

III. Recurrent Issues of Post-Conflict Rehabilitation and Lessons to Be Learned

6. Lessons on Post-War Rehabilitation in South East Europe and by South East Europeans

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The Balkan Conflicts and Their ‘Post-Conflict Rehabilitation Capacity’

The *national aspect* of the processes of international relations system’s transformation in the conflict-rich Balkan region can be traced through the decision of the individual countries to gravitate towards one or another center of global power. The countries of the EU and NATO have been perceived in South-Eastern Europe as one of these centers of complex global power with a huge potential for shaping world developments. A specific regional and national consequence for the Balkans has been the re-birth of the age-old possibility for “balkanization”, meaning the fragmentation of the regional state relations and the subsequent polarization of Balkan international relations around external poles of power. In the post-Cold War situation in the Balkans, the EU, the NATO and other developed countries generate and stimulate the European and Euro-Atlantic integration of the South-Eastern European region, while Russia is ambiguous – oscillating between broker of new balances of power and dependencies for the Balkan countries and a constructive role as a world leader of a 21st century type, stimulating region-building tendencies as an organizational expression of globalization.

The structural shifts in the international system of the last 15 years have resulted in changes in the Balkans. The most depressing of them have been the wars on the territory of former Yugoslavia. The military conflicts and civil wars led the respective societies to hardships and suffering that would reproduce problems of various kinds for the region and for individuals, living in South East Europe. At the same time, the ex-

perience of dealing with post-conflict problems still needs to be studied and the lessons learnt – applied in the region and elsewhere. A major requirement in drawing the lessons from the Balkans for other post-conflict situations is to define as precisely as possible the standard post-conflict rehabilitation recommendations and their potential applicability to other cases. There are huge systemic differences that differentiate the Balkan post-conflict rehabilitation problematic from the situations in non-European contexts. Thus a measurement of the Balkan post-conflict rehabilitation capacity should be carried out and proposals drafted accordingly.

The Balkan Experience of Post-Conflict Rehabilitation: the Lessons Learnt and Their Application Elsewhere

In the transatlantic edition of *‘Internationale Politik’* in the fall of 2003 a leading European international relations scholar, Karl Kaiser wrote that the Balkans today were famous not for the tumultuous change and violence, but for the innovative approaches to mastering conflicts¹³¹. In the Balkan region, wrote Kaiser, the EU redefined its security role; through the Stability Pact the EU constructively applied its own experience to provide a forward-looking solution to a conflict-ridden environment. It was also in the Balkans that the question of the legitimacy of force to end violent conflict posed itself in a particularly dramatic way. It can be argued, continued Karl Kaiser that the Balkans have been and remain a region in which many of the central problems of world order in the 21st century were particularly apparent, such as the limits of self-determination; the management of ethnic conflict; the necessity of crisis management; the imperatives of a new type of peacekeeping and the legitimacy of humanitarian intervention. Though developments in this region were influenced by unique and special factors, concluded Kaiser, *experiences and lessons learnt there could be of general relevance for other parts of the globe* (underlined by me, P. P.)¹³².

¹³¹ Karl Kaiser, *The Balkans as a Model*, *Internationale Politik*, Transatlantic Edition, 3/2003, Volume 4, Fall Issue, p. 31-38.

¹³² Karl Kaiser, *Op. Cit.*, p. 31.

The UN Secretary General Kofi Annan's Deputy Special Representative in Kosovo, Jean-Christian Cady confirmed that opinion on 28 January 2004 during a Stockholm International Conference on Preventing Genocide. The UN official said: "Kosovo is a good example of what the international community and the United Nations can achieve to stop ethnic cleansing and build policy instruments that will prevent it from occurring again"¹³³.

Here an assessment of certain aspects of the Balkans' peacekeeping experience as well as the experience of the presence of peacekeeping troops of Balkan countries in Afghanistan and Iraq would be presented. It includes the issue of mandating the peacekeeping mission, the specific aspects of the peacekeeping and peace building missions, and the resources/capabilities for peace operations as they have been performed in the Balkans. ISIS provided suggestions on the basis of this experience less than two weeks after the declaration of the end of the war-fighting operation in Iraq¹³⁴. An analysis is provided as to how these lessons have been taken and utilized mainly in Iraq. A special accent is made on the domestic reactions to the national involvement in the Iraqi mission, specific problems of the national decision-making process and preparation for the missions. Some of the experience of the troops from the Balkans in Afghanistan and Iraq is also analyzed.

