

COMMUNICATION AND CONFLICT - AN INTERCULTURAL APPROACH

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Abstract: *The contemporary world is characterized through an unprecedented diversity and complexity, generated by the great revolutionary transformations, by the changes which are produced in all fields – political, economical, social, technical, and scientific and, especially, armed forces' relations. All these transformations mark, one after another, specific characteristics to the international life, to the relations between states, by bringing in the foreground some phenomenon, tendencies and events which require adequate solutions in order to ensure peace, security and people's progress.*

Despite the fact that nowadays using force is incriminated under any circumstance, war continues to be used for advocating the personal interests of some countries.

Keywords: *war, conflict, communication, negotiation, collective security, dialogue, cooperation, cohesion.*

The time of absolute and exclusive sovereignty (...) has passed; its theory never matched by reality. It is the task of the today's leaders to understand this and to find a balance between needs of good internal governance and the requisites of a world that gets more and more interdependent¹.

In recent years, many analysts suggest the fact that developments in the practice of states are the ones which justify the change from a focus based on the interests of sovereign state's government to one on sovereign people, the interests of the latter being the ones which tend to be more

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¹ Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, United Nations, 1992, <http://www.nationsencyclopedia.com/United-Nations/The-Secretary-General-DEVELOPMENTS-UNDER-BOUTROS-BOUTROSGHALI-1992-1996.html>

important. This situation demonstrates the growth of international community's support for a more liberal interpretation of sovereignty. Thus, security is wanted and brought into being at the level of humans, of social and professional communities, national, regional, continental and global in the same time.

Strictly speaking, security refers to the fact of being sheltered by any danger, of having a feeling of trust and peace given to someone by the absence of any threat. More, it represents a state of safety, a lack of danger¹. In the same time, it is necessary to mention the concept of collective security, which refers to a certain state of the relations between states, created through the agency of a treaty applied to those measures of common defense against aggression.

In literature², the concept of security means a situation in which a person or a state, according to some specific measures adopted individually or in partnership with other persons or states, gets the certainty that existence, integrity and its fundamental interests are not endangered.

In its modern acknowledgment, the word "security" includes five cumulative factors:

- The political component of society;
- The military component;
- The economic component;
- The social component;
- The ecological component.

At state level, security is ensured if each of these components is taken into account. For that reason, globalization represents the most predictable evolution of the international security environment, more often and more deeply approached in specialized fields.

We can state the fact that security is strictly influenced by globalization, the phenomenon which encompassed the whole world and which has branches in all fields, the latter producing disorders in a double way: downward, to the states, and upwards to the information society. Consequently, some states are forced to assume certain global responsibilities, while others are dispossessed from their sovereignty attributes. In all this time, new international structures are being created or the existing ones are forced to do more tasks that they have in the

¹ ***, <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/securitatie>, accesat la data de 09.02.2011.

² Lungu, A., *Securitate prin globalizare*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2004.

present, stressing the relations between economies and societies, between areas and regions of the world. Globalization is the process marked by a double axiological transition from atomizing the economic to that one of the social character. Taking into consideration this phenomenon of globalization, a series of consequences displayed, whose effects are already visible at all levels: the amplification of solidarity between world's states, increasing world's economy sensitiveness towards any local or regional dysfunctionality or difficulty, the reduction of national's sovereignty level through a high rate of dependence towards resources, information and technologies from others countries and the appearance of some crises induced by periods of derestructuring and restructuring of the present socio-political international system, the appearance and proliferation of some threats and asymmetrical risks (proliferation of terrorist and mobster networks, actions of penetration of the information and banking systems, of handling information, reducing state's authority and the globalization of organized crime, increase of gaps between different development levels of countries, expansion of immigration, etc). The above-mentioned factors are the same with those ones which are specific to the security environment, and the amplification and diversification of risks, as well as heading them toward conditions of an internal vulnerability and favored conjunctures can generate threats to international security, the adoption of some flexible and efficient actions being necessary. In case of noncompliance, the main vulnerabilities which can appear are: resources insufficiently allocated to safety and political defense institutions, plunging social injustices, the proliferation of underground economy and intensification of corruption, economic delinquency, disturbance of public order, the possibility of ecological disasters, natural disasters, and all these representing enduring problems for the global sphere.

