Review

Successful interventions in internal conflicts: A framework

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This article discusses factors contributing to successful third-party interventions in internal conflicts, dominating the 'post-cold war' era as the principal sources of current conflicts. It suggests that peacekeeping is a necessary strategy when violence breaks out between the parties, since without reducing physical violence, it is impossible to manage and resolve the conflict. Yet once peacekeeping introduces a cooling-off period, it must be followed by peace building efforts. The four-step peace building efforts discussed in the article involve helping the parties reach an agreement, monitoring the implementation process, institutional and economic reconstruction, and confidence building, in that order. The study concludes that successful interventions should involve a proper combination of both peacekeeping and peace building.

Key words: Internal conflicts, peacekeeping, peace building, third-party intervention, conflict resolution.

INTRODUCTION

The ending of the 'cold war' clearly increased the willingness of governments to work through the United Nations (UN) and other international channels to resolve conflicts and keep peace around the globe. Signs of the improved international cooperation include the decline of international conflicts, a dramatic reduction of vetoes in the 'UN security council', and wider subscription to such governing principles as market economics, liberal democracy, and the rule of law.

Despite this more cooperative environment, however, a fresh cycle of ethnopolitical movements have re-emerged recently in Eastern Europe, including the Balkans, Caucasus, Central Asia, Africa, and many other parts of the world. In turn, ethnically-driven internal conflicts, conflicts occurring within the borders of states, erupted over self-determination, succession or political dominance, replacing the 'cold War's' ideological clashes as the principal sources of current conflicts.

As these new conflicts arose, the international community exercised its new-found collective will to try to end them through diplomacy, and to alleviate refugee and other humanitarian problems through peacekeeping missions. Therefore, since the end of the 'cold war', peacekeeping missions have increased exponentially. To be sure, from 1948 to 1978, only a total of 13 peacekeeping forces were set up. In the following ten-year period, no new forces were established. However, from May, 1988 to October, 1993, an additional 20 forces were created (Yilmaz, 2005, pp. 16-17). As of August 31, 2010, the number of UN peacekeeping has reached 64, 16 of which are still operating in the field, involving 99,596 military personnel and civilian police.[*]

In some counties suffering severe internal conflicts in the post-Cold War period, such as Mozambique, the Congo, Angola, Haiti, and East Timor (independent Timor-Leste since 2002), peacekeeping interventions have gone reasonably well. But in many other areas, as in Somalia, Bosnia, and Rwanda, they encountered unexpected frustrations, and largely failed to stem violence and achieve order.

This observation suggests the need for interveners to devise a proper intervention strategy to carry things forward from the point of conflict to that of successfully implemented settlement and social peace. While each case differs, the experience of prolonged civil strives, nevertheless, produces significant similarities such as; long-standing hatreds; weak governments and leaders on all sides; an unsophisticated, violence prone population; exploitation and manipulation from both within and

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[*] For detailed statistical data about UN peacekeeping operations, visit http://www.un.org.peace/bnote010101.pdf

outside the area, as well as collapsed institutions, local economy, and security system. Thus, third-parties face the challenging task of not only stopping immediate violence between the parties in conflict but also building peace.

This article discusses factors contributing to successful interventions and tries to offer a general framework for constructive interventions. Although, there is no guarantee of success in every case, the article, stresses the need for a comprehensive peace strategy that combines peacekeeping and peace building. In this regard, first the utility of the use of force in the form of peacekeeping is discusses. Then peace building efforts that should follow and be used to complement peacekeeping are addressed. Several suggestions are also offered in concluding the study that may increase the chance of successful interventions in internal conflicts.

THE UTILITY OF THE USE OF FORCE

The most visible form of third-party interventions in violent internal conflicts involves the installation of UN peacekeeping forces. Peacekeeping, in a general sense, is an activity which involves the interposition of units of military and police forces between conflicting groups, either to stop violence or prevent it.

However, in practice, the international use of force in the form of peacekeeping has proven to be problematic in many ways, involving several dilemmas. The first dilemma is that while the use of force, especially UN peace enforcement missions based on UN Charter, Chapter 7, may help to restore order, they frequently involve killing and injuring civilians, as well as armed adversaries. When this happens, as it did in Somalia, Bosnia, the Congo, Rwanda, and Sudan, the UN and its leading members risk being accused of acting in a colonial manner. If this risk is to be minimized, there is a need for local knowledge, good intelligence, good decision making, and the skilled performance of military task. Unfortunately, not all peacekeeping forces are strong in all these respects (Yilmaz, 2005a, pp. 21-26).