Mandate for Peacekeeping Operations

1. UN, NATO and EU were the mandating authorities for the peacekeeping and peace-building operations in the Balkans. The problems with the UN mandate for enforcing the peace before the wars complicated existent patterns of involving the UN in peacekeeping and peace building. Kosovo and the events around Pristina airport when Russian troops nearly clashed with NATO troops marked this tendency. The problems also stimulated non-UN peacekeeping operations. Iraq intensified the trend: UN was out of business on mandating peacekeeping, and had

¹³³ Kosovo Is Good Lesson In International Action Against Ethnic Conflict, Says Official, EUR318, 01/28/2004, at: <http://usinfo.staate.gov>

¹³⁴ Plamen Pantev, *Assessing the Balkans Peacekeeping Experience: Lessons for Afghanistan, Iraq and Beyond*, Op.cit., 13 May 2003', Henry L. Stimson Center, Washington, D. C., at: www.stimson.org (Projects/Events).

huge problems, concerning peace-building mandate. The reason was that it could not guarantee clear, credible and achievable mandate. Both "humanitarian intervention" and "pre-emptive war" appeared to be hard to assimilate issues by the world organization. The division among the leading UN Security Council states was reflected negatively on the events that followed the Balkan wars of the 1990s.

This situation was partly changed when on 8 June 2004 the UN Security Council adopted Resolution 1546 initiated by the United States, Great Britain and Romania. The Resolution confirmed the leading role of the UN in the post-conflict rehabilitation of Iraq. The Resolution provided an international recognition of the interim government, taking office on 30 June 2004 and support for the US-led Coalition Forces. The latter needed to consult the interim government for any major military operation in the country. The interim government had the right to order US and other troops to leave the country. The mandate of the multilateral forces, according to the Resolution, would expire in January 2006. On 9 June 2004 Russian President Putin, for example, commented at Sea Island in Georgia, USA that the adoption of the Resolution marked a major step forward for Iraq and signaled a renewed international commitment to its reconstruction.

However, the negative consequences of the non-existent initial UN mandate persisted. The issue who was wrong and who was right about the beginning of the intervention in Iraq continued to re-open every day and week – until the division of the countries of the free world has provided enough room for terrorists and dictators to manoeuvre as they would wish. This issue distracted for long peacekeepers and peace builders in Iraq from their job. Iraq became a victim of problems and terminology issues of foreign and international actors – issues that could not lead to constructing peace and democracy. The investment of post-conflict rehabilitation efforts in Iraq, despite the renewed UN support, remained mostly limited to the Coalition Forces and less to the world organization. The delay in rehabilitating Iraq backfired on the image of the free world about the capacity of democracy to defend its principles and project its ideas in the broader Middle East.

2. This situation with the UN-mandating authority is a reflection of a mounting dispute among UNSC permanent members throughout the 1990s of the last century: 'unipolarity' vs. 'multipolarity'. In the beginning of this century the dispute loomed within NATO too.

However, 'unipolarity' vs. 'multipolarity' *is not the issue*. First, a broad international base is desirable for both peace enforcement and peacekeeping, as well as for peace building. If an international institution as the UN provides the legitimacy of a peace operation – so much the better. But it would be completely counterproductive if the UN, or the so-called 'multipolarity' issue were used as instruments of isolating the United States. Second, the issue is about what forms of democratic world governance are to be introduced and applied, not just simplifying a conflict between non-existent 'multipolarity' and 'unipolarity' in the world. The argument is that the resolution of the dispute of 'multipolarity' vs. 'unipolarity' does not give an answer to the essential issues of what to do: 1) with terrorism; 2) with the proliferation of WMD; 3) with poverty; 4) with regional conflicts; 5) with international law and raising its effectiveness. In other words, the dispute does not answer the questions of the real, substantive agenda and priorities of world politics, but rather focuses the agenda on the diverging national interests of the contending centers of power in a global and interdependent world.

