
Post-Conflict Intervention Revisited: Relief, Reconstruction, Rehabilitation, and Reform

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Legislative and administrative efforts to better manage U.S.-led operations in Afghanistan and Iraq have led to a broader reassessment of stabilization and reconstruction missions in conflict-prone countries. Harsh realities such as violent attacks, badly broken infrastructure, mounting frustration with occupiers over insecurity, lack of basic services, and unemployment necessitate a rethinking of international interventions. As frontline states in the war on terrorism, Afghanistan and Iraq have been compared to earlier quagmires on the front lines in the Cold War. In such complex emergencies involving belligerent forces, humanitarian missions have been repeatedly subsumed by security fears and guided by naive assumptions about economic development and civil society assistance. The reconstruction paradigm, which should have been shaped by the experience of costly Balkan interventions of the 1990s, instead risks repeating the unrealistic expectations of the 1960s and 1970s in Indochina. While violence, mismanagement, and logistical bottlenecks will continue to hinder post-conflict interventions in failed states, the varied approaches and assumptions currently associated with relief, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reform need to be reconsidered at the interagency and intergovernmental levels if missions are to achieve even modest objectives.

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INTERVENTION REVISITED

Post-World War II interventions in Japan and Germany were remarkable on many counts—from the unprecedented generosity of the United States to the stunning economic recovery of the devastated societies. Postwar missions in Japan and Germany represented transformations that resulted in democratic, peaceful, and economically thriving societies. War was indeed hell, but it could lead to a brighter future, shaped by bold interveners and appreciative recipients.¹

A half-century later, after such disparate crises in Somalia, Bosnia, Haiti, Kosovo, and East Timor, a well-thumbed set of post-Cold War intervention blueprints now sits on the shelves of United Nations and donor assistance offices: these contrast sharply with plans drawn up by the victors of World War II. The post-conflict interventions of the 1990s seemed to be naively designed as variations of a relief-to-development model that dated back to the 1960s, when experts boldly predicted that foreign assistance would pave the way toward self-sustained economic growth and democratic governance. In northern Iraq (1991-1996), Somalia (1992-1995), Bosnia (1992-1995), Haiti (1993-1996), Rwanda (1994-1995), and other war-ravaged countries, however, brutal militias and the local rejection of armed outside interventions solidified the division and failure of states.² In Bosnia and Kosovo, coldly calculated ethnic cleansing and an international desire to maintain peace above all else have resulted in UN-administered ethnic segregation. In East Timor, the UN successfully launched a democratic, if still impoverished government, thanks largely to a magnanimous neighbor, Australia; not to mention the small and well-managed transitional administration led by the talented Sergio Vieira de Mello (later killed in Baghdad in August 2003), which resulted in notable progress in nation-building.

The UN Security Council (UNSC) recognized in the 1990s that civil war-ravaged countries might require harder-edged “Chapter VII” efforts to assist abused civilians at the mercy of brutal militias.³ But peacekeeping, let alone peacemaking or peace-building, quickly lost much of its earlier luster, as blue helmets were humiliated at the Srebrenica massacre, evacuated out of Kigali as hundreds of thousands were hacked to death, and unable to even engage in Chechnya to curb the carnage there. Belligerents often view peacekeepers, once the proud vanguard of the UN’s commitment to neutral justice and security, as inherently biased and incapable of implementing ambitious mandates.⁴

As traditional justifications for UN-led interventions—such as provision of relief and protection of refugees—declined in importance, humanitarian agencies began to rely on other moral reasons for intervention: human rights, especially after the discovery of mass graves in Bosnia and Kosovo; prosecution of political leaders as war criminals responsible for ethnic violence and regional instability; and promotion of democratic nation-building in areas not accustomed to its

complicated and potentially polarizing processes.⁵ The ambitious “responsibility to protect” still requires the protection of interveners alongside the victims, yet peacekeepers and relief workers continue to be deployed to dangerous places ill-equipped, ill-trained, and ill-informed about what is going on around them.⁶

In the 1990s, the UNSC raised the bar on justice for victims by initiating international criminal tribunals for the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda, which tried and occasionally sentenced perpetrators of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and genocide, despite only grudging cooperation from the states involved.⁷ However, even with these war crime tribunals and universal condemnation of appalling violence in places such as the Congo, Sierra Leone, and Liberia, the international tendency at the beginning of the new millennium is still to protect sovereignty first, interveners second, and victims third.⁸ This risk-averse prioritization will likely remain fixed for future interventions, which makes nation-building problematic from the outset.

