii.

The Army was also America's first and most robust nation-building institution. Charged with expanding the government's influence westward for most of the nineteenth century, the Army implemented the nation's policy of the destruction, removal, and forced assimilation of people deemed incompatible with the so-called American way of life. It explored territory and established frontier posts to defend commercial enterprises and settlements. Army officials interfaced with, and at times governed, Indian communities. The Army built infrastructure and managed natural resources—roles the US Army Corps of Engineers retains to this day. Indeed, the Army "made a major contribution to continental consolidation," paving the way West for the "white Americans [who] in greater numbers and with greater energy than before resumed the quest for land, gold, commerce, and adventure" after the Civil War.<sup>9</sup>

As the West was won, the War Department's Indian government functions were transferred to other government agencies.<sup>10</sup> This restructuring eliminated much of the Army's institutional memory of the stability-like operations it had conducted domestically for nearly 100 years.

The United States began to fill a new global role in the early twentieth century, requiring the Army to administer people and territory of increasing physical and cultural distance from home, such as the Philippines and various Caribbean nations. Eventually, World War I led to an unprecedented deployment of American land forces across an ocean to help allies defeat a common enemy in large-scale combat. American soldiers then carried out an equally unprecedented military government in Germany.<sup>11</sup> This occupation was the "true beginning" of what is now called Civil Affairs.<sup>12</sup>

Army units in Europe were reorganized to occupy a portion of Germany, leading Army officers to perform a range of government functions in lieu of, or in addition to, their routine military duties.<sup>13</sup> They had no training or education in civilian administration and little information about Germany's government. As a result, Colonel Irvin L. Hunt, the Officer in Charge of Civil Affairs during the occupation, observed that the Army "lacked both training

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9. CMH, "Winning the West: The Army in the Indian Wars, 1865–1890," in *American Military History*, American Historical Series (Washington, DC: CMH, 1989), 300, <https://history.army.mil/books/AMH/AMH-14.htm>.

10. US Department of the Interior, "Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA)," Indian Affairs (website), n.d., accessed September 3, 2022, <https://www.bia.gov/bia>.

11. Hunt, *American Military Government*, v.

12. Headquarters, Department of the Army (HQDA), *Civil Affairs Operations*, Field Manual (FM) 3-57 (Washington, DC: HQDA 2021), A-1.

13. Hunt, *American Military Government*, 63–87.

and organization to guide the destinies of the nearly 1,000,000 civilians” for which it was suddenly responsible.<sup>14</sup>

Guided by the report that came to bear his name, Hunt and like-minded officers refined doctrine, organization, and training for Civil Affairs and Military Government in the interwar years, leading to a fairly successful program in World War II.<sup>15</sup> Recruits with applicable civilian skills were selected for language and government training at universities or specialized training centers before being organized into units to support operations in the European and Pacific Theaters.<sup>16</sup> In liberated allied countries, the transition to civilian authority was facilitated by local factions sympathetic to the Allies.<sup>17</sup> In enemy countries, military government required a stricter arrangement. Here, the Army recognized its “duty . . . to give the vanquished people a new government adequate to the protection of their personal and property rights . . . [and] to establish a strong and just government such as will preserve order and . . . pacify the inhabitants.”<sup>18</sup> Likewise, Marine Corps doctrine at the time viewed the “arrival . . . [of] the armed forces of the United States” in a foreign country as an assumption of responsibility for the “life and property of all the inhabitants.”<sup>19</sup> Principles such as these guided the postwar military governments of Germany, Japan, and other enemy territories. Subsequent American wars might have turned out differently had the military been as clear-eyed about its stability and government duties as it apparently was in World War II.

The Civil Affairs and Military Government program was saved from elimination after the Korean War by the lobbying of influential former Civil Affairs and Military Government officers.<sup>20</sup> As a compromise, the program was placed in the Army Reserves in 1955, where most of its capabilities still reside. In the Vietnam War, Civil Affairs forces bolstered the legitimacy of South Vietnam through medical, agricultural, and economic development activities, marking the program’s first use in a protracted stability-intensive conflict. Civil Affairs training was relocated to Fort Bragg, North Carolina, and aligned with special operations during this period, even as most active-duty Civil Affairs units were

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14. Hunt, *American Military Government*, 65.

15. HQDA, *Civil Affairs Operations*, A-1.

16. Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 170–71.

17. Coles and Weinberg, *Soldiers Become Governors*, 147.

18. Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 167.

