Post-Conflict Reconstruction Lessons In Technology

Learning from Africa and the Middle East

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Abstract

The United States of America has accomplished some advanced technological and developmental achievements recently. However, in order to better its abilities to reconstruct and stabilize nations in the future it must utilize the lessons it has learned from the past as well as these technological advancements. From both Africa and the Middle East, the United States has learned some valuable lessons in helping nations rebuild in the face of danger. Currently, the United States can use internet technologies to better educate those who would want to reconstruct their own nations as a united people group with as little foreign interference as possible. This in combination with past lessons learned can help the United States to become more efficient and capable of reconstructing post-war nations.

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Literature Review

There are many articles and papers on the experiences that the United States of America has had in the various countries where it has tried to help rebuild and even improve war-torn and disaster-stricken nations. Some of these are written by African aid beneficiaries as they have received the impact of nation-building efforts for the last fifty years, while others are written by academics here in the United States or abroad such as the Middle East. The sources used in this paper contain many facts and arguments that will help to determine the best path for the United States to take in the future.

Africa presented the United States with many unique challenges, as addressed by many organizations and researchers. The case study "Post Conflict Reconstruction in Africa: Lessons from Sierra Leone," by Gunter Bender, describes how and why there are still many challenges in this war-torn area and stresses the importance of supporting grass-roots efforts from within the country to rebuild its nation. Once one can help to balance the socioeconomic inequalities present, the people themselves will be galvanized to enact change for the better on their own populace's terms instead of nation builders like the United States.[1] The Conflict Management Division of PeaceAU (African Union) details the current policies in place that the United Nations has had a part in reconstructing and developing the nations therein.[2] The peacebuilding efforts of the UN

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[1]. Gunter Bender, "Post Conflict Reconstruction in Africa: Lessons from Sierra Leone," *ProQuest.com*, June 2011, accessed from http://www.liberty.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/917453436?accountid=12085 (accessed January 12, 2014).

[2]. Conflict Management Division, "Policy on Post-Conflict," *PeaceAU.org*, July, 2006, accessed from http://www.peaceau.org/uploads/pcrd-policy-framwowork-eng.pdf (accessed August 26, 2013).

worldwide and the mixed results thereof are addressed in Albert Cutillo's article for the

International Peace Institute, "International Assistance to Countries Emerging from

Conflict." Cutillo addresses the debate on how best to proceed in this area and how it has

been translated into the operational side of things around the world.[3] Pierre Englebert and

Denis Tull's essay on Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa takes on the American

reconstruction efforts throughout the African states. In this essay they list three "flawed

assumptions" that Western state institutions have put stock in so that they may assist in

the rebuilding of the failed states in Africa, similar to how Bender's views on how we can

learn from Sierra Leone.[4] The Center for Technology and National Security Policy puts

out Defense and Technology Papers on various international policy issues. Their article

"Learning from Darfur" argues that the key to support Africans in their desire to rebuild

from decades of conflict is to partner with the various states that are willing in order to

help develop their technologies and infrastructure and enable their own people to stop

mass killings before they start so that they can survive without foreign intervention over

every incident that pops up.[5] Alcira Kreimer's *Uganda* details the World Bank's

experience with the post conflict reconstruction effort in Uganda and how they have

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3. Albert Cutillo, "International Assistance to Countries Emerging from Conflict," *IPInst.org*, February, 2006, accessed from http://www.ipinst.org/media/pdf/publications/cutillo_e_rpt.pdf (accessed November 20, 2013).

4. Pierre Englebert, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa," *Pomona.edu*, September 19, 2007, accessed from www.politics.pomona.edu/penglebert/State%20Rec%20Paper%20IS%20R&R%20Sep%2019%2007.pdf (accessed September 5, 2013).

5. David Gompert, Courtney Richardson, Richard Kugler, and Clifford Bernath, "Learning from Darfur," *CTNSP.DODlive.mil,* July, 2005, accessed from http://ctnsp.dodlive.mil/2005/07/15/dtp-015-learning-from-darfur-building-a-net-capable-african-force-to-stop-mass-killing-2/ (accessed October 16, 2013).

achieved some success, but also explains why there continue to be shortcomings in the

long-term stabilization of the Ugandan state.[6]

The Middle East has its own share of problematic issues as well, though their

complications are unique to the region. Stuart Bowen's article, "Wanted," lists some of

the things that he had noticed while abroad in Iraq. He lists how the United States was

handling the nation reconstruction efforts in Iraq. Bowen suggests creating the United