This issue loomed during the Kosovo crisis. However, the humanitarian intervention was backed by a 'moral majority' in the UN Security Council (12 against 3) and by the consensus of the 19 NATO member countries. This was not the case with Iraq. Neither the UN Security Council, nor NATO agreed on a common position. The 'coalition of the willing' filled the regulative vacuum and drove the process on. Iraq must give an answer what matters more in the global world: the resolution of the substantive issues or the privileged position in power political relationships and decision-making by the big powers.

3. International institutions, mandating peacekeeping and peace-building activities do matter. The UN Security Council does matter. It is a practical forum of discussing world affairs by the global centers of power. This could be probably done in a more democratic, transparent and ac-

countable way than now. The great five UN Security Council permanent members, however, need to be more productive in their bilateral relations, if the UN Security Council is to preserve its authority of a moral and legitimate center of decision-making world power on the application of violent methods on a legal basis. For example, it would be counter-productive if the EU and Europe in general self-identify themselves in opposition or confrontation with the United States – both in the UN Security Council and around the globe.

What conclusions could be made about Iraq? Iraq is a test case – as Kosovo was – that apart from UN-guaranteed legitimacy effective resolution of conflicts also matters, and that effectiveness will not be sacrificed to protracted though legitimate decisions, preventing the timely solution of the issue at stake. We can only imagine – in a retrognostic way what would have been the fate of the Albanians in Kosovo if Milosevic had been allowed to continue his ethnic cleansing plan, tolerated by a blocked UN Security Council. Katariina Simonen of the Finnish Ministry of Defense rightly notes in her concluding remarks of an encompassing study of Operation Allied Force in Kosovo as a case of humanitarian intervention that “the inaction of the Security Council in such cases as Kosovo is the primary impetus that has led states to look for other ways of action, outside the UN Charter”¹³⁵.

The Peacekeeping and Peace Building Mission

1. Peacekeeping and peace building are important vehicles of social change and progress¹³⁶. The Balkan experience shows these vehicles guaranteed the transformation of societies to democracy, and of the region – close to the status of a security community of states. For that reason the effective mission is the "integrated mission of the military force and the civilian authorities" with an "integrated leadership and headquar-

¹³⁵ Katariina Simonen, *Operation Allied Force: A Case of Humanitarian Intervention?*, Athena Papers Series, September 2004, Partnership for Peace Consortium of Defense Academies and Security Studies Institutes, p. 86.

¹³⁶ Ho-Won Jeong suggests this thesis throughout his recent studies, linking peacekeeping and peace building to long-term social, political and economic transformation. See, for example, ‘Peacebuilding in Postconflict Societies: Strategy and Process’, Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder CO, 2005, 260pp.

ters" of the mission. This is the real guarantor of peace, needed to assist the long-term and complex political and social transformations of war-shattered societies. After meeting the immediate military and humanitarian concerns success can be built only by dealing with longer-term issues like: state-building; reforming the security sector (!!); strengthening civil society; social reintegration; economic reconstruction; media and education institutions' viability, etc.

For reaching these ends cooperation and understanding between authorized actors is needed on: the analysis of the political situation; military operations; civilian police; electoral assistance; human rights issues; humanitarian and health assistance; development issues (electricity, water supplies, heating, cooling, functioning of agriculture, schools – buildings, notebooks, textbooks, program, etc.); refugees and displaced persons; public information; logistics and transportation issues; finance and accounting, and recruitment/personnel issues. On the last issue – an adequate combination of local people and exiles should be reached during the transition. The negative experience of Kosovo continues to be a strong reminder of that necessity.

The experience of personnel selection has been adequate enough in South East Europe to be shared in connection with other cases. The fact that the transition processes in the Balkans had been taking place in former totalitarian societies led to the accumulation of adequate experience how to deal with former totalitarian party members. Reconciliation and reconstruction could not omit this issue and those who performed wisely did the best service to democracy, humaneness and rehabilitation of the respective societies. Those who unnecessarily antagonized the process of personnel adaptation to the needs of the new societies and state institutions programmed protracted and painful processes and consequences.

