

A photograph of the Golden Gate Bridge in San Francisco, California. The bridge is a suspension bridge with two large towers and numerous cables. It spans across a body of water, and the lower part of the bridge and the water are shrouded in a thick, white fog. The sky is a pale blue with wispy white clouds. In the background, there are hills and a tall tower structure.

PROJECTING  
STABILITY  
IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

EDITED BY  
SONIA LUCARELLI  
ALESSANDRO MARRONE  
FRANCESCO N. MORO

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**“Projecting Stability in an Unstable World”**

Editors: Sonia Lucarelli; Alessandro Marrone; and Francesco Niccolò Moro

Research Assistant: Marco Valigi

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# PROJECTING STABILITY IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

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# PROJECTING STABILITY IN AN UNSTABLE WORLD

## AN INTRODUCTION

*Sonia Lucarelli, Alessandro Marrone, Francesco N. Moro*

The destabilization of NATO's neighbourhood since 2011, both in the North Africa and Middle East and in the post-Soviet space, has fuelled a reflection about the nexus between Allies' security and the stability of their neighbours. At the same time, the boundaries between internal and external security have become more blurred, with the wave of terrorist attacks in European cities linked in various ways to the rise of Islamic State after the collapse of statehood in Syria and Iraq. Such a change in the international security environment has posed the question of what a military alliance such as NATO could do to contribute to project stability beyond its borders. Such a question is not entirely new in the Alliance's post-Cold War history. Since the 1990s, crisis management operations and then stability operations have been managed in various Balkan states over more than a decade. The NATO military and political commitment to stabilize Afghanistan, after the terrorist attacks against the US, initiated in 2003 with the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF) and is continuing today with the Resolute Support mission. A wide and deep range of partnership has been established with countries in Europe's neighbourhood and beyond, in order to build cooperative security and regional stability. Against this background, the international workshop organized in Bologna on May 10-11, 2017, was meant to reflect on NATO's approach to stability, and what this implies for the relations with its neighbouring countries, in both conceptual and operational terms.

For NATO, stability is a less familiar concept than security, its roots and implications for policy more difficult to grasp. The current Strategic Concept, adopted in 2010, had already broadened the portfolio of security challenges to be dealt by NATO well beyond armed attacks falling under Article 5 commitment: instability close to Alliance's perimeter, cyber security, terrorism, energy security, received significant attention by that document. Then, in 2014, Russian annexation of Crimea and the following Russian aggressive behaviour has brought NATO military posture to focus more on collective defence. In this context, if the Alliance wants to adopt a 360 degrees approach to security challenges in the current international security environment, understanding and unpacking the concept of stability is as difficult as needed.

While there are no common definitions of stability, neither in the academic nor in the policy literature, the recent debate seems to turn away from a focus on promoting democracy or respect of human rights, which dominated in the past decades. Stability is rather discussed as pragmatic and minimalist concept based on security (meant as limited societal and political violence), resilience of social and political institutions which ensure a certain degree of governance, and a level of economic and social development needed to stabilize a specific country. This way to frame the concept of stability does match a political milieu, in Europe and North America, less keen than in the 1990s and 2000s to undertake ambitious and transformative military intervention in crisis areas, especially after the costly interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq. A reflection on how a more limited, realistic and nuanced approach to stability is the subject of the first part of this



publication – as it was the focus of the first Working Group in the international workshop. Accordingly, when it comes to stability operations, the understanding of the micro-foundation of conflicts, the local ownership and legitimacy of the stabilization process, the long-term commitment coupled with constant readjustments of the overarching political plan, are highlighted as crucial elements.

Another fundamental element in any attempt to stabilize a crisis area is the coordination among the International Organization (IOs) involved in the operational theatre - the topic of the second Working Group and thus the second part of this publication. The civil-military cooperation remains as problematic as needed, although a number of lessons learned can be drawn from past and ongoing operations. Yet the problem is broader: it spans from intra-agency cooperation to “comprehensive”, “integrated” or “whole-of-government” approach, up to the strategic level of relations among NATO, EU, UN, OSCE and other relevant IOs. Here the Alliance faces different challenges but also opportunities to improve cooperation and coordination with others, and particularly with the European Union.

At the same time, the importance of local actors in crisis cannot be overlooked. Usually, a number of stakeholders have a shared interest in the outcome of a stabilization process and demonstrate some degree of ownership about it, therefore it is crucial for NATO and other IOs to understand their position and tailor the approach to the various spoilers. Here the Non-Governmental Organization (NGOs) working on the ground with the local civil society have a significant role to play. However, different aims, mandates, organizational cultures and a number of other factors have been often hampering the interaction between a military Alliance and civilian NGOs. The third section of this publication deals also with these obstacles and the possible ways to overcome them, on the basis of the findings of the third Working Group.

As confirmed by the debates during the workshop, the conceptual, political and operational questions about a possible NATO role to support the stabilization of its neighbourhood, particularly through stability operations, are numerous and complex. However, some important lessons can be drawn from an assessment based on the three lenses of what stability operations mean for NATO, how coordination among IOs can be enhanced, and how interaction with local actors and NGOs can be improved.

## **1. The evolving character of NATO stability operations**

From a NATO point of view, in the future stability operations that might take place will be characterized by the requirements of stabilization both in the short and the long run, which involves deeper changes in governance to guarantee sustainability. Also, because of the aforementioned impact of neighbourhood instability over Allies' societies, they will have to protect the domestic security of NATO members by addressing the links between conflicts occurring in third countries with transnational terrorism, organized crime, smuggling of human beings, and border security. The multiplicity of these challenges and of the domains involved entails that NATO will probably have to face a greater complexity in terms of interacting with other external actors (with more IOs and more NGOs involved than in the past), and that possibly NATO will not be in the lead of the stabilization effort (or of some of its key aspects). This is also due to the fact that political fatigue and the need to military recovery from large-scale out of area operations make NATO countries less willing and able to commit to ISAF-style operations. From a Western point of view, this unwillingness/inability could imply a three-fold shift of approaches to stability operations: (1) from crisis management to training missions; (2) from NATO-led all-encompassing missions to the provision of “niche” capabilities; and (3) from land operations to air, naval or special forces ones.



## **2. The politics of cooperation among IOs.**

While cooperation among different IOs is often found as an essential requirement for the success of stabilization, academic literature and practical experience often highlighted how such cooperation is hindered by competitive pressures. IOs can compete with each other in the same environment, for instance in terms of Member States funding, capabilities, political capital. This inter-agency rivalry can lead to a general lack of coherence in the measures undertaken, duplication of efforts, waste of resources that in turn diminish the likely of success. The “politics” of interaction, and how to deal with the strategic autonomy of each actor are thus immediate challenges to be dealt with. Enhancing cooperation among IOs would benefit from an approach taking into account the three major levels at which it occurs. At the upper level, it would be necessary to reach beforehand an agreement and a roadmap that provides clear guidelines on what IOs want to achieve together. This implies the respective leadership and the IOs Member States should constructively engage on the goals they share, and then proceed to a fruitful, conflict-minimizing, division of labour through recognition of the synergies. At a middle level, on the basis of such top-down guidelines, a proper institutionalization of the relationships among IOs is necessary to create permanent loci that function as incentives to dialogue. Establishing steering committees, identifying points of contacts, setting up information sharing and joint analysis mechanisms, enabling staff-to-staff exchanges, etc. all represent strategies that, based on experience, can bear clear benefits. At the lower level, in the operational theatres, the IOs should design their organizations (from chain of commands to monitoring systems) to ensure that decisions established at the upper levels are implemented, while leveraging the already good cooperation on the ground within stabilization operations that may exist.

## **3. The relations between NATO and NGOs.**

When it comes to NATO-NGOs relations, it is important to understand the different perspectives that belong to each side. From the perspective of NGOs, a major concern is the loss of neutrality, with the consequences this entails for the credibility of their operations. Perception of involvement with actors that undertake military activities can lead to severe problems in dealing with local actors and the care of civilians if being involved in “military activities”. The fear of being used as a tool for NATO in order to acquire relevant information should also be considered a primary problem, and source of divergence. Another problem includes the different organizational culture and structure that is typical of several NGOs (which, by the way, can vastly differ among themselves in this aspect). When dealing with NATO, different perceptions of “hierarchy” can constitute a problem, and so does the perception of risks of being “commanded” and controlled by armed forces (that have superior material resources). Furthermore, this is coupled with the perceived risk of an overall “militarization” of peace-building operations, that also brings to a diversion of funds from aid and development-related activities to more military-related initiatives. Conversely, from the perspective of NATO, the main obstacles derived from the lack of coherence between their aims and those of several NGOs, which are seen as pursuing their specific organizational agendas, as well as from the growing competition among NGOs in order to obtain resources from international organizations. Military people within NATO are also hit by the political and ideological reasons









WORKING GROUP

I





STABILIZATION  
RETHINKING INTERVENTION  
IN WEAK AND FRAGILE STATES

*Roberto Belloni – University of Trento*

Since the early 1990s many international interventions have aimed at spreading liberal institutions, norms and values in a number of so-called “weak” or “failing states” through the use of a variety of military and civilian tools. These interventions take place in the midst of on-going war or during the peace settlement process with both international organizations and (mostly Western) states seeking to avoid the relapse into war while building viable democratic institutions and a market economy. Since the September 2001 attacks on the United States, the perception that weak or failing states constitute a threat to international peace and stability has further motivated international involvement in areas of instability.

According to most accounts, after more than two decades the results of these endeavors are mixed. International interveners have learned the hard way about the practical challenges of peace enforcement, peace implementation and state-building. These missions are typically long, expensive, complicated and are limited in their effectiveness due to the difficulties inherent in implementing state institutions locally in any sustainable and legitimate way. These difficulties have different explanations. While some critics have denounced Western arrogance in attempting to spread neo-liberal norms and institutions, others have focused their analysis on the technical obstacles of implementation (for a balanced assessment see Debiel, Held, Schneckener, 2016). Be that as it may, the awareness of both the complexity and uncertainty characterizing political and social processes, as well as the problems international actors have faced in dealing with them, have suggested a more modest approach.

The increasing geopolitical competition with rising powers, especially China and Russia, has led Western policymakers to reconsider their stance on interventionism in weak and failing states. China and Russia have increasingly asserted (or re-asserted) themselves on the international stage. At the regional level, Saudi Arabia and, of utmost importance, Iran, advance their staunch confidence and assertiveness in their foreign policies regarding the Middle East. All of these states pose a new challenge to Western interventionism because they are scarcely interested, if at all, in democratic conditionality. Rather, they prefer to exert their influence through various military, diplomatic and economic means, which are deployed with little or no consideration for democratic or human rights issues. Western states have responded to this challenge by lessening their demands on weak and fragile states and by lowering their transformative aspirations in foreign policy.

As a result of both the limited success of Western liberal interventions since the 1990s, and the geopolitical competition of rising powers, a thorough assessment of Western policy, its impact and its possible alternatives, has begun. According to Michael Mazarr (2014: 113), who echoes the views of several analysts, “the recent era of interventionist U.S. state building is drawing to a close.” There is questioning now about what will

replace liberal hubris and the prolonged, large-scale and land-based military interventions conducted in the name of the War on Terrorism. This paper argues that stabilization represents the interventionists' response to the disappointment over the results of their international involvement. Stabilization operations involving both coercive force and various forms of development assistance have been deployed for at least a century, if not longer, in order to promote peace and security in unruly parts of the world. Interventions in the Philippines (1898-1902), Algeria (1956-62), Vietnam (1967-1975) and El Salvador (1980-1992), among others, were all driven by the logic of stabilization (Zyck, Barakat, Deely, 2014). The current discourse is different not only because it introduces the private sector and incorporates humanitarian action into military strategies, but because it evolves from both the general disillusionment with the achievements of several international operations and from the rise and competition for influence of non-Western states such as China, Russia and, to an extent, Saudi Arabia and Iran. As a result of these issues, multilateral organizations and Western states generally maintain their rhetoric on promoting democratization and human rights while they have, in fact, greatly lowered their ambitions.

### Conceptualizing Stabilization

Although the concept of “fragility” is contested and perhaps inadequately defined, it is still widely used to identify unstable situations. Fragile states, including those suffering from war, emerging from armed conflict, or experiencing extreme forms of violent organized crime are estimated to be between 40 and 60 states worldwide. In addressing the challenges posed by these states, both Western countries and multilateral organizations have referred to the need to revert to stability operations. The discourse on stabilization has been embraced not only by multilateral organizations – most notably the United Nations – and by Western states, but also by several governments in conflict areas eager to frame contentious civil wars as legitimate stabilization operations (Collison, Elhawary & Muggah, 2010: 4). Accordingly, the consensus around stability and stabilization is wide, and growing.

The total number of times that “stabilization” is mentioned in United Nations Security Council meetings has increased significantly, raising from 59 times in 2001 to 671 times in 2014 (Curran & Holtom, 2015: 8). The revised European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) identifies “stabilization as its main political priority” (European Commission and HR, 2015: 2). Most member states of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) have embraced the term in their foreign policy bureaucracies. At least two academic, peer-reviewed journals – PRISM, which is based at the National Defense University, and *Stability: International Journal of Security and Development* - have been founded in order to dissect the logic and consequences of stabilization. It would be tempting to dismiss this dynamism as sheer rhetoric and stabilization as another buzzword in the international jargon alongside the “comprehensive approach,” “resilience” and the many more similar expressions that are regularly used during academic and policy debates. However, stability operations have been under way for a while. Most notably, US-led stability operations currently operate in at least 50 fragile states, particularly in the Americas, Africa and the Middle East. The UN has launched at least 4 operations, which will be briefly discussed below, with “stability” as their main mission. Many OECD states are involved in various stability operations.

Although used diffusely, the term “stabilization” has been used carelessly and confusingly in the context of international interventions. Often the term has merged with other ones adopted in discussions related to peacekeeping, peace-building, state-building, development and security. Unsurprisingly, according to Muggah (2014), “the conceptual and operational parameters of these stabilization interventions are still opaque.” Calls to clarify the term have been increasingly demanded by different actors. For example, the High Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations suggested the need for the UN to clarify the meaning of “stabilization”, since the term “has a wide range of interpretations” (HIPPO, 2015: 30). Most importantly,

is it an end state (between conflict and peace) or a process (a mode of intervention)? For some “stabilization” refers to a single category, while others use it to refer to a broad array of activities that aim to establish security and development.

A brief overview of the official position of some of the most prominent multilateral organizations, states and scholars suggests that a widely accepted definition has not yet been developed. According to NATO (2015: pa. 2), “stabilization is an approach used to mitigate crisis, promote legitimate political authority, and set the conditions for long-term stability by using comprehensive civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security, and end social, economic, and political turmoil.” While NATO’s definition is almost tautological in its suggestion that stabilization is required to reach stability, at least it evidences the attempt to define the concept. By contrast, the United Nations has left its understanding of stabilization mostly implicit. From the UN Security Council perspective, there is value in leaving the concept undefined, since vagueness and constructive ambiguity allows for flexibility in its interpretation and application. At the same time, however, the gap between doctrine and practice means that peacekeepers are trained based on wrong assumptions and out-of-date concepts. In such a context, unintended consequences are almost inevitable, as the unprecedented high number of fatalities and injuries in UN stabilization missions testify (De Coning, Aoi, & Karlsrud, 2017).

