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Securitizing instability: the US military and full spectrum operations

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Abstract. This paper examines the recent broadening of the US military's overseas mission into what it calls 'full spectrum operations' and critiques how it is being enabled by what I term 'full spectrum law'. The paper explores the important doctrinal shifts that took place in the US military from 2005 when it declared for the first time a commitment to 'stability operations' as a military responsibility equal in status to offense and deterrence. This, I argue, has reinforced an already dominant US national security discourse in which military and economic security interests are firmly bound. In particular, it has given the US military a broader role in the 'correction' of underdevelopment and the securitization of the legal and economic modalities necessary for a functioning neoliberal global economy. The paper reflects on the US military's blending of security and development concerns and reveals how its legal framing of stability operations draws upon a 'notional legal spectrum' that allows for the securitization of the most broadly understood 'instability' and sanctions the interminable use of the US military in global interventions in an era ubiquitously cited as one of 'persistent conflict'.

Keywords: stability operations, US military, law, military-economic securitization

Introduction

Over 50 years ago, US President John F. Kennedy outlined the wide military toolkit necessary for the 1961 graduating class of the US Naval Academy at Annapolis:

"You must know something about strategy and tactics and logic-logistics, but also economics and politics and diplomacy and history [...] You must understand that few of the important problems of our time have, in the final analysis, been finally solved by military power alone" (US President John F. Kennedy, 1961).

Kennedy will have had post-WW2 Germany and Japan in mind above, and more broadly the US lead in the Allied political and economic reconstruction of its wartime theatres of operations in Europe and the Pacific. He may well have been thinking too of earlier instances of the US military taking a key role in post-conflict reconstruction efforts; it has a history of reconstruction and stabilization missions dating back to at least its colonial interventions in the Philippines when it first declared its “exceptional” and “benevolent” form of imperialism (Go and Foster, 2003).

Through the course of the twentieth century, the US military has variously committed to elements of ‘stability operations’ and ‘counterinsurgency operations’ (COIN), which Jennifer Morrison Taw has recently illuminated so well (Morrison Taw, 2012a). Morrison Taw cites a number of important developments of COIN and stability operations strategy since the 1930s, including the publication of the US Marine Corps’ *Small Wars Operations* in 1935, the Civil Operations and Revolutionary (later Rural) Development Support (CORDS) programme during the Vietnam War, the publication of various US Army and Marine Corps manuals on COIN, low intensity conflict, stability operations and military policing during the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, and the establishment of the Commission on the Roles and Missions of the Armed Forces in 1994 (2012a, pages 14, 41-47). Other important initiatives more recently include the founding of the Joint Warfighting Center, the initiation of the Quadrennial Defense Review, the establishment of the Global Defense Posture Review and the publication of the joint US Army and Marine Corps COIN field manual. All of these developments have variously addressed the broadening deployment of US military force in late modern war.

In recent years, we have witnessed a firmer yet commitment on the part of the US military to specifically ‘stability operations’, which builds upon earlier doctrinal and operational iterations. Announcing for the first time in 2005 in a key Department of Defense (DoD) Directive (3000.05) that ‘stability operations’ were henceforth a “core U.S. military mission”, to be “given priority comparable to combat operations”, was significant for a number of reasons (US Department of Defense, 2005). At its most basic declaratory level, the directive assigned stability operations a military responsibility equal in status to offense and deterrence. A year later, the US military ceased from referring to operations as either “War” or “Military Operations Other Than War” (MOOTW), signalling, as I argue later, a new broader vision of what counts as war.¹ Directive 3000.05 was quickly buttressed too by a concomitant

⁽¹⁾ This distinction and the term and acronym MOOTW were officially declared discontinued by *Joint Publication 3-0, Joint Operations* (US Joint Chiefs of Staff, 2006, page iii). Thereafter, US military operations were divided into three major categories: (i) Major Operations and Campaigns; (ii) Crisis Response and Limited Contingency

broadening of additional DoD budgeting for stability operations – hundreds of millions of dollars – and this was matched by a simultaneous budgetary and programme extension of the Commander’s Emergency Response Program (CERP) in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, the US military has increasingly framed its stability operations doctrine via what Colleen Bell and Brad Evans term a “post-interventionary logic”, one marked by a “shift away from promoting reliance on military force towards advocating the use of security technologies that are capable of fashioning longer-term social cohesion and development” (2010, page 364). This logic is now clearly discernible in a range of government policy documents, military doctrine and more broadly military strategic thinking (for the latter, see, for example, RAND’s *War by Other Means* from 2008).

Through this paper, I explore a number of revised scriptings of DoD grand strategy respecting stability operations, along with interrogating the US military’s relevant operational laws and field manuals. Certainly, much of the US military’s current stability operations policy mirrors the relentless entwining of development and security issues in our contemporary moment – what Mark Duffield and others describe as the ‘development-security nexus’ (Duffield, 2001; cf Bachman, 2010; Reid-Henry, 2011). However, in addition to undoubtedly significant reference to ‘development’ concerns in recent stability operations doctrine, I want to divulge how such an emphasis continues to be superseded by longstanding military-economic security interests that centrally direct US interventionary practices overseas. I argue that stability operations, both in declared policy and operational practice, are neatly incorporated into a well-established mission of military-economic securitization, involving specific practices of military posturing and deterrence, and geoeconomic policing and regulation (Morrissey, 2011a). That said however, in the wider geopolitical and geoeconomic milieu of contemporary US interventionism, the US military sees a combination of both offensive and stability operations as key to the success of what it calls ‘full spectrum operations’ (US Department of the Army, 2009). In this context, stability operations are part of a broad discursive rationale for an ambitious US global forward presence that promises not only neoliberal correction for some of the world’s most volatile yet economically pivotal spaces, but correction too for the forms of illiberal ‘underdevelopment’ seen as a threat to the ‘Western way of life’ (Bell and Evans, 2010; Dillon and Reid, 2009; Duffield, 2007).

