The Cooperation of International Organizations in the Ethnic Conflicts in the Former Yugoslavia

I. Introduction

The analysis of the interplay between international organizations (IOs) involved in conflict-related scenarios is today a matter of priority for modern peace operations. Multifunctional peace operations normally take place in difficult political, security, economic and humanitarian environments and therefore require effective cooperation and coordination. Then, relying in its nature on the capability to address a broad variety of tasks, such operations are weakened by a deficiency in coordination and cooperation of IOs, which, officially or unofficially, are indeed asked to contribute in a mutually supportive manner to the success of the whole international operation. In such circumstances, cooperation means more than a just reasoned analysis on the mere functional aspect (e.g., deployment, mandates, activities to carry out, etc.) but should be seen in view of the real impact of an international deployment in conflict-related scenarios. My aim is first to demonstrate how the unsatisfactory level of cooperation among IOs hampered the success of the whole international presence in the Balkans, and then to propose possible conclusions or lessons learned for the deployment of future multifunctional peace operations.

Moreover, I seek to provide an overview of the state of cooperation between the Council of Europe (CoE), the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the EU and NATO during the Yugoslav wars, during the period of 1991

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to 2002. My analysis will then continue through a reconstruction of IOs’ role and influence in each of the countries involved in the conflict, to be complemented by a country-by-country approach considered in its both international and field-level view. Furthermore, the “evaluation of the co-operation” included in each part of the document is instrumental in achieving the lessons learned at the end of the report. As from its structure, deeper attention is devoted to the analysis of the multifunctional operations in BiH and Herzegovina (BiH) and in Kosovo. I carry out a comparison between the two operations in order to trace and better underline which are the positive and negative elements in handling both crises and whether possible ‘mistakes’ committed in BiH had been repeated in Kosovo.

II. Analysis of the Cooperation in Croatia

A. Cooperation at the International Level

The analysis of cooperation among international actors should be preceded by an assessment of the position of those same actors at the beginning of the 1990s, which indeed is useful for analyzing the instruments at the disposal of an IC, by that time still considered “in transition.” In these circumstances, the European Community (EC) itself was not ready for the crisis in Yugoslavia. The EC’s members were just about to start the final phase of the negotiations leading up to the Maastricht summit of December 1991. Furthermore, the strengthening of cooperation in foreign policy and its transformation into a common foreign policy were still controversial issues. Meanwhile, in the field, the ceasefire agreement and the three months’ suspension of Slovene and Croat independence formed part of the EC brokered the Brioni Agreement, which actually spelled the end of the Yugoslav Federation. The agreement established a moratorium on the implementation of independence but not a prohibition on the right of unilateral secession for Slovenia and Croatia. The separatist republics were also asked to accept the presence in their territory of an unarmed international observer mission organized by the EC, namely the European Community Monitoring Mission (ECMM), and endorsed by the CSCE. The initiative was soon followed by the creation of the EC

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2 For a previous research on the topic please see Ugo Caruso, Interplay between the Council of Europe, OSCE, EU and NATO, paper developed in the frame of the MIRICO project and available at <http://www.eurac.edu/Org/Minorities/MIRICO/Mirico+project+results.htm>.

3 The Brioni Agreement came at the end of an intensive work conducted by the then EC Troika and was signed on 7 July 1991 under the political sponsorship of the European Community.