States Office for Contingency Operations as an alternative method to save money and

even lives in the future as they could use the same new organization for future

reconstruction and nation building efforts.[7] Ambassador Paul Bremer describes, in his

2003 transcript of a briefing he held from Baghdad, Iraq, the current status of America's

reconstruction efforts in Iraq and how he thought they were doing compared to their

goals. He further explains that they need to partner closely with the Iraqi people if they

want to enable them to be self-sufficient. He also warns that fixing the economy could

take quite a while. Bremer concludes his briefing by detailing how the United States has

set up the interim Iraqi government in hopes of establishing something more permanent

in the future.[8] The geopolitical intelligence firm Stratfor publishes new essays most

weeks that touch on relevant policy concerns as well. Robert Kaplan of Stratfor wrote

"The Death of Defense," in which he describes how Americans are ready and willing to

commit to a smaller military presence worldwide, as they are sick and tired of the wars in

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6. Alcira Kreimer, *Uganda: Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Country Case Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: World Bank, 2000).

7. Stuart Bowen, "Wanted," *DefenseOne.com,* July 31, 2013, accessed from http://www.defenseone.com/ideas/2013/07/someone-watch-over-oco-why-pentagon-needs-permanent-nation-building-watchdog/67865/ (accessed August 28, 2013).

8. Paul Bremer, "Briefing on Reconstruction Efforts," *Defense.gov,* June 12, 2003, accessed from http://www.defense.gov/transcripts/transcript.aspx?transcriptid=2737 (accessed August 28, 2013).

the Middle East and elsewhere. However, the threats in today's world are often far more complex and hidden than ever before, warranting a large force capable of handling threats globally because no one is willing or able to take over the spot the United States now holds.[9] Robert Orr writes in *Winning the Peace: an American Strategy for Post-Conflict Reconstruction* on how the post-conflict situations in many of these nations create a power vacuum that is conducive to terrorist cells and their growing exploitation of the people groups within in his book.[10] He further discloses that if regional stability and economic stability are to be maintained, then the United States needs to come up with a better strategy for post-conflict reconstruction. Without a more effective strategy, these nations will continue to be plagued by terrorist cells and will see more violence spread throughout the region. Andrew Rathmell in "Planning post-conflict reconstruction in Iraq: What can we learn?" delves into how the number of reconstruction and peacekeeping efforts by the UN has skyrocketed and the American military has assumed the role not only of being peacekeepers, but also the role of being a temporary system of governance. He further claims that Iraq has been the most "ambitious and demanding" of America's reconstruction efforts to date.[11] The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction's "Reform of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations" describes the way that Iraq in particular has been handled and suggests ten ideas that could help to reform the stabilization and reconstruction methods that will be used in the future. Much

9. Robert Kaplan, "The Slow Death of Defense," *Stratfor.com,* October 30, 2013, accessed from http://www.stratfor.com/weekly/slow-death-defense (accessed November 22, 2013).

10. Robert Orr, *Winning the Peace: an American Strategy for Post-Conflict Reconstruction* (Washington, D.C.: CSIS Press, 2004).

11. Andrew Rathmell, "Planning Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Iraq: What Can We Learn?," *OnlineLibrary.Wiley.com*, October, 2005, accessed from http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2005.00500.x/full (accessed January 14, 2014).

like in his later work, the Special Inspector (Stuart Bowen) proposes the organization of

the USOCO in this report in order to better handle reconstruction efforts in the future.[12]

Jos Van Gennip admits in his article "Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development"

that post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and in Iraq have been

"enormously challenging."[13] This article asserts that there are many reasons for

reconstruction, it is not simply a tool used to subjugate other nations to the builder

nation's will, but in fact can be very helpful to nations who are constantly being

terrorized by local warlords and would-be tyrants, though there are many challenges, as

stated above.

The history of post-conflict reconstruction goes back a few decades and there are

many who have dedicated and continue to dedicate their work to developing new

technologies to better assist nations in the future as well. Marc Cogen's and Eric De

Brabandere's "Democratic Governance and Post-conflict Reconstruction" lists what

Cogen and Brabandere consider to be the three constitutive elements of democracy that

are crucial in post-conflict reconstruction efforts, especially in nations that do not have a

democratic history.[14] Sanam Anderlini and Judy El-Bushra detail in "Post Conflict

Reconstruction" the kind of relief efforts needed to help nations rebuild in the face of

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12. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Reform of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations," *SIGIR.mil*, February, 2010, accessed from http://cybercemetery.unt.edu/ archive/sigir/20131001125112/http://www.sigir.mil/files/USOCO/ApplyingHardLessons.pdf (accessed August 28, 2013).

