Stability Assessment Framework Quick Reference Guide

The Stability Assessment Framework (SAF) is an analytical, planning, and programming tool designed to support civil-military operations planning, the Civil Affairs (CA) methodology, and non-lethal targeting approaches during MAGTF operations. The SAF helps Marine and civilian planners determine stability dynamics within the MAGTF battlespace and to design programs and activities that address sources of instability (SOI) and reinforce sources of stability (SOS / resiliencies), and to measure their effect in fostering stability.
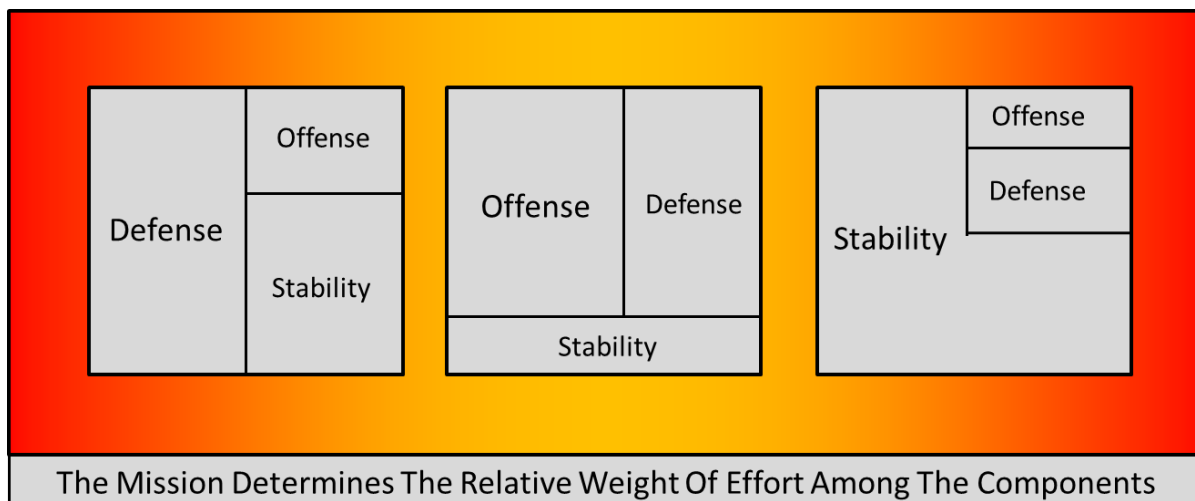
SAF focuses on the attributes of the operating environment and integrates multiple perspectives during planning and assessment. The SAF methodology has four basic components nested within both the CA methodology (represented by 6 steps—Assess, Decide, Develop & Detect, Deliver, Evaluate and Transition—AD3ET) and the Marine Corps Planning Process (Problem Framing, Course of Action Development, Course of Action War Game, Course of Action Comparison and Decision, Orders Development, Transition—MCPP). The four SAF components [Civil Preparation of the Battlespace (CPB), Analysis, Design and Execution] complement and enhance existing planning and execution processes (e.g. Targeting Cycle) used during MAGTF operations.

Stabilization

Stabilization is a core U.S. military mission that the Department of Defense (DoD) shall be prepared to conduct with proficiency equivalent to combat operations. The DoD shall be prepared to conduct stability activities across the conflict continuum and throughout the range of military operations (ROMO). The magnitude of stability activities may range from small-scale, short-duration to large-scale, long duration.

A holistic understanding of the operational environment enables the design of complementing offensive, defensive, and stability activities that, together in an appropriate and ever changing balance, achieve operational objectives. SAF provides the MAGTF commander with a tool to support deliberate targeting efforts across the conflict continuum and throughout the ROMO.

