A Framework for Improved Coordination: Lessons Learned from the International Development, Peacekeeping, Peacebuilding, Humanitarian and Conflict Resolution Communities

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Acknowledgements

Table of Contents

Introduction

A.   The US Government – In New Need of Coordination

The United States government recognizes the critical importance of interagency coordination and is prioritizing it at all levels, from senior political leaders down through the ranks of every department and agency. Enormous efforts and resources are being applied to this national challenge. The need for improved interagency coordination has been clearly documented and the importance of this mission and its direct impact on the safety and prosperity of our nation is universally recognized.[1]

Improved interagency coordination will provide enormously positive benefits, the most obvious of which will be enhanced national and homeland security. It will provide the US government with more flexibility to react to the dynamic international environment in which it now operates. It will enable US policy makers to develop more nuanced and effective policies in some of its most challenging missions, such as the stabilization and reconstruction missions in Afghanistan and Iraq. Improved interagency coordination in these complex environments will also improve collaboration and coordination with other governments and organizations (international and non-governmental).

The need for the coordination of a multitude of different international and national actors is particularly evident in post-conflict environments, where programs must focus on different timeframes – short, medium and long-term – and different programmatic approaches – security, political, humanitarian, human rights, development, peacebuilding and rule of law, among others. In these complex interventions, coordination helps to knit the different pieces together, and is crucial for the smooth functioning of the larger multifaceted approach.

For over twenty years, the peacekeeping, peacebuilding, development, conflict resolution and humanitarian communities, including US government agencies, have been struggling with the chronic coordination challenges present in post-conflict and other environments. Natural competition, miscommunication and miscoordination within and among multilateral organizations, non-governmental organizations and bi-lateral donors have plagued and hampered the efforts of these organizations around the world. As a result, these communities have developed a core base of lessons learned about improving coordination within the same stabilization and reconstruction mission environment that the US government finds itself today. The aim of this paper is to help the US Government tackle its interagency challenge by drawing on the lessons that have been learned in other communities.

One of the most important lessons learned is that there is no silver bullet. Tension around the coordination of different agencies is a natural aspect of the bureaucratic environment. These tensions can be managed, but rarely completely resolved. By injecting the interagency system with a clearer understanding of the nature of the common coordination challenges and the tools to manage them, a culture of coordination will be fostered over time which addresses these challenges. As a result, we will hopefully begin to see synergies that have a profound and additive impact on the safety and prosperity of the United States.

B.   Framing the Coordination Challenge and the Solution

It is most often recommended that coordination be improved through the establishment of new coordination bodies and the formation of clear policy directives. While the establishment of

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[1] *911 Commission Report,* New York and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 2004, available from http://www.9-11commission.gov/report/911Report.pdf

coordination bodies can help to improve the likelihood that coordination will take place, mechanisms alone are not the solution. To be effective, coordination bodies must employ good coordination processes and be supported by incentives that encourage institutions and individuals to invest in coordination. Likewise, while clear policy guidance from an institution such as the National Security Council can help to focus the direction of coordination efforts, coordination efforts will still have to manage the diverse perspectives and approaches of different agencies.[2] Therefore, we do not propose an ideal structural or policy solution to the coordination challenge, as most ideal solutions have been proven to fail. What we do propose are ways to address the inherent difficulties that exist in almost all coordination efforts; barriers that we claim can be managed, but not removed.

Below, we outline eight common barriers to coordination. Then, we summarize the conclusions of the paper, outlining the five major lessons learned, two key new concepts and three drivers for coordination. Much more detail on each of these topics is found in the pages that follow.

i)   Barriers to Coordination

Below, we identify the eight barriers to coordination that are common to most interagency, intergovernmental, and inter-organizational coordination processes. While most readers may be very familiar with these barriers, we believe that it is important to reiterate them. Our analysis indicates that many coordination processes ignore these barriers, rather than trying to work with them so that the coordination process can surmount them. The subsequent sections of this paper will propose ways that these barriers can be effectively managed and addressed.

1. Organizational sovereignty - Each agency considers itself to be a sovereign entity. Each agency operates in collaboration with other agencies, but is not directly accountable to them. An agency will therefore only participate in coordination efforts that help it to meet its own particular objectives and mission. Even coordination efforts that are statutorily mandated require some degree of voluntary participation. Individuals are foremost accountable to their agencies, and only secondarily accountable to the coordination effort, if at all.

2. Missions are very complex with great uncertainty as to the correct course of action - One of the primary barriers to coordination that underlies this entire discussion is the complex context in which coordination is taking place. Whether organizations are trying to achieve a coherent foreign policy, implement complementary programs in a post-conflict environment, carry out effective humanitarian relief efforts or implement counter-terrorism operations, to name a few, the task at hand is usually extremely complex. Thus, coordination most often takes place in the context of difficult, challenging problems that require a multitude of actors to address the various dimensions of the problem, with great uncertainty for all as to the correct course of action.

3. Large disparity in power and resources between agencies - the disparity in power and resources among the agencies participating in the coordination effort often are a significant barrier. Less powerful agencies often see coordination as synonymous with being co-opted or controlled by the more powerful agency. More powerful agencies run up against resistance to even their most banal efforts at coordination. More powerful agencies may also perceive coordination as a loss of their power. This power imbalance creates a great deal of explicit and implicit resistance to coordination efforts.

4. Agencies have different mandates, programming approaches, timeframes and concepts of the end state - The different organizational mandates, programming approaches, timeframes for operations and concepts of the end state can constitute a great barrier to coordination. They make it very difficult for different agencies to align toward a common objective or to

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[2] See the *Beyond Goldwater Nichols Report* by CSIS as an example one proposal to address the Interagency Process available at http://www.csis.org/index.php?option=com_csis_progj&task=view&id=52

develop joint operations. Each agency often views their own approach as the best approach, and believes that all other agencies should align with them.

5. <u>Agencies have different cultures, languages and systems of communication</u> - Agencies use very different languages and terminology. Agencies have different security classifications and communications systems. Agencies are governed by different cultures or institutional norms of behavior and interaction. All of these potential communication barriers between agencies set the stage for considerable misunderstanding and miscommunication.

6. <u>Barriers in communication between headquarters and field</u> - Each agency encounters internal barriers to communication and understanding between headquarters and the field. When agencies try to coordinate with one another at either level, these vertical bureaucratic barriers increase exponentially. Thus, coordination efforts must always address the bureaucratic barriers between the different levels of one agency as well as the differences between agencies.

7. *<u>Politics of coordination</u>* – Political imperatives and jockeying for power can greatly complicate coordination processes. The approaches proposed here seek to help the agencies focus on and attain a common implementation objective rather than falling back on separate political maneuvers.

8. <u>Not everything can or should be coordinated</u> - In some cases, agreement may not be found among the different agencies and coordination may not be achieved. A coordination process will often reveal what can be coordinated and what can't. In Peter Uvin's words, "Knowing what needs to be coordinated and what not; knowing where to allow difference and competition and where not to; knowing what each agency is better at doing and what it does not do well – are all as important as creating desire, ownership, attitude change and institutional mechanisms for coordination."

ii)   Lessons Learned from Other Fields

We have drawn five major lessons from the two decades of experience that the development, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian and conflict resolution communities have had with coordination.

1. <u>Coordination is the process of managing diverse efforts and their inherent contradictions</u>. Due to the sovereignty of each agency and the importance of a diversity of approaches in complex missions, coordination is an essential process that helps to manage potential tensions and increase understanding of other's perspectives.

2. <u>Authority is an illusion, incentives are the solution</u>. A hierarchical coordination structure, with one clear authority figure at the top, will not resolve the inherent tensions involved in trying to coordinate the efforts of different agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral initiatives and non-governmental organizations. It is therefore essential to establish incentives to encourage individuals and institutions to commit themselves and their resources to the coordination process and cooperative efforts.

3. <u>The long-term effectiveness of coordinated efforts depends on national capacity</u>. International coordination efforts often sideline and overwhelm national capacity, even though the success of international efforts often depends on the capacity of national actors to continue the work begun by international actors. National and local actors therefore need to be involved, to at least some degree, in the coordination process.

4. <u>Decentralize decision-making authority, but maintain strong, supportive linkages between headquarters and the field</u>. It is important that decision-making authority be given to field representatives who are able to respond quickly to the problem at hand, enabling them to participate more effectively in field-based coordination efforts. Nonetheless, it is also

important to maintain strong vertical linkages between headquarters and the field so that headquarters can effectively support and ensure accountability for actions taken on the ground.