19. US Marine Corps, *Small Wars Manual, 1940* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1940), 1.

20. Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 338.

disbanded as the war drew to a close.<sup>21</sup> Civil Affairs remained primarily a reserve capability for the next three decades.

An active-duty Civil Affairs branch was established in 2006 in response to the demands of the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq.<sup>22</sup> Active-duty and reserve Civil Affairs forces were employed in various ways to attempt to legitimize the governments of Afghanistan and Iraq. The creation of an active-duty branch parallel to an existing reserve structure established overly complicated command relationships, which led to a “divorce” between active-duty and reserve Civil Affairs that caused major manning, funding, training, and organizational culture issues.<sup>23</sup> Force reductions after the end of major combat operations in Iraq and Afghanistan left few active-duty Civil Affairs officers supporting conventional forces.<sup>24</sup> Unfortunately, this problem cannot be solved simply by increasing the number of active-duty Civil Affairs officers. Their training and career development do not impart the language skills, academic knowledge, or military education needed to support conventional force staffs during stability and military government operations.

## The Stability Professional

Professionalizing the Army’s ability to perform military government and stability operations requires active-duty functional area officers, or *stability professionals*, who can advise commanders and integrate staff planning. They would be educated broadly in the Army’s six stability operations tasks: (1) civil security, (2) security cooperation, (3) civil control, (4) essential services, (5) governance support, and (6) economic stabilization and infrastructure, while possessing academic depth in at least one of these areas.<sup>25</sup> Their military experience would enable them to manage a staff and advise commanders while applying their knowledge to stability problems. The stability professional concept unifies ideas currently

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21. HQDA, *Civil Affairs Operations*, A-2.

22. HQDA, Army General Order 2006-29, “Establishment of the United States Army Civil Affairs Branch,” January 12, 2007.

23. Kathleen H. Hicks, Christine E. Wormuth, and Eric Ridge, *The Future of U.S. Civil Affairs Forces: A Report of the CSIS International Security Program* (Washington, DC: Center for Strategic and International Studies, February 2009), 36.

24. “U.S. Army Active Component Units,” Civil Affairs Association (website), n.d., accessed May 4, 2022, <https://www.civilaffairsassoc.org/army-active-units/>.

25. HQDA, *Stability*, Army Doctrine Publication (ADP) 3-07 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2019), 2-11.

fragmented across commands, components, and doctrine by placing unique expertise with the units and commands conducting stability operations.

The term *stability professional* serves several functions in this article. First, using *stability professional* instead of *Civil Affairs* or *Military Government* mitigates confusion with existing career fields and the vague concepts associated with these terms. Second, while *stability operations* and *military government* are not doctrinally the same, an officer prepared to conduct stability operations would be reasonably prepared for military government. Finally, the stability professional would be a new asset. The Army has never invested adequately in officers who could direct successful stability operations—certainly not before a conflict required it.

Stability officers need professional knowledge, but the Army's definition of professional expertise is too broad to evaluate the skill requirements of officer career fields. The Army views itself as a "profession of arms . . . composed of experts certified in the ethical application of land combat power," implying that all soldiers are professionals, regardless of their skill or experience.<sup>26</sup> In a stricter sense, professionals devote their lives to something difficult for the good of others by answering a call "requiring *specialized knowledge* and often *long and intensive academic preparation*" (emphasis added).<sup>27</sup>

Army doctrine says officers leading stability operations "require a unique combination of knowledge and understanding, the ability to achieve unity of effort, and cultural awareness."<sup>28</sup> This description implies there are three domains of a stability professional's knowledge: regional and foreign language proficiency, knowledge of disciplines relevant to stability operations, and military competence. To develop these competencies, a stability functional area officer's initial training should include a year of intensive study in a foreign language, graduate study in a relevant field, and grade-appropriate professional military education.

## Regional and Foreign Language Proficiency

Stability professionals need significant regional knowledge and the ability to communicate across cultural and language barriers to earn trust, discuss complex problems, and negotiate. They should be regional experts with an understanding of foreign areas derived from "a combination

26. HQDA, *Officer Professional Development and Career Management*, Department of the Army Pamphlet (DA PAM) 600-3 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2019), 2.

27. *Merriam-Webster Online*, s.v. "profession," n.d., accessed May 4, 2022, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/profession>.

