

Integrated Missions << in Afghanistan

The international materialization of the new humanitarianism, which is based on principles such as peace building, development and the defense of human rights, has allowed a new interpretational framework for analyzing civil-military relations during extended peace-building processes, the foundation of the state and the flourishing of democracies, all of which are encouraged by western powers, international organization and national and international non governmental organizations. This new “paradigm” is, however, source of several dilemmas not only at its conception but also during its implementation; the case of Afghanistan is a clear example of this.

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Action intégrale en afghanistan

L'entrée sur le scénario international du nouvel humanitarisme, basé sur les principes de construction de la paix, la défense des droits humains et le développement, a ouvert un nouveau cadre d'interprétation dont profitent les relations civiles-militaires analysées vis-à-vis les contextes de construction de la paix, de l'État, et de la démocratie, qui sont principalement agencés par l'Occident, les organismes internationaux et les organismes non-gouvernementaux. Cette nouvelle paradigme a produit d'importantes questions non seulement sur la conception mais aussi l'implémentation du thème; le cas d'Afghanistan est un exemple de cette situation.

Introduction

This article is part of research carried out at the Center of Strategic Studies on National Security and Defense –CEESEDEN- War College. This research is based on the models of Integrated Missions carried out in Afghanistan. The implementation of the Policy for the Consolidation of Democratic Security (PCDS) in Colombia which is based on the concept of Integrated Missions, led to the development of this research which aims at establishing the international references that allow a comprehensive understanding of the PCDS.

As stated in the title, this article is centered on the case of Afghanistan and takes as reference the experience of the Provincial Reconstruction Teams (PRT) in that Asian country. It is worth underlining the importance of the PRT given that, according to several analysts, they are an emblematic embodiment of the integration of military and humanitarian operations as well as an example of, development and implementation of peace maintenance and construction missions.

The first section of this article explores the historical references of the premises that underline the relationship between emergencies and foreign aid for development; and how these postures comprise, inevitably, a political preconception. The second part of the document is centered on the case of Afghanistan and the consequences of the new humanitarianism and the closer relationship between military actions and humanitarian assistance operations.

Methodology

This is a documentary research qualitative in nature and supported on secondary sources and academic databases. The analysis is centered on the establishment of conceptual categories that explain the development of Integrated Missions in Afghanistan during the war against terrorism.

> 1. Regarding the new humanitarianism

The publication of texts such as Henri Dunant's *A Memory of Solferino*, which helped encourage the creation of the Red Cross and the Geneva Convention of 1864 and Immanuel Kant's *Perpetual Peace*, which supports the idea that the process of pacification that led to the construction of the European states could be replicated internationally to improve the relations among states, are a representation of the emergence of modern humanism; of this new western paradigm that rescues Protagora's thought that: "man is the measure of all things". Although an analysis of such historical fact would exceed the limits of this research it is possible to argue that the life of men – that "fundamental biological data" as stated by Reyes Mate (2003)- has become the most important individual possession that ought to be protected¹.

Within this logic and after the humanitarian catastrophes of the first and second World Wars² the creation of the United Nations (UN) was imposed with the purpose of "preserving future generations from the scourge of war"³. The UN Charter establishes: a) the formal parameters for immediate operations when they are necessary to maintain its purpose and b) the foundations for the development of the necessary social conditions. In the end, these principles of general understanding founded the distinction between emergency aid (or humanitarian aid) and development aid (or development cooperation). Moreover, these principles established the relationship between humanitarian programs and military functions (Caselles, 2009).

Humanitarian aid refers to the material or logistical support provided for humanitarian purposes after an emergency (and therefore, it is conceived for the short term); on the other hand, development aid aims at permanently improving the conditions

of a community with the purpose of reducing the possibility of violent disturbances (and it is thus conceived for the long term)⁴.

This theoretical and operational differentiation between development aid and emergency aid was subject to a number of criticisms in relation to the crisis in Africa during the 1980s; where humanitarian aid was prioritized. In the end, thanks to the African experience, it was believed by the most of the international community (especially pundits) that any efforts directed only to tackling the consequences rather than the causes had little impact in diminishing the vulnerability of affected populations⁵. On the other hand, everything indicated that humanitarian aid efforts that did not keep into consideration future events (medium and long term) caused major problems that went beyond the emergencies themselves (Milwood, 1996).

Although in the beginning the debate focused on emergencies caused by natural disasters, the fall of the Berlin Wall allowed the expansion of the debate to include armed conflicts (or organized violence). As it is known, the problem of using development aid during the bipolar cold-war period was not a marginal issue. Both the United States (US) and the Soviet Union (SU) were aware of the importance of aid (despite how they used it and the results it achieved) in blocking the influence of one another (in order to gain the support of the population)⁶.