5. <u>Integrate conflict analysis, scenario planning and gaming tools into the coordination process</u>. The inclusion of these valuable tools in a coordination process helps to reveal how different agencies address different aspects of the same problem, setting the stage for collaborative action. The application of these tools can identify gaps and overlaps in international and national efforts and help organizations focus on a common context-specific problem to jointly address. These tools can also build relationships and foster understanding for the different agencies' perspectives and approaches.

iii)   Two Key New Coordination Concepts

Our analysis has led us to frame two key new concepts that should shape how coordination is thought about or considered.

- <u>Coordination is an iterative process of gradually building trust, understanding and working relationships</u>. The cooperation spectrum, conceptualized by Andrea Strimling, outlines the following different degrees of coordination: communication ⇒ coexistence ⇒ coordinated action ⇒ integrated action and decision-making. Each step builds on the next. The objective of the process is to determine the degree of coordination necessary for the participating agencies to meet their common objectives, and to develop a process to help the agencies build the knowledge, understanding and relationships necessary to meet these common objectives.

- <u>Each subsequent degree of coordination (communication ⇒ coexistence ⇒ coordinated action ⇒ integrated action and decision-making) requires that each agency commit a greater amount of resources and abdicate a greater degree of its control over outcomes to the coordination process</u>. As the degree of commitment that each agency has to the coordination process increases, so does the risk that each agency takes on the process. It is therefore essential that personal and institutional incentives be established to encourage a greater commitment to coordination, if coordination is truly desired.

iv)   Drivers for Improving Coordination

Finally, based on our analysis of the lessons learned, we outline three overarching drivers for coordination: develop incentives for coordination, adopt and diffuse coordination principles and improve coordination processes.

1. <u>Develop personal and institutional incentives for coordination</u>. Because participation in coordination processes is always to some degree voluntary, it is essential that incentives be established at both the personal and institutional levels within each agency and for the coordination process to encourage greater commitment to collaborative outcomes. Incentives are necessary to balance out the natural disincentives to coordinate and to address many of the barriers coordination discussed above.

2. <u>Adopt and diffuse coordination principles</u>. We outline the following three overarching categories of coordination principles that should be adopted and diffused by all agencies: transparency, interagency communication and accountability for impact. These principles once agreed should be integrated into both agency-specific and interagency training packages.

3. <u>Improve the coordination process.</u> Although coordination bodies are necessary as noted earlier, they are not sufficient. Coordination bodies are only as good as their process. It is therefore essential that an effective process be developed to help agencies establish and work

toward their coordination objective (communication ⇒ coexistence ⇒ coordinated action ⇒ integrated action and decision-making). We recommend that a more effective coordination process should include the following components: 1) identification of the dimensions of the coordination mechanism (horizontal & vertical, networked & hierarchical, event-based & institutionalized); 2) assignment of roles in the coordination process (convener, facilitator, decision-making process, stakeholder); 3) establishment of a coordination objective; and 4) comprehension of the environment and all of the relevant players.

In the following pages we expand on the points enumerated above - the lessons learned from other fields, important new ways of thinking about coordination, and drivers that can help to improve coordination. It is our hope that this will help those within the US government challenged with this very difficult task to find some new inspiration for how to surmount what may have appeared to be insurmountable barriers.

Part I: Lessons Learned from Development, Peacebuilding, Humanitarian and Conflict Resolution Communities

The previous section discussed common institutional barriers to coordination. The development, conflict resolution, humanitarian, peacekeeping and peacebuilding fields have been struggling with the challenge of coordination for at least twenty years. Over this time period, a few crucial lessons have been learned that are relevant to the current coordination challenges faced by the US government. It should not be assumed, however, that any field has found the perfect solution to the coordination challenge. In fact, one principle that is echoed throughout this paper is that there is no perfect solution to coordination. There is no perfect tool, mechanism, driver or hierarchy. Coordination, as stated previously, is a process of managing the potentially conflicting priorities and interests of the intervening institutions, whether from one government or representing a multitude of governmental and non-governmental interests.

I.   Coordination is the process of managing diverse efforts and their inherent contradictions[3]

As mentioned in the introduction, a diversity of approaches by a multitude of actors is needed to address the complex dynamics of pre-, during and post-conflict environments. In post-conflict environments, in particular, interventions must focus on different timeframes – short, medium and long-term – and different programmatic approaches – security, political, humanitarian, human rights, development, peacebuilding, and rule of law, among others. Each of these programmatic approaches has its own priorities and assumptions which may or may not be in line with those of the other approaches.

Proposals within the US government and the UN seek to manage competing priorities through the establishment of comprehensive, inclusive planning processes and coordination efforts that are unified under a clear chain of command. The UN defines this as an *integrated mission: "an instrument with which the UN seeks to help countries in the transition from war to lasting peace, or address a similarly complex situation that requires a system-wide UN response, through subsuming various actors and approaches within an overall political-strategic crisis management framework."[4]* Yet, neither the UN nor the US government has developed a planning, management or coordination process that can effectively manage the tensions between the different programmatic priorities and objectives. This is partially due to the real differences in priorities and approaches that exist among the various organizations.

To illustrate the challenge of managing these differences, below we outline the **potential disagreements around priorities that can exist between agencies and organizations intervening in the same complex operation**. This builds on the work of a recent review of UN Integrated Missions, and thus uses their terminology, but is equally relevant to the same sectors within the US government.

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[3] In his OECD review, Peter Uvin recommended that Innovation in diversity be respected: "some countries may be more willing than other to take risks, to innovate, or to engage conflicting parties in dialogue. Rather than seeking bland consensus, the potentials of transparent but differential innovation must be recognized." Peter Uvin,. *The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict.* Paris: Development Assistance Committee, OECD, 1999, p. 20

[4] Espen Barth Eide, Anja Therese Kaspersen, Randolph Kent, Karen von Hippel, *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations Independent Study for the Expanded UN ECHA Core Group*, May 2005, p. 14.

- "<u>Peacekeepers</u> typically see integrated missions in terms of supporting peace agreements, ensuring stability through the cessation of hostilities, disarmament and demobilization, creating civilian structures to enforce policing and judicial functions, and promoting the return of civilian governance – normally through an election process."[5] These short-term, internationally-led and executed efforts often run into conflict with the longer-term development and peacebuilding perspectives, which seeks to transfer capacity to the national actors.

- "<u>Development actors</u> undoubtedly share many of the same objectives as the more security oriented actors, as evidenced in their common interest in disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) and security sector reform (SSR). The difference between the two clusters centers principally on the dimensions of time, process and level." [6] Development actors have complained that longer-term thinking often loses out to the urgency of establishing security and providing humanitarian relief, reducing the likelihood that a sustainable impact will be made. In most UN peacekeeping missions, the development actors are rarely included in the mission planning, and the expertise that they have amassed from years of a presence on the ground is rarely built upon.[7]

- The perspective of <u>humanitarian actors</u> is "based on a set of principles (i.e., humanity, impartiality and neutrality), which cannot be easily reconciled with the sort of political processes required for peacebuilding. And yet, those humanitarian actors in the UN are part of a system which, in its peacebuilding pursuits, is deeply political. Their perspectives therefore have to contend with a host of contradictions."[8] Additionally, conflicts often emerge between the different understandings that humanitarian actors and peacekeepers have of humanitarian space. For humanitarian actors this is understood as the "importance of maintaining a clear distinction between the role and function of humanitarian actors from that of the military… (as) the determining factor in creating an operating environment in which humanitarian organizations can discharge their responsibilities [to protect and save lives] both effectively and safely."[9] For <u>military actors</u>, as demonstrated in Afghanistan and Iraq, the line between humanitarian and security efforts has become increasingly blurred.

- There are clear contradictions between the <u>human rights</u> and <u>political</u> perspectives. "Often, transitional [political] processes require that individuals and groups that themselves were part of the preceding conflict – often with blood on their hands – become accepted and at times necessary partners in making transition work. Hence, the *quest for peace* may suggest that past sins are forgotten, which the *quest for truth*, reconciliation and dignity suggest that they are brought into the open and that a culture of impunity is avoided."[10]

The following **key lessons learned can be drawn from our analysis of the different priorities and assumptions** of agencies and organizations intervening in complex operations:

- <u>It is important that a diversity of approaches be maintained, even at the sacrifice of a completely coherent, integrated intervention</u>. A completely integrated intervention risks losing the benefit of the different tools and approaches that each individual agency can deliver. According to David Tucker in his analysis of the role of the US Department of Defense in the Interagency process, "Because their functions are different, military officers, spies, diplomats and lawyers see problems and their solutions differently. Not one of these

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[5] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 13.