The Mission Determines The Relative Weight Of Effort Among The Components

SAF and CPB

CPB [formerly Civil Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace (CIPB) or Civil Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment (CIPOE)] is an iterative analytical method used to examine the civil operating environment in support of the MCPP, and the overall Intelligence Preparation of the Battlespace or Joint Intelligence Preparation of the Operational Environment processes. CPB analyzes different aspects of civil information and assesses the civil impact of friendly, adversary, external actors, and the local populace on MAGTF operations. The purpose is to gain a comprehensive understanding of the civil operating environment in order to develop a civil operating environment model (similar to a G/S-2 threat model) that informs decision makers of possible civil actions impacting MAGTF operations. The following steps are used to develop CPB products:

- Step 1. Define the civil operating environment (Collect Civil Information)
- Step 2. Analyze the civil operating environment
- Step 3. Develop a civil environment model
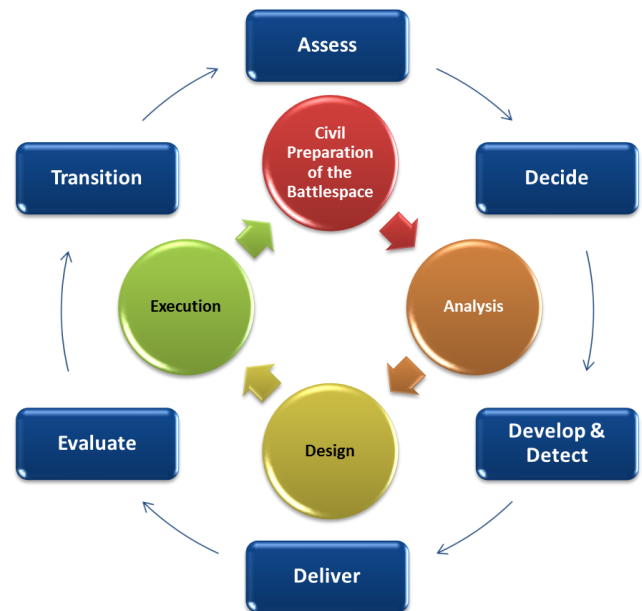- Step 4. Determine civil actions

While the complete CPB is a four step process, the "CPB" step within SAF focuses on using the results of CPB Steps 1 and 2—collecting information on the civil environment and analyzing that information. The results of CPB steps 3 and 4 can be used to enhance SAF, but are not necessary to executing a good SAF process. Regardless, both SAF and CPB closely examine the following three variables to achieve a comprehensive understanding of the battlespace:

- The operating environment
- The cultural environment
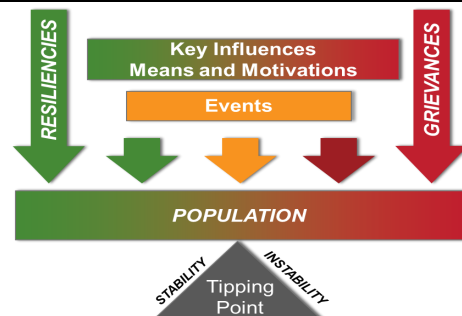- Instability and stability dynamics

SAF as a Cycle

Neither SAF nor CPB are stand-alone planning tools. Rather, they are planning support methods that share common processes to facilitate understanding of the civil operating environment and the variables that have the potential to influence MAGTF operations. However, the SAF focus is stability dynamics and the design, application and monitoring of actions to facilitate *stability* in the MAGTF's battlespace. The CPB focus is to *understand* the MAGTF's civil operating environment to better inform decision makers during the steps of the MCPP.