The failure of communism brought about the idea that the way to a country's development was by the implementation of liberalism (protection of the fundamental liberties) and capitalism (economic approach). This way, it was much easier to support the idea that violent conflicts in many weak countries could be overcome (and avoided) through the establishment of democracy and a westernized economic model.

1 In words of Michael Foucault (1992), the process of "statetalization" of the biological realm, the emergency of biopolitics, started with modernity.

2 Where the equation was: the preservation of life included the annihilation (physical and political) of the "undesirables" (Foucault, 1992).

3 Charter of the United Nations, preamble. Online access at: <http://un.org/es/documents/charter/>.

4 Some pundits have also argued the need to find a middle point between humanitarian aid and development aid (also known as reconstruction aid). This type of aid aims at repairing the damages after an emergency such as the reconstruction of the basic infrastructure etc. (Anderson, et al, 1989).

5 The uncontrollability of disasters is clear, however, it is still possible to reduce the vulnerability of populations during emergency situations.

6 The program for economic cooperation, *Alliance for Progress*, is a good example.

This new idea, which many call “the new humanitarianism” (NH), is focused, according to Pérez de Armiño (2002), on three fundamental principles: (1) peace building, (2) the defense of Human Rights and (3) development; which should promote other political and social processes. In other words, the aid proposed by the NH suffers from a *preestablished political orientation*.

It is worth noting that today a number of organizations practice the old humanitarianism and focus on humanitarian aid without any political connotations (or so they argue) such as the Red Cross; the NH on the other hand is mainly supported by western powers through their relations with developing countries.

An important change was given after the adoption of resolution 46/182 by the United Nations in 1991. This resolution explicitly establishes the close relationship between emergency, rehabilitation and development aid; moreover, the UN is in charge of the coordination, cooperation and leadership of such operations.

These cultural changes gave way to what is known today as *Integrated Missions*; a strategy that integrates the basic elements of security policies (military and policy functions) with different forms of aid –humanitarian, reconstruction and development (Bayman, et al, 2000; Slim, 2001; Binnendijk, et al, 2007)⁷.

It is clear that military actions cannot be conceived as an independent unit from the NH. On the contrary, the NH can only be developed under solid security conditions; in other words the implementation of the NH depends on the political and military defeat of every anti-democracy force and the annihilation of all human rights violating components. In the following part, this document analyses the political meaning of the NH in Afghanistan where Provincial Reconstruction Teams have played a central role.

➤ 2. Regarding provincial reconstruction Teams in Afghanistan

2.1. The development of PRT's

After the terrorist attacks on September 11 2001, Afghanistan became one of the most significant (if not the most important) points of reference of international conflict just overnight. A few years before 9/11 when the country was still undergoing a civil war, nothing was known of Afghanistan. However, this was not always the case. The history of Afghanistan is marked, after its reunification during the mid XVIII century, by the strategic interest of world powers; which has left a mark in the processes of pacification and reconstruction (Maley, 2002; Batalla, 2006; Mishali-Ram, 2008).

The War on Terror, launched during the administration of G.W. Bush, was the response of the United States to the dreadful events of 9/11. The war's declared aim of chasing potential al-Qaida members from their bases in the Afghanistan mountains and removing the Taliban regime was no secret. This intervention was justified, and still is, on the premise that weak states or “failed states”⁸ are a source of instability and a threat to the security of other states⁹.

After the retreat of the Taliban from Kabul in December of 2001 the most representative afghan groups signed the Bonn Accord which provides for the building of a stable democratic state in Afghanistan. Through the pillars of the Bonn Accord, and Afghan participation in developing an economic, political and social consensus (Suhrke, 2007) the country should eventually be able to bounce back.

Bearing in mind UN Security Council resolution 1386 military stabilization efforts in Afghanistan took shape after the establishment of the international peacekeeping missions to protect Kabul and the

7 “Integrated missions”, integrated approach”, “comprehensive approach”, are, among others, some of the terms used by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization, the United Nations and the European Union.

8 For a further definition please visit: <http://www.fundforpeace.org/global/>.

9 A critical analysis of this posture is found in: Chomsky 2007.

surroundings¹⁰. These missions were known as the International Security Assistance Force (ISAF). The ISAF was at first administered by several European countries (England, Germany and the Netherlands). In 2003 the NATO took over command in order to better develop the subsequent stages (Jalali, 2006). With 48 nations and nearly 132,000 troops, ISAF is the longest and most international operation currently developed.

It is worth remembering that the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) was established shortly after the ISAF missions. UNAMA's priorities are geared towards strengthening Afghan institutions and building the capacity of the Afghan Administration at all levels, including the development of institutions of good governance, reconstruction and development (its main purpose is to set the foundations of the Afghan democracy)¹¹.

