

## **Panel Executive Brief: Transitioning War & Conflict to Peace & Stability**

Post-conflict transitions must strike a balance between institutions and processes. While long-term institutions are necessary, we need to design institutions for the transition period that will prevent a relapse into conflict. Processes refer to a more vigorous participation of local communities and individuals in making decisions that would affect their future. Externally imposed solutions can deprive local and national actors of the agency to manage their own affairs. Thus, institution-building must be an inclusive process. For the US and other international actors, this implies a deeper engagement and understanding of contexts, resulting in flexible and adaptive approaches to stabilization.

### **Speakers**

Frances Z. Brown - *Fellow, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace*

Katherine Donahue - *Acting Chief for Program Learning & Innovation (USAID/OTI)*

Ciara Knudsen - *Policy Planning Staff, Office of the Secretary (DOS)*

COL Joe Holland - *Chief, Stability and Humanitarian Engagement Division, J-5 Global Policy & Partnerships (DOD)*

*Moderator: Kelly Uribe - Senior Policy Advisor, (OSD/SHA), SAR Lead*

### **Key Issues/Problems discussed:**

- “Anecdotalism” refers to a focus on short-term success stories, instead of sustainable institutions. Methods of measuring success must be balanced between the short and long-term.
- Stabilization is not a linear process.
- Disruption of local leadership and power structures during conflict creates suspicion of external actors. Actions of the US government can create divisions between the haves and have-nots.
- There is ambiguity in identification of legitimate local partners.
- After the defeat of ISIS, there is a lack of consensus on how to deal with prisoners, formerly-affiliated women and children, amnesty, and reconciliation.
- Approaches to stabilization have been perceived as military centered and actors on the ground have not had access to interagency colleagues.

### **Key Recommendations:**

- We need to think about long-term institutions as well as short-term institutions that would prevent conflict from disrupting democratic transitions.
- An understanding of the culture of the host nation and the political will of the host government is crucial.
- Processes require more attention in political transitions: engagement of people in decision-making processes and the provision of agency to manage resources.
- There is a need for flexible procurement mechanisms, decentralized management that privileges field staff analysis, and overall modest and time-sensitive goals.
- Programming should be flexible and be able to adapt and learn from the realities on ground. It should also involve targeting, sequencing, and an exit strategy.

***Significance of SAR:***

Stabilization is a transitional process and the SAR highlights an interagency focus on the field, where all three have the agency to observe and communicate with host countries. For the DoD specifically, the SAR implies an improvement of processes, policy, and doctrine.