28. HQDA, *Stability*, 2-12.

of education, military experience, area studies courses, in-country assignments, travel, mentoring, and specialized professional experience,” as well as foreign language abilities and cultural capabilities.<sup>29</sup> On the Interagency Language Roundtable (ILR) scale used by the Department of Defense for foreign language assessment, this language competence level is “General Professional Proficiency,” or ILR 3.<sup>30</sup>

To achieve general professional proficiency, personnel trained at the Defense Language Institute should continue to apply their foreign language abilities in graduate school programs. This continued education is especially important for stability officers because language ratings directly correspond to capability in the field. For example, at the lower end of the proficiency spectrum, the language standard for Army Special Operations Forces is “elementary plus” (ILR 1+).<sup>31</sup> Interagency Language Roundtable 1+ speakers struggle to form coherent sentences, and a native speaker listening to someone at this level must “strain . . . to understand even some simple speech.” By contrast, ILR 3 speakers “participate effectively” in complex conversations while making “errors [that] virtually never interfere with [a native speaker’s] understanding.”<sup>32</sup> Interagency Language Roundtable 3 foreign language proficiency is clearly much more valuable to a stability officer’s mission than lower proficiency ratings.

Achieving general professional language proficiency requires significant time and effort. Most students of Spanish should attain ILR 3 proficiency in 24 weeks. Officers learning Chinese or Arabic would need 88 weeks—almost four times as much instruction—to achieve the same proficiency.<sup>33</sup> Language assignments and allocations should be determined by a periodic analysis of the Department of Defense’s strategic priorities; stability professionals should learn languages relevant to the places the Army is most likely to perform stability operations. Arabic, Chinese, French, Korean, Russian, and Spanish are enduring priority languages. Future requirements, however, may call for proficiency in other languages. Enough officers should be trained to fill staff positions at the brigade, division, corps, theater, and combatant command levels while aligning language and regional skills to operational requirements and

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29. DoD, *Management of the Defense Language, Regional Regional Expertise, and Culture (LREC) Program*, DoD Instruction (DoDI) 5160.70 (Washington, DC, 2016), 28.

30. “Interagency Language Roundtable Skill Level Descriptions – Speaking,” Interagency Language Roundtable (website), n.d., accessed May 4, 2022, <https://govtilr.org/Skills/ILRscale2.htm>.

31. HQDA, *Army Foreign Language Program*, Army Regulation (AR) 11-6 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2022), 25.

32. ILR, “Skill Level Descriptions – Speaking.”

33. “Foreign Service Institute: Foreign Language Training,” US Department of State (DOS) (website), n.d., accessed September 3, 2022, <https://www.state.gov/foreign-language-training/>.



force-generating activities. As with other language professionals, officers would maintain their language proficiency with support from their command language program in accordance with Army Regulation 11-6.

## Academic Preparation

Officers providing expert advice to commanders on stability and military government need specialized knowledge that cannot be acquired from Army institutions. To develop an understanding of the development, implementation, and management of government functions and policy in foreign countries, officers should attend rigorous, full-time civilian graduate school programs aligned with one of the six stability operations tasks. These officers belong in a specialized career field (functional area) that would facilitate professional growth and increase their impact on the Army's prosecution of land warfare. After successful tours in a basic branch, functional area officers are prepared for specialized duties with "unique education, training, and experience" usually attained through civilian graduate school, advanced military training, and specialized assignments.<sup>34</sup> They become proven leaders who can apply advanced academic knowledge in a military context, often informing the decisions of their generalist counterparts who typically have greater command authority. Although Civil Affairs and Psychological Operations functional areas have existed in the past, the approach proposed here differs significantly in training, scale, and employment.<sup>35</sup>

Stability officers should attend civilian graduate school for three reasons. First, graduate school provides an intellectual and institutional foundation. Exposure to different ways of thinking has inherent value for future Army leaders who must understand the "civil component of the operational environment."<sup>36</sup> Graduate students apply many methods, tools, and disciplines to develop research, analytical, and problem-solving abilities. Universities also provide unique opportunities to refine foreign language skills. Select officers could pursue a doctorate later in their careers to further enhance the depth and breadth of stability knowledge available to the Army.

A second benefit is the ability to engage with public- and private-sector leaders and policymakers, world-class faculty, and peers in similar fields. These important connections will broaden officers'

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34. HQDA, *Officer Professional Development*, 11.

35. Robert G. Brady, "The Civil Affairs FID/UW Battalion and Its Implications for SOF in LIC Operations," *Special Warfare* 4, no. 1 (Winter 1991): 12–17.