NATION-BUILDING IN FAILED STATES

As U.S. Secretary of State Colin Powell has argued, the destruction of the Twin Towers changed the political dynamics of coalition-led interventions. This crisis underscored a requirement for strategic partnerships beyond the war on terrorism.⁹ Even with international commitments to implement nation-building, debate continues in capitals and at the UNSC on the fate of so-called ungovernable areas. In one corner, nation-building will still be derided as hopeless in places where “ancient” ethnic animosities and cruel dictators guarantee recurring civil warfare. In the other, development agencies will still hold out the promise of civil society in places where the masses have known only tyranny. Reality will be somewhere in between. Once considered noble and neutral, UN-led operations will continue to be criticized for being a willing part of the problem rather than the solution, calling into question the role and purpose of humanitarian agencies accused of encouraging local dependency on international aid and allowing themselves to be manipulated by both local warlords and major powers.¹⁰

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A 2003 RAND study of U.S.-led nation-building from World War II to present suggests that multilateral interventions, while logistically complicated, tend to yield more lasting political transformations than unilateral efforts.¹¹ They do, however, require a significant investment in resources and personnel, as well as a shared vision of goals. Neighbors to the conflict-crippled state must also cooperate if nation-building is to have a chance. Lastly, interveners should plan on staying awhile—at least five years. Those lessons have proven hard to learn and harder still to apply as governments repeat past mistakes and struggle to define and implement their post-conflict goals and duties.

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Other “lessons learned” studies have also concluded that intervention assumptions and approaches need to be reevaluated continually if interveners are to win not just the violent war but also the problematic peace.¹² Contingency planning always runs the risk of making preparations based on the last war rather than the next, or assuming that the most recent humanitarian crisis will be replicated in the same form. This never happens. Past interventions, both distant

and recent, underscore that the international community can expect future interventions to be similarly confounding.¹³ Thus, lessons learned from the anti-terrorism and military-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq may have little relevance for future humanitarian crises if such efforts do not also take on the challenge of reacting to regional tyrants or global terrorists. Without such compelling targets in the global war on terrorism, will interventions revert back to tepid relief programs that feed the children, but don’t rock the boat?

Consider Zimbabwe, where the combination of an AIDS pandemic, government mismanagement, increasing poverty, and declining agricultural productivity represents a multi-symptomatic and intensive emergency. A repressive regime has caused widespread suffering among its citizens without being perceived as a regional threat or sponsor of terrorism. Under such conditions in failing regions, idealistic UN-mandated interventions appear futile when juxtaposed with the unforgiving reality of everyday life in a failed state. Several factors suggest that even modest relief goals may be too optimistic in these states, let alone the more ambitious goal of nation-building.¹⁴ Among the problems are inadequate levels of donor support for troubled countries; ineffective security; misunderstanding of what is required locally and nationally; failure to appreciate the limits of outside actors and the importance of the rule of law; and poor intervention management.

Francis Fukuyama argues that, while nation-building is still considered politically suspect, the national interest of intervening in failed, or rapidly failing, states to prevent transnational terrorism requires a different type of engagement—one that begins early with interagency and intergovernmental planning, has the resources to do what is needed, and stays the course until self-governance is achieved.¹⁵ Such an ambitious response to failed states and terrorism, though, will likely continue to be stillborn, even when a growing army of lawyers, policemen, engineers, and administrators accompany relief workers, peacekeepers, and development experts. Predictable intervention failures stem from an underlying conceptual failure to grasp chronic conditions, shifting vulnerabilities, and moral quandaries of humanitarian crises.¹⁶ Effective interventions must thus adopt a multifaceted and aggressive approach to confront immediate food, medicine, and shelter shortages that require urgent relief; infrastructure and economic market collapses that demand robust reconstruction; ethnic-based trauma, violence, and alienation that call for cultural rehabilitation; and government corruption, crime, and inequities that necessitate fundamental reform.