13. Jos Van Gennip, "Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development," *ProQuest.com*, 2005, accessed from http://www.liberty.edu:2048/login?url=http://search.proquest.com/docview/216909452? accountid=12085 (accessed January 13, 2014).

14. Marc Cogen and Eric De Brabandere, "Democratic Governance and Post-conflict Reconstruction," *ProQuest.com*, September, 2007, accessed from http://www.liberty.edu:2048/login?url= http://search.proquest.com/docview/219584507?accountid=12085 (accessed January 15, 2014).

ending conflicts and the effects of the reconstruction process on women.[15] The book

Governance in Post-conflict Societies, published by the Center for Strategic and

International Studies and edited by Derick Brinkerhoff, is divided into three sections

which delves into the history of nation building before exploring the "evolving role of the

US military" and then into how one can use the structures of local governance to

strengthen new statewide structures.[16] Much like Bender, Marcus Cox in "State Building

and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Lessons from Bosnia," extrapolates more helpful

methods of state reconstruction. Cox collects data from the international effort to help

Bosnia instead of Bender's case study in Sierra Leone.[17] Infodev's article "The Role of

Information and Communication Technologies in Post-Conflict Reconstruction" by

Nicholas Friederici states that every post-conflict situation is different and should each be

handled individually, though each situation shares common characteristics as information

and communication technologies can go a long way towards helping countries begin to

build again, especially economically.[18] Sybert Liebenberg and Richard Gueli conclude

"Assessment Framework" by finding that post-disaster and post-conflict situations are

very similar, so the basis of the technological tools used to help the nations in need

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15. Sanam Anderlini and Judy El-Bushra, "Post Conflict Reconstruction," *InclusiveSecurity.org*, April 2012, accessed from http://www.inclusivesecurity.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/04/39_post_conflict.pdf (accessed January 12, 2014).

16. Derick Brinkerhoff, *Governance in Post-Conflict Societies Rebuilding Fragile States* (London: Routledge, 2007).

17 . Marcus Cox, "State Building and Post-Conflict Reconstruction: Lessons from Bosnia," *CASIN.ch,* January, 2001, accessed from http://kms1.isn.ethz.ch/serviceengine/Files/ISN/102385/ipublicationdocument_singledocument/5CDDE3C1-0604-4AD4-BE0E-66A4D2ADF05/en/2001_01_State_Building_and_Post-Conflict_Reconstruction.pdf (accessed January 12, 2014).

18. Nicholas Friederici, "The Role of ICT in Post-Conflict Reconstruction," *InfoDev.org,* June, 2013, accessed from http://infodev.org/infodev-files/ict_post-conflict_final_07102013.pdf (accessed September 1, 2013).

should be similar. Both situations would require the same aid techniques, yet understandably in a different context.[19] Carlos Lopes writes on development in "Mediation, Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction" and lends his take on the recent missteps of the United Nations. Lopes lists three key dilemmas as to why there are increasingly fewer resolved disputes and also an increase in failed peacekeeping efforts in the more war-torn regions: the lack of distinction between civilians and combatants, the changing nature of combatants, and the blurring of lines between "military and criminal activities and between military and humanitarian/ development activities."[20] Monte Palmer's work, *The Dilemmas of Political Development*, discusses how a stark minority of nations control the vast majority of the planet's wealth and thus end up sending aid and establishing development initiatives in the more conflict-ridden regions. Political development must advance in these regions if these war-torn states are to achieve an "overall development in society" as well as advance economically. [21]

Data

As Kaplan puts it, the United States has had a worldwide military presence since the attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941.[22] The UN has responsibility for keeping peace worldwide, but it is the United States that provides the backbone for their forces.

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19. Sybert Liebenberg, "Assessment Framework," *CSIR.co.za,* March 2006, accessed from http://www.csir.co.za/websource/ptl0002/pdf_files/media/2006/Paper1.pdf (accessed September 1, 2013).

20. Carlos Lopes, "Mediation, Conflict Prevention, Resolution and Post-conflict Reconstruction," *Scribd.com*, December 1, 2011, accessed from http://www.scribd.com/doc/89191644/Development-Dialogue-no-57 (accessed January 11, 2014).

21. Monte Palmer, *The Dilemmas of Political Development; an Introduction to the Politics of the Developing Areas* (Itasca, Ill.: F.E. Peacock Publishers, 1973).

