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PhD Thesis



POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION AND
DEMOCRATIZATION.

CONTEMPORARY APPROACHES AND
PERSPECTIVES

- ABSTRACT -

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KEY WORDS: POST-CONFLICT RECONSTRUCTION, DEMOCRATISATION, INTERNATIONAL CONFLICTS, ACTORS, RISKS, THREATS, REGIONAL CONFLICT SYSTEMS, CRISIS MANAGEMENT

If until the last decade of the 21st century non-state actors were tangentially approached by specialty literature, in the post Cold-War period its role on the international stage is undeniable and cannot be overlooked. State actors, however, have not lost the position of strength they previously held, on the contrary, they have successfully adapted and a polarisation of the distribution of power has occurred, in the sense that those who were competitive increased their power resources, implicitly their strength, while those who were “weak” have lost ground from this perspective. At the same time, a reciprocal determination occurred in the relations between actors and certain phenomena. I am referring in this respect to the globalisation and internationalisation processes which developed directly proportional to the interactions between the actors of the international system. A current level was reached, represented by complex interdependencies which determine the dynamics and evolution of the entire international system. However, as the achieved progress grows larger, the social and economic gap between rich and poor countries deepens and reaches increasingly larger proportions. A system is thus born, in which feelings of instability and insecurity manifest intensely among certain less privileged categories. Today globalisation is viewed as a non-uniform, asymmetric process which exhibits a variable geometry which produces both opportunities and tension associated risks. In parallel with technological developments and progress, the globalisation phenomenon brings with it an increase in discrepancies (inequalities), the polarisation of wealth (its sedimentation among certain social classes), social exclusion and social insecurity. Furthermore, a globalisation of evil is being identified with increased intensity, all this owing to the lack of a command centre to remove inequalities – a result of the anarchic structure of the international system.

In addition, we see new phenomena which are impossible to predict (by the observer), which destabilise and sometimes even destroy regional or international balance.

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Those are the so called *black swan* type phenomena, which have proved to be extremely difficult to avoid and which have a considerable impact on reality. For example, the fall of the Soviet Union, the protests and revolts known as the Arab Spring, the annexation of Crimea by Russia, natural disasters, the Brexit vote etc. All these lead to strategies being rethought and changed, resources being wasted and efforts being reoriented. They contribute, additionally, to the transformation of objectives, approaches and of the behaviour of actors on the international stage.

This PhD thesis holds as central elements aspects directly related to the processes of reconstruction and democratisation which took place/were implemented in post-conflict areas in the past decades by states and non-state organisations/institutions. Furthermore, having in mind the evolution of the international context in the past decades, namely the series of conflict situations commonly known as the Arab Spring and the situation in Ukraine, Syria, Libya etc. I consider being really necessary any theoretical and empirical approach of the regional conflict system from the ulterior perspective of the reconstruction and democratisation phase. Also, the serious worsening of the security situation in Syria, Libya, Ukraine and other areas in Africa, proves the failure of internal and external efforts to create, after a transition process, a stable environment which would lead to a democratic development of the particular state. Therefore, following previous academic endeavours, I asked myself *whether the failure or inefficiency of peace interventions resides exclusively in the nature and characteristics of belligerences or it is due to other elements, characterised by externality in relation to a specific conflictuality.*

In the frames of this thesis I saw necessary to structure the activity in relation to a set of objectives the achievement of which will clarify and simplify the way in which international actors approach the issue of post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation and reveal the elements that influences their behaviour in respect to these subjects. Therefore, the general objective of the present thesis and of its core research consists in identifying and analysing the behaviours pertaining to actors involved in post-conflict transition and reconstruction processes, along with present day geopolitical and geostrategic realities in order to find the elements which can produce fundamental changes in current practice, thus determining possible future evolution trends.

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I have therefore analysed conflictuality and the way in which this reality of the international system evolved in the past decades, both from a theoretical and conceptual perspective and from the perspective of empirical aspects. At the same time, I have identified the main trends so far and the main actors/ architects of post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation processes, along with the motivation behind involvement in such endeavours. As a specific approach, I have worked to identify and analyse the main elements that can determine a change of availability on the level of entities involved in these processes (be they states or international organisations), concurrently with establishing the degree of resilience of current practices in the conflict and crisis management area, in relation to the active factors of the geopolitical and geostrategic environment which have the potential to affect the evolutions today.