ANTI-TERRORISM INTERVENTIONS

If the 1960s to 1980s are considered to be the era of anti-communist interventions and the 1990s to be the era of anti-war crime interventions, then are we now in a new era of anti-terrorist interventions?¹⁷ If so, what does this basis for coalition partnerships mean for preemptive efforts to win the hearts and minds of potential terrorist supporters? It may mean that the new era of wars against various terrorists—wars that differ fundamentally from civil wars or inter-state wars—requires a robust strategy to deal with the identity politics that underlie specific terrorist actions as well as hidden support networks.¹⁸

In this new era, “ungovernable areas” in need of assistance are more likely to be candidates for aggressive humanitarian interventions if they host terrorist groups than if they host only war victims. Relief agencies have long argued that intervening in unstable, poor countries is beneficial indirectly to the citizens of stable, rich countries by contributing to regional security and even international trade. Now they can claim in addition that terrorism-driven humanitarian interventions directly support homeland security because relief operations are part of an integrated strategy to eliminate a pervasive terrorist threat emanating from failing states. Under this broader policy umbrella, new humanitarian interveners will be tasked with helping to attack those responsible for terrorism in addition to feeding babies, giving vaccinations, holding fair elections, rebuilding communities, policing streets, and training bureaucrats.¹⁹ If, however, international security is the primary justification for an intervention, then what defines a successful mission—a self-supporting and healthy populace, a democratically elected regime, a stable and peaceful region, or the elimination of a terrorist group? Must it be all of these?²⁰

Difficult nation-building operations are therefore no longer just “soft” altruistic humanitarian missions led by UN civil servants but part of “hard” anti-terrorism security operations led by generals.²¹ Studies on peacekeeping missions of the past decade have helped set the debate over the appropriate roles of civilian and military entities engaged in non-permissive environments where there exists an active, local resistance to foreign interveners.²² The logic of attempting to deny terrorists their support network through reconstruction and nation-building, for example, has been met with skepticism about means and ends, harkening back to failed “pacification” campaigns in Vietnam. Ongoing missions in Afghanistan and Iraq also suggest that, once again, coalition soldiers are caught in the contentious zone between pursuing “bad guys” (read communists, war criminals, or terrorists) and being obstructed by foreigner-wary locals.²³

Despite their profound differences in almost all aspects of relief and even reconstruction needs, Afghans and Iraqis do share a legacy of British occupation and a distrust of imposed nation-building.²⁴ The UN Assistance Mission for Afghanistan (UNAMA) is charged with that effort in Kabul and the Coalition Provisional Authority (CPA) was tasked with that goal in Baghdad. While “reconstruction” is the common term for the ambitious civilian-led aspects of these interventions, that banner may oversell what is achievable in both countries. Although both countries are early in their respective transitions, persistent violence in Afghanistan and Iraq suggests steep, deeply rutted roads ahead for coalition partners. Even with new donor support pledged at the March 2004 Berlin Conference (reportedly \$8.2 billion over three years), Afghanistan will remain, for the foreseeable future, one of the world’s poorest countries, weakened politically by inter-ethnic clashes, destabilized by tensions between Kabul and the outer provinces, and corrupted economically by illegal opium exports.²⁵ Iraq, with vast oil reserves, should eventually become better off and perhaps even democratic, but must also cope, as does Afghanistan, with tribal factionalism and theocratic influences. While more centralized than Afghanistan, Iraq faces more immediate structural and governance challenges to the creation of an integral state that will impede its long-term economic development.

In both countries, initial relief efforts evolved quickly into reconstruction programs, which were riddled by growing frustrations among donors, interveners, and intended beneficiaries. Overlapping missions of military forces on the one hand and civilian officials on the other compounded operational confusion. Within the same agency, civilians are themselves divided into different relief and development arenas, and they are often reluctant to mingle in the gray area that defines most complex emergencies. Even if red tape and turf battles are resolved through better interagency and intergovernmental planning and coordination, “realistic” war-fighters will thus likely have just as much trouble with future civil-military nation-building as their “idealistic” relief-worker counterparts.²⁶

DECONSTRUCTING RECONSTRUCTION

The CPA's efforts in Baghdad and UNAMA's efforts in Kabul feature both common concerns and growing resentments arising from unmet expectations among the occupied. While most Iraqis did not face imminent starvation following the coalition *blitzkrieg* they were surrounded by crumbling infrastructure, cowed by the vestiges of a brutal regime, and dependent upon an oil-for-food funded system. Determining what should and should not be reconstructed thus proved highly political.²⁷ Drought- and war-ravaged Afghanistan did face an ongoing humanitarian crisis, but, as in Iraq, donors also pledged to support ambitious programs to repair destroyed infrastructure.²⁸ Like Iraq, Afghanistan has volatile tribalism and insurgents. Unlike Iraq, however, it has no welfare system for the masses.