Operations; and (iii) Military Engagement, Security Cooperation, and Deterrence (US Army Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center, 2013, page 56).

2 The notional legal spectrum: stability operations in the war/law/space nexus

US global ambition is projected and facilitated by its military's global forward presence, and this must be enabled by a purposeful legal architecture sanctioning land, sea and air access, troop movement and conduct, rules of engagement and so on (Morrissey, 2011b). This is part of the 'geopolitics and biopolitics' combination that Michael Dillon (2007) sees as defining late modern war. One of the most instructive ways of considering how stability operations fit into the envisioning of US interventionism in late modern war is to examine how they have been legally framed and operationalized. On the opening page of the US military's *Operational Law Handbook*, we get a clear outlining of the central importance of *jus ad bellum*, "the law governing a state's resort to force": "[a]ny decision to employ force must rest upon the existence of a viable legal basis" (US Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center, 2013, page 1). Sanctioned military violence, in other words, must always work *through* the law. And indeed as Walter Benjamin noted nearly a century ago, there is also an essential "lawmaking character" inherent in military violence (1978, page 283). Benjamin's acutely observed aphorism can be usefully drawn upon to consider the 'operational' lawmaking character of the US military today – in its battlespaces, in its territorial, naval and aerial occupations, in its extraterritoriality, and in its adapted deployments of legal armatures in its range of military operations. This is part of the 'war/law/space nexus' that Craig Jones and Michael Smith have thoughtfully conceived as a guiding frame for this special issue's critique of late modern war (cf Blomley, 1989), and below I interrogate the US military's current 'operational law' to situate how stability operations fit within.

Military interventionary practices today rely upon a legal armature that anticipates, codifies and secures multiple manifestations of combat and non-combat environments (Gregory, 2010). For the US military, the primary reference point for the legal framing of its 'theatre of operations' is its *Operational Law Handbook*, updated and issued annually by the International and Operational Law Department at the Judge Advocate General's Legal Center in Charlottesville, Virginia. For 'stability operations', the 2013 handbook outlines the principal "sources of law" (pages 67-71), including UN Security Council Resolution 940, which mandates the use of "all necessary means" to "establish a secure and stable environment" (United Nations, 1994). It also references the 'law of war' (LOW), "the part of international law that regulates the conduct of armed hostilities", emphasising how it applies to "all armed conflicts, no matter how characterized, and in all other military operations" (US Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center, 2013, pages 11, 70). Elsewhere, the Judge Advocate General Corps (JAGC) makes the same point abundantly clear: that stability operations "do not

fundamentally differ from other types of operations” and that “the law of war applies” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-2).² This divulges a broader vision of what counts as contemporary war, what permissions apply, and ultimately that there are no longer military operations ‘other than war’ (this also ties in with the dropping of the legal distinction between ‘War’ and ‘MOOTW’ in 2006). All of this would indicate that stability operations do not trigger any specific set of legal modalities altogether different to how all US military operations are legally secured. Indeed, if one compares the US military’s Rules of Engagement (ROE) card for ‘major combat operations’ for Operation Iraqi Freedom (OIF) in 2003, with its revised ROE card for the ‘stability operations’ of OIF from 2005, they are much the same; both stipulating the authorisation of the use of force in the context of LOW, both emphasising the import of positive identification prior to engagement, and both warning against the targeting of “Iraqi Infrastructure”, “Lines of Communication” and “Economic Objects” (US Army Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center, 2013, pages 103-104).

For the specific protection of ‘fundamental human rights’ in US stability operations – a core concern one would think – there is no definitive legal ‘source list’ listed in the *Operational Law Handbook*. As a result, a range of legal guidance documents are variously referenced and invoked, including the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), Common Article III of the Geneva Conventions and the Third Restatement of the Foreign Relations Law of the United States. The US, however, “views the UDHR as aspirational, not obligatory” (US Army Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center, 2013, page 48); and this language of aspiration is perhaps part of a broader evasion strategy regarding the application of international human rights law – former White House Counsel Alberto Gonzales, for instance, led vociferous efforts to bypass Common Article III from the outset of the war on terror. Of the three legal sources listed above, the *Operational Law Handbook* underlines the US government’s own Third Restatement as the “most informative” on the protection of human rights. This is interesting for a number of reasons, not least of which is how the Third Restatement deviates from “traditionally acknowledged principles of international law”, as Kathleen Hixson (1988, page 128) highlighted soon after the Restatement was published in the late 1980s. As Hixson makes clear, the provisions within “fail to provide a precise outline of jurisdictional boundaries as generally accepted by the international community” (1988, page 128). She concludes that the

⁽²⁾ Published for the first time in 2009, the latest iteration of *Field Manual (FM) 1-04 Legal Support to the Operational Army* affirms that “[a]s it does with regard to all U.S. military operations, the law of war applies to stability operations”, and “[j]ust as stability operations do not fundamentally differ from other types of operations, the roles of JAGC personnel in stability operations do not fundamentally differ from the roles they fill in the conduct of offensive and defensive operations” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-2).

US government “must have a clear understanding of what is acceptable prescription in the international community”, and argues that its “excessive reliance” on the Third Restatement “will not further this end” (1988, page 151). Yet, it remains the “most informative” reference point for JAGC personnel respecting international law and the protection of fundamental human rights.³

Ultimately, within the current *Operational Law Handbook*, stability operations appear to be largely incorporated into a broad range of legal sources that can be variously referenced and deployed in the US military’s wide theatre of operations. In addition, what is arguably a key element of the conduct of late modern war is signalled within: what US military legal advisors instructively call the ‘notional legal spectrum’ of all their military interventions. And just like every other military intervention, stability operations are legally enabled somewhere along this spectrum, which the handbook vividly captures thus:

“U.S. forces enter other nations with a legal status that exists anywhere along a notional legal spectrum. The right end of that spectrum is represented by invasion followed by occupation. The left end of the spectrum is represented by tourism. [...] When the entrance can be described as invasion, the legal obligations and privileges of the invading force are based upon the list of straightforward rules found within the LOW. As the analysis moves to the left end of the spectrum and the entrance begins to look more like tourism, host nation law becomes increasingly important” (US Army Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center, 2013, page 68).