SAF, similar to the CA methodology (depicted to the right as the outer process), is not a linear process like the MCPP, but an iterative cycle in which new information is uncovered through civil reconnaissance and new activities are spawned through analysis, design and execution starting the process over again. Thus, SAF may have multiple cycles occurring simultaneously and overlapping. The SAF process ends at the conclusion of an activity(s) or the transition of the activity(s) to another unit or agency.
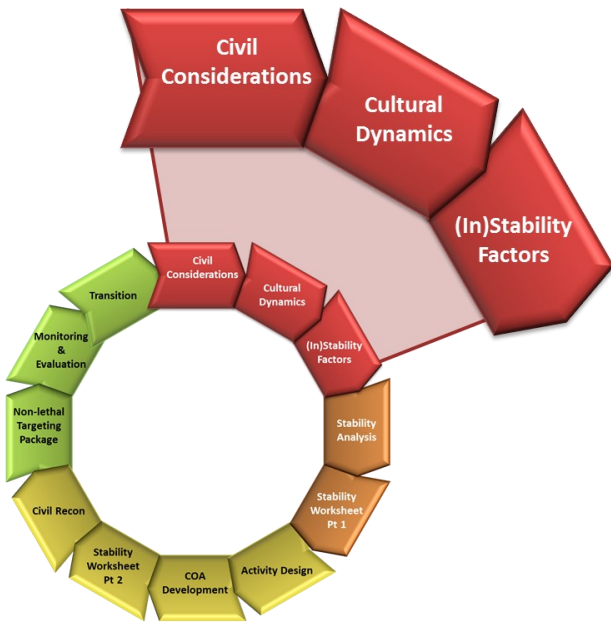

Factors of Stability and Instability

Instability results when the factors fostering instability overwhelm the ability of the host nation to mitigate these factors. Understanding the relationship between the people, societal grievances, resiliencies, events, and key influences is fundamental to the SAF process. The use of SAF enables mission planners and executers to develop and scale stability activities according to specific mission requirements and/or the phase of the operation.

SAF Component 1—CPB

Component 1, CPB, uses the results of the first two steps of the overall CPB process, and focuses on three primary civil environment variables:

- Civil Considerations (ASCOPE / PMESII data)
- Cultural Dynamics (Applying Operational Culture principles)
- Stability / Instability Factors (Data gathered through indirect methods—area studies, embassy data, etc., and direct methods—civil reconnaissance, civil engagements, etc.)

Much of the data gathered for this first step of the SAF process is likely available through standard MAGTF resources. E.g., Civil Affairs Marines and CMO Planners will perform CPB as a part of the MCPP. Additionally, G/S-2 sections as well as logisticians will likely be compiling similar information for use in their planning and staffing processes. Stability planners need not duplicate existing efforts. Rather they can make use of the common databases to support a stability analysis using the SAF process.

CPB Variable 1—Civil Considerations

There are a number of models that can be used to describe the operating environment. A model common to a number of communities (for example, civil affairs and intelligence communities) is the ASCOPE-PMESII model. ASCOPE describes civil areas, structures, capabilities, organizations, people, and events and is the basis for civil information collection and analysis. ASCOPE information can be further refined by applying operational variables (PMESII—political/governance, military/security, economic, social, information and infrastructure). At its most basic level, civil considerations (ASCOPE) are examined using operational variables (PMESII) to ascertain factors relevant to MAGTF operations and to aid

Example Factors and Relevance Matrix for Civil _Areas_. Information would be captured for each part of ASCOPE			
Civil Considerations	**Operational Variables**	**Factors** What are the factors in the Civil Environment that will significantly affect friendly forces? Consider population perception of the factor.	**Relevance** How will each factor affect the friendly forces? Consider stability aspects of the mission/operation.
AREAS	Political	Political boundaries are manipulated	Boundaries are drawn to favor one political faction over another
	Military	Military districts overlap economic regions	Military ownership of industry
	Economic	Economic development areas	Key industries and supply chains are linked through geographic location
	Social	Municipalities, towns and villages are largely ethnically homogenous	Ethnic enclaves are prevalent with little intermingling
	Information	Telecommunication is widespread	Information is easily controlled by the Gov't
	Infrastructure	Investment in infrastructure is uneven	Investment favors supporters of the regime

in understanding the stability/instability dynamics of the civil analysis of the AO. The ASCOPE/PMESII construct is population-focused rather than enemy-focused which makes it the ideal starting point for SAF. In addition, the factors and relevance matrix is designed to highlight those factors impacting the MAGTF (both positively and negatively) as they relate to stability dynamics. While there may be numerous civil factors that are relevant to MAGTF operations, the SAF process filters these factors by asking a basic question; "how does it (the identified factor) affect stability?"