[6] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 13.

[7] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 18.

[8] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 13.

[9] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 30.

[10] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 7.

different approaches is expendable. To succeed, the US government needs them all and needs vigorous advocates for each."[11]

- Efforts to completely unify planning and operational processes risk homogenizing all efforts under one agency's approach, losing the diversity of approaches necessary to carry out complex missions. Different planning and analytical processes result from the divergent ways that agencies envision the problem. While more compatible planning process, communication infrastructure and operational procedures will certainly facilitate coordination, fully aligned processes and procedures risk prioritizing one agency's approach over another's.

- If an agency's interests are not taken into account they will often explicitly or implicitly resist full participation in a coordinated process. If more powerful agencies try to wield their power to enforce coordination, less powerful agencies will often resist by not committing their resources or expertise to the coordination process or to any collaborative action. This type of explicit or implicit resistance can occur even in circumstances where an agency is mandated to participate in the coordination process.

- More powerful agencies, such as the Department of Defense or the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, can exercise too much control over an integrated intervention, sidelining other agencies and approaches. For example, within the United Nations, the Integrated Mission assessment showed that the UN Country Team on the ground prior to the deployment of a peacekeeping mission said that if "integration really was about bringing the whole UN community together as equals, then they would support it." But, they said, integration as it is currently structured represents "a one-way transfer of power" from the UN Country Teams to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations [DPKO] who runs the integrated missions.[12]

- The potential contradictions between the approaches of different intervening agencies can never be completely resolved, but must always be managed. Coordination is, therefore, the process through which these differences and competing priorities are managed.

- The UN Integrated Mission report concluded that efforts to focus purely on structural solutions to the challenge of integrated interventions are insufficient. "Integration," they say, "is at least as much about process as it is about structures." We have drawn the same conclusion from our analysis of the US Government and its primarily structural approach to interagency coordination.

The **primary lesson learned** is that due to the sovereignty of each agency and the importance of a diversity of approaches in complex missions, coordination is an essential process that helps to manage potential tensions and increase understanding of other agencies' perspectives.

Reference documents:

- *Report on Integrated Missions: Practical Perspectives and Recommendations*
  http://www.nupi.no/IPS/filestore/ReportonIntegratedMissionsMay2005.pdf

- *Civil-Military Relationship in Complex Emergencies*
  http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/DPAL-62GCWL?OpenDocument

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[11] David Tucker. *The RMA and the Interagency: Knowledge and Speed vs. Ignorance and Sloth?* Parameters, Autumn 2000, pp. 66-76.
[12] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 17.

II.   *The Illusion of Authority and the Solution of Incentives*

Most recommendations to improve coordination of complex interventions include the appointment of an authority figure to lead and manage the operation. The Beyond Goldwater-Nichols report declares that "unity of effort requires coordination from the top" and recommends a more active role for the National Security Council in "ensuring the presidential intent is realized through USG actions."[13] The UN Secretary General has repeatedly called for his Special Representatives to be given clear overall authority for the UN system in peacebuilding missions.[14] In his chapter on, "The Challenges of Strategic Coordination," Bruce Jones says that the mediation and implementation of peace agreements requires a lead actor to "set priorities, ensure that those priorities are pursued by all third-party actors involved, and to provide consistency across all phases of a political process, such that implementation efforts are grounded in the realities of the negotiating process."[15] Yet, Jones admits, no international actor has the capacity and authority to fulfill this role.

The **lesson learned** is that a hierarchical coordination structure, with one clear authority figure at the top, will not resolve the inherent tensions involved in trying to coordinate the efforts of different agencies, multilateral organizations, bilateral initiatives and non-governmental organizations. Our analysis reveals the following reasons for this illusion of authority:

- According to David Tucker, the US Government interagency process functions much more like a loose network of organizations with their individual interests rather than a clear hierarchy where "directions and information flows down the hierarchy and information and policy options ready for decision flow up."[16] It only becomes a clear hierarchy when the President focuses his attention on a problem. "Since the number of issues that become politically significant are few compared to the array of issues dealt with, the interagency is for the most part a real network and an apparent hierarchy."[17]

- Organizations operate as sovereign entities. Even within one government, each agency has its own decision-making processes and accountability structures. Staff are primarily accountable to their particular agency and how their agency responds to the overall policy directives. The self-interest of each agency is always potentially at odds with a coordinated approach. The challenge for coordination efforts is to align the self-interest of the agency with the interests of the coordinated effort. This alignment can rarely be achieved through a purely hierarchical process; it will always require some degree of voluntary participation on the behalf of the organizations involved.

- Due to the complex nature of many contingency operations, it is also extremely difficult for one authority figure to comprehend and manage the numerous dimensions of the intervention. Delegation of authority is a necessity. Delegation of authority within the intergovernmental and international realm results in delegation to individual agencies and their particular incentive structures and institutional cultures.

- Even when there is coherence between the different efforts of one government, there has not yet been an individual with the authority or legitimacy to direct an intergovernmental coordination process. The Special Representative of the Secretary General in Afghanistan, Lakhdar Brahimi, was one of the few figures who might have had the legitimacy and mandate to wield significant authority over a coordination process. The Security Council and

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[13] *Beyond Goldwater Nichols* 2, p. 7.
[14] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 20.
[15] Bruce D. Jones, *The Challenge of Strategic Coordination : Containing Opposition and Sustaining Implementation of Peace Agreements in Civil War* Available at http://www.ipacademy.org/PDF_Reports/Pdf_Report_Challenges.pdf
Jones, p. 111.
[16] Tucker, p. 19.
[17] Tucker, p. 19.

all politically and economically interested member states were in agreement with Brahimi's approach and leadership of the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA), representing an unprecedented political consensus. Nonetheless, his power and ability to provide "directive coordination" to all UN agencies, much less to other agencies outside of the UN system, was limited by a number of factors. First, although he was mandated to provide directive coordination to all UN agencies, he did not have authority over the budgets and staff appointments of UN personnel. Second, the other international actors were not eager to be drawn into a UN-defined framework of cooperation. Third, he was seen by other UN agencies and NGOs as being partial to short-term political solutions which sidelined many humanitarian, development and human rights actors.[18] Thus, even Lakhdar Brahimi, a leader with a very high degree of personal legitimacy and political and economic support, was not able to lead an effective UN, much less intergovernmental, coordination process.

The **primary lesson learned** here is that the diverse approaches of the multitude of actors intervening in complex environments cannot be managed simply by making all agencies accountable to one authority figure, or even to his or her deputies. Establishing lead agencies for a particular sector or mission may be important for designating who is charge of convening and facilitating the coordination effort; yet, it does not replace the necessity of establishing incentives to encourage individuals and institutions to commit themselves and their resources to the coordination process and cooperative efforts.

Reference documents:

- *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (Brahimi Report)
  http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/

- *Report of the Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change*
  http://www.un.org/secureworld/

- Bruce D. Jones, *The Challenge of Strategic Coordination : Containing Opposition and Sustaining Implementation of Peace Agreements in Civil War*
  http://www.ipacademy.org/PDF_Reports/Pdf_Report_Challenges.pdf

III.   The Long-term Effectiveness of Coordinated Efforts Depends on National Capacity

The international community often intervenes in other countries in a way that sidelines national and local capacity. The various representatives of the 'international community' are often so consumed with trying to manage and coordinate their own efforts that they fail to include, or even undermine, national and local capacity. International actors often seem to assume that international capacity can replace national capacity and tackle all of the problems that the national government is unable to tackle. Yet, if national and local capacity is not built, there will be no one to continue the work begun by international actors.

The following points out the potential impact of the **exclusion of national and local actors from international programming and coordination efforts**[19]:

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[18] A *Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change, Conflict, Security and Development Group* King's College London, 13 March 2003, p. 39, available from http://www.reliefweb.int/rw/lib.nsf/db900SID/LGEL-5LLH7D/$FILE/kings-peace-03.pdf?OpenElement
[19] Some of these are drawn from the OECD work on *Harmonization and Alignment in Fragile States* noted above.

- When weak governments are avoided by donors, parallel systems and priorities are set up by the international community, which <u>hampers the development of downward accountability or social contract to the population</u>.

- The <u>national government is the only actor with the legitimacy to exercise authority</u> over all of the various international actors intervening in their country, although it rarely has the capacity or political clout to do so.

- <u>National planning departments are often overwhelmed</u> by the incompatible procedures, processes, conditionalities and demands of the diverse international interveners. Particularly in fragile states, where the international presence is often highest, the national planning departments are often unable to meet the demands of the various international actors, much less coordinate them.