22. Kaplan, "The Slow Death of Defense."

Additionally, the United States takes independent action quite often due to the

bureaucratic nature of the UN. The UN has conducted 19 complex military operations

around the world since 1989 in order to rebuild nations and help to quell the violence in

nations that were still at war. Ten of these operations have taken place in African states.

Englebert notes that despite the best efforts of the UN, very few of these operations were

actually successful and the UN had difficulty in establishing self-sustaining institutions.[23]

UN and French troops were unable to prevent election violence in the Democratic

Republic of Congo, despite having 17,000 peacekeepers and 2,500 European Union

troops in the area. Englebert reports that conflict actually rose during the 2006 elections.

Even worldwide, peace building efforts have not gotten to the level that the UN would

like them to be as compared to their peacekeeping and humanitarian activities during the

last decade.[24] The UN forces located in Africa at the end of 2005 were composed of

82.4% of all UN peacekeeping forces worldwide.[25] The conflicts in question have killed

or displaced millions across the African states, such as the Democratic Republic of

Congo, Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Angola.[26] The UN's hopeful goals of restoring

these failed states is a flawed premise, as the majority of African states were never

"constituted repositories of power and authority" in the first place, but were always ruled

by authoritarian leaders who took advantage of any power they may have held.[27] The

United States and other Western societies have begun to realize that they need to support

23. Englebert, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa."

24. Cutillo, "International Assistance to Countries."

25. Englebert, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa."

26. Conflict Management Division, "Policy on Post-Conflict."

27. Englebert, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa."

the AU's philosophy to "African Solutions to African Problems" and Americans can use technology in the future to better help train and prepare the future leaders in Africa to lead their respective countries.[28] However, it is not just Africa that has had conflicts in the past and that needs foreign aid and assistance in order for them to rebuild and to get back on their feet.

Stabilization and reconstruction efforts have been going on in Iraq and Afghanistan for the last nine years, but have been plagued by military/civilian integration problems and mismanagement.[29] These "SROs" (Stabilization Reconstruction Operations) encompass all military and civilian activities "across the full spectrum of a conflict."[30] As Bowen mentions, no one was really sure "who was in charge" during individual SROs and this led to significant waste and poor oversight on the operations.[31] Even in 2003, Ambassador Paul Bremer was not sure how long it would take to rebuild Iraq; he avoided stating any specific timelines.[32] In fact, there is no centrally planned organization in Iraq that is taking the lead and neither USAID nor the State Department has the manpower for extended stability operations such as in Iraq and Afghanistan.[33] Ambassador John Herbst is quoted as saying that the United States needs "a corps of dedicated civilian professionals in order to conduct these stabilization operations well."[34]

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28. Gompert, "Learning from Darfur."

29. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Reform of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations."

30. Ibid.

31. Bowen, "Wanted."

32. Bremer, "Briefing on Reconstruction Efforts."

33. Bowen, "Wanted."

The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction similarly suggests that a central

organization to handle post-conflict reconstruction in these and other countries in the

future could be best exemplified by the new organization, the U.S. Office for

Contingency Operations.[35] SROs are not a new thing for the United States as it has

engaged in fifteen of them since World War II, though this is the first time that oversight

was set up over the operation so that they have been able to learn from their mistakes and

what they can do better in the future.[36] In 2003, President Bush organized the Office of

Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance, though this organization never fully

subsumed the responsibilities that it was created to have. It was quickly replaced by the

Coalition Provisional Authority who absorbed what was left of ORHA, though it too

lacked information technology, personnel, and the financial resources to fully carry out

its specific missions.[37] Both situations in Africa and the Middle East can be assisted by

this USOCO as this new organization is meant to be able to used exclusively for nation

rebuilding in the future with the kind of resources that only a top-down method can

provide.[38]

The UN has undertaken peace building around the world since its inception at the

conclusion of World War II.[39] Peace building is the framework in which post-conflict

countries should be assisted by external sources through peacekeeping, humanitarian aid,

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34. Ibid.

35. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Reform of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations."