36. HQDA, *Civil Affairs Operations*, 1-1.

perspectives, build important relationships, and help the Army achieve unified action among nonmilitary partners.<sup>37</sup>

Finally, the Army will find it difficult and costly to attract and retain the faculty required to administer its own military government and stability operations education program. The unique opportunities for learning and growth the right civilian institutions could provide will also be lost. In World War II, the Army partnered with civilian schools to develop and administer education programs for officers who would assume government functions in occupied and liberated territories.<sup>38</sup> These programs began prior to the liberation of Europe and the Pacific, building a competent Civil Affairs and Military Government capability before it was needed in these theaters.

Two models for a partnership between the Army and civilian universities are possible. First, Advanced Civil Schooling could be used to send stability officers to graduate schools, creating a diverse stability corps but limiting the Army's ability to oversee academic development. Second, the Army could adopt a center of excellence model to provide regionally focused academic experiences by establishing long-term partnerships with schools of government at leading institutions. This approach would provide a common experience and allow Army stakeholders (such as the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute) to interface with civilian schools to curate and refine academic preparation. Unfortunately, recent proposals to close the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute demonstrate the low priority the Department of Defense has given stability operations.<sup>39</sup>

## Professional Military Education

It is vital stability officers receive professional military education, given how important governing people and territory is to the success of combat operations on land. Periodic, grade-specific professional military education would prepare these officers to integrate their civilian professional knowledge into military operations. Newly selected stability officers should complete a short functional area indoctrination course to learn the history and doctrine of military government and stability operations and the fundamentals of interagency cooperation.

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37. Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), *Doctrine for the Armed Forces of the United States*, Joint Publication (JP) 1 (Washington, DC: JCS, 2017), II-8.

38. Sandler, *Glad to See Them Come*, 170.

39. Tammy S. Schultz, "Tool of Peace and War: Save the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute," *Strength through Peace* (blog), July 31, 2018, <https://www.cfr.org/blog/tool-peace-and-war-save-peacekeeping-and-stability-operations-institute>.

This instruction should be driven by rigorous analysis of case studies that develop the ability to think clearly, speak confidently, and write effectively. Most importantly, this training should reinforce the ethic of a “professional force [that] understands how [its] tasks collectively serve a greater social good.”<sup>40</sup>

Prominent American military leaders in World War II exemplified the ethic required for successful occupation and stability operations. General Lucius D. Clay, military governor of postwar Germany, was so moved by the suffering he witnessed that he resolved “never to forget that we were responsible for the government of human beings.”<sup>41</sup> Similarly, Brigadier General Crawford F. Sams believed his purpose in his roles supervising public health in Japan and Korea was to show people that “literally, their lives are worth saving.”<sup>42</sup> These officers acted on a belief in the military’s ultimate responsibility to restore peace and dignity. While all officers should be trained to emulate this compassionate diligence, none would be better positioned to guide the Army to act on it than the stability professional.

Following the indoctrination course and to benefit the Army and Joint Force, stability officers should complete various common-core intermediate-level education or equivalent courses in any Army-approved program or resident, satellite, and sister-service intermediate-level programs. As officers advance, they should attend senior service colleges to further refine their ability to contribute to operational- and strategic-level planning.

## Stability Professionals Employed

Stability professionals should be assigned to billets that position them to participate in and contribute meaningfully and consistently to their supported commands’ training and operations. The G-9 staff officer advises the commander on the use of “Army forces to establish or reestablish civil government” and also “evaluates civil considerations,” “prepares the groundwork for transitioning the area of operations from military to civilian control,” and “[enhances] the relationship between Army forces and the civil authorities and people in the area of operations.”<sup>43</sup> Duties of the G-9 include assessing and analyzing complex civil problems, leading and influencing staff sections, and coordinating between military and civilian organizations

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40. C. Anthony Pfaff, “Professionalizing Special Operations Forces,” *Parameters* 52, no. 3 (Autumn 2022): 112, <https://doi.org/10.55540/0031-1723.3172>.

41. Lucius D. Clay, *Decision in Germany* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, 1950), 21.

42. Crawford F. Sams, *Medic: The Mission of an American Military Doctor in Occupied Japan and Wartorn Korea* (Armonk, NY: M. E. Sharpe, 1998), 264.

