

Hungary's Whole-of-Government Approach to Crisis Management and Post-Conflict Stabilization

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Even though Hungary and the rest of Central European states went through a peaceful, bloodless transition in 1989-1990, our nations have experienced the complexity of rapid political, economic and social transformation. The challenge of constructing a new politico-economic model with parallel reforms in all sectors of society is quite apparent. The task is immensely more difficult in countries devastated by violence, insurgency and war.

Based on this recognition, Hungary decided to lend a helping hand to less fortunate countries even before attaining membership of the European Union. Hungary has been a donor state since 2003, Afghanistan being among the very first recipients of international development assistance. Hungary's international development policy is focused mainly on sharing our experience in political-economic transition, knowledge transfer, education, vocational training, health care, agriculture and water management. In accordance with the conclusions of the Council of the European Union, Hungary undertook to increase official development assistance from the present level which is slightly over 0.1 % of the GNI to 0.17 % by 2010.

This article intends to present a short overview of Hungary's diverse roles and activities in a wide range of international missions, and then focus on the Hungarian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team (PRT) in Afghanistan, pointing out why a comprehensive approach to stabilization efforts is necessary in the 21st Century's global security environment.

Taking part in NATO, EU, coalition, as well as UN and OSCE missions, Hungarian soldiers have been contributing to stabilization and reconstruction in various ways: building bridges in Bosnia-Herzegovina, providing medical support to ISAF-troops, training Iraqi soldiers in Baghdad, ensuring food supply to African Union troops serving in Sudan, advising on security sector reform in the Democratic Republic of Congo and furnishing UNIFIL forces with accurate maps of Lebanon.

Involving police experts and contingents is a relatively new trend in international peace support missions. Despite of the lack of experience in this field, as well as the legislative, budgetary and human resource restraints, Hungary also deployed police trainers to Kabul, sent police officers to Sarajevo and the Sinai Peninsula. Hungarian police and border guard officers play a leading role in the ongoing EU Border Assistance Mission in Moldova, and there is a Hungarian correction officer in the EU JustLex mission in Baghdad.

Hungarian non-governmental organizations—relying on governmental or international funds as well—tend to play an increasing role in post-conflict capacity building,

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both in areas of aid and development, and in transferring know-how to support democratic transition abroad. For example, the Hungarian Interchurch Aid, one of the NGOs now assisting the Hungarian-led PRT in Afghanistan, has been performing humanitarian and international development activities in Afghanistan since 2001. They implemented an educational development program, including construction of schools, and introduced innovative waste management methods and capacity building for Afghan environmental experts.

Leading a PRT in Afghanistan

Coordinating Hungarian participation in the afore-mentioned operations called for a close cooperation between the relevant ministries and governmental agencies in Budapest. Taking over the lead nation role of the Baghlan Provincial Reconstruction Team in Afghanistan in October 2006, however, necessitated a new concept for running a complex stabilization and reconstruction mission. Effective operation of the PRT has proved to be a test case for civil-military-police cooperation in the capital and on the ground as well. Both require a common understanding of the situation, unity of goals, and a consensus-based approach open to out-of-the-box initiatives.

Planning and coordinating in the capital can be quite challenging, since the various actors involved sometimes have diverging perspectives and expertise, and need different pieces of information. They are also competing for funds. To alleviate this problem, the Government established an Inter-Ministerial Committee chaired by the Prime Minister's Office and composed of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Economy and Transport, the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Justice and Law Enforcement. On a case-by-case basis, the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development and the Ministry of Health are also invited to its meetings. The Committee oversees all major issues in the PRT, advancing information flow and strategic planning. It adapted a procedure on training and certifying civil servants and NGOs to be deployed in the field. The Committee is a useful body to keep respective ministries engaged and facilitate the co-ordination of their project-planning and management. In the MFA, coordination among the departments of Security Policy and Non-Proliferation, International Development Cooperation and Asian and Pacific affairs, EU Foreign and Security Policy, Management Finance and Budgeting and the Spokesman's Office is handled by an 'Afghanistan Task Force' headed by the Political Director.

The whole of government approach is reflected in the field as well. The PRT should operate and should be seen by the local population as one entity that assists stabilization and reconstruction efforts in several ways. Running development projects with a tangible impact on the local population's perspective to a more prosperous future is the fundamental mission of the PRT, as well as the best 'insurance policy' for the soldiers and civil experts serving there. Therefore, in addition to the sum spent by the Ministry of Defense on running the PRT the Hungarian government earmarked US\$2.5 million per year for development projects. At the same time, it has been understood that a breakthrough is needed to alter public perceptions of the PRT as a kind of

charity organization – a breakthrough that would come from empowerment, capacity building and job creation.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs dispatched a political advisor to the PRT, who is a diplomat at ambassadorial rank, not subordinated to the military commander. He is in charge of maintaining political contacts with local authorities, power brokers and international organizations that are active in the province. He is also responsible for harmonizing development projects with actual needs presented by local and central governmental bodies.

The 200-strong military contingent deployed in the PRT is not only ensuring security, but carries out a wide range of CIMIC programs as well. In the first six months after the takeover of the PRT, CIMIC officers executed more than 60 so-called ‘Hearts and Minds’ projects. Close attention is being paid to ensure that each ethnic group and provincial district is offered some kind of assistance. CIMIC projects range from refurbishing schools, providing classroom equipment, donating medical supplies, clothing, generators, or computers to renovating roads, water wells and fixing small-size hydropower plants. CIMIC officers make a substantial effort to engage and involve local decision-makers and laborers in planning and executing those projects.

