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Limits and Possibilities of the United States Military in Post-Conflict Reconstruction and Stabilization

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Introduction

In the last thirty years, the international community has witnessed an exponential rise in conflict with non-state actors against militias and terrorist organizations. This has consequently induced the diaspora of refugees across vast continents, the dislocation of millions of internally displaced people (IDPs) within war zones, the massacre and slavery of civilians, and the unprecedented emergence of epidemics instigated by targeted destruction of humanitarian efforts.[1] The aftermath of conflict presents a window of opportunity for stabilization operations, contingent upon the adaptability of involved humanitarian actors to the degree of security in unpredictable environments.[2] Without assistance or intervention, countries can collapse into failed states or relapse into conflict which can exacerbate the magnitude of security and humanitarian fallout in the region.[3] Such disastrous occurrences have not hampered the international response, as the World Bank reported a 3,700% increase in aid received since 1960.[4]

National and international organizations, religious institutions, and private actors have not been indifferent to the suffering caused by extensive conflict—both inter-and intrastate. Their desire for humanitarian intervention is undermined by the threats they face under conditions of violence where they often become targets of the various combatants involved.[5] In effect, attempting to deliver humanitarian assistance in various post-conflict environments often confront humanitarian actors with security challenges that threaten the continuity and stability of their operations. Unsurprisingly, as a short-term fix, stakeholders have lobbied for state or international authorities to provide some measure of stability through military intervention meant to serve as an instrument of transition from conflict suppression to security stabilization and, finally, to post-conflict reconstruction – the foundational components that define nation-building.[6]

It is essential to recognize that there is no agreed-upon definition of nation-building; rather, there are abstract subcomponents that have been ascertained by scholars and practitioners.[7] James Dobbins identified critical challenges that influence the level of success in nation-building into a hierarchy of seven essential subcomponents or tasks. [8] The inherent objectives of nation-building

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[1] Jordan Ryan, "Conflict Has Changed, and This Needs to Be Reflected in the Future Development Agenda," *The United Nations Development Programme*, 2013, https://www.undp.org/content/undp/en/home/ourperspective/ourperspectivearticles/2013/08/02/conflict-has-changed-and-this-needs-to-be-reflected-in-the-future-development-agenda-jordan-ryan.html.; The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, "Data Export," The Armed Conflict Location & Event Data Project, 2019, https://acleddata.com/curated-data-files/.; Uppsala Conflict Data Program, "Charts, Graphs, and Maps," Department of Peace and Conflict Research, Uppsala University, 2019, https://www.pcr.uu.se/research/ucdp/charts-graphs-and-maps/.

[2] The United Nations General Assembly and Security Council, "Report of the Secretary General on Peacebuilding in the Immediate Aftermath of Conflict," (New York, NY: United Nations, 2009), http://www.un.org/ruleoflaw/files/pbf_090611_sg.pdf.

[3] Robert D. Lamb, "Fragile States Cannot Be Fixed with State-Building," *Center for Strategic and International Studies*, 2015, https://www.csis.org/analysis/fragile-states-cannot-be-fixed-state-building.; Barbara F. Walter, "Conflict Relapse And The Sustainability of Post-Conflict Peace." (Washington D.C.: The World Bank Group, 2010). http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/128031468182669586/pdf/620260WP0Confl0BOX0361475B00PUBLIC0.pdf.

[4] Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, 2017, "Net Official Development Assistance and Official Aid Received (Current US$)." The World Bank. 2017. https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/dt.oda.alld.cd.

[5] Roger B. Myerson, "Standards for State-Building Interventions," (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago, 2012), http://home.uchicago.edu/~rmyerson/research/std4sb.pdf.; Taylor B. Seybolt, *Humanitarian Military Intervention: The Conditions for Success and Failure*. 1st ed. (Solna, Sweden: SIPRI Publication, 2012).

[6] Ryan, "Conflict Has Changed."; Andrea K. Talentino, "Intervention as Nation-Building: Illusion or Possibility?" *Security Dialogue* 33, no. 1 (2002): 27–43. https://doi.org/10.1177/0967010602033001003.

[7] Nassrine Azimi, "Challenges of Post-Conflict Reconstruction: What Have We Learned in the Past Decade?" *United Nations Institute for Training and Research Hiroshima Office for Asia and the Pacific*, 2020. https://home.hiroshima-u.ac.jp/heiwa/cons/Azimi/03.pdf.

Samuel R. Berger, Brent Scowcroft, and William L Nash, *In the Wake of War : Improving U.S. Post-Conflict Capabilities*, (New York: Council On Foreign Relations, 2005).

Astri Suhrke, "Reconstruction as Modernisation: The 'Post-Conflict' Project in Afghanistan." *Third World Quarterly* 28, no. 7 (2007): 1291–1308. https://doi.org/10.1080/01436590701547053.

[8] James Dobbins, *America's Role in Nation-Building : From Germany to Iraq*, (Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2003).; James Dobbins, Seth G Jones, Keith Crane, and Beth DeGrasse, *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building*. *Santa Monica, CA: RAND, 2007). https://doi.org/10.7249/mg557.

While there is no agreed-upon definition of nation-building with academic circles, the idealtype of state-building is a multifaceted, multilevel, and multistage process to rebuild and strengthen a state's *raison d'être* as a functioning state, without any restrictions on a time frame. The seven subcomponents of nation-building, published by the RAND Corporation in *The Beginner's Guide to Nation-Building* and *America's Role in Nation-*

are beyond the scope of the U.S. military. Due to the nature of the Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR) and the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR) reports—the actual mission of the post-conflict experience in both Afghanistan and Iraq— this paper will focus on post-conflict reconstruction of development and infrastructure.[9]

Military to the Rescue?

Has the approach to pacifying and reconstructing war zones been effective or justified the expectations of humanitarian aid organizations? The answers to this question are diverse, partial, and contingent. Despite the high cost of conflict and the humanitarian impulse to alleviate human suffering, militaries are generally cautious in humanitarian affairs because of their primary function as protectors in warfare. However, institutional, operational, and logistical capabilities have expanded their breadth of abilities in establishing a secure environment. One can compose a laundry list of factors that may restrict a military's humanitarian involvement, but they can be summarized as limitations stemming from a paucity of political, institutional, and ultimately operational control over mission planning, logistics, and implementation - whether the source of disagreement of the mandate is rooted in their own states or supervising international authorities.

Indeed, whether related to humanitarian intervention or not, both states and international organizations calculate their interests carefully when asked to engage in war. Both are as likely to cooperate with other states in avoiding a particular mission as to participate in it, since the risks are high for domestic political leaders as well as international bodies whose credibility diminishes with each institution-sponsored misstep.[10] Like their militaries, states are also hesitant to place sovereign militaries under U.N. authority, especially given its history of peacekeeping limitations.[11] However, countries still look to the U.N. to solve their problems. Understandably, when the economic, political, and national security interests of a state do not align with

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Building from Germany to Iraq are: 1) rule of law, 2) governance, 3) security, 4) humanitarian, 5) economic stabilization, 6) democratization, and 7) development and infrastructure.

[9] Mary Kaldor and Iavor Rangelov, *The Handbook of Global Security Policy*, (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2014), 265-281.; Post-conflict reconstruction is the rebuilding and development of security and infrastructure to increase the efficiency and effectiveness of the system as a whole. As a result, it contributes to the strengthening of the economy, health, security, government infrastructure, and many others sectors that legitimize the government institution. It is one of many components advancing the concretization of the rule of law and facilitates the democratization of both political and economic institutions, leading to the idea of nation-building. Thus, post-conflict reconstruction is not interchangeble with nation-building; rather, it is a proccess that leads to its ultimate purpose.

