

Introduction:

Changing Scenarios in Transatlantic Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management

Eva Gross, Daniel Hamilton, Claudia Major, Henning Riecke

The past two decades have witnessed significant transatlantic engagement with crisis management. The wars in the Balkans challenged the transatlantic community not only to intervene militarily but also to engage in post-conflict reconstruction and long-term institution building efforts. The Rwandan genocide demonstrated the moral costs of non-intervention, just as the massacre in Srebrenica and other war time atrocities during the Balkan wars shifted the focus to the plight of individuals and civilians rather than the security of states. Interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq highlighted how state failure could affect regional as well as global security, but also the limitations of military instruments in post-conflict intervention. These experiences collectively spurred the conceptual debate on the link between state failure and insecurity and discussion about the appropriate mix of civilian and military means in crisis management.

Both sides of the Atlantic also drew institutional and operational lessons from these experiences. The EU created the Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) and amassed operational experience particularly in the civilian aspects of crisis management. Since the launch of the first CSDP operation in 2003, the EU has conducted 28 civilian and military operations around the globe, and has attained significant experience in civilian contributions to crisis management ranging from police, justice and border reform to the integrated rule of law. The U.S. for its part came increasingly to recognize the value of civilian aspects of post-conflict reconstruction

in pursuit of a comprehensive or integrated approach to crisis management. Consequently, the U.S. has developed capabilities within State Department structures for planning and coordinating conflict response to strengthen the diplomatic and development components of its international capabilities. Both partners also increasingly work together, either through U.S. participation in CSDP missions or the EU working alongside or in partnership with U.S. or NATO operations in the Balkans and Afghanistan.

The ongoing Arab transition and transatlantic responses, particularly with regard to the intervention in Libya and its aftermath, have brought full circle many of the conceptual debates and operational challenges outlined in the first paragraph. They also reinforce the need for the EU and the U.S. to tailor and design individual and collective responses; and to improve the framework for cooperation. At the same time, the global and transatlantic contexts have changed significantly since the early 1990s and the post-9/11 environment. This also applies to geopolitical conditions in the crisis regions. Both have important implications for future transatlantic crisis response but also long-term engagement.

First, economic constraints resulting from the financial crisis and subsequent austerity programs, limit the scope of possible crisis response missions in a long term perspective. Second, alternative models of transition assistance demonstrate that the transatlantic community as a whole is no longer the only

actor in crisis management. Along with these changing circumstances—or perhaps because of them—there is a noticeable lack of appetite on the part of the transatlantic community to engage as a full-bore crisis manager, partly due to lack of political will to utilize the significant capabilities that have been created over the past two decades; and partly due to financial considerations.

The experience in Afghanistan, which has provided a broad canvas for lessons learned in post-conflict engagement, also represents a cautionary tale for future engagement. This applies in particular to the sliding scale of international engagement—but without being able to declare ‘victory’—and the implications for future transatlantic engagement, a theme that is taken up by a number of authors in this volume. Beginning with a legitimate mission of self defense, and initially limited to an operation to restore state power, coalition partners progressively expanded the scope of ISAF and NATO involvement throughout Afghanistan. NATO has been faced with the insurmountable task of stabilizing a country in turmoil, with only few of the original goals achieved, with the threat of a re-emerging Taliban particularly after the end of the ongoing transition period, and with a Western public deeply critical of the operation.

The collective experience of crisis management over the past two decades has shown that crisis response through military instruments is less conducive to creating stability than reliance on civilian means and a focus on conflict prevention. A number of push and pull factors act on the continuing efforts to create, maintain and apply conflict prevention and crisis management instruments. Normative shifts towards the Responsibility to Protect—R2P—and a focus on individual security, alongside the clearly perceived threat of state failure, terrorism and organized crime for regional and global stability, constitute a strong push factor in favor of increasing efforts. The increasing

consensus in favor of a comprehensive approach reflects the operational lessons of post-conflict reconstruction. Lacking political will and leadership, along with financial constraints on the other hand, represent the pull factors—both at the level of nation-states as well as international organizations—that threaten to undo the progress made over the past decade. The chapters in this volume collectively address these questions.

