Attempts to bring peace and stability in conflict plagued areas have dominated the foreign policy of the United States. In the era of globalization, however, the U.S. is only a single player in an increasingly complex “maze” of organizations addressing stability problems.¹ The problems of coordination and cooperation have only intensified as the number of organizations engaged in stabilization increases. Though collaboration does not guarantee success, insufficient collaboration can ensure failure, as was seen in numerous reviews of U.S. activities. Hundreds of millions, if not billions, of dollars in reconstruction assistance have been described as having been wasted, in part due to lack of coordination. Further still, collaboration failures have doubtless impeded the promotion peace and stability.

The coordination and direction of U.S. stabilization efforts, which can be loosely described as political and economic support to reduce violence and promote stability, is complicated by the legal division of authority over U.S. civilian and military organizations. This has led to situations with uncertain authority or responsibility for areas of activity, as well as areas of overlapping authorities.² Beyond U.S. organizations – though all generally supportive of peace and stability – the wide range of organizations operating in conflict zones can have a spectrum of overlapping and diverging interests. This can include the diverging interests of a multiplicity of donor states, limited mandates for international organizations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), or differences of opinion between local and national elements of the host national government itself. Organizations, particularly humanitarian ones, can even be suspicious of U.S. intentions or averse to cooperating with military forces in general.³

Further complicating coordination, many activities are conducted through third party organizations. Donor states, including U.S. civilian agencies, predominantly do not design and

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implement programs and projects directly. Rather, they direct policy implementation and work through “implementing partners,” funded through grants and contracts. These partners can number in the dozens for any given functional area. Other organizations, such as the United Nations and its agencies, can both act as implementers for other organizations or fund their own implementing partners.

The need to improve collaboration and avoid failures has led to the embracing of “Whole-of-Government” and “Whole-of-Nation” approaches...

The need to improve collaboration and avoid failures has led to the embracing of “Whole-of-Government” and “Whole-of-Nation” approaches to appropriately martial the collective resources and capabilities of organizations across the U.S. government and host nation.

• A Whole-of-Government approach in this context refers the U.S. military and civilian agencies working across boundaries to achieve shared goals and an integrated government response.

• A Whole-of-Nation (or sometimes also called a “comprehensive approach”) widens this aperture to include all organizations operating in a conflict area to support peace and stability, to reach common goals, though typically not so far as to achieve an integrated response.

Collaboration Research

To discover more about the challenges of collaboration, I conducted research on the how it occurred between organizations in a number of conflicts in which the U.S. was attempting to promote stability. This included Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as collaboration in the conflicted afflicted region of Mindanao in the Philippines and the efforts to promote stability in South Sudan. These cases were intended to cover the spectrum of military engagement, with heavy military presence in the cases of Iraq and Afghanistan, and a virtually non-existent military presence in the later locations. The research examined U.S. civilian and military collaboration in political and economic support activities but also further examined U.S. collaboration with the full range of actors, including host nation governments, international organizations and NGOs. The periods of each case study spanned several years of activity, to help understand longer term trends.

In the research, the Iraq and Afghanistan cases were narrowed to focus on two subject areas, those of U.S. efforts at the provincial level, and the U.S. efforts in the area of rule of law support. The provincial level often included combined U.S. civilian and military Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs), sometimes with additional district or locality oriented teams, local governments and civil society groups, and sometimes other international partners. The rule of law cases covered the “courts, cops, and corrections” focused activities in the two countries. The South Sudan and Mindanao cases covered the entire effort in those countries.

The research involved generally characterizing collaboration between major groups of organizations, such as between the U.S. civilian and military, between the U.S. and host nation, or with NGOs, etc. This effort included a thorough review of primary source documents and the conduct of 14 interviews of U.S. and international practitioners in the case study countries to support the document research. The most prominent findings of this research as they relate to U.S. efforts in applying a Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Nation approach are presented here. Additional details about the research and finds can be found in my dissertation research, Beyond Ad Hoc.
Stabilization as a Collaboration Network

U.S. stabilization efforts involve a wide spectrum of civil improvement projects in areas ranging from rule of law (e.g., “courts, cops, and corrections”), economic development, and supporting national and local governance. In many cases, these efforts concern issues and actors that would not be unfamiliar to city managers or other state and local officials in the U.S. or any other country. Thus, stabilization activities can be seen as an “expeditionary” application of governance and public policy, in a context of a foreign country and amidst violent conflict.

Moreover, as noted by Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Nation approaches, success requires working with a wide range of organizations, not the least of which is the host nation, but also local civil society organizations and other international states or organizations. This implies an inherently collaborative and networked approach and can be viewed as working within a network of friendly or even neutral partners. For decades, public administration and affairs scholars have been studying the implementation of public policy objectives through networks of participating organizations based upon cooperation, partnership, and collaboration, rather than through a hierarchical structure. With this in mind, my research was conducted using these approaches to examining collaboration.

