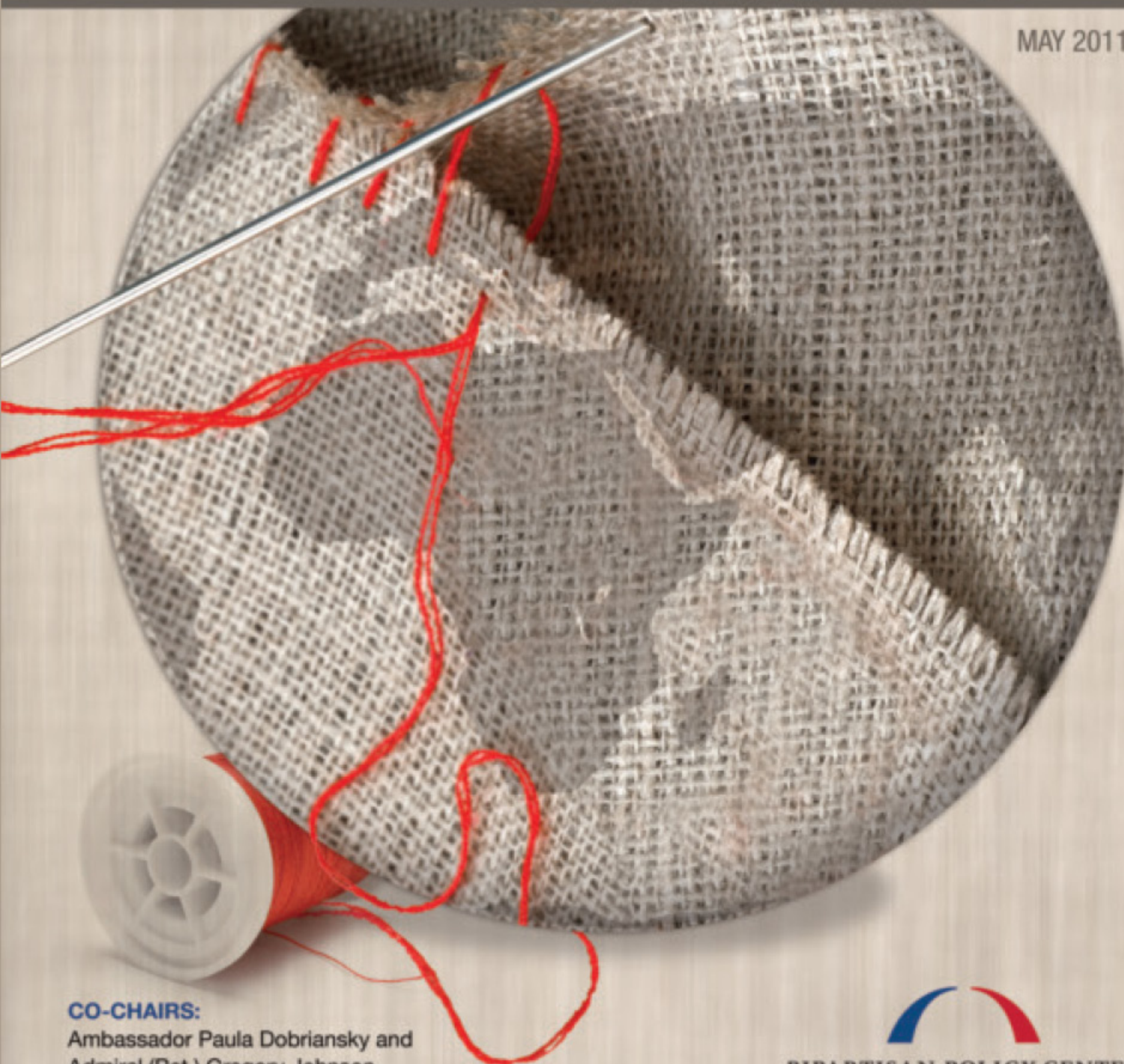


A STITCH IN time

STABILIZING FRAGILE STATES

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BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

With the globalization and integration of economies, transportation, communication and ideas, the United States and its allies face a growing strategic challenge: fragile states. The inability of failed and of failing states to carry out basic functions—securing borders, providing essential civil services and public goods, and maintaining rule of law and governing legitimacy—can spark a range of crises that undermine U.S. strategic interests.