What conclusions could be made about Iraq? The US-organized interim government, apart from being an effective one, had to gradually acquire democratic and totally national forms. Baath party had to be ousted politically, ideologically and historically, though individuals not from the elite of the party who were not compromised and cherished a unanimous respect by their constituencies could have been involved in the recon-

struction of Iraq. This suggestion has been made in mid-May 2003 for sure¹³⁷, though the issue has been discussed earlier too, but has been left unconsidered and an indiscriminate purge of Baath party members and their relatives has been undertaken by the Iraqi authorities. This intensified unnecessarily the social tensions in Iraq. One year later the issue has been analyzed again and certain elements of the Baath regime have been asked to take obligations in the interest of the Iraqi people, including in the armed forces.

The international community should encourage any indication of the appearance of a nascent civil society. The lessons of the Balkans in dealing with radical Islam (in Bosnia, Kosovo and elsewhere) were inadequate to gain experience in coping with the local Iraqi Sunni/Shiite/Kurds disputes, testing the ground for future political battles. Strong secular counter-balance in Iraqi society must be supported to neutralize religious political ambitions. Religious freedom and religious extremists' restraint must be the norms from the outset of new Iraq. Free media should be educated and turned into a significant and efficient source of information and social regulator.

National state institutions and administration are the keys to the success of Iraq's re-birth. Conceptual models of the new state have already been brought to the attention of the Iraqi public. Downsized, tailored along the principle of economy of organization administration in combination with economic freedom, investment and trade have to drive successfully the transformation of Iraq. It would be a disaster for the new society and state if freedom and entrepreneurial mood lead to the appearance of sex industry, tolerated by the foreign partners. The cultural impact of such an industry may provoke radical and extremist reactions and provide food for fundamentalist clerics. What Kosovo showed was that political principles and values (freedom of speech, business accountability, security of contracts) are the real pillars of the transformation – not the potentially clumsy institutions. The principles are regarded highly and seri-

¹³⁷ Plamen Pantev, *Assessing the Balkans Peacekeeping Experience: Lessons for...*, Op. cit.

ously and they do matter for the idealistic 'fathers' of the new political entities and societies.

However, the establishment of new democratic institutions of power after democratically organized and held elections in a big country as Iraq was of crucial strategic domestic and international importance. The Bosnian and Kosovo experience showed that though slowly, with negative side effects as 'the culture of dependency', the election of local institutions of power in coordination with the international community's representatives push forward from a bottom-up and top-down perspective the processes of social progress. The holy war that terrorists declared on the Iraqi elections in January 2005 was a clear demonstration of the effectiveness of the elections as the democratic anti-dot of terrorism. The successful elections in Afghanistan for President did not turn into a panacea, but definitely engaged the initiative and local responsibility in driving the social, political and economic processes ahead. This had been a major earlier lesson of the democratic reconstruction in the conflict-shattered territories in the Western Balkans.

There have been recommendations that Iraq shared experience with 'model countries' – not mostly from Europe (Germany or Romania), but rather from Japan and the Eastern Asian 'tigers'. They have been provided by the USA with security guarantees, but it has been the local initiative and local culture that has driven the process of transformation. Iraqis should remain confident they would preserve their cultural and historical identity while transforming their society and economy. This is a necessary and realistic precondition for a successful and democratic Iraq to turn into a model state for the broader region of the Middle East.

A crucial question is how privatization would be carried out. 'Success story' countries like South Korea, Spain, some of the Central/East European countries may provide specialized advice – both for their positive and negative experience.

What role for the UN? According to Michael Steiner, a former UNMIK chief of Kosovo, UN must rebuild Iraq with ten times as many foreign functionaries than in Kosovo, which means hundreds of thousands. Ac-

According to one of the Iraqi opposition leaders – Bakhtiar Amin, who visited in the spring of 2003 Kosovo – the trip has left him convinced the UN must be excluded from the reconstruction of Iraq. By 20 March 2003 UN and EU preferred the status quo. The post-pre-emptive war situation was tense enough to experiment incompetent governance. The ‘liberators’ of Iraq had to provide the tools for freedom and prosperity. The UN could be helpful in providing humanitarian assistance. The broader involvement of the UN, however, provides more legitimacy of the effort of rehabilitating Iraq and is a significant litmus test of the role of terrorists in Iraq. Though the UN became a target of terrorists several times after May 2003 its role in Iraq is crucial for the regulated progress of this country. The involvement of the UN in the preparation of the first Iraqi elections in January 2005 proved how important it has been to gradually engage the world organization in the region. The fight of terrorists and rebels of various sorts against the UN proved to the regional and the world community that those who oppose the integration of Iraq in the international society are enemies of progress and of the vital interests of the Iraqi people.