However, not all collaborative networks are equal. A useful means of distinguishing is by means of interaction. The levels of interaction included:

- Informational networks, in which participants come together exclusively to exchange agency information and any actions taken are purely voluntary;
- Developmental networks, in which information exchange is combined with education and member services that increase capacity to implement solutions;
- Synchronization networks, in which participants share information, build capacities, sequence activities, pool resources, and develop new implementation options; and
- Joint Action networks, in which participants adopt collective courses of action and combine resources.

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The type of interaction among network participants has implications for the types of support and engagement required from individual organizations. As the level of interaction increases, more sophisticated, resource intensive, and often more formal means of managing the network are required. For example, in Joint Action networks where integrated decisions are made, formal deliberative means of reaching agreement are almost always the rule and a greater degree of coherence of participant goals is required.

Moving along this continuum depends on a number of factors. A logic model of collaboration between organizations divides the process into two general categories that can be generally summed up as the “will” and the capacity to collaborate. The former involves a number of issues such as incentive or perceived “pay off” to collaborate, interdependence between actors, trust levels, and shared understanding...
of problems and possible solutions. Capacity for collaboration involves resources and the authority to employ them for this purpose. This could include managerial discretion (or lack thereof), how to share resources, or regulatory or administrative limitations. In relation to the levels of interaction, in general terms, while all collaboration requires a will, higher levels of collaborative interaction require increasing capacity.

Findings from the Case Studies

After a review of the type of interactions seen in the Iraq and Afghanistan provincial and rule of law collaborative networks, and in the South Sudan and Mindanao collaborative networks, the level of collaborative interaction across the cases was best characterized as being at the Developmental level in general or at Synchronization network levels for the U.S. military and civilian interactions.

With the exception of one particularly contentious relationship, the various collaborative interactions seen in these cases were all operating at a Developmental level or higher. This would include the interactions between the U.S. and NGO, U.S. and host nation, U.S. and other donor states, and U.S. and UN. This was evidenced common participation in conferences to share best practices and build common capacity, often for a functional area such as agriculture, rule of law, or a local region. Further, there was a strong culture of sharing transport space and emergency support among organizations. However, broad collaboration across organizations was more limited when it involved accepting risk to individual projects or missions. One way to look at this was that while the sharing of extra space on vehicles was common, the actual lending of transport assets to a partner was rare, if not unheard of. This affected collaboration on project activities past a Developmental level, as organizations were typically unable or reluctant to make changes to their project goals or redirect resources away from them to support other organizations, even for potentially mutually beneficial efforts.

The U.S. civilian and military relationships, aside from the thorniest of relationships, operated at a Synchronization level, at least by the end of the case study periods. This was seen in terms of mutually understood areas of activity, shared strategic goals and objectives, and by at least staying out of each other’s way (i.e. “deconflicted”), if not actually routinely complimentary project activities, by the end of the cases. There was a general trend of slowly improved, but by far not perfected, patterns of collaborative interaction in all of the cases.

However there was a clear, but frustrated, desire for a Joint Action network level of collaboration between the U.S. civilians and military (particularly by the latter). While there were certainly examples of Joint Action between the U.S. civilian and military organizations and with other partners in the cases, these were generally isolated and/or not sustained. Where U.S. civilian and military collaboration seemed to break down was at the highest level of activity of shared decision making, particularly regarding those decisions that involved directing such resources, particularly project funding. Lack of civilian access to responsive funding sources, lack of civilian personnel and capacity, and an absence of accountability and incentive systems worked against coordination and consistently constrained Joint Action level collaboration. Funding sources proved to be a barrier for collaboration, even when the motives (trust, shared goals, leadership intent) were present.12

An example of a frustrated attempt to
establish a Joint Action level network can be seen in the case of the Deputies Committee, under the Coordinating Director for Rule of Law and Law Enforcement (CDROLLE), who was the civilian head of rule of law activities in Afghanistan. The intent of the Deputies Committee was to vet programs, share information on activities, and function as a coordinating body, with the committee chair having the final say on spending. However, many participants tried to side-step it, and integrated collaboration was never achieved. Moreover, often U.S. civilian agency agendas and funding were controlled largely from Washington rather than Kabul, and as a result, civilian agencies often remained beholden to their respective funding sources. The CDROLLE did not have any legal authority to force compliance from participating organizations. As a result, it was an informational and consultative body, despite the intention for it to be an integrated decision making one. Despite falling short of enabling Joint Action, the CDROLLE and Deputies Committee did foster collaboration at lower levels of interaction. For example, in at least once case, the CDROLLE helped identify duplication of rule of law activities between the Department of State’s Bureau of International Narcotics and Law Enforcement Affairs and the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which was then addressed.

