

STABILIZATION SYMPOSIUM

JUNE 26-27, 2018 THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON, DC

EXECUTIVE REPORT



Elliott School of
International Affairs

THE GEORGE WASHINGTON UNIVERSITY



On June 19, 2018, the U.S. Department of State, United States Agency for International Development (USAID), and the Department of Defense (DOD) jointly released the Stabilization Assistance Review (SAR): A Framework to Maximize the Effectiveness of U.S. Government Efforts to Stabilize Conflict-Affected Areas. The interagency document lays out a shared definition of stabilization to guide U.S. interventions in conflict stabilization activities, focusing on their political nature. The SAR aims to better direct resources through time-bound and strategic initiatives that help locally legitimate leaders govern inclusively, build peace, and prevent a return to violence.

On June 26-27, 2018, Creative Learning, the Elliott School of International Affairs at George Washington University, and other strategic partners gathered over 300 thought leaders, policy makers, legislators, development practitioners, peacebuilders, and the private sector to engage with the State, USAID, and DoD architects of the SAR and each other to dialogue about applying this new framework in practice, incorporating a multi-stakeholder approach,

and addressing challenges to implementing coordinated stabilization programming.

Through over 20 plenary and breakout sessions, the Stabilization Symposium delved into how to better address the inherently political nature of stabilization, how to achieve more integrated and disciplined approaches to stabilization, how to enhance coordination and burden-sharing across allies, multilaterals, and other donors in conflict-affected areas, and how to implement and evaluate effective stabilization activities. Ultimately, no matter the intervention, stabilization is not an end within itself, but rather, must be a means to fostering a political environment necessary for enhancing security and governance.

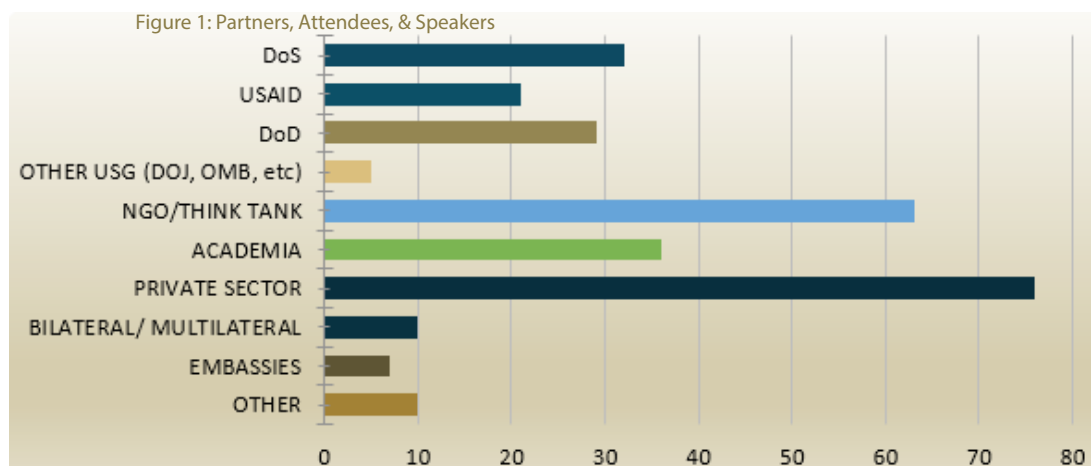
The following is an Executive Brief of the conversations and key outcomes compiled from notes and recordings of each session. Detailed notes and recordings can be found in their entirety at www.StabilizationSymposium.com.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Several pivotal points echoed throughout the panels, workshops, and keynote sessions of the two-day event. Here is what the experts said about implementing coordinated stabilization:

Stakeholders and experts support the SAR and encourage its implementation.

The Symposium participants commended the SAR framework and overwhelmingly supported its full implementation by the United States Government (USG) and partners (see Figure 1). There was a strong recognition that the USG and other international actors can no longer afford to do “business as usual” in fragile and conflict-affected areas around the globe and that strategic engagement criteria and a more purposeful division of labor is essential. Participants powerfully endorsed the concept of stabilization as an inherently political endeavor, where diplomacy is therefore key to success. Participants uniformly agreed with the new SAR definition for stabilization and affirmed the importance of diplomatic engagement to develop, refine, and execute stabilization political strategies. Political end states should be the guiding star for smart, evidence-based and targeted interventions that build the resilience and capacity of locally legitimate authorities to peaceably manage conflict; deploying diplomats is essential to identifying and engaging those actors at the heart of stabilizing conflict-affected regions.