Instant communications make decisions taken in one area to have impact in other parts of the world as well. This phenomenon has lead to a change in states' diplomatic behavior in international relations' level. In order to eliminate threats addressed to security, even before they became major risks, the great powers combine diplomacy with a rational usage of force. That is why, today, military force is used not so much for wars, but also to discourage their appearance.

The conflict, that misunderstanding or disagreement upon some ideas, interests of different persons or nations, can be seen as a form of communication. Because is more and more obvious that a good mastery of

communication art guarantees the success of each action at international level, nowadays, we are the witnesses of an evolution of the communication science. The huge investments that strong states make in the field of communication demonstrate the fact that today communication is one of the strongest weapons. Self-contradictory, the war between two or more states is a form of communication through which they repel for their wishes, requests, problems, dissatisfactions, but all these do not bring a solution to the problems that were launched, on the contrary, they emphasize much more the tensions, social, economical and psychological vulnerabilities, and they produce casualties and important material damages, hard to recover even during more generations. Generally speaking, the outburst of a conflict had two premises on the basis: the religious one, on one hand, and that one of natural resources' domination, on the other hand. Today, we are part of a new type of conflict that one of the junctions between those mentioned above - the terrorism. Therefore, simultaneously with the preventive and strategy politics, a perpetuation of development and accomplishment of some post-conflict communication strategies is necessary, having in mind troops preparation and the necessary resources for solving the utmost problems which are created after an armed stand-off, as well as the concrete ways of action¹.

As Daniela-Maria Ioniță says in her article entitled "Communication and negotiation within conflicts"², the importance of creating a complex view about communication is visible, first of all, at the level of small conflicts, but, especially, in case of international conflicts. Today, communication is gaining a higher role because the correct use of communication tactics could mean the failure or the success of a conflict. Consequently, a well-defined communication strategy must be adjusted to any kind of situation because one main traits of conflict is uncertainty, the surprise. A good negotiator manages to identify enemy's weak points or the strong ones in order to use them to his benefit, concluding the compromise level at which the opponent is ready to participate. Thus, the side which focuses on communication laws can ensure its success in a conflict, even in the case he starts from a different position.

¹ Alexandrescu, G., Văduva, G., *Acțiuni militare post conflict, studii de securitate și apărare*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2005, p.161 în Fulea, A., *Politicile și strategiile media ca elemente managementului conflictelor la sfârșit și început de mileniu*.

² Ioniță, D., *Comunicare și negociere în cadrul conflictelor*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2004, p. 103.

Considering the Iraq's war characteristics, they were based and deployed in the whole Arabian Peninsula as well as its maritime space. Started in 2003, the war from Iraq, also known as the *Iraqi Freedom Operation*, is made up of four stages as follows:

1. Obtaining international support and force's preparation for dislocation.
2. Force dislocation in the war.
3. The unfolding of military operations.
4. The unfolding of post-conflict operations.

The fourth phase of the campaign, the one responsible for the planning and management of specific actions, did not represent a priority for the strategic military planners who focused their attention and resources on the third phase. Thus, it is considered that the responsibilities for planning the stability actions and reconstruction are in the task of the civil structure, not seeing that military actions for overthrowing Saddam Hussein's regime are part of a greater effort in order to obtain the stability of the situation but also the democracy of Iraq.

It has been signalized the necessity of a robust involvement of civil agencies and organizations in the effort of obtaining a stabilization of Iraq as these possess the required post-conflict competences. Consequently, many governmental organizations have conducted their own studies concerning the evolution of the post-war situation, but timing and integration in a cohesive plan were absent. Therefore, a more detailed plan was designed in order to grant humanitarian assistance, but the reconstruction activities were not clearly identified because it was mainly considered that the reconstruction effort will not be necessary and the stabilization process will be managed by the Iraqis themselves.

At the end of military operations, international coalition's strategy consisted in requesting Iraq's security forces to take, in a hastened way, the responsibility in what concerns the security, the multinational force being ready to deal with the main challenges in this field of security. Foreseeing a large number of refugees due to the military operations, the multinational force planned some actions for preventing a huge humanitarian crisis. Unlike what was anticipated, many of the challenges never appeared and thus the civil population did not leave its houses and the expected humanitarian crisis did not take place.