Insecurity Drives Collaboration Volatility and Instability

The review of collaboration in conflict environments begs the question of why consistent, high level collaboration seemed so difficult to attain. In examining the cases, it became clear that there was an interrelation between the hostile security environments and tour rotations. The poor security was a driver of short tour durations and staffing instability, which substantially undermined collaboration and sustainability. Staff turnover was seen as a challenging issue that spanned all cases. Due to hostile and austere working environments, personnel – particularly international personnel – typically only resided in a country for a year or less. Host nation counterparts, though not bound to the frequent rotations that U.S. and international personnel maintained, still could often leave positions, either from threats or acts of violence or through normal turnover, such as after elections. For example, many Iraqi government positions were based on political patronage and personal power, which could shift from one group to another resulting in wholesale replacements of staff. In South Sudan, officials were also noted as changing frequently, particularly at the local levels. Changes in personnel could coincide with scheduled U.S. rotations, exacerbating negative results for an area.

An example of how this dynamic could result in collaboration volatility can be seen in the civil-military relationship of three Marine and Army unit rotations in Anbar, circa 2008-2009. The first Marine Regional Command was seen as strongly supporting the civilian activity. However, the second Marine Regional Command was seen as “old school” and didn’t understand the civilian role. It took two to three months (of their six month tours) to cement a working relationship between the civilians and military. The following Army military command had studied civilian activities and as such was strongly supportive with little needed “spin up” time.

As seen, staff instability necessitated adjustments if not re-establishment of collaborative patterns. Adjustments between collaborating organizations were likely to have impacts that organizations across the network...
would in turn need to adjust to. This created a ripple effect, as organizations generally faced staffing disruptions in a compressed amount of time. Simultaneously, security needs created challenges and delays to relationship development and knowledge management, both of which were substantially affected by tour rotations. These factors made it more difficult for organizations to adjust to the changes fostered by staff instability.

Further still, the hostile environment created volatility in coordination and strategy, as changes in violence levels and political crises forced rapid priority changes, adding to the challenges above. In many cases, hostile environments greatly affected strategic priorities. Spikes in violence could rapidly undermine plans and derail efforts at stabilization. This instability was particularly detrimental to senior level or “top-down” efforts to improve collaboration across organizations, as it affected the whole of the network activities and highest-level priorities of collaboration. In a network context, this caused a cascading effect of organizations needing to rapidly re-prioritize, then to adapt to all of the other participating organizations’ reprioritizations.

Leadership instability was particularly detrimental to collaboration. This was seen frequently in U.S. military unit rotations...

One early example captured the potentially extreme changes that could be driven by security concerns: “What a rapid change in just five days, from preparing to launch a broad new array of programs aimed at operating government, improving communication and public input, to living hunkered down in a military base, contemplating evacuation.”

In another example from South Sudan, in response to the 2014 crisis, the European Union and United Nations Development Programme rapidly changed their strategies to reflect the new environment and needs, establishing new priorities and redirecting resources. This vicious circle of insecurity and staff volatility was doubtless a driver of many of the collaboration challenges seen in the cases, and a striking instability of collaboration was seen across the cases.

Fragility of Progress

The instability of the collaborative networks likely frustrated the development of network mechanisms that could have provided for greater stability. Frequent tour rotations likely limited the ability of managers to identify the necessary developments as well as to make and solidify the agreements necessary to support greater collaboration. This is most clearly evidenced in the cases in the study where agreements to support collaboration between organizations were made and then collapsed due to staff turnover. In some cases, organizational agreements were developed, abandoned, and then reestablished.

Leadership instability was particularly detrimental to collaboration. This was seen frequently in U.S. military unit rotations, where incoming military leaders made fundamental changes to their predecessors’ policies and priorities. Projects could be stopped for weeks or months as the new commander decided priorities and the military familiarized itself with the area. This could go so far as effectively ignoring the previous unit’s work and effectively starting over or even reversing progress. Multiple changes in leadership could also lead to instability in vision and direction, and lead to less focused and inefficient efforts.

One example of this was seen in the CDROLLE in Afghanistan. An initial civilian-military agreement was reached on the roles and responsibilities of the CDROLLE, which included U.S. civilian primacy on rule of law activities. However, the following generation of
military leadership did not accept the agreement, and the highly integrated level of collaboration envisioned in the initial agreement was not sustained.\textsuperscript{27}

A further example of this build and collapse pattern was seen in the Afghanistan Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) fund. This was a military funding source for reconstruction and stabilization projects. To ensure close coordination, in spring 2005, the military leadership temporarily withdrew the authority of PRT commanders to allocate CERP funds. Instead, they were required to coordinate funding proposals with civilians and then send them for high headquarters approval. Civilian organizations made complementary efforts during this time, such as placing representatives at military headquarters to further facilitate coordination. This requirement, however, was withdrawn in several months, with military leadership satisfied that expectation for military coordination with civilians had been firmly established. However, the coordination did not turn out to be sustainable without it, and over time, it diminished.\textsuperscript{28} To re-address this issue, the civilian and military leadership in 2007 developed a new Fragmentary Order that directed the military to both consult with civilian representatives on CERP projects and to learn from their development expertise. The Fragmentary Order was also intended to ensure that CERP activities took into account local development plans in Afghanistan, which were developed with civilian involvement.\textsuperscript{29} Though the military initially complained that this slowed down operations, in time it came to appreciate the value of the process.\textsuperscript{30}