Fragile states may play host to international terrorist organizations, as in Afghanistan or Yemen.¹ They may be centers for the narcotics trade and for organized crime, as in Colombia or Guinea-Bissau.² They may lose control, or facilitate the transfer, of materials for weapons of mass destruction (WMD), as many fear may happen in Pakistan.³ They might spawn violence that restricts access to vital natural resources, such as oil in Nigeria, or that restrains the flow of international trade, as in Indonesia.

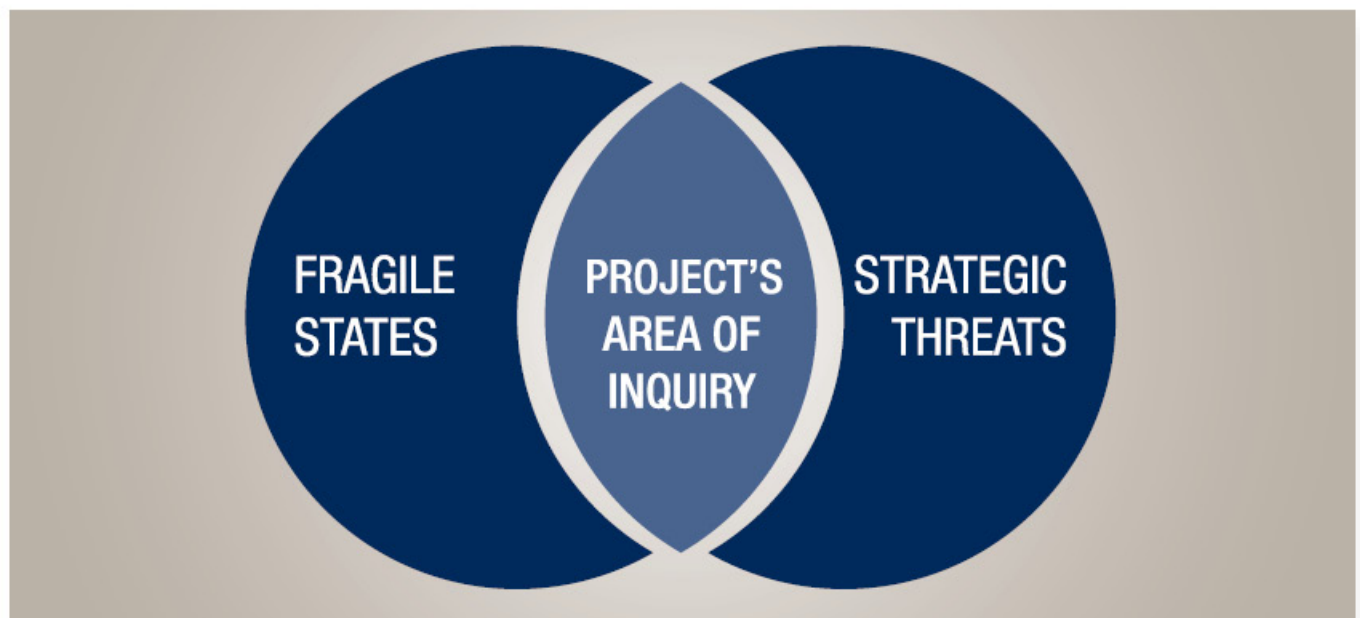
President Obama has expressed this new reality in his *National Security Strategy*: “Instead of a hostile expansionist empire, we now face a diverse array of challenges, from a loose network of violent extremists to states that flout international norms or face internal collapse.”⁴ Indeed, the Obama administration—and the Bush administration before it—has made clear that these

threats cannot be left to metastasize. Secretary of Defense Robert M. Gates gave voice to this growing, bipartisan consensus, writing that “Dealing with such fractured or failing states is, in many ways, the main security challenge of our time...”⁵