The second dilemma is that the use of force can undermine perceptions of the impartiality of peacekeeping forces. Such forces often have great difficulties in maintaining their impartiality, especially if humanitarian aid is needed more by one side than another. Peacekeeping forces, like any other forces in an alien land, need local allies and supporters, particularly if they are engaged in hostilities. In such circumstances, impartiality must be a casualty. There may even be some risk that the impartiality of UN peacekeeping forces generally may be undermined.

The third dilemma is that the UN system of decision making is not well geared to controlling major uses of force. When violent situations call for heavier tactics, disagreements tend to arise among the participants of peacekeepers regarding the degree of UN control. This was particularly the case during the Bosnian conflict in which the United Kingdom and France were reluctant to follow UN authority on the ground in Bosnia.

Despite these dilemmas, however, in managing violent internal conflicts, peacekeeping has its own utility. Especially when adversaries are engaged in mutual violence or armed clashes, peacekeeping appears to be the most urgent strategy. Until violence is stopped, it is unlikely that any attempts to resolve competing interests, to change negative attitudes, or to alter socio-economic circumstances giving rise to conflict will be successful.

Moreover, in the absence of peacekeeping forces, any group wishing to sabotage a peace initiative may find it easier to provoke armed clashes with the other side, since there is no impartial buffer between the sides which can act as a restraining influence. The absence of a suitable control mechanism may enable even a small group of people committed to violence to wreak enormous havoc, whereas the presence of an impartial third force can be an important factor for stability (Yilmaz, 2005a, pp. 18-19).

Yet the main problematic issue regarding peacekeeping operations in practice is the expanded use of this strategy, especially since the end of the 'cold war', which leads to the increasing militarization of peace missions. Rather than turning to increasingly militarized solutions - a habit that pervades thinking about conflict management at the international level - measures should also be taken to address the root causes of conflicts and to heal them. Otherwise, just by stopping violence or providing humanitarian assistance, internal conflicts cannot be resolved in the full sense (Yilmaz, 2006).

It should be kept in mind that peacekeeping, despite its utility, is a "palliative", not a cure. Peacekeeping forces cannot directly resolve conflicts. All they can do is to manage them for a period of time to allow the people who have the capacity to deal with them in an atmosphere not poisoned by death and destruction. And in an anarchic international system, no better alternative has been found yet. But in order for violent internal conflicts to be actually resolved, peacekeeping should be complemented by a larger peace strategy involving peace building efforts discussed below.

PEACE BUILDING

While peacekeeping activities focus on the behavioral component of conflict and try to stop violence between conflicting parties, peace building concentrates on conditions giving rise to conflict, with an aim to alter them for the better to terminate the recurrence of the issue. Thus, peace building necessities much time and more efforts by third-parties from many different angles.

In practice, peace building tasks in internal conflict settings are carried out by a wide variety of intermediaries, ranging from individuals, such as US Secretary of State or President of France, to such organizations as UN specialized agencies, International Committee of Red Cross, and non-governmental organizations (NGOs), in general.

Step I: Reaching a peace settlement

Whoever is, the first duty of any peace builder is to bring the parties to the negotiating table and convince them to sign a peace agreement. But this duty is not as easy as it sounds; there are specific requirements for success. To start with, it is absolutely essential that all of the warring parties be represented at the negotiating table and involved in discussions about the new constitutional and political order that will be created after the fighting stops. Ethnic conflicts are virtually always a two or *n*-party game. Thus, a good agreement is one that has been crafted by all parties to the conflict. Parties excluded from these negotiations, or whose interests are not represented at the bargaining table, will have a much stronger incentive to defect from the peace process and resort to violence to achieve their goals.

Second, a good agreement is one that contains power-sharing provisions for winners and losers in the aftermath of elections. Winners-take-all is not a constructive mentality and cannot produce a lasting peace. All must have a sense that they can participate and that political life is not zero-sum. The new rules about political competition must also be seen as fair and just.

Finally, peace agreements must contain provisions for re-negotiation and third-party mediation during the implementation phase of the settlement process. This element is particularly important, because a settlement is usually an imperfect road map to the future. Key provisions of any settlement often have to be renegotiated, since they may be ambiguous or even unimplementable in their current form. Further, new problems can emerge, which must be accommodated within the framework of the settlement. Poorly-negotiated and badly-designed agreements are a sure prescription for disaster.