36. Ibid.

37. Ibid.

38. Bowen, "Wanted."

39. Cutillo, "International Assistance to Countries Emerging from Conflict."

and development cooperation.[40] Information and communications technologies fall under

development and can bring tangible economic benefits after being re-established in the

post-conflict nation.[41] The ultimate objective for post-disaster and post-conflict nations is

to develop a path to sustainable development so that the nation in question can avoid

being put into such a situation again in the future.[42]

Analysis

Over the past few decades the United States of America has accomplished some

very advanced technological and developmental achievements. In order to better their

abilities to reconstruct and stabilize nations in the future they must utilize the lessons they

have learned from the past as well as these technological advancements. From their

experiences in Africa with its ever changing political landscape, as well as their more

recent efforts in the Middle East, they have learned some valuable lessons in how to

approach helping nations rebuild in the face of danger. In addition to these lessons, they

have also passed some very important milestones in technology and now have the ability

to access information almost anywhere in the world. This new globally linked network

can be used to better educate those who would want to reconstruct their own nations as a

united people group with as little foreign interference as possible, while also enabling the

United States to train up leaders in their own communities. This training empowers

people to save their own nations without causing the United States to be seen as a new

imperialistic power, bent on setting up satellite "Americas" around the world. In

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40. Ibid.

41. Friederici, "The Role of ICT in Post-Conflict Reconstruction."

42. Liebenberg, "Assessment Framework."

combination with their past lessons, this newfound empowerment can help them to become more efficient and capable of reconstructing post-war nations and to help stabilize their economy and set up their new system of governance. However, it is very possible that American efforts thus far have only solidified the fact that they should not be engaged in nation building at all and that they should let countries develop on their own.

While the United States of America has been seen as the "world police" since 1941, according to Kaplan, it only attempts to be involved in situations that no one else can or will get involved in order to help out a hurting people group.[43] It does not matter where on Earth this group is located, the United States military will do its best to protect innocent lives and to promote the cause of liberty. The experiences that the United States has gained with aiding in post-war reconstruction and stabilization in the various African states over the years has taught it many valuable lessons about what it can and cannot achieve in tumultuous areas. Since 1989, there have been 10 relief efforts by the United Nations in Africa to help support the transition from war to peace and to rebuild governing institutions so that the African states could regain sovereignty over their borders and to effectively govern their respective populace.[44]

While the United States did have limited success in some of these countries, many of them were plagued by violence for years to come, especially in the first stages of transition. Even countries who did not explode with violent action have become dependent on foreign aid and face inadequacies each year with their various issues and governing policies. Because of this, the UN forces located in Africa at the end of 2005

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43. Kaplan, "The Slow Death of Defense."

44. Englebert, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa."

comprised 82.4% of all UN peacekeeping forces worldwide in order to help keep the

peace and prevent future outbreaks of violence.[45] The conflicts in question have killed or

displaced millions across the African states, such as the Democratic Republic of Congo,

Sierra Leone, Côte d'Ivoire, and Angola.[46] More and more of a percentage of

international terrorist activity and oil exports are coming from Africa, so this is affecting

the violence levels drastically in regards to toppling fledgling governments and

controlling the people of the various African states. Even America's most lofty promises

seem circumspect when compared to the track record it has in attempting to rebuild and

stabilize the war-torn states.

The blame for the continual failure of African states to form effective and stable

governments can be traced to their past reliance on patronage of whatever colonial power

happened to be in charge of their regions at the time. Many Africans were taken as slaves

during the colonialist time period of the world and their governing authorities exploited

them to export products to other more civilized nations in order to be refined into usable

goods and even services. Since they never really were able to get a grasp on being actual

producers, trying to set up a government run by the people and expecting them to survive

in the global economy could be compared to handing a teenager a credit card who has

never had to budget anything in their lives, and expecting them not to run the card up past

its limit. To put it another way, it would be like giving a brand new manual-transmission

car to a 16 year old who has had no driving experience and expecting them to not stall out

on the interstate while trying to shift gears and merge through 4 lane traffic at the same

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45. Ibid.

46. Conflict Management Division, "Policy on Post-Conflict."

time. These nations have no experience with self-government to draw from. They have

continually found themselves in a cyclical pattern of building, becoming corrupt, and

eventually falling back apart into separate factions. Each wanted different things until

war once more devastates everyone. Then the UN comes back in to try and set up the

dominoes of fate once more so that these states can knock them over again.[47]

The UN's hopeful goals of restoring these failed states is a flawed premise, as the

majority of African states were never "constituted repositories of power and authority" in

the first place, but were always ruled by authoritarian leaders who took advantage of any

power they may have held.[48] These leaders took advantage of their power to cause the

failures of their respective states. It is not as if the African states are obstinately refusing

help, it is just that the methods being used thus far are ineffective and end up being a

waste of time. Englebert also points out that there is a flaw in the logic of cooperation

between the donor states and the state being rebuilt. "Local elites maximize personal or

factional benefits from political instability and outsiders' reconstruction efforts," which

casts doubts on the continuance of reconstruction efforts when the donor nations end up

lining the pockets of the corrupt.[49] The third flaw that Englebert and Tull notice is the

inconsistency in the reasons behind the donor nation's generosity. Some help with the

reconstruction efforts just so that they might gain political favor in their home country,

while abandoning the cause when it falls out of the limelight. They only end up helping

in the short term, preventing the post-conflict nation from gaining any long-term ground

as their flow of support wavers as donors sign on or abandon their cause.