PRTs are not in an easy position when attempting to fit their activities into the development matrix of the provinces, in a country filled with development agencies and NGOs. While building roads, bridges and public buildings is indispensable, these alone will never create sustainable prosperity. In Baghlan Province, a short review of the state of development—or rather the lack of it—convinced us of the necessity to pay special attention to more than the traditional array of projects on the PRT menu. It became clear that the province badly needed more employment.

Since Hungary does not have a development agency like the Canadian CIDA, the German GTZ or USAID a Hungarian non-governmental organization with a long experience in Afghanistan has been chosen through a bidding process to work out and implement projects in the fields of education and job creation. Various projects with synergic effects to one another are envisaged in this field, starting with the construction of a brick factory, donating animals and fruit trees to needy families, as well as teaching fruit dehydration and carpet-weaving to locals. Certainly, the road to employment starts with education. Thus the PRT strives not only to build schools, but to assist developing and equipping the Baghlan Teachers’ College where future professors are being educated. This NGO in close cooperation with the PRT and in particular with the political advisor also acts as a facilitating partner managing projects developed and implemented by Hungarian field ministries and NGOs.

Recognizing the stark reality that employment is fundamental for both security and prosperity, the PRT took account of the employers of Baghlan province. The cheese factory opened by the preceding PRT lead-nation, the Netherlands, has bright prospects in this relatively green province. The Hungarian PRT began a systematic veterinarian scan of the cattle-stock in order to assist improving the quality of the product, thus the economic prospects of the factory. The cement factory and several coal mines in Baghlan province have recently been privatized by Afghan investors, opening the way to new hiring. The PRT plans to assist these industries by deploying Hungarian

geologists to survey possible sites for exploitation. The development of industries is unimaginable without adequate energy resources, so the PRT aims to assist the local government to refurbish a major power plant in Pol-e Khumri, currently running well below its capacity.

In accordance with international efforts, aimed at creating self-sustaining stability through capacity building, the Hungarian-led PRT intends to lay a heavy emphasis on police training. Based on previous Hungarian experience in Kabul, police trainers are deployed to the PRT in the summer of 2007. Under the auspices of the police training projects, Hungary also plans to contribute to the development of local police infrastructure. After launching the European Union's ESDP Police Training Mission, the Hungarian activities in Baghlan province will become part of that undertaking.

The Hungarian-led PRT is an international enterprise both in terms of military and civilian projects. In addition to allied officers from Bulgaria and Slovakia, Croatian military personnel also contribute with their skills proving that aspirant NATO-members are ready and able to combine their forces to execute a complex operation. A USAID development officer also joined the PRT, and Greece contributed €500,000 to co-finance PRT projects in the fields of agriculture, education, health care and water management. Further consultations are underway with several allies and partners on their potential contribution to the PRT's development programs. Hungary also intends to take advantage of the EU Commission's Provincial Reconstruction Facility program, and participate in the planned EU Police Training Mission.

The need for a 'Concerted Approach'

Our experiences in Kosovo and Afghanistan show that the four pillars of post-conflict reconstruction—(1) security; (2) social and economic development; (3) justice and reconciliation; and (4) effective governance—are all indivisibly linked and a positive outcome in each area depends on successful interaction among them.

All this brings us to the notion that complex challenges in today's security environment require integrated responses. It has become evident that crises cannot be solved by military means alone, therefore combining civil and military elements is essential. We must adapt our national and international responses to these changing circumstances.

Realizing the need for a structured co-operation between military and civilian actors involved in an operation, Hungary, together with Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, the Netherlands, Norway, and Slovakia, decided to act as a co-sponsor of an initiative in NATO to develop a Concerted Approach.

The primary rationale for the Concerted Approach is to optimize the planning and conduct of NATO's operations and missions. It also has the added value of contributing to the formulation of an exit strategy. The Concerted Approach has two key elements: (1) involving civilian agencies and organizations already in the early phases of military planning; and (2) enhancing NATO's cooperation with other international and—where appropriate—local actors on the basis of respective competences and comparative advantages.

This is not a fundamentally novel concept. In planning and conducting its operations, the Alliance has already tried to link the provision of security to the pursuit of reconstruction and development, but in an ad hoc fashion. These practices, however, have shown their limits. Therefore, greater degree of coordination within NATO at all levels and better cooperation with other actors is required.

At the Riga Summit, NATO Allies agreed that a concerted approach engaging all actors involved was required to meet the challenges of operational environments in Afghanistan and Kosovo. Consequently, NATO needs to ensure that its own planning and crisis management procedures are coherently applied and the Alliance is able to co-operate with a range of partners, such as the UN, EU, regional and non-governmental organizations, in all phases of the operations.

It must be stressed that in seeking co-operation with other organizations and actors, NATO is not striving for exerting leadership; the principle of mutual respect of each other's mandates should be strictly adhered to. The initiative is not about to develop new civilian capabilities within the Alliance, the aim is to optimize the use of resources already at hand and to take advantage of the added value the respective organizations can offer.

With respect to the future of Concerted Approach, an important step was taken at Riga where the decision was made to develop concrete proposals in time for the meetings of Foreign Ministers in April, and Defense Ministers in June. This led to an intensive working process in NATO ensuring thereby that the initiative remains high on the agenda. In carrying out this task, we encountered some difficulties. Nevertheless, we consider it to be a positive development that a thinking process has been launched within the Alliance which, in turn, will feed into NATO's ongoing transformation. This will also influence policy making at the national level with respect to conducting peace operations. In our view, national and international policy-making go hand in hand as they mutually reinforce each other.

Responding to complex crises in today's security environment poses a novel challenge to the international community. We must learn and adapt our national and international processes and, in the meantime, we should bear in mind that this approach is evolutionary in nature. This is where NATO's ongoing efforts to develop a Concerted Approach could provide a conceptual blueprint.