[10] Examples include the 1993 United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR), the 1995 United Nations Mission in Bosnia-Herzegovina (UNMIBH), the 1999 United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL), the 2003 genocide in Darfur, and the lack of involvement in the 2011 Syrian Civil War.

Don Mayer, "Peaceful Warriors: Private Military Security Companies and the Quest for Stable Societies," *Journal of Business Ethics* 89, no. S4 (2009): 387–401. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0400-x.

[11] Inaction led to the symptomatic emergence of The Right to Protect (R2P), obligating states with the responsibility to protect civilians and provide humanitarian intervention in parallel to security stabilization. The voting system of the Security Council has made enforcement difficult. Many look to the UN Peacekeepers as enforcers amid conflict; however, their operational, administrative and security limitations hinder their capacity in post-conflict security stabilization.

Anthony Fenton, "Haiti and The Dangers of Responsibility to Protect," *Global Policy Forum*, New York, NY: Global Policy Forum, 2009. https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/154/26083.html.

Mats Berdal, "What Are the Limits to the Use of Force in U.N. Peacekeeping?" In *United Nations Peace Operations in a Changing Global Order*, edited by Peter Mateja, 113–32. London, United Kingdom: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019.

Philippa King, "Responsibility to Protect," *Australian Year Book of International Law* 33, no. 1 (2015): 448–52. https://search.informit.com.au/documentSummary;dn=770969209320343;res=IELAPA.

Åse Gilje Østensen, "U.N. Use of Private Military and Security Companies," *The Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces* 3, no. 1 (2001): 1–84. https://www.dcaf.ch/sites/default/files/publications/documents/SSR_PAPER3.pdf.

The United Nations Department of Public Information, "Secretary-General Presents His Annual Report to General Assembly," 1999.; "Report of the Secretary- General, In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All," 2005a.; "Resolution Adopted by the General Assembly," 2005b.; "Calls for Greater Inclusion of Elected Security Council Members, Limited Veto Use in Addressing Atrocity Crimes Dominate Open Debate on Working Methods," 2018.

Nadege Sheehan, "United Nations Peacekeeping: Limitations and Prospects," *The Economics of Peace and Security Journal* 3, no. 2 (2008). https://doi.org/10.15355/epsj.3.2.74.

Jennifer M. Welsh, "Norm Contestation and the Responsibility to Protect," Global Responsibility to Protect 5, no. 4 (2013): 365–96. https://doi.org/10.1163/1875984x-00504002.

justifications for assistance and intervention, militaries may have legitimate concerns on involvement.[12] However, one might expect an increase of participation when these concerns are addressed. In the search to remedy state and international lapses of action in a crisis, some advocate privatizing military functions with private military companies (PMCs). However, this solution has not proven a viable option due to PMCs' history of criminal activities, unethical behavior, limited transparency, minimal accountability, and access to sensitive operational information. [13]

The U.S. Military as Humanitarian Facilitator

The picture painted thus far confirms the conventional argument that neither states nor international bodies like the U.N. are models of how to achieve post-conflict security stabilization. And yet, as suggested, some form of military security—whether state or internationally sponsored—is not only necessary to any such endeavors, but has arguably demonstrated its success. Like other states facing calls to use their military for humanitarian purposes, the U.S. has relevant experience worth examining. The U.S. has been actively involved in post-conflict security stabilization for over 100 years, despite a conventional history of attempting to not engage in military intervention and peacebuilding operations since the Battle of Mogadishu during the Clinton Administration.[14] The challenges of U.S. engagement in humanitarian interventions under the auspices of U.N. authority require that states maintain a certain level of military readiness to repress and stabilize post-conflict environments where interests require it, such as many peacekeeping missions (e.g., African Union Mission to Somalia).

The introduction of non-state actors as destabilizing entities in a conflict has threatened international security and U.S. interests abroad; however, the driving force behind the change of American intervention priorities were the September 11 attacks. These terrorist attacks reshaped the operational purpose and capability of the U.S. military. The U.S. rapidly deployed troops in offensive operations in Afghanistan (2001) and Iraq (2003), while American diplomats sought support and justification of military invasion in the U.N.[15] President Bush indicated in the *National*

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[12] John Holmes, "Responsibility to Protect," *Global Responsibility to Protect* 6, no. 2 (2014): 126–45. https://doi.org/10.1163/1875984x-00602003.

Anthony Fenton, "Haiti and The Dangers of Responsibility to Protect," *Global Policy Forum*. New York, NY: Global Policy Forum, 2009. https://www.globalpolicy.org/component/content/article/154/26083.html.

Roland Paris, "The 'Responsibility to Protect' and the Structural Problems of Preventive Humanitarian Intervention," *International Peacekeeping* 21, no. 5 (2014): 569–603. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2014.963322.

[13] E.g., Eric SA in Algeria in 1992, Ronco during the 1994 Rwanda Genocide, MPRI in Liberia in 1995, ATS Tactical, and Select Armor in Somalia from 2006 through 2008, among many others.

Seden Akcinaroglu and Elizabeth Radziszewski. "Private Military Companies, Opportunities, and Termination of Civil Wars in Africa," *Journal of Conflict Resolution* 57, no. 5 (2012): 795–821. https://doi.org/10.1177/0022002712449325.

Blake W. Mobley, "Outsourcing Post-Conflict Operations: Designing a System for Contract Management and Oversight." *Journal of Public and International Affairs* 15, no. 1 (2004): 21–37. https://jpia.princeton.edu/sites/jpia/files/2004-2.pdf.

[14] Bradley L. Mark, *Publication. The Army and Reconstruction, 1865-1877*. The United States Army, 2015. Accessed December 1, 2020. https://history.army.mil/html/books/075/75-18/cmhPub_75-18.pdf.

Philip Dotson, "The Successes and Failures of the Battle of Mogadishu and Its Effects on U.S. Foreign Policy," *Channels* 1, no. 1 (2016): 179–200. https://doi.org/10.15385/jch.2016.1.1.3.

Michael R. Gordon, and Thomas L. Friedman. "Details of U.S. Raid in Somalia: Success So Near, a Loss So Deep." *The New York Times*, October 25, 1993, https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/25/world/details-of-us-raid-in-somalia-success-so-near-a-loss-so-deep.html.

Victoria K. Holt and Michael G. Mackinnon. "The Origins and Evolution of US Policy Towards Peace Operations," *International Peacekeeping* 15, no. 1 (2008): 18–34. https://doi.org/10.1080/13533310701879860.

NPR, "What A Downed Black Hawk In Somalia Taught America," NPR, 2019, https://www.npr.org/2013/10/05/229561805/what-a-downed-black-hawk-in-somalia-taught-america.

Reuters, "THE SOMALIA MISSION; Clinton's Words on Somalia: 'The Responsibilities of American Leadership,'" *The New York Times*, October 8, 1993, https://www.nytimes.com/1993/10/08/world/somalia-mission-clinton-s-words-somalia-responsibilities-american-leadership.html.

William J. Clinton, "Executive Order No. NSC-25. Presidential Decision Directive – US Policy on Reforming Multilateral Peace Operations," *Federation of American Scientists*. (Washington D.C.: The White House, 1994). https://fas.org/irp/offdocs/pdd/pdd-25.pdf.

Filip Reyntjens, "Rwanda: Genocide and Beyond," *Journal of Refugee Studies* 9, no. 3 (1996): 240–51. https://doi.org/10.1093/jrs/9.3.240.

[15] Holt et al., "The Origins and Evolution of US Policy".