Normative Shifts: Towards R2P and Individual Security

The post-Cold War period, but particularly the post-9/11 era, has witnessed an evolution towards different modes and norms of intervention. Rather than inter-state conflict, conflict drivers are weak and failing states and transnational threats, including terrorism, but also organized crime and more generally the potentially destabilizing effects of migration. John Herbst makes this point very clearly when he states that failing states and ungoverned spaces are to remain part of the global security agenda. For Herbst, rather than moving beyond the post-9/11 era the transatlantic community will continue to face reconstruction challenges, which run up against current tendencies in the U.S. to cut budgets and focus on different policy issues. The need for continued investment in civilian response capabilities, as well as for partners who can share the burden of civilian reconstruction, remains as important as ever.

Along with this changing focus on state weakness and failure and the need to broaden suitable instruments for intervention away from military to civilian instruments, there has emerged a doctrinal shift towards the protection of civilians. The emerging norm of the Responsibility to Protect links closely to the threat of state failure. It also provides the ideational underpinning of the interventions

of the past decade. According to R2P proponents, states claiming sovereignty must accept a responsibility to protect their citizens against gross violations of human rights, genocide, or ethnic cleansing. In cases where states do not have the ability or the will to live up to this responsibility or, as in recent cases of Libya or Ivory Coast, actively shun it, the international community must act. According to the R2P concept, which was signed by the UN General Assembly as a political, not legal obligation, the UN has the obligation to get involved. R2P thus departs from 'traditional' humanitarian intervention in broadening the focus of responsibility from internal state actors but to external interveners as well. It can thus create thus legitimacy for international action—although the operationalization of R2P rests on decisions by UN member states that, according to their interests, take up the task to command R2P missions.

Some argue that R2P has already seen its zenith: disputes over the implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1973 in Libya, which represents the clearest example of the implementation of the R2P norm, have alienated the already critical UN Security Council members Russia and China from accepting the new paradigm. Emerging powers—including but not limited to UN Security Council members Russia and China—continue to place a higher value on sovereignty and have not been persuaded of the universal applicability of R2P. This suggests that a future consensus to exercise R2P, at least through military means, will be difficult to forge.

Resolutions along similar lines thus do not seem to be likely in the foreseeable future. It must be kept in mind, though, that the range of instruments for appropriate responses includes civilian and preventative responses—and that military intervention represents an instrument of last resort.

R2P broadens the focus not only on individuals but also on the broad range of crisis management and conflict prevention measures. Still, protecting civilians in practice entails political choices, and the decision to intervene has to date been taken selectively. Western states could thus rebuild the frail consensus behind R2P by both improving their crisis prevention capabilities and by seeking to strengthen regional actors to work for the protection of civilians in crisis regions.

Alex Vines argues that the massacres in Rwanda and the atrocities in Somalia have changed the African Union's attitude to intervention—it might be better for the course of the crisis if missions could be commanded by African actors, particularly since Western military intervention does not have the intended effect on a crisis anyway. Jon Temin, writing about Sudan, echoes this argument when he states that the announcement of Western intervention will affect the conflict and might even expand the activities of parties hoping for support.

Beyond highlighting the role of regional organizations and the impact of looming decisions to intervene on conflict dynamics, however, R2P also relies for its implementation on the interest of states to intervene. Here, Temin also points to the lack of interest of Western states to become engaged in Sudan.

The future application of R2P thus hinges on a pull factor outlined earlier: the reluctance of individual states to move from a non-interventionist stance towards one that would naturally consider intervention, including through military means. Domestic inhibitions and strategic cultures act as filters for these emerging doctrines, and do not necessarily lead to a shift in fundamental positions.

Changing Strategic Cultures?

Normative and doctrinal shifts towards more comprehensive and integrated crisis response on behalf of individual as well as state security clearly have occurred over the past decade. The selectivity of response but also the tools chosen for such response, however, suggest that national cultures do not necessarily reflect these doctrinal shifts—rather, they can slow down or otherwise affect the operationalization of crisis management operations.

The case of Germany illustrates this quite well: although Berlin has moved from its pacifist, non-interventionist stance during the Cold War and engages militarily in Afghanistan and elsewhere, the abstention to the UNSC vote on the intervention in Libya has raised questions over the limits of Germany's international actorness—and, more fundamentally, Germany's strategic culture. Niels Annen's analysis of the way the Afghanistan engagement has changed German thinking about the use of force is instructive. Given German skepticism towards military means, in shoring up support for engagement in Afghanistan Berlin looked for moral justifications for its military engagement. In this particular domestic context, these justifications end up negatively affecting collective implementation through the resulting narrow operational guidelines.