At the multinational force's reorganization level, it can be said that the main objective of the security missions' transfer plan to the security Iraqi forces consisted in the gradual reduction of the number of multinational

force's militaries. Just as Dan Ghica-Radu mentions in his article¹, the above mentioned plan was made up of four phases:

1. Mutual support, through which the multinational force was creating certain conditions to transfer the responsibilities to the Iraqi forces;
2. The transition of control at local level to the Iraqi security forces;
3. The transition of control at regional level;
4. The transition to a stable security environment at strategic level, the Iraqi security forces being supervised by the multinational force.

To all the ones involved, the creation of a relative stable security environment formed the main objective. Unfortunately, ethnic and religious minorities are still victims of violent attacks, and the central consequence of these actions is made up of the emigration phenomenon. A dangerous and volatile security environment burdens the motion and the reconstruction efforts of the international civil personnel. Hence, these scarce security conditions continue to discourage foreign investors and do not allow the development of the private sector.

The reduction of violence in Iraq is due to the following factors: an increase in the number of international coalition's militaries, the establishment of nongovernmental security Iraqi forces and the cease of hostilities by Shiite paramilitary structures.

Because the need for a stable security environment was felt in the city of Bagdad and its surroundings, new units were built. Their mission was to help the security Iraqi military forces in their effort to secure Bagdad's neighbors and to protect the local population.

Although Iraq's war looks like other types of armed conflicts, it possesses some particular elements which make him somehow unique in the history of military art. Among these we can mention the following:

- it was the first war based on network concepts and operations based on effects;
- instead of representing a conflict meant to bring a democratic change to Iraq, it became a classic war;
- it showcased the religious extremism as well as the sensitivity of the Arabic world as a whole;
- it brought into discussion the belief of ranking nations as good or bad/failed;

¹ Ghica-Radu, D., *Particularități strategice ale teatrului de operații și de întrebuințare a forței multinaționale din Irak*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2004, p. 69.

- problems such as international security tend to be outsourced to other organizations and associations which do not belong to the military system;

- it brings into the foreground two adversarial philosophies which are characteristic to the globalization process: the identity philosophy and the fragmentation philosophy;

- it underlined the opposite points of view of different countries from Europe and Asia.

Thus, the experience of post cold war conflicts shows us that the military instruments can win just the war, but the peace and above it the international relations' system mean much more than power, supposing the achievement of a better future through which we can generate on the long run, and for everybody, a favorable and sustained security.

Authors such as Camilleri and Falk have underlined the westphalian system of state-nations and, more exactly, its validity to our days, declaring themselves, through the agency of the rhetoric volume entitled "The end of Sovereignty?", against of what they call sovereignty discourse or "a way of describing and thinking about the world as being made up of state-nations as main centers of power and interest". The same authors have brought into discussion the necessity of changing the interest point from the states to the subjects of humanitarian actions – people and their rights as part of the international community. Still, these must obey some well-determined criteria; the most known ones are:

- violation of human rights to be obvious and extended;
- intervention to be multilateral;
- the nature of the intervention to be strictly humanitarian;
- intervention to be limited and proportional;
- self-determination to be respected

Actions in the field of communication and management of a crisis by a democratic nation must be anchored to principles and values with wide recognition in the international spectrum, being able in this way to avoid lots of factors which distort a good communication. The prejudices and stereotypes which exist in the collective thinking of nations must be emphasized in this context. In what concerns the communication between different parts of a conflict and the big actors of the international scene, as it was the case of Kosovo, the theme was linked to complying with human rights and the implementation of international rights' law. So, after the end of the cold war, the intervention problem regained public interest. The fifth article from the NATO Status underlines the prohibition of involving

into a conflict, except those cases when we deal with defending a member state which suffered from an armed attack. In this context, NATO claims that, in what concerns Kosovo, there was a humanitarian intervention, but indeed those violations of human rights in Kosovo are impermissible to the international community.