CPB Variable 2—The Cultural Environment

Culture shapes our world view or perception of events; it is composed of a pattern of relationships and structures and is varied and dynamic. It is not a check-in-the-box factor that can be reduced to a map and predicted with scientific certainty; it is complex. People, regardless of their culture, share certain ways of organizing and interacting with each other based on five different dimensions. The five critical cultural dimensions are: the physical environment; local economies; social organization and power; political structures and leadership; and belief systems.

There is no singular approach to applying a cultural lens to the data collected. Every situation will require careful consideration based on commander's intent and guidance and the nature of the MAGTF's operations. Stability planners should endeavor to apply cultural perspective-taking (to "see" and "feel" others' behavior/actions in the frame of that person's culture) and cultural interpretation (the process by which understanding and meaning is derived) to the information they have gathered. The point of this approach is to minimize "mirroring," i.e., viewing the information from a U.S. Marine, Western mentality. Regardless of the approach taken, each of the 5 cultural dimensions has factors that must be considered.

Additionally, the five cultural dimensions provide another filter for framing and understanding stability dynamics. Stability planners can identify major cultural groups and their interests, cultural codes, traditions and values; conflict resolution mechanisms and the authorities associated with them; disruptions to traditional and accepted authorities; and how key influences can leverage these factors.

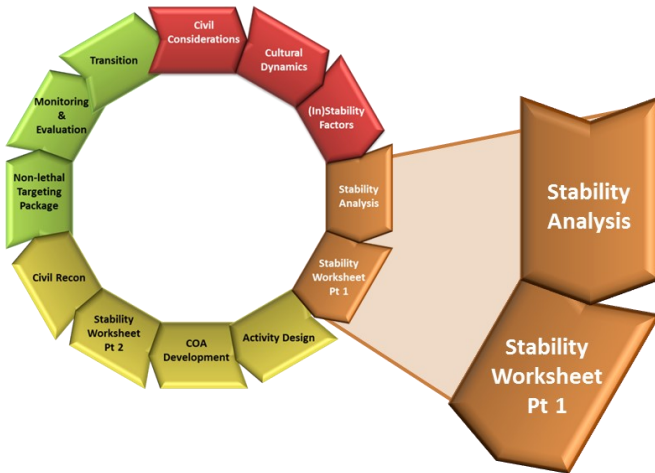| Physical Environment Water, Land, Food, Climate, Fuel, Power, Transportation	Economy Informal, Formal, Exchange goods, Structured (Agriculture/Industrial)	Social Structure Age, Gender, Kinship/Clan, Ethnicity, Religion	Political Structure Councils, Electoral, Tribal, (Formal vs Actual)	Belief Systems History, Symbols, Rituals, Norms, Mores, Taboos control and affect behavior
- "People of the Current." Fishing and Agriculture- Commercially and Subsistence farming. - - Urban and Rural Infrastructure, Cell phones widely used - Local generator power in most villages - - Communal water and toilets facilities common	- Patronage and cronyism dominate much of the daily lives and economy - Much of the economy is subsidized by IGO/NGOs - Unsubsidized, "free" economy is controlled by islanders of Chinese descent	- Societal welfare is based on Family and extended Family relations - Islamic, but have varying view points on various laws and traditions within Islam - Dominant ethnic group - Elderly respected and honored - Females are subservient but not "second-class" citizens - Chinese "second-class" citizens	- Formal-Elected Governor, Mayors and local leaders - Village Elders are valued and wield considerable influence - Religious leaders are highly regarded by general populace but their influence on the general populace is often considered a threat to political power brokers - Council of elders provides a conflict resolution process recognized by elected officials	- Marriages are often arranged, particularly in rural areas - Young girls help mothers with household duties; boys help fathers in fields or fishing - Along with Muslim identity-spirit worship is much a part of everyday life - Many social values are derived from Confucianism and Taoism.
Cultural Factors Affecting Stability Operations				
Major groups include indigenous Malayo-Polynesians population adhering to a variation of Sunni Islam, and islanders of Chinese descent. Variations of Sunni Islamic doctrine prevail. Modern Salafi interpretations threaten traditional values Populace perception of being disenfranchised by Gov't. Most economic activity is informal. Traditional conflict resolution mechanisms cannot cope with modern problems. Formal Political power derived from central gov't. Informal by loose confederation of traditional village authority, religious, local associations. Traditional beliefs shape populace behavior. Malign actors seek to take advantage of weakened traditional structures.				

