

The concept of Developmental Peace Missions: implications for the military and civilians

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Introduction

Many policy makers still insist today that distinguishing between military and developmental tasks in peace missions provides them with a clear line delineating specific roles and responsibilities in different stages of conflict. Unfortunately, those who ascribe to this conventional wisdom seem to forget that the underlying causes of contemporary armed conflict are too complex to be addressed by security alone. Indeed, two enduring lessons that the United Nations (UN) has learned through years of experience in responding to conflict is that, firstly, successful operations require *integrated efforts*, not separate tracks that do not converge, and secondly that *speed and momentum do matter* in peace missions. These lessons are especially relevant if one considers that there is strong evidence of recidivism in theatres where UN troops have been stationed, as witnessed in Sierra Leone, Liberia, DR Congo, and more recently in Côte d'Ivoire and Sudan.

UN officials are very aware of the problem of recidivism. For instance, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, once remarked, 'we have peacekeeping operations that succeed, only to lapse back into conflict. Successful operations, as it were, in which the patient dies.'¹ Guéhenno's comments are especially relevant for Africa: ceasefires are mostly fragile and occupying 'blue helmet' forces often struggle to disarm and demobilise soldiers (many of whom are child soldiers) often guilty of committing the most heinous war crimes and crimes against humanity. Evidently, there is something wrong with the way the UN plans its missions, and an alternative approach to respond to violent conflict is needed.

In response to the UN's mixed track record, the former South African Deputy-Minister of Defence, Ms Nozizwe Madlala-Roudledge, on one occasion proposed that the UN's failures in Africa could partly be attributed to its preoccupation with state security, whereas this effort should run concurrently with an equally vital aspect of an overall peace plan, which is the commitment to human security (i.e. reconstruction and development). Madlala-Roudledge reasoned that an alternative approach to end violent conflict demands filling the institutional and programming void between security (peacekeeping) and development (peacebuilding) – more precisely, that these two veritable pillars of all UN operations are, firstly, bridged and then 'rolled-out' as mutually reinforcing processes.²

While the principle behind bringing peacekeeping closer to peacebuilding is hardly new, there is still much to learn institutionally and operationally about how the two activities can best be applied in practice. In this regard, in 2004 Madlala-Roudledge, together with the Council of Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), pioneered the concept of 'Developmental Peace Missions',³ a concept based on the premise that security can only achieve permanent benefit if vital peacebuilding activities are rolled-out *within reasonable time*. By 'reasonable', we understand to mean providing critical humanitarian assistance and reconstruction capabilities immediately behind military operations so that security can dynamically reinforce and influence the effectiveness of development (i.e. the one activity must be applied without losing sight of the other).

Certainly, the precise time frame for immediate reconstruction will depend on many factors. Even so, experience has shown that the window between the end of military action and the start of development is very *narrow*: the first few months – if not weeks – following an intervention are perhaps the more critical period for laying the groundwork for peace and establishing the credibility of foreign intervention forces. ('Groundwork' is the operative word as short-term interventions must always complement long-term commitments). Conversely, legitimacy and

political momentum lost during this critical period can be difficult to regain, especially if foreign forces are unable to satisfactorily deal with systematic threats against individuals, intimidation, rioting, looting, and attacks on property.

For instance, the inability of the Anglo-American alliance to stabilise Iraq more quickly has highlighted the dangers of being unable to begin reconstruction promptly following the military defeat of enemy forces. Predictably, some commentators would point out that Iraq was not a peace mission *per se*, and hence argue that post-Iraq lessons should be ignored by conflict prevention and resolution practitioners. However, there is an emerging school of thought that maintains that some lessons may lend themselves to the broader international peace and security agenda, chief among these that a *bridge* to long-term development and democratisation is required to stabilise security environments and begin reconstruction promptly. This concept of operations has been termed by US officials as 'Stabilisation and Reconstruction' (often signalled by the shorthand of two letters, S&R) and proposes ways to target the gap 'between the end of major combat operations and the beginning of nation-building'.⁴

In this regard, the philosophy behind S&R and Developmental Peace Missions is encouragingly similar: both concepts seek to directly challenge the traditional, and questionable, dichotomy between providing short-term military security and long-term development in conflict environments. The concepts dramatically differ in terms of their purpose, however. On one hand, S&R was developed in reaction to the debacle of post-war planning for Iraq and the threat posed by failed states and international terrorist groups. Ostensibly, such a formulation seems primarily driven by concerns of national security and so can be construed as being a counter-insurgency strategy that uses developmental tools.

