Key Principles for Resilience & Conflict Transformation[1]

Collaborative International Crisis & Conflict Management post-COVID-19

Against the background that

- all peace processes should be appreciate as a chance to foster legitimacy for self-determined development and resilience,
- poor sustainability can result not only in setbacks but in the loss of prior achievements altogether, and
- instead of focusing solely on conflict stabilisation, international engagement needs to prioritise conflict transformation – always in line with local priorities.

To this end, actors of International Crisis & Conflict Management agree to act under the following general principles of road maps to peace:

1 Crisis preparedness by "resilience networks" – New Models of Governance

One of the Covid-19 lessons is the need for preparedness by networks for resilience. In this regard it needs new Think Tanks producing ideas that are fit for the world we live in, brave approaches to roll out these ideas, a new balance between polity and society. Governance models for future crisis and conflict management should involve new actors and formats that allow inclusiveness, a renewed understanding of global responsibility and coherent engagement.

2 Effect-based Comprehensive Approach

As a second COVID-19 consequence, joint goal setting and coordination of all activities with a mid-term horizon is vital for efficiency and credibility of the overall processes of crisis and conflict management. Big crises turn out to be characterised by a multiplicity of strategic challenges. Therefore all three interlinked pillars of socio-economic, environmental and political life shall be addressed and tackled by a whole-of-SDG approach. This includes joint assessments of expected outcomes (e.g. SWOT analysis, inclusive strategy making).

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3 Legitimacy of international action

Stakeholders acting on behalf of the international community of solidarity, democratic peaceful and inclusive societies need a legitimate basis for external engagement. Acting together on the basis of joint mandates at global, regional or local level shall guide collaboration in this endeavour. As a consequence of the COVID-19 crisis, the regional level should be empowered to act more autonomously in keeping peace, however under the surveillance and ultimate responsibility of the UN Security Council. Dialogue, civilian peace work, mediation and preventive diplomacy prevail whereas robust action always remains *ultima ratio*.

4 Realistic expectation management

Management of expectations specifying opportunities and possibilities but also limitations and risks of international interventions needs to take place continuously and in alignment with local partners. This is especially relevant in the contemporary highly fluid international environment with rapidly shifting future scenarios.

5 Embracing the strategic quality of military engagement enabling civilian peace work

For the protection of civilians, military means might be necessary in support of international political support and mediation as a response to humanitarian emergencies and endemic violence. However, they can never replace civilian peacebuilding efforts and should embrace a stabilising and transformative character. Robust military action is mandated especially to counter crimes against humanity and should clearly be restricted to the role of a strategic “door opener” for civilian peace.

6 New holistic early warning and early action alert system

Prior to taking the decision to deploy a crisis management mission, international actors need to have a clear picture whether certain preconditions are in place. This is best done by representatives on the ground. Such representatives need to be mandated to report regularly so as to be prepared if a crisis occurs (*Peace Observatories Alert System*). The conflict situation, the overall success probability as well as the availability of human and financial resources for the mission need to be judged in a realistic manner. In order to fulfil such requirements, it needs new types of deliberative exchange and new formats to engage civil society on the ground.

7 Local ownership of peace processes and inclusion

The implementation of peace concepts can only reach the common goal of self-determined sustainable development when these are not only supported but shaped by locals and conducted by local actors. In this context, resistance to peace efforts by spoilers – when local actors taking political and/or economic advantages of the current conflict situation – needs to be overcome. Extremists are to be frozen out. A further key point is the utter need of an early inclusion of women in peace negotiations and implementation.

8 System-wide action under the HDP doctrine

Despite the widely recognized need for sustainable and long-term international engagement it should be clear that external actors are only 'guests' in the respective conflict country. Especially military actors are under time pressure to achieve measurable results with a view to upholding local support processes. In fact, and all the more in the light of the COVID-19 lessons learned, a common understanding of simultaneousness of action should be guiding external players on the basis of the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding Triple ("HDP") nexus.

9 Civil-military coordination & partnerships

In this sense, urgent need of resources, capabilities, assets and multiple challenges on the ground must result in increasing division of responsibilities, mutual trust and coordination efforts between all civilian and military actors. Here again, a turn to expressed needs and inclusion of local capacities is essential to gain support and safeguard sustainability. One lesson learned is to equip justice and security sector as well as international presences in the country on a "local first" basis, subsidiarity of external equipment and logistics being a core principle, all the more to boost local supply immediately after the Covid-19 shutdown.

10 Flexible exit-strategies "plus"

Collaborative international crisis management can only be limited in time, thematic areas covered and geographical space. It needs to incorporate flexibility and adaptive exit-strategies from the beginning on. These include support for fair digitisation, protection from hybrid threats, human rights-aligned missions and zero tolerance for discrimination. Clear goals of the external presence are a must for the (self-)development of the community concerned.