POST-CONFLICT OPERATIONS – A COOPERATIVE EFFORT

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Abstract: Post-conflict operations may be conducted prior to the complete end of a conflict. The past experience shows that it is most effective for these operations to be conducted when there is an acceptable security situation. The security aspect of post-conflict operations is based on the coordinating issue for beginning and maintaining such operations in which the military and civilian personnel are involved.

Keywords: reconstruction, reconciliation, security, support, post-conflict operations

1. Introduction

The analysis of the post-conflict period has to be accomplished, in our opinion, along with the setting off, the development and the settlement of the conflict, for its importance and extremely complex content to be very well understood, especially because this certain stage is essential to the future of the involved parties, but also to the areas in which the conflict had taken place. We begin from the fact that the entire evolution of a conflict has to be viewed as a complex process, with at least three basic components: the pre-conflict period, the actual conflict and the post-conflict period.

For the scientific rigorousness of our scientific endeavour, we consider that a terminological definition is necessary, namely, why we use the term of conflict and not that of war. The reasons are many, but we will only refer to two of them, which we consider to be the most relevant: the area of coverage that the conflict has is bigger than that of a war and the introduction of the idea that not every conflict leads to a war, when the vice-versa version is always possible, meaning war is always a high-intensity conflict.

Starting off from this consideration, instead of the well-known enunciation *the initial period of the war* we will constantly use *pre-conflict period* and in the same manner we will use the collocations *actual conflict* and *post-conflict period*.

If we talk about conflict, it is mandatory for us to have, in the first place, the image of a non-violent state of misunderstanding, disagreement or clash of opposite interests between rival parties, which, under certain circumstances, can degenerate into disputes and violent actions and even into war.

In fact, if we accept that the arrival and the evolution of conflicts is determined by the passing (voluntarily or not) beyond certain, generally known, limits and the incapacity of those who face certain state pressures, the approach into the new era of knowledge amounts to a significant accession of the potential of anticipation and response in crowded situations and of the control capacity of dysfunction.

Logically, these premises should lead to the decrease or even the dismissing of tensions, of dysfunctions and critical imbalance, and especially of those that are explosive.

All of these are supposed to happen before the aggravation of the situations that can become conflicts, especially in the initial phases, of contrasts, of opposition, of contradictions solvable right from the treaty table.

2. The post-conflict period – specific elements.

The post-conflict periods that follow up after the end of the hostilities join the operations to support peace and reconstruction process.

While it is generally understood that reconstruction often takes place at various times during and after conflict, the framework places tasks between the cessation of **violent conflict** and the return to **normalization**. For the purposes of this framework, normalization is reached when [1]:

– extraordinary outside intervention is no longer needed;
– the processes of governance and economic activity largely function on a self-determined and self-sustaining basis;
– internal and external relations are conducted according to generally accepted norms of behavior.

The framework tasks of reconstruction phases is organized around four distinct issue areas, or "pillars": security; justice/reconciliation; social/economic well-being; and governance/participation. These areas are presented in the figure below.

Security & Public Order	Justice & Rule of Law	Democracy & Governance	Economic & social Recovery
Restoring the State's ability to provide security and maintain public order	Strengthening the rule of law1and respect for human rights	Supporting the emergence of legitimate political institutions and participatory processes	Promoting social and economic recovery and development Safe return or resettlement of internally displaced persons and refugees uprooted by conflict

Figure 1: Pillars of reconstruction phases

But for the subsequent reconstruction and development of a built-up area affected by conflict, the construction and the maintenance of a stable security become primary conventions. So the security of areas in post-conflict period gains major importance.