Continued innovation and adaption are required to address stabilization challenges. The Symposium included dedicated sessions to review ongoing stabilization efforts in critical countries and regions, including the Lake Chad Basin, Iraq, the Philippines, Syria, and Ukraine. Participants applauded USG and international efforts to advance stabilization in these areas, but agreed that continued innovation and adaptation are needed to apply the SAR principles to these ongoing efforts. In particular, participants highlighted the importance of focusing efforts on promoting host-nation leadership and accountability for the long-term success of these efforts.

Implementing partners need greater clarity and consensus on political goals for stabilization missions. Stabilization is most effective when agencies across the government, alongside nongovernmental implementing partners, work together toward a common goal in a given conflict zone. Different international actors have different interests in stabilization, and implementers align activities to funder priorities. A clear sense of the shared political goals and metrics guiding stabilization is critical to enable implementers to calibrate and integrate their programs. Implementers are ready and willing to collaborate provided a clear mandate to do so.

Flexible assistance is crucial to advance stabilization, with strong monitoring and oversight. Symposium participants discussed the importance of flexible funding authorities across the interagency that enable agile responses, risk-taking, adaptive iteration, and learning. For implementers, foreign assistance that is not adaptable restricts program effectiveness in rapidly evolving stabilization contexts. Participants encouraged the USG and other international donors to pursue flexible assistance that can enable sequenced, targeted approaches in these complex environments. At the same time, participants noted the imperative for strong monitoring and oversight to manage risk in these difficult environments.

Trained civilian experts, coupled with supportive military leaders, are needed to lead effective stabilization efforts on the ground. Symposium participants noted that effective implementation requires strategic investments in building a well-trained and readily available cadre of civilians who will deploy alongside the military in conflict-affected environments. Participants emphasized the importance of having civilian experts on the ground who can help assess, adapt assistance, and advise military planners, commanders, and operators on their interactions with local civilian leaders, while conflict may still be ongoing. It is imperative the USG and international actors work together to overcome current challenges in this regard and ensure adequate resourcing and both effective and efficient integration of these inter-agency and intragovernmental efforts. At the same time, more joint civil-military training is needed to ensure integrated efforts across diplomatic, development, and military organizations.

Greater coordination among international donors is imperative for successful stabilization. Symposium participants noted that many international actors are working to update and renew their policies and capabilities for stabilization.

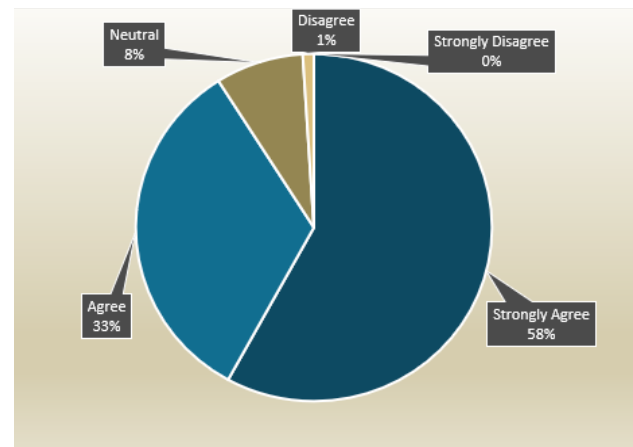


Figure 2: The SAR recommendations/components should be implemented by the USG.

Several countries - including the UK, Canada, Germany, and the Netherlands – and multilateral organizations – the World Bank and the United Nations – are pursuing reforms to better plan and implement their interventions in fragile and conflict-affected environments. Participants called for more coordination of these efforts, including an honest assessment of how to optimize the strengths and mitigate the weaknesses of different donor mechanisms. In particular, the USG’s SAR implementation should be coordinated with the UN and World Bank’s planned reforms to enhance their peacebuilding architecture.



A strategic approach to stabilization should be expanded to elevate “upstream” conflict prevention. Symposium participants stressed that while stabilization during active conflict is critical, it must not overshadow work to prevent violent conflict from igniting, which can save countless lives and billions of dollars in humanitarian aid and military intervention. The latest Global Peace Index finds that conflict cost the world \$14.76 trillion in 2017, or 12.4 percent of global GDP. Participants noted that the SAR organizational framework could be adapted to enable a more disciplined, structured approach to prevention by the USG. Participants called for more work by all stakeholders to ensure that prevention is elevated within policy and programmatic efforts.