A 2003 Iraq Reconstruction Assessment Mission of the Center for Strategic and International Studies offered several observations that suggested reconstruction as only part of the postwar equation: public safety needs to be provided throughout the country; Iraqis need to be given "ownership of the rebuilding process;" jobs must be generated and basic services restored; decision making must be decentralized; "the Coalition must facilitate a profound change in the Iraqi national frame of mind;" a broader "reconstruction coalition" needs to be mobilized; and, of course, more money and funding flexibility are needed.²⁹ What is striking about these recommendations is that they go far beyond what is traditionally viewed as relief and development and move instead into the realm of behavioral change, advocating a fundamental change in the way the coalition engages Iraqis.

Afghanistan's development challenge is more rudimentary than Iraq's, with more extensive poverty, multiple tribal power centers, and a nascent smuggling- and opium-based economy.³⁰ Many areas of Afghanistan are in need of construction, not reconstruction: the country needs not only repairs to its country-wide "ring road" but also employment-generating projects that can demonstrate the government's commitment to the average Afghan. Effectively starting from scratch, development agencies in Kabul are attempting infrastructure- and capacity-building at national and local levels, but they lack the resources or security to do either effectively.³¹ Programs to restore public services and redistribute food have been repeatedly set back by attacks, thefts, and public hostility.

Reconstruction already seems an inadequate description of what is being

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carried out in the name of nation-building in both countries.³² Iraq has a more educated and urbanized population than does Afghanistan, but both face the challenge of formulating some type of “Islamic democracy” that embraces broad participation and decentralized decision making among heterogeneous populations, while also incorporating Islamic traditions. Those traditions, however, are quite different, with Ba’thist pan-Arabic secularism setting a very different political stage than Taliban pan-Islamic fundamentalism. Democracy promotion in both countries must somehow embrace their respective tribal networks that are centered on family, kinship (real and fictive), Sunni and Shi’i religious ties, and overlapping areas of influence—all of which are difficult to decipher. Perhaps more than any reconstruction program, this untested balance between secular and theocratic ideals will determine political legitimacy, public security, regional stability, and the duration of occupation.³³

In both Iraq and Afghanistan, reconstruction has become almost a mission mantra that masks a wide gulf between the perceptions of the occupiers and the occupied over what needs to be done and how. The occupiers’ goals are laid out in a strategic planning checklist aimed at empowering “good” citizens (non-Ba’thist Iraqis and non-Taliban Afghans): draft a constitution, restore electricity, open up transportation corridors, and support local government institutions. Numerous news reports and opinion polls, however, emphasize that many Iraqis and Afghans distrust foreigners running their country and are baffled that a superpower-backed occupation should be so susceptible to sporadic insurgent attacks. Iraqis have been vocal about not wanting a foreign military presence but remain fearful of rampant crime should the soldiers leave.³⁴ Active resistance to coalition objectives works with popular frustration to yield a double benefit for insurgents: it reinforces popular blame against occupiers for failing to provide either relief or reconstruction while demonstrating that even the world’s most powerful governments are vulnerable to a homegrown resistance. Such broad-based opposition demands reevaluation of intervention priorities and strategies.

INTERVENTION REWORDING

Four categories of intervention are discussed here—relief, reconstruction, rehabilitation, and reform. If post-conflict concerns are to be addressed effectively, these four should be thought of as parallel strategies for engagement, rather than sequential steps. While still in need of donated food and medicine, recipients also raise concerns about insecurity, distrust, lost jobs, inept assistance, and slighted pride, implying that some form of national rehabilitation is needed in addition to reconstruction projects. Foreigners attempting to implement ambitious nation-building programs in polarized post-conflict countries thus will be caught between immediate operational problems and longer-term challenges—

such as reducing inter-ethnic tensions and improving public security—which will unravel intervention efforts unless institutional reforms are adopted to prevent the escalatory dynamics of recurring conflict and violence.³⁵