Research was structured in a number of four chapters, as follows:

Chapter I, entitled *General theoretical considerations concerning conflict, the post-conflict area, reconstruction and democratisation*, defines conceptually the notions used and identifies the main trends in specialty literature regarding their use and their role. At the same time, it catches the dimensions and constituent parts of the conflict, of the post-conflict area, of conflict as a process and of democratisation. Furthermore, it offers a theoretical framework developed around the notion of conflictuality and of the main theoretical challenges imposed by the evolutions which occurred inside the international system in the past decades.

Chapter II, entitled *Post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation on an international level in the 21st century – practical perspectives*, gives practical dimensions to the concepts studied in the previous chapter, analysing the need for peace and the birth of peace building practices, by identifying the main strategies and tools for reconstruction and democratisation within the present day international system, along with identifying the actors who play a fundamental role as far as those practises are concerned. Moreover, on the same note of associating theories and practice, the last section of this chapter captures the effects of democratisation on communities located inside the post-conflict areas.

Chapter III, entitled *Factors influencing the availability of actors to get themselves involved in post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation processes*, represents a component of the research endeavour which identifies the main elements within the

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international context which can determine behavioural changes among the actors which play a role in the analysed processes. Three landmarks were chosen, which were considered fundamental, and namely the United Nations, NATO and the European Union. An analysis was carried out in their respect, concerning financial and political elements which can result in a decrease of the availability of involvement.

The last section, chapter IV, is entitled *The future of post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation in the current international geopolitical context* and represents an interpretation of the research results in chapter 3, in relation to the present geopolitical and geostrategic climate. Moreover, a complementary approach is integrated, which emerges from the observations of the role played by the religious element in all the equation of peace missions. The academic endeavour ends in an effort to shape the future of post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation processes from 3 perspectives: a political one, an economic one and a perspective which emerges from the internal and external challenges which were identified during the research.

I have therefore noted throughout this scientific endeavour that eradicating violence and giving birth to a peace climate favourable to development and evolution was and continues to be a wish of human kind, but paradoxically, the history of our existence as individuals was and continues to be sprinkled with conflictuality and violence. If human nature had pursued similar efforts in favour of peace as it had in favour of developing dissensions, rivalries and conflicts, maybe it had been possible to talk today about a unitary and durable global society. Alas, the daily realities are others. The motivation and the predisposition of human nature to make use of aggressiveness and violence when it comes to settling issues, created conflict transformations which call for evolved response tools and capabilities. Therefore, at the time being, the international community is making constant and sustained efforts to prevent, combat and eradicate violence, in a society where human rights and the need for peace are fundamental desiderata. However, inequalities, restrictions and differences between individuals and groups persist and contribute to shaping insecurity climates, localised either locally or regionally. The harmful effects are no longer felt just in the immediate proximity of these conflicting instances, but they affect others, both directly and indirectly. The development of interdependencies transforms conflict and violence into elements with increased impact factors, impossible to isolate to a particular geographic area. At the same time, individual and group interests or objectives, or even higher social constructions,

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have diversified and shape the behaviours differently, in comparison to the situation several decades ago. We all find ourselves in a dynamic and complex environment and we take part in competitive situations which force us to transform and improve continuously.

On this note, I have noticed that specialty literature and general concerns related to post-conflict area reconstruction and to democratisation are oriented mainly towards identifying, explaining and evaluating specific conflicts or, at most, the general behaviours of the external actors involved in such processes. The field of this subject abounds with specific analyses, critical and well-documented assessments and specialised forecasting tools. However, there are few papers dealing with post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation from a different perspective, which is negotiated in this PhD thesis.

Thus, I have found significantly fewer resources that discuss the geopolitical and geostrategic context that underlies the motivation of actors on the international stage to get involved, participate and support such approaches. I felt during the research that the existence of organisations such as the UN, NATO, EU, the AU, etc. is seen as a standard of the international system and that, in fact, there are no elements that could change these realities. However, I have tried to show that there are international risks and threats from different instances that act on various levels, which can transform and endanger current resources.

