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## **CONSIDERATION ON JOINT FORCES IN POST- CONFLICT OPERATIONS**

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**Abstract:**

The contemporary strategic environment might be described as uncertain, complex and it is subject to rapid changes, which requires constant monitoring and proactive engagement in order to mitigate the security challenges. Conflicts will exist for an undetermined period of time, being part of human nature. The wars will start and will come to an end through post conflict operations. Post-conflict operations consist of a complex and challenging set of tasks meant to provide a stable environment involving the military as well as other government agencies and multinational partners. In fact, the primary military contribution to stabilization is to protect and defend the population in order to create a platform for political, economic, and human security.

*Key words: strategic environment, joint force, post/conflict operations, stability operations*

*“No one starts a war—or rather, no one in his senses ought to do so—without first being clear in his mind what he intends to achieve by that war and how he intends to conduct it.”*

*Carl von Clausewitz, On War*

### **1. Introduction**

The contemporary strategic environment might be described as vulnerable, uncertain, complex, ambiguous and it is subject to rapid changes, which requires constant monitoring and proactive engagement in order to mitigate the security challenges. Fluidity is a characteristic feature of the present strategic environment which embodies the continuous change of coalitions, alliances, partnerships, actors, and new national and transnational threats constantly evolving. Interagency and joint operations will be required to manage this wide and complex range of players and threats residing in the environment. While it is impossible to foresee accurately how challenges will come out and what form they might take, it is expected that uncertainty, ambiguity, and surprise will govern the course of regional and global events. Additionally to conventional conflicts, the nowadays challenges continue to include irregular threats, information operations directly targeting civilian leadership and population, catastrophic terrorism employing weapons of mass destruction, and other emerging threats to disrupt the nations and international organization ability to project power. These challenges are the natural products of the enduring human condition, but they will exhibit new features in the future. None of these challenges is a purely military problem [1].

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However, the military instrument it is and will be part of the solution and it will be called to manage the early stages of the conflict, bearing in mind that strategic and operational goals are achieved or lost not only by the aggressive use of force but also by how rapidly a state of stability can be established and maintained. As a result of the extremely high lethality and range of today weapons systems, and the inclination of opponent forces to operate among the population, the risk to combatants and noncombatants will be much greater and outcomes will be measured in terms of effects on populations [2].

Complex cultural, demographic and physical environmental factors will be also present, adding to the uncertainty of war and they will include humanitarian crises, ethnic and religious differences, and complex and urban terrain, which often become major centers of gravity and a haven for potential threats.

Victory is determined not only by what happens during a period of conflict but also by what happens after the fighting ends, during post-conflict operations. The famous military theorist, B. H. Liddell Hart, used to say *“If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is almost certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war”*[3]. Unfortunately, the recent conflicts have proved the actuality of theorist’ words and the need to reconsider the approach of the post- conflict phase.

### **2. Joint forces in complex post-conflict operations**

Post-conflict operations consist of a complex and challenging set of tasks meant to provide a stable environment involving the military as well as other government agencies and multinational partners. In fact, the primary Joint forces contribution to stabilization is to protect and defend the population in order to create a platform for political, economic, and human security. The missions, tasks, and activities conducted under stability operations fall into three broad categories: initial response activities, transformational activities, and sustainment activities [4].

Initial response activities generally are tasks executed to stabilize the operational environment in an area of operations, for instance during or immediately following conflict. Initial response activities aim to provide a safe, secure environment and attend to the immediate humanitarian needs of a population. They support efforts to reduce the level of violence or human suffering while creating conditions that enable other organizations to participate safely in ongoing efforts. Understanding the operational environment is a precondition for designing post-conflict operations because, in many regards, the factors that affect them may differ significantly from those that influence conflict. For example, the immediate post-conflict environment in Iraq and Afghanistan revealed that the major concern after the termination of open hostilities was security because local security forces were unable, unavailable, or unwilling to address civilian lawlessness and violence [5]. For this reason, coalition forces had to provide security in major population centers and this greatly slowed the stabilization process.