In addition to multilateral organizations a number of states, including the United States, France and the United Kingdom, have developed doctrines for stabilization. The US military doctrine historically focused on conventional, high-intensity warfare. However, in 2006 the US Department of Defense issued a Directive which declared that stability operations were, along with combat, part of the core mission of the US military (Flavin & Aoi, 2017). According to the US Joint Chiefs of Staff (2016: ix) stabilization is “the process by which military and non-military actors collectively apply various instruments of national power to address drivers of conflict, foster host-nation resiliencies, and create conditions that enable sustainable peace and security.” The British military doctrine on stabilization was developed in the context of the campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. The UK Stabilization Unit defined the term as “one of the approaches used in situations of violent conflict which is designed to protect and promote legitimate political authority, using a combination of integrated civilian and military actions to reduce violence, re-establish security and prepare for longer-term recovery by building an enabling environment for structural stability.” While borrowing from US approaches, the UK places greater emphasis on civilian rather than military roles (Curran & Williams, 2017: 80). Finally, France has adopted a “warrior” approach to stabilization (and, more broadly, to UN peacekeeping operations) whereby military force is greatly valued as a tool for intervention, which raises the question of how this approach can be reconciled with political, economic, humanitarian and other non-military dimensions of intervention (Novosseloff and Tardy, 2017).

This variegated terminology is also reflected in the scholarly literature on the topic. Zick, Barakat and Deely (2013: 19) define stabilization as “a process involving coercive force in concert with reconstruction and development assistance during or in the immediate aftermath of a violent conflict.” For Zick and Muggah (2015: 3) the key element of stabilization that differentiates it from competing concepts (including peacekeeping, counter-insurgency, state-building, etc.) is the value-free nature of the term: from this perspective, stabilization is not linked to any particular understanding of (in)security and development. With particular reference to UN stabilization operations, De Coning, Aoi and Karlsrud (2017) define stabilization as interventions aimed at helping states in crisis to “restore order and stability in the absence of a peace agreement, by using force as well as political, developmental and other means to help national and local authorities to contain aggressors (...) to enforce law and order and to protect civilians, in the context of a larger process that seeks a lasting political solutions to the crisis.”

## Stabilization's Main Components

While stabilization is likely to remain a vague and contested concept, this brief overview suggests a few recurring themes. First, stabilization is a Western idea shaped by the strategic interests and priorities of Western governments (Curran & Holton, 2015). The term “stabilization” has been frequently associated to interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, where major military operations have been carried out, followed by attempts to “stabilize” these states by favouring the development of accountable and legitimate domestic institutions. These large-scale interventions are unlikely to be repeated, given the mismatch between the costs and commitment involved and their lack of success. Yet, stabilization remains high on the agenda, although focused primarily on addressing immediate security threats, above all terrorism. The key elements of stabilization operations involve interventions in “weak and failing states” understood as sources of instability because of the possibility that they can host terrorist organizations and activities (Mazarr, 2014). Stabilization involves powerful states attempting to shape a political order in accordance with their strategic interests. In its narrow meaning, the term is applied to situations where there is no political settlement in place (SU, 2014; de Coning, Aoi & Karlsrud, 2017), and thus where peacekeeping and peacebuilding principles are irrelevant. In its broader meaning, it refers to situations of insecurity and instability in weak and fragile states that require a comprehensive and integrated approach to achieving stability (Muggah, 2014). For critical theorists, stabilization is primarily about Western control of unruly world peripheries (McGinty, 2012).

Second, stabilization is pragmatic and problem-solving. Tolstoj once argued that all happy families are alike, but each unhappy family is unhappy its own way. Similarly, the discourse on stabilization draws attention to the uniqueness of each fragile state, and the need for it to be addressed with the most suitable form of intervention. There is no universal model for stabilization; only situation-specific responses exist (Gordon, 2010: 371). Stabilization requires a coordinated multi-phase strategy, rather than stand-alone activities like counter-insurgency or humanitarian relief. “[L]inear approaches, such as an early focus on security, then politics, and then development are unhelpful” (SU, 2014: 15). Rather, stabilization involves a cluster of military, humanitarian and development activities aimed at bringing stability to fragile states. Security, governance and development are interdependent and thus comprehensive programs addressing all of these issues are required in order to break the vicious circle of underdevelopment and violence (Muggah, 2014). Accordingly, most Western governments and multilateral organizations endorse “whole of government,” “integrated” and “comprehensive” approaches involving a range of hard and soft stabilization measures. The main objective is to support the maintenance of security and the delivery of basic services when national authorities do not possess the legitimacy and/or the resources to exercise effective control over their territory or provide basic services. Stabilization aims at creating a stable and legitimate state while at the same time providing security to the population (de Coning, Aoi, Karlsrud, 2017). The delivery of services is widely conceived of as a critical component in winning a population’s “hearts and minds” and in delivering security benefits (Gordon, 2010: 369). The provision of essential services and some iconic reconstruction projects help develop the host state’s legitimacy and core capabilities.

Third, the disappointing results with large scale Western interventionism since the 1990s has taught potential interveners that conflicts cannot be “solved” once and for all, but local capacities must be developed to cope with them. This requires domestic ownership and domestic resilience. Problems of conflict and poverty are no longer amenable to interventionist solutions, but interveners must rely on facilitating the local people’s development of existing capacities (Chandler, 2015). The emphasis is no longer on the implementation of external frameworks, but on facilitating the agency and empowerment of local actors. Stabilization is not about “fixing failed states” but, more realistically, it aims at supporting state institutions to restore and develop an effective political order and the capacities to withstand external shocks (Rotmann, 2016). Thus, local actors become a priority: “[w]orking closely with national actors is critical for transition to sustainable local political institutions” (SU, 2014: 11). According to Chandler (2015: 5), interventions “need to work with – rather than against – organic local practices and understandings.”



In this context, stability primarily means resilience to political shocks. “Resilience” is the term frequently used in both the academic and policy literature to indicate the capacity of systems and structures to resist shocks and disasters, either by changing the nature of risks before they inflict their damage or by recovering quickly from calamitous events – or both. The 2016 EU Global Strategy mentions “resilience” more than 40 times, which testifies to the increasing importance of the term in foreign policy. The logic of resilience involves the strengthening of individual, organizational and structural resources in order to anticipate or endure shocks, and to rebuild when necessary. The focus on internal capacities and capabilities suggests the need to “cope with” or “manage” conflict, rather than solve it. Resilience-based approaches emphasize strategies for coping rather than for social transformation. A resilient country may be fragile, but is at least able to handle its situation.

Fourth, the move towards stabilization for a struggling state, and the related concept of instilling its resilience, has meant that the standards of success for international missions has been lowered. It is difficult to identify the indicators that show that stabilization works, which replicates in some ways the difficulties of identifying the clear signs and markers of success for liberal interventions. In particular, the attribution of “causality” to stabilization programs in volatile, political and socially complex environments is challenging (Gordon, 2010: 384). For Zyck and Muggah (2015: 4) so the benchmark of the success of those missions is “the prevention and reduction of net harm to people and polities.” From this perspective, stabilization no longer entails ambitious transformative goals. Accordingly, expressions such as “good enough governance” (Grindle, 2004), which has been embraced by the UK Stabilization Unit, or “stable governance” (USIP, 2009: 6) indicate the lower and decreasing expectations associated to international intervention in these states. Rather than developing and enforcing detailed institutional standards in fragile states, international organizations have increasingly emphasized the need to focus on the local political context, where lower benchmarks and standards can be deemed as appropriate. According to Zyck and Muggah (2015: 3), stabilization does not privilege Weberian state institutions over customary ones, but includes both formal and informal institutions. For USIP (2009: 14), “local customs and structures that are legitimate are better than transplanted models that are unfamiliar.”

While it is possible to identify some common characteristics of stabilization operations, the means by which its objectives – above all security and development – can be achieved are controversial. The main question involves which activities should be implemented, by whom and in what order (Gordon, 2010: 370). In general, the “security first” approach, adopted in the US-led interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq, has focused on countering the threats posed by insurgents or terrorists. Humanitarian and development activities are expected to contribute to security objectives and to legitimize the host state and the internationally imposed political settlement. In other instances, nationally led military efforts have supported international military and other types of involvement, as in the number of UN interventions discussed below.

At a minimum, stabilization involves security priorities associated with counter-terrorism, counter-insurgency, the fight of transnational crimes and, increasingly, the containment of migration flows. The key difference between military fighting and stabilization is the recognition that the military effort alone cannot achieve its objectives, but needs to be combined with political, economic, governance and development efforts (Muggah, 2014). Thus, the pursuit of a stabilization agenda requires significant interaction between military/security and civilian components, using the “comprehensive” or “integrated” approach mentioned above. Stabilization also typically involves a broader policy agenda, which includes humanitarian action, development, state-building and peacebuilding. Accordingly, stabilization is simultaneously a conservative, potentially transformative and long-term project (Collinson, Elhawary and Muggah, 2010: 3). Indeed, a fundamental difficulty in the stabilization agenda is found in the contradictions between a conservative understanding focused on security and the transformational objectives associated with long-term developmental interventions. More generally, the relative balance between security priorities, political efforts, and humanitarian and development activities constitutes a major area of debate.

## Military Driven Operations

While stabilization operations involve both military and developmental and humanitarian aspects, the relative weight of these components changes from case to case, and even overtime within a particular theatre. A basic distinction in the types and reasons behind the operations employed involves two ideal-types: military driven operations and civilian driven operations. The military operations are deployed in states where no political settlement has been achieved, or where such as settlement is at risk of being derailed. In this kind of situation, the range of activities carried out by civilian actors, such as humanitarian and development NGOs, is greatly constrained due to issues of security. In the cases of Afghanistan, Iraq, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Mali and the Central African Republic exemplify this approach. By contrast, civilian driven operations (discussed below) are deployed where security concerns are less threatening and where a political settlement is in place. In these contexts, civilian, economic, humanitarian and development organizations are deployed to support the reform of domestic institutions. In a large measure, these operations evolve from the disillusionment with liberal peacebuilding operations. Cases as diverse as Bosnia and Kosovo in the Balkans; Sierra Leone, South Sudan and Burundi in Central Africa; and Timor Leste in Asia illustrate how governance standards have been lowered and the new focus on resilience and domestic ownership has emerged.

Needless to say, the distinction between military and civilian driven organizations is often unclear, with situations that do not fall neatly within either one of the two camps, or with missions evolving from a military to a civilian focus (or viceversa). However, this distinction is useful insofar as it draws attention to basic distinctions within Western interventions. In military driven operations, stability is understood primarily in physical security terms. Following the disappointment with large-scale US-led intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq, stabilization operations have been mandated through the use of force in more targeted and selective ways. In these circumstances, civil-type activities are considered as an added minor tactical tool following combat in order to win the “hearts and minds” of the local population. Controversially, these civilian activities have been entrusted to military commanders. For example, in Afghanistan US military commanders funded quick-impact projects involving small-scale humanitarian relief and reconstruction activities in order to pacify volatile areas and to provide legitimacy to the new political system and to the newly established domestic institutions (Gordon, 2014). In this context assistance is essentially seen as a political tool, which can be deployed according to the desired impact on fostering a more stable political order, and not on based on humanitarian need. NGOs contest this blurring of the lines between security and aid agendas because their access to populations is made more dangerous by stabilization and counter-insurgency activities. In addition, NGOs further condemn the provision of relief and development aid not on the basis of either needs or rights, but as part of tactical considerations (Belloni, 2014).

NGOs’ uneasiness arises from both the international organizations’ and Western states’ robust approach in dealing with weak and failing states. The use of force in these states has increasingly been endorsed by the UN, which throughout the 1990s had been accused of passivity in front of widespread atrocities. Not only has the UN responded to this criticism by endorsing a more forceful approach, but it has also acknowledged changes in the contexts where interventions take place, and has planned accordingly. While in the early 2000s most UN peacekeeping operations were deployed in post-settlement implementation missions, currently more than two-thirds of these operations are deployed amidst on-going conflict. As a result, in order to enable measures for protecting civilians, which has emerged as a key element in the mandates of UN missions, most UN operations have been authorized under Chapter VII of the UN Charter (De Coning & Aoi, 2017; Hunt, 2017; Williams, 2013).

It is frequently highlighted that instability occurs at the local rather than national level (Siegle, 2011: 27). For example, instability is found in North Kivu, the Niger Delta, Darfur and the Donbass, to cite just a few areas. However, in these and other similar cases the underlying reasons for instability may be found at the international level, as in the Donbass where Russia has been playing a key role in destabilizing the area. While attempting

to address the international dimension (through the imposition of sanctions on Russia), intervention may focus on improving security at the local level. The protection of civilians agenda does not simply reflect the humanitarian need to ensure the safety of the population, as exemplified by the Responsibility to Protect doctrine, but it encompasses the broader interest in enabling people to go about their normal lives, thus creating a sense of stability even amidst tensions. In the most violent contexts, and in the absence of regional hegemony opposing military intervention, counter-insurgency operations are deployed to protect civilians and defeat spoilers' efforts to destabilize the situation. The British operation in Sierra Leone in 2000 is a good example of how a relatively minor intervention can have a major impact in stabilizing a country.

The number of UN stabilization missions has been increasing. The missions to Haiti (2004), Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) (2010-), Mali (2013-) and Central African Republic (2014-) all have "stabilization" in their title. Many others missions include stabilization goals: Bosnia-Herzegovina, Kosovo, Timor Leste, Afghanistan, Somalia and South Sudan. In several of these cases, in particular with reference to the DRC, Mali and the Central African Republic, the UN has deployed its mission in a context where a political solution is still missing. The goal is not only that of achieving strategic stability in the form of a peace agreement between the parties of a conflict, but also that of supporting the development of a legitimate state authority and its monopoly over the use of force. Often these missions include an explicit reference and mandate to proactively protect civilians, as well as ensure humanitarian access and/or support state authority. While these missions are clearly robust they still fall under the rubric of peacekeeping since the use of military force requires the consent of the host country. In practice, peacekeeping operations increasingly resemble on-going stabilization missions; the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq have erased the line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement (Peter, 2015). Robust peacekeeping entails a significant level of force against perceived "spoilers," that is, non-state actors who enjoy no international legitimacy because of their often abysmal human rights record. Similar to the missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, the UN is confronting extremist non-state actors (such as Al-Shabaab, M23, Boko Haram and other Islamist formations in the Maghreb), but on a smaller scale with the primary objective of containing these conflicts (Peter, 2015: 354). Importantly, the forceful approach to pacifying unruly areas reflects the preference of both Western states and of regional organizations, such as the African Union. (Kjeksrud & Vermeij, 2017).

Thus, in recent years UN operations have been deployed in the midst of on-going conflicts, mandated to protect civilians and to restore and maintain stability by supporting the government to extend its authority throughout the territory. Despite the fact that they are allowed to use force proactively, UN missions not only try to achieve a military solution to a conflict, but try to support the search for political solutions by helping to shape the security environment (Muggah, 2014c).

This type of "hot stabilization," where military-led counter-insurgency and stabilization discourses are merged (Gordon, 2010: 372), is contentious. The problematic aspects of these operations can be understood as predictable side effects, rather than unintended consequences (Hunt, 2017). First, greater militarization may actually endanger civilians who find themselves in the crossfire, or may be targeted during revenge attacks if they are perceived to be on the side of the UN (or that of its partners). Peacekeepers themselves may be considered a legitimate military target and thus become more vulnerable. Second, humanitarian actors are concerned about possible costs, including less humanitarian access and greater insecurity for their workers. Security-focused stabilization efforts may even endanger "humanitarian space" understood as the wider political, social or geographical space within which individuals implement coping and survival strategies in the midst of conflict. In some cases, the military identifies and manages quick-impact projects and engages in aid delivery, leading to the militarization and securitization of assistance. As mentioned, this type of service provision transforms needs based priorities into political or military ones (Gordon, 2010: 380). Accordingly, the attitude of the international humanitarian community ranges from diffident and defensive to openly hostile to much of what has been advanced under the stabilization rubric (Collinson, Elhawary, Muggah, 2010).