Before the last decade of the previous century, few have anticipated that the period of Post Conflict Reconstruction (PCR) will become one of the most serious and long-standing challenges of the military engagements of post-Cold War. The process of planning and instruction, as well as the knowledge of those involved in these, were poor. This lack of preparation led to the failure of the states and the international organization in the attempt to build nations and, in some cases, their efforts made the crises even worse. There are many questions regarding the post-conflict media, like those regarding who should carry responsibility financially, legally and morally. But very few consider one aspect: the world should be better prepared to engage into PCR. The conflicts after the beginning of the last decade of the previous century proved that military

operations are just a stabilizing element and a reconstruction post-conflict element. PCR includes military and civil duties in five different fields [2]:

– the guarantee of *security* (even for the military and police functions);

– the input of *essential services* (for example water, electricity and medical aid);

– the building of *political structures* (for example, the elaboration of a constitution and of an election system);

– the building of an *economical infrastructure*

– the easing of *reconciliation* between parties that were previously in conflict.

The security environment of the populated conflict-affected areas differs from each other because of a few aspects, from the security environment of the areas not affected by conflict.

Firstly, in the post-conflict periods *we experience the acute need of concentration over the input of security process,* a process that is seen as a top-priority and as a pre-measure needed for the successful implementation of all the other necessary measures. If an inhabited area is not safe, then processes like subsequent reconstruction or social and economic development will be extremely hard to achieve. The reality out on the field is of such nature that the security of the inhabited areas must be done in parallel with the repeated attempts to put an end to violence in the conflict areas and to allow the combatants to reach an agreement regarding the situations in which the practice of physical strength becomes justified.

In the second place, in a post-conflict period, *the security of built-up areas in post-conflict periods is closely connected to the operations that support the peace,* which explains why the process of building security might be greatly influenced by other states that were also involved in the conflict medium as inputs of military force. The foreign presence usually has more of a military quality and less of a

civil one; this implies the grant of great attention to the building of defence capabilities and diminished attention to the legislative and forensic areas.

In the third place, *the responsibility of the forces that intervene is extremely big.* It is possible, in the moment of engaging, for the security medium to be collapsing; the biggest part of the local infrastructure, public or private, to be destroyed; the local leaders to feel like they are losing their power and influence and so to take up a hostile attitude; the law to be completely ignored, and the democracy mostly suppressed. All of these are very plausible possibilities if an inhabited area is affected by conflict. That is why the forces that intervene are confronting a big responsibility, so big that the smallest mistake can have devastating effects for the security environment.

In the fourth place, in post-conflict periods *the efforts are focused on actions that rarely happen* in non-conflict situations. This leads to the disarmament of the combatants, the confiscation of guns, mine-clearing actions, the reintegration of ex-fighters in a local security field, well-defined from a legal point of view or in the civilian life, the demobilization of child-soldiers and the return to their own families and communities. Such activities need a series of capacities and special qualifications, which the local communities cannot have. The assistance of the international community becomes, in this case, compulsory.

However, despite the differences between the security of populated areas in post-conflict times and the security of populated areas unaffected by conflict, the forces that come into action must respect the same principles. The analysis of what must be done to provide that security must ground itself on another analysis of the characteristics of the environment, of the protocol that must be followed and of the interactions that take place. The involved parties must rely on the trust of the population, because if the population does

not trust them, they will not prove their efficiency, and their mission will fail.

3. The Need for Cooperation – A Lesson Learned

The point the World Bank makes when it defines the post-conflict reconstruction as "the support for transition from a state of conflict to a state of peace by reconstructing the socio-economic component of a country" is extremely interesting. The same belief is shared by other international organizations, because it refers to the vast process of fast and easy translation from a state of conflict to a state of peace. One of the most complicated problems that arises in this regard is who is to be made responsible for this vast process, because it has come to a point when the belief that it is not sufficiently coherent is widespread, especially because of the difficulty of coordinating such a process and assigning it to a sole international organization.

The wars in Iraq and Afghanistan have not only underlined the need of a comprehensive approach of the PCR, but they raised a set of completely new questions regarding the place of politics in this field.

In the field of cooperation, there are some important steps that have been made: NATO Foreign Ministers held a meeting with the EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the OSCE Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary General of the Council of Europe to discuss closer cooperation and issues of common concern. This was the first time such a meeting took place [3].

