

# “HUMANITARIAN CRISES”

THE RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITY COOPERATION

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**Summary:** This article is focused on the innovative response of university cooperation to the humanitarian crises and complex emergencies as new strategy supporting the international actors interventions and as an important tool to promote peace, integration and democracy starting from a better reconciliation between young people divided by conflicts . This university cooperation is also viewed as an essential means of contributing to intercultural and interfaith dialogue. It is important to consider the commitment to fostering reciprocal knowledge and respect, both on a national and on an international level; to analyze the roles of education and Academic Institutions as crucial tools of public diplomacy in action for young people. Tools which are also vehicles of integration for an effective management of cultural and religious integrations. (Prof. Massimo Maria Caneva, Conference on Peacekeeping OXPEACE - University of Oxford 2013)

## INTRODUCTION

One of the basic challenges for the XXI Century is international peace and development in the light of the new world balance. Today, there are problems that can only be solved by action at the global level. New strategic thinking is required to approach global issues and advance “global public goods”. Consequently, international communities must become protagonists of a new strategy to intervene in crisis areas and to promote peace, development, a strategy based on realistic and effective foreign common policy.

Such a strategy must include the collaborative efforts of diplomatic, economic and peace forces actions, while being rooted in the common goal of development of a strong cooperation culture of solidarity capable of understanding local needs and providing quick and efficient solutions that are at once professional and respectful of human dignity.

New problems when addressed with new sensibilities can lead to truly effective solutions. Such a strategy must rely on cultural expertise and include expert knowledge of the theoretical elements of crisis and development management, and the capability to understand the real comprehensive needs of the populations, and their historical and cultural roots in order to give effective answers to them and to promote peace and development even in the first phases of the interventions.

## **I - UNIVERSITY COOPERATION AND HUMANITARIAN CRISES**

A competent and comprehensive response requires a multidisciplinary approach. In every university cooperation programme for peace it is necessary to take into account that the objective of an action aiming to analyse the situations must take into consideration the cultural context, in order to advance the technical and cultural objectives of the cooperation.

Universities can play a significant role in this new strategy, if they build partnerships with other relevant actors, including international organizations, diplomacy, peace forces and NGOs. Universities should not act as an elite, far removed from real problems and challenges. On the contrary, universities and their faculty should be engaged in the field and share their expertise and knowledge as well as learn from other actors.

The traditional “academic collaboration” is distinct from the “university cooperation for peace and development” understood as a strategy of action aimed to build a more developed and peaceful society. In fact, university cooperation needs to manage and deal with a double problem of independence in order to face the challenges to which it is called: from one side, it has to tackle the problem of research, didactics and operational services naturally built into the academic structure; from the other, it has to deal with the necessity of reconciling technical-scientific interventions, that must be tailored to the real demands of the local populations whose needs become are gradually discovered as the project proceeds.

When we speak about university cooperation we don't refer only to the exchange of lecturers and researchers - which is usually the objective of traditional forms of academic collaboration - although this kind of activity may be very useful. University cooperation implies a more general strategy based on both analysis and action, of training and research in the field, of cooperation among the academy and civil institutions, diplomats and international organizations, volunteers and peace forces, in order to provide support in both the prevention and solution of crisis promoting future development.

## **II – THE RESPONSE OF UNIVERSITY TO THE HUMANITARIAN AID**

International peace and stability are the essential conditions through which every single citizen of the world can realistically and freely and fully participate in the building of their own future. In the crisis areas, only the interventions open to a strategy of cooperation, dialogue and comprehension between the parties are those that favor peace and social stability. These initiatives are mainly a “cultural question” that requires not only the knowledge of the specific necessities of these countries but also an understanding of their cultural, historical and geographical roots as a guarantee of a real peace process respecting their identity.

In this picture, the role of universities is clear, in that they are the privileged place, not only for the formation and a guarantee of scientific progress, but above all a substitutable instrument in affirming and promoting the fundamental human rights of the future generations. International Institutions and universities must promote the formation not only of people able to ensure rapid and efficient or effective humanitarian initiatives from an organizational and operative point of view, for example the refugee population in crisis areas, but through these initiatives obtain the promotion and the defense of human rights that are at the roots of a real and personal responsibility “ in the social protection of the human being and the improvement in the quality of their lives”.

The Universities, with the application of its operative methodology in learning processes and in replying to human realities, assume a central role of particular importance in any type of humanitarian action identifying a “new reply strategy” to the needs of the interested population. The “global society” that one often speaks about would never exist if one did not refer to the concept of “global responsibility” that must be exercised in everyday life.

This central role of the universities could be considered as an action carried out by “elite” with respect to many, as I will repeat further on in this presentation. But this is not the case. In fact it is with the widening of the horizons of human knowledge through research and scientific formation that one is able to enable a pertinent analysis of the problems, a 360 degree approach to the human being, to his or her necessities and stimulating the collaboration between populations and individual citizens. Furthermore it is possible to provide the young with an increased comprehension capacity of the importance to dedicate their professional skills to humanitarian needs.

We must underline that, in the context of the preparation of specialized personnel for the important humanitarian emergencies, the most valid strategic approach is that, together analysis, action, formation and research in the field, in cooperation with the institutions, international organisms and volunteers are inseparable realities. For this reason it is not sufficient to be an expert in a specific section to be able to carry out a program of this nature. Applying the method, the result is a cooperation that foresees side by side, both in crisis area and in the area that supplies humanitarian aid, lectures, researchers, specialists and technicians ( many of whom are volunteers), military personnel and those from civil institutions or from international organizations involved as the protagonists in an operation orientated in dealing with different problems and at the same time contributing to the growth of the local community.