On the other hand, the concept of Developmental Peace Missions was formulated in reaction to UN troops struggling to establish a safe and secure environment for peacebuilding. The concept essentially represents an African effort to ensure that reconstruction and development begin immediately – ideally concurrently – with the end of major combat action. In sum, it seeks to challenge the trend of recidivism through the integrated mobilisation and application of military and civilian resources in peace missions. For the armed forces, this means establishing a critical window of opportunity for civilian teams to deploy in environments where the mix between conflict and peace is likely to shift back and forth. For civilians, it implies rapidly deploying to the area of operations to meet critical humanitarian needs and set-up temporary infrastructure, and progressively repair damage to essential services (power, transportation, sanitation, communications and catalyse local skills capacity and public administration).

Certainly, early action will not be sufficient for success. Ultimately, the transfer of power, resources and capacities to local actors will define the effectiveness and sustainability of peacebuilding on the ground. Nevertheless, despite lip-service paid to local ownership in reconstruction, there is typically a disconnect between policy and action on the ground.

Civilian reconstruction: the missing face in peace missions

The idea of advancing socio-economic development into conflict resolution is an important consideration for two reasons. Firstly, unwinding armed conflict and the elaborate networks behind it means not only going after those involved (difficult enough as this is anyway) but also finding – and funding – alternative livelihoods. After all, peace cannot be imposed; rather, complementary efforts need to be put in place to help peacekeepers prevail over warlords and to create sufficient demand for peace and reform at the grass-roots level. Secondly, front-loading civilians with soldiers in unstable theatres does not only apply to providing better humanitarian assistance but also in the area of immediate assistance for reconstruction to begin.

Yet, despite the increased quantitative and qualitative demand for civilian capabilities in peace missions, few UN-contributing states have paid sufficient attention to enhancing their civilian

capacities in a systematic way. Unsurprisingly, civilian experts – especially in reconstruction – are in short supply in peace missions. According to Guéhenno, the armed forces tend to play a more dominant role in UN missions because they are so much easier to deploy – that is, unlike civil servants, they work under a common strategic framework, operate under a permanent budget, and have systems in place that allow for rapid deployment.⁵ Accordingly, military troops have been saddled with a disproportionate share of the post-conflict burden, even though they lack formal training to provide essential socio-economic services, and have battled to produce a tangible peace dividend to host-populations.

Apart from extensive reliance on the myriad of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) to carry out peacebuilding-related activities (their track record, it must be mentioned, is mixed, at best), a significant outcome of the 'civilian gap' in peace missions has been an increasingly strong international shift toward private sector contracting. For some, the participation of private contractors in peace operations is a negative development in the realm of peace and security. Typically, individuals and companies are blamed for instigating and intensifying wars, selling weapons to (sometimes opposing) warring factions, or providing logistical support to despot armies for purely economic ends. On the other hand, others believe that private companies are reliable, effective and rapidly deployable, and hence capable of curtailing the malicious activities of insurgents and creating the ideal conditions for economic recovery and democratisation.⁶ However, to argue for or against their hire is, perhaps, an exercise in futility. Contractors will continue to be hired-off in the global market, especially by armies that depend on donor countries, which, in turn, regularly outsource private companies to provide logistical support. Rather, it seems more sensible to draw on the relative capabilities of both the public and private sectors and recognise the complementary benefits of using both from the outset of a peace mission.

Addressing this challenge requires, first of all, tackling the problem of independent action in the field and ensuring that all actors – UN and non-UN – in the mission area work together under an overall political-strategic framework. To this end, the UN has already taken significant steps towards improving in-house coordination of military and civilian assets on the ground in line with the emerging 'integrated missions' concept.

Secondly, the civilian component of peace missions must be bolstered to improve rapid response capabilities. In this regard, the UN's Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is exploring ways of improving in-house rapid deployment for mission start-up and reconstruction, *inter alia* through the development of a roster of approximately 1000-1500 career officials that would provide DPKO with a reliable pool of experienced personnel, able to deploy at short notice to fill core mission positions.⁷ To support this drive for improved rapid deployment, DPKO's roster initiative also includes attempts to draw experts from Member States and agencies to complement UN staff in the field. Unfortunately, this process has been met by uncertain commitment and insufficient buy-in, not least because the majority of Member States do not have any systems in place to systematically identify (let alone deploy) experts from within or outside government. In fact, one can only doubt whether the UN will be able to field a reliable civilian capacity for peacebuilding if Member States themselves lack appropriate stand-by or permanent arrangements.