- Divisions within the international community can <u>play into divisions within the national government</u>, with alliances being created among different international representatives and their favored national interlocutor.

To address these potential problems, the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) recommends that donors align and harmonize their programs with those of the national government.

- <u>Alignment</u> is the "relationship between the priorities (as reflected in strategies, policies and budgets) and system of a government and those of donors to that government."

- <u>Harmonization</u> refers to " the extent of coherence in approaches, policies and systems between donors."

- <u>Coherence</u> "refers to the extent of consistency of approach within and across donor governments between the security, political, humanitarian and development policy domains."[20]

Alignment with national policies and processes can form the basis for improved coordination because effective efforts will flow much more easily from common policies. According to Peter Uvin, both local ownership and alignment create a solid basis for coordination – if donors and interveners are willing to build their priorities around those made by the national and local actors, then "de facto coordination will ensue."[21]

Nonetheless, **alignment and harmonization in fragile states comes with many challenges**, including the fact that donors may support bad policies or support leaders that have little legitimacy with their population. The OECD argues that in fragile states it is even more essential that donors, or international actors, have coherent policies so as not to create more chaos out of an already complex situation.

The **primary lesson learned** is that national and local actors need to be involved in international coordination. The effectiveness of international efforts, particularly in stabilization and reconstruction missions, depends on their capacity to build national capacity. In the most fragile states where there is weak capacity, the OECD recommends that donors and recipients "work to focus on a limited number of tasks rather than try to spread limited human, financial and institutional capital over a range of tasks simultaneously."[22] This means that international actors may have to consider whether or not national actors can absorb and sustain their efforts, rather than plan in isolation of national or local capacity or priorities.

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[20] *Integrated Mission Report*, pp. 6-7
[21] Uvin, *The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict*, p. 20.
[22] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 9.

IV. Decentralize Decision-Making Authority, but Maintain Strong, Supportive Linkages between Headquarters and the Field

There has been a continuous push among development, humanitarian, peacekeeping and peacebuilding actors to decentralize authority and responsibility to the country/field level. According to the OECD, "Decentralization consists of a transfer of public functions from higher tiers to lower tiers of governance. It can be administrative (transfer of civil servants and public functions to the local level), fiscal (devolution of fiscal resources and revenue generating powers), political (devolution of decision-making powers) or a mixture of these."[23] Decentralization can support more effective coordination in the following ways:

- <u>Decentralization of decision-making authority enables people that are closer to the dynamic country context to make quick, informed decisions</u>. Decentralized decision-making is even more crucial in complex conflict environments where effective action requires quick decisions that are relevant to the context at hand. The delegation of authority to country-level representatives enables them to jointly make quick, informed decisions and allocate resources. In his study of development aid in conflict, Peter Uvin concluded that "the need to allow local officers, who are closer to the situation and the local actors, to take decisions more rapidly and flexibly was one of the most often recurring themes throughout [his research]."[24]

- <u>Coordination among different bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organizations is only possible at the country level, where they are all present</u>. Because the headquarters of the different intervening organizations are located all over the world, some degree of decentralization is necessary to facilitate effective communication and relationship building among the intervening organizations. According to Chayes and Chayes in their book *Planning for Intervention*, "people can meet frequently and share the latest news, engage in analysis and strategizing together, and take joint actions where appropriate. When interveners have field-based representatives, these individuals can coordinate much more efficiently than the geographically scattered organizational leaderships of their respective organizations."[25]

- <u>Personal relationships built in the field facilitate better coordination</u>. Both formal and informal coordination are facilitated through personal relationships. Giving some degree of decision-making authority to individuals in the field helps them to use these relationships to encourage more effective coordination. According to Nicole Ball, "constant second-guessing from headquarters and injunctions on collaboration with other agencies have hampered the development of close working relationships in the field on many occasions."[26]

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[23] *Decentralization and Poverty Reduction*, p. 1, OECD Development Center 2005, OECD, Policy Insights No. 5, Johannes Jütting, Elena Corsi and Albrecht Stockmayer, , available from www.oecd.org/dev/insights
[24] Uvin, *The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict*, p. 20.
[25] Antonia Chayes and Abram Chayes, *Planning for intervention: international cooperation in conflict management*, The Hague; Boston: Kluwer Law International, c1999.
[26] Nicole Ball, *The Challenge of Rebuilding War-Torn Societies* in Chester A Crocker, Fen Osler Hampson, and Pamela Aall eds., *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, USIP 2001, p. 731.

- Decentralization of decision-making authority increases the investment that agency representatives have in solving the problem at hand. People that are closer to the problem may be more concerned with the impact of their efforts than bureaucratic rivalries. Yet, in some cases, even those on the ground will see coordination as being against their interests. For this reason, it is important not to decentralize complete authority, but to keep headquarters involved to provide incentives for coordination to take place, in the cases where this is desirable.

Nonetheless, the ideal coordination structure, where all decision-makers are present at the table and have the resources and support of their organization behind them, is not likely to ever exist. The relationship between headquarters and field varies with each agency and organization. Even within one government, such as the US government, the degree of decentralization of authority varies with each agency. The variation only increases as more governments and organizations participate in the coordination process. Coordination will always be held somewhat hostage to the complex relationships that each field-level representative has with his/her headquarters and with the other individuals or institutions to which they are accountable (taxpayers, donors, legislators, etc.).

Therefore, at the same time that decision-making authority is given to field representatives, **there should remain strong vertical linkages between headquarters and the field linkages to enable headquarters to monitor, support and/or revise the decisions taken on the ground**. David Tucker writes that this *vertical* dimension is critical because it enables people in the field to convey operational possibilities and costs to policymakers. Yet, Tucker writes, "If operations are too fast for coordination with policymakers, then they will be ineffective, no matter how successful militarily, because they will unfold before policy can properly shape them. Worse, operations may present policymakers with *faits accomplis*, and thus determine policy."[27]

Decentralization efforts should, therefore, take into account the **following justifications for a supportive vertical linkage between headquarters and field**:

- The primary question that headquarters should ask is how headquarter-based coordination efforts can facilitate and support more effective coordination at the field level. According to a review conducted of UN integrated missions, "some of the limitations to integration in the field actually flowed from the fact that headquarters itself remained fragmented."[28] This shows the importance of coordination at headquarters in supporting and enabling a more effective decentralized coordination.

- As stated earlier, each agency acts as a sovereign entity. Some degree of responsibility for the decisions made and actions taken at the field level remains with headquarters. This is important for ensuring accountability for actions and for pressuring for changes at the field level.

- Field staff are often very vulnerable to potentially dangerous security situations. Headquarters involvement helps to protect field staff by helping to reveal potential security threats, bringing them to the attention of the international community, and providing necessary political and material resources to increase security.

- Decisions made at the field level affect international policy. Headquarters must be involved and maintain some degree of responsibility for actions taken at the field level in order to ensure that policies are implemented and to revise policy decisions as the situation on the ground necessitates.

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[27] Tucker, p. 7.
[28] *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 18)

- Additional political, financial and material resources are often needed from headquarters to support unforeseen events that occur in the dynamic context of complex interventions.

> Therefore**, the primary lesson learned** is that it is essential to develop clear vertical lines of communication between headquarters and the field in order to support decentralization decision-making. It is also important to be transparent with other actors about the vertical lines of communication and decision-making to facilitate more open communication and coordination.

Reference documents:

- Johannes Jütting, Elena Corsi and Albrecht Stockmayer, *Decentralization and Poverty Reduction,* www.oecd.org/dev/insights
- Peter Uvin, *The Influence of Aid in Situations of Violent Conflict* http://www.carleton.ca/cifp/docs/synth_fin.pdf
- Antonia Chayes and Abram Chayes, *Planning for intervention: international cooperation in conflict management*
- Nicole Ball*, The Challenge of Rebuilding War-Torn Societies*

V.   Integrate Conflict Analysis, Scenario Planning and Gaming Tools into the Coordination Process

There is general agreement within the development, humanitarian and peacebuilding fields as to the importance of an analysis of the conflict dynamics of a particular country prior to and during an intervention.[29] The military and humanitarian communities have developed sophisticated gaming and scenario planning tools to better prepare for the diverse scenarios that could occur in complex contingence operations. **Conflict analysis, gaming and scenario planning tools can significantly improve coordination efforts if integrated into coordination processes that involve the relevant agencies and organizations**. More specifically, conflict analysis, gaming, and scenario planning help to:

- Identify the context in which the agencies will intervene and the different aspects of the problem that they seek to address. The first objective of a conflict or context analysis is to identify the political, security, economic, social, cultural and environmental aspects of the conflict. It helps all intervening agencies to develop programs that are suited to the specific context and its particular needs and challenges. It also helps agencies to set institutional priorities. **When this analysis is done jointly by a group of agencies, it helps to reveal how the agencies address different aspects of the same problem and sets the stage for more open collaboration**.