This dynamic has serious implications for collaboration in stabilization efforts when taken together with the assertion that greater levels of collaboration require greater and more formal network management features. Organizational changes can take well over a year or two to see through, including negotiations between organizations and waiting to impact budget cycles.\textsuperscript{31} More complex changes or policy changes can take three years or more. However, the rapid turnover, particularly of leadership, provides “break points” well inside the timelines for organizational changes. At a minimum, these break points require reaffirming agreements and support for collaboration mechanisms among partners, or they can lead to the effective dissolution of collaboration agreements entirely. As a result, the inherent staffing instability in conflict situations has profoundly negative impacts for establishing the mechanisms necessary to support sustainable high-level collaboration.

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**Limits of Common Responses**

Across the cases, frustration with collaboration engendered a number of efforts and approaches to improve collaboration among partners. However, as seen by the limits to collaboration previously outlined, these approaches were not completely successful. Notable among these are the efforts of co-location of staff, frequently of U.S. civilian and military staff, and joint planning. Their benefits and limits are discussed below.

**Limits of Co-Location**

Co-location was the establishment of entire offices or teams of personnel from different organizations in the same areas. Examples of co-location civilian and military personnel co-located at various levels of the military structure in the field in Iraq and Afghanistan. Further, in Mindanao, U.S. leaders determined, in part
for collaboration purposes as well as legal and practical ones, that U.S. military forces would be co-located with Philippine units on Philippine installations. Co-location was seen as contributing to coordination and problem solving. In this process, daily in-person interaction was seen as building up relationships and credibility or trust. Through improved information sharing and relationships, a common understanding of issues could be developed which allowed for development of coordinated solutions and activities.

An example in Al Asad, Iraq provides an example of co-location in practice. The harsh living conditions were cited as fostering mutual bonding and working relationships across both military and civilian lines. In particular, a lack of plumbing in living quarters was cited as a bonding factor. This was contrasted to other locations, where civilians may have had amenities, such as indoor plumbing, which military personnel did not. These differences could lead to tension that damaged the civilian and military working relationships. To avoid these, many civilian teams self-imposed restrictions on their privileges. At Al Asad, there was an effort to observe military protocols in general. The PRT leadership directed that although civilians were not necessarily subject to the same restrictions as military staff, they too would not be allowed to drink alcohol when their Army and Marine counterparts could not. The direction was also given to respect personal communication black outs in the case of military casualties, which were implemented for a number of hours (12) to ensure that families received formal notifications. These efforts were cited as helping to foster cohesion between military and civilians at Al Asad, if only through removing potential causes of resentment on the part of the military.

Co-location greatly reduced the transaction costs of information sharing and relationship building. This could be particularly important in hostile environments where challenges to travel and communications could greatly limit contact, even when only short distances were involved. However, much benefit of co-location still hinged on personal relationships and credibility. While most examples of co-located results were positive, co-location sometimes generated more conflict than coordination. Even though co-location reduced barriers to in-person interaction that helped foster the will to collaborate, it alone was not sufficient to guarantee high levels of collaborative interaction.

**Limits of Joint Planning**

Across the cases, there were many U.S. efforts to promote high levels of U.S. civilian and military collaboration through increased planning. However, joint planning could not itself fully enable the desired Joint Action network level of collaborative interaction. In reviewing the challenges in achieving Joint Action network levels of collaboration, funding sources proved to be a barrier for collaboration, even when the will to collaborate was present. In many cases, organizations on the ground did not have the authority to align funds to other priorities.

The inability to directly control funding resources to support inter-organizational plans was particularly challenging among U.S. civilian organizations. Collaboration was constrained by budgetary funding cycles, including the time delay in obtaining funding through various mechanisms. As a result, when opportunities to coordinate national projects with the military emerged, USAID officers were unable to move quickly enough to do so.
and military collaboration were largely a result of the organization with the more flexible funding source, e.g. the U.S. military and its CERP funding, deciding to support U.S. civilian objectives and apply resources for them.