While these problems are frequently noted, less debated are the difficulties raised by the link between the use of military force and the political process. First, the United Nations' ability to engage in political negotiations is damaged if international forces are used to achieve a particular political reality on the ground. It is hard to act as an impartial broker in the peace process while simultaneously attempting to defeat one of the parties militarily (Kjeksrud & Vermeij, 2017). Second, the expansion of the state's authority is frequently part of a mission's mandate (Peter, 2015: 358). In practice, UN operations may preclude particular political solutions by siding with contested governments (Peter, 2015: 352). The human rights and peacebuilding agenda may suffer from the closeness between international interveners and state authorities. The structural relationship in stabilization operations between external actors and the host government hinders engagement with non-state actors and civil society, particularly at the local level, and thus limits the possibility of contributing to sustainable peace (McGinty, 2012). Third, the reliance on military action and developmental interventions may prevent the use of the necessary political and diplomatic capital needed to reach an inclusive political settlement. Most worrisome, the host government may interpret the UN war-fighting attitude as supportive in the attempt to defeat a non-state actor militarily, and thus may feel little pressure to negotiate a political settlement with those associated with the aggressor (De Coning & Aoi, 2017). In some cases, non-state actors targeted militarily by external intervention may enjoy significant popular support from the local population, such as Al-Shabaab in Somalia (Peter, 2015: 365). In these types of cases, even if the insurgency is defeated, the government that emerges as victorious may still be seen as illegitimate in the eyes of its citizens.

In addition, it is challenging for populations on the ground to understand the role of those who intervene since the stabilization logic involves an implicit or explicit state-centric vision. "Stabilizing fragile states is frequently a state-building exercise" (Siegle, 2011: 22). Experience with state-building operations has demonstrated that the attempt at strengthening the capacity of state institutions may ultimately lead to the empowerment of predatory and corrupt regimes. Several fragile states have experienced the phenomenon of "state capture." Strengthening the state security sector, as in South Sudan, has contributed to the government's ability to inflict damage on the civilian population. The development of a highly corrupt, client state in situations as diverse as Bosnia, Afghanistan and South Sudan clashes with the stabilization objective of creating legitimate, accountable and sustainable institutions. Thus, despite the transformational discourse, security objectives associated with the existence of central authorities have been prioritized over developmental and human rights concerns. Western governments have been willing to set aside humanitarian efforts when dealing with a particular state authority considered to be an ally in the fight against terrorism.

Stability is not a value-free term, which affects those receiving support. In the case of Sri Lanka, for example, stability is closely linked to a "victors' peace" dominated by government interests, with devastating humanitarian consequences for the civilian population. In the DRC the UN has intervened to support the Congolese government, which has repeatedly been censored by international organizations for its involvement in human rights abuses. Stabilization operations risk becoming indistinguishable from security and hard strategic interests, thus losing their broader peacebuilding role. The consolidation of government power may ultimately exacerbate the conflict.

### **Civilian Driven Operations and Transformational Objectives**

In this type of operation, the task of military actors is to support a civilian-led process focused on strengthening state institutions, their legitimacy and their capacity to deliver services. From this perspective, stabilization is an overarching goal involving a greater role for civilian activities as well as long-term, structural approaches to reduce the risk of a relapse into war.

Military led stabilization approaches are state-centric and tend to be short-term and conservative, while civilian-led methods are more inclusive, transformative and long-term efforts that aim to involve civil society



actors. Out of all of those important aspects, inclusiveness is considered to be the key tool for ensuring sustainability. According to the UK Stabilization Unit, the “most suitable outcome in many circumstances will be to empower local level non-state institutions. Interventions that exclusively focus on central government and formal structures reduce their ability to achieve impact... Stabilization efforts will need both to encompass local level and informal institutions and mitigate against potential level of indifference at higher levels” (SU, 2014: 8). Rather than defeating “spoilers,” this approach entails considering carefully whether or not they could be included in political processes” (SU, 2014: 8).

This perspective reveals an awareness of the limits of the neo-liberal hubris and constitutes a less robust interventionist approach at building liberal democratic institutions in weak and fragile states, in particular with regard to the role played by Western interveners. “The contribution made by external actors is often characterized in very limited terms, reflecting a perceived inability to impose a political settlement or generate public confidence in a government” (Gordon, 2010: 372). The limits apparent in the imposition of external frameworks (and/or conditions) as a way to pursue liberal internationalist goals advise the adoption of a more modest approach. The real or perceived failures of international intervention in places like Iraq and Afghanistan, which are widely seen as two of the most glaring examples, have led to an increasing focus on developing internal capacities to deal with state fragility. It matters only marginally the extent to which it is possible to identify clear criteria to define whether a particular operation is a “failure,” a “success” or, more likely, something in between. While Iraq, with its persisting instability, internal divisions and huge loss of human life, is clearly a failure, other cases may be more debatable. For example, Bosnia is often identified as experiencing troubling economic, political and social problems, but it has been at peace for more than two decades and has experienced significant rates of economic growth. Even the controversial case of Afghanistan could be interpreted as an example of a kind of “success” since the Taliban has been ousted from power and legitimate domestic authorities have been governing the majority of the Afghan territory for years.

Regardless of the ultimate assessment of any particular mission, which may remain controversial, international organizations and Western states are increasingly unsure about their ability to build democratic and legitimate institutions. They are conscious of the increasing challenges they face from geopolitical competitors such as Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and Iran and have, therefore, shifted their focus towards a less transformative agenda. The rhetoric of both international organizations and OECD states continue to make reference to grand goals involving democratic accountability, human rights and economic development. In practice stabilization has evolved through the use other terms and expressions, such as resilience and civilian protection, suggesting a change in Western methods towards pursuing a less ambitious agenda.

This agenda requires a level of self-restraint by Western international actors as well as openness to “solutions” to conflict that may be less than satisfactory from a liberal peace perspective. According to the UK Stabilization Unit, “interventions must support, and not prevent, appropriate local solutions although what is deemed appropriate may be open to interpretation. The political environment in these contexts is invariably messy and a flexible approach is key” (SU, 2014: 7). Stability requires a peace dividend not only for the political elite, but also for the population. Without employment opportunities and the delivery of basic services citizens’ frustration may grow to the point that it feeds into instability and rebellion. The mass dismissal of Baath party members, including the military, in post-Saddam Iraq has contributed to the terrorist insurgency that has been plaguing the Middle East ever since. In contrast, fragile states with an overstuffed and inefficient public sector may be necessary for stability (Siegle, 2011: 33). The other side of the phenomenon of “state capture,” discussed above, involves the use of public resources to feed clientelistic networks. For example, in Bosnia more than 50% of the GDP is spent to maintain an inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy. Although the public sector may contribute little to the efficiency of service provision and economic productivity, dramatic cutbacks may prove highly destabilizing. Here the liberal, and market-oriented agenda is clearly at odds with the need to ensure stability.

As this example suggests, stabilization emphasizes flexibility, awareness of the peculiarities of each particular situation and pragmatism in identifying what may be the most appropriate intervention tool for each case. For Mazarr (2014: 118), it is necessary to “allow local institutional development to proceed more organically and authentically, in its own ways and at its own pace” (emphasis added). Accordingly, stabilization moves beyond the liberal peace template in order to focus on the local context. While liberal peace interventions adhere rather closely to a standard recipe involving democratization and liberalization tools, and thus take as their point of departure the supply side of intervention, stabilization emphasizes the demand side of intervention and assesses external actions not on the grounds of their respect of liberal principles, but on the basis of their practical consequences. This pragmatist turn suggests that the universal liberal values must be adapted to the circumstances of each case. In practice, democracy and human rights continue to inform international involvement in fragile states, but these values should be pursued on a case-by-case basis. Needless to say, this approach implies a significant lowering of standards, typical of both military and civilian driven operations, and is bound to generate skepticism due to its inherent selectivity and risk of applying double standards.

Pragmatism constitutes the main point of contact between the stabilization agenda and the growing interest for resilience among OECD states and international organizations, especially the European Union (Juncos, 2017: 4). Policy-makers endorsing both stabilization and the attempt to develop domestic resilience wish to move beyond the liberal script and the imposition of universal liberal values in favour of the identification of local actors and practices with contextual legitimacy. Stabilization activities rely and build on existing local resources and networks. International officials should not replace domestic ones, but they should support the resilience of local institutions and favour the domestic ownership of the political, economic and social transition towards stable governance. It goes without saying that domestic ownership is not a new consideration of international interveners. During the heyday of Western interventionism both scholars and practitioners focused on the moral and ethical imperative of local ownership and the current discourse refers to the pragmatic need for local practices and institutions to enact political processes. Bluntly put, this “bottom-up” approach to building peace and security does not reflect the liberal concern to respect individual and group autonomy, but is rather seen as a tool to achieve stabilization objectives. For example, the Western emphasis on strengthening state political and military institutions in Iraq reflects the acknowledgement of the failure of externally led liberal intervention and the need to fight Islamic radicalism more effectively, rather than the appreciation of the value of self-governance.

Thus, stabilization shrewdly pursues Western objectives while it shifts policy responsibility away from Western actors and towards domestic ones. Stabilization shares with the resilience agenda (Joseph, 2016) the ability to justify Western intervention while avoiding charges of neo-colonialism. Policy responsibility is given to the domestic targets of intervention who, in the name of the principle of domestic ownership, are then accountable for fixing their fragile states. This expectation is often shared by local governments in weak and fragile states that demand ever greater responsibility for managing their own affairs and may even successfully address some (or most) of the challenges they face. For critics of the Western agenda (Chandler, 2015), however, this focus on local agency, contextual legitimacy and domestic ownership obscures power relations and accountability issues.

## Conclusions

Stabilization operations have taken place for over a century. Though hardly new, the way these operations are currently conceived of and deployed reflects the current international, mostly Western mood, towards intervention in unruly parts of the world. The real and perceived threat posed by weak and fragile states, the failure of large scale missions in places like Iraq, as well as the rise of geopolitical competitors such as Russia, China, Saudi Arabia and Iran, make multilateral intervention a priority for most Western states. Setting aside their considerable differences, stabilization operations are generally less transformative than

liberal peacebuilding interventions. More pragmatically, these operations aim at supporting the legitimacy of state institutions, while opening or enlarging the political space for a viable peace process to take root. Rather than transplanting liberal democratic institutions, intervention is based on what works locally and relies as much as possible on domestic actors.

Intervention based on the local context, domestic ownership and the development of resilience makes generic policy templates and solutions both very difficult to formulate and unnecessary. The monitoring and evaluation (M&E) of stabilization interventions are problematic due to: the wide range of often concurrent activities with different underlying logics that occur simultaneously; the differing amount of time needed to implement various activities; the complexities of the environment in which stabilization takes place; and the limited capacities of actors for undertaking M&E efforts (van Stolk, Ling, Reding, Bassford, 2011). The focus on contextual issues that limit the opportunities for weak or fragile states to derive policy from broader templates. As David Chandler (2015: 7) argued, in this context “there is little possibility of learning generic lessons from interventions applicable to other cases of conflict or underdevelopment.” Perhaps unsurprisingly, the current literature is almost silent on what works and what does not in stabilization operations. Yet, despite the lack of clear evidence about their effectiveness, stabilization operations represent the main response to the broad disillusionment with liberal peacebuilding and will likely continue in the future.

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## WORKING GROUP REPORT

# WHAT IS STABILITY AND HOW TO ACHIEVE IT THE RESEARCH-POLICY NEXUS

*Stefano Costalli - University of Florence*

Civil wars, cases of state failure and the resulting diffusion of violence represent major challenges to the security of the contemporary international system. External interventions and peacekeeping missions have multiplied in the last decades and NATO took part in several stabilization missions. However, the ambitious and highly transformative approach elaborated in the 1990s and followed by most missions until very recently has produced mixed results. In particular, the cases of Afghanistan and Iraq represented major negative experiences that persuaded the international community and NATO to reshape both the goals and the means of interventions in crisis areas. While years ago these types of missions had the establishment of Western-style democratic institutions based on the rule of law and the respect of human rights as their main objectives, nowadays the keywords seem to have changed. “Stability” and “resilience” are increasingly mentioned as crucial goals of contemporary and future missions, but it is still not clear what stability should be and how to achieve it. For these reasons, Working Group 1 based its works on the academic literature that addresses this concept with the aim of clarifying what stability is and advancing proposals about the role of NATO in possible future stabilization missions.

### **What is “stability”?**

First of all, the working group focused on the concept of stability, looking for a common definition. In order to achieve this goal, the academic and policy literature on stabilization operations was taken into account. After a review of the relevant literature, the working group agreed on the absence of a widely accepted definition of “stability”. More precisely, a real definition of the concept is often missing in studies and policy reports that deal with ways to reach stability in contexts of crisis. In some cases, the definitions tend to be tautological, defining stabilization operations as those multidimensional operations aimed at preserving or re-establishing stability in conflict-prone or conflict-ridden countries. In other cases, such as in many UN documents, stability is not even defined, leaving the concept open to diverse interpretations by different states. The working group acknowledged that having a certain degree of flexibility can be useful to achieve the support of many states to stabilization missions, but there is a clear trade-off between flexibility and clarity, because missions on the ground need to work with precise objectives and tasks.

In any case, the analysis of the literature shows that the concept of “stability” has emerged in the last years as a consequence of a generalized disappointment with the large-scale interventionist approach that aimed at establishing “Western-like” states in many different regions of the world. Especially following the negative experiences of ambitious and highly transformative missions in Afghanistan and Iraq, stability is increasingly mentioned as the main goal of external interventions in crisis areas. On the contrary, the establishment of functioning democratic institutions, the respect of human rights and rule of law no longer appear as priorities. Thus, stability can be conceived as a “pragmatic” and “minimal” concept, whose basic content is to be identified with the establishment of a secure environment and essential economic development. Local political institutions do not necessarily need to resemble long-established, Western democracies, but need to be sufficiently resilient and representative of local societies as to avoid and resist further crises in the near future.

### **Practical requirements of stability**

Having reached an agreement of the fact that no commonly accepted definition of stability exists at the theoretical level, the members of the working group decided to start a discussion on the practical features of stability. Looking at past stabilization missions, the working group tried to identify common experiences that could serve as lessons learned for future interventions. First of all, the working group agreed that past stabilization missions did not take the local context and the political economy of conflict into due account. Most contemporary conflicts are deeply rooted in local grievances, involve a mix of private and political motives and the dynamics of violence can neither be understood nor changed without taking the micro-foundations of conflicts into due account. National problems and macro political divisions often explain only a part of the instability, while local actors and rivalries can combine and even exploit national dynamics in different and variable ways. Some members of the working group highlighted that in the last ten years the academic community has produced important and numerous empirical studies on the causes and consequences of civil wars, as well as on the dynamics of violence in intra-state conflicts using spatially and temporally disaggregated data. The policy community could probably fruitfully use this type of literature, as it is based on the assumption that the national level and highly aggregated average indicators do not serve the purpose of getting to the roots of contemporary conflicts.

The working group also acknowledged the frequent need of stabilization missions to face difficult choices between competing objectives or – even worse – between competing unwanted events. In many cases the missions need to identify the lesser of two evils, because transforming the context in the theoretically desirable way is often technically impossible, at least in the short run.

The working group agreed that stabilization also means understanding the perspectives of the various parties to the conflict and develop a political plan that is aware of these differences, instead adopting a unilateral approach. In addition, even though stability emerges as a minimal concept based on security, it cannot be achieved only with military tools. Stabilization missions need to apply a comprehensive approach, which means working at different levels (national vs. local; strategic vs. operational) and on different dimensions. Some members of the working group mentioned the fact that in previous missions military personnel have often been required to work on political problems that they were not adequately prepared to face. This was partly due to the fact that previous stabilization missions often lacked adequate human resources in terms of both quality and quantity, especially in the civilian component of the missions.