Transformational activities consist of a broad range of security and reconstruction efforts. These activities aim to build affected nation capacity across multiple sectors and to set up conditions that facilitate unified action to rebuild its supporting institutions in order to create adequate conditions for sustainable development. Undertaking ambitious reconstruction goals is possible only when security is guaranteed.

Sustainment activities include long-term efforts that capitalize on capacity building and reconstruction activities to establish conditions that enable sustainable development.

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Joint force may be temporarily appointed as lead-agency for stabilization activities when a high level of violence is present, particularly while combat operations are ongoing in particular areas (for example counterinsurgency operations). That is exactly what happened in Germany and Japan following World War II. President Franklin D. Roosevelt designated the U.S. Army as the lead government agency responsible for post-conflict reconstruction. President Roosevelt based that decision partly on his perception of the U.S. Army's ability to deliver "prompt results" and partly on Secretary of State recognition that the State Department did not have the capacity to run an occupation [6].

Planning for termination and post-conflict operations should begin as early as possible, because post-conflict operations are often chaotic, long-lasting and they have a tendency to weaken the military's resources and adversely affect the force readiness. It is of major importance for political leaders to give adequate guidance, define the end state, and properly resource the military for conflict termination and post-conflict operations. World War II demonstrated the importance of early planning for post-conflict operations. Planning for post-conflict operations for World War II began in 1943. By the time the war in Europe ended the military had a detailed plan for post-conflict operations and the occupation of Germany. We can state that the success of Operation ECLIPSE was due in large part to early planning. Planners were able to anticipate and prepare for almost every situation that occurred after the war [7].

*"Force is rarely the defining element that delivers success; instead, it is best used as an enabler of diplomacy"* [8]. Complex problems of post-conflict operations require comprehensive solutions, a full range of measures to promote host nation reconstruction. Joint, interagency and multinational must describe the modern way of war. Joint refers to operations conducted by employing the collective capabilities of the component services of the military, while the interagency simply means that operations will involve all agencies of the particular government, or international organization. The multinational aspect leverages the political and military advantages that other nations can bring to reconstruction process. Joint military operations are constantly improving as professional military personnel realize and embrace the synergistic effect of "acting unified". Likewise, the importance of coalition operations has become increasingly apparent.

Interagency cooperation and involvement in post-conflict operations is not only important, it is essential. For example, a study based on Iraq reconstruction process identified 135 tasks to be accomplished in order to build and sustain a state. At least 68 of those tasks were beyond the range of military capabilities being primarily responsibility of other government/non-military agencies.[9]

Unity of effort and command are essential during post-conflict operations. History indicates that the principle of unity of effort and unity of command is violated during post-conflict operations. When this happens the operation lacks focus and is characterized by confusion. Post-conflict operations to rebuild Afghanistan have involved different organizations and NGOs willing to help a nation in need. Unfortunately, each organization has come in with its own mission and plans, except any reasonable solution to act in the spirit of unity of effort or unity of command. Allied aid efforts showed less coordination and continuity and the UN Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA)—which reports on drugs, human rights, and casualties—has never shown any serious ability to coordinate the international aid effort, develop effective plans and requirements, or do any more to ensure that aid money is spent honestly and has real measures of effectiveness[10]. Moreover, the allied leaders of the international aid efforts and allied forces showed so little interest in effective contracting and control of money, validating the programs they

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started, and measuring the effectiveness of these programs. Although ultimately successful, post-conflict operations would have been more efficient if there had been a higher cooperation to synchronize and coordinate the effort. Unity of effort and unity of command are just as important in post-conflict operations as they are during combat operations.

