Euro-Atlantic Solidarity on Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: Adjusting the Strategic Approaches

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Introduction

There are many reasons to agree with the statement that "the obvious lesson—that conflict prevention must begin as part of post-conflict reconstruction—is seldom drawn."[1] Dealing with this problem among the plethora of issues involved in making the world a safer place for life and social progress calls for greater solidarity of those who can draft and implement adequate strategies, and who possess sufficient resources to see them through. The countries of the Euro-Atlantic security zone and their institutions—primarily NATO and the EU—have a special political responsibility in implementing an effective post-conflict rehabilitation strategy. Adjusting the threat perception systems of Europe and North America will have the beneficial effect of not only maintaining cohesion during eventual interventions, but also in the aftermath of the conflict. Certainly, Euro-Atlantic solidarity is another crucial component in the mechanism of post-conflict rehabilitation strategic efforts. In a similar way some changes would probably be needed in the very conceptual model of "post-conflict rehabilitation" in order to adjust the present strategic approach. All three adjustments will require strenuous and concerted effort, and they will succeed only if the worth of Euro-Atlantic solidarity is fairly and objectively calculated: the two sides of the Atlantic need each other to cope with the immense task of achieving a secure global community that is capable of carrying out the multitude of global activities. Achieving a balance between cooperation and healthy competition between Europe and North America is the maturity test for politicians and thinkers on two continents. Working together and/or in a coordinated manner on post-conflict reconstruction in various places of the globe has the potential to produce a positive net effect, including rehabilitating the bruised relations suffered during the last year between parts of Europe and the U.S.

Post-Conflict Reconstruction: A 'Must' of Present-Day Conflict Management

In 1998 the UN Secretary-General described the nature and the necessity of post-conflict peace-building activities as actions undertaken at the end of a conflict to consoli-

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[1] Keith Krausse, "Conflict Prevention," in *International Security: Challenges and Prospects* (Bern: Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Centre for International Security Policy, 2003), 20.

date peace and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontations.[2] The consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict requires more than purely diplomatic and military action; an integrated peace-building effort is needed to address the various factors that have caused or are threatening a conflict. The peace-building effort may involve the creation or strengthening of national institutions, monitoring elections, promoting human rights, and providing for reintegration and rehabilitation programs, as well as creating conditions for resumed development. Peace-building does not replace ongoing humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crises. Its aims are to build on, add to, or reorient such activities in ways that are designed to reduce the risk of a resumption of conflict and contribute to creating conditions most conducive to reconciliation, reconstruction, and recovery. In post-conflict societies, reconciliation should be encouraged; respect for human rights must be demonstrated; political inclusiveness must be fostered and national unity promoted; safe, smooth, and early repatriation and resettlement of refugees and displaced persons must be ensured; ex-combatants must be reintegrated into society; the availability of small arms should be curtailed; and domestic and international resources for economic recovery and reconstruction must be mobilized. Each of these tasks is linked to the other, and success will require a concerted and coordinated effort on all fronts. The authors of the Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty ("The Responsibility To Protect," December 2001) point to the main issues that confront policy makers in exercising the responsibility to rebuild in the three most immediate and crucial areas: security, justice, and economic development.[3]

The experiences of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century show that there is no substitute for this clear post-conflict or post-intervention strategy. International intervention in post-conflict countries will be needed in the longer term to achieve stability and prevent new conflicts. However, faced with the growing number of post-conflict countries that the international community—mostly the Euro-Atlantic community—will have to deal with in the coming years, adjusting the dominant post-conflict rehabilitation strategy becomes indispensable.

The three dimensions of the adjustment of the post-conflict rehabilitation strategy are:

- Carry out a Threat Perception Adjustment "Operation";
- Adjust the Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Model;
- Upgrade Euro-Atlantic Solidarity.

These will be addressed in order below.

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[2] Kofi Annan, UN Documents/1998/UN Secretary General, "The Causes of Conflict and the Promotion of Durable Peace and Sustainable Development in Africa."

[3] "The Responsibility to Protect," Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, International Development Research Centre, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Canada (December 2001), 40–43.

1. Carry Out a Threat Perception Adjustment "Operation"

There is no doubt for any student of security issues how significant the security threat perception is to future conceptual, political, strategic, and institutional reactions for coping with the coming danger. The Western unity in perceiving the threat of the rising Kosovo crisis led to a united policy, and collective support for NATO's actions. This largely compensated for the lack of a clear UN Security Council mandate, which was obstructed by three of the Council's members, two of which were permanent.

