15. International and transnational interactions
Stabilization operations combine asymmetric low-intensity or insurgent-counter-insurgent conflict with traditional “peace-keeping” and “war-fighting” and with development and state building in hybrid conflicts involving both civil and military, state and non-state actors. Afghanistan and Iraq are present paradigm cases. Stabilization operations are necessitated by the structure of the contemporary world-system and exhibit both continuities and discontinuities with prior states of this system. In simplified form, the world-system divides nation-states into core and periphery, relative to past trajectories of development and present position within the world-economy. This may be extended to the peripheral sub-state level, with peripheral state populations divisible into core or elite and peripheral or non-elite positions (Galtung 1971). The subordination of the periphery, while primarily economic, is maintained by political regimes and enforced when necessary by military intervention. Such intervention is legitimated in terms of a core cultural model of the legitimate form and internal and external relations and functions of the state (Meyer et al 1997), or as “humanitarian” or “stabilizing”; peripheral states are represented as potentially unstable or as “weak” or “failing.” The dependency perspective considers military intervention the most salient form of enforcement of dependence or reproduction of under-development, with core dominance dependant on peripheral subordination as a resource base and market (Hahn 2008).

Peripheral subordination is maintained by a convergence of interest in exploitation of peripheral non-elite populations between elite core states and elites within peripheral states (Galtung 1971; Kowaleski and Hoover 2000). The defection of peripheral state-institutional elites from state socioeconomic redistributive functions, either through predation or institutional incapacity, delegitimates the state and destabilizes recently and/or partially established state monopolies of coercion. Sub-national institutions of coercion, varying in their relations to sub-national populations from predation and exploitation to provision of socioeconomic redistribution and governance, may develop in response to state incapacity, evolving into paramilitary insurgencies contesting the state coercive monopoly within the space of the nation-state. Asymmetry of military capability or extreme ideological positions on state illegitimacy may lead to strategies of covert and indiscriminate targeting of state civil and military institutions, or those considered representatives of same, a practice defined as illegitimate, that is, as “terrorism” by states and those liable to be targeted, especially where insurgent targeting criteria may be cultural or symbolic and
hence appear arbitrary (Lizardo 2008). Where targeting of state representatives extends beyond the peripheral state to representatives of core states as the perceived agents of peripheral state institutional incapacity or illegitimacy, peripheral state instability threatens the security of core states and may have destabilizing effects at the world-system level (Rennstich 2005). Stabilization operations are the core state and core-dominated international government organization (IGO) response to security instabilities resulting from peripheral state instability, resulting from world-systemic structures of dependence.

Stabilization operations may be seen as a form of global policing continuous with colonial police actions, proxy wars, or counter-insurgent conflicts under prior world-system conditions (Hahn 2008), but discontinuities are also apparent. The trans-nationality of insurgency under technological conditions of globalization allows direct peripheral paramilitary intervention in the core, in contrast to prior core immunity. This technological shift is also manifest in information technology led capital intensiveness of core militaries (Kantor and Kick 2008) and in increasing militarization of the periphery through dispersion of modern assault weapons post-Cold War. The post–Cold War shift from bipolar hegemony to multipolarity and unipolar hegemony, initially seen as signaling the end of geostrategic or realist-oppositional legitimation of core military intervention in the periphery, led to increasing legitimation of intervention in humanitarian, peripheral-developmental, or state building terms (Hahn 2008; Meyer et al. 1997). While there has been a return to legitimation of intervention in realist or state-security terms in response to peripheral paramilitary intervention in core states, the necessity for core militaries engaged in counter-insurgency in destabilized states to secure local support and proxies, combined with increasing scrutiny of core military interventions by core populations through globalized media and international non-government organizations (INGOs), has ensured that legitimacy remains a key factor in stabilization operations. Core militaries are increasingly required to demonstrate “legitimacy-in-practice” vis-à-vis peripheral populations and civil actors, such as IGOs and INGOs, through civil-military cooperation. Insurgents are conversely increasingly less dependant on demonstrating their legitimacy vis-à-vis peripheral or core populations, having increasingly turned to exploitation of peripheral economic resources in place of prior core state or peripheral popular support, an exploitation facilitated by technological shifts and the parallel development of a “shadow” world-economy and world-system (Mackinlay 2002).

From the long duration world-system perspective, these discontinuities are balanced by continuity with historical conflicts between core imperial state militaries and peripheral non-state paramilitaries or militarized societies (Wilkinson 1996). However, this perspective, constructing peripheral populations as culturally deficient in capacities for state-formation and culturally predisposed to warfare, has been challenged as a core discourse legitimating past and present core military intervention in peripheral states or quasi-states (Hahn 2008).

References