Adopting a transatlantic viewpoint, Glenn Nye argues that budget constraints hamper the ability of Western governments to create support for crisis interventions. The gap between the transatlantic partners regarding military capabilities, and the diverting strategies for post-conflict reconstructions add to the problem. The Arab Spring has highlighted the state of crisis response also in a transatlantic context, including unequal willingness and capability to respond. Decisions leading up to the intervention in Libya and the actual

campaign itself signals a shift in the U.S. relationship with its partners. The U.S. made it clear that it will reduce its commitment to international crisis management, redefine its strategic priorities, and expect the Europeans to assume greater international responsibilities particularly in the Europe's own backyard.

NATO has displayed a new way of doing business in Libya—namely, that the U.S. plays a supporting role while two European countries take the lead. Despite the unfortunate characterization of the U.S. “leading from behind,” Operation Unified Protector does not necessarily mark a point of departure for the transatlantic alliance or security cooperation. Rather, U.S. capabilities will continue to be crucial to sustain crisis interventions; and European partners cannot be counted upon to agree to an intervention or to participate when it comes to intervening. In a climate of impending and most likely severe budget cuts, this rather suggests less, not more intervention—and the need to rethink transatlantic approaches towards crisis management in terms of selectivity and in terms of forging political and operational partnerships beyond the transatlantic space. This applies equally to the civilian aspects of crisis management. Although the past decade has seen significant engagement with the civilian aspects of post-conflict reconstruction, increasing demands for contributions have increasingly conflicted with limited resources and capabilities.

Expanding Conflict Prevention and Crisis Management Cooperation

Changing strategic cultures in response to changing international norms and doctrines for intervention have led to the creation of crisis management capabilities on both sides of the Atlantic, and both partners increasingly cooperate internationally.

On the EU side, although the first decade of CSDP operations has seen significant growth in this particular policy area, recent years have seen a contraction in the size but also the numbers of missions. As Claudia Major and Martina Bail argue, European civilian capabilities have not only reached a plateau but the political will to launch, staff and fund operations has decreased—despite ongoing need for small- and large-scale interventions, and despite the fact that the Lisbon Treaty, which entered into force in 2009, was supposed to strengthen the European Union’s capacity to act in the realm of foreign and security policy. The crucial problem of civilian CSDP is the limited political will and interests of the member states—it blocks both efficient decision-making and the appropriate provision of resources.

Underlying strategic motivations in Brussels and Washington may be similar—but the domestic and institutional contexts are significantly different, and this affects cooperation in practice. As Eva Gross argues, U.S. capabilities remain smaller than that of the EU, and bureaucratic innovations that focus on coordinating crisis response, planning and lessons learned have not been immediately been accepted and absorbed in the larger diplomatic and development practice. And, while the U.S. government has embraced the need for civilian contributions in post-conflict reconstruction, the chapters by John Herbst and Eva Gross both warn that the sustainability of these structures is far from secure.

On the broader political level, transatlantic cooperation has intensified and this can reinforce ongoing joint operational experience. Direct EU-U.S. cooperation may be limited to civilian aspects and be small in scope. However,

the contribution by Patryk Pawlak highlights the need—as well as the opportunities—for the EU and the U.S. to engage in a coordinated manner with individual countries in the Middle East and North Africa. Alfred Pijpers makes a similar case for transatlantic cooperation in the Middle East, highlighting a set of priorities for EU-U.S. approaches to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

Lessons Learned for Transatlantic Cooperation in Crisis Management

For transatlantic relations, the individual chapters in this book highlight a number of lessons. First, normative shifts towards R2P, while taking place, remain contested—and the transatlantic partnership no longer holds the monopoly on intervention or the capacity to bring about consent. Regional actors (in the ongoing Arab transition this includes Turkey but also the Gulf countries) participate but also help shape, and can constrain, transatlantic political innovations.

Transatlantic capabilities—whether in the context of NATO or EU-US relations - remain limited, and are unlikely to grow in the near future due to economic considerations. This places a premium on cooperation, and fine-tuning joint interventions as well as their broader political context. It also places emphasis on prevention rather than active management of conflict. This in turn places a premium on joint political in addition to operational engagement so as to influence the context of a specific conflict, or to engage regional and global partners in the search for solutions both in the prevention and the management of conflict.