43. HQDA, *Commander and Staff*, FM 6-0 (Washington, DC: HQDA, 2014), 2-9, 2-14.

and activities. A stability professional should serve a key developmental assignment as an assistant chief of staff for a brigade or group (as a major/O-4/S-9), for a division (as a lieutenant colonel/O-5/G-9), and for a corps (as a colonel/O-6/G-9). Additional assignments could facilitate career paths for general officers who could advise at the highest levels of military commands and policy.

Broadening assignments should enable officers to use their unique experiences and education to make significant contributions to military operations and national security policy, including serving at theater and combatant commands, the Joint Staff, the Office of the Secretary of Defense, and professional military education centers (such as the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute). Stability officers should also exchange knowledge through interagency programs. For example, in the Department of State, opportunities could include liaison positions in the Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operations, the Bureau of Political-Military Affairs, and the the Bureau of Population, Refugees, and Migration. In the US Agency for International Development (USAID) opportunities exist within the Bureau of Conflict Prevention and Stabilization in the Office of Civil-Military Cooperation or the Office of Transition Initiatives. Stability officers could also advance the missions of NATO's Civil-Military Cooperation Centre of Excellence and the Department of Defense Regional Centers for Security Studies.

## Considering Alternatives

Two arguments might be made against the proposed stability professional. The first is a belief that the expertise to conduct stability operations already exists within the government and is available to support military operations. The second is that stability missions are not the Army's real job.

## The Capability Already Exists

Many in the military believe civilians from other agencies are responsible for the success of stability missions. The Department of State and USAID are thought to be America's nation builders. While these executive agencies have critical leadership roles in stabilization, they are primarily responsible for policy and working through partners to achieve long-term goals.<sup>44</sup> In *War and the Art of Governance*, Nadia Schadlow calls out the "myth" that

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44. DOS, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and DoD, *Stabilization Assistance Review: A Framework for Maximizing the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-affected Areas* (Washington, DC: DOS, USAID, and DoD, January 2018), 11, <https://www.state.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/SAR-Final.pdf>.

the US government has “significant nonmilitary, deployable capabilities in sufficient scale” for stability operations.<sup>45</sup> Agencies have attempted to expand civilian capabilities for post-conflict stabilization, but Lieutenant Colonel David A. Mueller observes that such capacity “does not exist in a deployable form in the United States and never has.”<sup>46</sup> Even if the United States could assemble vast numbers of expeditionary civilian experts, Schadlow notes that their presence during and immediately after military action would likely impede a coherent stability strategy by creating redundant control, funding, and reporting structures.<sup>47</sup>

If other government agencies are not suited for stability operations, then some might say Army Civil Affairs forces are adequate. Doctrine calls them “DOD’s primary force to engage and influence [civilians], conduct military government operations, and provide civil considerations expertise.”<sup>48</sup> Unfortunately, this mostly reserve force has limited resources and training time and faces significant obstacles to mobilizing and integrating with active-duty forces and applying its expertise in concert with other stability efforts.<sup>49</sup>

The Army has a brief chance to seize and maintain the stability initiative—every day that passes without effective governance allows near-peer adversaries, insurgents, and criminals to manipulate human suffering to their benefit. This fleeting time has been called “the *golden hour*” of stability.<sup>50</sup> A RAND Corporation report notes the Army’s action (or inaction) early in an operation puts “[stability] on a trajectory that, if trending downward, becomes increasingly difficult to correct.”<sup>51</sup> Units deploying without stability officers will lose precious opportunities to consolidate gains. The stability situation might be beyond professional help by the time Civil Affairs reservists arrive.

To address this gap, brigade and higher-level units need active-duty officers with an expert understanding of stability on their primary staffs. No expertise can impact the outcome of an operation if it is unavailable for that operation. By keeping most of its officers with stability skills

45. Nadia Schadlow, *War and the Art of Governance: Consolidating Combat Success into Political Stability* (Washington, DC: Georgetown University Press, 2017), 276.

46. David A. Mueller, “Civil Order and Governance as Military Responsibilities,” *Joint Force Quarterly* 84, no. 1 (2017): 49, [https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-84/jfq-84\\_43-50\\_Mueller.pdf?ver=2017-01-27-091815-910](https://ndupress.ndu.edu/Portals/68/Documents/jfq/jfq-84/jfq-84_43-50_Mueller.pdf?ver=2017-01-27-091815-910).