Significant work remains to translate the promise of the SAR and the renewed commitment by many actors to address conflict-related challenges into practical implementation. Participants agreed that continued partnerships and a multi-stakeholder approach are needed to garner and sustain sufficient senior-level attention for this critical work to proceed. There currently exists broad-based support and significant tailwind for SAR operationalization among practitioners and academics – the USG should continue to lean on the community to share the burden for continuing research, innovation, and best practices. We are all committed to achieving tangible outcomes for stability in the months and years ahead.

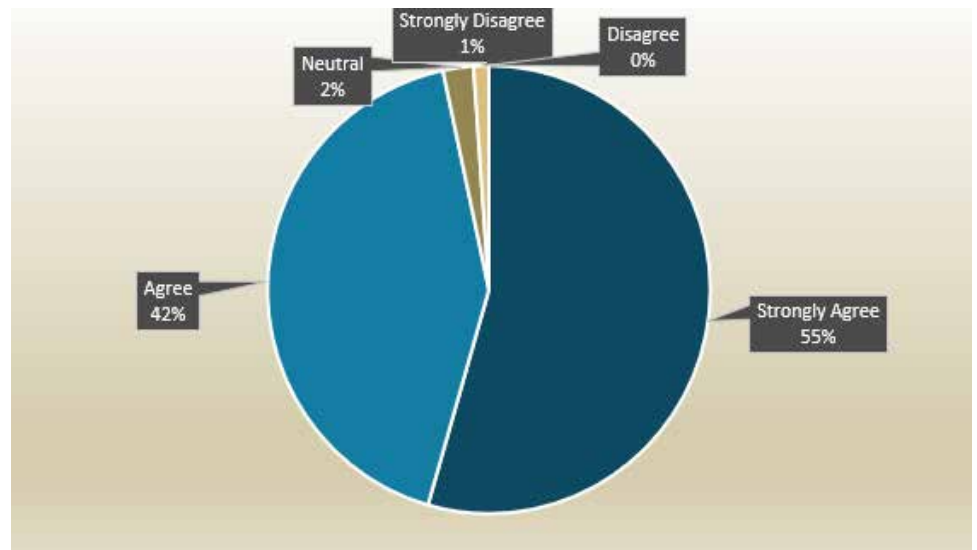


Figure 3: The Symposium content and information exchanges provided me a deeper understanding of the future of stabilization.

“As we move forward we will be divvying up responsibility, coordinating with the Stabilization Assistance Review team to ensure that as a community we push this forward.”

– Cameron M. Chisholm,
Vice President, Creative Learning

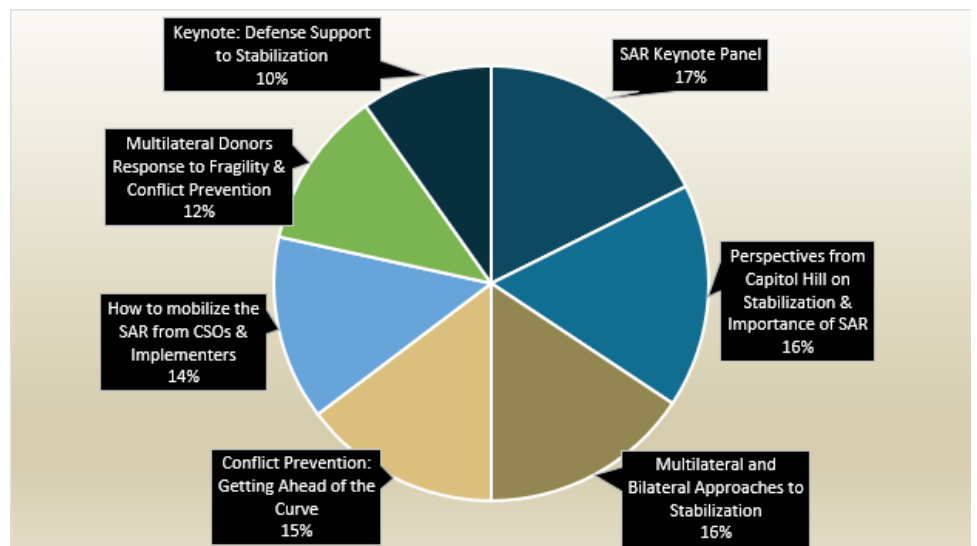


Figure 4: What plenary sessions of the Symposium did you find the most useful?