- Identify the capacity of each agency to address the problem, the current programs underway and the potential overlapping or complementary capacities. It is also important to clearly identify the capacity of each agency to address the problems identified in the analysis. In many cases, although an agency might have a mandate to address a particular problem, it may not have the capacity and may need to be supplemented by other agencies. In other

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[29] According to USAID's Conflict Assessment Framework, conflict assessments should be conducted in most countries in order to "help Missions: 1) identify and prioritize the causes and consequences of violence and instability that are most important in a given country context; 2) understand how existing development programs interact with these factors; and 3) determine where development and humanitarian assistance can most effectively support local efforts to manage conflict and build peace." Available from http://www.usaid.gov/our_work/cross-cutting_programs/conflict/publications/docs/CMM_ConflAssessFrmwrk_May_05.pdf

cases, resources can be wasted because agencies may duplicate efforts. **Conflict analysis and organizational capacity mapping can help to *identify gaps and overlaps* in efforts of international and national interveners and set the stage for coordinated action**.

- Establish a context-specific objective and distinguish how each agency will work toward that objective. Coordination efforts are more effective when they focus on a tangible and achievable goal. Joint conflict analysis and scenario development can help to focus the various agencies' capacities on a common well-defined goal. This is particularly important in cases where agencies must combine their capacities to solve a complex problem. For example, a Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) program requires efforts by political, military, humanitarian and development agencies. The success of one agency's efforts depends on the capacity of the other agency to tackle their part of the problem. **The joint identification of a common context-specific objective and a mapping of the international and national capacities to meet that objective can greatly help the international and national actors plan and allocate the resources necessary for a cooperative effort.**

- Build cooperative relationships and set the stage for overcoming challenges that may arise in the implementation process. Gaming and scenario planning can also help different agencies build more cooperative relationships. According to Chayes and Chayes, "Addressing the many quite different futures that might unfold from the present environment pushes participants to open their minds to different assumptions, different approaches and alternative ways of thinking… The roster [for scenario planning] will include soldiers, diplomats, human rights workers, humanitarian assistance personnel, health workers, engineers and even lawyers. Almost any kind of advance planning activity drawing together such people from different organizations with different cultures, expertise, experiences and approaches will help them overcome mutual suspicion and develop a degree of comfort with one another."[30] **The resulting understanding of different agencies' perspectives and approaches significantly supports improved coordination.**

Even though conflict analysis, organizational mapping, scenario planning and gaming are all useful tools, they are not the magic solution. In applying these tools it is important to be aware of the following **potential pitfalls and the ways that coordination processes can help to address them**:

- It is not possible to fully predict how a dynamic conflict situation will unfold. Thus, all analyses must be continuously updated and revised in line with the changing dynamics on the ground. **Coordination processes can serve as a venue in which to jointly revise the analysis and the resulting programmatic assumptions**.

- A clear identification of the problem does not necessarily result in a good program or operation to address the problem. In many complex conflicts, programs must be prepared to encounter some degree of trial and error as they adapt themselves to the particular needs and challenges of the particular environment. **Coordination processes can provide a venue in which agencies can encourage each other to redirect a program that is not effectively responding to the problem.**

- Analysis and scenario development is always subjective. People and agencies tend to analyze the problem through their own lens. An economist will identify economic problems and economic solutions. A soldier will identify security problems and security solutions. A historian will identify the historical dimensions of the problem. **Joint conflict analysis, gaming and scenario planning seek to help people step out of their own institutional box, but the subjective nature of analysis always remains a risk and a reality.**

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[30] Chayes and Chayes, p. 176.

- Thorough analysis and scenario planning often requires that trust be established among the participants beforehand. People are often reluctant, or unable, to share sensitive information about the context or about their real institutional capacity. There are also many institutional and security clearance barriers that block the open sharing of information. **Thus, it is essential that conflict analysis, scenario planning and gaming efforts be accompanied by good processes that help to build trust and encourage openness and understanding.**

- As discussed above, the efforts of different agencies can be inherently contradictory. Thus, even a good analysis will not completely resolve these contradictions. On the contrary, it may highlight the contradictory approaches (i.e., human rights v. political; military v. humanitarian, etc.) **Well-facilitated coordination processes can help to reduce the natural friction between different agencies' approaches**.

Reference documents:

- *Resource Pack on Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding*
  http://web.idrc.ca/en/ev-60789-201-1-DO_TOPIC.html

- *Common Inter-Agency Framework for Conflict Analysis in Transition*
  http://www.undg.org/content.cfm?id=1247

- *Practical Guide to Multilateral Needs Assessments in Post-Conflict Situations*
  http://www.undp.org/bcpr/recovery/Documents/Practical%20Guide%20to%20MNA%20in%20Post-Conflict%20Situations.pdf

Part II: Drivers for Improving Coordination: Incentives, Principles and Process

Based on our analysis of the lessons learned from the development, humanitarian, peacekeeping and conflict resolution fields, we have developed three overarching drivers to improve coordination: Incentives, Principles and Process. We propose that more effective coordination requires the establishment of personal and institutional incentives to encourage coordination; agreement on common principles among agencies to support formal and informal coordination; and improved design and facilitation of coordination processes. As stated in the introduction, the US government has responded to the need for more effective coordination by proposing the creation of new coordination mechanisms. Our argument here is that the creation of mechanisms is necessary, but not sufficient. The three drivers for improving coordination focus on creating a more conducive institutional environment in which coordination can take place and on improving the functioning of coordination mechanisms.

Two Core Concepts

When most development, humanitarian, or peacekeeping actors mention coordination, they often have in mind the definition of coordination provided earlier: bringing "the different elements of (a complex activity or organization) into a relationship that will ensure efficiency or harmony."[31] In reality, however, most coordination efforts do not achieve this degree of smooth, integrated action. Agencies and organizations often end up simply sharing unclassified information about what they do and what they know, rather than creating a smooth, efficient, unified or effort. Our analysis leads us to conclude that there are three reasons for the shallowness of many coordination efforts: 1) the agencies around the table have different degrees of commitment to the coordination process, which is rarely openly discussed; 2) iterative approaches for building trust and relationships are rarely integrated into the coordination process; and 3) there are few institutional and personal incentives to take the institutional and personal risks that a greater degree of coordination often requires.

Therefore, before going into the content of the three drivers, we will outline two core concepts that underpin this analysis. First, coordination is an iterative process of working toward your coordination objective. Second, the greater degree of commitment that an agency makes to coordinated action, the greater the degree of institutional risk.

i)   Coordination as an Iterative Process

In her article, "Stepping Out of the Tracks: Cooperation Between Official Diplomats and Private Facilitators," Andrea Strimling organizes the different activities that coordination can include into four components under what she terms the *cooperation spectrum*.[32] Below, we have used the framework from her coordination spectrum and adapted it to the language used in this paper:

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[31] Oxford American Dictionary – online access.
[32] Andrea Strimling, *Stepping out of the Tracks: Cooperation Between Official Diplomats and Private Facilitators*, 27 July 2004, p.4.

Coordination Objective	*Communication*	*Coexistence*	*Coordinated Action*	*Integrated Action and Decision-Making*
Activities	Communication between agencies – limited information sharing.	Joint context and capacity analysis, with programming developed partially based on the analysis.	Joint design and/or implementation of specific activities; active partnership on ad hoc or sustained basis.	Subsuming various actors and approaches within an overall political-strategic framework;[33] establishment of collaborative decision-making and evaluation mechanisms.
Institutional commitment	Participation in general interagency meetings; fostering informal relationships with other agencies.	Participation in an interagency coordination mechanism with a facilitated process; establishment of the degree of trust/communication necessary to share real analysis of context and institutional capacity; development of some joint decision-making capacity.	Commitment to some degree of joint decision-making; senior level buy in and support.	Full transparency; senior level participation and support for achievement of a common policy objective, and the allocation of the necessary resources.