Although NATO's actions can be seen from the point of view of legitimate reprisals, it must be brought into discussion the fact that they cannot be violated by serious encroachments of human rights. Many injunctions exist, clearly delimited, stated by the United Nations' Charter and developed through different forms; still, war and the use of force have not vanished from international life. In this way, United Nations' Charter has two commandments: a coercive enforcement action which cannot be brought to an end unless the great powers agree so and the fact that the great powers have the same common interest to stop wars. Ways of paralyzing any action meant to bring peace into the world have become dividing the world in influence areas and the veto right offered to the great powers. Today, more than ever, the role of ONU is required in order to increase and become an international entity, much stronger and more efficient as to respond to peace yearnings, cooperation and progress among all nations. Thus, a democratization of the entire international life is required so the voice of every country, regardless of its size, to be heard and respected. In the continuous fight for maintaining peace and international security, most countries are taking efficient collective measures in order to prevent and overthrow threats of all kinds. Through peaceful ways and according to international rights, they have succeeded to smooth out or settle differences and situations with international character which could have brought to violation of conventions and their relations.

In his book entitled "International Public Law", Professor Gheorghe Moca¹ considers that "peace and security relations with the involvement and the benefit of all nations cannot take place unless we obey the principles of international rights, as well as their rules and institutions". Became almost universally, the idea of fighting for peace and its stabilization is heading towards ceasing the armed race of all states, preventing conflicts as well as providing solutions through the agency of dialogue and negotiations even from early stages. Following these guidelines, international rights focus on eliminating conflicts and tensions

¹ Moca, G., *Drept internațional public*, volumul I, București, Editura Universul juridic, 2008.

between nations and people, using dialogue, agreements, civilized negotiations, nomination of a society without weapons and violence, dismissal of producing world destroying weapons, ceasing the psychological attack of a potential atomic war, as well as changing the mentality of leaders who see themselves as great conquerors and oppressors of some nations which are weaker from an economical, political, cultural or military point of view with regard to the state they are ruling¹.

Following these premises, we will see as solutions those ones found by Cosmina Covatariu²: the elimination of doubt and mistrust of the relations between nations and people, encouraging a climate aimed to sustain a good symbiosis of people, but also the reveal of those deeds aimed to generate tension and conflicts between states. Any case, "in the present days, the belief that the legitimacy of a cause does not justify itself through forms of violence is becoming more and more spread, especially against the innocent ones", as M. Mihaila³ states in his book, "Elements of international public and private law".

Nowadays, war, seen from an economical, political and social point of view, is more and more put under the great power's human community oversight, international and non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, besides war, there are many violent armed actions which take ground and diversify as the economic differences between countries increase exponentially.

When referring to terrorism, some specialists call it "the fourth world war", as James Woolsey, ex-director CIA, stated at some point that the cold war was the "third world war" and it comes naturally to believe that the one against terrorism is the fourth one.

This age of transition that we are going through marks the swing from the state seen as a nation to decentralized structures centered on "an open society". The war of the future, this new type of war, brings four characteristics: it is the only war warranted and accepted, has a private character (because just some world actors can "play" it), it is based on a strategic art and underlines only one belligerent⁴. Still, it must be mentioned

¹ Selejan-Gutan, B., *Drept internațional public*, Sibiu, Editura Universității "Lucian Blaga" 2003, p. 210.

² Covatariu, C., *Intervenția militară, soluție a conflictelor în secolul XXI?*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2004, p. 317.

³ Mihăilă, M., *Elemente de drept internațional public și privat*, București, Editura All Beck, 2001, p. 480.

⁴ <http://dexonline.ro/definitie/beligerant> - „which is in the state of war”.

that the war of the future will provide lodging for the economical and political powers, but will be intended for world projects¹. Order on Earth must be established through sustained economic development based on friendly international cooperation between all states².

Once the globalization process has moved forward, war became for international community's politics a way of imposing certain decisions, managing crisis and conflicts. This is the path that must be obeyed in order to continue the renewal process of armies, to develop professional armies and their integrated international components.

