



Passing the BATON

*Foreign Policy Challenges and
Opportunities Facing the New Administration*

Afternoon Panel Two: “Building Civilian Capacity to Meet 21st Century Challenges”

Speakers: **James Dobbins**, Director, International Security and Defense Policy Centre, the RAND Corporation;
Jean-Marie Guéhenno, Former UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations;
Nancy Lindborg, President, Mercy Corps;
Chester A. Crocker, Former Assistant Secretary of State for African Affairs, Board Member, United States Institute of Peace

Main Issues

The UN, regional organizations, individual states, and non-governmental organizations all play a critical role in preventing conflict and rebuilding war-torn societies. While militaries educate and train their personnel for engaging in conflict zones, civilian institutions ask their staffs to learn by doing. Experiences in Iraq and Afghanistan confirm the high cost of failing to increase civilian capacity. Key conflict management institutions - both in the United States and abroad – have recognized the need to build civilian capacity to operate effectively in conflict zones. This panel assessed what has been learned and why greater progress has not been made over the last decade. It also considered the next steps for preparing civilians for the difficult work of preventing, ending, and settling conflicts.

Panelists agreed with Chester Crocker’s observation that another engagement like the war in Iraq was unlikely, and the era of outsiders running a state, e.g. Iraq and Timor-Leste, is over. International involvement in fragile states will continue to be essential, but the international role will shift to building the legitimacy and capacity of local institutions and authorities to operate effectively.

There is a window of opportunity after conflict in which progress in political, social and economic reconstruction must be apparent, or the post-conflict rebuilding effort will lose legitimacy. National governments, international organizations, and NGOs are all part of this effort to transfer knowledge and skills in rule of law, security sector reform, and governance. These institutions may have to reconsider whether their own structures are fit for the nature and scope of future interventions. At the same time, they will have to think how best to educate and train their personnel to operate in challenging conflict environments. In addition, they will have to find ways to institutionalize the lessons they have learned in using civilian capacities in conflict management, including how to work together at all levels, in the field and at headquarters.



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Policy Conclusions*

Given that peace and stability operations will likely be a central and enduring element of U.S. and international overseas engagement, the panelists emphasized the need to build a more robust capacity for civilian leadership of such missions. As Dobbins noted, we should stop conducting these missions as if each were the first such occasion. Key objectives that were suggested by at least one of the panelists:

1. Reassign missions to appropriate institutions.
 - a. Enhance USAID's capabilities through increased funding and personnel and/or by moving assistance and development operational responsibilities from State to USAID, with State retaining overall policy oversight.
 - b. Do not subordinate civilian social, political and economic development goals to military "hearts and minds" strategies, which limit the effectiveness of civilian development professionals as has occurred too frequently with Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs).
2. Orchestrate efforts to maximize impact during post-conflict "windows of opportunity."
 - a. Coordinate U.S. and international policies within and between clusters of security, finance, administration, and planning.
 - b. Empower a mission head or senior representative on the ground to orchestrate the civilian and military efforts.
 - c. Coordinate efforts at local, national, and regional levels.
 - d. Understand and account for political consequences of technical interventions.
3. Build host country capacity from the outset.
 - a. Transfer skills in problem-solving, planning and project implementation as well as decision-making authority for project leadership to host country staff.
 - b. At the same time, build international capacity to oversee and support this local staff, including remote management, assessment and analysis of social, political and economic conditions.

* Policy Conclusions from Group Panel Discussions at Passing the Baton 2009 were not necessarily achieved by group consensus. In some instances, individual panel members may have been in disagreement with the larger group. For specific information on each panel's contents, please see the comprehensive online archive at www.usip.org/baton2009.



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4. Create civilian-led education and training programs for civilian and military personnel involved in peacebuilding missions.
 - a. Educate and train at all levels, from policy planners to managers to those carrying out projects on the ground.
 - b. Provide education and training on project leadership and coordination, planning, negotiation, conflict analysis, and mentoring and training.
 - c. Use joint training programs to foster integrated communities of practice among diverse governments, IOs, and NGOs.