This fact offers the possibility of realizing major changes in the structures of the institutions. NATO could represent the key to solving this apparently great challenge. Why? Because the Organization has unique expertise when it comes to military stability. And it is also involved in the socio-political sphere, although it treads very lightly in this area, not being its major concern. NATO should become an expert in the field of civil reconstruction in the same way it is now an expert in military stability.

Besides the NATO involvement, an international effort to create more solid PCR capabilities should focus on making NATO the international organization in charge of reconstruction, and this transformation should begin with the Organization assuming its pivotal role inside a PCR network of global partnerships with states that are not members of NATO and regional and international organizations.

The PCR involves a mix of military and civil expertise, but no organization has both. The creation of a real interface between military and civilian personnel constitutes a great challenge both culturally and organizationally.

Besides NATO, two other organizations, the United Nations and the European Union can be used as instruments of occidental collaboration in the ongoing operations of stabilization. Of the aforementioned three, the UN is the biggest one. It is in charge of a vast number of nation building missions in the whole world, and, although a certain degree of blame can be put on it whenever such a mission fails, it was the power engine for many successes. The interventions led by the UN in Cambodia, Eastern Slavonia, Eastern Timor, El Salvador, Mozambique, Namibia and Sierra Leone were all successful in changing the direction in which war-affected countries are developing and, with the exception of Cambodia, the UN intervention led to durable democratic regimes. The UN also plays a significant role in all other nation-building missions sustained by other institutions. There are many UN operations without any involvement from the EU, NATO and USA. But there is no UE, NATO or US operation without a certain involvement from the UN.

The European Union, NATO and the UN have their own pluses and minuses regarding the leading of nation-building

missions. UN's experience is most diverse, its legitimacy is regarded as widespread and it represents the best known formal authority. By definition, its actions receive international support. Unlike the other organizations, the UN can legally enforce its point of view with both the member and non-member states. Unlike the other organizations, it can legally determine the governments of member states to finance operations, even though they do not agree or do not consider them proper.

By contrast, NATO can easily dislocate huge forces that can be used to force their way in if necessary. So, even though the UN is the best suited organization for most peace-keeping operations, NATO is better suited for more difficult missions such as the ones in the Balkans. On the other hand, NATO doesn't have the authority to conduct the implementation of civil stipulations and it always depends on the UN and/or certain benevolent coalitions formed on the spot by the countries willing to assume the plethora of non-military positions that are essential to the success of any nation-building operation. Thereby, NATO's "exit strategy" always depends on other organizations.

NATO's transformation has had a certain degree of impact on the EU-NATO relations. NATO has reformed its structures and policies in order to be able to counter the latest threats, such as terrorism, and the main interest of the Organization will clearly take this path, thus turning away its attention from the management of such crises that are the object of *The Petersburg Tasks,* first agreed upon at the June 1992 [4].

International organisations do not work in isolation. They complement each other to help create a peaceful environment in which economies can flourish and individuals prosper [5]. The EU and NATO are not in a direct competition. International organisations do not work in isolation.

4. Conclusion

They most often take action in a complementary way, against common targets. NATO is the architecture on which the Allies build their collective defence and the development of EU's capabilities must allow European countries to contribute more to their own safety and carry out missions in areas where the United States should not be involved.

The exact division of tasks between the two organizations will reflect the contents and physiognomy of every crisis, and also the conduct of the interventions. The operations that require a massive military presence will remain, at least for now, under NATO's prerogatives, while the EU will use their political and military resources in peace keeping missions, humanitarian actions and post-calamity aid, in other words in the administration of crises and conflicts that do not involve huge military structures, spread on vast territories and with ongoing armed conflicts.

In conclusion, as we have previously shown, the legal and durable settlement of the hugely complex issues from the post-conflict period is one of the most relevant stages of a conflict, and all the international organizations, both civilian and military, both governmental and non-governmental are called to action.

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