Security Strategy of 2002 that post-conflict reconstruction needed to become a bedrock of American security interests in the Middle East during the 21st century.[16]

This brings into question the U.S. military's level of readiness to serve as an effective intervener of post-conflict security stabilization and reconstruction based on previous lessons learned.[17] As previously mentioned, the military's primary mission to serve and protect; however, the military's capacity and flexibility is necessary in post-conflict stabilization. While certain studies seek to evaluate the unilateral performance of the U.S. military in post-conflict reconstruction, a new trend in scholarship has emerged from analyzing the impact of the war in Afghanistan and Iraq on the intricacies of civil-military partnerships with a *lessons-learned* approach.[18] Many focus on the relationship between the U.S. military, the Department of State (DoS), and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) as actors in post-conflict reconstruction.[19] However, with this discourse, an insignificant amount of attention has been given on the detailed accounts published by the Department of Defense Inspector General's (DoDIG) Special Plans and Operations, SIGAR and SIGIR reports as primary evaluators of the degree of American military success.[20] These reports provide valuable insight into the lack of preparation of the U.S. military and highlight areas to prepare for future interventions.[21]

This study focuses on the current limits and possibilities encountered by the U.S. military in establishing a continuous, working partnership with U.S. humanitarian institutions (e.g., USAID or other private International Nongovernmental Organizations - INGOs) to stabilize conflict zones in order to implement humanitarian aid and assistance to affected populations. While the

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[16] George W. Bush, "A Nation Challenged; Bush Says America Sees a 'Greater Hope,'" *The New York Times*, 2002. https://www.nytimes.com/2002/04/18/world/a-nation-challenged-bush-says-america-sees-a-greater-hope.html.

George W. Bush, "The National Security Strategy of the United States of America," (The White House. Washington D.C.: The White House, 2002b). https://history.defense.gov/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=vGEKP5eXB3A%3d&tabid=9115&portalid=70&mid=20231.

[17] Minxin Pei and Sara Kasper, "Lessons from the Past: The American Record on Nation Building," *Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*. (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2003). https://carnegieendowment.org/files/Policybrief24.pdf.

Nina M. Serafino, "Peacekeeping and Related Stability Operations: Issues of U.S. Military Involvement," Foreign Affairs, Defense, and Trade Division. (Washington D.C.: Congressional Research Service, 2006). https://fas.org/sgp/crs/natsec/IB94040.pdf.

[18] Stuart W. Bowen Jr., and Craig Collier, "Reconstruction Leaders' Perceptions of CERP in Iraq: Report Overview," *Prism : A Journal of the Center for Complex Operations* 4, no. 1 (2012): 119–25. https://doi.org/2157-0663.

Edwin K. Burkett, "Foreign Health Sector Capacity Building and the U.S. Military," *Military Medicine* 177, no. 3 (2012): 296–301. https://doi.org/10.7205/milmed-d-11-00087.

Jayne A.Carson, "Nation-Building, The American Way." *Federation of American Scientists*. (Carlisle Barracks, PA: United States Army War College, 2003). https://fas.org/man/eprint/carson.pdf.

[19] Brendan Ballou, "Why America's Nation Building Office Failed and What Congress Had to Do With It," *Stability: International Journal of Security & Development* 3, no. 1 (2014). https://doi.org/10.5334/sta.ec.

James Dobbins, "Europe's Role in Nation Building," *Survival* 50, no. 3 (2008): 83–110. https://doi.org/10.1080/00396330802173115.

Andrew Rathmell, "Planning Post-Conflict Reconstruction in Iraq: What Can We Learn?," *International Affairs* 81, no. 5 (2005): 1013–38. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1468-2346.2005.00500.x.

Suhrke, "Reconstruction as Modernisation."

[20] Department of Defense Office of Inspector General's Special Plans and Operations (SPO) Directorate, "Summary of Lessons Learned 'DoD IG Assessment Oversight of 'Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip' Operations by U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan," *Department of Defense*. Last modified March 31, 2015. https://www.dodig.mil/reports.html/Article/1119136/summary-of-lessons-learned-dod-ig-assessment-oversight-of-train-advise-assist-a/.

Michele Chwastiak, "Profiting from Destruction: The Iraq Reconstruction, Auditing and the Management of Fraud," *Critical Perspectives on Accounting* 24, no. 1 (2013): 32–43. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cpa.2011.11.009.

Yosef Jabareen, "Conceptualizing 'Post-Conflict Reconstruction' and 'Ongoing Conflict Reconstruction' of Failed States," *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* 26, no. 2 (2012): 107–25. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10767-012-9118-3.

Justin M. Marchesi, "Pass the Sigar: Cutting through the Smoke of Lessons Learned in Simplified Contingency Contracting Operations," *Military Law Review* 219, no. 1 (2014): 53–82. https://search-ebscohost-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/login.aspx?direct=true&db=tsh&AN=97347213&site=ehost-live&scope=site.

Kamarul Azlan Bin Abd Samad, RMN. "The Challenges and Prospects in Rebuilding Post-Conflict Afghanistan," *The Journal of Defense and Security* 7, no. 1 (2016): 80–92. https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/2296130241?pq-origsite=summon.

[21] Ballou, "Why America's Nation Building."

Toby Dodge, *Inventing Iraq: The Failure of Nation-Building and a History Denied*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005).

Institute for Defense & Government Advancement, "The Doctrine of Failure in Afghanistan: Rethinking Nation Building and the Punitive Expedition," 2013. https://www.idga.org/archived-content/news/the-doctrine-of-failure-in-afghanistan-rethinkin.

Kenneth M. Pollack, "The Seven Deadly Sins of Failure in Iraq: A Retrospective Analysis of the Reconstruction," *The Brookings Institution*, 2006. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/the-seven-deadly-sins-of-failure-in-iraq-a-retrospective-analysis-of-the-reconstruction/.

Ahmed Rashid, *Descent into Chaos : The US and the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia*, (London: Penguin Publishing, 2009).

complexities of involving militaries as a tool of stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction are global in scope, it is imperative to note that it involves both state and non-state actors across many cases. The U.S. will continue to engage and modify strategies to meet objectives in post-conflict nation-building, and it is crucial to implement SIGAR and SIGIR recommendations to concretize its evidence-based approach. This will only be possible by answering questions that encompass a comparative analysis of each case; "How can the U.S. effectively and systematically improve its future post-conflict reconstruction efforts in post-conflict regions? What dynamics are present in military-humanitarian cooperation (USAID) that need to be analyzed? How can both the military and American government departments help local stakeholders solidify the continuity of post-conflict reconstruction efforts after withdrawal? How can the U.S. military experience in Afghanistan and Iraq inform its future partnership with USAID and other humanitarian organizations in order to facilitate lifesaving stabilization in the wake of ongoing or post-conflict scenarios?" This paper seeks to answer these critical questions that will unfold the multifaceted complexity of American efforts abroad, as well as derive factors that can directly impact the success of future efforts.

Methodology

The framework of this research consists of conducting a comparative analysis of Afghanistan and Iraq as two recent U.S. civilian-military cooperation and coordination cases, USAID will symbolize the possibilities of other humanitarian organizations that can be involved with the U.S. military in future post-conflict reconstruction.[22] To achieve this, this study will first dissect individual actors primarily involved with post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq. Secondly, this analysis will scrutinize each case to provide valuable insight into the overall status of post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq through insights offered by the SIGAR and SIGIR reports. While DODIG publishes reports mostly are available for public access, this study will see post-conflict reconstruction through the lens of SIGAR and SIGIR. Finally, the lessons learned from these reports will propose strategic recommendations for future efforts.