The reasons for this lack of investment are not hard to find. The more obvious of these, perhaps, is that protecting the national interest has always been more important than responding to international humanitarian crisis. In other words: why bother developing or enhancing national capabilities for peacebuilding when outside humanitarian concerns do not directly threaten the national interest? In the likely event that such concerns do threaten national security, a basic operational principle underpinning peacekeeping has been to achieve military stability, and then worry later about reconstruction. In other words: if security is a pre-requisite for development, why should state institutions concern themselves with providing humanitarian and developmental assistance when donor agencies can probably do a better job? The net effects of these and other issues can be summarised as follows: first, reconstruction has not been

regarded as a core function of government; second, accumulated expertise has been dissipated, important lessons forgotten, and experienced personnel not retained for future missions; and third, civil servants – that is, apart from the military – have lacked mechanisms to study prior peace efforts, to draw appropriate lessons, and to integrate these into future planning.

To be fair, the urgency to strengthen the level of civilian capacity deployed in peace missions has of late gained currency amongst states and regional organisations. Arguably, Iraq has been the primary catalyst for increased strategic debate concerning improved civilian capabilities. More specifically, Iraq has shown the importance of increasing institutional capacity and investing in appropriate skills and technologies that would enable the rapid deployment of qualified civilian personnel abroad.

Thirdly, the need for civilians to match military capability and deployment timelessness should also be accompanied by the need to correctly sequence and synergise military and civilian tasks. On the ground, different agencies and institutions will invariably play different roles and take priority across the spectrum of conflict. The armed forces will necessarily play a lead role in providing initial security in a broken state. As security improves civilian agencies will progressively move to the forefront of the reconstruction process. This begs the question: after major military operations, when is the 'golden' period for reconstruction? Although this is a particular issue that requires further analysis, it suffices to say that planners must consider two interrelated points: first, safe security environments are necessary, but not sufficient ingredient for enduring stability; second, persistent conditions of insecurity prevent sustainable reconstruction and development. Invariably, no amount of mediation or coercion will win the peace if ordinary citizens have limited access to essential services – water, electricity, health – and little prospect of formal employment.

The current security situation in the DRC is a case point. Soldiers inside the so-called 'reintegration' camps – responsible for providing security in the upcoming elections in July 2006 – often rampage nearby villages for food and money because they do not get regularly paid. And while these camps seem to offer little but starvation and sometimes a wage, rebel groups are offering the same men \$60 dollars a month to carry on fighting.⁸ Meanwhile, the 17,000-strong UN mission is trying to help the DRC's fledgling army pacify Congo's lawless east, where militia groups continue to roam and terrorise locals. This situation, coupled with war-related hunger and poverty, has resulted in continuing abuses against the general public and may even place the DRC's transition period at risk.

So, to rehash a previous point, both the maintenance of law and order and the restoration of basic socio-economic services are *critical pre-conditions* for successful transition periods and long-term development. In this context, the concept of Developmental Peace Missions seeks to challenge the traditional notion of providing peacekeeping first and then peacebuilding by mainstreaming civilian capabilities to augment the military security function and, at the same time, to properly address the unique challenges of peacebuilding and wider reconstruction efforts.

Institutional prerequisites

To meet the implementation challenge of integrated or hybrid missions, UN-contributing states, like South Africa, cannot continue their *ad hoc*, piecemeal, and fragmented response to complex emergencies, piecing together makeshift committees or teams for each new crisis. What is needed is an overall political framework and institutional base, backed by permanent staff, for developing plans and procedures for integrated civil-military efforts. Currently, the absence of any specific coordinating entity for reconstruction within Africa's peace and security architecture contributes to the clouding of priorities, the inefficient use of resources, and the reactive nature of responses. As such, it would be important to establish lead agencies that

can provide clear strategic direction, and identify key gaps and clarify roles and responsibilities, for responding to conflict and assisting with reconstruction.⁹

To improve integration, such agencies should be endowed with sufficient authority to bring together all the relevant military and civilian agencies when a crisis emerges. In this regard, the establishment of a standing civilian corps for reconstruction will require conducting an inventory of existing capabilities and supporting technologies to determine human resource, organisational, and technical gaps for civilian reconstruction-related activities. Gaps for stability operations will invariably take longer to address as Africa has many trained and experienced military peacekeepers but very few civilian experts. Nevertheless, African armed forces should transform and be ready to field the resources required to secure stability and create an enabling environment for reconstruction.

