



**Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe
Conflict Prevention Centre**

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‘Lessons of NATO involvement in the Balkans: Civilian Reconstruction
and Political Institutions’.**

In my presentation today I intend to address the issue of civilian reconstruction and political institutions in terms of the relevance of our experiences in the Balkans with an eye to looking at lessons learned in view of future tasks in different regions. In this regard, the first question to be asked is how relevant is in fact our experience in the Balkans for the new tasks that the international community is facing in other areas such as, for instance, Afghanistan or Iraq.

From an OSCE perspective, I could immediately point out that our own approach to conflict prevention and crisis management is based on a comprehensive approach to security and on principles such as inclusiveness and ownership. The constant feature is therefore the permanent dialogue that involves directly the countries in the region where we operate, empowers them and makes them fully part of the decision-making process. This allow us to better take into account and factor into our activities the aspirations of the countries themselves and improves our knowledge of the local situation. A key role in this sense is obviously played by our missions which allow us to develop a dialogue at the local level, not only with representatives of the governments and local administration, but also with the civil society. This is a key factor in promoting a better understanding and an acceptance of our activities at all levels.

Looking at “out of OSCE area” scenarios, this issue would stand out immediately as one that would require attention in terms of developing a political dialogue with governments and a dialogue with the most significant components of the civil society so as to elicit understanding and support for the aims of the activity of reconstruction. In the case of Afghanistan, for instance, we have developed a “Cooperation Partnership” which will provide the framework for possible future initiative of practical cooperation with the OSCE.

This permanent interaction would make it possible to modulate efforts so as to duly take into account specific characteristics of the region where one operates and to better understand the way people perceive activities undertaken. When engaging in a process of rebuilding institutions there is no “single size-that-fits-all”; rather, to the contrary – we have learned to work and to patiently adjust and adapt our best practices to local realities.

Another key point to be kept in mind is that the process of democratic institution building is greatly facilitated in the presence of regional or democratic integration processes. We have witnessed in the Balkans how easier security and defence sector reforms become when they take place in a PFP context, with the perspective for the countries to perhaps join NATO some time in the future. The EU Stabilization and Association Process, by opening up a path for the countries of the region towards eventual accession to the EU, is making EU standards an increasingly acceptable parameter for our own activities in institution-building.

When these perspectives are absent, the sheer economic considerations and motivations will inevitably play a comparatively more important role. Obviously, any process of political stabilization is heavily dependent on economic rehabilitation. Therefore the community of the international financial institutions (IFI) needs to be engaged at an early stage, possibly already in the debate on the development of strategy and a vision for the future.

This leads to the point concerning co-operation among international institutions. We have come a long way since the time of our initial experiences in the Balkans, and we have also learned a lot on the way, both from the set-backs and from our successes. (On the other hand, you will agree with me that we are still learning today.)

As a result of our experiences, we have successfully activated an intensive dialogue among international actors involved in the Balkans. This includes more and more structured exchanges at HQ level aimed at encouraging exchanges of visions and fine-tuning of strategies. The recent framework for an enhanced NATO/EU dialogue is an example of this, and the OSCE for its part remains ready to offer its contribution on each of the core areas identified in this important document. This dialogue, however, complements – but cannot in any way replace – the vitally important mechanisms for coordination and cooperation on the terrain both at the political and the operational level.

The BiH format, with its complex architecture revolving around the function of the Office of the High Representative (OHR), the Kosovo ‘pillar’ structure, the more flexible formats of the IC principals in Skopje, or the Friends of Albania in Tirana are all different but equally successful models that one could draw upon in designing mechanisms for co-ordination on the ground in future. Among the principles governing this co-operation I will limit myself to

recalling here the need for a division of labour based on the comparative strengths and advantages of each organisation and the necessity to avoid duplication. In our case, we found our co-operation with NATO in the Western Balkans not only extremely useful, but in fact a *conditio sine qua non* for us to be able to discharge effectively our functions in a number of regions.

In this connection, I would like to put forward some suggestions to further improve IC co-operation in conflict prevention:

- to improve information sharing, especially in early warning;
 - to enhance co-operation in fact-finding and monitoring missions, including possible set-up of joint “country co-ordination teams;”
 - to develop joint training programs for field officers prior to their deployment in the field; and
 - to try to harmonise our working procedures.
- First, where necessary, partner organizations should introduce new modalities and establish new mechanisms for co-operation. But we also need to build more efficiently on the initiatives already launched and take more active advantage of each other’s existing tools. For example, better use could be made of cross-conditionality: non-compliance with international obligations (ICTY or OSCE or Dayton) could be linked to progress in the relations with other organisations (e.g. SAP or PfP cooperation). We must see where and how we can complement each other, using experience gained, resources and mechanisms available. And we should respect the principle of inclusiveness and involve all relevant players.
 - Secondly, despite recent progress achieved, information sharing among partner organizations, especially in early warning, definitely needs to be improved. Early warning is one of the main functions of the OSCE Institutions and field offices. Regular reports and evaluations of the situation in a variety of locations and on a variety of issues are provided to the participating States, who themselves regularly share information in the Permanent Council. Better information sharing among partner organizations can be achieved through joint working level meetings directly in the field and between headquarters. The OSCE-NATO working level consultations between headquarters have become a good examples of such information sharing, and we are presently discussing ways to make even it more systematic and operational.
 - Thirdly, there is much room for improving co-operation in fact-finding and monitoring missions. One possible solution might be to set up, when needed, joint “country co-ordination teams”, for example drawing on OSCE’s permanent field presences.
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- Fourth, as we are doing today, we should as well in future continue our exchanges on lessons learned and evaluation, since this is an essential component of successful conflict prevention. Within the OSCE the Conflict Prevention Centre is, among others, responsible for developing an OSCE lessons learned process. A “Lessons Learned paper on the OSCE Mission in FYROM” was prepared and distributed to participating States earlier this year. This has been the first and valuable experience for us, and we intend to continue it in the future. An OSCE strategy in this area of activity, as well as a database, will be produced. It would be interesting to formulate truly inclusive common evaluations of joint operations with a view to developing common lessons learned.
 - Fifth, as proved by earlier practice, very often a major obstacle to smooth co-operation between partners in the field is the lack of reciprocal knowledge of goals, mandates, procedures, etc. One way to tackle this issue would be to provide each other with training modules on respective organizations, or to develop joint training programs on relevant issues for field officers prior to their deployment in the field. Joint training should be a general aim, not least because common standards are already current practice in many areas. Joint exercises can also play a very important role in this process of getting to know each other’s procedures better – but only if partner organizations are treated as real partners, and can participate rather than observe, and have access to relevant information. On a similar theme, to improve co-operation in conflict prevention it would prove useful to harmonise respective actors’ working procedures, or at least to try to develop compatible procedures or model agreements, which would already be a significant step forward.
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