47. Schadlow, *Art of Governance*, 274–76.

48. JCS, *Civil-Military Operations*, JP 3-57 (Washington, DC: JCS, 2018), A-A-1.

49. HQDA, *Civil Affairs Operations*, B-1–B-6.

50. James Dobbins et al., *Seizing the Golden Hour: Tasks, Organization, and Capabilities Required for the Earliest Phase of Stability Operations* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2020), ix, [https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research\\_reports/RR2600/RR2633/RAND\\_RR2633.pdf](https://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/research_reports/RR2600/RR2633/RAND_RR2633.pdf).

51. Dobbins et al., *Seizing the Golden Hour*, xix.

in the reserves, the Army entrenches itself against its military responsibility to set conditions for stability from the moment an operation begins. This arrangement guarantees strategic and operational plans will fail to assess the requirements of stability operations accurately because few military planners understand them.<sup>52</sup> Likewise, units should be trained to use their own planning processes and capabilities for stability operations during and after large-scale combat. Unfortunately, this concept is undertaught at all levels of professional military education and underemphasized in the force.<sup>53</sup>

Another significant gap in reserve Civil Affairs capabilities is a lack of training. In addition to having some of the most ambiguous and complex responsibilities in the Army, Civil Affairs reservists must maintain the ability to operate in tactical environments, which limits the amount of drill time available for applying their civilian knowledge in military settings.

It could be said Civil Affairs reservists train every day in their civilian jobs, but applying civilian professions to military operations can be difficult. Professional knowledge is highly contextual. Doctors and lawyers may spend entire careers in a single practice area—shaping, and often narrowing, the limits of their competence. It would be unethical for a cardiologist to perform brain surgery or for a title attorney to frame a nation's constitution. In many professions, location matters as much as specialty. A civil engineer in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, works in a different sociopolitical, economic, and geographic context than a civil engineer in Saint Paul, Minnesota. Both engineers practice the same profession on the same river in the same country, but if they switched places, it would take time and effort for them to adjust to their new environments. How much more adaptation would it take for the mayor of a suburban American town to advise a tribal leader in the Hindu Kush effectively? Civil Affairs reservists cannot put their civilian professions in a duffel bag to unpack in a foreign country and achieve lasting results, yet that is what the Army expects them to do.

At first glance, a relatively new reserve Military Government program seems to address the lack of Army officers with stability skills by recruiting people with highly specialized civilian education and experience.<sup>54</sup> While the Military Government program's technocratic approach may retain a small number of experts for the Army's use at high levels (for example, in theaters and combatant commands), these officers will be stretched too thin to help staffs in brigades, divisions, and corps apply their

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52. Mueller, "Civil Order and Governance," 44.

53. Hicks, Wormuth, and Ridge, *U.S. Civil Affairs Forces*, 40.

54. "Army Civil Affairs Officer – Reserves," US Army Talent Management (website), n.d., accessed May 4, 2022, <https://talent.army.mil/job/civilaffairs-reserve/>.

military capabilities to stability problems in local situations. They will not be available in a contingency because of the time it takes to mobilize reservists, nor will the Army be able to replace quickly experts lost to tour-of-duty rotations and casualties. This new program may also run into an old problem; people are generally not eager to subject their civilian lives and credentials to the needs of the Army. Even volunteers may become uninterested in occupation duty after the war is over, as was the case with some military medical professionals in the postwar Pacific.<sup>55</sup>

### Not “Real” War

The Army has participated in hundreds of government and stability operations.<sup>56</sup> Indeed, official DoD policy states, “Stability operations are a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations.”<sup>57</sup> Yet, the “Army’s institutional biases . . . [have] instilled the conviction in most officers that . . . ‘real’ war is a *conventional* undertaking” involving only large-scale state on state combat. Consequently, the Army has a “general disinclination to study and prepare for . . . *stability operations*.”<sup>58</sup>

Stability operations are not distractions from large-scale combat; they are inseparable from it. World War II offers many examples of how stability enabled the Army’s continued operations during the most extensive and intense combat it had ever experienced, prompting a senior officer to emphasize the military necessity of stability.

The Army is not a welfare organization. It is a military machine whose mission is to defeat the enemy on the field of battle. Its interest and activities in military government and civil affairs administration are incidental to the accomplishment of the military mission. Nevertheless, these activities are of paramount importance, as any lack of a condition of social stability in an occupied area would be prejudicial to the success of the military effort.<sup>59</sup>

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55. Sams, *Medic*, 35.