The idea of a ‘notional legal spectrum’ is an important discursive device to draw upon for the contemporary US military. A ‘notional legal spectrum’ can be productively referenced for a wide range of legal modalities underpinning a broad array of interventionary practices.⁴ It allows for the contingent, and it can facilitate the securitization (via multiple means) of the most broadly conceived ‘instability’. One can imagine how the pendulum above can quickly swing (exceptionally or otherwise) from left to right. Ontologically, this equates to the selective

⁽³⁾ The Third Restatement was first published by the American Law Institute in 1987 (updating the Second Restatement from 1965). It still remains to be updated, although the institute recently began working on the Fourth Restatement. After a period of exceptional and unrelenting US overseas interventions over the 25 years or more since, the institute is no doubt tasked with addressing a wide range of issues, not least of which is the recent commitment to ‘stability operations’ on an equal footing with offense and deterrence.

⁽⁴⁾ The US Army’s *FM 1-04 Legal Support to the Operational Army* declares that ‘stability operations’ “may be performed across the spectrum of conflict” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-1).

use of the law to both rationalize and mobilize military action. Throughout the *Operational Law Handbook*, there is little concrete signification of what stability operations precisely entail, nor is there any framing of their specific legal parameters. But perhaps this is a key dimension of the US military's broader legal strategy, which draws upon a complex mesh of existing engagement laws that are left to be 'variously deployed' in the field.⁵ Such a strategy is how to enable what could perhaps be best envisaged as 'full spectrum law'. Full spectrum law mirrors the blurring of distinctions between wartime and peacetime, and flexibly enables forms of corrective intervention that can be adaptively legally sanctioned. It is crucial to waging what Derek Gregory (2011) calls an "everywhere war", and to securitizing instability under the broadest rubric of "full spectrum operations" (US Department of the Army, 2009).

3 From full spectrum law to full spectrum operations

The gestation of 'full spectrum operations' goes back a long way in the US military. The concept mirrors a particular type of liberal imperial ambition and indeed echoes an even more ambitious concept in earlier US military doctrine: 'full spectrum dominance'. The modern-day orientation of full spectrum operations gathered particular momentum in August 2004, when the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS) was established in the US State Department. Although initiated with little media attention, some have argued that it signalled the beginnings of a wholesale re-envisioning of US interventionary responsibilities overseas (Morrison Taw, 2012a). S/CRS was set up in response to the US military's then difficulties of ensuring political and economic stability in Iraq and Afghanistan. The office was intended to liaise with all six combatant commands,⁶ and to forge close relationships with the core national institutions teaching military doctrine, such as the US Army War College, Naval Postgraduate School and National Defense University. Its original mission statement elaborates on its role in a broader US interventionism:

"The core mission of S/CRS is to lead, coordinate and institutionalize U.S. Government civilian capacity to prevent or prepare for post-conflict situations, and to help stabilize and reconstruct societies in transition from conflict or civil strife, so they can reach a

⁽⁵⁾ Such an assessment echoes the concerns of Kennedy, Weizman and others respecting the malleability of the 'legal' in declared military commitments to international law and more broadly humanitarian forms of interventionism (Kennedy, 2006; Weizman, 2009).

⁽⁶⁾ The six current regional US combatant commands are: US Africa Command (the most recently activated command in 2008); US Central Command (1983); US European Command (1952); US Northern Command (2002); US Pacific Command (1947); and US Southern Command (1963).

sustainable path toward peace, democracy and a market economy” (US Department of State, 2004).

The following year, in November 2005, the DoD issued Directive 3000.05, *Military Support for Stability, Security, Transition and Reconstruction (SSTR) Operations*, which outlined how the armed forces would proactively respond to the new vision of US foreign policy and its attendant requirements of a wider interventionary toolkit (US Department of Defense, 2005). Soon thereafter, US President George W. Bush issued National Security Presidential Directive/NSPD-44, *Management of Interagency Efforts Concerning Reconstruction and Stabilization*, which solidified the US government’s commitment to military stability operations (The White House, 2005). In NSPD-44, a broader politico-economic rationale and mission for stability operations is indicated:

“The United States has a significant stake in enhancing the capacity to assist in stabilizing and reconstructing countries or regions, especially those at risk of, in, or in transition from conflict or civil strife, and to help them establish a sustainable path toward peaceful societies, democracies, and market economies” (The White House, 2005, page 1).

The remit of securitizing political economy under the broad sign of ‘stability operations’ features even more prominently in the subsequent joint publication of the US Department of State and Joint Warfighting Centre on the emergent framework of US overseas reconstruction and stabilization strategy. In it, “American military power” is tasked with “vital roles” in the full spectrum of “peace, crisis, and conflict”, and the following economic mechanisms are underscored at length as “essential components” of intervention to be supported: “bilateral and multilateral economic relations”, the “commercial sector”, “trade”, “foreign direct investment”, “sanctions”, “regulatory frameworks”, and “policy towards international financial institutions” (US Department of State and US Joint Warfighting Center, 2005, pages 33-34). In support of these and other interventionary components under the umbrella of ‘stability operations’, the US government was not slow in committing additional DoD funding. Just over a month after Directive 3000.05 was issued, the National Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2006 (Section 1206) authorised the spending of up to \$200 million per annum by military commanders on the ground in the training and equipping of foreign military forces for stability operations and counter-insurgency (Congressional Research Service, 2008, page 2). This was increased to \$300 million the following year and \$500 million by 2011. All of this occurred in

addition to the initiation of the Commander's Emergency Response Program (CERP) in post-invasion Afghanistan and Iraq to "meet urgent humanitarian relief requirements or urgent reconstruction requirements" (US Army Judge Advocate General's Legal Center, 2013, page 238). Between 2004 and 2010, Congress approved almost \$4 billion for CERP in Iraq and over \$1.6 billion in Afghanistan (Morrison Taw, 2012a, page 133).⁷

