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The Challenge of Successful Post – War Stabilization: More Questions than Answers for the NATO–EU Framework

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The Challenge of Post-War Stabilization: More Questions than Answers for the NATO-EU Framework

The following comments regarding the so-called ‘EU-NATO framework’ and its increasing role in post-conflict peace- and nation-building and stabilization refers to a project, which I conduct as associate researcher at the Foundation for Post-Conflict Development in New York (<http://www.postconflictdev.org/>). The focus of my research at the Foundation is three-fold. First, it analyzes Germany’s role and player within the ‘framework of increasing out-of-area peacekeeping or peace-building missions, initiated or supported by either the North Atlantic Organization or the European Union, or both.

Some of the questions concern the characteristics of contemporary German foreign and security policy. Are there, and if yes, what are the specific limitations for German contributions to peacekeeping, such as in Afghanistan? I also ask the question, whether and to which extent, reunified Germany might benefit from its own historic experience with a successful post-World War II reconstruction process; and how we can contrast this success story with the disastrously flawed policy of insufficient or non-existent post-war planning for Iraq, plus the enormous security challenges NATO is still facing in Afghanistan where the Germans have had for a considerable time the second largest contingent among NATO allies. What might be the lessons the international community could have drawn or still should be drawing from the ‘German case’ following World War II with regard to contemporary cases of reconstruction and stabilization?

The second aspect of my research has dealt with NATO’s increasing role in post-conflict peace- and nation-building. In the 1990s, NATO provided leadership for peacekeeping missions in Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo. With regard to SFOR, the former Stabilization Force in Bosnia, the official leadership shifted from formerly NATO to nowadays the European Union (EUFOR). While NATO still heads the International Stabilization Assistance Force (ISAF) in Afghanistan, we all know how considerably ‘bogged’ down NATO has been in recent months, every winter anxiously awaiting the next spring offensive by the Taliban. It is striking, how unequally the burden among NATO members in Afghanistan is shared. Some NATO partners put considerable restrictions on their troops concerning the missions and regions in Afghanistan they can be engaged in. This applies, for instance to Germany, France, Italy and Spain. As a result of allies pushing the Germans to lift those restrictions on fighting forces and to assume a more active and robust role in more dangerous areas in Southern Afghanistan, the German government in early 2007 agreed – after long debates in the German Parliament – to send ‘tornado’ fighter jets. What turned out as a major step for the German public and politicians, some of Germany’s allies regarded the measure as rather half hearted and as too little, too late. Whereas in the late 1990s and especially after September 11, 2001, it seemed as if NATO might have the potential to develop into a ‘permanent stand-by force’ for the UN, as envisioned in chapter 7 of the UN Charter, the challenges that NATO has been facing in recent years while trying to transform itself from a regional security alliance into one with a more global reach, give us reason to pause!

During an October 24, 2007 NATO summit the US American government increased the pressure on Germany, France, Spain and Italy to pledge more troops, whereas, on the other hand, in Canada and the Netherlands, public pressure has been increasing to reduce national troops in Afghanistan. It seems, tensions over unequally shared NATO burdens are probably here with us stay. The repeated statements by German and other European foreign and defense

ministries, particularly in 2006 and 2007, that the ‘West’ was failing in Afghanistan and the Afghani people, but could simply not afford to do so, are an indicator for how precarious the situation in Afghanistan has become. The utter lack of ‘citizen-security’, which *Charles Call* of United States Institute for Peace in Washington, DC describes as the most pressing goal in post-conflict stabilization is not only undermining (any remaining) credibility in Western democracy and values in the Arab and Muslim world, but also undermining the credibility of the NATO-EU framework to efficiently contribute to post-war stabilization that goes beyond the regional context.^[i] Call speaks of the necessary revival of an international peacemaking approach that emphasizes the rule of law and citizen protection – unlike what the world witnessed in Iraq in the aftermath of war in 2003 when looting was prominent with American forces simply standing by and watching; or, what ensued in the following years with insufficient numbers of international forces on the ground that could actively and efficiently enforce the peace and provide the conditions for post-war goals superseding ‘immediate security’, such as economic well-being and justice. As Jane Holl points out, any ultimate post-war ‘transition’ period needs to be followed by ‘stabilization’ and ultimately, ‘normalization’. In both, Iraq and Afghanistan, outside actors – whether based on multi-national alliances or an international effort backed by a UN mandate – never seem to have left the initial post-war ‘transition’ period with regard to the degree of ‘citizen security’ that could be achieved for the people living in the two countries. One challenge clearly concerns the training of police and the strengthening of the justice system and security ‘*apparati*’. It is a recommendable step in this regard that the government in Berlin after the visit of German Chancellor Angela Merkel to Afghanistan on November 5, 2007, pledged to send more police trainers to Afghanistan.