Keeping these general requirements in mind, a third-party intervening internal conflicts as a mediator basically uses three modes to accomplish his or her goal of directing the parties to achieve an agreement-'communication', 'formulation', and 'manipulation', usually in that order.

When conflict has made direct contact between the parties impossible, thereby preventing them from talking to each other and from making concessions without appearing weak or losing face, the third-party can serve as communicator. In this situation, the mediator simply acts as a conduit, opening contacts and carrying messages. This role is completely passive, with no substantive contribution by the third-party.

The second mode requires the third-party to enter into the substance of the negotiation. Since a conflict may not only impede communication between parties, but be so encompassing that it prevents them from conceiving ways out of the dispute, the parties need a third-party as formulator too. Once face-to-face discussions are underway, the main function of the third-party traditionally includes: providing ideas or possible solutions, especially when the parties are deadlocked; initiating proposals which originate from one or the other party which could not be advanced for fear of revealing weakness or uncertainty; de-committing the parties by providing some formula by which they can gracefully abandon previous positions to which public acts and statements have heavily committed them; and acting as a substitute source of ideas or proposals (Stitt, 2004).

The third mode, finally, requires the third-party to act as a manipulator. Here the third-party assumes the maximum degree of involvement, becoming a party to the solution. As a manipulator, the third-party uses its power to bring the parties to an agreement, pushing and pulling them away from conflict into resolution. When the third-party acts as a communicator, tact, wording, mixed in equal doses with accuracy and confidentiality, are the necessary character traits that should particularly exist.

The third-party as a formulator must be capable of thinking of ways to unblock the thinking of the conflicting parties and to work out imaginative ways to skirt those commitments that constrain the parties. Also, it must be persuasive and tenacious, for just as the conflict oftentimes prevents the parties from finding imaginative ways out, it may also prevent them seeing the value of the third-party's suggestions at first hearing.

The third-party as a manipulator needs to use leverage. Leverage consists of political, economic, or even personal punishments and rewards. The third-party uses them to push the parties towards a solution (Zartman and Touval, 1996; Zartman and Spector, 2003).

Step II: Monitoring the settlement

When the parties reach a negotiated agreement, the duty of a third-party does not stop there. Ideally, third-parties should monitor the implementation of the agreement and take necessary measures to sustain it to ensure its survival and durability. The act of signing an agreement does not mean that the parties necessarily wish to fulfill all of their commitments under the agreement. Thus, the risk of sliding back into confrontation is usually high in the early stages of the implementation process. Even after a modicum of trust is built between the parties, it can be undermined by perceived violations or failures of

compliance.

Hence, one of the key functions of third-parties is to foster trust between warring factions by monitoring compliance and holding them accountable to their negotiated commitments. As needed, third-parties should play their traditional mediation role for continuing negotiations over intractable issues left out of the agreement as well.

Step III: Institutional and economic reconstruction

In countries emerging from a civil war, it is typical that the political institutions are weak and ill-suited to the needs of people. Efforts to strengthen and restructure the state apparatus so that governments can fulfill roles critical to social and economic well-being are severely hampered by the post-conflict political environment, characterized by a vigorous competition for power. It is also distinguished by limited legitimacy of political leaders, extreme polarization, and a lack of consensus on the direction the country should follow. Civil-society institutions, which in democratic countries serve as one means of applying pressure to governments, are also usually poorly developed in war-torn societies. Those that exist are often inexperienced and highly politicized, seriously undermining their effectiveness (Yilmaz, 2007b).

Closely-related to the problem of institutional weakness or collapse, war-torn societies are characterized by serious security problems. Local forces whose legitimacy is under question are often incapable of guaranteeing law and order. These forces are usually professionally weak and have a long history of human rights abuses as well (Raush and Banar, 2006).

Prolonged internal conflicts have serious economic consequences too. Major economic and social infrastructures such as the transport and communication systems, health care, education, banking and finance- suffer extensive damage as a result of fighting or lack of maintenance. At the same time, the share of manufacturing, construction, transport, and commerce in gross domestic product drastically declines. Human resource shortages are also typical in war-torn societies as people with professional training such as doctors, teachers, and government officials- are often targeted during civil wars. Consequently, the country's economic capacity to re-generate substantial investments slowly diminishes (Ball, 1996).

Consequently, post-conflict societies face large and complex issues that must be addressed rapidly. Even if an agreement is achieved, failing to respond to these issues in a timely fashion may create the conditions for a return to organized violence.