Finally, the working group agreed that stability also involves domestic ownership. The concept of ownership used to be framed in ethical terms, as a corollary of the principle of self-determination. Domestic ownership over the peace process was conceived as the only way to give local populations a sense that their own interests were served by the new social and political ordering. This is still true, but some members of the

panel also stressed that the idea of domestic ownership is framed in increasingly pragmatic terms. First of all, this conceptual turn derives from the need to create stable institutions able to acquire legitimacy locally. As already mentioned, resilience rather than democracy has become key in shaping interventions in fragile states. Secondly, a higher degree of local ownership allows for less exposure of international personnel of the stabilization mission.

### **Time and opportunity: Two contentious issues**

The members of the working group also identified two issues that deserve further discussion, even though they are not strictly connected to the definition of stability. The first issue is timing. Stabilization missions need to be planned and adjusted over a long time horizon. Often stabilization missions tend to prematurely leave the countries where they intervened, due to political pressures in the intervening countries, budget constraints or disagreements among the different states that compose the missions. The members of the working group agreed that it is impossible to define the right duration of a stabilization mission before facing the concrete situation on the ground, but they also stressed that reaching a real stability can take several years, possibly more than five. On the one hand, the duration of the mission partly depends on the meaning that the concept of stability is given in the framework of the specific mission. On the other hand, it depends on the fact that solutions and actions needed to stabilize the situation in the short run often have to be changed and adjusted because they could be detrimental in the long run.

The second issue that according to the members of the working group deserves further investigation is whether NATO should really deal with stabilization missions in countries that are not members of the Alliance. It is a highly political issue and it sparked different views during the discussion. Some participants identified stabilization missions as a fundamental duty of NATO and a way to prevent future threats for the members of the Alliance, including transnational terrorism. Others stressed that NATO should focus on more traditional and typically military tasks, basically referring to Art.5 of the North-Atlantic Treaty.

### **Proposals for future stabilization missions**

After a careful analysis of past NATO stabilization missions, the members of the working group identified the following lessons learned and proposals for a different approach to stability. Essentially, NATO should continue contributing to stabilization missions, but stability should be conceived in a more flexible and “minimal” sense. Accordingly, the role of NATO should be limited to the provision of specific assets and the performance of limited tasks.

1. The lack of a detailed definition of stability is not a critical problem if stabilization missions move in the direction of providing tailored solutions and initiatives to different situations. The meaning of stability could become context-specific, changing according to the geographical context and the temporal phases of the mission. The tailored approach needs to be planned and implemented taking into account and combining national and local political dynamics. The bottom-up and the top-down approaches need to be used together in all phases. Focusing only on macro-structural issues overlooking the micro foundations of violence is a self-defeating strategy because it never allows the missions to achieve real stability. Focusing only on local political and economic dynamics without a general view of the country creates disparities that will probably lead to new future instability.

2. As a result, the military component of stabilization missions has to be included in a broad political plan. The political plan has to define the end state of the mission. The end state is a situation in which locals can solve their contrasts and conflicts without resorting to violence, but the concrete features of the end state have to be studied and delineated case by case. The political settlement needs to be inclusive, but it cannot be so inclusive as to incorporate spoilers who have no interests in reaching an agreement. The stabilization missions need to distinguish between marginal spoilers and powerful spoilers who also enjoy legitimacy, perhaps in a given region of the country. Marginal spoilers can be left out of the political settlement, while the latter type of spoilers have to be included in the future order of the state. Moreover, it is crucial to avoid the emergence of new spoilers as a consequence of the activities of the stabilization missions. Finally, the political framework needs to be continuously checked and reframed, even years after the violence ended, because arrangements that are suitable for stabilizing the situation in the first phase of the intervention might not be optimal in the long run.
3. After debating whether NATO should perform stabilization missions in the future, the members of the working group agreed that in case the members of the Alliance decide to intervene and stabilize third countries, NATO should play an indirect and “minimal” role. More specifically, NATO should no longer engage in complex, all-encompassing nation-building ventures, but rather contribute to such multidimensional missions performing specific tasks and providing its “niche-expertise”. Stabilizing a country involves the implementation of policies in many different fields, but NATO should limit itself to military affairs and the provision of security. In these fields NATO can count on clear advantages over other international organizations and it can really make the difference. For instance, NATO can provide military assets and interoperability, while other actors such as civilian international organizations or NGOs can build actual stability. Moreover, NATO can provide situational awareness through its AWACS infrastructure, train local military and police forces and also act as a clearing house where members and partners can exchange views. Sharing experiences accumulated on the ground can serve as the base to build trust and coordination in the following steps.

## **Conclusion**

The need for stabilization missions has dramatically increased with the diffusion of intra-state conflicts and it is unlikely to decrease in the near future. Nonetheless, the ambitious and highly transformative interventions aimed at establishing Western-style democracies in crises areas around the world have been substituted by missions that more modestly aim at stabilizing the countries where they operate. Considering that the meaning of stability is still unclear, Working Group 1 started its works analyzing the relevant academic and policy literature in search for a commonly agreed definition of the concept. Following this analysis, the working group realized that trying to define stability in theoretical terms is both extremely difficult and scarcely useful. Stability is a context-specific concept that needs to be tailored case by case and the same holds for the concrete policies that stabilization missions have to implement on the ground. The tailored approach must take into account both national and local political dynamics. In the past, the micro foundations of conflict and violence have often been overlooked and this mistake crucially contributed to perpetuate tensions and instability.

Stabilization missions cannot be based on military measures without a broad political plan. It is essential to work for an inclusive political settlement and distinguish between marginal spoilers and powerful spoilers who also enjoy legitimacy in specific areas of the country. The latter type of spoilers have to be included in the future order of the state, but the political settlement needs to be checked and adjusted as time passes, because arrangements that are suitable for stabilizing the situation in the first phase of the intervention might not be optimal in the long run.



According to the working group, NATO should not completely abandon stabilization missions, but it should no longer engage in all-encompassing nation-building endeavors. NATO should rather contribute to stabilization missions performing specific tasks and providing its “niche-expertise”. NATO could fruitfully limit itself to military affairs and the provision of security, fields in which it can really make the difference. For instance, NATO could provide interoperability, situational awareness and training to local security forces, leaving many political and economic activities to other international organizations and even to NGOs.





WORKING GROUP

II

# INTERACTION BETWEEN INTERNATIONAL STAKEHOLDERS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Sebastiaan Rietjens - Netherlands Defence Academy*

Interaction between international stakeholders, military as well as civilian, is at the heart of many scientific as well as practical debates on stability operations. Several of the recent NATO summits stressed the importance of such interaction and former NATO Secretary General, Anders Fogh Rasmussen, even called it the primary lesson from Afghanistan:

“The days when the military could defeat the enemy, then hand the baton off to the civilians and go home, are past us...And Afghanistan is not unique. There are 16 major armed conflicts underway today. All of them are within, rather than between states. In many cases, it is the basic pillars of society that need to be rebuilt. This means that the military and civilians need to work much more closely than they have in the past.”

In an attempt to institutionalize interaction between military and civilian stakeholders many countries and supra-national institutions have developed their own concepts. On a national level, governments refer to these as the ‘3D-approach’ (Defense, Diplomacy and Development), the ‘Whole of Government Approach’ or the ‘integrated approach’, while at a supra-national level, organizations label these as the comprehensive approach (NATO) or the integrated approach (UN and EU).

Despite all efforts, the interaction between international military and civilian stakeholders in the context of peace operations remains largely improvisational, pragmatic, and ad hoc (Lucius & Rietjens, 2016). When meeting on the ground in theater, personnel works out solutions overcoming differences for the common good. As such, coordination evolves over time in response to specific needs on the ground. Some say there is merit in this approach as it allows for flexibility in dynamically evolving circumstances. That being true, searching for constants and patterns can help the stakeholders to build on experiences and become more effective.

The objective of this paper is therefore to identify recurring patterns within the practice of civil-military interaction to peace operations and to provide suggestions on how to improve future interaction. To meet this objective, section 2 describes the different types of civil-military interaction. The subsequent sections identify recurring patterns in the preparation (section 3), execution (section 4) and evaluation (section 5) phases of civil-military interaction in peace operations. Section 6 provides a discussion and concludes the paper.

<b>Type of coherence</b>  <b>Level of Interaction</b>	<b>Intra-agency</b>	<b>Inter-agency</b>	<b>Whole of government</b>	<b>External vs internal</b>
<b>Actors are united</b>		Members of the coalition Operation Desert Storm, 1991 Gulf War		International agencies and national IEC work together to organize elections in DRC in 2006
<b>Actors are integrated</b>			UK Stabilisation Unit, or Canadian Stabilization and Reconstruction Task Force (START)	
<b>Actors cooperate</b>	DPKO and OCHA (both UN Secretariat) work together on UN Protection of Civilians guidelines	Afghanistan Bonn-process 2003;  UN-EU cooperation in Chad, 2008		
<b>Actors coordinate</b>		UN cluster approach		UN and Sudanese Independent Electoral Commission in April 2010 elections
<b>Actors coexist</b>			DFID and MoD fail to agree on common evaluation criteria for UK PRT in Afghanistan, 2008	
<b>Actors compete</b>	Various sections of a ministry compete for funding			Taliban & ISAF/ UNAMA

**Figure 1:** Matrix that compares the types of coherence and the levels of interaction (Adapted from De Coning and Friis, 2011)



## Coming to grips with civil-military interaction

The concept of interaction means different things to different organizations and individual countries (see e.g. Hallett and Thorngren, 2011). From the perspective of an international NGO, Save the Children (2004) suggested four different approaches: (1) principled non-engagement, (2) arm's-length interaction, (3) proactive, pragmatic, principled engagement, and (4) active, direct engagement and cooperation. The United Nations provided another perspective as they identified three broad levels of interaction between civilian and military organizations: cooperation, coordination, and coexistence. They argue that whilst cooperation is more easily achieved during peacetime (e.g. during training or exercises), in conflict situations the divide between civilian and military activities reduces coordination to the level of coexistence and de-confliction (Hodermarsky, 2014).

In an attempt to provide further clarity and to facilitate the debate on the interaction between different stakeholders, De Coning & Friis (2011) have proposed a typology, consisting of a matrix with two different axes. The horizontal axis of the matrix identifies four types of coherence, namely:

1. Intra-agency coherence (i.e. coherence within one single organization);
2. Inter-agency coherence (i.e. coherence between different organizations);
3. Whole-of-government coherence (i.e. coherence among different government agencies of a country);
4. External-internal coherence (i.e. coherence between international and actors of the host nation such as Afghanistan, Mali or Somalia).

The vertical axis of the matrix consists of six levels of interaction ranging from the actors are united (e.g. the actors have established a unified structure and undertake joint action) to the actors compete (actors work at cross purposes). In-between these two extremes they identify levels such as the actors are integrated, they cooperate, they coordinate or they co-exist.

If both the different types of coherence and the levels of interaction are mapped against one another a matrix appears (see figure 1), which contributes to understanding the complexity of interaction between the variety of stakeholders. For illustration purposes, several examples have been included in the matrix.

Interaction between international military and civilian stakeholders is a form of inter-agency coherence or whole of government approach. These two types of coherence will therefore be the focus of the analysis below that identifies the recurring patterns in the different phases of civil-military interaction in peace operations.

### Civil-military interaction in practice: preparation phase

Three recurring patterns in the preparation phase are identified and discussed below: (1) doctrines and handbooks, (2) training and education, and (3) civil-military planning.

#### Policy, doctrines and handbooks

At national as well as supranational level, countries and organizations have developed policy as well as doctrines and handbooks. These should contribute to the frame of reference of international stakeholders that are deployed to a mission area. NATO has developed several relevant documents including the Comprehensive Approach Planning Directive (COPD) (NATO, 2013), the Allied Joint Publication on Civil-Military Cooperation (AJP 3.4.9.) (NATO, 2013) and the MC 411 that deals with Military Policy on Civil-Military Cooperation (CIMIC) and Civil-Military Interaction (CMI) (NATO, 2014).

This type of guidance, whether in the form of policy or operationalized in doctrines or handbooks, however has its flaws. First, peace operations, and certainly the ambitious crisis and stability missions as in Afghanistan and Mali, are intrinsically difficult. There is no proven knowledge and there are no fixed standards available about how to achieve the intended objectives. This is the description of the so-called wicked problems, which are ambiguous and fuzzy (Noordergraaf & Abma, 2003). This wickedness makes it difficult, if not impossible, to develop guidance in the same intensity, form and shape that most soldiers have been used to.

Second, doctrines and handbooks are almost entirely developed by defense personnel. As a result, the perspectives and concerns of civilian actors such as NGOs, IOs or private military firms are included only to a limited extent. Third, since policymaking is the result of politics, the policy, doctrine or guideline that is developed reflects the interests of and the power balance between the members of the organization. It is thus more a mirror of the interests of the member states of the organization than a program promoting the interests of the host nation and its citizens. Fourth and last, the guiding documents often provide a generalized one size fits all approach, thereby overlooking situational differences such as in geography, time or actors.

As a result of these flaws, many representatives of international stakeholders are being confronted with challenges that are not adequately dealt with in their guiding documents. One of the main mechanisms to cope with such limited guidance is to educate and train the people that are being deployed. The following section addresses this topic.

### Train as you fight

Already in 1973 the first commander of the U.S. Army's Training and Doctrine Command, emphasized that it was necessary to expose soldiers to realistic battlefield conditions before they experienced actual combat (Reeson, 2006). Doing this should improve the soldiers' preparation and thereby their internal efficiency, which in the long run should enable external effectiveness. This belief was widely shared and led to the development of new training methods and a training philosophy that is often referred to as train as you fight.

From a military perspective, it make sense to focus most educational and training efforts at developing a combat ready force that is physically and psychologically prepared to fight and win wars. However, peace operations are about integrating approaches and their effectiveness depends on combining military expertise on security with civilian expertise on governance, human rights, rule of law and economic development. To realize this civil-military interaction is of crucial importance. It is therefore remarkable that many countries and military training institutes in both the US and Europe have paid relatively limited attention to this topic.

In particular from the Afghanistan campaign onwards, several promising initiatives have been employed that intend to fill this vacuum. These initiatives include the training courses offered by the NATO accredited Cimic Centre of Excellence, the German CIMIC Competence Centre and the Australian Civil-Military Centre. Also, several simulation-based games such as Go4It have been developed to create a deeper understanding of the dynamics of the comprehensive approach (see Van der Hulst et al., 2014).

Apart from these training modules, countries have included civil-military interaction in their exercises or even devoted entire exercises to the topic. The series of exercises labeled Common Effort that NATO's First German Netherlands Corps has hosted since 2010 provides a good example. These exercises take place within a comprehensive scenario and have attracted considerable numbers of civilian participants from NGOs, IOs as well as from governmental departments outside the Ministries of Defense. The multinational Joint Viking exercise series that Sweden and the US organize is a similar example. In the most recent edition of Joint Viking in March 2017, over 8000 participants took part in this comprehensive crisis management exercise. In most of these exercises, however, one frequently observes an imbalance in resources. This not only relates to personnel but also to finances and the time that is available to prepare the exercise. In this respect it is

important to notice that military organizations are often tasked to train during peacetime. For UN agencies, IOs and NGOs, however, this is not the case, mostly because it is an unaffordable luxury in terms of money and time. Generally these organizations have far smaller budgets and numbers of personnel available to dedicate to such exercises.

Alike the gradual adjustment of training programs and exercises, curricula at military academia and universities have gradually paid more attention to the complexities of creating stability and to civil-military interaction in particular. A great example is Westpoint's center for the study of civil-military operations. This center teaches many courses on civil-military interaction, organizes relevant lectures for its staff and students and sends cadets abroad to do an internship at an international research institute or development organization.