As for the EU – it was prudent to involve itself in the post-war reconstruction on clearly agreed with the interim administrations of Iraq terms and the Union should guarantee the implementation of what it pledged to contribute. The involvement of the EU was important in connection with its ambition to be a global actor and not to stay regional.

2. A crucial issue of the mission is to achieve stability and public security. Both troops for hard security contingencies and police are needed. In Iraq, as well as in Kosovo and Bosnia, a lot of light and heavier weapons and ammunitions remained, almost with every citizen. Putting those arms under control is a major step in diluting and preventing civil war or acts of violence.

After dictatorial regime’s security forces disappeared some of them became part of the national or regional organized crime. The murder in the Balkans of the Prime Minister of Serbia, Zoran Djindjic, is a reminder of that post-dictatorial effect. The killings of Iraqi officials at local, regional and national levels also prove the necessity to prioritize law and order requirements.

In the case of Iraq the terrorist activity bears also the ideological appeal that success of democracy in Iraq is ‘mission impossible’. The counter-motive – of proving democracy is not belonging only to the culture of Christians, but has a universal appeal and meaning, needs to be seriously considered by all who have or have not positions on the developments in Iraq. The ‘anti-democracy’ motive did not have any appeal in the environment of the post-conflict Balkans.

War criminals must be put on trial. Reliance on Iraqi judicial institutions was the right decision, though international cooperation was very useful in dealing with this issue too. Justice in an Islamic environment has specific social motivation and repercussion. Equal treatment of Christians and Muslims by the International Criminal Court for former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague is crucial for the reconciliation process in the post-Yugoslav territories.

In an effort to establish the rule of law and mechanisms of accountability following the war in Kosovo and rising civil disorder, the UN Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) established a program of international judges and prosecutors (IJP) that was the first of its kind in the world. What has been learnt from the international experience in Kosovo was that successful international intervention in the judicial arena should be immediate and bold, rather than incremental and crisis-driven. Early prosecution by ‘internationals’ can ensure fair and impartial trials and a public perception that even the powerful are not immune to the rule of law, can inhibit the growth and entrenchment of criminal power structures and alliances among extremist ethnic groups, and can end impunity for war criminals and terrorists alike¹³⁸. This lesson of Kosovo was applied in Iraq with a clear and predominant Iraqi participation – a fact that has significant consequences for the self-image of a big and with long state traditions nation.

¹³⁸ Michael E. Hartmann, *International Judges and Prosecutors in Kosovo: A New Model for Post-Conflict Peacekeeping*, USIP, Special Report 112, October 2003, p. 1-2.

3. Regionalization of peacekeeping pays back, but no universal model with 'Balkan' roots and characteristics could be suggested as to how regional peacekeeping and peace building link regional issues, organizations with regional states, the UN and extend this linkage to region-wide positive transformation processes. The maturity of a particular region in the process of globalization is a specific issue, requiring a specialized study, and though a loose concept, could provide some ideas and guidelines for the region around Iraq.

The regional states in the Balkans were crucial factors in supporting in various ways the peacekeeping and peace building in post-Yugoslavia and the Western Balkans in general. This situation is hardly applicable to the case of Iraq. However, a combination of factors bears a potential of urging the neighbors of Iraq to reshape their attitudes in a benign for the common region way. Such factors are: knowledge and experience; global organizations; regional institutions; humanitarian agencies; development agencies; non-governmental organizations; bilateral relations with countries from the region; identity issues of the potential region; level of homogeneity of this region; potential for cooperation and integration of the participating countries; chances of the region to become globally significant; historical and cultural legacies of the region, etc. The definition of the region, in which Iraq exists and develops as well the eventual re-definition of the region itself, may become important tools in tackling a variety of issues in the individual countries of the region, including in Iraq. The rare chance of involving the Balkans into NATO and EU enlargement processes could hardly be repeated as a significant incentive of the transformation processes in the broader Middle East. However, the prerequisites of region building in the broader Middle East could well be studied and borrowed conceptually from the experience of the Balkans. The very first steps could be the establishment of good-neighborly relations with various confidence-building measures between the states around Iraq and Baghdad itself. A purposeful involvement into the broader international relations and diplomatic network as the G-8 summit decided in 2004 is a strategically correct mid-term goal that should be supported.