I have thus found that there may be two categories of motivation that determine a proactive attitude of states, namely: those resulting from the relationship between the states in conflict with the potential intervention agents and those originating in the characteristics of the conflict context. For example, major powers may wish to extend their influence over their former colonies through intervention. Genocide can trigger humanitarian intervention by the great powers. The expected benefits of intervention and humanitarian concerns not only make the major powers less reluctant to intervene, but also motivate them to choose specialised intervention methods. However, a key to the intervention puzzle are the reasons behind the behaviour of states. In other words, the effects of the intervention can be determined by the reason and reasoning for which states have intervened in conflicts (see the case of Libya). At the same time, on the one hand, intervention in the event of armed violence may be motivated by the own interest of external actors, such as maintaining their regional influence, expanding markets and gaining access to natural resources. On the other hand, humanitarian disasters caused by civil war can encourage states to intervene in the domestic affairs of another country, and the goal of involvement would be to stop violent conflicts and save lives rather than seek

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their own interests. The different reasons of external actors can determine whether they will act for their own interests or for humanitarian purposes, and therefore the missions will have different outcomes. Political dissensions and bottlenecks have been a frequent element of peace talks. There have been cases like Syria, where a common denominator has not been achieved, and that is why, in this situation, national strategic interests were put before good humanitarian intentions.

From a different perspective, organisations, both international and regional, along with their individual states, will often have their own peace-keeping opinions and practices that could reflect more typical considerations with local origins. In some cases, for example, regional organisations involved in peacekeeping have been accused of pursuing their own strategic interests and this as priority. Even if national forces serve UN peacekeeping operations, there are problems when commanders of these forces are more responsive to orders coming from a national level than to those from the United Nations. Another concerning issue is the global division of labour, which in recent years has come to determine the function of the UN peacekeeping. From a historical point of view, the developed countries have been important nations that have contributed with troops to such efforts. However, these powers have become increasingly more averse to the risks of peacekeeping, and therefore developing countries now provide the vast majority of UN troops (troops and police). While it is true that the greatest need for peacekeeping is often found in developing countries, it is also true that these entities are often less well prepared to meet these needs. Strengthening regional peacekeeping capacity is a favoured approach, but a larger division of tasks may be necessary if peacekeeping is to continue to respond to a wide range of challenges and contexts. At the same time, it is proven in practice, more and more often, that only the financial instruments do not work well on site. Therefore, it takes more than that.

Overall, this PhD thesis has identified a number of systemic elements that can fundamentally determine future pathways for post-conflict and democratisation reconstruction operations. On one hand, the current geopolitical and geostrategic context is characterised by a multiplication of conflicts from a quantitative perspective, with fewer victims, but with far more political and social-economic implications than past conflicting situations. Moreover, conflictuality has diversified both in terms of causation and of objectives, due to the interdependence and competition between actors (at all levels of analysis), power rivalries are more fragmented and harder to locate. Complementary, the high-level ones are also kept

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between strong actors, but they remain in a state of tension and rarely turn into crises in the true sense of the word. Essentially, that classical need for peace no longer makes its presence among the powerful states, and this is seen in the behaviour of the entities and in the reporting mode.

From a different perspective, the management of regional conflicts currently requires the mobilisation of massive resources obtained from the international collaboration between actors belonging to different categories. Conflicts are a continuous reality of the world we live in, and the solutions found so far cannot prove their efficiency in all situations, because the dynamics of internal, local, national and regional disputes is much more flexible. Peacekeeping and peacekeeping missions undertaken by actors who are not involved in the conflict require far greater resources than those that can possibly be offered and require an exponentially longer period than the one of the ongoing violence. A large number of post-conflict areas thus emerge, in which international efforts are conjugated in order to restore peace and stability, in a context in which their lack affects the entire regional / global security system, with direct implications for the national security of some states. And this is namely another problem that can affect the availability of actors for financial and logistic contributions in future efforts. The increase in intervention spots raises new challenges and needs, all this in a context in which political and financial availability is lower and lower. At the same time, even if in time expenses for defence were disproportional in comparison to those for peace, the last decade and the ongoing practices are proof of a higher affinity providing self security, which can be seen in the investments made by the United States of America, of the European Union, of Russia and of other important actors in the defence sector.

As such, in a concise note, the development of post-conflict reconstruction and democratisation efforts are, at least at the moment, in danger. In short, available financial resources exist but are not allocated, major actors (US, EU, Russia, China, Japan) are involved in power rivalries and lose interest in such approaches, conflictuality diversifies and multiplies, but instruments and existing strategies are not flexible enough to respond effectively, logistical problems are interdependent with those implied by the lack of qualified human resources, missions are shorter and more specialised and there is no longer a willingness to invest on the medium and long term , and among large and medium-sized donors there a fatigue and reorientation of interests can be seen.

In consequence, the present PhD thesis is an effort which is not exhaustive but sufficient, which demonstrates that on an international level post-conflict reconstruction

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and democratisation practices are at an impasse, and their further evolution depends exclusively on the availability of strong international actors and on the ability of international organisations to organise their efforts in an increasingly varied and dynamic climate of conflict.