The Ministry of Defense in Romania has a functional and reinforced communicational basis, and the first missions from the beginning of the millennium (ex-Yugoslavia, Iraq and Afghanistan) represented for the Ministry a reassessment of the importance of its media component³. Iraq's conflicts have demonstrated once again the viability of the military press, of dialogue and military negotiations, of sending the information clearly and accurately. In this way, a permanent feed-back was obtained which brought to an improvement of lodging and food conditions, of adequate technical and material amenity of military units, as well as an improvement in human relations. Which is remarkable is the effort to cooperate, coming from the part of Romanian journalists, as well as from the part of foreign ones for a more realistic spreading of information.

While Canada and USA have preferred from ancient times to have an army made up exclusively of volunteers, Romania has had from the very beginning of its history a compulsory military service, situation that has changed since 2007. This matter was depicted through a different perception of the two states through a completely diverse mentality of the soldiers, materialized in an elective participation to an armed event, on one hand, and in a forced involvement, on the other hand. In order to emphasize the interaction between American and Romanian soldiers during the war in the East, a questionnaire was structured and offered to two Romanian and American soldiers who both took part directly in the fights. The questionnaire focused on the following questions:

¹ Private management of strategic commodities, restrictive access to modern technology, conditional access to water sources, enhancement of demographic reports, control among certain "hot areas" and environmental protection.

² Văduva, G., *Strategie militară pentru viitor*, Editura Paideia, 2003.

³ Seserman, D., *Operații militare multinaționale în teatrul de operații din Afganistan*, București, Editura U.N.Ap., 2004.

1. Where did the operation that you participated at take place?
2. How long did it last?
3. Have you participated in a training programme before or during your mission? If so, could you give us some details?
4. Is there a way to improve the programme that you participated in? (the training)
5. How did you interact with the other soldiers during the operation?
6. Which was the most frequent language spoken in your campus?
7. Which were your impressions about the Romanian soldiers?
8. Is there any improvement that has been brought through this operation to your experience as a soldier?
9. On the battle field, have you ever made any difference between your American colleagues and the Romanians?
10. Would you agree to participate in a training programme for the future soldiers as a “speaker” and share them a bit of your experience? If so, would you consider this beneficial for the ones who are going to participate in a mission abroad?

In what concerns the first two questions, both respondents have been chosen from those ones who participated in Iraq for five, respectively, six months. In addition, it seems that both governments, the American and the Romanian one, provide training programmes for soldiers (first-aid training, small arms training, cultural awareness and also law of armed conflict). A difference between the two visions was seen at the level of improvement in what concerns the two training programmes, the

Americans viewing them as complex and useless to have any changes, while the Romanians felt that there is a need to update them continuously (customs being different from one area of Iraq to another). Interaction between various groups of soldiers proved to be based on a professional atmosphere, as well as on a team and cohesion spirit of soldiers. In the same time, the most frequent language spoken in campuses was English. Impressions were mutual, the Americans saying about the Romanians that they have a professional attitude and are also very friendly, while the latter talked about the Americans as people who respect the rules as they were given and without having a superior attitude toward the other nationalities. Both sides agreed on the fact that this experience proved to be very useful and helping them, for example, to know how to deal with weather extremes (sand storms, excessive heat). Another disagreement could be observed at available level of each soldier to be part of certain training programmes in which they can share their experience. The American soldier said no to this challenge while the Romanian accepted it, both seeing the effect of participating to such an event as beneficial, especially that prejudices between different countries are eliminated.

In conclusion, during his life, Man faces all kind of problems so he can know how to prevent what is useless. That is why the first and foremost role of shaping a true man is that one of family, school and other specialized educational institutions. Also, various well trained persons provide citizens' protection and security. In order to live free, in harmony and in peace it is necessary to wish to respect Earth's customs, the written and the unwritten laws of nations, to shelter nature and not to have conflicts with the likes of us. The way we act, talk and react shows a good upbringing, education and learning. War is not just a strategy and does not mean just procurement and munitions, it's a true historical era, an amount of sciences next to culture and technique. Educating ourselves towards being intercultural does not mean only tolerance, accepting the others, heterogeneity on Earth, but it also means that these sciences must act and interact mutually, forming a global effort towards a peaceful and harmonious coexistence, where diversity must be unanimously accepted.

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