The dynamic of civilian inability to quickly direct resources was seen in an Afghanistan Provincial example. Although the main source of civilian funding in Afghanistan at the provincial level and below was from USAID, the vast majority of USAID spending decisions were made in Kabul. Any changes to USAID contracts, which were typically established for multiple years, could require time consuming contract modifications with implementing partners, or even notifications to Congress. Once the work plan was established, implementing partners were seldom responsive to the individual provincial needs outside of the established plan.43

This is not to say that planning efforts were not useful for fostering collaboration. These efforts did seem to produce an effect in that, as stated above, a Synchronization level of collaborative interaction was often achieved between U.S. civilian and military organizations. This included sharing information, building capacities, sequencing activities, pooling resources, and developing implementation options. However, planning without all participants’ direct control over resources was insufficient to achieve an integrated level of collaboration. The failures of the plans to produce these results appeared to have resulted in frustration with the collaboration process.44

Moreover, the review of cases suggests that Joint Action network level collaboration, or full integration, was not necessary for overall success. This is evidenced by the relative success of the stabilization effort in Mindanao. In that case study, complementary Synchronization levels of collaborative interaction between the U.S. military and civilians, and with strong host nation partnerships, supported positive stabilization results as seen in the acceptance of a peace agreement between major combatant groups and the government. Thus, Synchronized levels of collaborative interaction, though not necessarily fully integrated Joint Action levels of interaction, may be sufficient.

Cases of more successful U.S. civilian and military collaboration were largely a result of the organization with the more flexible funding source...

Other Barriers

Other barriers were also identified in the research. These include challenges and costs of accountability and oversight of projects and barriers to sharing information with partners. Each had substantial impacts on the collaboration efforts examined in the cases.

Accountability and Oversight

In most non-hostile development or collaborative governance environments, a certain level of accountability and oversight for programmatic activities is assumed. However, the hostile security situation meant staff could not always travel to projects for site visits or to verify information coming from implementing partners. U.S. site-visits could even turn the project into a target. For example, in Fallujah, the insurgency affected that district team’s ability to monitor the progress of its projects: “…if Americans started showing up at a project it highlights (that) this guy is working with Americans, and (he) becomes a higher target.” As a result, in-person observation could be abandoned in favor of phone or email oversight, third-party local partners could become relied upon, or oversight could just not be conducted. In some instances, there were some areas that were so insecure that even local national personnel would not go there.46 This led to a number of
program challenges and outright failures.

While the costs of additional physical security that hostile stabilization environments necessitated were frequently well-stated, the increased costs to accountability and oversight were not as visible. While there is a general sense that accountability and oversight were limited, there was no accounting for the increased transportation costs, security costs, or project risks that barriers to accountability and oversight created. In an insecure and weak civil society/media environment, which is typical of conflict afflicted areas, resource providers will have a greater burden in this area. These hidden or unarticulated accountability and oversight costs were not widely recognized when contemplating or planning for collaboration in conflict zones.

Information Sharing Challenges

Another potentially significant barrier to collaboration in conflict zones were restrictions to information sharing that resulted from the hostile environment. Given the hostile nature of the environment, concerns or restrictions on information are justified. In the cases, resistance to sharing information could be significant. This was in part due to concerns that releasing it could pose security risks as well as over how the information may be used by others.

However, information must still be shared to enable collaboration. Information sharing is a key building block to collaboration, and is the starting point for establishing relationships, setting common priorities, and progressing to the further steps necessary for higher levels of collaborative interaction. Further, in a collaborative context, the availability and rate at which information can be accessed has implications for the overall efficiency of a collaborative network. Sharing information is key for many aspects of collaboration, such forming mutual understanding of organizational capacities and sharing understanding of problems. Impeding the sharing of information among partners can slow or undermine the collaborative process.

Information sharing restrictions often led to administrative hurdles to sharing information with partners. While such hassles for information sharing were seen as manageable in the cases described here, it is likely that there were still negative impacts that resulted. For example, there was anecdotal evidence that humanitarian NGOs self-selected away from partnering with security conscious U.S. government organizations, at least in part due to the limited information exchange and associated barriers. Furthermore, in a low trust environment, managers with the discretion to do so may decide to withhold information from partners they are not confident in. Alternately, they may simply not feel empowered to share, rather than actively withholding information. Moreover, security restrictions on sharing information can easily be leveraged to avoid information flow or can have a chilling effect on benign information sharing.

Success Mechanisms

While a number of barriers were identified in the research, so too were a number of promising or potential success mechanisms. These were either observed in the cases studied or strongly suggested by analysis of them.

Leadership and Management Approaches

For leaders or managers, a key implication of ensuring instability is that fostering collaboration is an enduring management responsibility. Leaders often play a key signaling role in fostering collaboration with partners. Commonly, this is an implied role for leaders or managers. However, in collaborative environments,
establishing and demonstrating collaborative relationships with all partners should be a clear responsibility for leaders.

Managers and leaders should also build strategies to develop trust among partners who do not already have strong cultures of collaboration. This would involve understanding limits to trust among organizations, including rivalries, conflicts, resentments, competing priorities, etc. Further, maintaining and reestablishing relationships is an ongoing effort in stabilization activities. This is almost certain to transcend individual “relationship holders” as staff transitions. Thus, efforts should be made to preserve relationships across rotations.47

Managers should understand and recognize the degrees of collaboration that may be sought. This includes identifying how much collaboration is possible across sets of organizations, due to divergent goals or inflexibility of resources. To enable this, managers should identify central players without whom progress cannot be achieved, as well as understand these central player’s positions on collaboration. Managers should also understand limits to collaboration that may result from inflexibilities or incompatibilities in funding sources.

