



3rd Annual Interagency Symposium
Interagency Transitions in Iraq, Afghanistan and Beyond
February 3-4, 2011

Symposium Notes

Lessons for Transitions in Iraq and Afghanistan

Overarching themes:

- Timelines for transition can be effective in focusing attention and resources. However, timelines must be paired with realistic conditions so as not to be counterproductive. Keeping commitments contained in timelines has strategic benefits but can be tactically awkward.
- Security in development efforts must be designed and prioritized with sustainability in mind, especially regarding local resources to support the institutions.
- Organizing agreements (e.g. Status of Forces, Security Agreement) are helpful for setting clear goals and objectives, and for allocating roles and responsibilities.
- Whole-of-government is easy to say and appealing in principle. However, agency cultures and lack of planning structures prevent whole-of-government approaches.
- Plan early and often. Facilitates unity of effort, which is more important than unity of command.
- Large amounts of resources are available early on when host country institutions are too fragile to use it effectively. Later, when those institutions are more mature and funding is needed, it is no longer available.
- Must begin long-term development efforts early to build institutions, so they have the capacity and capability to accept transition later.
- Both short-term stability focused efforts and long-term development and institution building efforts are necessary. They should be planned and executed simultaneously in a coordinated manner. If not, these efforts have the potential to create incentives that undermine each other.
- Short-term funding cycles and use-it-or-lose-it funding is at least wasteful and often counterproductive as it contributes to corruption and undermines capacity of local ministries. A framework for multi-year funding needs to be developed.
- We need to do a better job in capturing lessons learned from transitions we have already undertaken in Iraq and elsewhere.
- The tendency to “do it for them” creates dependency and must be avoided.
- Success of development programs requires host country ownership. Success goes beyond getting their “buy-in”. Host government institutions must set own priorities, design the programs, and play the lead role.
- Security and development are linked.

Towards coordination among U.S. agencies:

- Unity of command is not as important as unity of effort.
- Unity of effort is built on:
 - Common goals
 - Common messaging
 - Early, frequent, and consistent civilian-military communication.
- Potential model for civilian-military cooperation include Advise and Assist Brigades and increased guidance by PRTs.
- In Iraq and Afghanistan, successful cooperation between U.S. agencies is due to the personalities and skills of effective leaders rather than institutional structures and processes.
- State Department officials had to identify and align themselves with their respective organizational counterparts, and work around where there were not obvious or functional counterparts.

More clarity on security objectives than development goals:

- There is greater clarity and consensus on goals for multi-national force handoff and withdrawal to national security forces.
- There is less agreement on goals, milestones, and desired end states for governance, stability, and development efforts.

Lack of local partnership/ownership of security and development:

- “Letting go” is hard for Americans who do not like leaving problems unresolved; especially when security is poor.
- For sustainability, Iraqis and Afghans must guide security and development goals. Frequently cited as “buy-in”, this term may be incomplete as implies acceptance of ideas already developed.

Incomplete national reconciliation:

- Lack of broad, meaningful national reconciliation may undermine all security and development efforts. Reintegration of the Sons of Iraq is one example.

Timelines for withdrawal:

- Timelines can force planning and in some cases cooperation.
 - Between U.S./multinational forces and the host nation.
 - Among U.S. agencies.
 - Facilitates planning by offering an end date within which plans must be prepared and completed.
- Timelines, if honored, help establish credibility. Withdrawal of multinational forces in Iraq from cities in 2010 were very important for establishing trust and credibility that the U.S. will honor agreements and work towards local sovereignty.

Conditions for transition:

- Conditions for transition/withdrawal help define objectives and prioritize U.S. efforts/spending.
- Conditions should be achievable and cognizant of political, economic, and security trajectories

Conditions for funding effective transitions:

- Single-year funding cycles encourages short-term one-off efforts.
- Us-it-or-lose-it funding encourages waste and removes political leverage as local officials know money must be spent.
- Too much development money allocated too soon, before host nation institutions can participate, guide, and eventually own projects.
- Sustainment of host nation security forces is extremely expensive.
- Budget/debt woes in U.S. mean funding will decline when it is needed most.
- Big funding is needed later in an effort once reasonable security has improved, U.S. actors have gained wisdom and expertise, and host nation institutions have developed. Unfortunately, Iraq war and growing Afghan war fatigue among American public and decision makers means funding declines in later years.

Issues for more discussion:

- The drawdown of PRTs: lessons from Iraq for Afghanistan.
- The model of Advise and Assist Brigades.
- The desirability and feasibility of an Office of Provincial Affairs.
- The feasibility of multi-year/pooled funding.

Key differences between Iraq and Afghanistan when discussing transitions**Clarity of objectives and desired end states:**

- Iraq transition is from military to civilian lead on security and nation building.
- Afghan transition is from multi-national forces to Afghan National Security Forces.
- Status of Forces Agreement and Security Framework Agreement elucidate objectives and milestones for Iraq. Agreements in Kabul and Lisbon are less definite and less binding.

Drawdown:

- Almost complete military withdrawal from Iraq.
- Most likely not drawing down to zero U.S./multi-national forces in Afghanistan.
- Transition in Iraq is from U.S. military forces to U.S. civilian forces, and then to the government of Iraq.
- Transition in Afghanistan is from U.S. and NATO forces to Afghan security forces and the government.
- In Iraq, the on-paper distinction outlined in Articles 10 and 22 of the Status of Forces Agreement between “warfare” and “assistance” will likely be complicated and difficult to operationalize on the ground.

Timeline:

- More definite, shorter-term timeline for military withdrawal from Iraq.
- Goal of handoff to Afghan National Security Forces by 2014, but agreements less definite and binding.

Local perceptions of security forces:

- In Iraq, strong sentiments supporting withdrawal of U.S. military. Although there is a possibility of an Iraqi request for extension or new agreement in December 2011.
- Afghan population wants multi-national forces to stay to assist with security and order.

Development status:

- Iraq is more developed than Afghanistan in terms of history of scholarship, institutional capacity, and valuable natural resources. However, it is important not to overlook the challenges Iraq faces in both decentralization to local/regional government capacity building, as well as the challenges to turning oil natural resources into income, jobs, and development.

National identity:

- Fierce independence and nationalism in Iraq. Not so in Afghanistan.