PURPOSE AND OVERVIEW

To meet this challenge, the United States faces both the necessity of maintaining the force and technical capability to break hostile enemies, and that of learning how to help weaker nations become stable, willing partners *before* they give rise to threats. The United States must surmount four obstacles in order to attain this capability: a lack of coherent strategy; a dearth of civilian capabilities; inflexible funding mechanisms; and insufficient commitment to sustained stabilization efforts.

This report develops a range of *strategic, policy* and *institutional* recommendations to overcome these four obstacles. The report focuses particularly on two necessary, though not comprehensive, aspects of stabilization: *Building Partner Security Capacity* and *Civic Resilience*. *Building Partner Security Capacity* focuses on providing fragile states with the expertise, tools and institutions to control the entirety of their territory. *Civic Resilience* seeks to rebuild the ties between state



and society that poverty, weak governance and conflict can weaken and in the absence of which extremism flourishes. We have chosen these particular aspects of stabilization to emphasize that security cannot be the sole priority, and that creating an accountable, responsive and transparent government cannot be a distant priority.

After two long wars and with the nation still recovering from an economic recession, it is important to balance national security threats with the costs— human, financial and political—of foreign interventions. We strike this balance by limiting the scope of our recommendations in three fundamental aspects.

First, we do not suggest that *every* fragile state poses a strategic threat to the United States or that every fragile state must be stabilized. Many fragile states pose risks to their populations and neighbors (for example, due to spillover effects from civil wars, famine or disease), without becoming an international security challenge. Such states are most certainly candidates for humanitarian assistance and demand attention from the international community. However, we believe stabilization efforts should focus on identifying and lending assistance to only to those states that are on the precipice of failure *and* harbor potential threats.

WE BELIEVE STABILIZATION EFFORTS SHOULD FOCUS ON IDENTIFYING AND LENDING ASSISTANCE TO ONLY TO THOSE STATES THAT ARE ON THE PRECIPICE OF FAILURE *AND* HARBOR POTENTIAL THREATS.

Second, we believe that the United States cannot afford to wait until the strategic dangers of state failure materialize. The basic assumption of this project is that the best strategy for national security is *preventing*, rather than *reacting to*, the security threats caused by failed states.

While clear and present dangers might sometimes call for direct intervention in failing states, a preventive strategy of stabilization is likely to prove more effective and less costly in the long run. Thus, in this report we refer

throughout to the assistance provided to fragile states as *stabilization* rather than *post-conflict reconstruction*. By stabilization we mean policies and programs primarily designed to arrest fragile states' backward slide rather than turn them into fully functioning modern states.

Finally, we have focused on ways in which to utilize existing personnel and funds more effectively through improved strategies, interagency cooperation and funding mechanisms. Though we do not hesitate to point out areas where more money and expertise is needed, overall our recommendations are mindful of the current fiscal challenges facing our nation and seek to make better use of the resources already appropriated.

THE PROBLEM

Although stabilizing fragile states is crucial to the national security interests of the United States, we are far from proficient at this task. There is widespread consensus among policymakers and academics alike that U.S. stabilization efforts suffer from serious shortcomings. As the State Department's first *Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review* states: "For the past two decades, the U.S. government has recognized that US national security depends upon a more effective approach fragile states [sic]. Yet we have struggled with how to understand these challenges and how to organize our civilian institutions to deal with them."⁶

First, the United States largely lacks a foreign policy architecture that links fragile states with national security strategically, security with development conceptually or the military and civilian agencies institutionally. Though the United States has been engaged abroad since at least the end of the Second World War, historically it has separated military, economic, political and humanitarian assistance; the justifications, strategies and resources for each of these sorts of missions were kept distinct. This separation has continued and today affects stabilization efforts; multiple foreign policy communities—counter-terrorism, democracy promotion, development, public diplomacy and human rights, to name a few—lay claim

to various dimensions of this issue. But fragile states challenge these conceptual borders and, as yet, there is no consensus on how to combine these various strategies into a single, cohesive approach to stabilization.