This research contains key advantages within the selection of this methodology. First, the small sample of the extent of U.S. military-humanitarian efforts has primarily occurred within the last 20 years. This will allow for a detailed and contemporary account of each reconstruction effort. Secondly, SIGAR and SIGIR have published extensively detailed reports on the outcomes of military-facilitated post-reconstruction efforts in each case. These reports prove to be useful in comprehending lessons learned, as well as the limits and possibilities of moving forward with recommendations for future joint projects.

Despite its advantages, one limitation of this analysis is the paucity of cases encompassing military-humanitarian cooperation and coordination that will not allow for any statistically robust quantitative conclusion; consequently, causing this study to rely upon both qualitative and quantitative analysis. A second limitation is the scope of the SIGAR and SIGIR reports. It is important to note that these reports are seen through the lens of an American government entity, and do not include the perspective of the DoDIG. As a result, it is possible that the standards that SIGAR and SIGIR uses to measure effectiveness might not coincide with the sociopolitical, economic, religious and cultural limitations imposed in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition,

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[22] This paper will later address the joint-partnerships of the military and USAID and how it impacts post-conflict reconstruction. Therefore, it is critical to use USAID as a symbol of the military's relationship with the humanitarian community as it serves as the humanitarian umbrella for U.S. international development and humanitarian efforts. This paper does not argue that the U.S. military and USAID should not be the primarily lead in post-conflict reconstruction; rathe, this study points out the weaknesses by SIGAR and SIGIR reports to strenghten their response.

mandates and commands changed in a continuous basis, making it difficult to have an overarching strategy and implementation plan throughout the entire theater involvement. This study looks at specific contexts of different commands and mandates to identify what did not work. A final limitation encompasses the questionable success of counterinsurgency (COIN) contingent upon reliable leadership and various operational factors.[23] The SIGAR and SIGIR reports account for the fact the military has done conflict suppression to some degree during the post-conflict scenario and so achieved a critical phase in the transition towards the quixotic objectives post-conflict reconstruction. Rather than addressing all seven tasks published by Dobbins, the focus of utilizing the SIGIR and SIGAR reports are to analyze and recommend alterations to one of seven subcomponents of post-conflict reconstruction; development and infrastructure.

A critical factor worth noting is there is a lack of well-defined intervals or milestones of the spectrum measuring the level of nation-building available to the public, and any classified information will limit the ability of this study to establish clear boundaries between the functions of humanitarian intervention and post-conflict reconstruction. It is also even difficult to define success in post-conflict reconstruction, as many countries tend to fall back into conflict, become a failed state or even struggle slowly on its path to recovery. Even when state security stabilization is not fully achieved, humanitarian intervention tends to develop towards the idea of nation-building. Post-conflict reconstruction are steps taken towards the monumental idea of nation-building – these two concepts are not identical. As a result, post-conflict reconstruction can happen without total territorial control. However, security implications could lead to a relapse into a conflict that would again require humanitarian intervention – a continuous cycle dependency. Thus, it is difficult to measure the transition from humanitarian intervention to post-conflict reconstruction in the spectrum of nation-building.[24]

U.S. Actors in Post-Conflict Reconstruction

While there are no concrete metrics to measure success, there are identifiable essential actors addressed by SIGAR and SIGIR throughout the post-conflict reconstruction process. The United States Army Corp of Engineers (USACE) was the chief national-level actor in post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq in charge of building, managing, monitoring and subcontracting services to rebuild and modernize the infrastructure of Afghanistan and Iraq.[25] USACE was not able to achieve DoD objectives alone and required assistance from another actor - USAID.[26] As mission priorities changed with the realities of post-conflict reconstruction,

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[23] Nicholas J. Schlosser, "The Surge: 2007-2008," *Center of Military History*, (Washington D.C.: United States Army, 2017). https://history.army.mil/html/books/078/78-1/cmhPub_078-1.pdf.

The Department of the Army, "Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies (FM 3-24)," *The Department of the Army*, (Washington D.C.: Department of Defense, 2014). https://fas.org/irp/doddir/army/fm3-24.pdf.

The United States Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, "Counterinsurgency," The United States Army Maneuver Center of Excellence, 2018. https://www.benning.army.mil/MSSP/Counterinsurgency.

Karl W. Eikenberry, "The Limits of Counterinsurgency Doctrine in Afghanistan: The Other Side of the COIN," *Foreign Affairs* 92, no. 5: 59–VII. https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1428163502?pq-origsite=summon

[24] While there are no metrics, further research would be required to select appropriate measurements to define success in post-conflict reconstruction and encourage efficiency and sustainability between post conflict and the execution of reconstruction.

[25] David Petraeus, "Reflections by General David Petraeus, USA (Ret.) on the Wars in Afghanistan and Iraq," *Prism* 7, no. 1 (2017): 150–67. http://ezproxy.liberty.edu/login?url=https://search-proquest-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/docview/1944517566?accountid=12085.

Estimated at billions in construction and oversight at thousands of sites from 2002 to 2018, USACE built health facilities, roads, schools, military bases, housing, government facilities, and many other facilities encompassing all sectors; The US Army Corps of Engineers. 2019c. "The Corps Oversaw the Construction of Much of Afghanistan's Modern Road Network."; 2019d. "USACE History in Afghanistan."; 2019a. "Afghanistan District Mission."; 2019b. "Doing Business with the Afghanistan District."; 2019, "The Corps Oversaw."

[26] As a result of the departmental mission directives, the Integrated Civil-Military Affairs Group - joint Department of Defense (DoD) and USAID initiative - implemented a plan that "operationalized the concept of stabilization and described how civilian and military organizations would work side-by-side in Afghanistan to stabilize priority areas from the bottom up," while considering security and institutional challenges.

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR), "SIGAR-18-48-LL: Stabilization: Lessons from the US Experience in Afghanistan." (Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2018c). https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/lessonslearned/SIGAR-18-48-LL.pdf. 39.

USAID's involvement in post-conflict reconstruction was contingent on the degree of involvement of DoD and the level of security provided by the U.S. military in Afghanistan and Iraq. USAID reported that its mission objective was to contextualize and integrate programs with the long-term development objective of stabilization and growth in multiple sectors.[27] As military interests in Afghanistan and Iraq began to dissipate, American politicians began to question the next step in the stabilization and sustainability of post-conflict reconstruction efforts, andthe mantle of post-conflict reconstruction and development was passed to USAID.[28] USACE indirectly maintained its involvement in a consultant capacity on construction projects and by assisting in procuring subcontractors.[29] Civil-military partnerships, such as USAID and USACE, required third-party oversight to ensure the integrity and transparency of post-conflict reconstruction projects.This oversight was delegated to SIGAR and SIGIR.

Special Inspector General for Afghanistan Reconstruction (SIGAR)

As the U.S. military focused on security and capacity building of the Afghan National Army (ANA) as an objective of Operation Freedom's Sentinel, USAID became the humanitarian arm of the U.S. government tasked by Congress with spearheading post-conflict reconstruction in partnership with USACE.[30] First, SIGAR discovered a lack of compliance with the International Building Code (IBC) and basic health regulations. In 2013, SIGAR submitted a letter to the Lieutenant General Thomas P. Bostick, the Commanding General and Chief of Engineer of USACE, to alert of potential life-threatening fire and safety risks of the 1,002 K-Span structures either directly built or subcontracted by USACE for ANA.[31] The insulation and thermal barrier systems used in K-Span structures did not comply with IBC standards, which caused past fires resulting in almost $1 million in property damage.[32] On the other hand, SIGAR also uncovered the lack of compliance with basic health regulations when physically inspecting 269 of 664 USAID-supported health facilities in nearly 75% of the provinces in Afghanistan.[33] Clinics faced serious structural deficiencies: exposed wires, cracked walls, shattered windows, intermittent potable water and electricity, leaking roofs, and waste management. The lack of compliance threatened the lives of soldiers and civilians.