**Combined Reporting to Leadership**

In the case studies, regular joint or combined presentations to senior leadership was found to be at least as successful as integrated planning. For example, in the Iraq and Afghanistan cases, there were examples of combined civilian and military briefings to senior leadership. Such presentations could be to either a civilian or military senior leader or even both at once. This process seemed to serve as a reliable forcing function to establish collaborative relationships, often helping to foster a Synchronization level of interaction.

This practice of senior level review required fewer resources than integrated planning and seemed to produce similar collaboration results. Thus, as a less resource-intensive but still effective means to support collaboration across organizations, joint or combined reporting for senior leadership should be considered. This review should ideally be concurrently or conducted jointly by all organizational leaders, and it should take place at as high of a level as feasible.

Shared Funding

Shared funding mechanisms, i.e., pooled civilian and military funds, or funds which require both U.S. civilian and military approach, should be explored as a means to facilitate (or even necessitate) Synchronized and Integrated collaboration between U.S. civilians and military. An example of one such “dual-key” fund is the Department of State-managed Global Security Contingency Fund, which is funded primarily by the Defense Department with State Department contributions. In theory, such shared funds would resolve the inflexibility issues by being codirected. Further, through co-direction, they would require some measure of agreement on priorities.

An early example of high-level U.S. civilian and military collaboration was achieved through this approach. In the 2004 to 2006 timeframe, the Jalalabad PRT in Afghanistan had initiated a weekly project nomination process, at which everyone on the PRT could vote on the nomination of projects for CERP funds. The civilian members of the PRT became to be seen as the “PRT Executive Team,” with substantial purview and authority in their area of expertise. Formal final decision-making authority still resided with the military commander, though with consideration of civilian inputs.48 The process was eventually expanded so that the
PRT and military could vet projects with the local provincial coordination council and so that USAID could align local programs with national programs in Kabul.

The Jalalabad PRT system was subsequently adopted by other PRTs in Afghanistan as a “board of directors” approach, with State, USAID, and the military commander, and potentially other leaders and key staff developing plans together.\(^49\) A similar approach was known as a “Command Group model” where each agency was a co-equal partner. This model allowed the PRT to develop and implement one comprehensive provincial stability strategy, while also coordinating his or her agency’s larger mission in the area.\(^50\)

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**Project Oversight to Support Continuity**

Frequently during leadership transitions programs were added, dropped, or changed as new leaders changed priorities. This led to inefficiencies, program failure, and collaboration challenges with partners, who were often caught unaware by the changes. While cost of a project was typically a threshold for higher levels of review and oversight, duration or continuity of projects was not. To promote collaboration, greater oversight should be considered projects that may endure or that may be subject to changes after their initial sponsors depart. Measures to monitor and even moderate project changes should be considered as leaders, or in the case of the military, units change.

For example, the U.S. military’s existing formal transition process could be extended to include a process to re-affirm, modify, or cease projects as leaders and military units transition. Such a process could include justifications, as well as analysis of impacts to partners. Another approach could be to require an agreement with a receiving caretaker organization to “adopt” and manage projects that are intended to endure after a transition. Examples of this occurred in the cases studies in some cases as military units withdrew and ensured projects were adopted by remaining civilian teams.

**Dual or Multi-Tracked Approvals**

There were numerous examples of leadership changes resulting in the dissolution of or need to reestablish organizational agreements, some of which are described above. This degraded network efficiency and provided barriers to further collaboration. As a result, special attention should be paid to shared priorities and any agreements that articulate them. For example, shared priorities between organizations should be re-affirmed, or changed as needed, as a matter of course during leadership transitions. Ways this could be done would include a process of establishing and refreshing agreements, such as memorandums of understanding, or through strategic planning. An example of the latter was seen in the common planning at the provincial levels conducted between U.S. civilians and military organizations in Iraq. In this process, common priorities and a shared understanding were re-established between the civilian teams and military units as the latter rotated in.

At a minimum, established shared priorities should be tracked by higher headquarters, with notifications of their approval, dissolution, or other changes. Higher headquarters may even want to establish a justification or review processes for their abrogation in order to support collaboration success. Further, as a best practice to ensure the continuation of joint agreements, agreements should be affirmed by both or all parties at level higher than the agreeing parties, and promulgated through all parties’ organizational systems.
Security Forces Enabling Access and Oversight