As a legal-policy directive, Directive 3000.05 also assumes a certain organisational salience within the US military, and this appears to be playing out in military doctrine, education and training. At the Naval Postgraduate School in Monterey, California, for instance, the School of International Graduate Studies launched a new Center for Stabilization and Reconstruction Studies in late 2004, to complement its existing Center for Civil-Military Relations established 10 years earlier. They now offer dedicated curriculums on 'stabilization and reconstruction', 'strategic studies' and 'civil-military relations', and run MA and PhD programs in security studies comprising modules such as: 'War and its Impact on Post-Conflict Reconstruction'; 'Economic Development for Security Building'; and 'Stability Operations' (Naval Postgraduate School, 2013). Elsewhere, Air Force officers too are being increasingly equipped with expertise that overlaps economics, law and strategic studies (Air Force Academy, 2013). In terms of revised field operations, the Army and the Marine Corps jointly published their much heralded *Counterinsurgency* field manual in late 2006, which referenced at length the importance of stability operations in training and overseas interventions (US Army and US Marine Corps, 2006).⁸ And in 2008, the US Army published a new version (the first since the September 11th attacks in 2001) of its capstone doctrine, *Field Manual (FM) 3-0: Operations*, which outlined the new elevated role of stability operations. Soon thereafter, they published a follow-up manual specifically on stability operations, *FM 3-07: Stability Operations* (US Department of the Army, 2008a, 2008b).

It is worth considering in some detail the envisioning of stability operations in these two instructive US Army field manuals. *Operations* begins by declaring that not only is "America at war", but that "it should remain fully engaged for the next several decades in a persistent conflict against an enemy dedicated to U.S. defeat as a nation and eradication as a society" (US Department of the Army, 2008a, page viii). With this doomsday dystopia established, it then

⁽⁷⁾ Although some of these monies were used for the establishment of such initiatives as Provincial Reconstruction Teams, much of it ended up being used for buying short-term local security support (Patrick and Brown, 2007; Bachman, 2010).

⁽⁸⁾ In 2009, the Joint Chiefs of Staff published *Joint Publication 3-24: Counterinsurgency Operations* on behalf of the five core military branches of the DoD, the Army, Marine Corps, Navy, Air Force and Coast Guard. It was revised in November 2013.

sets out stability operations “as important as – or more important than – offensive and defensive operations”, and envisages ‘full spectrum operations’ as an historic and revolutionary shift from “an ‘either-or’ view of combat and other operations to an inclusive doctrine that emphasized the essentiality of nonlethal actions with combat actions” (US Department of the Army, 2008a, pages vii-viii). With the publication of *Operations*, the US Army formally adopted full spectrum operations as its new broader military doctrine, which it defined in its subsequent 2009 Posture Statement:

“Full spectrum operations apply combat power through simultaneous and continuous combinations of four elements: offense, defense, stability, and civil support. The Army must defeat enemies and simultaneously shape the civil situation through stability or civil support operations [...] The Army recognizes that the new century is characterized by ‘persistent conflict’ that will test Soldiers and the Nation for an unknown period” (US Department of the Army, 2009).

Presumably, one of the ways in which soldiers will be tested is in taking on the new responsibilities of full spectrum operations, such as “economic stabilization and infrastructure”, “restoring economic production and distribution” and “initiating market reform”, as outlined in *Operations* (US Department of the Army, 2008a, page 3-16). Throughout the course of the document, however, none of these responsibilities are detailed in any significant way.

In *Stability Operations*, the US Army’s broader mission “to generate ‘soft’ power to promote participation in government, spur economic development, and address the root causes of conflict among the disenfranchised populations of the world” is initially announced (US Department of the Army, 2008b, page C2). To this end, a “comprehensive approach to stability operations” is then proclaimed, which “integrates the tools of statecraft with our military forces, international partners, humanitarian organizations, and the private sector” – all in the name of an “American policy of internationalism” that “promotes political and economic freedom” (US Department of the Army, 2008b, pages C2, 1-10). Across six chapters, *Stability Operations* subsequently elaborates the US Army’s new doctrinal approach to stability operations. Although vague in detail throughout, the word ‘economic’ is the overwhelmingly dominant adjective describing stability operations and responsibilities, appearing over 200 times (and more than the combined total for ‘political’, ‘social’, ‘moral’, ‘ethical’ and ‘environmental’). Supporting “economic and infrastructure development”, furthermore, is outlined as one of five

“primary stability tasks”, the other four related tasks being “essential services”, “civil security”, “civil control” and “governance” (US Department of the Army, 2008b, chapter 3). In addition, the legal architectures of occupation and reconstruction are posited as critical, as “legal framework development makes the legal and regulatory changes necessary to enable organizations, institutions, and individuals at all levels and in all sectors to perform effectively and to build their capacities” (US Department of the Army, 2008b, pages 1-8, 1-9). The other point to note in *Stability Operations* is the positioning of ‘exceptional’ practices which further enable military intervention under “extreme circumstances” where, for example, “the host-nation government has failed completely or an enemy regime has been deposed”; in such a case, the “intervening authority has a legal and moral responsibility to install a transitional military authority” (US Department of the Army, 2008b, page 5-1).