Secondly, investigations uncovered inaccurate and incomplete data reports of joint USACE and USAID monitoring and evaluation activities. For example, from 2007 through 2009, SIGAR reported that over half of CERP files were incomplete; as a result, the U.S. Army Audit Agency conducted an independent investigation and discovered that "92.6 percent of the records reviewed—212 of 229—were not complete, and the gaps were often important documents" of the 3,000 incomplete projects.[34] Discrepancies in data reporting hinder measuring the impact of funds that focused on improving the livelihoods of the local population in post-conflict reconstruction

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[27] William Hammink, "USAID in Afghanistan: Challenges and Successes," *United States Institute for Peace*. (Washington D.C.: United States Institute for Peace, 2017). https://www.usip.org/sites/default/files/2017-12/sr417-usaid-in-afghanistan-challenges-and-successes.pdf.

The United States Agency for International Development. 2019a. "About the USAID ASSIST Project."; 2019b. "Partnership Contracts for Health (PCH)."; 2012. "Fact Sheet: Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI)."; 2015. "Fact Sheet: Fiscal Year 2015 Budget Request for Development and Humanitarian Assistance."; 2018a. "Annual Performance Monitoring Report FY18."

[28] Schlosser, "The Surge."

[29] James Dobbins, Jason Campbell, Sean Mann, and Laurel Miller, *Consequences of a Precipitous U.S. Withdrawal from Afghanistan*, (RAND Corporation, 2019). https://doi.org/10.7249/pe326.

[30] The United States Agency for International Development, "Annual Performance Monitoring".The United States Agency for International Development, "USAID Coordinates Closely".

[31] SIGAR, "*SIGAR-13-3-SP: Management*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/alerts/SIGAR%20SP%20Alert%20Letter%2013-3%20April%204%202013.pdf.

[32] Ibid.

[33] SIGAR, "*SIGAR-20-28-SP: Health Facilities in Afghanistan: Observations from Site Visits at 269 Clinics and Hospitals*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2020c. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-20-28-SP.pdf.

[34] SIGAR, "*SIGAR-18-48-LL*," 100.

and strengthening ANA. Incomplete contractual data decreased the accuracy of USACE reports; however, SIGAR also published various reports on the inaccuracy of the monitoring and evaluation practices of The Partnership Contracts for Health (PCH) Program and the System Enhancement for Health Action in Transition (SEHAT) Program under joint USACE and USAID operations.[35] To be impartial, the nuances of fieldwork amid a post-conflict environment, combining with sociopolitical and environmental restrictions, could have impacted to the ability of USAID and USACE to achieve reporting objectives.

The monitoring and evaluation activities inspected by SIGAR consisted of three stages: confirmation, evaluation and reporting.[36] As part of the first step, SIGAR John F. Sopko submitted a letter in 2015 to the Acting Administrator of USAID, Alfonso E. Lenhardt, requesting additional information to confirm the locations of PCH and SEHAT facilities.[37] In partnership with the U.S. Army's Geospatial Center and Digital Globe Imagery, SIGAR investigated all reported data and geospatial imagery of coordinates to confirm the location of 641 health care facilities. Numerous inconsistencies were found. SIGAR reported 13 duplicated coordinates, 43 erroneous coordinates, and 120 mismatched districts.[38] Multiple facility locations were either reported with a structure far from a respective coordinate or with no structure at all. In response, the USAID Assistant to the Administrator for the Office of Afghanistan and Pakistan Affairs (OAPA), Donald L. Sampler, responded to Sopko's first letter by assuring that USAID was now working with the Afghanistan MOPH to rectify the discrepancies.[39] However, after SIGAR analyzed the second submitted updated list, Sopko still discovered multiple errors.[40]

Third, fraud and waste directly tied to joint-USAID and military subcontractors and U.S. soldiers directly diminished the view of the U.S. military as a competent actor. For example, subcontractor Mercury Development, received $3.1 million of the $3.4 million of their contract before completing the Sheberghan Teacher Training Facility building project. As a result, Mercury Development abandoned the project and USACE had to terminate "the contract and released the company from further contractual liability."[41] Fraud and waste served as opportunities for various criminal convictions of U.S. soldiers directly impacting the legitimacy of military efforts in post-

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[35] Ibid.; The PCH and the SEHAT programs funded assistance to the Afghan Ministry of Public Health (MOPH) to deliver essential health services to approximately 10.6 million Afghans in 13 provinces. The activities of this program consisted of increasing functioning primary health care facilities, creating a monitoring system at the provincial level, and others.

SIGAR, "SIGAR-19-34-SP: USAID Supported Health Facilities in Bamyan Province, Afghanistan: Observations from 44 Site Visits," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2019b. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-19-34-SP.pdf.

The United States Agency for International Development, "About the USAID ASSIST Project."

The United States Agency for International Development, "Partnership Contracts for Health (PCH)."

[36] The first stage of inspections consists of confirming the location and the data provided by USAID. The second stage in SIGAR's investigation process consisted of a 1-2 hours inspection by a team that annotated the date, time, coordinate verification, and photographed every facility visited and analyzed the "overall assessment of the facility." This overall assessment included recording the geospatial coordinates of the facility, the apperance, as well as the operational and structural integrity of the facility based on standards established by health officials and engineers. The final stage consisted of publishing detailed findings that accounted for deficiencies and recommendations of each facility; SIGAR, "SIGAR 17-18-SP: Review Letter: USAID-Supported Health Facilities in Baghlan," 2016d.; 2019a. "*SIGAR 19-20-SP: USAID Supported Health Facilities in Faryab Province, Afghanistan: Observations From 17 Site Visits.*"; 2019b, "*SIGAR-19-34-SP.*"

[37] SIGAR, "*SIGAR-15-67-SP: Inquiry Letter: Geospatial Coordinates for PCH Health Facilities*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2015a. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-15-67-SP.pdf.

[38] Ibid.

SIGAR, "*SIGAR-15-82-SP: Alert Letter: PCH Health Facilities Coordinates Response*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2015b. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/special%20projects/SIGAR-15-82-SP.pdf.

[39] Ibid.

[40] Ibid.

[41] SIGAR, "*SIGAR 18-08-IP: Department of State and USAID Reconstruction Projects in Afghanistan: Analysis of SIGAR Inspection Reports Issued from August 2009 through March 2017*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2017d. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/inspections/SIGAR-18-08-IP.pdf. 1.

conflict reconstruction.[42] Thus, SIGAR investigations concluded joint USACE and USAID operations faced critical systematic deficiencies.[43]

Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR)

Much like USACE operations in Afghanistan, the Gulf Region Division of USACE served as the primary construction administrator and manager of all sectors in Iraq that supported contracts designated to the Task Forces to Restore Iraqi Oil and Iraqi Electricity funds.[44] SIGIR reported that USACE completed over 5,000 projects estimated at $8.27 billion.[45] The approach of USAID and USACE in Iraq was different from Afghanistan because the focus was mostly on security and the rule of law; however, funds directed towards infrastructure development targeted water, sanitation, energy, and the health sector.[46] To ensure that the funds allocated to post-conflict reconstruction were appropriately utilized, SIGIR was mandated with the responsibility to provide oversight, investigations and audits of the reconstruction efforts in Iraq, targeting misuse of all funds associated with American post-conflict reconstruction.[47] Throughout the entire U.S. military involvement in Iraq, SIGIR conducted over 220 audits and 170 investigations that reported mishaps that directly impacted the credibility of the DoD and USAID as effective actors in post-conflict reconstruction.[48] SIGIR reported two main issues as a result of their investigations: structural deficiencies and inaccurate reported data.