### Civil-military planning

A third recurring pattern in the preparation phase is civil-military planning. The focus on stability operations means that planning security, as well as humanitarian and development efforts, all emphasize human individuals or groups, be they an enemy or a beneficiary. Also, in carrying out their planning processes, both military and civilian organizations employ similar concepts of ends, ways and means. However, they use a different vocabulary. Many civilian planning processes develop a narrative of the change that they envision in the conflict. Subsequently, they justify their efforts and programs on the contribution that is made to this ideal process. In doing this many organizations employ so-called 'logical frameworks' in which they link their actions to outputs, results and outcomes and track their progress using a set of indicators (see e.g. EU Integration Office, 2011). In a similar fashion, military planning processes often define an end-state and then produce a linear narrative that contains a sequence of 'decisive conditions' along several lines of effort to reach this (Shelter-Jones, 2016).

Both military and civilian planners are reluctant to reveal their planning process and sometimes the product of planning to the public (Shetler-Jones, 2016). Military organizations do this to preserve the element of surprise, while planners from civilian organizations may want to keep their planning processes independent and objective, until their plans have been authorized.

Despite these similarities, military and civilian planning processes also show considerable differences. Although both forms of planning focus on the human elements, military planning is mostly concerned with the enemy, while most civilian organizations aim at restoring material conditions and freedoms (freedom from want as well as freedom from fear) to the individual. This may create tension in the relationship between military and civilian organizations. In particular when "planning objectives are in contradiction over differential treatment of an individual or group that has been designated as the enemy" (Shelter-Jones, 2016, p. 94). Another major difference concerns timing. Civilian organizations that focus on the root causes of the conflict are often prepared to stay in the area for a far longer period than the military. By contrast, military efforts are often planned on the expectations of achieving a decisive result as quickly as possible. This means that they often fall out of synchronization with each other, creating different opinions concerning for instance, what is "reasonable" progress during a certain time period (Rietjens, 2008).

### **Civil-military interaction in practice: execution phase**

In this phase two levels of coherence as identified in the matrix of De Coning and Friis (2011; see figure 1) are elaborated on. These include interagency coherence and whole-of-government coherence.



## Interagency coherence

Interaction between military forces and IOs and NGOs is the most eye-catching topic when discussing interagency coherence. Interdependency between these different organizations is apparent and is caused by overlapping tasks and scarce resources in mission areas. Military and civil operations affect each other at all levels and there is serious risk that they counteract each other.

The relationship between military and civilian stakeholders such as IOs and NGOs is bound with many challenges. Within military as well as civilian circles, multiple and conflicting stances on the appropriateness of the comprehensive approach are part of everyday reality. Some IOs and NGOs are reluctant to be associated with a military force and thereby lose their protective patina of neutrality. Frerks et al. (2006) refer to these organizations as being principled, whereas pragmatic organizations generally interact more easily with military forces.

Another prominent challenge for this type of civil-military relationship is the difference in organizational structures. The organization structures of military and IOs and NGOs are for the most part opposites. Military institutions place a high value on command and control, top-down hierarchical organizational structures, and clear lines of authority, discipline, and accountability (Soeters et al., 2010). They place great emphasis on logistics, and substantial resources are dedicated to the acquisition of assets and training of personnel to ensure that they can function independently under the most adverse circumstances.

The organization structure of most civilian stakeholders, most prominently the international NGOs, is horizontal and fluid, with significant decision-making authority lodged at the site with the most information, usually in the field. Many of these organizations follow a consensus-based approach. They pay more attention to the process by which they accomplish operations, partly because they attach more importance to long-term impacts.

With continuous and multiple points of interface, military and civilian personnel interpret the world through the lens of their own culture. Lack of familiarity with the differences embedded in the organization cultures is a breeding ground for misunderstanding and poor coordination and cooperation (Rubinstein et al., 2008). According to Cameron and Quinn's (2006) research on organization cultures, the culture of the military organization can be generally classified as a Hierarchy Culture. This culture is goal oriented, rules and regulations run the organization, and process and scheduling are adhered to the "daily battle rhythm". They have respect for tradition, for physical and mental toughness, and for age. Leaders are taught to be assertive, decisive, tenacious, and confident.

Most NGOs are classified as a Clan Culture. This culture is more interested in intuitive than in rational knowledge and more concerned with the development of people than with their deployment or utilization. NGOs often have flat management structures, spend relatively small amounts on bureaucracy and administration, and are generally staffed by young, energetic, highly committed, and motivated people.

As personnel from civilian organizations interact regularly with military personnel, these clashes become apparent. Aid workers do often distrust the military, and the military is similarly suspicious of aid workers. Such unfamiliarity inevitably encourages the promulgation of ill-informed stereotypes.

In order to reduce inter-group tension between military and civilian organizations, Scheltinga et al. (2005) argue that organizations' cultural differences need to be managed. If differences are managed well, then groups will become more acquainted with each other. To manage the differences, they developed a roadmap that starts with an assessment of the differences among the cultures of the interacting actors. Subsequently, the cultural differences are managed through the creation of awareness of the differences and the similarities. Finally, all the actors must learn to respect each other's behavior and culture.

## Whole-of-government coherence

Over the last years there has been a significant increase of civilian representatives working in mission areas that belongs to other departments than a country's Ministry of Defense. These representatives include policemen and generally speaking security forces (border control units, etc.), political advisors (POLAD), cultural advisors (CULAD), development advisors (DEVAD), rule of law advisors (RULAD), agricultural advisors and counter narcotics advisors. A recurring pattern that one often observes is a great imbalance in personnel and finances. While the great majority of the personnel tends to be military, only a small fraction is civilian (see e.g. Maley & Schmeidl, 2015). With regard to the financial resources the division is just the opposite. Here civil representatives often have far more financial means than military personnel.

A second pattern is the division of tasks and responsibilities. In many instances, it becomes blurred who does what, especially when it comes to tasks and responsibilities at the edge of an organization's domain (Rietdijk, 2008). Within many military organizations the Cimic officers used to take care of the liaison with IOs and NGOs in their mission area. However, with their steady influx, civilian representatives have slowly taken over the communication with IOs and NGOs. Often this was because these representatives were more comfortable in dealing with IOs and NGOs and had better connections with these organizations. In a similar fashion, it is often not clear under what circumstances training and education of local police forces is being done by military police personnel or by non-military policemen.

The dual roles of civilian advisors is a third recurring pattern. In many cases civilian advisors have both ministerial responsibilities such as running a development program as well as an advisory role towards their military colleagues. When time and resources are scarce this causes friction.

Finally, information exchange between military and civilian representatives proves to be difficult in practice. In their case study on the UN operation, MINUSMA, in Mali, Rietjens and Baudet (2017) concluded that information sharing suffered from "what the intelligence literature calls stovepiping, an undue amount of compartmentalization. Mutual distrust and turf wars resulting from unfamiliarity and different practices, a less than satisfactory level of inter-operability—both at the technical (ICT) and the analytical levels—made sharing information a liability... While compartmentalization is a necessity from the perspective of the protection of sensitive information and capabilities, it has its downside, especially in a multilateral operational context because analysts and policy makers run the risk of tunnel vision, which directly hampers the effectiveness and unity of efforts, like MINUSMA as a whole."

### **Civil-military interaction in practice: evaluation phase**

Both during and after the execution phase, monitoring and evaluating performance is important for several reasons including increased transparency and accountability, the evaluation of outputs, and improved communication and coordination between participating organizations (see e.g. Rietjens et al., 2011). Carrying out monitoring and evaluation activities in peace operations is however intrinsically difficult. First, there are many different systems that focus on performance measurement. These systems are often disconnected, using different methodologies and terminology (Cohen, 2006). And while some of these systems focus on inputs and processes of an organization others aim for outputs or outcomes. In this respect, it is often much easier to define what activities an organization carries on (e.g. the amount of dollars spent, the number of schools built or the number of weapons collected) but this does not necessarily provide the right answers.

Applying accounting and control concepts to the comprehensive approach leads us to see several recurring patterns. First, despite an increased focus on metrics within many institutions, selecting the right measures remains a difficult issue. Glenn and Gayton (2008) state that many organizations must balance the desire for

simple, easily assessed and comprehensible metrics with a very rigorous approach, in which increased data collection and subsequent analysis attempt to satisfy all prospective users' requirements.

Second, finding a causal relationship between actions and the effects or outcomes is difficult in general, but particularly in peace operations. To establish causality requires that very specific, in fact impossible, conditions be met (Davids et al., 2011). Hence, within peace operations there are huge difficulties to determine outcomes and identify causal relationships between these and an organization's actions (Glenn and Gayton, 2008).

Finally, measurement easily increases bureaucracy (see e.g. De Bruijn, 2007). When an organization emphasizes performance measurement it often assigns considerable resources to producing data and information on performance results and - if possible- impact. This can increase the load of bureaucracy enormously. A clear example of such a situation was found within ISAF headquarters in Kabul where an entire organization (i.e. the Afghan Assessment Group) was established which focused on measuring dozens of indicators in order to make sense of the progress in Afghanistan (Rietjens et al., 2011).

### **Discussion and conclusions**

As the previous sections have shown several recurring patterns can be identified in the practice of coordination between international stakeholders during peace operations. Paris (2009), however, argues that prescribing improved coordination as a remedy for the contradictions and dilemmas that come with this type of operation is too simple a solution. It diverges from the possibility that there may be strategic deficit in peace operations or that we still know too little about how to turn countries wrecked by conflict into secure and stable societies. According to Paris (2009) discussions about improving coordination run the risk of redefining a substantive disagreement in procedural-technocratic terms. Brocades Zaalberg (forthcoming, p. 1) raises a similar critique and argues that "it is justified to question many of the assumptions underlying the recent idealistic interpretations of comprehensive approaches."

Having said that, due to the unique character of the operational environment, the stakeholders involved and the sensitivities between these stakeholders, an adequate understanding of the empirical data seems critical. There is thus an important argument for introducing more evidence-based thinking. In essence this means a systematic and evidence-informed practice of, in this case, coordination between international stakeholders in peace operations. Evidence-based thinking has emerged in medicine (Sackett et al., 1996), but has also been advocated in policing (Sherman, 2002), management (Rousseau, 2006) and recently in military studies (Soeters and Heeren-Bogers, 2013). "This way of thinking attempts to combine the best available external evidence from systematic research with individual expertise and experience [of practitioners]" (Soeters and Heeren-Bogers, 2013, p. 118).

Rousseau (2012) identifies four fundamental facets underlying such evidence based thinking. The first facet is to make use of the best available scientific findings. Due to its multidisciplinary character, the coordination between international stakeholders finds itself on the crossroads of several different scientific domains. These include, but are not limited to interagency coordination, disaster studies, sociology, counterinsurgency, anthropology and public administration. In addition to the different domains, there is a wide variety of research methods that one can apply to better understand the coordination between international stakeholders. In addition to the classical one case one country studies that are often performed, several less traditional research methods seem very promising. These include big data analysis – which may lead to make better use of the enormous datasets that large institutions such as NATO have - quasi-experiments and studies that carefully compare different (national) practices.

The second facet that Rousseau (2012) identifies is the gathering and attending to facts, indicators and metrics in a systematic fashion to increase their reliability and usefulness. There are many different challenges that come along coordination between international stakeholders as we have seen in this paper. To address these challenges demands interpretation, sense-making, and qualitative interpretation. However, in many cases especially military people insist on having quantitative data at their disposal: “a briefing with qualitative data . . . is not yet accepted” (Glenn & Gayton, 2008, p. 48). It should be well understood that quantitative data, provided they are reliable, valid, timely, and adequately analyzed, and provided they have been carefully assessed on these merits, are indispensable. Simple metrics may render long discussions superfluous, but these simple metrics should be provided with a sound interpretation (Glenn & Gayton, 2008). This resembles the third facet identified by Rousseau (2012), which is the on-going use of critical, reflective judgment and decision aids in order to reduce bias and improve decision quality.

The fourth and final facet underlying evidence-based thinking relates to considering ethical issues such as the short- and long-term impact of decisions on stakeholders. This means that there should not only be interaction between international stakeholders, but also with the variety of host national stakeholders about e.g. the goals, timelines and modus operandi. As such there should be room for varied sense making and thus the possibility to present different views and analyses, including those of the local communities. Enhancing the “local footprint” (Denhardt et al., 2009; Rietjens et al., 2009) seems to be needed in all phases, from preparation to execution and evaluation. In the end, utilizing all these main facets of evidence-based thinking brings us a step closer to effective coordination and successful peace operations.

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## WORKING GROUP REPORT

# COORDINATING WITH INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

*Alessandro Marrone - Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI)*

When it comes to projecting stability and particularly stability operations, the need for cooperation and coordination among International Organizations (IOs) is officially recognized by most actors as a crucial element to succeed. Indeed, in the past, current, and foreseeable international security environment, they are somehow doomed to interact in addressing crisis which have a negative impact on their member states and cannot be solved only by a single actor – even the most powerful. However, cooperation and coordination, and even information sharing, remain difficult, and the track record of international community engagement in stabilization operations is mixed, and often unsatisfactory in terms of results and effectiveness. This gap between cooperation needs and reality applies also to the relations among NATO and other relevant IOs such as EU, OSCE or UN. Also for this reason, Working Group 2 was devoted to discuss the challenges to coordination among these actors, with a particular focus on the opportunities the Atlantic Alliance may grasp to improve its relation with the other IOs possibly working on stability operations.

### **Challenges to cooperation among IOs: the politics of interaction**

Participants agreed the very structural reason IOs find difficulties to cooperate is the fact they are somehow “social actors” which compete with each other in the same environment, for example in terms of Member States funding, capabilities, political capital. This implies a general lack of coherence, inter-agency rivalry, duplication of efforts and eventually waste of resources. Such challenge is only partly linked to the long-standing difficulties of civil-military cooperation. It is mainly about the politics of interaction, and the strategic autonomy of each actor. For example, some participants pointed out the risk of rigid division of labour whereby if an IO loses its ability to operate its own tasks the other IOs are negatively affected by the disappearance of a support supposed to be helpful in the operational theatre.

Secondly, according to participants, within large IOs like NATO there is the temptation of a “One Fits-All Approach” which turns to be rather counter-productive when applied to different international organizations, different crises, different operational theatres. At the same time, a certain degree of institutionalization of the relation among two IOs is necessary to let the respective staff working with each other. Therefore, the



challenge is really about striking the balance between flexibility and institutionalization in each single relation involving NATO and other IOs. Participants agreed that more permanent forum and mechanisms to discuss issues relevant for the Alliance and other stakeholders would be a good starting point to build such balance, by greater common understanding and confidence building.

A third challenge lies in the difficulty to identify and understand counterparts, appropriate point of contact or entry point, in large and complex IOs like NATO, EU or UN. This is particularly important for the Atlantic Alliance, because of its distributed organization in terms of civilian and military staff, different command, agencies and bodies. Participants agreed that in the NATO “universe”, a greater effort is needed to better connect the different “planets”, not only for the sake of the effectiveness and efficiency of Alliance’s activities, but also to enable partnering with other IOs. Here comes the need to develop a “One NATO approach” also to projecting stability and partnership and in a sense, the challenge is about making NATO “simpler” for partners to cooperate with.

Forth, there is a tendency from the military to think in terms of integration, leverage, coordinating of other actors, and this represents a challenge *per se* according to participants. For example, it was pointed out the request from the military to other IOs to contribute to fill the civilian-military objectives within the military planning. Such mindset is understandable because of the NATO strategic culture, however in some cases integrating and coordinating as a matter of fact is not feasible nor desirable. Vice-versa, in most cases, the military will play a minor role in stability operations, a role to be coordinated into a broader, multi-agency and multilayered effort led by the international community.

Finally, according to most participants, there is a widespread perception by several actors, inside and outside NATO, that the Alliance has turned back to fulfil only article 5 core tasks. This is obviously due to the increased role of defence and deterrence after the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea by Russian Federation, and the following crisis in Ukraine and deterioration of NATO-Russia relations. Allies have then went through an internal debate on NATO priorities, and the 2016 Warsaw Summit agreed a 360° degrees approach to security challenges and strategic directions, as well as the goal to project stability in the Alliance’s neighbourhood. In particular, participants recognized that Alliance leadership is heading towards a limited contribution, as part of a broader effort and not with a leading role. In this context, the challenge for NATO is to carve a role on projecting stability which is sustainable in terms of resources and commitment, does constitute an added value with regard to national or EU efforts, and it is credible in the eyes of both domestic constituencies and external actors. Enhancing internal consensus and coherence on the goal of projecting stability is a prerequisite for improving cooperation with other actors.