This unfortunately did not happen in the run-up to the crisis in Iraq. While the Bush Administration saw on 12 September 2001 the danger as stemming from Iraq and, logically, linked its response to the challenge of terrorism to regime change in Baghdad, some of the leading European states preferred to rely on their own experience in dealing with terrorism and religious fundamentalism. This reliance on past lessons was additionally stimulated by a sense of the limits of their own capabilities, calling for more cautious reactions. Hence, some Europeans did not choose quick military solutions in dealing with the Iraqi regime, despite its horrific human rights record, but rather a course of compromise and containment of Saddam Hussein. The United States perceived Iraq as a direct threat that could create problems in the short-term, while some members of the EU calculated the threat as a long-term issue. Washington considered military force to be necessary, while some European countries preferred the continuation of political and diplomatic pressure on Baghdad. Logically enough, these perceptions and assessments generated the unilateralism vs. multilateralism debate in world politics, leading to much talk of divergences within the Alliance and the weakening of the institutional link between Europe and North America.

Such a weakening may have disastrous consequences for global stability and European security—a development that should be prevented. Julian Lindley-French is correct in stating that, "if the U. S. succeeds (in Iraq) then the credibility of America and the broader West will have been immeasurably strengthened in the minds of those inimical to both. If the U. S. fails then those who killed thousands of Europeans and Americans on 9/11 will have been tragically emboldened."[4] That is why a security perception adjustment process between the two sides of the Atlantic must become an integral part of the complex decision-making process of NATO and of the member and Partner states.

2. Adjust the Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Model

Stabilizing the situation and preventing the recurrence of conflict in a post-intervention or post-war society will be a long-term proposition. The difficult choices post-conflict reconstructors have to make—and the frequent lack of efficiency of such operations, as past experience shows—will not always require a full spectrum of activities to rehabilitate a given society. Furthermore, the international community is not always ready

[4] Julian Lindley-French, "Europe Needs the U.S. to Succeed in Iraq," *Wall Street Journal Europe*, 21 August 2003.

to deliver the support that would meet all the tasks of rehabilitating a war-torn society. Bosnia is one of the few cases where the international community constructed a post-conflict rehabilitation model and provided the resources to bring it to life. At the end of the day, the international community achieved only rather modest results, which generated negative feedback regarding the realism of the model that was applied. Of course, in Bosnia no deadline was set for when the foreign troops should leave. However, would this always be an option for the international community in the various parts of the world where it is already involved or might become involved?

A strategic re-adjustment would require pulling back from any maximal tasks of rehabilitating a post-conflict society.[5] It is simply a fact of life that the Euro-Atlantic community cannot involve itself in a short- to mid-term process of integration of all war-torn societies, as has happened to a certain extent in the Balkans. This is hardly the chance to draft all the elements of a re-thought model of post-conflict rehabilitation that would satisfy both the need of stability and of economy of investments. But a new and more realistic strategy of implementing the post-conflict rehabilitation model is more than necessary. The basic requirements of this transformation of the model should be, however, never compromising on fundamental human rights, and generating in the short term mobilization within the society in question to assume the leadership responsibilities for the reconstruction effort. When this is obviously impossible, the international community will have to both scale down its activities and invest military presence, management, and financial resources. Lastly, the international community will still have to have the courage to accept that there are certain territories, populated by certain people, which should be left temporarily to themselves to suggest a form of social interaction that will give the outside world an opportunity to provide some help.

3. Upgrade Euro-Atlantic Solidarity

Considering the immensity and complexity of the post-conflict rehabilitation tasks at hand around the world, it would be necessary to rethink the vital nature of Euro-Atlantic solidarity in carrying out the tasks of reconstruction. More coordination, and probably some division of labor, would be indispensable between the two sides of the Atlantic, but a substitute for genuine Euro-Atlantic solidarity can hardly be imagined. Commonality of values requires an additional, conceptual impetus to reinvigorate this solidarity: Europe and the United States need each other not in order to compete with each other, but in order to cooperate. Otherwise, any thought or feeling of solidarity risks being neutralized easily in the midst of any new round of competing visions, interests, or positions. One must not expect a uniformity of perceptions and reactions to what is going on in the world, but cooperative attitudes and minimum solidarity are simply the rational choice. Continuous dialogue within Europe and across the Atlantic provides

[5] Similar suggestions concerning the "democratic reconstruction model" may be seen in Marina Ottaway, "Promoting Democracy after Conflict: The Difficult Choices," *International Studies Perspectives* 4 (2003): 314–22.

the one guarantee that Euro-Atlantic solidarity will continue to be nourished and revitalized. Otherwise, the root causes of the great problems of the world will never be uncovered and addressed.

Conclusions

The post-conflict rehabilitation situations in the broader Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia, and other parts of the world where NATO and the EU will have to cooperate may be hard to predict and prioritize. The Western Balkans is still high on the priority list of EU and NATO post-intervention and post-war rehabilitation activities. A deeper involvement of the UN in the efforts of post-war rehabilitation will probably be increasingly necessary over time. However, the UN's efforts would remain ineffective without adequate readjustments of the Euro-Atlantic post-conflict rehabilitation strategy, and without sufficient solidarity between the two sides of the Atlantic.

Bibliography

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