THE BEST STRATEGY FOR NATIONAL SECURITY IS PREVENTING, RATHER THAN REACTING TO, THE SECURITY THREATS CAUSED BY FAILED STATES.

Second, U.S. bureaucratic structures are outdated and therefore ill-equipped to face the complexities of modern day state-building efforts. Multiple agencies share overlapping responsibilities for stabilization but lack mutual visibility, as well as strategic and tactical coordination. This condition is aggravated by the multiple, narrow oversight jurisdictions in Congress, and makes developing a “whole-of-government,” “interagency” or “holistic” approach virtually impossible. The hazy geographic and functional boundaries between different agencies’ areas of responsibility—such as the Defense Department’s Combatant Commands and State’s Regional Bureaus—only exacerbate the confusion. While these discrepancies may seem trivial, they translate into real differences in policy priorities, compounding the already difficult tasks of coordination and cooperation.

Third, U.S. funding for stabilization assistance is beset with problems. It is disproportionately skewed towards military assistance at the expense of rule of law and political development. As a result, critical programs that provide support and training for the judicial, penal and governing institutions or that support and foster civil society are consistently short-changed. U.S. legislature fragments foreign assistance into many different appropriations and funds, each with its own bureaucracy, legal requirements and congressional subcommittees defending their turf. The President cannot always spend money on the programs he deems most valuable. Conversely, Congressional oversight is impaired because each subcommittee has only a partial picture of what the Executive Branch is doing. Thus, two Executive departments sometimes request money for nearly identical programs, while other important policy

areas slip entirely through the cracks. These funding challenges limit the President’s ability to determine and enforce foreign policy priorities, and increase the risk of programs operating at cross-purposes.

Finally, all the above obstacles—strategic ambiguity, lack of a well-coordinated stabilization capacity, legal and funding limitations—are compounded by the traditional impatience, if not aversion, among the American public and policymakers toward “nation-building” endeavors. As a result, we often lack the political will to intervene and stabilize fragile states effectively. Too often we have waited to react until it is too late, once states have already descended into chaos and conflict. Too often our commitment to weak states has been fleeting, disjointed or both. Too often stunted U.S. interventions—whether in post-Soviet Afghanistan, the former Yugoslavia, Haiti or Somalia—have required subsequent engagement or left countries to fester.

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Effectively stabilizing fragile states will therefore require conceptual strategic and organizational reforms.

BUILDING PARTNER SECURITY CAPACITY

To meet the security challenges posed by fragile states, the United States needs partner governments with the capacity to secure borders and populations. But such security cannot be construed purely militarily. As important as armed protection and coercion may be, stability is also determined by popular perceptions of legitimacy, justice and authority. Effective stabilization must include the ability to prevent, contain and manage sources of instability, such as local conflicts, humanitarian disasters, health pandemics and criminal and terrorist networks. Building these capacities in fragile states requires promoting good governance and the rule of law, alongside powerful militaries and effective police forces.

EFFECTIVE STABILIZATION MUST INCLUDE THE ABILITY TO PREVENT, CONTAIN AND MANAGE SOURCES OF INSTABILITY, SUCH AS LOCAL CONFLICTS, HUMANITARIAN DISASTERS, HEALTH PANDEMICS AND CRIMINAL AND TERRORIST NETWORKS.