According to Strimling, communication is the foundation of all coordination, collaboration and integration. She proposes that we think about communication and trust building as an iterative process, "in which initial communication strengthens relationships in ways conducive to more in-depth communication."[34] We have termed the different degrees of coordination as the ***coordination objective***, which can range from communication to integrated action and decision-making, and includes all of the variations in-between. One phase in the coordination process builds up to the next, and the degree of intensity of coordination increases as you progress on the spectrum from the right to the left.

ii) Higher Degrees of Coordination Require Greater Institutional Commitment and Risk

Ineffective coordination is often blamed on the absence of political or institutional will to participate fully in the coordination process. While some degree of good intention can help improve coordination, this explanation ignores the multitude of institutional and individual disincentives that often discourage full participation in coordination processes. The personal and institutional risks increase with the degree of commitment desired in the coordination process. Simply sharing public information about a particular agency's programs, objectives, funding, partnerships, political objectives, etc., does not put much at risk; it may only take away precious staff time. Committing

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[33] This definition is taken partially from the UN *Integrated Mission Report*, p. 14.
[34] Strimling, p. 10.

resources to and designing integrated operations or initiatives through a coordinated process can put much more at risk – the effectiveness of the agency's programs/operations and the reputations of the individuals that advocate for the coordinated effort. The institutional and individual risks and costs inherent in participation in the various degrees of the coordination spectrum must be taken into account through the development of commensurate benefits.

The four degrees of institutional commitment outlined in the table above increase in accordance with the increase in coordination intensity as follows:

1. Institutional Commitment that comes with ***Communication*** - Participation in general interagency meetings; fostering informal relationships with other agencies.

2. Institutional Commitment that comes with ***Coexistence*** - Participation in an interagency coordination mechanism with a facilitated process; establishment of the degree of trust/communication necessary to share real analysis of context and institutional capacity; development of some joint decision-making capacity.

3. Institutional Commitment that comes with ***Coordinated Action*** - Commitment to some degree of joint decision-making; senior level buy in and support.

4. Institutional Commitment that comes with ***Integrated Action and Decision-Making*** - Full transparency; senior level participation and support for achievement of a common policy objective and the allocation of the necessary resources.

Driver I: Develop Incentives for Coordination

This section outlines personal and institutional incentives to encourage more effective coordination processes. These incentives and principles are outside of the current structural solutions proposed by US government coordination efforts. Disincentives for coordination exist because of the nature of the organizations involved (particularly their organizational sovereignty), the potentially contradicting approaches of different organizations and the complex environments in which intervention takes place. These disincentives are not necessarily intentional nor often recognized, but they do have to be managed if more effective coordination is to take place.[35] The question is not whether there will be disincentives for organizations to coordinate, but whether there will be proportional incentives to encourage more effective coordination. "*Incentives* include the rewards and punishments that are perceived by individuals to be related to their actions and those of others."[36]

We have divided the discussion of incentives for coordination into three categories: individual incentives offered by an individual's agency; institutional incentives established by the agency; and individual and institutional incentives established by or through the coordination mechanism. While the other drivers should also serve as incentives for coordination, the specific incentives here focus on the direct benefit that can be delivered to the institutions and the individuals participating in the coordination process.

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[35] Four papers that discuss incentives more in depth are: Martens, Bertin, *The Institutional Economics of Foreign Aid.* Cambridge, Cambridge UP 2002; Ostrom, Elinor, Clark Gibson, Sujai Shivakumar, Krister Andersson. *Aid, Incentives, and Sustainability. An Institutional Analysis of Development Cooperation.* Stockhom, SIDA, 2002; Michael N. Barnett, Martha Finnemore. *The Politics, Power, and Pathologies of International Organizations.* International Organization, 53, 4 (Autumn 1999); David Lewis, Anthony Bebbington et al. *Practice, Power and Meaning: Frameworks for Studying Organizational Culture in Multi-Agency Rural Development Projects.* London, CCS International Working Paper 12, 2004.
[36] Elinor Ostrom, Clark Gibson, Sujai Shivakumar and Krister Andersson, *Aid, Incentives, and Sustainability. An Institutional Analysis of Development Cooperation*, Stockhom, SIDA, 2002, p. 18.

i)   **Individual incentives** (put in place by the individual's agency)

- <u>Provide staff with the time to participate actively in coordination processes</u>. It should be included in the relevant individuals' job descriptions and their appraisal. For agencies that have fewer staff available to participate in coordination meetings, it is important that meetings are run more efficiently so that they may be able to find the time to participate.

- <u>Select staff to participate in coordination processes who view effective coordination as supporting the achievement of their particular mandate</u> and improving their capacity to fulfill their objectives.

- <u>Establish more effective coordination processes *within each agency*</u> to help find consensus and encourage open discussion.

  - o   This will give staff that participate in coordination meetings a forum within the agency where he/she can communicate what occurred in the interagency coordination meeting and illicit input for the subsequent interagency coordination meeting.

  - o   It gives the staff person more power to share information and resources through coordination processes.

  - o   It is important to encourage an environment of openness, transparency and critical discussion within the agency so that staff participating in coordination processes will feel more open to discuss agency-specific challenges and needs (or perceived "weaknesses").[37]

- <u>Give staff participating in coordination processes the authority to openly share information and resources, where appropriate</u>. As the coordination process moves along the cooperation spectrum, it may be necessary for higher-level staff to participate.

ii)   **Institutional incentives** (put in place by the agency)

- <u>The leadership of the agency needs to recognize the benefit that coordination can bring to the achievement of its mandate</u>. This requires (and will support) moving past institutional rivalries to the fulfillment of a common policy objective or the achievement of a commonly desired operational or political impact. In cases where the leadership of the organization may not openly recognize the benefit of coordination, it is possible that effective collaboration can be conducted on a more technical level by other layers of the organization.

- The agency that prioritizes and establishes mechanisms to promote accountability for impact will, most likely, support coordination processes. The US Government Accounting Office has shown great interest in more effective coordination because it reduces duplication and encourage the more effective use of funds. <u>Putting in place better impact accountability mechanisms should therefore encourage more effective coordination</u>.

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[37] Larry Minear says that we should find ways to "institutionalize incentives for constructive criticism and promote a culture receptive to thoughtful critiques of current policy and suggestions of alternatives." This quotation can be found in *Learning the Lessons of Coordination* by Larry Minear, p. 13. Available at http://hwproject.tufts.edu/publications/electronic/e_ltloc.html.

iii) **Individual and institutional incentives** (put in place by/through a coordination process)

- Ensure that all agencies have ownership over the coordination process. Even in a hierarchical coordination mechanism, where one agency or individual has clear decision-making authority, it is important that the participating agencies and individuals feel that coordination does not equal cooptation. Even if one institution or individual does have authority as the "coordinator," agencies that do not buy into the process or accept this authority will find ways to resist coordination.

- Include agencies in the agenda setting of the coordination process. In the case of integrated missions, include all relevant agencies in the planning and decision-making process. This ensures their buy in and builds on their essential knowledge and expertise.

- Focus the coordination effort on an objective or impact that is desired by all participating agencies. If a coordination effort is not focused on a specific achievable objective, such as the DDR program mentioned earlier, then agencies will often not see its utility. Agencies will more readily participate if they can see how coordination will help fulfill their mandate. As discussed in the sections on conflict analysis, focusing on a specific context-specific objective can greatly increase agencies' willingness to coordinate.

- Always give participating agencies some control over the outcomes of the coordination process. Establishing a phased process that moves from the establishment of the coordination objective, to information sharing, to more integrated cooperation allows agencies to engage in the process gradually and build confidence as the process moves forward.

- In a non-hierarchical, or consensus-based coordination process (which includes all coordination processes to some degree), ensure that the participating agencies establish ways to hold themselves accountable for implementing the actions that they agree upon. The establishment of measures to ensure mutual accountability for a common purpose or objective gives the coordination process more value, and offers an incentive for agencies and individuals to more fully participate.

  - Some examples of accountability tools may be a plan that is endorsed by each individual agency; the presence (or a report to) of an authority figure to whom all agencies are responsible; a consistent reporting/review process in which agencies hold one another accountable to following through on the commitments made at the previous meeting.

- Provide individuals that are participating in the coordination process with a clear plan and results that they can report back to their agency. This information should be written up and all agency-specific jargon translated for a larger audience. In the case of very sensitive information, other ways of sharing information with the agency should be adopted. The most important incentive here is to provide individuals participating in the coordination process with the tools to share the information with their agency, which should encourage the continuous buy-in of their agency to the coordination process.

- Establish joint funds to support the implementation of coordinated or integrated programs. Examples of this include: a) conflict prevention pools used by the UK government to support the implementation of programs by a number of UK governmental agencies; b) Country-specific trust funds, such as the ones in Afghanistan; or c) calls for proposals that encourage joint efforts.

- More efficient and effective coordination processes are an incentive in themselves because the individuals and institutions participating will feel that their time is well spent.