Third, given the centrality of nation- or peace-building to my research, and how weak the post-war planning for Iraq obviously was, research of the author of this paper has tried to highlight and discuss some of the core challenges in post-conflict situations, such as security, economic well-being or reconstruction, establishing the foundations for governance, and re-creating the social fabrics of society through social peace-building or reconciliation. Earlier doctoral research had already focused on conflict prevention in the Balkans and the prospects for a common European foreign and security policy, following NATO intervening in Kosovo in 1999. Throughout preceding research, a key assumption in the aftermath of September 11, 2001 was that ‘Europe needed to toughen up’ and take on more ‘hard-power-related’ security, as outlined within the European Security Strategy of the European Union in December 2003; but that on the other hand, America – also under the leadership of the current Bush administration with its neo-conservative advisors, including Condoleezza Rice who repeatedly had been on record during Presidential elections in 2000 that US troops should not engage in nation-building – could not afford to ignore the ‘softer aspects’ of foreign policy, such as ‘nation-building’. From what we, the international community, have witnessed in recent years, we have to conclude unfortunately that, whereas the United States could not afford to ignore nation-building, it clearly and very unfortunately did just that!

With regard to seemingly increasing numbers of ‘out-of area peace- and nation-building missions’, NATO has not been the only organization to be ‘out-of-area’. European Union peace-keeping has gone ‘out-of-area’, for instance in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The EU has also provided the bulk for an enlarged international peacekeeping effort by the UN in Southern Lebanon after the war between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon in 2006. Today, NATO and EU member states alike seem to be stretched thin with regard to both, their contributions to more or less robust peacekeeping and civil crisis management. I would like to make the argument that, whether NATO or EU-members lead or contribute considerably to international peace-building efforts, it is the *overall EU-NATO framework* – its members among the

most developed nation-states and part of the G8 - which increasingly enables and empowers international peacekeeping.

With regard to earlier research on the so-called NATO-EU framework in post-conflict stabilization, and the role of Germany as an essential contributor to that framework, as stated before I am addressing the question, to which extent Germany can benefit from its own historic experience with a successful post-World War II reconstruction process. And, I argue that – looking back at this uniquely successful transformation process following the devastation of World War II – there are crucial lessons that Europeans, Americans and the international community can draw from the ‘German case’. Real and long-term commitment seems to be the most obvious one. With regard to European integration following World War II, its biggest success seems to lie in the fact that the integration process put a lid on formerly virulent ethno-nationalism, constant war-fighting, counter-balancing and struggles over who might become the next hegemony on the continent. Thus, we are left to wonder, whether the framework of arguably mutually reinforcing ‘integration and reconciliation within Europe’ coupled with ‘strong transatlantic ties’ – these are still the same, two old sides of one and the same ‘coin’ – are applicable to other troubled regions? While the vision for Europe following World War II was nothing but ‘big’ – democracy (based not just on elections, but the rule of law), stability and reconciliation – the concrete policy steps were smaller, centering on certain sectors, such as the economy first – sectors, as we all know, nation-states could agree upon more easily.

An April 2007 edition of the weekly *Economist* concluded that transatlantic relations had improved during the second Bush administration. The two sides, Europeans and Americans, had learned to moderate, or, rather to suppress their differences. With still not ‘much love lost’ for the current US administration by fellow Europeans, and much trust and ‘benefit of the doubt’ lost among Americans in their current leadership, part of the change in transatlantic attitude may be pragmatism. It has, after all, increasingly become clear that allies on both sides of the Atlantic will have to face a number of geopolitical and transnational threats, whether terrorism, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, containing Iran, but also global warming and energy scarcity together. Charles Kupchan at the Council on Foreign Relations on November 12, 2007 wrote: “*President Bush last week met with French President Nicolas Sarkozy and with the German Chancellor Angela Merkel. Sarkozy was given a rare White House black tie dinner, and Ms. Merkel met with Bush at the ranch in Crawford, Texas. Do these meetings signify a dramatic improvement in the Atlantic relationship now? Yes, I think that the symbolic importance of the Sarkozy and Merkel visits overshadowed their substantive importance...*”^[ii] On the latter point of substance, I would like to differ. Let us remind ourselves that French Foreign Minister, Bernhard Kouchner declared weeks ago that the world could not permit a nuclear Iran. We can probably assume that among the issues topping the agenda during the Bush-Sarkozy meeting was Iran.