SAF and CPB approaches both use the same initial variables to understand the civil environment, the SAF cultural perspective can be carried forward into the development of a civil environment model, Green Cell activities, the estimation of civil most likely and civil most disadvantageous (or disruptive) courses of actions, and other civil environment-focused MCPP support tools. The cultural matrix (left) illustrates how information can be sorted and distilled to support the stability planner.

CPB Variable 3—(In)Stability Factors

Information gathered from the ASCOPE/PMESII factors and relevance matrices as well as the cultural analysis can be further synthesized and categorized as potential grievances or resiliencies on the (In)Stability Factors Matrices. Instability can occur through unresolved grievances, destabilizing events and key influences that seek to take advantage of them. Although there can be many potential grievances, they do not all necessarily foster instability unless key influences with both the motivation and means to translate these grievances into instability emerge. Such "windows of vulnerability" are often precipitated by a specific event that key influences can capitalize on. Similarly, instability can be mitigated by societal resiliencies, events and key influences with the motivation and means to foster stability.

Grievances: What are the core grievances and societal vulnerabilities identified in your civil considerations (From perception data)?	Events: Potential situations that could contribute to an increase in instability (From ASCOPE/PMESII)?	Key influences - Means and Motivations: What are the influences, the means and motivations that contribute to an increase of instability (From ASCOPE/PMESII)?
Resiliencies: What processes, relationships, or institutions enable the society to function normally and peacefully? Are there any previous resiliencies that have been or are being undermined (From perception data)?	Events: What potential or anticipated future situations could create an opening for key influences to further reinforce stability (From ASCOPE/PMESII)?	Key influences: Means and Motivations: What key influences in the society preserve and strengthen stability? What means do they possess, what are the motives, and what actions are taken (From ASCOPE/PMESII)?

SAF Component 2—Analysis

While the collection of civil information is continuous, the stability planner must nevertheless analyze the information that has been collected and categorized. SAF analysis utilizes the same tools that have proved effective for previous stability analytical efforts. The tools—the Source of Instability (SOI) and Source of Stability (SOS) Analysis Matrices apply stability criteria to further refine and prioritize potential sources of instability and resiliencies.

The Stability Worksheet (also described as the Tactical Stability Matrix or Nonlethal Targeting Worksheet) is used to record the analysis, develop stability objectives and associated measures of effectiveness (MOEs) and identify potential data sources to be used for the MOEs. The completion of the *Analysis* side of the Stability Worksheet is synonymous with completing "Part 1" of the Stability Worksheet.

Source of Instability Analysis Matrix

Each SOI is examined using the SOI Analysis Matrix and vetted against three instability criteria to ascertain the potential for being a driver of instability. An instability factor resulting in affirmative responses to any criteria is considered a viable issue for mitigation, however, an acknowledged problem is not necessarily an underlying source of instability. Generally, the more criteria met, the more likely the issue is creating instability. The three criteria are:

(1) Does this issue decrease support for the government or legitimate governance?

(2) Does this issue increase support for malign actors?

(3) Does this issue disrupt the normal functioning of society?

Upon completion of the SOI analysis, further confirmation of the data and prioritization of effort should be sought through civil reconnaissance and local engagement.