Capabilities/Resources of the Peace Operations

1. The experience of the military forces in the Balkans, especially in Bosnia and Kosovo, has been well interpreted by the coalition forces in Iraq at the war-fighting phase. The ultimate authority was reached by a quick winning of the war and through cooperation with Kurds in Northern Iraq. Commitment of adequate forces and resources was a clear issue at the very beginning of operation "Iraqi Freedom". The main parts of the peacekeepers stepped in Iraq as the next logical move after the major part of the battle for Iraq was over. Forces from Albania, Bulgaria, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Italy, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Georgia, Ukraine and many other countries were added. NATO has a big potential of contributing to the peacekeeping effort. At this point NATO is contributing much less in Iraq in comparison to its involvement in the Balkans. This is due to problems with the mandating for participation and the specific national attitudes and decision-making procedures. There is another issue – the involvement of UN, NATO or EU in the peacekeeping mission in Iraq would require coordination of personnel and of conceptual motivation of the participation. The forces of the enlisted several European countries became part of a clear US scenario of peacekeeping operation. The UN and NATO would need some time to adapt to the forces that are already on the ground as well as to the mission in general. The NATO training mission in Iraq that was launched in 2004 is gathering experience and would probably expand with time. NATO has an incomparable experience in peace operations in the Balkans.

2. The question of 'burden-sharing' in the peacekeeping and peace building operations in the Balkans was solved in a mutually satisfying way by Europe and the USA. 34,000 Europeans put effort together with 8,000 US troops in UNPROFOR. In KFOR the commander was always a European as well as the UNMIK chief. US commitment, however, remains essential for the longer-term success of the Balkan peacekeeping, for the stability and the evolution of the region. The involvement of the USA, NATO and EU in the Balkans received crucial support by the people of the region who have been attracted to the processes of European and Euro-Atlantic integration, modernization and progress in the 1990s.

A similar coordinated effort is needed to balance the strain on the United States by contributing actors from Europe, Asia and the Arab countries. In South East Europe a multilateral effort, called "Pact of Stability for South East Europe" brought together resources from various institutions, mainly EU, but also the IMF, WB, from Japan, Switzerland and Norway. The US is an important catalyst and contributor – directly and through the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI). In the Balkans EU supports the development of the economy of the region; OSCE – democracy and institution-building, including Kosovo Police Service; UN – UNMIK, the civil administration, UNIP, the international police, UNHCR, coordinating humanitarian assistance. A bottom-up Southeast European Cooperation Process (the 'Sofia process') adds to the top-down initiatives and contributions. EU took the strategic decision in 2003 to integrate the whole Balkan region in the longer-run, with no exceptions.

Analogous formulae should be found and organized in Iraq with a view of involving the neighboring states in cooperative projects. This may trigger processes of transformation on a broader social, economic and political scale region-wide. Realistically, however, first a well-planned campaign of confidence building measures between the countries from the region should be designed and in the process of its implementation new region-wide opportunities could be discussed.

3. An important conclusion of the Balkan experience was that experts on political, military, humanitarian, legal, financial, media and other issues were indispensable at the 'mandating' stage and at the 'mission-implementation' one, when the decision-making process strongly needed them. Intelligence expertise is crucial for guaranteeing the success of the peacekeeping and peace building effort, but especially in the coordinated fight on terrorism that wants to disrupt the constructive efforts of post-conflict rehabilitation. The ability of decision-makers to limit wrong or imprecise decisions of various kinds, to take the best from experts and intelligence operatives would provide them with bigger chances of success.