Across the cases, one of the strengths of security forces was a field presence in areas that might have been too dangerous for civilian organizations. This was particularly so for the U.S. military and its pronounced presences in Iraq and Afghanistan\(^\text{51}\) and for UN peacekeeping efforts in South Sudan.\(^\text{52}\) The U.S. military also often helped provide or facilitate oversight for areas it had better access to.\(^\text{53}\) Non-military partner organizations were aware of this and frequently enlisted assistance of armed security forces in oversight activities. However, this was conducted on an informal, ad hoc basis. To facilitate greater network efficiency, this potential role for security forces or other organizations operating with greater access in a stabilization environment should be considered and, where possible, leveraged to support accountability and oversight for those organizations with less access. Formal agreements could be established between organizations to enable this. In the U.S. context, this role could be added to the plans for U.S. or other partner military organizations.\(^\text{54}\)

Enabling Information Sharing

To support collaboration, appropriate information sharing should be encouraged or even required. This could be enabled in several ways. These include requirements for implementing partners to report information to appropriate lead countries or secretariats. It could also be promoted through shared planning processes, such as information management annexes in national development strategies or in joint plans, such as U.S. Joint Campaign Plans.

Risks to staff or activities should be taken into account regarding what information to protect. However, information that possesses no or minimal risk and is useful to other organizations should be shared widely. To avoid unnecessary barriers to information sharing, restrictions to sharing with partners should, as a best practice, be disseminated with guidance identifying what information is actually sharable and how partners may access it.

From the research in the cases, information commonly sought out by organizations included:

- Common risks or threats, such as explosive remnants of war;
- Organizations acting in the physical or functional areas;
- Roles and responsibilities of participants;
- How resources could be leveraged;
- What the host nation needs are, particularly locally; and
- What can local partners sustain.

In addition to what information needs to be shared or protected, how it actually can be shared with partners should be considered.

In addition to what information needs to be shared or protected, how it actually can be shared with partners should be considered. For example, information stored on U.S. secured computer networks frequently had to be manually shared (i.e. downloaded to physical media and transported by hand) with non-U.S. partners. In other cases, databases were not well used or were not sustained after their initial start-up project ended. Ideally, how information can be shared in a trusted manner will be planned for well before organizations begin operations in a collaborative environment.

Shaping Funding to Enable Integrated Collaboration

U.S. conflict-oriented funds, such as any future CERP-like funds, should be designed to mitigate resource inflexibilities that inhibit
or prevent integrated collaboration. This could include being responsive to country and/or sub-national planning and priorities. Conflict funds could also be designed to enable integrated action through bridging gaps in conventional funding areas. This could include bridging time delays that prohibit integrated collaboration, such as when funds are subject to different timetables due to their respective allocation processes. Or they could be authorized for functional areas not normally covered by other funds, such as development of local partner capacities or covering “seams and gaps”. Enabling integrated activity among partners, through providing a capacity to collaborate, should be an expressed purpose of such funds.

If these conflict oriented funds are effectively replacing an existing non-conflict fund then they should be as consistent with U.S. civilian and/or international best practices as is practical to promote collaboration and transferability. An example of this was the use of CERP “where civilians are not operating” as seen in Iraq and Afghanistan. This consistency of practice should include both the activities themselves and the oversight and evaluation of the funds. Additionally, such funds would foster collaboration through being dual-keyed or pooled funds.

**Conclusion**

Through the frameworks of collaborative governance theory, my research examined many of the limits and challenges – as well as successes – of collaboration in U.S. stabilization efforts. Understanding both of these can enable greater success and avoid failures. However, for the findings of this research to have practical impact, they must be translated into knowledge and resources for managers and organizations, such as through inclusion into training and doctrine. In this way, research findings may improve collaboration effectiveness and efficiency and, ideally, succeed in mitigating conflict and bringing stability to violence-afflicted peoples in the world.

The research and review also illustrated a need to better understand management and leadership when engaging with networks in Whole-of-Nation and Whole-of-Government contexts. Collaborative governance researchers have found that management success in these networks involves a different mix of skills, approaches, and techniques than in hierarchical environments. A better understanding of how and when to apply collaborative network
management approaches when engaging with networks the Whole-of-Nation and Whole-of-Government approaches would better enable success. Moreover, a stronger conceptual understanding of how to understand and assess collaborative networks, such as the typology and basic logic model presented here, can help leaders better succeed within them. Collaboration and cooperation is not one single thing, and such conceptual understanding would offer a more nuanced understanding of how collaboration occurs and to what degree it may occur and with which partners.

In this vein, one major theme of my research findings was that true integration of operations is not feasible without control of resources, particularly funding. However, another key observation was that integration is not necessarily required for success. None of the patterns of organizational collaboration reached a consistent and sustained Joint Action, or integration level of interaction. However, many of them made significant progress, particularly in Mindanao which saw a substantial reduction in violence in the region by the end of the case period. If any conclusion about the relationship collaboration and stabilization success could be drawn from the research, it was that reaching high Developmental or Synchronization level of collaboration with a host nation is possibly more important than a Joint Action level of U.S. civilian and military collaboration. Moreover, the “integration” mindset itself could be counterproductive, as it could lead to frustration and to potentially unproductive efforts to increase levels of U.S. civilian and military collaboration interaction.