56. Lawrence A. Yates, *The US Military’s Experience in Stability Operations, 1789–2005*, Global War on Terrorism Occasional Paper (OP) 15 (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute Press, 2006), 2.

57. DoD, *Stability Operations*, DoDI 3000.05 (Washington, DC: DoD, 2017), 2.

58. Yates, *Stability Operations*, 1.

59. Coles and Weinberg, *Soldiers Become Governors*, 153.

Schadlow observes every “significant [US] military intervention” has required the Army to “shape the political outcome of a war.”<sup>60</sup> She uses the term *American denial syndrome* to describe how the US government has “consistently avoided *institutionalizing* and *preparing for* the military and political activities that are associated with the restoration of order during and following combat operations” (emphasis added).<sup>61</sup> The Army typically refocuses on “real” war after a stability-intensive conflict has not gone well, abandoning lessons learned from places like Vietnam, Iraq, and Afghanistan. In this view, though the Army has fought so-called nation-building wars in the past, it will not fight them in the future because that is “not what the Army does.” This attitude ignores the fact that the purpose of war is to create political change by force, making all wars nation-building wars.<sup>62</sup>

Some argue failures in Iraq and Afghanistan were the result of high-level policy decisions that created unsolvable problems for the Department of Defense. While policy undoubtedly affected the outcome of these wars, others have noted the Department underperformed in tasks below the national policy level, to say nothing of the Department’s role in shaping those policies.<sup>63</sup> Policy decisions, good or bad, do not relieve the Army of its responsibility to get results within the areas of its professional competence—offense, defense, and stability operations on land.

As the Hunt report observes, “The history of the United States offers an uninterrupted series of wars, which demanded as their aftermath, the exercise by its officers of civil governmental functions.”<sup>64</sup> The truth in these words, written shortly after World War I, can be seen in the wars of the next 100 years (World War II, the Korean War, the Vietnam War, the Gulf War, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, and dozens of other operations) that needed an Army capable of stabilizing foreign territory. Unfortunately, its officers were seldom trained sufficiently for the job.

## Conclusion

The Army must establish a stable political arrangement during and after large-scale combat to accomplish its missions, but almost no active-duty officers focus on this aspect of war. The few that do are not educated properly for this complex task and are rarely assigned to billets where they could significantly impact the outcome of major

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60. Schadlow, *Art of Governance*, 3.

61. Schadlow, *Art of Governance*, 14.

62. Carl von Clausewitz, *On War*, ed. Anatol Rapoport (London: Penguin Group, 1968), 119.

63. Todd Greentree, “What Went Wrong in Afghanistan?,” *Parameters* 51, no. 4 (Winter 2021): 15, doi:10.55540/0031-1723.3088.

64. Hunt, *American Military Government*, 64.



Army operations. The Army needs active-duty stability professionals to support conventional forces across the spectrum of operations. These professionals should be functional area officers whose career field is entirely new or the result of a dramatic restructuring of current Civil Affairs officer development and employment. The creation of a stability and military government functional area is a realistic way to improve the Army's competence in its missions. By investing in people first, the Army prepares select officers to use existing doctrine and institutions to improve its ability to carry out its ultimate purpose of securing land and establishing a political order that furthers American interests.

Stability professionals should be proven leaders with general professional proficiency (ILR 3) in a foreign language, a graduate-level education aligned with US government stability sectors and Army stability operations tasks, and appropriate professional military education. These officers would advise commanders and integrate civil considerations into staff planning. At the tactical and operational levels, they would promote local stability to enable the Army's continued operations. At the strategic level, they could participate in theater, combatant command, and national planning, shaping appropriate interventions with a nuanced regional understanding grounded in military experience.

In 2018, then Secretary of Defense James N. Mattis stated that the American military has “no God-given right to victory.”<sup>65</sup> This truth applies equally to large-scale combat against enemy armed forces and to the stability operations that will occur before, during, and after the fighting. As learned from the recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there is more to “mission accomplished” than defeating an enemy in battle. The Army should educate active-duty professionals who can integrate this understanding into plans and operations; mitigate political, social, and economic instability; and secure American victories.

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65. James N. Mattis, “Secretary of Defense: Message to the Force,” *Marines* (website), August 17, 2018, <https://www.marines.mil/News/Press-Releases/Press-Release-Display/Article/1605285/secretary-of-defense-message-to-the-force/>.

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