Balkan Nations' Experience About Iraq and In Afghanistan and Iraq

Though at an early stage some lessons and comparisons of Balkan countries' participation in Afghanistan and especially in Iraq could be tentatively drawn. The national support of NATO intervention in Kosovo has been fervently debated, though the opposing views never crossed the line of direct clashes of people. The difficult measure in favor of supporting NATO was calculated in the light of the direct danger to the Balkan countries' national security that protracted conflicts in former Yugoslavia could cause. The support of the US-led Coalition for Iraq by Albania, Romania and Bulgaria, and later by Bosnia and Herzegovina reflected the inertia of pro-NATO thinking and less the motive of extending democracy elsewhere. The counter-terrorism motive was added later after Iraq turned into the battleground of world Islamic terrorists against civilization and democracy.

Anyway, in contingencies as those in the Balkans and later – in Afghanistan and Iraq, national cohesion and support for the expeditionary troops turns into a major factor of success in the difficult conditions away from the borders of the countries that send them. Preserving that support in the mid- and long-term is dependent on a variety of factors, linked to the national armed forces, to the battlefield, to the evolution of the social environment where the troops were sent, and to the domestic politics. The influence of various factors of the international environment – behavior of other great states, of coalition partners, of international organizations to which the sending country belongs, substantially influence the magnitude of the national support of the mission.

While in the case of Kosovo the 'ideological' motivation to get involved was the salvation of those who were ethnically cleansed, in the case of Afghanistan was the salvation of human civilization, and of Iraq – an eclectic sum of explanations that never reached a very broad or universal agreement – preventing the use of weapons of mass destruction, oil, support of democracy and freedom, geo-strategic domination by the USA, geopolitical pressure on terrorism, etc. Though there could not be proposed an accepted by all and streamlined interpretation of the in-

involvement of some Balkan countries in Iraq there was a general instinctive understanding that success of the Coalition Forces in Iraq is indispensable – because of the solidarity of future NATO members with the United States; extremist Islam; terrorism; the preparations for use of weapons of mass destruction; the call for democracy by many Iraqis and the need to help them; the necessity to have the Iraqi oil running to the world markets and for the benefit of the people of that country and not of a dictator; the need to have a kind of order that no other powerful state but the USA could guarantee, etc. The large turnout at the first-ever democratic elections in Iraq in January 2005 added a strong argument to the involvement.

The activity of providing democracy and freedom to the Iraqis, however, met skeptical considerations especially in Bulgaria and Romania, used during the Soviet era of ‘exporting socialism’ to other societies. Social engineering without adequate ‘bottom-up’ support is doomed to failure and the Balkan skepticism on this issue about Iraq stimulated additional efforts to nourish the local, grass-root needs for democracy and freedom – not imposing ‘our’ vision of society and politics.

This involvement caused an intensified terrorist activity against the Balkan participants in the Iraqi Coalition Forces. The deaths of innocent people and soldiers caused both doubts in the societies of the participating countries and a rise of the will to win over the terrorists’ ideological arguments. The public in the different Balkan participating countries quietly shares the opinion that by engaging the terrorists in Iraq we may attract their attention on our countries, but it would be better to fight them mostly there. The lack of military tradition to fight far from the boundaries of the state is a psychological factor that prevents from the freedom of considering having troops abroad as a normal state of affairs. At the same time the understanding that in today’s world the frontlines must not necessarily be at the border of the sovereign state gets closer to the mind of the average citizen in the Balkan countries. There is a certain comfort that this novel situation is not met by the individual efforts but as part of a group of like-minded coalition partners or allies. The new situation requires new pattern of preparing the troops for practical military contingencies in a non-traditional environment. The political leaders

also need to learn the lesson of taking adequate and timely decisions so that the missions of the troops were correctly defined.

The experience of participation in Alliance and/or Coalition missions of Balkan countries in Afghanistan and Iraq is not over to draw 'final conclusions' or 'lessons'. The evolution of the security situation has not reached stable conditions that would provide a logical 'level of reference' in the assessments of the participation of troops from the Balkans. It is sure, however, that the local regional experience of post-conflict rehabilitation is already augmented by the active Balkan countries' participation in peacekeeping and peace building missions elsewhere.