

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

Plamen Pantev*

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Conflict prevention must begin as a part of post-conflict reconstruction, and NATO and the EU have political responsibility in implementation this process. Peace-building activities do not replace humanitarian and development activities in countries emerging from crises. Stabilizing the situation and preventing the recurrence of conflict in a post-intervention or post-war society will be needed for a long term. The immensity and complexity of the post-conflict rehabilitation would be needed to rethink the vital nature of the Euro-Atlantic solidarity and more coordination between the two sides of the Atlantic.

Key words: conflict prevention, post-conflict reconstruction, peace-building

1. 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 to make the world a safer place for life and social progress calls for greater solidarity of those who can draft and implement adequate strategies, and provide enough resources. The countries of the Euro-Atlantic security zone and their institutions - NATO and the EU, have a special political responsibility in implementing an effective post-conflict rehabilitation. Adjusting the threat perception systems of Europe and North America will have the beneficial effect of not only remaining intact 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, probably, some changes would be needed in the very conceptual model of 'post-conflict rehabilitation'

to adjust the present strategic approach. All three adjustments would require strenuous activity and they will not fail only if the worth of Euro-Atlantic solidarity is fairly and objectively calculated: the two sides of the Atlantic are in bad need of each other to cope with the immense task of getting a global world, which is secure to carry out the multitude of global activities. The measure between cooperation and healthy competition of Europe and North America is the maturity test of the present politicians and thinkers of the two continents. Working together and/or in a coordinated manner on post-conflict reconstruction in various places of the globe has the potential of producing a positive net effect, including rehabilitating the bruised relations during the last year between parts of Europe and the USA.

2. 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:² these are actions, undertaken at

* Director of Institute for Security and International Studies, Sofia, Bulgaria.

the end of a conflict to consolidate peace and prevent a recurrence of armed confrontations. The consolidation of peace in the aftermath of conflict requires more than purely diplomatic and military action, and that an integrated peace-building effort is needed to address the various factors which 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, 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 every 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' of December 2001 point to the main issues that confront policy makers in exercising the responsibility to rebuild in the three most immediate crucial areas: security, justice and economic development.³

The experience of the 1990s and the beginning of the new century shows, that there is no substitute for this clear post-conflict or post-intervention strategy. The international intervention in post-conflict countries will be needed in the longer-term to reach stability and prevent new conflicts. However, faced with a growing number of post-conflict countries that the international community, mostly the Euro-Atlantic community, will have to deal with in the next years, adjustments of the post-conflict rehabilitation strategy become indispensable.

The Three Dimensions of the Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Strategy Adjustment:

a) Carry Out a Threat Perception Adjustment 'Operation'

There is no doubt for any student of security issues how significant the security threat perception

is for further 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 support to the NATO's actions. This largely compensated the weakness of the missing clear UN Security Council mandate, obstructed by three of its members, two of which were permanent.

This unfortunately did not happen in the crisis in Iraq. While on 12 September 2001 the US Administration saw the danger stemming from Iraq and logically, the response to the challenge of terrorism was linked 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. The 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 away with the Iraqi regime, despite its horrific human rights record, but rather the compromise and reliance on containing Saddam. The United States perceived Iraq as a direct threat that could create problems in the short-term while some of the EU leading countries calculated it as a long-term issue. Washington considered military force was necessary while some European countries preferred the continuation of the political and diplomatic pressure on Baghdad. Logically these perceptions and assessments generated the unilateralism vs. multilateralism question in world politics, the divergences within the Alliance and weakening of the institutional link between Europe and North America.

Such 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.

b) Adjust the Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Model
Stabilising the situation and preventing the recurrence of conflict in a post-intervention or post-war society will be needed for long. The difficult choices post-conflict re-constructors have to make and the lack of efficiency as past experience shows

would not always require a full-spectrum of activities to rehabilitate the respective societies. Furthermore, the international community is not always ready to deliver 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 faced rather modest results, which generates negative feedbacks at the realism of the model that was applied. Of course in Bosnia no deadline was set when the foreign troops should leave. However, could this be the option of the international community in the various places of the world where it is involved and would necessarily have to get involved?

A strategic re-adjustment, according to us, would require pulling away from any maximal tasks of rehabilitating a post-conflict society.⁵ It is just a fact of life that the Euro-Atlantic community cannot involve in a short-to-mid-term process of integration all war-torn societies as this 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 local national mobilisation to assume the responsibilities of the leadership of the reconstruction activity. When this is obviously impossible, the international community will have to carry out both scaling-down of its activities and investing military presence, management and financial resources. And lastly, the international community will still have to have the courage to accept that there are certain territories, populated by people, which should be left temporarily to suggest themselves what form of social interaction may give the opportunity to the outside world to provide some help.

c) Upgrade Euro-Atlantic Solidarity

Considering the immensity and complexity of the post-conflict rehabilitation tasks worldwide it would be needed to re-think the vital nature of the Euro-Atlantic solidarity in carrying out the tasks of reconstruction. More coordination, probably some division of labour would be indispensable between the two sides of the Atlantic, but hardly a substitute for genuine Euro-Atlantic solidarity could be proposed. Commonality of values requires an additional - conceptual, impetus to reinvigorate this solidarity: Europe and the United States need each other not in competition between themselves, but in cooperation. Otherwise any thought or feeling of solidarity risks to be neutralised easily in the midst of any new round of competing visions, interests or positions. One must not expect uniformity of perceptions and reactions to what is going on in the world, but cooperative attitudes and minimum solidarity are just the rational choice. Non-stopping dialogue within Europe and within the Euro-Atlantic community is the guarantee that solidarity will continuously be nourished and re-vitalised. Otherwise, the root causes of the really big problems of the world will never be reached and solved.

3. Conclusions

The post-conflict rehabilitation situations in the broader Middle East, Caucasus, Central Asia and other places of the world where NATO and EU will have to cooperate may be hard to predict and enlist. The Western Balkans is still on the high priority list of the EU and NATO post-intervention and post-war rehabilitation activities. A deeper involvement of the UN in the efforts of post-war rehabilitation would, probably, be needed more and more. However, UN's efforts would remain ineffective without adequate re-adjustments of the post-conflict rehabilitation strategy and without enough solidarity between the two sides of the Atlantic. ■

NOTES

1 Keith Krause, Conflict Prevention, in: 'International Security: Challenges and Prospects', Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Centre for International Security Policy, Bern, 2003, p. 20.

2 Koffi 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, p. 40-43.

4 Julian Lindley-French, Europe Needs the U. S. to Succeed in Iraq, in: 'Wall Street Journal Europe', 21 August, 2003.

5 Similar suggestions, concerning the 'democratic reconstruction model' may be seen in: Marina Ottaway, 'Promoting Democracy after Conflict: The Difficult Choices', International Studies Perspectives (2003) 4, 314-322.