SOCIAL MEDIA

By using social media and the **#SAR2018**, the online audience engaged directly with participants and speakers and expressed their thoughts and opinions on the challenges to implement coordinated stabilization programming. They were more than **3.1 million Twitter impressions** on the #SAR2018 and more than **1,000 tweets** during the event. Today, the conversation on stabilization continues online and offline with stakeholders continue discussing opportunities to innovate stabilization solutions to violent conflicts. Join the conversation online.



#SAR2018
SOCIAL MEDIA: by the numbers

SOCIAL MEDIA STATS

An estimated 531,108 accounts were reached through #SAR2018

Tweets discussing #SAR2018 created 3,128,745 impressions

#SAR2018 garnered over 1,000 views online

Replies
5%

Tweets
39%

Retweets
56%

There were more than 938 tweets about #SAR2018!

luke waggoner @lukewaggoner
#stabilization is, at its core, a political endeavor #SAR2018 @USAID @StateDept @DeptofDefense @StateCSO



6:51 AM - 26 Jun 2018

USAID/OTI @USAIDOTI

"In telling the story of our work, we're always basing our [programming decisions] on what's happening on the ground. Our business model supports reviews every 6 months." @USAIDOTI Elizabeth Winger Shevock #SAR2018

10:50 AM - 27 Jun 2018

AllforPeacebuilding @AllforPeacebuilding

#Stabilization is one tool for supporting conflict-affected states, along the spectrum w conflict prevention and peacebuilding. We're excited to see the conversation include multilateral donors' evolving approaches on fragility and sustaining peace. #SAR2018

7:07 AM - 27 Jun 2018



From left to right: Bill Kruvant, Chairman of the Board of Directors, Creative Learning; Carola Mandelbaum, CEO, Creative Learning; Leland Kruvant, CEO, Creative Associates International



Multilateral and Bilateral Approaches to Stabilization (front left to right): Kristen Cordell, Senior Advisor (USAID/PPL), SAR Lead; Peter McDermott, Deputy Director, Stabilisation Unit, FCO; Moises Venancio, Regional Advisor, Iraq and Syria Crisis Countries, UNDP



Meals for the Stabilization Symposium were catered by Conflict Cuisine®.



How Do You Measure Success? (front left to right): Amb. Rick Barton, Lecturer, Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; Michael Dziedzic, Vice President, Pax Advisory; Sarah Scarcelli, Deputy Director (DOS/CSO)



Civil-Military Affairs & Expeditionary Diplomacy (front left to right): Jason Ladnier, Director, Office of Partnerships, Strategy, and Communications (DOS/CSO); COL Tony Thacker, Chief, USCENTCOM, Interagency Action Group, Civil Affairs Operations Division; BG Kimberly Field (ret.), Director, CVE, Creative Associates International; COL Charles Burnett, 95th Civil Affairs Brigade Commander, Fort Bragg



Transitioning War & Conflict to Peace & Stability: Ciara Knudsen, Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary (DOS)

* All photos by Skip Brown Photography



Peter Qaranto, Senior Advisor for Peace and Security (DOS/F), SAR Lead



Multilateral Donors Response to Fragility & Conflict Prevention (front left to right): Dr. Daniel Serwer, Chair, Conflict Management Program, Johns Hopkins University, SAIS; Chuck Call, Non-Resident Fellow, Brookings; Laurel Patterson, Senior Policy Advisor, Crisis, Fragility, and Resilience, UNDP



Perspectives from Capitol Hill on Stabilization & Importance of SAR (from left to right): Dr. Patrick Quirk, Senior Policy Advisor (DOS/CSO), SAR Lead; Mark Iozzi, Counsel, U.S. House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee; Michael V. Phelan, Senior Professional Staff Member, Committee on Foreign Relations, U.S. Senate; Laura Strawmyer, Policy & Advocacy Manager, Alliance for Peacebuilding



Private Sector Role in Stabilization (from left to right): Harry Bader, Acting Executive Director, U.S. Global Development Lab (USAID); Earl Gast, Senior Vice President, Creative Associates International; Howard R. Lind, President, International Stability Operations Association; Jim Hake, CEO, Spirit of America



Tine Knott, Vice President, Center for Secure and Stable States, DAI



Cameron M. Chisholm, Vice President, Creative Learning; Founder, International Peace & Security Institute



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