Potential Sources of Instability	Instability Criteria			SOI?	Prioritization
	Does this issue decrease support for the Govt / legit governance? Explain.	Does this issue increase support for malign actors? Explain.	Does this issue disrupt the normal functioning of society? Explain.	Does the issue meet any Instability criteria?	Is the SOI a Priority Grievance for the local populace?
Drawing from the CPB, list all potential Sources of Instability (SOIs)	If yes, explain how the potential SOI decreases support for the government / legitimate governance institutions	If yes, explain how the potential SOI increases support for malign actors	If yes, explain how the potential SOI disrupts the normal functioning of society	If the issue meets instability criteria, it may be considered a Source of Instability	For those issues that are SOIs, prioritize them based on whether the SOI is also a priority grievance for the populace

Source of Stability Analysis Matrix

Each SOS is examined using the SOS Analysis Matrix and vetted against three stability criteria to ascertain the potential for establishing effective stability activities. A stability factor resulting in affirmative responses to any criteria is considered a viable issue for reinforcing stability activities. Similar to the SOI analysis, the more criteria met, the more likely the factor is supporting stability. The three criteria are:

(1) Does this issue increase support for the government or legitimate governance?

(2) Does this issue decrease support for malign actors?

(3) Does this issue increase societal and institutional capacity and capabilities?

Upon completion of the SOS analysis a determination should be made as to the efficacy of reinforcing the stability factor. It may be best left alone!

Potential Sources of Stability	Stability Criteria			SOS	Impact to mission
	Does this increase support for the Govt / legit governance? Explain.	Does this issue decrease support for malign actors? Explain.	Does this issue increase societal and institutional capacity and capabilities? Explain.	Does the issue meet any Stability criteria?	Do we need to support this SOS?
Drawing from the CPB, list all potential Sources of Stability (SOS)	If yes, explain how the potential SOS increases support for the government / legitimate governance institutions	If yes, explain how the potential SOS decreases support for malign actors	If yes, explain how the potential SOS increase societal and institutional capacity and capabilities	If the issue meets Stability criteria, it is considered a Resiliency	Determine whether the SOS is needed for mission success and/or whether we need to reinforce it

Stability Worksheet—Analysis

Using the Stability Worksheet. The following describes how to complete the various components of the Stability Worksheet (part 1). The explanation reflects a source of instability but the process is equally applicable to a resiliency. Top right chart represents the part 1 components. Bottom right chart shows the relationship of the information.

- *Source of Instability*. Using the SOI analysis matrix complete a brief description of the identified problem or issue.

- *Cause (Perception)*. The perceived cause of a SOI. This is usually derived from local perceptions / priority grievances as gathered through civil reconnaissance / local engagement or other polling sources.

- *Cause (Systematic)*. The root cause(s) of the problem that relate to the perceived causes. Root cause analysis seeks to identify and correct root causes, as opposed to simply addressing their symptoms. By repeatedly asking the question "Why" something is perceived as a problem (five is a good rule of thumb), you peel away the layers of symptoms, which can lead to the root cause of a problem.

- *Objective*. A statement of the conditions that will diminish the identified SOI. In many respects this is no different from identifying any other deliberate targeting objective. It may be stated as the opposite of the SOI.

- *Measures of Effectiveness (Indicators)*. MOE answers the question, "are we doing the right things?" and are used to assess changes in system behavior, capability, or the operational environment. They are tied to measuring the attainment of the objective. To identify MOEs consider, "how will I know if the objective has been achieved?"