### **Opportunities for NATO-IOs cooperation: the institutionalization of relations**

The preliminary understanding of challenges was deemed necessary to realistically identify opportunities for cooperation, in particular between NATO and other IOs. Participants thus turned on this second step and discussed six possibilities to improve the current unsatisfactory situation.

First, the WG has underlined there has been good cooperation on the ground, in stability operations, among missions deployed by different international organizations, from the Balkans to Afghanistan, through the Gulf of Aden and Horn of Africa. This is the case of EU and NATO deployed personnel, but also of NATO and OSCE one – i.e. with the former providing security for conditions for the latter electoral missions in Kosovo and Afghanistan. Participants also recognized there has been in recent years a certain convergence at strategic level, again at least between NATO-OSCE and between the Alliance and the Union. For example, regarding the first relation, Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has recently appointed a Special Representative to Vienna in order to further improve cooperation among the two IOs. Generally speaking, documents and

praxis have been produced over the last two decades, and the situation cannot be considered as “ground zero”. Therefore, there is an opportunity to combine bottom up and top down approaches, by building on the good cooperation on the ground and the convergence at strategic level. Such combination should aim to bridge the gap existing in the crucial mid-level, by setting mechanisms and procedures for institutionalized interaction among these IOs.

Second, there is an opportunity to tailor ambitions and differentiate patterns in order to achieve positive results. Participants underlined that NATO approach to relations with other international organization should differ from the those towards NGOs. In the first case, an effort to institutionalize a structured cooperation is deemed necessary and worthy. In the second case, such an effort could be ineffective or even counter-productive, given the fact NGOs are guided by principles such as impartiality and neutrality which are at odds with the military approach based on allies and opponents. Accordingly, it would be more effective to work on transparency and mutual understanding in order to de-conflict the respective agendas: since the goal is stabilization, and not coordination per sé, even de-confliction in some cases may be the best outcome achievable. This finding proved to be in line with the reflection carried on in the WG3 on interaction with local stakeholders and NGOs (see *infra*).

Third, participants agreed that cooperation between two IOs would benefit from an approach across three levels:

1. At strategic level, considering the politics of interaction and the aforementioned challenges to cooperation, it would be necessary to reach an agreement and a roadmap that gives guidelines on what the two IOs want to achieve together. This implies the respective leadership and the IOs Member States should constructively engage on the goals to pursue through division of labour and synergies. This first level is crucial to ensure the political commitment of the sovereign nations which form the Alliance, and in most case are also members of EU or OSCE.
2. At the middle level, on the basis of such top-down guidelines, a proper institutionalization is necessary to create permanent tools that incentives dialogue, for example by establishing steering committees, identifying points of contacts, setting up information sharing and joint analysis mechanisms, enabling staff-to-staff exchanges, etc.
3. A lower level, in the operational theatres, the two IOs would implemented what has been established at the above levels, while leveraging the already good cooperation on the ground within stabilization operations.

Such a three-levels approach would be more effective if a feedback from the field move upward to the middle and strategic levels, for example through proper lessons learning mechanisms.

Actually, in 2016 NATO and EU have made progresses at strategic level through the Joint Declaration agreed at the Warsaw Summit, and are working on the middle level with the 42 concrete proposals endorsed by European Council and North Atlantic Council on December 2016 in order to implement the Declaration. Also, at lower level in the Mediterranean Sea the NATO Operation Sea Guardian and the EU one EUNAVFORMED Sophia are operating simultaneously and with increasing exchange of information. Therefore, NATO-EU cooperation could be a first important example of such three-levels approach implemented for the benefit of both actors.

Furthermore, this approach seems to be very well in line with to the persistent federated approach proposed by NATO ACT. Actually, the former constitute a valuable opportunity to implement the former: connecting to a network is also a political choice and not just a technical one, therefore the top-down guidelines to cooperate would benefit the connection and possibly federation across the three levels.

Participants agreed a forth opportunity to improve cooperation between NATO and other IOs lies in the ongoing review of Alliance command structure. This would indeed be an opportunity not only to maintain the elements necessary to connect with other IOs, but also to expand and empower them. This would contribute to make the NATO “universe” more accessible to other actors, thus addressing one of the challenges previously underlined by the WG. As NATO remains an alliance of sovereign Member States, such review should also seek to connect and maximise capabilities at national level, as aimed by the persistent federated approach proposed by ACT.

In this context, the hub established in at Joint Force Command Naples to deal with the Southern neighbourhood of the Alliance is a good step forward. However, in order to fulfil its role, it has to be well-connected with the other “planets” in the NATO “universe”, as well as keen to establish relations with other IOs also considering certain division of tasks.

Participants discussed particularly opportunity of cooperation in the context of projecting stability. Different views emerged on what this goal means in conceptual and concrete terms, also challenging the definitions so far agreed within NATO. It was broadly agreed that projecting stability is strictly related with operations, with defence and security capacity building and security sector reform, as well as with conflict prevention, early warning and political dialogue. As a result, it spans through the whole conflict cycle. Bearing this in mind, participants suggest that several under-looked opportunities for coordination among international organizations may arise by looking at each crisis theatre, for example regarding NATO and EU defence capacity building activities in Georgia.

The WG underlined that other underestimated opportunities regards training and education, considering the importance of the human factor in stability operations, projecting stability and generally speaking the interaction among IOs. Cooperation could be substantially improved between the EU Security and Defence College on the one hand, and the NATO Oberammergau school, the NATO Defence College, the lessons learned portal managed by the Joint Alliance Lessons Learned Centre (JALLC), and the ACT leading the effort on e-learning. In particularly, the WG discussed ideas such as mandatory courses for the officials of each IOs in the other’s colleges, modules on the functioning of other IOs and how to cooperate it, sharing of the lessons learned via JALLC, e-learning courses.

A sixth and more ambitious opportunity was discussed by participants in relation with the good practices among OSCE and UN in terms of mutualisation of resources, for example with an agreement to share the financial burden of a pool of experts to be deployed in operations, a pool to be kept available before the crisis arise. NATO could explore the possibility to connect to EU, OSCE, UN to share the burden and feeding a similar – or eventually the same - pool of human resources to be deployed in stability operations. That would create a persistent sharing and federation of expertise which in turn would greatly facilitate coordination and cooperation among the involved IOs.

## **Conclusion**

In a globalized but unstable world, cooperation and coordination among NATO and other IOs is necessary to contribute to international community efforts to address multiple crisis and project stability. This is particularly the case with the regions surrounding Europe, which represents a primary source of concerns for Member States of NATO, EU and OSCE.

While the case for improved relations among these IOs is clear, a realistic assessment of the politics of interaction among these “social factors” rightly underlines the many challenges to cooperation and coordination. IOs do compete each other in the same environment, for example in terms of Member States funding,

capabilities, political capital. When they want to work better together, it is challenging to strike the balance between flexibility and institutionalization in each single relation involving for example NATO and another IOs. Furthermore, there is a difficulty to identify and understand counterparts, appropriate point of contact or entry point, in large and complex international organizations like NATO, EU or UN. Another challenge from within the Alliance, it is tendency from the military to think in terms of integration, leverage, coordinating of other actors, while in many cases this is not feasible nor desirable. Finally, a specific challenge for NATO today is to carve a role on projecting stability which is sustainable in terms of resources and commitment, does constitute an added value with regard to national or EU efforts, and it is credible in the eyes of both domestic constituencies and external actors.

Such realistic assessment on the challenges to coordination and cooperation between NATO and other IOs should not prevent thinking about opportunities to improve working relations. On the contrary, it is a prerequisite to conceptualized tailored and realistic ideas.

A first possibility is to build on the good cooperation on the ground, in stability operations, among missions deployed by different international organizations, and on a certain convergence at strategic level, again at least between NATO-OSCE and between the Alliance and the Union, to bridge the gap at mid-level.

Second, there is an opportunity to tailor ambitions and differentiate patterns in order to achieve positive results: while towards IOs a NATO effort to institutionalize a structured cooperation is deemed necessary and worthy, with respect to NGOs such an effort could be ineffective or even counter-productive while a more modest approach would succeed.

Cooperation between two IOs would benefit from an approach across three levels: strategic, mid- and low-level, by starting with top-down political guidelines by Member States and working through concrete measures to implement it – as it is currently the case of NATO-EU partnership. Fourth, the ongoing review of Alliance command structure is an opportunity not only to maintain the elements necessary to connect with other IOs, but also to expand and empower them to make NATO universe more accessible to partners. Other underestimated opportunities regard training and education, considering the importance of the human factor in stability operations and projecting stability, a field where improved cooperation EU Security Defence College and NATO actors dealing with education and training is achievable and worthy. Finally, NATO can learn from and connect to good practices among OSCE and UN in terms of mutualisation of resources, for example with an agreement to share the financial burden of a pool of experts to be deployed in operations. Cooperation and coordination among IOs in today international security environment continue to see challenges to be addressed and opportunities to be grasped. A better understanding of both would enable NATO to deal with them, particularly but not only in the context of projecting stability.









WORKING GROUP

III



# INTERACTING WITH NGOS AND LOCAL STAKEHOLDERS: ISSUES AND POSSIBILITIES

*Kateryna Pishchikova - e-Campus University*

In the post-Cold War era NATO has evolved from a military alliance into a complex security institution. This evolution is well captured in the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept that talks about a global ambition and outlines NATO's three core objectives: collective defense, crisis management, and cooperative security. These changes within NATO reflect the changing nature of international politics: new threats, rise of violent non-state actors, and the changes in the nature of armed conflicts. NATO's aspiration to become a complex security institution in the post-Cold War world implies rethinking not only how it interacts with other actors, governmental and nongovernmental, nationally and internationally, but also an internal transformation that would generate the capacities necessary for this new role.

This chapter focuses specifically on the challenges and opportunities of NATO-NGO interaction. Today, NGOs have become an indivisible part of the international and national policy-making. NGOs have become key to many international policy-making processes and developed dense relations with international organizations that are increasing institutionalized. In domestic politics, it is now almost universally agreed that conflict management cannot be done without civil society organizations, both local and international. The world of NGOs is, almost by definition, complex and contradictory. Establishing productive cooperation with these actors is particularly challenging for such a hierarchical organization as NATO, especially since the tasks that form such a cooperation historically do not belong to the NATO's core business. Still, alongside a number of challenges, there are also opportunities for a productive interaction.

This chapter provides an entry point and a conceptual map for approaching the complex and evolving issue of NATO-NGO interaction. First, it puts the NATO-NGO interaction in the context of the Alliances' post-Cold War operations and strategy, as it was formulated in the 2010 Strategic Concept. Second, it introduces the complex debate on NGOs, and civil society more broadly, by organizing it around three sets of questions: analytical questions about who constitutes civil society; operational questions that refer to the mode in which civil society does or should operate; and normative questions that refer to the norms and values that civil society does or should uphold. This three-dimensional approach helps highlight the diversity and complexity of NGOs and civil society groups as an interlocutor for NATO. Finally, it discusses the challenges and opportunities for the NATO-NGO interaction that stem from those organizations' unique characteristics.

## Interacting with NGOs: The experience of NATO

The end of the Cold War and the changes in international security led to changes in NATO's objectives and modus operandi. These changes are captured in the 2010 NATO Strategic Concept that was presented at the Lisbon Summit and spells out a vision for NATO that is markedly different from its Cold War version. Two key elements of the 2010 Strategy are particularly consequential for the present discussion: NATO's new global reach, thus, going beyond a territorially bound alliance, and its commitment to crisis management that was elevated to be one of the three core tasks for the Alliance. As a result, the Strategy foresees a stronger expeditionary dimension and a commitment to intervene in crises that do not directly threaten the member states' territories.

The Strategic Concept argues that "NATO has a unique and robust set of political and military capabilities to address the full spectrum of crises – before, during and after conflicts. NATO will actively employ an appropriate mix of those political and military tools to help manage developing crises that have the potential to affect Alliance security, before they escalate into conflicts; to stop ongoing conflicts where they affect Alliance security; and to help consolidate stability in post-conflict situations where that contributes to Euro-Atlantic security." The ambition is therefore to intervene at different stages of crises: "to prevent crises, manage crises, stabilize post- conflict situations and support reconstruction". The Strategy also envisions a number of instruments that should help achieve these goals, such as: appropriate but modest civilian crisis management capability to interface more effectively with civilian partners; integrated civilian-military planning throughout the crisis spectrum; capability to train and develop local forces in crisis zones; civilian specialists from member states, made available for rapid deployment by Allies for selected missions.

By choosing the role of a proactive risk manager, NATO has stepped into a rather crowded domain, where a number of international organizations, notably the UN and the EU, claim an active role. It is also an area where NGOs operate at all levels and during all stages of the conflict. NATO's new ambition not only requires increased cooperation with these actors but also a need to carve out its own unique role and mandate. NATO's growing commitment to stabilizing and rebuilding countries emerging from conflict implies a need for systematic coordination between military and civilian actors. Such operations increasingly involve not only securing civilians and organizations operating in war-affected territories but also a direct provision of assistance to the civilian population – from delivering aid to rebuilding infrastructure and promoting the security sector reform – and sometimes the enforcement of peace settlements. This change in the mandate of the Alliance means that it has to work with a variety of NGOs in ways that go much beyond communication and coordination because it is actually pursuing tasks and objectives that overlap with those traditionally fulfilled by NGOs.

One of the dilemmas here is whether NATO should come up with a kind of closed cycle in-house model of managing different stages and types of intervention, military and civilian, or whether it should stick to what is unique about the alliance and put an emphasis on creating synergies with other actors on issues and activities that are not its core expertise. Up to date, different NATO missions represent different models along this continuum, each with its strengths and weaknesses.

NATO's awareness of the challenges and imperatives of crisis management developed out of its post-Cold War interventions, of which Bosnia, Kosovo, and Afghanistan are crucial cases. In fact, the 2010 Strategic Concept is in itself an attempt to take stock of these experiences and take some lessons learnt to the strategic level.

During the conflict in Bosnia and Herzegovina a number of NGOs like Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF), International Rescue Committee (IRC), Mercy Corps, and Catholic Relief Services were the first line of defense against the emerging crisis, and through their reports, were a key source of information on the situation on the ground. In the wake of the Dayton agreement in 1995, NATO's role included peacekeeping

and peacebuilding objectives, for which it deployed some 60 000 troops. Post-Dayton Bosnia is arguably one of the earlier missions where NATO had to operate alongside such a variety of international organizations and NGOs. NATO-NGO interaction in Bosnia was mostly limited to NATO informing NGOs on the security environment.

NATO intervention in Kosovo in 1999 was the first mission conceived under the broader peacebuilding framework and with new ideas about the civilian-military relations. Building on the experience in Bosnia, NATO instituted liaison officers to manage relations between KFOR and NGOs. At the time, there was already greater communication with NGO representatives during seminars and courses run for the NATO Staff, which meant greater awareness of what interacting with NGOs entails. Most observers argue, however, that at the time these new interactions had mostly impact on individual personnel and did not lead to any structural change within NATO or its operations. Indeed, Kosovo intervention exposed a number of challenges in making these relations with civilians work: NATO faced wide-spread suspicion from the nongovernmental actors, it was also not effective at communicating and collaborating with national governance structures or other international bodies.