Driver II: Adopt and Diffuse Coordination Principles

In addition to improved coordination mechanisms and the establishment of personal and institutional incentives common coordination, principles should be established at the system-wide level. Here, we propose that each agency in the interagency system adopt the following three coordination principles. These principles should be integrated into training programs within each agency and reinforced through coordination processes.

i)   Transparency

Each agency should adopt the principle of transparency. Agencies should be as open and transparent as possible about their initiatives, capacities, budgets, interests and assessments of the situation.

ii)   Interagency Communication

Each agency should commit itself to investing in educating its own staff about the language, culture, communications systems and capacity of other agencies. This should include education about the importance of other agencies' efforts in accomplishing each individual agency's objectives. This will greatly help to facilitate communication and understanding between the agencies. A common interagency discourse should also be developed, where common terms are understood by each agency, or at least the differences in terms are commonly defined.

iii)   Accountability for Impact

Each agency should hold itself accountable for the impact of the intervention. In addition, agencies should hold one another accountable for their impact. The analysis, institutional mapping, and information sharing discussed in the previous section will help to create greater accountability. In addition, coordination mechanisms can create an environment of mutual accountability. This may be particularly true in the field where information about the impact of each agency's program can be more easily obtained. Joint assessments and evaluations can help to increase the information available about each agency's program. To enable greater accountability it is also essential that each individual agency prioritize the principle of accountability.

Driver III: Improve the Coordination Process

Improving the effectiveness of coordination mechanisms requires designing a process that will help to build the trust, relationships, knowledge and institutional commitment necessary to move along the cooperation spectrum. We have divided this process into four steps – 1) identify the dimensions of your coordination mechanism; 2) assign roles in the coordination process; 3) establish the coordination objective; and 4) uncover the information necessary to move toward the coordination objective. The tools of conflict resolution, mediation and facilitation are used in each of these steps to help to get the necessary information on the table and build relationships and trust.

i)   Identify the Dimensions of Your Coordination Mechanism

It is important to identify the following dimensions of each coordination mechanism: vertical and horizontal and networked and hierarchical.[38] It is also important to distinguish whether this is an

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[38] The distinction between vertical & horizontal and networked & hierarchical was originally developed by David Tucker in his discussion of the US Government Interagency process in the Proceedings article cited above. Additionally, Andrea Strimling developed the concept of networked coordination.

event-based or institutionalized coordination mechanism. These distinctions help design the coordination process.

1. *Vertical & horizontal:*

    - The *horizontal dimension* is the interaction between agencies at either the headquarters or the field level. The horizontal relationship between agencies at the headquarters greatly affects coordination at the field level, and vice versa. Most coordination processes concern horizontal level interactions at either headquarters or the field, with little direct attention paid to the vertical connections.

    - The *vertical dimension* is the interaction between the headquarters and the field, usually within each individual agency. Within each agency, authority may be concentrated at a different place on the vertical axis, which influences the degree of decision-making authority that is present at the horizontal dimension. It is important to know the degree of decision-making authority present in with each agency representative at the field, headquarters, and regional levels, if relevant.

    - As we stated earlier, completely decentralized mechanisms are neither likely to exist nor fully desirable. Thus, each mechanism will have horizontal and vertical dimensions that need to be identified to understand what decision-making and implementation capacities are present at the table.

2. *Networked and hierarchical:*

    - The *networked dimension* represents a loose and completely voluntary relationship between the agencies involved in the mechanism and relies on consensus-based decisions. Andrea Strimling refers to this as networked coordination.

    - The *hierarchical dimension* is the relationship with an authority figure who oversees the coordination process and/or its output. Decisions are seen as binding and the Agencies are accountable to the authority figure for their output.

    - <u>Effective coordination will rarely result from a fully networked or fully hierarchical relationship</u> between the agencies involved.

        - Some type of binding process is necessary to go beyond the information sharing stage. An authority figure can help to manage these different approaches, but can rarely act in an authoritarian way to ensure coordinated action among military and civilian agencies.

        - Yet, as discussed earlier, a hierarchical approach is rarely likely to happen among diverse agencies or organizations. A somewhat networked process should exist to manage the different priorities of different agencies who, even under a unified command, will remain most accountable to their headquarters and their mandate, not the authority figure overseeing the coordination process.

        - Thus, <u>each mechanism must balance between the binding and voluntary aspects of the networked and hierarchical dimensions</u>.

3. *Event-based and institutionalized:*

    - An *event-based mechanism* is one that is established on an ad hoc basis to meet a specific, well-defined need, often in an emergency situation.

    - An *institutionalized mechanism* is one that meets regularly, usually with the stated goal of information sharing.

    - Institutionalized mechanisms can help to build relationships that can facilitate effective event-based coordination; yet, institutionalized mechanisms can rarely maintain the

degree of commitment from each institution that event-based coordination demands. An institutionalized mechanism can also be transformed into an event-based mechanism when an urgent situation arises. Agencies often vacillate between participating in event-based and institutionalized coordination mechanisms.

- The coordination objective, which ranges from communication to integrated action, helps to determine whether an event-based or institutionalized mechanism is needed.

ii) Assign Roles in the Coordination Process

As stated earlier, one of the fundamental challenges to interagency, inter-governmental and inter-organizational coordination is that every organization retains some degree of institutional sovereignty. As a result, tools and approaches can be used to help to encourage more active participation from all of the institutions represented at the table. This may mean that some of the more powerful organizations may have to abdicate some of their power in the interest of encouraging the participation of less powerful, but essential, agencies. It is also important to acknowledge that different agencies have different kinds of power (i.e., knowledge, approaches, credibility, etc.). One way to encourage participation and discussion is to ensure that everyone at the table will have a chance to speak and be heard as an equal. This may mean that the more powerful agency and/or the authority figure will have to step back during the coordination process to ensure that all voices and positions can be expressed. A neutral third party can help to facilitate this type of meeting/discussion.

Below, we have outlined four, potentially overlapping, roles in a coordination process. Each of these roles is essential to an effective coordination process. It is also very important that all participating individuals and agencies understand and accept their role and the roles of others.

1. *Convener*
   - The institution and/or individual who convenes the meeting. There may also be a rotating convener. The convener may or may not be the authority figure. The essential characteristic of the convener is that they have the credibility to bring the necessary representatives to the table.

2. *Authority figure and/or facilitated joint decision-making process*
   - The authority figure is the institution or individual to whom the coordination process is accountable. In many cases, there is no clear authority figure. In these cases, the participating agencies need to establish procedures for making decisions and creating accountability toward the decisions and commitments made. These joint decision-making processes must appoint a facilitator and decide on a process through which they will communicate and make joint decisions, where appropriate.

3. *Facilitator*
   - The institution or individual responsible for ensuring that the coordination process moves forward smoothly and that all agencies are invested in the process. This role can be played by the convener, the authority figure, a neutral third party or a participating agency. Regardless of who plays the role, the person must be skilled in facilitation and be able to subsume his/her own agenda to the agenda of the larger group of agencies.

4. *Stakeholder/Agency representative*
   - The agencies participating in the coordination process. Each agency holds a stake in the outcome of the coordination process. They should not be seen or treated as

passive observers, but encouraged to invest in the process and commit to follow through on its outcomes.

iii)   Establish the Coordination Objective

Once you understand the dynamics of your coordination mechanism and decide on the roles that each agency will play, it is necessary to establish the objective of your coordination effort. A few key questions can help to determine the coordination objective: 1) what are the different people around the table there to achieve? Are they there to share information, ensure that programs don't overlap or contradict, develop joint programs, or develop integrated programs? 2) what degree of institutional authority does each individual carry with him/her? Are they able to commit resources and decision-making authority to the coordinated effort?

As discussed earlier, the coordination objective has four overall levels of intensity, and all of the degrees in-between:

1. *Communication*

   - Communication between agencies, limited information sharing.

2. *Coexistence*

   - Joint context and capacity analysis, with programming developed partially based on the analysis.

3. *Coordinated action*

   - Joint design and/or implementation of specific activities; active partnership on ad hoc or sustained basis.

4. *Integrated action and decision-making*

   - Subsuming various actors and approaches within an overall political-strategic framework;[39] establishment of collaborative decision-making and evaluation mechanisms.

The primary lesson learned from conflict resolution and mediation processes is that, over time, trust and relationships can be built that will enable a greater degree of commitment than that which was initially imagined. Applied to this context, the coordination objective may change over time. More ambitious coordination objectives necessitate a process that enables the people and institutions present to build the trust and relationships necessary for that degree of commitment. At the beginning, agencies may only be prepared to communicate, but after sharing information and building relationships and/or trust they may decide that coordinated action is what they want to work toward. The coordination process can support the building of these relationships, trust and knowledge to enable individuals and institutions to commit to a more integrated degree of coordination over time. Below, we outline a few tools that, along with mediation and facilitation techniques, can help agencies move toward a more intense coordination objective.

iv)   Understand the Environment and the Players

To move toward the coordination objective (communication, coexistence, coordinated action, or integrated action & decision-making) it is important to understand the environment in which coordination will take place and the capacities and interests of the actors involved.