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47. Englebert, "Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Africa."

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

The United States and other Western societies have begun to realize that they need to support the AU's philosophy for "African Solutions to African Problems" and they can use technology in the future to better help train and prepare the future leaders in Africa to lead their respective countries, especially in the area of preventing mass killings and genocides.[50] According to Bender's "Lessons from Sierra Leone," the main issue is the returning conflicts of local warring tribes and the failures of most UN charity programs to address the root cause of the ever-present instability in the central African region. He even goes on to call these peace treaties "paper tigers" that have no real substance but look good for the countries that supported them in the first place.[51]

At the end of the day, only the local citizens know what is truly best for their newly developing nations. Having bureaucrats in far-off lands deciding how best to spend their aid money is not the best option at all. Thus, setting up "local and broadly representative councils" should take charge of any and all reconstruction proceedings in place of foreign nation builders.[52] Africans must take the lead in any of these efforts if they are to succeed because they cannot rely on foreigners to baby-sit them forever; they need to stand on their own at some point.[53] Also, any efforts or defense forces organized in order to protect the peace in Africa must be prepared and authorized to "fight and win."[54] They cannot do this alone though, and will still need to cooperate with western nations as they can receive more specialized training and learn how to better make use of

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50. Gompert, "Learning from Darfur."

51. Bender, "Lessons from Sierra Leone."

52. Van Gennip, "Post-conflict Reconstruction and Development."

53. Gompert, "Learning from Darfur."

54. Ibid.

the resources that they possess naturally in order to stabilize their nations. Stabilization is

just the first step of the process and the Conflict Management Division of PeaceAU

recognizes this and states, "Post-conflict reconstruction and development activities do not

stop with stabilization, but seek to achieve long-term sustainable development as

underpinned by the African vision of regeneration and growth."[55] However, it is not just

Africa that has had conflicts in the past and that needs foreign aid and assistance in order

for them to rebuild and to get back on their feet. Something needs to happen in the future

if America is to set these nations up permanently for the benefit of the innocent lives that

did not choose for their birthplace to constantly be engaged in turmoil and political

upheavals.

The Middle East has dominated the American news cycles, as well as Uncle

Sam's wallet, for the better part of the last decade. Africa is not alone is having disasters

and conflicts strike their homelands, and they are not the only ones to receive aid from

America's seemingly-never-ending coffers. Stabilization and reconstruction efforts have

been going on in Iraq and Afghanistan for the last nine years, but have been plagued by

military/civilian integration problems and mismanagement.[56] Though oversight is usually

typical of any government run organization or activity, there has been a severe lack of

such in the relief efforts to the Middle East. Instead of allowing each participating office

or organization to stick to doing what they know best, the stabilization and reconstruction

operations were split up between groups when they really should not have been. These

"SROs" encompass all military and civilian activities "across the full spectrum of a

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55. Conflict Management Division, "Policy on Post-Conflict."

56. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Reform of Stabilization and
Reconstruction Operations."

conflict."[57] Instead of having these operations spread out so thinly, it would've been

better to consolidate them into just a handful of organizations. As Bowen mentions, no

one was really sure "who was in charge" during individual SROs and this led to

significant waste and poor oversight on the operations.[58] Even in 2003, Ambassador Paul

Bremer was not sure how long it would take to rebuild Iraq; he avoided stating any

specific timelines.[59] He knew that it would take months or even years, but it is doubtful

that even he could've imagined that it would go on for a decade with still no conclusive

end in sight.

The fact is, there is no centrally planned organization in Iraq that is taking the lead

and neither USAID, nor the State Department, has the manpower for extended stability

operations such as in Iraq and Afghanistan.[60] Ambassador John Herbst says that the

United States needs "a corps of dedicated civilian professionals in order to conduct these

stabilization operations well."[61] The Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction,

Stuart Bowen, similarly suggests that a central organization to handle post-conflict

reconstruction in these countries and even others in the future could be best exemplified

by the new organization, the U.S. Office for Contingency Operations.[62] SROs are not a

new thing for the United States as they have engaged in fifteen of them since World War

II, though this is the first time that oversight was set up over the operation so that they

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57. Ibid.