The challenges of collaboration in complex environments and the need to engage networks in the Whole-of-Nation and Whole-of-Government approaches, and thus manage and lead through collaborative networks, show no sign of diminishing. While the U.S. civilian and military collaboration challenges in Iraq and Afghanistan garnered much of the attention, my research demonstrates that these issues are not unique to U.S. civilian and military environment. Even without large military presences, the U.S., along with the international community, will need to collaborate successfully to meet the world’s challenges. While collaboration itself cannot deliver stabilization success, lack of collaboration can ensure failures. Ideally the lessons drawn from this research can be used to inform U.S. Whole-of-Government and Whole-of-Nation efforts in a wide range of conflict or complex environments going forward. **IAJ**

**NOTES**


Even within the U.S. military some units, such as Special Operations Forces, can locally act independently of conventional military units. This can lead to multiple military units acting in an area without a unified chain of command; without sufficient coordination, these units can even undermine one another’s progress. Cases of U.S. Special Forces unit activities conflicting with general forces activities are well documented. It is even addressed as a priority in U.S. Army Field Manual 3-24, *Insurgencies and Countering Insurgencies*, May 2014, p. 6-5 to 6-6.

4 A Whole-of-Government approach in this context refers the U.S. military and civilian agencies working across boundaries to achieve shared goals and an integrated government response. A Whole-of-Nation, or sometimes a comprehensive, approach widens this aperture to include all organizations operating in a conflict area to support peace and stability and to reach common goals, though typically not so far as to achieve an integrated response.

5 See Beyond Ad Hoc: The Role of Inter-Organizational Collaboration in U.S. Stabilization Efforts by Brett C. Doyle, George Mason University, 2016.

6 The research did not include combat-oriented collaboration, such as military-to-military engagements to build partner combat capabilities.

7 PRTs were U.S. provincial level combined military and civilian teams focused on reconstruction and stabilization that were active both in Iraq and Afghanistan, though with notable differences. Iraq PRTs were civilian led and predominately civilian staffed, while Afghanistan PRTs were predominately military led and had a majority of military staff. There were also a number of international partner led and staffed PRTs in both countries, though they were more prevalent in Afghanistan.

8 “Beyond Ad Hoc” is also scheduled for publication as part of the Simons Center’s InterAgency Study series in March 2019.


10 In the original theory, “Synchronization” networks are termed “Outreach” networks, and “Joint Action” networks are termed “Action” networks.


12 Ibid.

13 Personal Interview, Afghanistan Rule of Law, 11 November 2013.


15 Personal Interview, Afghanistan Rule of Law, 11 November 2013.


17 Ibid.


20 Personal Interview, Iraq Provincial, 17 September 2013.

1998).


26 Personal Interview, Iraq Rule of Law, 24 September 2013; Personal Interview, Afghanistan Provincial, 23 January 2014.

27 Personal Interview, Afghanistan Rule of Law, 11 November 2013.


30 Ibid.

31 Bardach.


33 Yodsampa.

34 Close association between civilians and the military sharing the same difficult living conditions and hostile environment frequently resulted in PRT members expressing admiration for their military counterparts. Said one, “Being embedded, we were living and working like the military, which gave me a new appreciation for the work they do and the lives they lead.” It was also even suggested that both the shared difficult living and working conditions faced in Iraq helped contribute to eventual cohesion between the civilian and military overall. Shawn Dorman, “Iraq PRTs: Pins on a Map,” Foreign Service Journal, Vol. 84, No. 3, March 2007, p. 28.

35 Meyerle, et al.; Yodsampa.

36 Civilians may have had, due to chance or design, better living quarters than military personnel of comparable rank and operated with different benefits. For example, U.S. civilian staff received about two months of leave annual compared to two weeks typical for a military tour. However, the leave and hardship pay benefits for U.S. civilians were actually consistent with United Nations standards (though not military standards) for service in conflict zones.


38 Yodsampa.
This excerpt summarizes the dilemma this presented for U.S. PRT staff in accessing USAID funding: “We’d have a dialogue, led by a governor, regarding prioritizing their needs. For example, they would say, ‘We need schools, so kids won’t go to madrasas in Pakistan.’ ...When we’d go to USAID, they’d say, ‘That’s not part of the national strategy for Afghanistan. We’ll do that in two years.’ They were all about central government capacity. We’d say, ‘We’re bleeding here. We need a school here now, not in two years.’ So, we’d do it with CERP money...It was very frustrating.” Yodsampa, pp. 205-206.

Further, there is at least some evidence that in complex environments, planning in general is of limited utility, in that comprehensive rational planning is less useful in preventing error in complex environments in which stabilization networks function. More successful collaboration and partnering could involve correct mirroring or alignment of planning, resource direction, and implementation linkages between U.S. civilians and military. Bardach.

Embedded PRT, or ePRT.


Yodsampa.


Yodsampa.