Coping with such challenging tasks and building peace in war-torn societies are not likely through the efforts of one actor only. Multi-level efforts must be made by several actors, domestic and international. Particularly important is the participation of third-parties that operate independent of big-power political interests and that are trustworthy. Such third-parties may especially include NGOs, UN specialized agencies, and regional organizations.

In strengthening the institutional base, one priority area is strengthening governmental capacity. When civil wars end, governments are typically overextended and unable to perform key functions. The opposition, which may control some areas of the country, may remain highly wary of the existing government. Opposition leaders often believe that the government will fail to implement justice and they may seek to limit the government's capacity to deal effectively with local problems (Newman and Richmond, 2006).

Such conditions present the international community with a dilemma. In order to strengthen institutional capacity, resources can either be channeled through the government or through international NGOs. However, either choice can be problematic. If the international community turns to non-governmental bodies to deliver resources and bypasses the government, this is likely to limit the growth of governmental capacity. On the other hand, making the government the main actor of peace building may result in the danger that assistance would be used to gain electoral advantage at the expense of the groups most affected by the civil war, thereby fostering a political environment inimical to reconciliation. What is actually needed is a nuanced approach that progressively strengthens the central government's capacity to carry out key activities, while minimizing its ability to use resources for partisan political purposes. To that end, a forum consisting of representatives of the international community and local government can be set up to generate ideas on central issues. This forum would develop a policy framework, identify the key tasks for the government, a priority ranking of these tasks, and identify the proper level of government to assume responsibility for each task.

In addition to local governments, the international community should collaborate with representatives of civil society and with private enterprise in strengthening institutional capacity. Strengthening civil society can enhance opportunities for participation and foster political reconciliation in time. Likewise, strengthening private enterprise can generate employment, and provide goods and services at affordable rates. The real challenge, in the final analysis, is to find the appropriate blend of actors and to determine the role each of them is best suited to play in the process of strengthening the institutional base.

Since post-conflict countries suffer serious economic problems, as mentioned above, economic reconstruction is another priority area. To heal economic deficits, the international community can offer technical assistance

to plan and implement reconstruction efforts; rehabilitate the basic infrastructure, including health and education systems, water and sanitation systems, banking system, roads, bridges, and telecommunication facilities; rehabilitate agriculture sector, especially export agriculture, key industries, and housing; generate employment through micro enterprise assistance; and implement environmental protection programs (Jeong, 2005).

Of course, it is not possible to address all these issues simultaneously. In addition, due to the toll exacted by prolonged civil war on human and institutional resources, it can be extremely difficult to make rapid headway in war-torn countries. Nevertheless, the peace building experiences in the 'post-cold war' era suggest that in addition to the tasks specified in the peace accords (such as demobilizing excess troops or holding national elections), the activities summarized above ought to receive attention as early in the peace process as possible. Early action is especially needed to help rehabilitate the infrastructure that is crucial to economic revival (such as, major roads, marketplaces, power generation facilities, and so on), and stabilize both national currency and financial institutions (Thomas, 2006). Although, ethnic identity is valued in and of itself, the economic dimension is still important, for a multi-ethnic state that is characterized by widespread poverty is a state where ethnic antagonisms are likely to go on. Economic well-being, on the other hand, may contribute to a sense of security and give ethnic groups a stake in the system.

Step IV: Confidence building

The role of third-parties in the process of peace building also goes beyond mediating/monitoring negotiated agreements, and helping economic and social reconstruction, as it is typical in post-conflict countries that mutual hostilities between or among communities remain unchanged in the short run. The act of signing a peace agreement and even other peace building efforts addressed above do not automatically create the result that fighting people immediately lay down their arms and return to civilian life. Conflicting communities need to be prepared for peace. One way to ease relational problems and build confidence between hostile parties would be "second-track diplomacy". Joseph V. Montville, one of the pioneers of this approach, defines second-track diplomacy as an unofficial, informal interaction between members of adversary groups or nations aiming to develop strategies, influence public opinion, and organize human and material resources in ways that might help resolve their conflict (Montville, 1990: 162). If they are well-organized and undertaken for a reasonably long time, people-to-people interactions, oftentimes working

through problem-solving workshops, mediated or facilitated by psychologically-sensitive third-parties, may provide an opportunity for disputants to examine the root causes of their conflict and to identify obstacles to better relationships. Face-to-face communication may help participants arrest the dehumanization process, overcome psychological barriers, and focus on relation building (Davies and Kaufman, 2002; Yilmaz, 2005b; Bavly, 2009).