Although the mission in Afghanistan was hailed as an upgrade and a “lessons learnt” case by the NATO officials, here again the track record was mixed. It has to be highlighted, however, that unlike the previous missions, the political conflict in the country remains unresolved and the reconstruction mission is on-going alongside military action. The intervention in Afghanistan has become so problematic on so many fronts that it is also not clear how generalizable this case is or how typical of NATO-NGO interaction in general. Still, a number of new instruments were introduced in Afghanistan that merit discussion. Also, this intervention is emblematic of the overall attempt to link the development agenda with military success and vice versa.

The so-called Comprehensive Approach (previously Concerted Planning and Action) - a concept that was introduced in a number of NATO documents since the Riga Summit in 2006 but had been discussed even before that - was meant to spell out the kind of collaboration between different actors that complex stabilization missions necessitated, both at the operational and the strategic levels. It was not so much about creating new capabilities, but rather about fully exploiting existing capacity for the missions at hand. The Approach was meant to link development and reconstruction with military action. In Afghanistan, this new approach was translated into the so-called Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRTs) that were joint civil-military cells used to expand legitimate governance across Afghanistan and to enhance security through security sector reform and reconstruction efforts. The idea was to finally resolve the so-called “security-development dilemma”, whereby security was needed to promote development but development itself was ensuring more security. In addition, PRTs reflected the desire of NATO to bring military, diplomatic and development aspects all in one, thus simplifying the management of civil-military relations on the ground. Rather than depending on other civilian actors, domestic and international, NATO tried to come up with a single full-cycle instrument that it could manage directly.

PRTs came under severe criticism, even though some were more successful than others. The “quick-impact” nature of the NATO mission was at odds with long-term development objectives as pursued by NGOs. It was also argued that PRTs blurred the lines between military and humanitarian intervention, undercutting the efforts of humanitarian organizations and even putting some of them at greater risk.

The reflection on these issues is on-going. NATO’s new ambition requires a new approach to the systematic coordination with a range of actors and on a number of levels. NATO has been promoting direct interaction between NATO’s Supreme Headquarters Allied Powers Europe and some large NGOs. It has revised substantively its training programs in order to improve the knowledge of civilian mechanisms and organization. As part of this effort, the Alliance has been developing a modest civilian capability that acts as contact points internally as well as in interactions with different partners. It has also set up a Comprehensive

Approach Specialist Support (COMPASS) program to build a database of national civil experts in the fields of political reform, stabilization and reconstruction, and media that can be drawn upon for advice at the strategic, operational, and theatre levels - key objectives being the sharing of lessons learned and building trust between NATO and other actors.

More recently, the cooperation with NGOs has progressed to a new stage, whereby NGO representatives are getting a greater role within the NATO structure. Civil Society Advisory Panel on Women, Peace and Security (WPS) was launched in October 2016 and is aimed at institutionalizing sustained dialogue with representatives of civil society who work on conflict prevention and resolution, security and women's empowerment, from grassroots activism to national and international policy. Through this Panel, "NATO wishes to more systematically draw upon the insights and expertise of civil society and ensure a continued dialogue with civil society actors on matters concerning WPS, including in the planning and execution of NATO-led operations and missions." The panel brings together 28 individuals and institutions from countries and areas experiencing conflict, including Afghanistan and Ukraine, as well as countries engaged in supporting peacebuilding. The Panel will meet regularly with the Special Representative for Women, Peace and Security and NATO staff working in this area to provide feedback on, and input to, NATO's work to implement the Women, Peace and Security agenda. CSAP is NATO's first institutionalized mechanism for dialogue with civil society at the strategic and policy level. Given its recent institution, it remains to be seen how exactly the Panel will fit into the overall NATO architecture and what kind of impact it will have on stabilization missions. The section below aims to clarify the diversity and specificity of NGOs, both international and domestic, their added-value in crisis management, and the challenges related to interaction with these actors.

### **Unpacking the "messy" universe of NGOs**

NGOs are part of a bigger family – the civil society. In fact, most literature uses "civil society organizations" (CSOs) as a term of choice because it captures better the variety and diversity of the organizations that belong to this realm. In the context of this paper going back to the broader definition and breaking it down into three sets of questions - analytical questions about who belongs to civil society; operational questions that refer to the mode in which civil society does or should operate; and normative questions that refer to the norms and values that civil society does or should uphold - helps describe the diversity and complexity of these actors as well as identify the challenges and opportunities for the NATO-NGO interaction. Civil society is a complex and contested concept. One of the most comprehensive definitions defines it as:

the arena of uncoerced collective action around shared interests, purposes and values. In theory, its institutional forms are distinct from those of the state, family and market, though in practice, the boundaries between state, civil society, family and market are often complex, blurred and negotiated. Civil society commonly embraces a diversity of spaces, actors and institutional forms, varying in their degree of formality, autonomy and power. Civil societies are often populated by organizations such as registered charities, development non-governmental organizations, community groups, women's organizations, faith-based organizations, professional associations, trade unions, self-help groups, social movements, business associations, coalitions and advocacy groups.

This definition captures well the fact that the boundaries of different spheres in society are often less clear-cut than it seems and highlights the diversity of actors that populate this sphere. This definition refrains from establishing any equivalence between civil society and particular institutional forms by saying that civil society can be characterized as a totality of institutions, but also as a diversity of spaces and actors, reflecting thus a rather "thick" understanding of civil society.

Importantly, it defines civil society in terms of action that is “voluntary” and “collective”: this helps separate certain organizations that may lack voluntary character, for example, groups based on kinship. Also, some groups may be pursuing “shared interests, purposes, and values” that are not necessarily shared by the rest of the society or conducive to peace. Indeed, it is rather common that grassroots organizations are particularistic in nature, often organized around identity lines, and without an explicit orientation towards peace at large.

This challenge is emphasized in post-conflict settings. Recent thinking has disputed earlier assumptions that war destroys social capital, arguing, instead, that “violence is less about social breakdown than about the creation of new forms of social relations”. “Traditional” forms of civil society (with membership determined along family, community and clan lines) tend to prevail over “modern” forms (characterized by voluntary membership). At the local level, civil society groups revert to “primary grouping”, often along the same identity lines that shape the conflict itself, be it ethnic, religious and/or linguistic. To use Robert Putnam’s well-known distinction, during conflict, bonding social capital (i.e., social capital based on developing solidarity within a group) typically increases, while bridging social capital (i.e., social capital developed by connecting across different groups) tends to decrease. These expressions of bonding social capital are not necessarily conflict-oriented, however, they can easily be instrumentalized by entrepreneurs of violence, resulting in a self-reinforcing spiral of mutual distrust, prejudice and fear.

Another term that is often used interchangeably with “local civil society” or local NGOs is “local stakeholders”. The term seems to have acquired a positive connotation and is often used as a synonym for local partners who are willing to cooperate with the international actors. Conflict studies, however, urge us to go back to the original meaning of the term. Stakeholders could be understood as “actors (private and public) that have a shared interest in the outcome and demonstrate some degree of ownership.” This broader definition raises our awareness not only of the multiplicity of stakeholders in conflict settings but also of the fact that not all of them are stakeholders to the same outcome: while there are stakeholders for peace, there are also stakeholders for conflict. Seeing some CSOs as stakeholders for peace and others as conflict entrepreneurs adds the necessary realism to any conflict and context analysis, a realism that is often missing from an over-positive view of civil society in conflict settings. At the same time, greater awareness of interests and power struggles is indispensable for changing the underlying incentive structures and raising the peace gains for key stakeholders, so the stakeholders for conflict converge towards peaceful solutions.

Without a sufficient grasp of the local social dynamics, international actors might even find themselves unintentionally reinforcing discriminatory practices and networks of patronage. In early post-conflict periods, the sudden influx of resources earmarked for civil society clearly puts a premium on groups that can rapidly get organized according to criteria aligned with the international wish list. While certainly many of them are genuine organizations that require only minor readjustment to fit international standards, the search for civil society under tight deadlines also leads to the proliferation of ghost or ‘briefcase’ NGOs, created and run with the only goal of obtaining foreign funding.

Many scholars and critically-minded practitioners highlight how even the most sophisticated definition of civil society adopted within an international intervention is likely to produce hierarchies between locals and foreigners, in which domestic actors are mere “recipients” or “implementers” of projects conceived elsewhere. At the same time, the so-called “local turn” that argued for the primacy of local agency in peacebuilding, was also criticized for idealizing local actors and overstating their capacity to reach solutions for peace. More realistically, some scholars acknowledge the impact of local power structures on actors’ positions in conflict. Although local organizations are indeed closely linked to their constituencies, they can also lack open and voluntary character, and their primary purpose may be the advancement of a particular identity rather than the common good. This scholarship is represented by the literature on “conflict society” that shows how local civil society organizations are first and foremost shaped by the conflict and the contextual factors created by the conflict. The universe of civil society organizations is therefore complex and contradictory.



Building on this initial discussion, what we present below is an operational definition and a typology of NGOs operating in fields related to conflict management. Although this definition responds only to the first set of questions – analytical questions of who belongs to civil society – it is a useful entry point into a more operational discussion of NATO-NGO interaction that is presented in the following section.

Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are usually referred to as non-state, non-profit organizations or groups. While most definitions are rather technical focusing on NGOs’ organizational features and highlighting what sets them apart from other actors, such as businesses or political parties, some include more normative language. For example, one widely used definition from a World Bank document talks about activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development and argues that NGOs are value-based organizations for which principles of altruism and voluntarism remain key defining characteristics. This example is illustrative of the high expectations that have been invested into NGOs by the international organizations. It also highlights the dominance of a normative understanding of these organizations’ role and purpose.

NGOs come in all shapes and sizes. They are often divided into the operational NGOs that are involved in projects in a number of domains, from development to humanitarian aid, on the one hand; and the advocacy NGOs, on the other, whose primary purpose is to defend and/or promote a specific cause and seek to influence the policies and practices of international organizations or of a particular state around that issue. NGOs can also be sub-divided into categories that describe the level on which they operate primarily. It is therefore common to divide them into 1) national organizations that operate within specific national/ domestic contexts, 2) international organizations that operate across borders in a number of countries and are often directly involved in the policies of international organizations or Western governments, either as project implementers or even as participants to decision-making and political consultation processes. Finally, 3) community-based or grassroots organizations serve a specific population in a narrow geographical area and are often referred to as grassroots organizations. These are usually membership organizations and as such are directly representative of their constituencies who mobilize to further their interests, e.g. women’s groups, credit circles, youth clubs, cooperatives and farmers’ associations. By comparison, both national and international NGOs are more often intermediaries between certain constituencies and other actors, such as the state or the international actors.

	<b>International</b>	<b>Domestic</b>	<b>Community-based</b>
<b>Operational</b>	e.g. Red Cross, Medicines Sans Frontiers (MSF), Save the Children	e.g. civil society organizations that work on gender violence or with the ex-combatants, or promote inter-communal dialogue	e.g. groups and associations that address particular needs of a community
<b>Advocacy</b>	e.g. Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, Greenpeace	e.g. civic networks that lobby with national policy-makers on certain policy issues	e.g. groups that mobilize specifically to lobby on local policy issues

**Table 1:** *Typology of NGOs operating in conflict management*

Another interesting category worth mentioning here are the so-called “umbrella” NGOs, either international or national, that serve as membership organizations to smaller NGOs. Domestically, these act as hubs for smaller and geographically dispersed organizations helping them pool resources, get access to funding or have an impact on the policy level. Umbrella NGOs are popular with foreign donors who would like to reach out to small groups operating outside of the capital but do not have the capacity to do so directly. Using instruments, such as seed grants, they act via umbrella NGOs who then disburse the funds and manage the projects. Internationally, umbrella NGOs often emerge as front offices for multiple national NGOs united by the same concern, e.g. environment or conflict prevention. In addition to pooling resources and aggregating policy claims, such umbrella organizations have an invaluable ability to accumulate comparative knowledge of the issue and the lessons learnt in that field. They are also perfect for nurturing long-term partnerships with small national or community-based NGOs

Over the past several decades NGOs have also grown into an impressive force at the international level. Although not such a recent phenomenon - the International Committee of the Red Cross was founded in 1863, Save the Children Fund in 1917, Oxford Committee for Famine Relief (now Oxfam) in 1942, and CARE in 1945, - its reach has increased dramatically. Collectively NGOs now manage billions of dollars annually and are represented in many key policy fora. NGOs’ role in policy-making has also changed considerably. Most notable are the advocacy campaigns, such as for arms exports control, against land mines or “blood diamonds” to mention just a few. NGOs have now become an integral part of global governance and this is even more so in the area of conflict prevention and peacebuilding, whereby a number of umbrella organizations and transnational networks have been created, such as The Global Partnership for the Prevention of Armed Conflict (GPPAC), European Platform for Conflict Prevention and Transformation, European Peace Liaison Office (EPLO).

In addition to lobbying and advocacy, NGOs are now directly involved with several international organizations either as consultative bodies or as part of their decision-making structures. Most notable is, of course, the role of NGOs in the UN system, whereby the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations was established as early as in 1946. Other international and regional organizations have also been following the lead. Since the late 1990s, for example, EU parliamentarians began holding regular meetings with NGOs in the Human Rights Contact Group, Civil Society Contact Group, Common Foreign and Security Policy Contact Group and Arms Transfer Working Group. Other examples of IOs that gave the NGOs a permanent decision-making role include the FAO Committee on Food Security and the Joint UN Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS).

The following section focuses specifically on the NATO-NGO interaction. It highlights the added value of these actors for conflict management, thus arguing that better interaction and cooperation is likely to bring better results. It also lists a number of challenges that stem from different organizational cultures as well as conflicting objectives and operational claims.

### **Challenges and opportunities for the NATO-NGO interaction**

As NATO asserts itself as a complex security institution with a global outreach, there are a number of reasons why it can and should interact with NGOs, both at the international and domestic levels. NGOs are often better placed to deliver on a number of peacemaking and peacebuilding objectives. They bring added value with their unique cultural and symbolic capital; their expertise in specific issues areas and long-term experience with certain regions. Politically, they stand out for their impartiality, neutrality, and independence. NGOs have greater freedom in defining their mandates and can stake legitimacy claims that are not driven by political objectives. This puts them in a unique position vis-à-vis conflict parties and gives them particular weight in the public debate. Operationally, many CSOs can gain access to difficult areas, take greater risks, and build

direct links with grassroots or community-based organizations. There are a number of functions that NGOs are believed to be particularly good at fulfilling in (post-)conflict situations, such as monitoring of human rights violations and of implementation of peace agreements, advocacy for peace, or facilitation of dialogue, to mention just a few. Obviously, there can be overlap between NGOs and other actors that fulfill these functions. This is a strength rather than a weakness because it points to possible synergies between different actors and helps overcome a rather limiting discussion of who are the ideal actors for peace.

This of course does not apply to all NGOs. As noted in the critiques cited above, NGOs can also be tainted by their adherence to externally defined political agendas and by their bias towards certain types of national counterparts. NGOs are by definition an extremely difficult interlocutor: They are “messy”, extremely diverse, with competing claims in the crisis management realm, and are often hostile to state actors (domestic or international).

Despite a number of advantages that could stem from greater cooperation, NATO has faced considerable opposition from some NGOs that considered a new NATO’s Comprehensive Approach misplaced and even harmful. Some NGOs argued that NATO’s identity as a Western military organization and the capital it possessed were in direct contradiction to the idea of establishing and nurturing a “humanitarian space” rooted in impartiality and aimed at upholding the wellbeing of all conflict-affected citizens. Others have argued that by marrying military and developmental objectives, NATO has been contributing to the militarization of aid that undercuts the very goals of peacebuilding.