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[39] This definition is taken partially from the UN *Integrated Mission Report,* p. 14.

i) The Environment

As mentioned earlier, a <u>joint analysis of the intervention environment helps the people at the table to identify how the interventions of different actors contradict or complement one another</u>. This should also help to build understanding that the different actors involved often need one another to make their intervention more effective. This exercise can take place at the headquarters or the field and can use the tools of conflict analysis, scenario planning and/or gaming. Conflict analysis frameworks all have four common components: country profile, the root and proximate causes of the conflict, the actors involved in the conflict, and the resulting conflict dynamics.[40] As summarized in the International Alert Resource Pack on Conflict Sensitivity, these four common elements include:

- <u>Conflict profile</u>: includes an analysis of the political, economic, and socio-cultural context; the emergent political, economic, ecological, and social issues; the identification of the specific conflict prone/affected areas; and the history of the conflict.

- <u>Conflict causes</u>: includes an analysis of the root causes and the surface level, or proximate, causes; the triggers that could lead to the outbreak of further conflict; new factors that could prolong the conflict; and factors that could contribute to peace.

- <u>Actors</u>: includes an analysis of the main actors involved in the conflict; the actors interests, goals, positions, capacities, and relationships; the potential capacities for peace; and the spoilers.

- <u>Conflict dynamics</u>: includes an analysis of the current conflict trends, the windows of opportunity, and the potential scenarios that will result from the interaction of the conflict profile, causes and actors.

A joint analysis about conflict dynamics, nonetheless, requires that a certain degree of trust be built among the participants. Participants need to feel comfortable openly sharing what can be very sensitive information and analysis. Open communication can also be inhibited by different security classifications of the participating individuals. One important role of a well-designed coordination process is to help to build the trust and understanding necessary for a degree of open information sharing.

The analysis itself should be iterative and integrated into the coordination process. It should evolve and be updated as the environment changes. The coordination process can provide the venue for the continuous updating of the analysis and the assessment of whether the programs of the different actors continue to respond to the changing context.

ii) The Players

In addition to information sharing about the intervention environment, <u>it is essential that there is also some analysis, or mapping, of the capacities, limitations, current interventions and needs of the intervening organizations</u>. This analysis helps to encourage interventions to build upon capacity that exists rather than duplicating efforts already underway. It also helps to more clearly identify the real capacity gaps among the intervening actors. Even though an agency may have a mandate to carry out a task, they may not always have the capacity, in which case they may need support from another agency.

An institutional mapping should be done by the facilitators of the coordination process as part of the preparation prior to the meeting. During the coordination process, the facilitator should help the actors to put this information out on the table in a way in which they are comfortable. This will also

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[40] This description is taken from the *Resource Pack on Conflict Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peacebuilding*, Chapter 2. Available from http://www.international-alert.org/our_work/training/index.php?page=work&ext=se.

require some degree of trust and a willingness to openly share institutional capacities and constraints. In addition, because agencies often speak in their own jargon, the real meaning of what is being conveyed is often not completely understood by those outside of the particular agency. **The facilitator should help to clarify jargon to make the information accessible to everyone at the table**.

v)   Add the drivers together

These three drivers are additive. The effectiveness of each of these drivers increases when it is combined with another driver, and together they should significantly increase the effectiveness of coordination. The first two drivers support formal (through mechanisms) and informal (outside of mechanisms) coordination and pertain more specifically to incentives that can be provided to and/or within each agency to support more effective coordination. The last driver relates directly to the functioning and effectiveness of coordination mechanisms.

The three drivers for coordination will help to create coordination mechanisms that are able to learn and adapt to the changing and dynamic environments that the US Government is faced with today. The current structural coordination solutions proposed by the US Government are necessary, but not sufficient. We advocate for the incorporation of this framework of drivers into the framework to improve the effectiveness of coordination efforts. The common barriers to coordination, lessons learned, and drivers for coordination should inform the interagency education curriculum.

Conclusion

Interagency coordination has been and will continue to be difficult. However, although coordination challenges can never be permanently solved they can be effectively managed.

- By recognizing the Eight Barriers to Coordination outlined in this paper a clearer understanding of the interagency coordination challenges can be realized.

- By leveraging lessons learned from the international development, peacekeeping, peacebuilding, humanitarian and conflict resolution communities the US government can benefit from those experiences in general and in particular with regards to the ongoing stabilization and reconstruction missions in Afghanistan and Iraq.

- By recognizing that coordination is an iterative process and that a full spectrum of coordination is possible but that only those coordination efforts that clearly define a coordination objective will be successful.

- By fully developing and leveraging both personal and institutional incentives for coordination in order to overcome the significant disincentives to coordination that are built naturally into a large bureaucratic organization like the US government.

If through interagency training and education these concepts can be introduced into the thinking of a new and growing pool of "inter-agents" across the US government a culture of coordination can be fostered which anticipates and addresses many of these challenges. As a result, we could begin to see interagency coordination become a true "force multiplier" for both policy makers and policy implementers and most importantly, see a resulting increase in the safety and prosperity of the United States.

About the Authors

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Susanna P. Campbell has worked on conflict prevention, mitigation and response since 1996. She was a Research Associate for the Center for Preventive Action of the Council on Foreign Relations in New York from 1996 to 1999; the coordinator of the Great Lakes Network for the Forum on Early Warning and Early Response (FEWER) in London and Nairobi from 1999 to 2000; and the Communications director for UNICEF Burundi from 2001 to 2002. Subsequently, as an independent consultant, she wrote the International Crisis Group report A Framework for Responsible Aid to Burundi (Africa Report No. 57, 21 February 2002) and the chapter on "Building Institutional Capacity for Conflict Sensitivity" for the manual on Conflict-Sensitive Approaches to Development, Humanitarian Assistance and Peace-building produced by Saferworld, FEWER and International Alert. She also conducted assessments and evaluations for The World Bank Post-Conflict Fund and Search for Common Ground Burundi. She is currently a PhD candidate at The Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy, Tufts University.

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Appendix A: Summary Table

This paper seeks to inform and support the development of interagency training and education. To that end, the summary table provided below highlights three broad objectives recommended within the framework outlined in this paper – environment, process and mechanism. The table then briefly articulates the coordination capabilities required to achieve those objectives and recommends training areas to further develop coordination capacities within US government personnel and their organizations.

This summary table is not meant to be comprehensive in nature with regards to all of the lessons learned that have been identified within this paper. However, it should assist readers in conceptualizing how the analysis presented in this paper can be translated into curricula and training to meet the needs of the growing "interagency" community.

Overall objective	What does this entail?	What do you train to?
Managing Context/environment	• Context analysis • Continuous updating of the analysis through coordination mechanisms • Transparency of capacity and intervention approaches updates the context • Mutual accountability created through transparency and through other accountability measures • Feed information into the coordination process and informally through informal coordination and transparency – relationship building	• Train to analytical tools, and comprehensive gaming – pull people into the gaming process who will have to work together in the field • Know the current environment and who the various players are • Impact assessment – revisit impact through coordination process • Train to analytical tools and the process of feeding them into the coordination mechanism. How do you ensure accountability through coordination? • Core assumptions, objectives
Managing Coordination Objective – Process	• Understand and develop coordination process to meet each particular coordination objective • Coordination objective ranges from information sharing to full integration, but is always in relation to the context and the players.	• Define coordination objective in relation to analysis of context and understanding of capacity – outline how you do this • ITEA can educate on the iterative process and how it can work • FMCS could develop a curriculum to teach the process
Managing Players and mechanism	The players and the coordination objective determine the mechanism. Characteristics of mechanisms: • Vertical and horizontal dimensions • Networked and hierarchical dimensions • Binding and participatory dimensions Characteristics of players: • Different languages and cultures • Different institutional structures • Different capacities • Different understandings of the end state, mandates and objectives • Different decision-making centers of gravity (where decisions are made)	Understanding the characteristics of the players and the types of possible mechanisms can help people develop a middle ground through which they can communicate. You can train to: • Organizational capacity and strengths/weaknesses • Language • Culture • The middle ground can be created through common coordination principles, which you can train to • A common system • Each institution's hierarchy • How the player's capacity relates to the context

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