Stability Operations begins with a bleak geopolitical envisioning involving necessary US military global leadership. A world replete with “societal abysses”, “precipitous divides” and a “fundamental clash of ideologies and cultures” is scripted for a future of “persistent conflict against enemies intent on limiting American access and influence throughout the world”; meanwhile, Global South development is effectively posited as a nuisance for the United States (US Department of the Army, 2008b, page vi). There are multiple Malthusian and Orientalist resonances here, of course, and these have long been mirrored in the abstracted and reductive geographical writing so common to Strategic Studies and defense policy institutes more generally (cf Morrissey et al, 2009). In the foreword to *Stability Operations*, Lieutenant General William Caldwell outlined the global security challenge facing the United States via the familiar register of the ‘long war’ against radical Islam: “we have been engaged in an epic struggle unlike any other in our history” and face “challenges of an uncertain future” in “an persistent conflict” (US Department of the Army, 2008b, page C2). A few months earlier, General William Wallace in his foreword to *Operations* began with a similar geopolitical formulation, priming once again the notion of “persistent conflict” and “protracted confrontation” (US Department of the Army, 2008a, page C2). With the ‘instability register’ successfully mobilised, Wallace then heralds the doctrinal shift to full spectrum operations as “a revolutionary departure” and a commitment to a new operational concept where “commanders employ offensive, defensive, and stability or civil support operations simultaneously” (US Department of the Army, 2008a, page C2). The discursive binary of identifying instability and promising anew its securitization is an old tactic of interventionism, of course. The US armed forces overseas have long been tasked with a remit of military-economic securitization, particularly in the Middle East via US Central Command

(CENTCOM). I have previously outlined the development of CENTCOM's neoliberal interventionary mission since the early 1980s and shown how it reveals a conjoined history of military and economic securitization, involving practices of deterrence, policing and regulation (Morrissey, 2011a; cf Palmer, 1992). I consider below some of the most recent imaginings of the deployment of the US military in this role globally and reflect on where stability operations are being envisaged therein.

4 Military and economic stability operations

Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership: Priorities for 21st Century Defense is the Obama administration's latest expression of US global strategic vision. It proclaims that in the aftermath of "large-scale, prolonged stability operations" in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States will increasingly "emphasize non-military means and military-to-military cooperation to address instability" (US Department of Defense, 2012, page 6). Securing 'instability', moreover, involves protecting US economic and security interests, orienting a focused geographic mission on what CENTCOM calls the 'Central Region', and championing a neoliberal global economic order that necessitates securitization military force:

"U.S. economic and security interests are inextricably linked to developments in the arc extending from the Western Pacific and East Asia into the Indian Ocean region and South Asia [...] The maintenance of peace, stability, the free flow of commerce, and of U.S. influence in this dynamic region will depend in part on an underlying balance of military capability and presence [...] The United States will continue to make the necessary investments to ensure that we maintain regional access and the ability to operate freely in [...] a rules-based international order that ensures underlying stability" (US Department of Defense, 2012, page 2).

The US role, furthermore, in policing the "global commons" and enabling "economic growth and commerce" is also laid out:

"[The US] will seek to protect freedom of access throughout the global commons – those areas beyond national jurisdiction that constitute the vital connective tissue of the international system" US Department of Defense, 2012, page 3).

A broader commitment to commerce and its securitization is evident elsewhere too. An additional 2012 national security document, *National Strategy for Global Supply Chain Security*, published by the White House is a case in point. The document is shot through with an unambiguous binding of ‘economy’ and ‘security’, and a rejection of “the false choice between security and efficiency” (The White House, 2012, page 2; cf Harcourt, 2012). Extensively registered too are universalist calls for partnerships “with state, local, and tribal governments, the private sector, and the international community” – to realise “our shared goal of building a new framework to strengthen and protect this vital [global economic] system” (The White House, 2012, page C3). And once again we get a firm intermeshing of military and economic security logics:

“while the security of our citizens and our nation is the paramount concern, we must work to promote America’s future economic growth and international competitiveness by remaining open for businesses to the world” (The White House, 2012, page 6).

The ‘security’ and ‘economic’ interests equation is not new, of course, and dates back to at least the immediate post-WW2 era and the signing of the Roosevelt-Aziz pact, which I have documented elsewhere (Morrissey, 2009). The conjoined military-economic national security discourse became solidified in the aftermath of a series of crises threatening the free flow of oil in the 1970s, and culminated in the emergence of the ‘Rapid Deployment Force’ concept in late 1979. Subsequent to the enunciation of the Carter doctrine in January 1980, a new responsibility was tasked to the US military in protecting US interests in the Persian Gulf region. The Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force was established in March 1980, and in 1983 became a unified command, CENTCOM. CENTCOM’s annual posture statements (delivered by the command’s head each year to the Senate Armed Services Committee) have consistently presented a focused military-economic securitization strategy ever since. Its current envisioning of its role in the Middle East by Commander General James Mattis underlines once again what will centrally “keep U.S. attention anchored in this region”: “oil and energy resources that fuel the global economy” (US Central Command, 2013). A notable departure in Mattis’ presentation to the Senate Armed Services Committee this year, however, was his signalling of the fiscal restraints within which the DoD are operating and his acknowledging of a broader interagency approach to US interventionism overseas:

“U.S. Central Command’s approach – working in tandem with the State Department and other agencies through a whole of government approach – is to protect our interests using fewer military resources in an era of fiscal restraint and political change” (US Central Command, 2013).

CENTCOM’s primary role in militarily policing and protecting the ‘global economy’ remains, however, and signalling a ‘whole of government’ approach to that end reads as merely an additional rhetorical justification for a universalist neoliberal mission. CENTCOM has not deviated from its long-established remit of ‘shaping’ the political economy of its ‘area of responsibility’, the energy rich region of the Persian Gulf and Central Asia – enabled by the most extensive overseas basing structure of any nation in history (Morrissey, 2011b). From its inception, CENTCOM has consistently relied upon a common-sense understanding of the use of western interventionary force to guard against threat and political economic instability. In what is now a proliferated discourse of military-economic securitization, CENTCOM’s presence in the Middle East, including of course its interventionary violence, assumes both a regulative and generative function in the international economic system (Morrissey, 2011a). For this key notion of ‘generative’ interventionism, stability operations can, of course, be usefully incorporated. The JAGC, for instance, advises its judge advocates in the field that stability operations primarily involve establishing “essential services, economic and infrastructure development, and governance” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 5-4).