Efforts by the EU Commission and EU member states to come up with a coherent energy policy that is sustainable and linked with the challenge of climate change are an indicator, how relevant geo-political topics have become in addition to transnational threats, especially in the light of Europe’s growing energy dependency from a less and less dependable, reliable and accountable Russia.^[iii] With regard to concrete NATO-EU cooperation in the context of post-conflict peace- and nation-building, the *Economist* of February 10, 2007 observed that in Kosovo and especially in Afghanistan today, NATO commanders despaired that the Taliban simply regrouped after and wherever NATO had cleared an area from them. And, Afghan ministers complained that there was insufficient coordination of aid from the EU. It seems, while members of NATO and EU are commonly engaged in similar ‘out-of-area’ missions, dealing

with similar threats to international peace and security, they increasingly share real geo-political and geo-strategic interests, in addition to the often referred to values, such as the emphasis on democracy, individual freedom, the rule of law. So, are the European Union and NATO in effect moving closer together, conceptually?

Whereas – again - unevenly shared responsibilities among NATO allies in Afghanistan have put the spot on NATO capability challenges, both concerning the provision of security and when trying to safeguard it, NATO's mandate has changed considerably from the Cold War, and the ultimate Cold War aftermath to nowadays, the 21st century. In its 2002 Transformation Declaration, NATO formally embraced 'out-of-area' missions. Again, does NATO have the potential to grow into a permanent stand-by force, which the UN Charter foresees in chapter 7? Can we imagine a so-called 'NATO-Plus', which would include countries, such as Australia – a country already engaged in fighting alongside NATO troops in Afghanistan? With a growing number of countries in Europe belonging to both, NATO and EU - 2005 brought 10 new EU member, 7 new NATO members, and 2007 added two new EU members - it is in essence the 'NATO-EU framework', which often enables and empowers international peace-making and peace-building. Consequently, with members of NATO and EU commonly engaged in similar 'out-of-area' missions, dealing with similar threats to international peace and security, they increasingly share real interests, in addition to values. And, this, indeed, might actually increasingly compare to a geo-political time and situation like after World War II, when the make-up of the international system in terms of 'polarity' shifted considerably.

The European Union comes with a traditional external relations focus on aid, development and trade, and nowadays disposes of an emerging common foreign and security policy; whereas NATO represents a Cold War alliance that has provided regional stability and has adapted its agenda to include more peacekeeping in intra-state conflicts since the 1990s. Both organizations combined, I have argued - and argue today - seem to provide the ideal toolbox for the long-term tasks required to help build, stabilize and reconstruct war-torn societies to prevent the re-emergence of more than hopefully just the worst outbursts of violence. 'EU-Europe' has its own problems, of course. When the German EU Presidency concluded by late June 2007, many observers had wondered, why the German government spent so much time and effort trying to salvage the so-called 'EU constitution', whose ratification the French and Dutch population had already rendered impossible given their 'no' vote during popular referenda in 2005. The German EU presidency tried to save, among other things provisions that had been negotiated earlier, such as qualified majority voting or a reduced number of commissioners in the EU Commission. There was also the idea of a common EU foreign minister who would combine the offices of the High Representative of the EU's common foreign and security policy, plus the office of the Commissioner for External Affairs in the Commission. Shortly before the corresponding EU Summit completing the German EU Presidency in late June 2007, the German government, after another talk with its French counterparts – announced to the astonishment of the European public that Germany would recommend to its neighbors during the German EU Summit to 'drop the constitution'. What followed was the so-called 'Reform Treaty', a somewhat leaner version of the earlier, so-called constitution. The Reform Treaty agreed in Lisbon, still foresees a representative for the common foreign and security policy, the exact title now being "*High Representative for the Union of Foreign Affairs and Security Policy*"; the idea of a common foreign minister – implying a reduction of sovereignty – however, for now belongs to the history books.

Back in 1997, Zbigniew Brzezinski identified Germany and the US as main proponents of NATO enlargement and raised the question, what an ever closer relationship between reunified Germany and the US meant to France, which was geo-strategically weakened by an

eastward shift of Europe's center. Robert Kagan in an article in 'Business Day', a South African newspaper on August 25, 2007 discusses the 'return of history'. Kagan refers to the hopeful view of the early 1990s that with the end to the bi-polar system the international community within international institutions might be able to agree on matters of peace and international security more often than not. In 2007, Kagan concludes, however that "*our time was a 'time not of convergence, but of divergence, of ideas and ideologies'*".[\[iv\]](#) And, the 'West' was unfortunately still clinging to a vision of an increasingly 'liberal, democratic world'. However, the 'turn toward autocracy in Russia' and the growing military ambitions of China, we might add, rendered the world a risky place. The enormous environmental problems China currently faces seem to shed doubt on the 'unstoppable growth potential' assumption the West might have had concerning the 'Empire of the Middle' in times of globalization. I argued before that I see, in general, 'institutional convergence' in the case of necessary and continued NATO-EU cooperation, plus convergence in opinion and policy by partners and allies within Europe and across the Atlantic, such as on threats. However, I do concur with Kagan, that US and probably European foreign policy has both, 'underestimated Putin' and 'overestimated China'.