One of the most important objectives of post-conflict operations is also achieving unity of effort across the diplomatic, informational, military, and economic elements of national power. The diplomatic element may be used to gain international support and to deal with the indigenous leadership. The informational element ensures that the intentions are correctly understood by public. An effective information campaign for post-conflict operations must focus on earning the trust and confidence of the people while simultaneously acting to counter hostile propaganda. The military element will become less significant as the post-conflict operations progress toward achieving the end state. However, the transition/handover from military to civilian authority may be a major problem in terms of identifying the method of transition. This would involve a period of overlapping operations, the exchange of information and liaison personnel and the establishment of specific criteria to ensure a smooth and effective turnover. Two of the major activities of post-conflict operations, rebuilding and reconstruction, depend extensively on the economic element, thus the availability of financial support and capital will have a direct impact on success or failure as well as the duration of the operation.

The Joint force has to apply prudently the appropriate combat capability. During post-conflict operations, defending and protecting the population is paramount. It is on this foundation of civil security that the political settlement can be achieved. The use of force often antagonizes the population, possibly damaging the legitimacy of both the host nation government and the organization that uses force while enhancing the legitimacy of any adversary. Restraint, a particular principle of stability operations, requires the careful and disciplined balancing of protecting the people and infrastructure, conducting military operations, and achieving the overarching objectives of the operation. A single act can cause significant military and political consequences; therefore, when force is used, it must be lawful and measured [11].

One of the difficult aspects is the fact that sometimes hostile forces instead wearing military uniforms they use civilian clothes as it was encountered in Afghanistan. This is both a real risk to cause collateral casualties among civilians and a new characteristic of conflicts. The multinational troops on the ground operate more often in the populated areas in order to protect and defend civilians against an adversary present among it, being a real challenge to separate the enemy from civilian population.

### **3. Conclusions**

Future operations will be short on combat and long on post-conflict activities if we want lasting stability. Successful post-conflict operations and conflict resolution depend on the civil and military leadership ability to work integrated, transition to peace being a phase as important as the conduct of war. Mechanisms and organizations should be developed and enabled to coordinate the military, political, economic, and informational aspects of the operation as well as harmonizing the interagency, multinational and civilian participants.

A civil-military plan needs to be developed that describes the desired end state in sufficient detail so that each of the agencies can develop its own supporting plans. However, flexibility and adaptability are essential traits.

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One of the lessons learned from post-conflict operations is the importance of information operations. Modern military operations and particularly post-conflict operations involve other government agencies. Capabilities such as intelligence and diplomacy are resident in government agencies other than the defense agency yet they are essential for successful post-conflict operations. To improve its ability to work with other government agencies the military should take the necessary steps to ensure interagency operations are integrated into its doctrine.

Security is one of the pillars of post-conflict operations. Every time the military conducts post-conflict operations it faces a dilemma regarding the role of combat forces in maintaining security after the fight. Combat forces are an excellent initial security capability but they are neither trained nor equipped to perform long-term law enforcement and other security functions. An alternative solution is to involve as early as possible police/gendarmerie forces to provide an interim security capability to bridge the gap between the conclusion of combat operations and the establishment of indigenous security institutions.

Every type of military operations requires training and post-conflict operations are no exception. There is a real need to develop viable training programs that could be used to rapidly train units and individuals for post-conflict tasks outside of their area of expertise. It is important also, to include in the force training liaison with nongovernmental organizations, private volunteer organizations and other governmental organizations and coalition partners and small unit operations in uncertain situations with restrictive rules of engagement.

Military organizations rely on strong leaders who understand the nature of post-conflict operations. Developing leaders who can perform effectively in the dynamic environment that post-conflict operations requires mandatory cultural awareness and language training and developing abilities for interpersonal relations, negotiating skills, and communications.

The success of post-conflict operations does not rely only on military ability to conduct successful combat tasks, but on the capacity of all actors involved in operation to work in a cooperative manner. The success is also driven by planner ability to properly address the needs and aims/desires of the local civilian population.

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