In this report we use the phrase “building partner security capacity” (BPSC) to distinguish full-spectrum security and governance assistance from more limited traditional military assistance, often referred to as “security sector reform” (SSR). Specifically,

Building Partner Security Capacity is the training, equipping and mentoring of a partner country’s military, security, law enforcement, judicial, penal and bureaucratic organs to create effective institutions that address security threats and contribute to the legitimacy of the state.

During the process of stabilizing fragile states it is critical to establish and maintain security. While training and equipping military forces is a key aspect of the security assistance framework—especially at the start of most such operations—setting a state on track toward long-term, sustainable stabilization also requires training and mentoring a full spectrum of security forces. In addition to regular police, these forces might include gendarmerie, constabulary, internal defense, infrastructure protection, civil defense, homeland defense, coast guard, border protection and counterterrorism forces, as well as ministries and the components of a judicial system. Thus, the six most common key tasks of BPSC, from tactical to strategic, are: (1) providing security forces with arms and equipment; (2) military training and mentoring; (3) police training and mentoring; (4) criminal justice sector assistance; (5) ministerial capacity development; and (6) supporting civilian control of the security and judicial sectors.

CIVIC RESILIENCE

Just as important to stability as security, however, are legitimacy and allegiance—the willingness of society to partake in and abide by the results of the political process. They can be particularly stressed under adverse conditions; the weaker a state becomes, the less effective it is at delivering public goods and the more susceptible to extremist ideologies and violence. Thus, strengthening society’s ability to withstand the stresses of fragility—what we call “civic resilience”—serves both to strengthen the bond between state and society as well as to limit the appeal of extremism in weak states. It is ultimately the political mechanisms that deal with disaffection that differentiate stable states from fragile ones. Almost all states, after all, must occasionally contend with disaffection in some portion of society.

VIBRANT CIVIL SOCIETY, STRONG RULE OF LAW, AND A FREE AND TRANSPARENT POLITICAL PROCESS ARE CRITICAL TO BLUNTING THE APPEAL OF EXTREMIST GROUPS.

In stable states, society’s grievances are not transformed into extremist beliefs or into attempts to subvert the state. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, for example, deplorable conditions led to widespread discontent with the political leadership, but never stoked anti-statist fervor or violence. Stabilizing fragile states and inoculating them against violent extremism will require creating institutions and processes that help citizens to resolve their grievances inside the structures of the political system and not by undermining it. Specifically,

Civic resilience is the ability of societies to accommodate citizens’ grievances through peaceful processes and accepted institutions.

Civic resilience is most likely to endure when it is grounded by the tolerance of pluralism. Vibrant civil society, strong rule of law, and a free and transparent political process are critical to blunting the appeal of

extremist groups. The processes and institutions of civic resilience, however, must arise organically. Rather than choosing or creating groups allied with the United States, countering extremism requires fostering the political, social and economic conditions that allow mainstream movements to emerge naturally. We identify five key elements of civic resilience: (1) improving government capacity; (2) expanding opportunities; (3) democratic governance; (4) amplifying mainstream voices; and (5) isolating extremists.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

Our recommendations combine lessons learned from current stabilization efforts with best practices designed to have maximum impact in weak states, and fall into three major areas: *strategic* recommendations to ensure a cohesive and comprehensive approach to stabilization; *policy* recommendations for programs and capacities needed to conduct effective stabilization missions; and *institutional* recommendations to unify and streamline the bureaucratic structures responsible for stabilization.

A. STRATEGIC:

1. *Prepare for Sustained Commitment* in order to ensure continued returns on time and resources invested in stabilizing fragile states.
2. *Develop Delivery Mechanisms* that will allow tasks to be matched with the appropriate agents—whether governmental or not—and facilitate open communication across agencies as well as beyond government.

B. POLICY:

1. *Create a permanent corps of U.S. government Stabilization Advisors*, consisting of a host of personnel experts in various elements of stabilization. These experts will aid in all aspects of the stabilization process, from diagnosing the sources of state fragility, to governance and rule of law assistance, economic development and civil society promotion. They may also help manage bureaucratic command and control functions such as personnel management, accounting and logistics, and

would be available to deploy on stabilization missions as needed.