The 'Russia-factor' and 'Turkey dimension' will determine to a large degree, whether and how EU-Europe and Europeans will be able to strengthen their own, common European foreign and security policy, distinguishable from other actors on the global scale. (How) will Europeans be able to become less dependent from energy supplied over Russian territory? Might this increase the prospect for Turkey to become an EU member, after all, given the fact that the only alternative gas and oil pipeline – the so-called 'Nabuko' pipeline – travels from Azerbaijan through Georgia to Turkey? What about recent tensions on the Iraqi-Turkish border? Which role does the recognition of the Armenian 'genocide' play? Before a recent debate within the US Congress to acknowledge the Armenian genocide as what it is, France had already endorsed a corresponding resolution and law about two years ago. Given Turkey's current problems with rising Kurdish nationalism and potentially, a rising Kurdistan, debates about Turkey's secularism, constitution, the legacy of the Ottoman Empire, the massive ethnic cleansing or genocide against its Armenian population, and, last but not least, (Northern)Cyprus, how can we not imagine the 'Turkey dimension' blowing into the 'face of the West' in the foreseeable future? With regard to Russia, here are just some of the 'hurdles' that have impeded and can only negatively affect constructive relations between the West and Russia: political murder seems to have become a constant feature of Russian society; plutonium is smuggled through Germany 'en route' to Great Britain to murder yet another dissident; there is possible Russian involvement in a cyber attack on Estonia; Russian meddling in national elections, such as in Ukraine is obvious; Moscow has been putting enormous pressure on the nation-state of Georgia with whom NATO has started membership negotiations; repeated incursions into NATO airspace by Cold War style Soviet bomber planes seem to become a normalcy in 2007; and, the Kremlin does not hesitate to repeatedly turn off the gas and, or oil supply to Eastern and Western European neighbors.[\[v\]](#)

While we see the 'West' moving closer together again on global issues, increasingly recognizing them as common challenges; on the other hand, we see China and Russia cooperating increasingly, too, on security issues. One concrete example is the so-called Shanghai Cooperation Organization, a regional security regime that includes an increasing number of oil and gas rich Central Asia – except Afghanistan – and lists countries, such as energy-rich Iran, as an affiliated member. It really looks as if the great powers of today are yet again engaged in the 'Great Game', the 18th and 19th centuries struggles among the British and Russian Empires over influence in Persia, the Caucasus, Central Asia and India. Thus, we are left with the important question, whether the struggle for hegemonial dominance ever brought about lasting

peace or stability? Short term ‘stability’ or ‘balance’ maybe. In the end, ‘counter-balancing’ all too often means ‘war’ (and supporting nasty dictatorships and autocrats along the way). With America at the forefront – in general – and especially, nowadays concretely in Iraq, European allies find themselves engaged in the ‘Great Game’ together with the US, whether they like it or not. Many of the long-term challenges following unsuccessful nation-state making and artificially drawn borders in some of the most volatile regions in today’s world, such as in the Middle East, date back to European colonialism and imperialism. Following that line of argument, it is really quite mind-boggling that it should be the so-called ‘NATO-EU framework of growing cooperation among NATO and EU member states, which increasingly – yet again - engages in out-of-area nation-building and ‘stabilization’ efforts – ‘neo-colonial, or 21st century style’!

[i] Charles T. Call, 2007, *Constructing Justice and Security after War* (USIP: Washington, DC).

[ii] Charles Kupchan, ‘ Gwertzman Asks the Experts’ , interview published by the Council on Foreign Relations, Washington, DC, November 12, 2007, www.cfr.org/publication/14784/kupchan.html

[iii] ‘ Russian Protests. Democracy A La Russe’ , *Economist*, April 21, 2007, www.economist.com/world/europe/displaystory.cfm

[iv] Robert Kagan, *Business Day*, August 25, 2007.

[v] ‘ Kremlin Inc’ , *New Yorker*, January 29, 2007, www.newyorker.com/reporting/2007/01/29/070129fa_fact_specter

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