Simultaneously, the United States continued the Global War against Terrorism through the

Operation Enduring Freedom (OEF); however, a great number of setbacks and negative results during the implementation of the OEF mainly related to the unintended deaths of Afghan civilians which rapidly undermined political support for the war. This situation led to the creation of the PRTs during the OEF in order to win the hearts and minds of the local Afghans (Calvo, 2007). Moreover, Hamid Karsai, the leader of Afghanistan's interim government, immediately after the creation of the ISAF, requested the creation of other PRTs in the provinces where the government was unable to provide the security conditions found in the capital¹².

The fact that the United States embarked in two wars, limited the amount of resources and troops assigned to Afghanistan. This meant that the PRTs military and human resources were also very limited. However, this had a positive effect on the legitimacy of the PRT operations before the international community given that the PRT appeared as a coherent post-conflict policy far from militarists views (Ghufran, 2006; 2007).



Source: OTAN, ISAF "placemat" (Contributing nations and troop numbers) - 4 March 2011.

¹⁰ In the beginning, great scale operations were not conceived (they were limited to Kabul) in order to avoid misperceptions regarding the ISAF as an occupation force, and legitimize the operations in the eyes of the Afghan population.

¹¹ UN, Resolution 1401 of 2002

¹² A large part of the Afghan population joke about the idea that Karsai wasn't the president of Afghanistan but simply the Mayor of Kabul.

The PRTs were first established in Afghanistan in late 2001 or early 2002 by the United States. However, as it was mentioned before, the double front-war in Afghanistan and Iraq forced the incursion of NATO troops for the operation of some of the existing teams. As a result this American initiative was “internationalized” and was rapidly spread in Afghanistan.

According to the information published¹³, the PRT’s usually consist of 50 to 300 military personnel and civilian experts each and are in charge of provinces, their mission includes, 1) supporting the Afghan government in its efforts to increase its power and influence in the remote regions of the country 2) building a safe environment in every region of the country and 3) supporting reconstruction efforts.

2.2. The dilemmas

Although the “internationalization” of the PRT’s allowed, undoubtedly, a special support towards the building of a nation, they also led to an ambivalent situation regarding coordination efforts. Unavoidably, the countries involved have different perspectives of what the PRT’s should be like (some believe that civilians should be subordinated to military control, others believe there should be a clear difference between the two). These differences are also translated into the regions where the PRT’s are being implemented, for example, in highly violent areas of the country or regions that are under the command of the ISAF or the OEF (Saikal, 2006).

Although some efforts have been put into making the PRTs work, such as the Executive Steering Committee (founded in 2005, regularly assembles representatives of civilians and the military for consultations on a strategic level around the NATO¹⁴) it is also well known that the PRT’s strategies lack common objectives and a clear structure.

Nevertheless, there are other problems associated with the PRTs. Some Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) working for the protection of human rights,

and other reconstruction and development efforts, have criticized the current model. According to some of these NGOs (Runge, 2009) it is clear that the PRTs have distorted the line that differentiate assistance to the population efforts from military operations. Civilians have been seen in many cases as instruments of the military. There are two main consequences to all this: 1) By embedding civilians in military units, their security conditions and the international intervention are compromised; 2) by making part of the aid efforts selective, the afghan population has reacted negatively to the PRTs (in many cases the programs are aimed at populations groups that are more prone to supporting the foreign intervention; other populations with a more radical view are left out of the programs).

Finally, it is worth noting that, the PRTs and the NGOs involved in Afghanistan are both western models designed for emergency and development (civilian and military) which ignore the cultural and sociopolitical aspects of the Afghan people such as its tribal structure which, for example, differs from the western nation-state model (Barnet, 2006; Calvo, 2007).

Conclusions

Every process directed towards the construction of the state, the establishment of democracy and the construction of peace faces a number of potential obstacles in relation to the “good practices” associated to them. The larger the number of actors and agencies involved in the process, and the greater their physical and disciplinary separation, the greater is the challenge in making them unite around one common goal. The case of Afghanistan is a reminder of this. In other words, concepts such as neutrality and independence are being reevaluated given the cultural transformations of the western civilization.

Despite the debates that take place in this document, it is important to coordinate (or in better words, to negotiate) the actions (or interests) of all actors involved. In the end, if there is agreement on most issues, this is, that the lives of human beings are much more important than every other thing (and not only the lives of some) then, the radical separation between civilians and the military and the subordination of one to the other would cease to exist.

13 NATO’s official site: http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natolive/topics_69349.htm.

14 Rehse, 2004.

Leaving aside all criticism of the international intervention in Afghanistan it is possible to point out some of the successes which include, the reconstruction of the infrastructure, the establishment of democratic institutions, the improving social assistance (health, education, etc.) and every other effort directed to building a new and better future for the country¹⁵.

During the final editing of this article, in a commando operation deep inside Pakistan, an American Navy team killed Osama bin Laden, the terrorist leader of Al-Qaeda. Although this is recent news, the impact of the death of bin Laden on American interests in Afganistan is yet to be seen; the death of bin Laden, however, will not have any impact on the lives of the Afghan people.

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