Analysis						Design		
Source of (In)Stability	Cause (Perception)	Cause (Systemic)	Objective	MOE Indicators	MOE Data Sources	Activity	MOP Indicators	MOP Data Sources
Taken from SOI / SOS analysis	Population's perception (From a variety of polling data)	Root cause	Objective statement	Indicators reflecting measurable change as objective is achieved	Information sources allowing you to track indicators			

Analysis						Design		
Source of Instability	Causes (Perception)	Causes (Systemic)	Objective	MOE Indicators	MOE Data Sources	Activities	MOP Indicators	MOP Data Sources

An important note! Stability planners should recognize that not every SOI/S can be mitigated or protected through MAGTF organic capabilities or through nonlethal means. Certain SOI/S may be better mitigated or protected through other approaches which could include referral to intergovernmental/non-governmental-sponsored programs, Host Nation actions or in some cases, referred for prosecution by other MAGTF or Joint targeting approaches. Don't try and force a square peg into a round hole!

SAF Component 3—Design

The next component of SAF relates to designing stability activities to address the objective identified on the Stability Worksheet (part 1) and to target systematic causes of instability. Marines design, prioritize, and synchronize stabilization activities using the Activity Design Worksheet and complete the design section of the Stability Worksheet part 2. This process examines potential activities specifically related to issues captured during previous SOI/S analysis. Potential activities are then screened and refined using three Stability Criteria and 8 design principles. Additional actions include determining resource availability and finally, whether it is in the interests of the MAGTF or appropriate for the MAGTF to initiate the activity.

The Design component of SAF can be roughly equated to course of action development of MCPP. Activities are developed and harmonized with other MAGTF actions to support the commander's objectives.

Stability Worksheet—Design

The Stability Worksheet (Part 2) is used during the design phase to identify potential activities addressing the stability objective and systematic causes as well as to identify measures of performance and measures of performance data sources to monitor the activities. The Design components include:

Activities—The things you will do to mitigate the systematic causes of instability (or reinforce stability) and achieve the identified stability objective.

Measures of Performance (MOP)—A criterion to assess friendly actions that are tied to measuring task accomplishment. MOPs have two parts and answer these questions, "Was the assigned task(s) accomplished? Was the assigned task(s) accomplished to accepted standards? (i.e., Are we doing things right?) For example: Provide 500 gallons to the water resupply point daily. MOP 1 – Was 500 gallons of water delivered daily? MOP 2 – Was 500 gallons of water delivered in a usable condition?

Analysis						Design		
Source of (In)Stability	Cause (Perception)	Cause (Systemic)	Objective	MOE Indicators	MOE Data Sources	Activity	MOP Indicators	MOP Data Sources
						Activity to achieve objective	Indicators that measure progress toward activity completion	Information sources that track activity completion

MOP Data Sources—Methods to obtain the information identified in the MOP Indicators.

The final step in Design is to validate the activity identified in the Stability Worksheet (Part 2) as a viable stability non-lethal target. This validation occurs through civil reconnaissance and civil engagement. Civil reconnaissance and civil engagement examines actual local conditions to ensure planning assumptions were not corrupt or misguided. During this final step and prior to the execution phase, activities are validated, prioritized, and synchronized with overall MAGTF efforts. If the activity is deemed untenable or beyond mission parameters it is reevaluated though CPB and the entire process cycles again.

Activity Design Worksheet

The Activity Design Worksheet is a tool used in conjunction with the Stability Worksheet (Part 2) to assist with filtering activities against the stability criteria, design principles, resource availability and MAGTF mission. It facilitates designing stability activities predicated on previous SOI/S analysis. The SOI/S is captured in the header of the first column to ensure traceability. The proposed activity is entered into the first column. Subsequent rows, associated with each possible activity, are developed across the template addressing items identified in column headers. Explanation for the stability criteria questions remains the same. However, at this juncture, opportunity exists to reexamine data while fully explaining responses to stability criteria and exploring relative importance for prioritization. Proposed activities that meet two of

