

be in all peace-building, whether the military of the host country or a foreign military presence attempting to nurture a re-built society in another country. From Haiti and Panama to Somalia, Bosnia, Macedonia, East Timor, The Solomon Islands, Côte d'Ivoire, Sierra Leone, Afghanistan and Iraq, militaries have been engaged in post-Cold War peace-building that has demonstrated relative success, total failure, and most stages in between.

We speak constantly about learning the lessons from these cases. We know that military involvement tends to create an international response vacuum; the military ends up doing too much because other organisations leave it to do so. We know that it tends to create a culture of dependency among the host population which can set real re-construction back indefinitely. We know that it can appear to be a substitute for proper, sequenced, economic, social and governmental re-construction, and hinder the development of these processes. And we know that it can simply go wrong since it makes such high demands on the military instrument which is often not trained specifically for such politically delicate operations. The area of post-conflict re-construction is a place for professional troops only and it will test their skills and training to the limit.

Yet we strive to learn as many technical lessons as we can from previous cases. If only we can get the training right. If only we can get the sequencing right within the international response community and produce a genuinely comprehensive approach to the problem. If we can somehow learn to better integrate the tactics of effects-based operations (EBO), disarmament, demobilisation and rehabilitation (DDR), security sector reform (SSR) with the core requirements of – merely – governance, development and social sustainability, then we will make real progress in these cases and understand properly where the military fits into it all.

I do not argue that we should not attempt to do this. We certainly should. But I am convinced that there are more fundamental issues of political principle to be addressed when the military becomes involved in peace-building. The military must not be used as a substitute for political engagement in a peace-building problem. It is not the first stage of response which buys time for more considered political thinking. It is intrinsic in some way to all stages of peace-building if it is relevant at all. And if the military is to be deployed, it should be deployed heavily in early stages and drawn down thereafter, not vice-versa.

There is a hard conclusion to be drawn from our ever-lengthening catalogue of contemporary cases. It is that if the military is relevant to a situation, but not fully deployed as an intrinsic part of an international response that has the overall capacity to meet the governance/developmental/social sustainability challenges, then there may be less ultimate human misery if it is not used at all – or else used to ring-fence a situation rather than intervene in it.