As I have outlined elsewhere, the contemporary US military’s overseas mission is discursively built upon a well registered risk-securitization equation, which firmly binds military concerns with economic concerns, and works to justify interventionary force for two key ends: to militarily combat and deter threat, volatility and instability; and to enable, regulate and stabilize a free market system for the good of the global economy (Morrissey, 2011a; cf Dalby, 2009; Neocleous, 2008; Williams, 2007). In the preface to *Sustaining U.S. Global Leadership*, US President Barack Obama invokes a common temporal and geopolitical register synonymous with the US military at this point: the notion of an ‘uncertain future’ and the US military’s necessary role in securing it. Obama speaks of a “moment of transition” in which the US is endeavouring to “end today’s war”, “reshape [the] Armed Forces”, and ensure that they are “agile, flexible, and ready for the full range of contingencies” (US Department of Defense,

2012, page iii).⁹ And despite the Budget Control Act of 2011, Obama is adamant in outlining America's prioritised and enduring national security interests, which are explicitly tied to economic interests:

“We seek the security of our Nation, allies and partners. We seek the prosperity that flows from an open and free international economic system” (US Department of Defense, 2012, page iii).

What is less clear is what he means when he speaks of the “tools of American power, including diplomacy and development” that must be strengthened to this end, in meeting future security challenges that “cannot be the work of the military alone” (US Department of Defense, 2012, page iii). Is this largely rhetorical given the enduring primacy of ‘military-economic’ stability operations for US interventionism overseas, as affirmed far more centrally in the key national security strategy documents of his administration? In this context, how do we read declarations to support diplomatic and development practices from the State Department, US Agency for International Development (USAID) and elsewhere? Lisa Bhunghalia (2012) has shown how USAID, established under the shadow of the Cold War in 1961, can in many ways be viewed as an “early articulation of the shift towards a “population-centric” approach to counterinsurgency”, and this interventionary tactic has been firmly fused into US military strategy in its long war on terror. The blending of security and development concerns is not new, of course, in either the US military or more broadly (cf Bell and Evans, 2010; Duffield, 2001; Essex, 2013). But apart from the rhetorical power of mapping and legitimating a broader field of interventionism long into our ‘uncertain future’, does the US even have the capacity to conduct the kind of ‘full-spectrum’ military-led stability operations it has increasingly advocated?

5 Austerity, efficiency and stability operations as ‘war by other means’

⁽⁹⁾ Such developments were well underway at this point, of course. Indeed, one can trace the transition from traditional division and battalion organisation to elite, mobile small units (such as those of Joint Special Operations Command today) to the early 1980s and the development of the ‘rapid deployment’ concept (see Scahill, 2013; cf Record, 1981).

One of the underlying reasons for the US military's reimagining of its interventionary remit to explicitly include 'stability operations' appears to be the budgetary pressures of post-crisis austerity and an aversion to large-scale military engagements such as Afghanistan and Iraq. Like every other government department, the DoD has been inflected by new public management discourses seeking to drive increased economic efficiencies in a period of tighter government spending (Phillips and Corcoran, 2011). Certainly, the DoD is under pressure to justify its budget requests and its enormous conventional warfare capacity, and questions are being asked of the alternative employments of the military's toolkit for a broader set of US security interests (Flournoy, 2013; Morrison Taw, 2012b). Indeed, it has been keen of late to demonstrate value for money and efficiency, through both its acquisition of services and supplies and through its operations. Recent notable expansions of the employment of resources at the Defense Acquisition University are a case in point (Defense Acquisition University, 2013). The DoD's increased budgetary efficiency, moreover, has been heralded as a security imperative by various commentators; it is typically reported vis-à-vis a persuasive discourse that neatly binds rapid acquisition with flexible force deployment, with the endgame of enhanced security capabilities (cf Romero, 2012; Vinch, 2012; Weigelt, 2009). Notwithstanding such claims of increased budgetary efficiency, and with due recognition of the Budget Control Act of 2011, it is important to remember, however, that the US military's 2012 budget still exceeded the combined total for the next 17 highest spending nations. In fact, its defense budget accounts for "approximately 43 percent of total global defense outlays" (Morrison Taw, 2012b). This, of course, raises the question of the most efficient employment of such a massively funded and staffed arm of government. As Jennifer Morrison Taw points out, policymakers in Washington are increasingly hoping to utilise "a tool at their disposal that gives them a long reach, extensive manpower, and a broad built-in skill set", whilst simultaneously appearing oblivious to any danger in seeing the military as "an all-purpose foreign policy instrument" (2012b).

Some US politicians have echoed Morrison Taw's concerns on Capitol Hill. US Senator Ted Kaufman, for instance, has argued for "a stronger civilian capacity to engage in counterinsurgency alongside the military", and has variously pressed the US government to make the necessary structural changes in the national security budget to "provide the State Department with more flexible and discretionary funding streams" (Kaufman and Berman, 2010, pages 175-176; Kaufman was serving as Chair of the short-lived Congressional Oversight Panel at the time of writing). For Kaufman, the US government "cannot afford to think of national security only in military terms", it must instead integrate its "civilian and

military capacities” and take on the key challenge of “interagency cooperation” and the “discrepancy between the size of civilian and military staffs” (he underlines that there are nearly 100,000 US troops in Afghanistan while there are barely 1000 diplomats and development professionals; Kaufman and Berman, 2010, pages 175-176). Congressman Howard Berman too has argued for a rebalanced budgeting of US foreign policy, asserting that it is “civilian, not military, forces – principally the U.S. Agency for International Development – that should lead in this regard, and it must be strengthened so that it can do so” (Kaufman and Berman, 2010, pages 175-176).