2. *Expand U.S. capacity to train foreign police forces.*

Due to the challenges of stabilization missions, two types of trainers are required: “surge” trainers available to deploy rapidly to establish training programs; and a contingent of trainers that can serve the longer tours needed to adequately train police forces. The former surge corps should be created by United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and comprised of U.S. Civilian Police willing to deploy for less than one year upon request. The U.S. Civilian Police force will be joined by National Guardsmen and Reservists who work as police officers in their civilian lives. However, it is simply not feasible to pull a significant number of police officers out of their civilian lives for long periods of time. Therefore, the United States should also commit as much as \$1 billion per year to establish a large force of permanently deployable police trainers, most likely composed of security contractors.

3. *Make BPSC a core mission of the Department of Defense (DOD).*

Building foreign military capacity should be its own Military Occupational Specialty (job function or career track within the military) with a clear promotion system, allowing service members to develop the specialized skills necessary for foreign military assistance. The United States should also greatly expand its International Military Education and Training program (IMET) and create regional training institutes to introduce partners and host nations to advanced techniques and doctrines, and to allow them to interact in a mutually beneficial learning environment under the auspices of U.S. sponsorship.

4. *Improve Governing Capacity.* Establish anti-corruption measures at both the national and local levels. Pervasive graft dilutes the efficient delivery of essential services and signals to the populace that the government is looking out only for itself, thus creating a wedge for extremists to exploit. Direct capacity building and other stabilization assistance should be aimed beyond just the

central government. Basic services can be administered more fairly and effectively if they are tailored to specific local needs and demands, and distributed by local governments and civil society organizations.

5. *Expand Opportunities.* Create programs that, while laying the foundation for more extensive development assistance, focus on perceptibly extending opportunities in the short-term. Such programs should aim to increase the availability of basic education and using aid-funded projects not only to supply fundamental needs but spur job growth. A particular focus on women in both these areas, when possible, can be especially effective.

6. *Democratic Governance.* Government accountability and transparency are at least as important as, and a crucial element of, overcoming corruption and cronyism. By putting processes in place that acknowledge and gather society's grievances, a fragile state can bolster legitimacy, thus further undermining the salience of extremist groups. To assist this process, the U.S. should help build institutions that respect and operate under the rule of law, and encourage autocratic regimes to devolve certain authorities onto local, tribal or religious actors, as permitted by conditions on the ground.

7. *Amplifying Mainstream Voices.* The free flow of moderate voices encourages citizens to become invested in their community, thereby challenging extremist messages that might otherwise gain widespread support. Both U.S. government agencies and NGOs working in fragile states should seek to build partnerships with a variety of existing groups and organizations both within the political system and outside of it—in order to foster the growth and prevalence of mainstream voices. Providing technical assistance to civic groups, human rights organizations, and independent journalists, and others can cultivate positive, democratic values to limit the traction and appeal of extremist ideologies. Amplifying mainstream voices also empowers moderate institutions and political parties as legitimate vehicles for voicing grievances.

8. *Isolating Extremists.* In order to diffuse the social and political tension that fuels extremism in many fragile states, the United States should identify “soft” supporters of extremist groups and seek to understand the grievances that motivate them. This will provide a better understanding of the causes of this social defection to extremist groups, and inform potential remedies in concert with, and in support of, the partner government. Programs should attempt to drive a wedge between these soft supporters and hardliners within organizations, and then work to reconcile them to society.

