

INTERNATIONAL  
**Herald Tribune**

## **Nation-building is not the army's job alone**

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When George W. Bush came to office in 2001, he parroted his national security advisers' view that the U.S. military should not get involved in nation-building in foreign hot spots. That was one reason the military was so unprepared to handle the chaos that engulfed Iraq after U.S. forces speedily toppled Saddam Hussein.

Now the U.S. Army has learned its lesson, and is training its soldiers to stitch communities back together after the fighting has stopped - or, in some cases, while it is still going on. The challenge now is to bring the expertise of other government agencies into this work.

The military's preferred term for this is not nation-building but "stabilization operations." The lesson of both Iraq and Afghanistan is that primary responsibility for these operations will fall to the military by default, as no other wing of the government can deploy - and protect - substantial numbers of trained personnel in short time frames.

The army has recently completed a new operations manual that includes a community rebuilding mission. But the Pentagon recognizes that the military cannot do this alone. Defense Secretary Robert Gates made headlines last year when he said Congress should better fund the State Department to improve its capacity for "smart power" tasks.

More recently, Gates has applauded a Bush executive order that encourages foreign-service officers and officials from other government departments to further their careers by serving tours in agencies other than their own. In the 1980s, the Goldwater-Nichols Act imposed inter-service cooperation on the military branches and made inter-service tours a boon on a service member's résumé.

The new executive order on interdepartmental collaboration could solve a problem cited last week by Lieutenant General William Caldwell IV, who oversaw the new army manual and is commandant of the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth in Kansas. Caldwell said he has many students at the college from the other U.S. military services and from foreign forces, but very few from civilian U.S. government agencies.

This is lamentable, but it reflects in part the understaffing of those agencies. For instance, the U.S. Agency for International Development, which had 15,000 employees during the Vietnam War, now has just 3,000.

The entire U.S. government, not just the military, has a lesson to learn from Iraq and Afghanistan: that stabilizing areas of conflict is a job for engineers, teachers, aid workers, diplomats, linguists and agronomists - not just soldiers.

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