NATO has a lot to offer: In addition to considerable material resources and military might, NATO brings into the theatre efficiency, discipline, and clear chain of command that are all extremely important in high risk and low security situations. However, as a Western military alliance, it is clearly a party to the conflict and not neutral. It also has structural limits to engage with NGOs effectively: lack of appropriate interlocutors within NATO structures; hierarchical organizational structure that clashes with more horizontal cooperation models common in the civil society. There is a lot of miscommunication and mutual mistrust. From the NATO perspective, NGOs are inefficient and unfocused, they lack material resources to make a difference. NGOs, on the other hand, argue that NATO’s military culture is inappropriate in reconstruction and development projects, and indeed, that NATO lack sufficient expertise in these fields. Indeed, many explanations of NATO-NGO disconnect focus on different organizational cultures as well as on the competition that breaks out when NATO makes a claim on the core tasks of its NGOs interlocutors. Indeed, NATO-NGO interaction is probably better seen as competition over the definition of expertise in statebuilding and stabilization.

## Conclusions

Today, the concepts and practice of international intervention and of post-conflict reconstruction have been transformed dramatically to include elements that go much beyond ensuring a cessation of hostilities. The new emphasis on comprehensive and long-term solutions has inevitably shifted the focus from the military action and traditional diplomacy to civilian expertise in governance and development.

A more ambitious mission embraced by NATO has produced new approaches to intervention and stabilization, some more successful than others. The challenges, however, go beyond issues of implementation of specific instruments. In the background, there is a broader strategic question: should NATO invest into a kind of closed cycle in-house model of managing different stages and types of intervention, military and civilian, or should it put an emphasis on creating synergies with other actors on issues and activities that are not its core expertise. The discussion of NATO-NGO interaction presented above points into the direction of synergy-building.

The diversity of NGOs, both international and domestic, and their added-value in crisis management make them an indispensable but also a difficult partner. NGOs are “messy”, they come in all shapes and sizes, and advance competing claims in the crisis management realm. They are also often hostile to state actors and to NATO specifically. This hostility arises from the competition over the core tasks and stabilization objectives. It is when NATO infringes on the “humanitarian space” where some NGOs operate or when it is seen as instrumentalizing long-term development objectives towards its short-term military goals that NGOs become critical of the Alliance.

Setting realistic objectives and clarifying NATO’s core tasks should make it much easier to manage NATO-NGO interaction. NATO’s hierarchical organizational culture creates preferences for a centrally-managed in-house mission that brings civilians and the military under a single command. This risk, however, rendering the mission scope too broad, almost unmanageable. It also implies boosting NATO’s civilian expertise to the extent that is probably neither possible nor desirable. Rather than trying to be all things to all people, NATO should look into how its core tasks are complementary with other actors’ activities on the ground. Competition for influence and operational space alienates those actors that would instead be interested in building synergies with NATO missions.

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## WORKING GROUP REPORT

# THE MILITARY-CIVILIAN COOPERATION AND ITS LIMITS

*Fabrizio Coticchia - University of Genova*

As stated by the “Warsaw declaration on Transatlantic Security” (2016), NATO will “do more to project stability beyond our borders”. Therefore, the most relevant question is: how to project stability in the complex security environment we live today? The recent operations in Iraq and Afghanistan have illustrated the obstacles of “international liberal peacebuilding”. Other approaches, such as “hybrid peace” or “resilience” have questioned the main top-down assumptions of Western humanitarian interventions. Without taking into account cultural, social and historical needs, state-building will inevitably fail. Thus, international interventions require to be based on local needs, fostering bottom-up approaches. Also for this reason, a growing attention has been devoted by scholars and policymakers to the vital role played by local stakeholders, civil society and NGOs. After being underestimated for years, such issue is nowadays perceived as vital by the international organizations, such as NATO, involved in projecting stability.

In order to explore the complex interaction of IOs with NGOs and local actors and stakeholders in the stabilization process we should adopt a broad approach, defining concepts and terms and identifying main issues, trends and key-actors. As illustrated in the plenary session of the workshop, NATO should learn and “re-learn” from previous crises, increasing its overall knowledge to better coordinate with NGOs operating on the ground, and to implement adequate policies on the ground in connection with local stakeholders and organized civil society, enhancing trust and info-sharing.

The workshop aimed at addressing the above-mentioned issues, answering two fundamental questions:

1. How to properly understand the complex interaction between IOs and NGOs ?
2. How to improve the effectiveness of their collaboration, overcoming main obstacles and problems?

In line with this goal, the “Working Group 3” (W-G 3) has focused its discussion on shared definitions, selected key-issues and opportunities that deserve further investigation.

### **Definitions and Concepts**

Since the very beginning, the “Working Group 3” has devoted a specific attention to clarify terms and concepts concerning the interactions between IOs and NGOs and local stakeholders. The panel aimed at answering the following key-questions:

- Who are those actors?
- What kinds of activities are offered in post-conflict reconstruction?
- What are the crucial “contextual factors” that shape conflict transformation?
- How to transform the “incentive structure” (and how to reduce incentives to violence?)
- What is the ultimate goal of NATO in the relation with civil society?
- Why civil society should enhance cooperation with NATO?
- What is the added value of the interaction?

Combining different perspectives in the debate, thanks to the presence of several kinds of speakers (e.g., scholars, military officers, experts, members of NGOs, etc.), the panel has explored the so-called “dilemmas for engagement”, trying to conceptualized how to cross the bridge between military and civilian actors and, above all, how to improve effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of their cooperation.

As already mentioned, the Working Group started its discussion from general concepts and definitions. Indeed, the main task of social sciences will be that of clarifying definitions and providing classifications. Two terms have been defined:

- Stakeholders, conceived as: “actors that have a shared interest in the outcome and demonstrate some degree of ownership”, and
- NGOs, labeled as “form of civic participation that have non-governmental and non-profit character”.

Panelist has then added two main addition clarifications:

1. There are “stakeholders for peace” but also “stakeholders for conflict”. Indeed, there could be “entrepreneurs for violence”, actors who have specific interests in spreading violence on the ground, for different reasons and purposes (material factors, ideology, etc.). Therefore, it is worth noting how words like “stakeholders” cannot be aligned only with positive terms and concepts. A “dark side” of civil society should be carefully highlighted;
2. There are local and international actors, with different aims, mandates and functions (e.g., there are peacebuilding or humanitarian NGOs). In other words, the range of “functions” “mandates”, is extremely wide, encompassing the following traditional activities in post-conflict reconstruction, peace-building, conflict management and transformation: protection of civilians, monitoring of human rights violations, advocacy for peace and human rights, intergroup social cohesion (i.e. bringing together people from different classes, religions and ethnic backgrounds), socialization to values (e.g., peace, democracy), facilitation of dialogue, service delivery for peacebuilding.

From a methodological perspective, two shared elements emerged from the (lively) discussion:

- a) The panel has recognised the need to “unpack” the concept of civil society, which could be also considerably polarized in a plural environment. Thus, we should adopt a flexible approach in addressing such concept, identifying carefully who belongs to civil organizations and their values and ties, before taking for granted a positive (and superficial) label of “civil society organizations” to include in process of conflict transformation;
- b) Rather than focusing only on “actors from the civil society” it would be more appropriate (and effective) to adopt a “dynamic perspective”, investigating the complex relation between state and society. For instance, in weak or fragile states, the role of civil society organizations will be extremely peculiar. Such relational approach helps in solving the main “dilemmas” of civil society. If the main goal is to foster conflict transformation to project stability, a detailed knowledge of the dynamics of power relationships should be accurately assessed, bearing in mind that certain form of “civil participation” are not in line with our “western liberal order”.

In sum, the W-G has focused on 1) types of state-society relations and 2) types of conflicts and their root causes, considered as vital “contextual factors” that deserve attention before addressing local stakeholders and NGOs in a specific political scenario. All the above-mentioned concepts paved the way to the following discussion in the panel, which identified selected key-issues concerning the interaction between NATO, NGOs and local stakeholders.

### **Key-issues in the debate**

The Panel has fully recognized how the cooperation between civilian and military actors could be problematic, for several reasons. The W-G has tried to summarize, from different backgrounds and angles, the more problematic issues that “divide” NGOs from NATO. The operations undertaken in the bipolar era, with a considerable rise after 9-11, help to collect several examples of such interaction.

From the perspective of NGOs, reported in the discussion by scholars and activists, the challenging aspects have been:

- The concern for losing neutrality and, consequently, credibility towards civilians after being involved in “military activities”;
- The concern over the risk of “instrumentality” (the civil-military relationship could be interpreted as a tool for NATO in order to acquire relevant information);
- The problematic perception of “hierarchy” in the relationship with NATO (the fact of being “commanded” and controlled by armed forces);
- An overall “militarization” of peacebuilding operations, diverting funds from development to military-related activities and initiatives;
- A very limited outreach: a scarce involvement of NATO in events and programs far from the operational needs, before or after missions on the ground.

Conversely, from the perspective of NATO, the main obstacles derived from:

- The lack of credibility of several NGOs, which pursue their specific agenda, sometimes not in line with that of NATO. In other words, there could be “conflicting mandates”;
- The growing competition among NGOs in order to obtain resources from international organizations in order to implement their projects and to maintain their structure over time;
- The political and ideological reasons that often constraint NGOs in the active involvement to events organized by NATO.

In sum, the problem of trust and reliability emerged as crucial. There could be also a different conception of the timing of the intervention, because of a more “long-term engagement” of NGOs, which are primarily interested in long-term sustainable development.

After having illustrated the existing (and even the potential) problems in the interaction between NGOs and NATO, the panel identified seven key-issues that should be addressed in order to foster the effectiveness of such cooperation. These are the seven aspects that required to be investigated in details according to the WG-3:

1. The first issue is related to the possible conflicting aims of the actors on the ground. If reconstruction, aid and development could be crucial to “win the hearts and minds of the population”, the “human development” represent the main goal of NGOs, which could be not interested in the military victory. Thus, we could have a dilemma between peace and stability vs. human development. On the one

hand, there is the need to reach the end-state of the mission, conquering the trust of local populace, in line with traditional counter-insurgency operations. Indeed, NATO is an organization whose main aim is the collective defense and, consequently, military victory in a case of crisis. On the other hand, we have a sort of inclusive, constant, “day-by-day peacebuilding”. Certainly, shared interests between NATO and NGOs working together on the ground exist, but the mandates could be conflicting. For instance, in order to better connect with local needs, and to resolve the above-mentioned dilemma, new concepts have been recently introduced (such as “resilience” in the new EU Global Strategy of 2016);

2. Apart from conflicting mandates, NGOs and NATO can adopt also different strategic narratives to interpret and explain conflicts and operations. Diverse plots and storylines strategically adopted to communicate a purpose, a meaning on security issues. Communication plays a crucial role in spread a reconciliation message, and, therefore, on “projecting stability”. The presence of counter-narratives could represent a significant obstacle to develop effective and successful narratives. On the whole, all participants in the panel agree on the fact that NATO should improve its strategic narratives;
3. The panel has obviously recognized the relevance of interaction between civilian and military actors. However, different approaches and perspectives emerged regarding the “appropriate” level of cooperation. Do these actors need to find a common ground? Or do they just need to coordinate at superficial level, sharing information at tactical dimensions? For instance, strategic relationships go beyond info-sharing. In sum, by answering those questions since the very beginning helps in better conceptualizing and the implementing the required level of interaction;
4. Neutrality seems just an illusion in peacebuilding. Political solutions cannot be neutral. Even knowledge is not neutral. An alternative kind of concepts, which can be useful, for both military and humanitarian perspective, is impartiality;
5. In order to improve the interaction with actors that have a different nature, a “cultural transformation” is required. Military forces need to acquire a “new mindset” to better cooperate with NGOs and local stakeholders, enhancing the level of trust and mutual understanding;
6. Apart from traditional formal relations with NGOs and local actors, a specific attention should be devoted to “informal relations” with them, beyond official communication. Indeed, a part of the complex interaction on the ground between military forces and relevant actors from civil society occurred beneath the formal frameworks. The types of such informal relations should be collected and deeply investigated.
7. Finally, the WG has emphasized how financial constraints affect the interaction. In other words, additional resources could represent a significant incentive to create occasions to share views and approaches, enhancing trust. In the context of financial crisis, the lack of proper resources has probably hindered further cooperation.

### **Lessons learnt and opportunities**

After almost two decades of complex military interventions in the new century, scholars, practitioners, and decision-makers have collected several useful lessons learnt. Some of them are related to the interaction between NATO, NGOs and local stakeholders. The panel has highlighted the following lessons learnt and opportunities (to properly enhance the civil-military cooperation):

- I. NATO has gradually recognized the importance of local stakeholders. Despite other international organizations are better structured for an effective interaction with NGOs and civil society, the panel has emphasized the improvement made by NATO and the enhanced coordination with civilian actors



achieved in recent years. Although pitfalls and problems, the case of ISAF in Afghanistan illustrates some improvements across time, even within an institutionalized context of coordination;

- II. In order to acquire a “new mindset” and being culturally prepared to engage different actors, exercises, simulations, and training activities remain decisive and should be developed;
- III. One of the identified reasons behind the limited interaction is the scarce outreach, which should be improved. Communication towards NGOs can be reformulated, enhancing communication, being more engaged in the civil society networks. The need of being more coherent and specific (e.g., involving the NGOs primarily according to their mandates and tasks) is also stressed. On the whole, the NATO’s capability in networking has been questioned. Finally, a logistic and financial problem (the fact that NGOs members do not have availability for working with NATO in joint exercises and simulations for several days) raised the general attention;
- IV. The panel has discussed also the “potential for engagement” of civilian actors beyond exercises and simulations, thanks to institutionalization and long-term approaches. The existing multi-stakeholder bodies within several IOs have been reported as examples. The question here is: Is there a space for a permanent involvement? The idea of common platform, where NATO is just as one actor, has been advanced. Others have focused on tactical level, remarking the importance of training officers on the ground for an effective interaction with NGOs and local stakeholders. A shared view concerning the need to involve civil society also in the strategic thinking, since the very beginning of operations, sharing methods, agenda and joint analysis, has been widely supported in the panel. In sum, a “comprehensive approach revised” should be discussed in next years, maybe emulating from other IOs;
- V. One of the main lessons learnt of the post 9-11 military operations is that there is no “exit strategy without local actors”. However, involving (especially small) NGOs has been problematic. Some obstacles have been found also in fostering integration with “umbrella organizations”, which represent several actors, with different views and approaches. Because of those problems, the first aspect that should be enhanced is the collection of positive examples of integration. The lessons learnt on “successful integration” should be absolutely increased. So far, as emerged in the debate, NATO collected positive results in specific activities and contexts, such as Security Sector reforms (SSR), Judicial System, training of police, etc. Here the added value of integration often has been visible, multiplying the effects of cooperation.

## **Conclusions**

In the post bipolar era, the vast majority of conflicts occurred within the border of the state. As constantly illustrated by scholars, as well as by the military operations undertaken in the last 30 years, the involvement of local stakeholders is crucial in the current “wars amongst the people”. Therefore, the level of effectiveness and sustainability of the interaction between military and civilian actors is a fundamental driver in projecting stability.

NATO has gradually recognized the importance of such cooperation, devoting time and efforts to develop and enhance the interaction with NGOs and local stakeholders. Nonetheless, several obstacles exist in hindering a further improvement. For this reason, the W-G has illustrated how and to what extent an inter-disciplinary confrontation allows to explore the key-issues regarding the complex cooperation between NATO and NGOs.

After having pointed out shared definitions and main problems and inconsistencies derived from different perspectives, the panel has advanced some concrete suggestions to improve the interaction. The panel has recognised the need to “unpack” the concept of civil society. Thanks to the lessons learnt collected in recent decades, the W-G has focused on cultural, organizational, and logistic aspects that deserve additional attention.

Finally, a shared view emerged in the panel concerning the need to carefully consider the political dimension of the cooperation, which never occurs in a vacuum, even in fragile or weak states. On the whole, there are no (civilian or military) actors “above the conflict”. Thus, a “neutral” or “technical” approach will inevitably fail. Rather, the political dimension of the interaction between NATO and NGOs and local stakeholder represents the starting point to understand and then develop the cooperation.





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