The political and academic concerns outlined above have raised significant questions about the US military’s competencies in effectively leading stability operations that include broadly ‘development’ concerns. The evidence, indeed, points to a serious shortfall of such capacity within the US military, despite the shift in rhetoric, doctrine and training of recent years. In 2009, the US Army’s RAND Arroyo Center conducted a study to “determine what U.S. government departments and agencies are best suited as lead and/or supporting agent in executing individual post-conflict reconstruction tasks” (cited in Liddick and Anderson, 2011, page 10). For fifty-four sectorized tasks (as identified by the then functioning Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization), the DoD was determined “not to be an appropriate sole lead or sole supporting agent for any of them” (cited in Liddick and Anderson, 2011, page 14). The report concludes that the DoD is “in a position of trying to move the interagency collaborative process forward and simultaneously planning in case it fails” (RAND, 2009, page xiv). The latter, of course, increases the likelihood of bringing about that very effect, and deters efforts to enable interagency cooperation.

A key 2011 paper from the Simons Center for the Study of Interagency Cooperation further highlights the chronic deficiencies of civilian agency capability in efforts to support the US military. Citing the incapacities of the Office of the Coordinator for Reconstruction and Stabilization (S/CRS), the authors stress how the U.S. government is as a result “in a continued state of ill preparedness”, as the DoD lacks “the necessary skill sets to execute the majority of reconstruction and stabilization tasks” (Liddick and Anderson, 2011, page 14). They point to the Obama administration’s initiation of the first ever Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review (QDDR) in 2009 (designed to review existing US diplomacy and development tools) as an exercise mostly in rhetoric, arguing that, although “since 2008, Secretary of Defense Gates has championed the cause to create civilian reconstruction and stabilization capacity, and Secretary Clinton has been in complete agreement”, the first QDDR (completed in December 2010) does “not provide clarification” on even how S/CRS would be

“encompassed” into the new Bureau of Conflict and Stabilization Operation (CSO)¹⁰ (Liddick and Anderson, 2011, pages 16, 17). They conclude with a now familiar and rather despondent plea: “it is fundamental that Congress as a whole acknowledge in word and deed that civilian reconstruction and stabilization capacity is a critical national security issue” (2011, page 17).

Liddick and Anderson are far from alone in their concerns that not enough resourcing of the State Department and USAID is occurring to offer the United States the necessary expertise and civilian-military balance in overseas stability operations and more broadly development practice. Important critiques of the US military’s ‘mission creep’ have come from both academic sources and from within the US government and military (Flournoy, 2013; Goodwin, 2009; Kaufman and Berman, 2010; Morrison Taw, 2012b).¹¹ Stewart Patrick and Kaysie Brown at the Center for Global Development question the DoD’s “growing aid role” beyond the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, which they argue “carries potentially significant risks, by threatening to displace or overshadow broader U.S. foreign policy and development objectives in target countries and exacerbating the longstanding imbalance between the military and civilian components of the U.S. approach to state-building” (Patrick and Brown, 2007, page i). They too underline the failure of Congress to “invest adequately in civilian capabilities”, pointing to the “disappointing fate of the S/CRS office” in failing to “secure adequate resources to make a tangible difference on the ground in war-torn countries and to command respect within the U.S. government” (Patrick and Brown, 2007, page 3). Separately, Patrick had earlier drawn attention to the lack of genuine government interagency cooperation with respect to USAID’s ‘fragile states’ strategy, which “won little support from other, more influential departments” (Patrick, 2007, page 1). In any case, USAID’s approach to fragile states is, in Patrick’s view, overly focused on security concerns to the detriment of development concerns, a critique echoed in the recent work of Lisa Bhunghalia on USAID’s counterinsurgency approach in contemporary Palestine (Bhunghalia, 2012).

Others have warned of the all-too-encompassing liberal peacebuilding policy of ‘bringing democracy’ to fragile or post-conflict states, where “rapid democratization and marketization” can quickly lead to “destabilizing effects” (Wiharta, Melvin and Avezov, 2012, page 17). And debates on the most effective use of the US military in stability operations

⁽¹⁰⁾ In November 2011, the State Department announced the creation of CSO, which incorporated S/CRS.

⁽¹¹⁾ Even the US military’s *Operational Law Handbook* specifically cautions against mission creep, instructing JAGC personnel in the field to be aware of “color of money” issues, to “help the commander stay in his lane”, and to “not presume DoD/DoS [State Department] synchronization” (US Army Judge Advocate General’s Legal Center, 2013, page 460).

continue to feature in Washington. On 17 June 2013, the DC-based think tanks, *American Security Project* and *Development Transformations* hosted a panel discussion on US stability operations post-Afghanistan. Nick Lockwood, *Development Transformation's* Director of International Operations, observed that “particularly in a time of great austerity” agencies defer to “what they’re good at”, and therefore that it is no surprise to see the US military’s focus remaining on national security threats (American Security Project, 2013). Despite all the rhetoric of civilian-military interagency cooperation, Lockwood concluded that “realistically military organizations will continue to conduct a majority of stability operations, given their size and resources relative to civilian agencies”. Lt. Gen. Frank Kearney III, US Marine Corps (Ret.) acknowledged that “we really don’t have a national strategy” for stability operations, citing the absence of a coherent campaign plan for Afghanistan from 2001 to 2009, in particular (American Security Project, 2013). And Howard Clark, a former marine intelligence officer, speaking from his experiences in Afghanistan, rejected “the idea of traditional stability operations altogether”, highlighting three key problems: first, that the “Western presence alone causes instability and motivates extremism”; secondly, that “money from U.S. contracts ends up in Taliban hands and fuels perceptions of corruption”; and, thirdly, that “foreign agencies cannot truly understand what local stability means” (American Security Project, 2013).