58. Bowen, "Wanted."

59. Bremer, "Briefing on Reconstruction Efforts."

60. Bowen, "Wanted."

61. Ibid.

62. Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction, "Reform of Stabilization and Reconstruction Operations."

have been able to learn from their mistakes and what they can do better in the future.[63] In

2003, President Bush signed the Office of Reconstruction and Humanitarian Assistance

into existence, though this organization never fully subsumed the responsibilities that it

was created to have. It was quickly replaced by the Coalition Provisional Authority who

absorbed what was left of ORHA, though it too lacked information technology,

personnel, and the financial resources to fully carry out its specific missions.[64] A year

later, the government decided to switch the reins from the Department of Defense to the

Department of State in hopes that their more diplomatic and bureaucratic approach to

foreign policy could help organize the reconstruction efforts more efficiently throughout

the Middle East. It then set up two temporary organizations to oversee and plan new

operations, but ambiguities arose when lines were crossed during implementation. The

Department of Defense still controlled most of the contracting and workforce involved,

while the Department of State possess neither the experience or scope to lead and

organize such a large reconstruction effort.[65]

      In order to alleviate all of the past problems in this area, both Bowen's

independent article and his Special Inspector's report suggest setting up the U.S. Office

for Contingency Operations. This organization would provide the top-down command

structure that would be required of such a large operation, while still being nuanced

enough to handle any problem thrown at it since each post-conflict or post-disaster

country is in a different situation. Creating another government organization is not ideal,

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63. Ibid.

64. Ibid.

65. Ibid.

as America was meant to be a small federated republic, but consolidating American

efforts into a single organization like the USOCO instead of the myriad of bureaucracies

that the United States has governing the rebuilding nations now will save America

money, time, and resources in the future. Bowen even postulates that it could only cost

$25 million a year to fund this new organization by "field[ing] a dedicated civ-mil team

that could provide a level of reliability and accountability that simply was missing in Iraq

and Afghanistan and is still absent from our national security architecture."[66] Both

situations in Africa and the Middle East can be assisted by this USOCO as this new

organization is meant to be able to used exclusively for nation rebuilding in the future

with the kind of resources that only a top-down method can provide.[67]

Each individual post-conflict nation is very different than the rest and each

requires individual attention in order to best assist them in rebuilding their nation. One of

the more often overlooked ways to help get a nation up and running again is the

information and communications technologies that most countries rely upon for the basis

of their infrastructure and economic centers.[68] While not every post-disaster or post-

conflict nation has the same issues in reconstruction, they all have commonalities that

could be relevant to ICT-enabled intervention.[69] Once they can regain their economic

independence by using ICT to rebuild critical economic infrastructure, they can more

easily fund peace building activities in tandem with the United Nations and/or American

forces. The UN has been tasked with peace building around the world since its inception

66. Bowen, "Wanted."

67. Ibid.

68. Friederici, "The Role of ICT in Post-Conflict Reconstruction."

69. Ibid.

at the conclusion of World War II.[70] This is pretty well-known, though the UN has often

been far more competent at stirring up old rivalries and creating more problems than it

actually solves due to its system of coalitions of small nations that block anything that the

bigger nations try to accomplish and the gridlock between the United States of America,

Russia, and China. None of the three wants any of the others to gain too much from any

one deal so that the balance of power will not be shifted from its current spot.

Peacebuilding is the framework in which post-conflict countries should be assisted by

external sources through peacekeeping, humanitarian aid, and development

cooperation.[71] Information and communications technologies fall into the development

side of things, and can bring tangible economic benefits after being re-established in the

post-conflict nation.[72]

While not being the largest priority or even one of the primary goals in the

reconstruction of post-disaster and post-conflict nations, the ICT field can assist greatly

in jumpstarting the economy and in reconfiguring governmental infrastructure. Some

governments never had country-wide communication in the first place, but with the

advent of mobile technologies and equipment powered by alternative energy sources, as

seen at expos such as the annual STARS-Tides conference at the National Defense

University, these nations are now able to join the 21st century with a bang as they can

now interact on the global scale in order to get better trade values for their resources and

to enable more efficient communication lines so that the fledgling government can