First, many facilities encountered structural flaws. For example, it is estimated that over $1.65 billion was allocated for the construction and maintenance of military buildings, barracks, and dining facilities.[49] USACE invested over $165 million to expand the prison capacity in Iraq by awarding contracts to build the Nassiriya and Khan Bani Sa'ad prisons.[50] After both the contract and the project were terminated due to deficiencies, SIGIR inspected several sections of each facility and concluded that the construction done by Parsons Delaware Inc did not meet safety standards and recommended for the facilities never to be used.[51] Structural deficiencies were also discovered in the health sector.[52]

As another example, USACE and USAID recognized that Iraq's underdeveloped public health system was a threat to long-term sustainability and decided to actively participate in

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[42] SIGAR, "Criminal Cases," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2020e. https://www.sigar.mil/investigations/criminalcases/index.aspx?SSR=3&SubSSR=20&WP=CriminalCases.

[43] SIGAR concluded that "USAID and DoD stabilization efforts in Afghanistan were marked by poor situational awareness, a lack of reliable data, a mismatch between short project timelines and highly ambitious long-term goals, and frequent shifts in priorities."; SIGAR , "*SIGAR-18-48-LL,*" 130.

[44] Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction (SIGIR). "*Learning From Iraq: A Final Report From the Special Inspector General for Iraq Reconstruction.*" Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2013a. https://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/sigir/20131001083907/http://www.sigir.mil/ files/learningfromiraq/Report_-_March_2013.pdf#view=fit.

[45] Ibid, 83.; The purpose of USACE was to rebuild critical infrastructure and "restore Iraq's oil infrastructure so that it could reach pre-war production and export levels" since the Iraq invasion caused approximately $457 million from military conflict and $943 million due to depreciation.

[46] Ibid.

[47] SIGIR, "*About SIGIR,*" Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2013b. https://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/sigir/20131001084048/http://www.sigir.mil/about/index.html.

[48] Iraq faced severe limitations superimposed by corruption, waste, fraud, and lack of proficient management and administrative skills by the US military and the Iraqi government. SIGIR investigations led to 82 convictions and saved over $1.6 billion of taxpayers' money.; SIGIR, "*Learning From Iraq.*"

[49] Ibid.

[50] Ibid.; The original plan was to expand the facilities to accommodate over 3,600 beds; however, Parsons Delaware Inc. faced cost overruns, delayed the construction schedule, and did not adhere to specifications in the contract.

[51] SIGIR, "*SIGIR-06-011: Management of the Primary Healthcare Centers Construction Projects,*" Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2006a. https://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/sigir/20131001084734/http://www.sigir.mil/files/audits/06-011.pdf#view=fit.; SIGIR, "*Learning From Iraq.*"

[52] SIGAR, "SIGAR-17-34-SP: Review: USAID Supported Health Facilities in Ghazni Province," 2017a.; "SIGAR-17-51-SP: Review: USAID Supported Health Facilities in Takhar," 2017b.; "SIGAR-17-67-SP: Review of CERP Health Facilities in Nangarhar," 2017c.; "SIGAR 16-40-SP: Review Letter: USAID-Supported Health Facilities in Badakhshan," 2016c.; "SIGAR 16-09-SP: Review Letter: USAID-Supported Health Facilities in Kabul," 2016a.

rebuilding the health sector.[53] The Iraq Primary Healthcare Center (IPCH) program was developed to impact over 4 million Iraqis by building 150 clinics around the country at a total $362 million.[54] Similar to the SEHAT and PCH program in Afghanistan, USACE was in charge of oversight and management in Iraq and subcontracted Parsons Delaware, Inc. to provide design and construction services in the building, housing and health care.[55] SIGIR physically audited the status of 109 facilities and discovered various flaws in the structural integrity of buildings (39 facilities), the plumbing (37 facilities) and sewage systems (29 facilities), the electrical systems (36 facilities), and many others areas.[56] Over $9 million was spent on maintenance and structural corrections: generator and electrical systems ($3.9 million), the interior and exterior of facilities ($1.3 million), plumbing and septic system ($465,000), and others.[57]

A second critical area uncovered by SIGIR inspections was inaccurate reported data. Similar to the incorrect GPS coordinates reported by SIGAR, SIGIR randomly selected ten PHC facilities and discovered that four of the ten facilities were located in an empty field – no construction was done.[58] The results of the SIGIR inspections reported similar findings to those of SIGAR in Afghanistan – inaccuracy and mismanagement have diminished the impact and effectiveness of financial resources that could have been reallocated to other vital projects.[59] DoDIG offers various *lessons learned* reports that should be considered to restructure and re-strategize as the U.S. military considers future war and reconstruction.[60]

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

While it is acknowledged that post-conflict reconstruction is a long-term process, the normative response and management system of the U.S. military and other U.S. government departments are varied from command.[61] Post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq exemplified these systematic norms over the last two decades, showcasing the fragility and complexity of projects contingent upon the fragile balance of U.S. interests and the socio-economic and political realities of each country. SIGIR and SIGAR highlighted the shortcomings of these

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[53] Ibid.

[54] Ibid.

[55] Part of the project included the procurement and furnishing of medical equipment to the clinics that were built by Parsons: x-ray equipment, blood analyzers, examination tables, defibrillators, ventilators, and incubators, as well as office supplies and furniture; SIGIR, "*SIGIR-06-016: Interim Audit Report on the Review of the Equipment Purchased for Primary Healthcare Centers Associated with Parsons Global Services, Contract Number W914NS-04-D-0006*," 2006b.; "*Learning From Iraq," 2013.;* "SIGIR-06-025: Review of the Medical Equipment Purchased for the Primary Healthcare Centers Associated with Parsons Global Services, Inc., Contract Number W914NS–04–D–0006," 2006c.; "SIGIR-10-015: Health Center Sustainment Contract Resulted in Some Repairs, but Iraqi Maintenance Capability Was Not Achieved," 2010.

[56] SIGIR, "*Learning From Iraq.*"

[57] Ibid.

[58] SIGIR, "*SIGIR-09-015: Construction of Primary Healthcare Centers Reported Essentially Complete, but Operational Issues Remain*," 2009a.; SIGAR concluded that the IPHC program had "cost substantially more than planned, taken much longer to complete, and produced fewer facilities…unless flawed policies, plans, procedures, and accounting for the status of completed and turned over assets is improved, US funded infrastructure projects will remain highly vulnerable to become wasted."; Ibid.

[59] Contracting challenges that led to "project delays and, ultimately, charges for overhead with no work being carried out"; "Learning From Iraq," 2013, 52; "SIGAR 18-29-AR: Afghan National Defense and Security Forces: DOD Cannot Fully Account for US-funded Infrastructure Transferred to the Afghan Government," 2018a.; "SIGAR-18-46-AR: Testimony Before the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee (HSGAC) Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management (FSO) US Senate. Oversight of US Spending in Afghanistan," 2018b.

[60] Peter Van Buren, *We Meant Well : How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People*. (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2012).

Dwight D. Murphey, "We Meant Well: How I Helped Lose the Battle for the Hearts and Minds of the Iraqi People." *The Journal of Social, Political and Economic Studies* 38, no. 1 (2013): 99+. https://link-gale-com.ezproxy.liberty.edu/apps/doc/A331169745/ITOF?u=vic_liberty&sid=ITOF&xid=e92f896b.