As the US military emerges from protracted wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, there has been widespread touting of an “inflection point” that demands that America responds to the “changing geopolitical environment” (US Department of Defense, 2012, page 1). Jennifer Morrison Taw argues that the real lessons from Afghanistan and Iraq should be for the United States to “avoid these kinds of operations altogether and seek more cost-effective, constructive, and long-term means of influencing the international environment in ways conducive to protecting American interests” (2012a, page 6). More recently, former Under Secretary of Defense (2009-2012), Michèle Flournoy, gave an instructive talk at Princeton on ‘sustaining U.S. global leadership in a time of austerity’. She outlined the “tough choices” needed to “maintain the foundations of U.S. power and influence”, arguing for continued US global economic leadership (Flournoy, 2013). For this declared endgame, Flournoy emphasised the gradual moves within the military to partner with other government agencies, but conceded the “limited success” ultimately of interagency cooperation on stability operations. The persistent imbalance of funding and personnel between the DoD “on steroids” and State Department “on

life support” is the key factor here, of course.¹² “There are more military band members than there are foreign service officers”, Flournoy quipped in her conclusion, bringing into sharp relief a picture of where the emphasis of US interventionary power lies today.

Yet, to conclude analysis by lamenting how the US government’s capacity to do effective stability operations is limited by its imbalanced resourcing of the DoD and State Department/USAID would be to miss a key point, which is that stability operations – their function, their degree of success and their place within the legal spectrum of military interventionism – are understood more broadly by the US military. Stability operations are envisaged by the US military as forming a constituent part of a wider strategy of military-economic securitization, replete with a familiar universalist discourse of improvement:

“Stability operations are an essential component of any campaign seeking to successfully resolve conflict through prosperity rather than military conquest” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-1).

Legally, furthermore, “JAGC personnel cannot clearly distinguish their support to stability operations from their support to other types of operations”, precisely because they can be performed across the full “spectrum of conflict” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-1). And indeed, a revealing directive of the JAGC to US armed forces in the field is to see stability operations as playing a “major role in irregular warfare, in conditions that require a flexible approach to conducting a mix of stability, offensive, and defensive operations” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-2). Stability operations, in other words, entail war by other, more flexible means.

6 Conclusion

⁽¹²⁾ The 2009 Fiscal Year (FY) budget for the DoD was \$664 billion, while the FY 2009 combined budget for the State Department/USAID was \$54 billion – a ratio of over 12 to 1 (Goodwin, 2009). The ratio remained at over 12 to 1 for FY 2013 (US Department of Defense, 2013, page 1-3; US Department of State, 2013, page 1).

“Legitimacy is a principle central to all stability operations. JAGC personnel are well versed in the relationship between legitimacy and operations, including combat operations. Law connects the government to the people” (US Department of the Army, 2013, page 9-2).

In 2005, DoD Directive 3000.05 concluded that ‘stability operations’ should be “conducted to help establish order that advances U.S. interests and values”, with the long-term goal being to help “develop indigenous capacity for securing essential services, a viable market economy [and] rule of law” (US Department of Defense, 2005). This broad political economic and legal interventionary rationale involves a number of outlined tasks under the remit of stability operations, including: rebuilding “judicial systems necessary to secure and stabilize the environment”; reviving “the private sector, including encouraging citizen-driven, bottom-up economic activity and constructing necessary infrastructure”; and “promoting freedom, the rule of law, and an entrepreneurial economy” (US Department of Defense, 2005). The emphasised tasks above, though in some senses aspirational, nevertheless reveal key aspects of the war/law/space nexus of late modern war, and how the US military is being directed to engage. They make clear the import of the legal geographies of both occupation and post-occupation, they divulge a prominently functioning dual logic of economic intervention and correction, and they reveal an intricate conflation of the ‘legal’ and the ‘economic’ in the liberal conduct of war in our contemporary moment.

When we deconstruct the legal-policy architecture of the US government’s recent revised commitment to stability operations and interagency diplomatic and development practices, three things become clear: first, the commitment is not backed up by resourcing either the State Department or USAID, but rather the DoD, whose expertise in development is questionable and whose use of additional monies many see as a stopgap for local security needs rather than for any integrated long-term development projects; secondly, stability operations are not governed by a distinct and separate set of legal parameters but rather are incorporated into a broader legal strategy in which ‘full spectrum operations’ are enabled along a ‘notional legal spectrum’ that ontologically rationalizes and allows for multiple contingencies and effectively secures ‘full spectrum law’; and thirdly, the declared ‘development’ concerns of stability operations appear to be seamlessly absorbed into a well-established broader military-economic logic of security, involving specific mechanisms of legal and economic correction and regulation. Perhaps above all else, the discourse of ‘stability operations’ gives the US military a wider set of security responsibilities in the ‘correction’ of underdevelopment via the

construction and regulation of the legal and economic architectures necessary for a functioning neoliberal global economy.

The doctrinal shift that took place in the US military from 2005 onwards presents a set of intriguing questions about where stability operations fit into the war/law/space nexus of our contemporary moment. I have argued that the broader US government's avowed securitization of instability has been underscored with a familiar presence, the fusion of military and economic security logics, and a familiar absence, a concerted rebalancing of the resourcing of military and civilian interventionary capacities. The latter seems unlikely to radically change despite repeated but arguably marginalised political and academic pleas, while the former remains at the heart of US grand strategy and features centrally in the stability operations that have emerged in recent years. In the spaces of contemporary US interventionism, there may well be an acknowledged 'whole of government approach' to stability operations but the wider securitization mission is still largely centred on military deterrence and economic stabilization. Underdevelopment concerns fall within. In the US military's 'era of persistent conflict', and its ubiquitous discourse of securing instability, we may mostly be witnessing a broader discursive reworking of longstanding military-economic stability operations.

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