Relief

The desire to do good and save lives remains a major motivation for governments and non-governmental organizations, alongside fighting the global war on terrorism. Civilian relief agencies have a growing cadre of experienced practitioners who understand the challenges and frustrations of assisting those in desperate and often dangerous situations. Whether providing medical help or managing a refugee camp, they are the international community's first responders. However, they also know they are applying a band-aid to a gaping wound—keeping people alive, but not necessarily solving the underlying problems that created the crisis and sometimes contribute to its recurrence.³⁶ Much of their day-to-day work is largely ignored until the chronic crisis becomes an acute disaster with enough deaths to be worthy of even fleeting media coverage.

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Reconstruction

Reconstruction appears to have replaced nation-building as the operative term for intervention because it is more tangible, but both terms share positivist assumptions: build it right (whether a road or parliament) and it will stand on its own. If reconstruction is the logical extension of a larger development assistance paradigm for poor countries, then it is not surprising that Afghanistan and Iraq have required an army of Western experts who are supposed to bring solutions. Provide it, and locals will be happy. Restore it, and they will be grateful. Democratize it (however slowly), and they will elect moderates. The hard-learned and on-the-ground experiences in both Iraq and Afghanistan (and before that in Bosnia and Kosovo) underscore that it is not so cut and dry. In post-conflict operations, large numbers of Western soldiers, relief workers, and reconstruction experts—driving four-wheel vehicles and staying in protected enclaves—can fuel resentment among those who should benefit most from foreign assistance: innovative entrepreneurs, educated elite, and skilled laborers.³⁷

Rehabilitation

Rehabilitation is perhaps a less satisfactory-sounding term for donors than reconstruction, as it suggests a handicapped body politic in need of long-term therapy and counseling; it is an implicit admission that there is no quick fix, undermining any predetermined exit strategy. Rehabilitation as a goal is associated with social and territory-based identities at various scales that are threatened by foreign occupation.³⁸ The term is also problematic for an occupying power because one of its meanings, “to reinstate the good name of,” runs counter to the notion of a political system so pervasively rotten as to merit a regime change. However, Iraqis and Afghans may see rehabilitation not as the restoration of an unloved former regime but with rose-colored memories of a nobler heritage. The memory of better times must also be put in context: most Afghans and Iraqis have never known anything but brutal authoritarianism and war.

The nationalistic pride of both Iraqis and to a lesser extent Afghans appears to have suffered after the fall of their respective repressive regimes. The postwar insurgency directed against coalition forces in Iraq in 2003-2004 harkens back to the revolt against British colonial powers in the 1920s and 1930s; both are based on popular resentment of foreign occupation and external attempts to impose modern governments.³⁹ Iraq has a much larger middle class and many more competent technocrats than Afghanistan, but anecdotal reports suggest that even educated Iraqis feel marginalized and somewhat humiliated by well-armed foreigners who claim to know how to fix their problems if they would just assist as a junior partner.⁴⁰ Rehabilitation of pride has little to do with Ba’thist or Taliban remnants and more to do with popular perceptions of once-proud cultures that were widely admired if not feared for their fierce independence. If disarmament, demobilization, and reintegration efforts are to have any viability in post-settlement peace-building following small asymmetric wars, the cultural aspirations of former soldiers need to be considered; rehabilitation must thus consider the status that comes with carrying a weapon, the power of being part of an armed faction, and the importance of association with an ethnic group.⁴¹

Reform

Closely tied with rehabilitation is reform of economic, political, and cultural institutions. Reform may be the hardest of the four “Re”s to implement because it requires a more fundamental transformation than providing food and shelter, building roads and power plants, and restoring a sense of lost honor. Political and economic reforms entail dismantling highly profitable systems and networks in which the elite reap a disproportionate share of national wealth because of secretive political connections before, during, and after each recurring

conflict. If democracy is to be credible in whatever form it emerges, it must be relatively transparent, representative, and accountable.⁴² These are foreign concepts for many in war-ravaged countries, where building capacity among local decision makers to manage harsh living conditions may be more important than repairing roads and much more difficult to execute.⁴³ The lack of reform ensures a continued environment of crime and corruption—perhaps under different names and functions in new regimes, but it is still the same game of abusing public office for material gain at the expense of ordinary citizens. The continuation of such practices sends a clear message: despite all the outside intervention efforts and grand pronouncements, nothing has really changed.