Department of Defense Office of Inspector General's Special Plans and Operations (SPO) Directorate, "Oversight of U.S. Military and Coalition Efforts to Improve Healthcare Conditions and to Develop Sustainable Afghanistan National Security Forces (ANSF) Medical Logistics at the Dawood National Military Hospital," 2013.; "Summary of Lessons Learned 'DoD IG Assessment Oversight of 'Train, Advise, Assist, and Equip' Operations by U.S. and Coalition Forces in Iraq and Afghanistan," 2015.

[61] James Dobbins et al., "The U.N.s Role in Nation-Building: From the Congo to Iraq." In *The UN's Role in NationBuilding: From the Congo to Iraq*, i–iii. (RAND Corporation, 2005). https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.7249/mg304rc; Hammink, "USAID in Afghanistan."

norms as well as exposed the fundamental challenges associated with post-conflict reconstruction. There are three lessons learned which can be applied to future post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

First, national, regional, and international standards in health and infrastructure are essential for personnel safety, as well as critical for ensuring the sustainable and long-term viability of projects. Post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq led to several compliance violations as identified by SIGAR and SIGIR; consequently, facilities faced continuous degradation to the point that it would require extensive maintenance to ensure the perpetual use of those buildings. For example, USAID-funded and USACE built health care facilities were not in compliance with public health care standards and regulations of the Center for Disease Control (CDC), The Joint Commission (JCO), and the World Health Organization (WHO) – basic standards that primary care and urgent care clinics, as well as hospitals, are required to follow in the U.S. The lack of proper active surveillance, monitoring and evaluation, including minimal regulatory compliance, can be life-threatening to the patient population. Water contaminants, waste disposal and intermittent electricity are three critical issues that need to be resolved to impede the spread of noncommunicable diseases.[62] Noncompliance will only exacerbate issues that post-conflict reconstruction was attempting to resolve in the first place, decreasing safety, increasing damage, exacerbating health issues, and crippling long-term health and economic development. Thus, the first lesson for future post-conflict reconstruction is the importance of compliance with national and international professional standards and regulations.

Secondly, whenever tens of thousands of projects and billions of dollars are injected in post-conflict reconstruction, resources are susceptible to fraud, waste, and mismanagement. Subcontractors, soldiers, and government employees attempt to illegally take advantage of contracts and systems to result in personal, financial, or political gain across Afghanistan and Iraq – even more with host countries.[63] Similarly, SIGIR also concluded that USACE and DoD lack proper management of funds distributed for reconstruction projects by mishandling contracts of subcontractors and not maintaining a database of contractual commitments.[64] Therefore, the second lesson in post-conflict reconstruction is that the vicious cycle of fraud, waste, and mismanagement is inevitable, but strict oversight and mitigation measures may decrease the extent of illicit activities before it exponentially grows.

Third, the accurate and timely reporting of the monitoring and evaluation of post-conflict reconstruction projects are essential for measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of projects, as well as to provide post-conflict reconstruction leaders with correct data to assist in policymaking

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[62] Unfiltered water, improper waste disposal procedures and exposure to biohazard waste in medical facilities exposes patients and staff to various strands of bacteria that can be life-threatening. Examples of infections include Salmonella, Clostridium difficile, severe acute respiratory syndrome - SARS, among many others. Intermittent electricity is also a precarious problem for Neonatal and Intensive Care Unit (NICU and ICU) patients, emergency rooms, and immunization and pharmaceutical storage that depend on a reliable source of electricity for life-saving interventions.

Michelle Gayer, Dominique Legros, Pierre Formenty, and Maire A. Connolly, "Conflict and Emerging Infectious Diseases," *Emerging Infectious Diseases* 13, no. 11 (2007): 1625–31. https://doi.org/10.3201/eid1311.061093.

Bayard Roberts, Preeti Patel, and Martin McKee. "Noncommunicable Diseases and Post-Conflict Countries," *Bulletin of the World Health Organization* 90, no. 1 (2011): 2-2A. https://doi.org/10.2471/blt.11.098863.

Yves Chartier et al. "Safe Management of Wastes From Health-Care Activities." World Health Organization. Geneva,: World Health Organization, 2014.
https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/85349/9789241548564_eng.pdf;jsessionid=6013C29A96B729BE4038A8D0B936AB63?sequence=1.

[63] Despite the limited resources of the PHC and SEHAT programs, SIGAR reported that an 11-room medical clinic built in the Walayatti village in the Khandahar province has never been used - $200,000 of taxpayer funds have been wasted. The construction of Salang Hospital in the Parwan province, costing over $500,000, resulted in 35% of the facility being used and reported to have various structural deficiencies SIGAR, 2019a. "*SIGAR 19-20-SP.*"; 2019b. "*SIGAR-19-34-SP.*; 2013b. "SIGAR 14-10-IP: Walayatti Medical Clinic: Facility Was Not Constructed According to Design Specifications and Has Never Been Used."; 2016b. "SIGAR 16-22-IP: Department of Defense Reconstruction Projects: Summary of SIGAR Inspection reports Issued from July 2009 through September 2015."

[64] In 2007, USACE spent "$3.0 million in DFI [Development Fund for Iraq] funds for potential liabilities associated with open reconstruction contracts, and one USACE contractor has about $2.2 million it said was for work that had been completed but not yet approved for payment."; SIGAR, "*SIGIR-10-006: Development Fund for Iraq: Policy Guidance Needed To Enhance Accountability of USACE-managed Funds*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2009b. https://cybercemetery.unt.edu/archive/sigir/20131001084734
/http://www.sigir.mil/files/audits/10-006.pdf#view=fit. 4.

and funds reallocation. The monitoring and evaluation process in those two countries is complex, multilayered, and dependent on multiple private and public organizations, as well as hundreds of individuals. For example, USACE and USAID subcontracted third-party foreign nationals' staff in Kabul to visit, monitor, and evaluate an estimated 2,331 facilities in 13 provinces with active projects, but various deficiencies in the monitoring, evaluation, and reporting process led to incorrect GPS coordinates, crumbling infrastructure, and decaying projects.[65]

DoD and USAID also inaccurately reported information on the success of post-conflict reconstruction programs that impacts the direction of policymaking and fund reallocation.[66] SIGAR was able to identify that USAID, who worked with USACE at times, never disclosed the baseline data to measure the reported increases, but auditors found that estimates came from reports from the World Health Organization that was not conducted with USAID.[67] Claims by USAID consisted of no baseline data for comparison, increased the correct data reported that came from WHO, and at times has a limited population impact survey that miscalculated the true extent of the impact in the entire country.[68] Having open-access settled and pre-established metrics, as well as a simplified reporting process and oversight in data quality management, will lead to better reporting of projects.[69] Thus, the third lesson exposes the difficulties of accurate reporting of data.