Operational prerequisites

While the civilian reconstruction dimensions of preventing a return to conflict are increasingly acknowledged, the challenge remains to translate lofty policy commitments into effective, practical tools that can enhance Africa's reconstruction capacity. A perennial theme for intervening forces will be to help build legitimate and sustainable local capacities and a minimally capable state. This will require, first of all, having a capacity to make assessments of reconstruction and development needs. This is important for two reasons. Up till now, needs assessments have been prepared by international agencies with limited, if any, participation of African institutions (Sudan's Joint Assessment Missions is case in point). As a result, reconstruction frameworks have been more inclined to serve the interests and priorities of outside actors (not least the financial requirements of international private contractors) as opposed to catalyse local institution and capacity building. Secondly, assessments provide a basic starting point for considering *what* needs to be done, *how* it should be done, and *who* should do it. In so doing, they allow decision-makers to determine priority, precedence, timing, appropriateness, cost, and execution of reconstruction tasks. Since needs assessments determine the nature and scope of reconstruction processes, they are a key entry point for African participation in peace efforts

Developing a capability to actually do reconstruction will invariably take more time to set up. Even so, the development of a group of civilian 'first-responders' will be crucial for planning as they will be able to inject greater on-the-ground realities into needs assessments. In this regard, a key task of civil-military operatives will be to decide as to the length of the time interval between initial military response and full-scale developmental assistance. An interval too short might place the lives of civilian reconstruction teams in too excessive a danger; one too long might well negate the benefits derivable from the initial military intervention. However, it is clear that an over-protective view of civilian personnel is bound to dangerously lengthen the gap between security and developmental efforts and possibly place the whole mission in jeopardy.

Conclusion

To overcome the mantra of 'African solution for African problems', Africa needs permanent institutions and means (and not makeshift committees, plug-and-play forces, and rosters of experts) to improve integrated planning and action in peace missions.

This effort will not be easy to implement on the ground, however. It will require, firstly, taking risks to demonstrate early tangible results in operational theatres where the mix between conflict and peace is likely to shift back and forth. Secondly, it will demand the unity of effort of the diverse military and civilian actors involved in a mission. Thirdly, it will demand establishing dedicated institutions at the national, regional, and/or continental levels to improve coordination and planning among departments and agencies (including the military) in order to mobilise the appropriate resources required for international peace missions in a timely and more consistent manner. Lastly, and this is a critical point, it will demand the creation of a stand-

by or standing civilian reconstruction capacity that can rapidly deploy with the military to make assessments of reconstruction needs and fast-track the delivery of basic services and essential infrastructure.

¹ Statement by Jean-Marie Guéhenno United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping to the Challenges Project, London, United Kingdom, 2 March 2005, accessed at <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/articles/article020305.htm>.

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³ The concept was originally branded 'Developmental Peacekeeping', but subsequently changed to 'Developmental Peace Missions' to reflect the multi-dimensional structure of contemporary international peace efforts. See, Nozizwe Madlala Routledge and Sybert Liebenberg, 'Developmental Peacekeeping: what are the advantages for Africa?', *African Security Review*, 13/2, 2004, pp. 125-131.

⁴ Binnendijk and Johnson, *Transforming for stabilisation and reconstruction operations*, *op cit.*, p. xv. It is worth noting that US officials are increasingly using the term 'Stability Operations' (and Reconstruction) rather than 'Stabilisation' – an effort, perhaps, to underscore the military nature of trying to restore the rule of law.

⁵ Remarks made by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, UN Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping, at a workshop entitled, *State-building and strengthening of civilian administration in post-conflict societies and failed states, 21 June 2004, New York, hosted by the Crises Management Initiative (CMI) and the International Peace Academy (IPA)*.

⁶ On the issue of utilising private contractors on the battlefield see, for example, Peter W. Singer, 'Outsourcing War', *Foreign Affairs*, 84/2, March/April 2005, pp. 119-132.

⁷ Catriona Gourlay, *Lessons learnt study: rosters for the deployment of civilian experts in peace operations*, March 2006, accessed at <http://www.peacekeepingbestpractices.unlb.org>.

⁸ Johann Hari, 'The war the world ignores', *The Sunday Independent*, 14 May 2006, p. 9.

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