Identify Possible Activities (Insert SOI /SOS Objective here)	Stability Criteria			Design Principles								Resources				Select
	Does the activity increase support for government / governance? Explain.	Does the activity decrease support for malign actors? Explain.	Does the activity increase institutional and societal capacity and capability? Explain.	Sustainability	Local Ownership	Short-term v.s. Long Term Results	Leverage Support from other Org.	Culturally & Politically Appropriate	Accountability & Transparency	Leverage Existing Resiliencies	Flexibility	Money	Personnel	Expertise	Time	Is Activity Realistic or should it be done?
ID potential activities that contribute to achieving SOI / SOS objective. Input each activity separately in this column and proceed across each row to ascertain viability.	Explain how the activity will increase support for the government and/or legitimate governance institutions.	Explain how the activity will decrease support for malign actors.	Explain how the activity will increase institutional and societal capacity and capability.	Refine the proposed activity to make it meet as many Design Principles as possible.								Determine resource requirements.				Based on the MAGTF mission, stability criteria, design principles & resource availability, should the activity be implemented? Explain.

three Stability Criteria are then refined using the 8 Design Principles. It is important to note that activity design does not have to meet all design principles, but the probability of executing a successful activity increases significantly when all design principles are met. The next step is to screen each proposed activity against available resources (money, personnel, expertise, time) and to validate whether the activity is realistic or even meets the parameters of the MAGTF's mission.

SAF Component 4—Execution

The execution phase of SAF consists of delivering the nonlethal targeting package (i.e. completed (In)Stability Worksheet and associated products) to the operations department and gaining concurrence, conducting monitoring and evaluation (M&E) on approved nonlethal targeting packages, and conducting transition to competent authorities (event driven transition) or conducting closing actions at the conclusion of operations (time driven transition). The first step of this phase is simply finalizing the nonlethal target package so that it becomes part of the MAGTF operational effort. The second step is most significant because it establishes an iterative cycle of examination that eventually leads to the accomplishment of objectives or the termination of activities because they fail to achieve desired effects. M&E is conducted on three levels: performance, effectiveness, and overall stability.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Stability planning and execution demands an ability to understand and measure change in stability dynamics within the civil environment. SAF examines three different attributes of MAGTF actions and the civil environment to measure progress toward stability objectives. As introduced in the Analysis component of SAF, stability objectives and the related MOEs are determined. MOEs comprise one attribute. The Design component introduces activities and MOPs. MOPs comprise the second attribute. The Monitoring and Evaluation Matrix is a tool to track progress against a baseline to assess the impact activities are having. It focuses on MOPs and MOEs. In assessing MOPs consideration is given to:

SOI	Activity	Measure of Performance		Measure of Effect			Objective
		MOP Indicator	Status	MOE Indicator	Baseline	Change	
Taken from the Stability Worksheet	Taken from the Stability Worksheet	MOP Indicators related to selected activity on the Stability Worksheet	Status of selected activity	MOE Indicators related to selected activity on the Stability Worksheet	Baseline Data for MOE Indicator identified on the Stability Worksheet	Change in Baseline Data	Taken from the Stability Worksheet

- Whether the activities have been completed?
- Whether the activities are being implemented successfully?
- Whether the MOPs are appropriate?

Similarly, in assessing MOEs consideration is given to:

- Whether there is a change in the civil environment?
- Whether the change represents the intended effect on the civil environment?
- Whether the activities being conducted are the drivers of the change?

Overall stability is the third attribute. Rather than measuring the effect of individual activities, it takes into account the effect of ALL the activities conducted over a longer period of time, as well as the influence of external factors. It asks, "Is stability increasing or decreasing?" Key to measuring overall stability is identifying good indicators, creating a baseline, and then tracking the indicators at regular intervals, starting as early as possible. The best overall stability indicators reflect local perceptions of stability, NOT perceptions or assumptions held by outsiders. They are based on the question, "What will local people do or say differently if they believe the environment is getting more stable?"

Transition

The final step of the SAF process is to transition operations and to redeploy MAGTF assets to other contingencies or back to homestation for retrofit and reassignment. Initial transition criteria are established when activities are submitted for implementation; however, more definitive transition criteria will be established as operations progress and the M&E process determines most realistic circumstances based on progress and overall MAGTF transition criteria.