An underlying theme in the published SIGAR and SIGIR reports the necessity to develop, strengthen, and maintain monitoring and evaluation systems to facilitate proper mitigation of fraud, waste, corruption, and mismanagement in local and international contractors, government officials, and U.S. agencies. One critical recommendation is to bolster funding and expand the staff of Inspector General's offices appointed by Congress because it is essential to combat the elements that weaken the legitimacy of the post-conflict reconstruction conducted. Appointed U.S. Inspector Generals should also provide capacity-building technical advisors based in American embassies to concretize the institutional strategies and mechanisms needed for the host government to be prepared and capable of providing oversight in the future projects. Another possibility is to invite watchdog NGOs, such as Transparency International, the U.N., and other reputable third-party monitors, to preserve the integrity of the post-conflict reconstruction process.[70] However, the U.S. military could be hesitant to embrace external monitors because it could alter covert methods and proprietary information used in operations, as well as potentially increase the bureaucracy involved to carry out projects. Overall, the U.S. military needs to

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[65] There are three leading subcontractors in charge of monitoring and evaluation (M&E) for USACE and USAID projects: 1) Measuring Impacts of Stabilization Initiatives (MISTI), 2) Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc ($52.2 million contracts), 3) Versar Inc ($90 million contracts). To properly mitigate deficiencies in M&E, Sampler asserted that USAID meets with a consultant from the Grants Contract Management Unit (GCMU) at least every two months, or immediately if an urgent situation arises, to present findings and resolve issues; Ibid; SIGAR, "The Corps Oversaw the Construction of Much of Afghanistan's Modern Road Network," 2019c.; "*SIGAR-15-82-SP,"* 2015b.*;* "Fact Sheet," 2015.

[66] SIGAR, "*SIGAR-20-26-TY: US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan: Testimony Before the Subcommittee on Federal Spending Oversight and Emergency Management Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs US Senate*," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2020b. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-20-26-TY.pdf.

[67] Of the $1 billion invested in rule-of-law projects in Afghanistan, SIGAR discovered that "the 2009 US rule-of-law strategy for Afghanistan contained 27 specific performance measures, the 2013 strategy contained no performance measures at all." In 2014, the USAID Administrator asserted that "3 million girls and 5 million boys are enrolled in school—compared to just 900,000 when the Taliban ruled Afghanistan", as well as "child mortality has been cut [in Afghanistan] by 60 percent, maternal mortality has declined by 80 percent, and access to health services has been increased by 90 percent", referring to the impacts of USAID programs; Ibid; SIGAR, "SIGAR-20-19-TY: US Lessons Learned in Afghanistan, Testimony Before the Committee on Foreign Affairs US House of Representatives," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2020a. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/testimony/SIGAR-20-19-TY.pdf. 4-5.

[68] SIGAR reported that "MISTI concluded that stabilization programming led to an increase in support for the Taliban in 13 of the 72 villages that were Taliban controlled, had no government or coalition presence, but still received a USAID stabilization project during the period studied."; Ibid; SIGAR, "SIGAR-18-48-LL," 136.

[69] SIGAR, "SIGAR-19-60-AR: USACE's Local National Quality Assurance Program: USACE Used Qualified Personnel to Monitor Construction in Afghanistan and Is Taking Steps to Improve Contractor Reporting," Washington D.C.: The United States Congress, 2019c. https://www.sigar.mil/pdf/audits/SIGAR-19-60-AR.pdf.

[70] Possibly, international watchgods and other third-party monitors have biasis; however, external actors will also apply pressure to improve results.

welcome oversight authorities to detect and prevent fraud, waste, corruption, and mismanagement, but it will not be easy.

The Future of Post-Conflict Reconstruction

The nature of post-conflict reconstruction is heavily contingent upon the inimitable realities of the socio-economic, political, organizational, humanitarian, ethnic, religious, and security implications of the evaluated country or region; hence, it is both incongruous and unrealistic to provide tangible and standardized solutions to unknown future efforts. It is imperative to note that this study reflects a small sample of two conflicts in the last 20 years; therefore, as previously mentioned, the paucity of cases encompassing military-humanitarian cooperation and coordination that will not allow for any statistically robust quantitative conclusion. However, after scrutinizing both qualitative and quantitative factors of U.S. military post-conflict reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, there are three broad recommendations to be considered for future military post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

The co-dependency of security stabilization and long-lasting post-conflict reconstruction is evident. Proper risk evaluation and mitigation are needed to ensure the proper level and type of security response, including physical, psychological, and cybersecurity. As seen with insurgents, terrorist organizations, and other combatants, if a country-wide security stabilization is not achieved, it is possible for subnational jurisdictions to relapse from post-conflict reconstruction and once again require emergency humanitarian intervention. Even more so, security is a necessary pre-context for successul establishment of basic public health, educational and infrastructure services.This cycle of relapse will continue until total security stabilization is reached or if unforeseen external factors, such as environmental disasters, are in play. As a result, the lack of security leads to extensive damages in project infrastructure, disrupts supply chains, burdens the fragile healthcare system, exacerbates economic, ethnic, and religious divides, multiplies the cost of a security force, increases the number of lives lost, and widens the gap of socio-economic disparity – totaling in an overall weakening of political, economic, and diplomatic competitiveness in the region. Therefore, the U.S. military needs to find a balance between security stabilization operations and reconstruction objectives to maximize the efficiency and efficacy of future post-conflict reconstruction, whether that is achieved through the reform of internal structures or the concretization of congruent USAID and military response through a unified policy approach.

Conclusion

The limits and possibilities of U.S. military efforts in post-conflict reconstruction are substantially contingent upon the individual actors and stakeholders directly involved at each operational level, the gravity of security concerns and unpredictability interconnected with any causal elements (e.g., economic, political, ethnic, religion, among others), the underlying reason for American intervention, as well as autonomy and expectations superimposed by the host government. In order to provide a focused comparative analysis, this study comprehensively examined SIGAR and SIGIR reports in light of post-conflict reconstruction efforts by the U.S. military, which in turn, concluded that it is interdependent with USAID. The deficiencies uncovered the audits conducted by SIGAR and SIGIR solidified the limitations contingent upon the balance of long-term development and security stabilization. Military efforts in Iraq focused on the reconstruction of a semi-operational government system, whereas Afghanistan led to the rise of extensive and unprecedented development and infrastructure projects with a clean slate.

Furthermore, the analysis of SIGAR and SIGIR facilitated this study to offer unique lessons learned from post-conflict reconstruction in Afghanistan and Iraq. First, compliance with standards and regulations is essential for the health and safety of all actors, but the inevitable nature of mismanagement can drastically harm the outcome of projects. Secondly, the muddled monitoring and evaluation processes impair accurate reporting of the efficiency and effectiveness of post-conflict reconstruction. Reliable data is needed in order to maximize efforts and reallocate funds accordingly. Finally, the imbalance between security and long-term development directly impacts infrastructure and health – directly contingent upon each other. As a result of the limitations revealed in the lessons learned, this study offered recommendations that can impact the future possibilities of post-conflict reconstruction by the U.S. military in monitoring and evaluation, noncompliance and mismanagement, as well as sustainable localization and contextualization.

The cases utilized in this study, despite its contingent limitations, contribute to a clearer understanding of the possibilities offered by the U.S. military, as well as other militaries, post-conflict reconstruction focused on post-conflict reconstruction and stabilization. Further investigations on SIGAR and SIGIR reports are needed to focus on the other seven components of post-conflict reconstruction not discussed in this study, as well as include insights from DoDIG. Each subcomponent of a post-conflict reconstruction strategy should be scrutinized for its compatibility with the above recommendations. Therefore, the U.S. military is not prepared or capable of successfully engaging in all subcomponents of post-conflict reconstruction in post-conflict reconstruction. Civilian-military cooperation continues to be critical in order to provide specialized intervention. As a result, any improvements in future post-conflict reconstruction efforts are dependent on the adapting, restructuring, and accepting of recommended amendments on a post-conflict reconstruction by SIGAR and SIGIR at each response level, contingent upon the local context. The U.S. government needs to strategically plan out post-reconstruction efforts before the executing the mission. That will be possible by bringing together representatives from all government departments (American and host country) and establish both a cross-disciplinary and multi-sector approach. Unless the U.S. military alters its planning, execution, and coordination strategies with other American government departments and the host nation, failure will be the recognized brand and expected outcome of any future military post-conflict reconstruction efforts.

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