70. Cutillo, "International Assistance to Countries Emerging from Conflict."

71. Ibid.

72. Friederici, "The Role of ICT in Post-Conflict Reconstruction."

adequately express its goals to the citizens and to nations abroad in order to prevent

misunderstandings in diplomacy and military policies that could very easily arise if no

communication was present.[73] They now possess the technology capable of creating

completely closed off networks for developing nations and possibly small corporations

that can provide phone, internet, and data access for a select amount of people within the

coverage radius. These network devices are relatively cheap when compared to setting up

one's own wired network nationwide and there are no monthly internet bills to deal with

either as it is all over the empty wavelengths in the electromagnetic spectrum. The

ultimate objective for post-disaster and post-conflict nations is to develop a path to

sustainable development so that the nation in question can avoid being put into such a

situation again in the future.[74] If these nations are able to stand on their own, they will no

longer have to rely on some big-brother nation to come bail them out every time a would-

be despot starts challenging their status quo. Once they are at the point of sustainable

development, these nations can start to become truly independent and can be welcomed

into the global community with pride.

Conclusion

Since 1776 the United States of America has done its best to be the "city on a

hill," an example to nations around the world of what a free country can do and the

benefits of living in a society where people are not afraid to speak their mind or risk their

fortune on a new business venture. It has also more recently been dubbed the world

police as the United States has decided to use its wealth, resources, and manpower in

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73. Ibid.

74. Liebenberg, "Assessment Framework."

order to make the world better for everyone, and not just for citizens of the United States. The United States of America has had a long partnership with the United Nations in assisting countries who have had tough situations occur within their borders, whether it be a natural disaster, civil war, international conflict, genocide, or even civic oppression of the minority. These most notably have occurred in the African states.

While there has been limited success within Africa, there have also been many failures, not the least of which being Darfur. In order to move forward with helping these nations, there needs to be a few changes made to the way the United States handles post-conflict and post-disaster reconstruction efforts in Africa and abroad. They need to recognize that the African state needs to take the lead on any specific projects being attempted as they need to learn to rely on themselves with their foreign partner as only a guide to get them started. Western nations as a whole need to learn that these reconstruction efforts are not for gaining political favor, nor are these states up for grabs again like they once thought during the colonialist period of history where European countries raced to lay claim to the various African states, as well as nations around the world. Also, any new systems or organizations set up in the future for Africa, or even other nations, needs to have the authority and preparedness to fight and win in case of an invading force, whether its domestic or foreign. They cannot be forced to sit on their thumbs due to not having the proper clearance to defend their citizens. Similarly, the work that is done to reconstruct their nations needs to consider the long-term goals of the country and not just whatever will make them happy now. They must be enabled to run their own governments so that they no longer depend on foreign help to fight their own battles.

Iraq and Afghanistan have taught the United States of America that there needs to be better foresight and planning before rushing into a nation blind and confident that everything will work out fine. It ends up in a bureaucratic nightmare as every organization and piece of infrastructure is jury-rigged on the spot or assigned to a department that might have no idea or precedents on how to proceed in the given circumstance. The best way forward for alleviating this jury-rigged "nightmare" is to create an organization much like the one that has been put forth by Bowen as an alternative way to move forward in nation rebuilding. The Middle East could highly benefit from an organization such as this, though it can be used in every future circumstance as well. The U.S. Office for Contingency Operations would be able to centralize all reconstruction efforts and do so with greater oversight and less overhead as America would know where every dollar was going and would be able to re-evaluate the situation as time went on to determine which methods or specific offices are not contributing to the overall success of the USOCO.

This new nation reconstruction organization, along with working more closely with the nations in question can greatly increase the American capacity to make a difference in war-torn and disaster ridden areas. Together with new information and communications technology policies, nations will be able to get back up on their own "feet" much more quickly than they have been in the past. Hopefully the UN will look to the United States as an example of how they should also use their technology and resources in order to promote peacebuilding worldwide as America cannot police the world on its own, no matter how much they would like to. ICT systems are becoming more and more critical to a nation's development, and if they are able to get this

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technology into reconstructing nations' hands and using the aforementioned techniques learned from Africa and the Middle East, the reconstruction of post-disaster and post-conflict nations will reach a new height of efficiency and expediency that the world has not seen as of yet. It will remain crucial for America to not attempt to swoop in and take over every system and level of government that might be remaining in the nation, but to come alongside them and help them back up so that they can regain their national pride, or even to develop their own independent nation for the first time in their history. This will cement America's place, not as the world police, but as the global partner for the reconstruction of nations and promoter of worldwide freedom.

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