C. INSTITUTIONAL:

1. *Create a Fragile States Designation System.* By official directive, the President should establish a policy process, housed in and operated through the National Security Council (NSC), for designating fragile states a critical national security priority, and for designing and implementing a central stabilization policy. To overcome institutional inertia and fragmentation, we propose an ad hoc central high-level authority be created to direct stabilization efforts to particular, critical fragile states. The general structure of this process would include:

- Tracking and identification of potentially threatening fragile states;
- Classified, Presidential designation of a state as a “Critically Fragile State;”
- Convening of a Fragile State Stabilization Committee (FSSC);
- Design and implementation of a country-specific stabilization strategy;
- Assessment of lessons learned to inform general stabilization strategies.

This approach would combine existing structures and capabilities with the necessary organization, direction and authority to effectively utilize all the resources already available for stabilization.

2. Consolidate Rule of Law Assistance into USAID. Place the entire range of U.S. government organizations now providing rule of law assistance under USAID's Bureau for Democracy, Conflict and Humanitarian Assistance (DCHA). This would provide a centralized capability to plan, implement, coordinate and monitor rule of law activities, and would improve accountability both to senior leaders and to Congress. This consolidation would help policymakers identify gaps in coverage, eliminate redundant bureaucracies and programs and reduce inter-agency rivalries and infighting. Bringing together the disparate agencies that provide rule of law assistance would help force the U.S. government to take a coordinated, whole-of-government approach. However, the Department of Defense would retain control over military equipping and training.

3. Create Country Level Structures to Coordinate Interagency Programs. The USAID country director should designate a "Rule of Law Attaché" to function as the central clearinghouse for the understanding of and support for the host nation's police and rule of law sectors. The Rule of Law Attaché would be the liaison between the U.S. Government and the relevant host nation institutions, offering coordinated support and advice as well as providing system-wide analysis. The exception would be those institutions tied to the "profession of arms" such as the Ministry of Defense and military in addition to any relevant security forces, which would be handled by the Department of Defense. Together, the Rule of Law Attaché, the Security Assistance Office (SAO) chief, the Defense Attaché and, where appropriate, the senior representative of the Department of Justice, would comprise an embassy-based Stabilization Development Team (SDT), charged with managing all U.S. stabilization funds and activities on the ground.

4. Geographic and Policy Alignment. Align and integrate State Department Regional Bureaus, USAID Geographic Bureaus, and Unified Combatant Commands (COCOM). Better coordinating these regional structures of the military with the State Department and USAID would give each regional Assistant Secretary of State an equivalent Combatant Commander with the same area of responsibility, resulting in a more coherent alignment of priorities. Each COCOM should appoint a civilian Deputy Commander who would report to both the Combatant Commander and to the Regional Assistant Secretary of State.

5. Consolidate BPSC funding into a single, flexible account, as proposed by Secretary Gates, as well as streamline the process by which these funds are overseen, appropriated and transferred. Funds in this account should be spent in accordance with a plan drawn up jointly by USAID, State and DOD, and no funds should be spent without the agreement of both the Secretary of State and the Secretary of Defense. Congress should permit funds in the security assistance account to be spent by pertinent federal agencies as deemed necessary by the FSSC process; they should be used for both rule of law and military assistance. In this way, Congress could get the appropriate amount of funding into the right hands, allowing for a more holistic approach to security assistance. The resulting flexibility and condensation of funding authority will allow both Congress and the President to better oversee the resulting programs.

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ABOUT THE BIPARTISAN POLICY CENTER

The Bipartisan Policy Center (BPC) is a non-profit organization that was established in 2007 by former Senate Majority Leaders Howard Baker, Tom Daschle, Bob Dole and George Mitchell to develop and promote solutions that can attract public support and political momentum in order to achieve real progress.

To confront this challenge, the BPC seeks to develop policy solutions that make sense for the nation and can be embraced by both sides of the aisle. After reaching shared solutions through principled compromise, we work to implement these policies through the political system. The BPC is currently focused on the following issues: health care, energy and climate change, national security, homeland security, transportation and economic policy. Each of these efforts is led by a diverse team of political leaders, policy experts, business leaders and academics.



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