Although, second-track diplomacy has many weaknesses (Yilmaz, 2005b: 447-449), the practical applications of the approach, nevertheless, confirm its utility. For example, Herbert C. Kelman, who conducted some problem-solving workshops between the Israelis and Palestinians, observed that the workshops allowed the participants to gain insights into the perspective of the other party, to create a new climate of trust, and to develop greater awareness of how the other party may have changed (Kelman, 1996: 515-517). Similarly, Edward E. Azar, who also organized several workshop exercises around the Lebanese and Sri Lankan conflicts, claimed that the workshops allowed the parties to discover their common needs and values, to establish informal networks, and to widen their agendas towards a mutually acceptable solution (Azar, 1990). The utility of second-track diplomacy was also acknowledged by the Center for Multi-Track Diplomacy, a Washington D.C.-based NGO, in re-humanizing the relationships between the parties in conflict and in generating a wide range of alternatives for resolution (Diamond and McDonald, 1996; McDonald, 2002).

Second-track diplomacy is an area where NGOs can play a major role as third-parties. They would arrange and facilitate problem-solving workshops between adversary groups, working as intermediaries in the process as well. Although, not necessary, third-party help is usually needed in organizing second-track diplomacy, since the parties in conflict cannot easily take unilateral actions due to the concern for appearing weak, as well as intense hostile feelings towards the other side.

The possibilities for easing ethnic antagonism between rival groups would also be enhanced when the groups are brought together by third-parties to work toward some common ends. The creation of supranational bodies that have the responsibility for fulfilling key economic and social needs would gradually bring about a transfer of loyalty from the narrow cultural group to the supranational bodies. Eventually, particularistic antagonisms would be dissolved as the participants become caught up in a web of mutual dependence.

Besides, having and working on common goals would enhance bonds among the participants in a number of ways. One is by reducing the silience of group boundaries. That is, people who are working toward a common goal are in some sense members of the same group, and therefore, they are not so likely to be

antagonistic toward one another. Another is by a reinforcement mechanism. As people work together, each tends to reward the other and this can generate a sense of gratitude and warmth toward the other. Pursuing a common goal also means that each party sees itself as working on behalf of the other, a view that is likely to foster positive attitudes (Pruitt et al., 2004: 136-137).

Finally, in transforming hostile inter-group relations, it is very important to re-design formal education to serve inter-communal relationship building. In most countries suffering internal strives, formal education is shaped by dominant groups to perpetuate their privileged positions. Further, historical enmities with respect to rival groups are transmitted from generation to generation. In so far as the conflict goes on between the societies this way, no durable peace is feasible at the societal level. Thus, if real progress is to be made toward internal harmony, educational programs should be revised to that end. In this regard, such programs must avoid any sort of discrimination and eliminate subjectively-judged historic enmities. Emphasis should be placed on intellectual and moral qualities, such as critical thinking, openness, skepticism, objectivity, and respect for differences. Education of that sort, usually called "peace education", would be a powerful tool in the hands of any peace builder, for the whole process of child raising may have a critical impact on attitudes and beliefs in later life. In addition, if hostile attitudes and perceptions of one generation are not passed on to the next, then younger generations may be able to deal with inter-group problems in a more constructive atmosphere.

CONCLUSION

The conclusion emerging from the above arguments is that successful third-party interventions in internal conflicts depend, to a great extent, on implementing proper strategies in accord with the requirements of conflict situations. In this respect, when violence breaks out between the parties, peacekeeping becomes the most urgent strategy, for without separating antagonists and reducing physical violence, it is impossible to manage and resolve the conflict. But once peacekeeping introduces a cooling-off period, it must be followed by peace building efforts. The four-step peace building efforts discussed in this article involve directing the parties to reach an agreement, monitoring the implementation process of the agreement, institutional and economic reconstruction and confidence building, in that order.

If extensive use of force, in the form of peacekeeping, goes on despite de-escalation in violence, this would create new problems and re-escalate the conflict. Similarly, if peacekeeping is attempted, but nothing else later, the result would be continuation of the problem,

since without proper peace building efforts, peacekeeping by itself cannot reverse the underlying causes of conflict. Although, each case may be different, the 'post-cold war' experiences show, overall, that successful third-party interventions in violent internal conflicts are ones involving a proper combination of peacekeeping and peace building.

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