Cultural change may be even more problematic than other reforms because it requires a societal commitment to tolerance of differing groups and views. Xenophobic tribalism and violent nationalism share a rigid worldview that divides those within an ethnic group from those outside.⁴⁴ All types of violence against locals and foreigners are justified by allegations that those within the group are threatened and thus need to strike first.⁴⁵ Cultural reforms come about through education—for boys and for long-neglected girls—but also by the example of leaders and living conditions. In Afghanistan, President Hamid Karzai has underscored the need for a sense of nationhood that transcends Pashtun, Tajik, and Uzbek rivalries. Iraq awaits a new elected leader to bury Saddam Hussein's cultural legacy of espousing Pan-Arabism while manipulating tribal and religious tensions. If postwar stabilization is to take root, it must grapple with pervasive identity-fueled conflicts built on exaggerated myths and threats. Successful stabilization must provide a means of replacing these identity conflicts with more tolerant and pluralistic political processes.⁴⁶

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INTEGRATED RESPONSES

Insecurity in Iraq and Afghanistan has been the occupiers' Achilles heel, regardless of which "Re" is being addressed. Experienced civilians and civil affairs officers need to be deployed alongside civilian police in larger numbers and with better training in basic language skills, cultural sensitivity, and conflict mediation-capabilities just as important for rehabilitation and reform as engineering has been for reconstruction. Engagement of skilled Iraqis and Afghans is also proving decisive. This may not win the hearts and minds of those already disillusioned with coalition promises, but aggressive security led by and provided for the local populace will better prepare the occupiers and the occupied for what they both want: recovery.

Another frequent criticism of the Afghanistan and Iraq postwar interventions, particularly in Iraq, has been poor planning and its consequences for postwar transition to a representative government that can provide security and enable economic growth.⁴⁷ Frictions between military and civilian agencies arose in part because the military saw its mission originally as winning the war quickly and decisively, only tangentially related to medium-term relief and reconstruction (through civil affairs) and having little if anything to do with long-term rehabilitation and reform.⁴⁸ Civilian agencies engaged in humanitarian diplomacy tend to talk about all four nation-building responsibilities, but they have capabilities to address only short-term relief and, to a much lesser degree, long-term reconstruction.⁴⁹ Civilian and military agencies tend to see these four categories in sequence, or phases, after the war is over: first comes the provision of basic supplies for those in need, usually the displaced; then come reconstruction projects to get the economy functioning; then perhaps rehabilitation with democratic elections and leaders; and finally, if feasible, the underlying reforms that address inherent institutional failures. Future interventions may require a different game plan—one that introduces these occupational responsibilities as an integrated package much earlier in the intervention and with better planning, interagency and intergovernmental coordination, and more attention and resources given to preemptive stabilization.⁵⁰

OCCUPATIONAL RESPONSIBILITIES

All post-conflict interventions will be judged ultimately by how well intervening parties help to establish functioning governments by ensuring that the basic needs of vulnerable populations are met, that human rights for all citizens (particularly minorities) are respected, and that rule of law (however defined) is institutionalized. In order to meet that international standard, future coalitions of the willing must better understand the plight of those they aim to assist. In failed states, national institutions are often absent, corrupted, and/or dysfunctional, making it essential to engage local communities directly and effectively on rehabilitation and reform. Victimized communities, more so than foreigners, will recognize that while stabilization might remain just out of reach, better living conditions are still possible. Three commonsense measures can help the international interveners avoid repeating costly blunders:

- Thorough diagnosis of life-threatening conditions and consequences before interveners deploy and frequent objective assessments of progress on all four responsibilities;
 - Rapid deployment of integrated, multilateral civil-military teams that bring useful nation-building skills, area and cultural knowledge, language and communication abilities, and logistical/resource support—not just for
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basic needs (relief) and physical repairs (reconstruction) but also for societal wounds (rehabilitation); and

- Intensive engagement at international, national, and local levels to ensure that crisis-repeating injustices and corruption do not survive (reform).

Only then might we begin to realize the lasting benefits of that elusive post-conflict goal, recovery. ■

NOTES

Citations to follow do not reference specific pages, but rather cite general themes and ideas expressed in the works.

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