This method is particularly requested in crisis areas where the impact can be considered a crisis within a crisis, with a population that is suffering subject to chronic social and economic problems. It is not easy to prepare and organize this kind of program as a great experience together with a personal humane maturity is necessary.

The new geopolitics of human assistance needs programs that foresee the presence of experts that above all have a huge comprehension capacity of the overall necessities of the population involved. Apart from the presence of well trained technical experts that are able to ensure fast and efficient action, other experts that are able to understand the different human situations are needed. The emergency situations are becoming daily more and more demanding and we must state that only mature societies that are conscious of human values will be able to provide an intervention that comprises human, scientific and organizational aspects.



LEBANON - MEETING AT THE UNITED NATIONS



MEETING AT THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION

### III – UNIVERSITY METHODOLOGIC APPROACH IN HUMANITARIAN CRISES

In the specific contest of humanitarian operations, an academic methodological approach guarantees three important elements:

- In the first place that every action related to humanitarian assistance is always anticipated and supported by a careful analysis of the different local realities;
- Secondly that the same program is implemented according to a plan of action organized according to an action plan that enable the involvement of local institutions and their operators;
- Thirdly, that the complete operation be accompanied by a constant reflection of the objectives of the mission including those related to the possible further development and including the formation of the local population.

This method enables very effective actions on the different prevention levels, operational and reconstruction after a crisis, independently of the type. Furthermore facilitates the carrying out of the different phases of the emergency:

- Take note and evaluate quickly the local necessities;
- Evaluate the social implications of the of the disastrous event;
- Identify appropriate and feasible replies (mainly in terms of human resources);
- Establish the operational priorities during the first phase of the emergency and those that follow;

- Create the conditions that assure that the operation is effective;
- Process the educational activity and the basic social formation as a preventive method
- Evaluate the cost – benefits ratio of the operation;
- Trigger off if necessary a development process.



UNIVERSITY COOPERATION : RECTORS OF HEBREW UNIVERSITY AND AL QUDS UNIVERSITY (left)  
CONFERENCE FOR PEACE FOR THE MIDDLE EAST WITH UNTSO FORCE COMMANDER IN JERUSALEM (right)

#### IV – THE CIVIL-MILITARY COOPERATION IN THE HUMANITARIAN AID



UNIFIL PEACE FORCES – MISSION WITH STUDENTS IN THE SOUTH OF LEBANON

In the last ten years internal conflicts or civil conflicts have become predominant events in the international crisis scenario. For the execution of peace agreements peace forces are necessary to maintain peace. The peace keeping operations in the post conflict phase require on the one hand impartiality and a minimal use of force and diplomacy, and on the other a capacity to dissuade, to be firm and authoritative and the capacity to assure the respect the provisions of the agreements when necessary. However in the long run the way to establish a durable peace consists in successful operations in the civilian sector.

The parties that are involved in these operations are the International Organizations, the NGO's, very different one from the other, and with an basic organizational complexity that can easily determine tensions, contrasts and a waste of resources. It is known that the civil organizations do not function like the military ones, that very often they have to set

up their organizations from zero, given that there aren't mechanisms to activate the necessary resources in such a way that they are readily available when the need arises.

Often the programming of an operation takes place after the starting up of an operation and not before. An immediate rational distribution of tasks and responsibilities doesn't exist with strategic deficiencies and a resulting confusion that has reflections in the field jeopardizing the peace process.

The cooperation between civil and military sectors confirms its importance in the peace operations especially when they are carried out after the conflict for two main reasons:

- Without the security made available by the military forces, the carrying out of the civilian aspects tend to be difficult and can be completely unattended;
- The capabilities and the experience together with the means of the military can give an important contribution in sustaining the operations carried out by the civilian organizations.



HQ UNIFIL IN NAQURA - GEN. CLAUDIO GRAZIANO FORCE COMMANDER UNIFIL AND UNIVERSITY DELEGATION

On the other hand it is known that the contribution of the civilian organizations enable the military to be more effective in maintaining the peace through:

- A greater comprehension of the problems of the particular territory and the population to assist in that the capillary action of the civilian organizations is greater the that of the military. In fact the civilian cooperation is based on rules of reciprocal respect and not on the imposition of orders;
- A quicker start of the process of re-composition and normalization of the civil life with its institutions, that are normally run by civilians. This is possible as a result of the study and analysis of the different social and economic problems in establishing the choice of the solutions to adopt;

- A greater elasticity with respect to the evolutionary process of the different social and human situations that only a civilian organization can understand and elaborate in time with the aim of planning new reconstruction strategies and the normalization process.

## V – THE ROLE OF UNIVERISTY COOPERATION IN THE CONFLICTS

It is clear that the cultural element in programs concerning the maintenance and the promotion of peace is predominant. Culture means creation of an open mentality in analysing the problems and in studying the realities that surround us with the perspective and the personal responsibility of improving quality of social life and to gain together a “communal wellbeing” whilst respecting human rights.

“Nobody should deceive oneself that the absence of war or conflicts, as much as it is desirable, means a long-lasting peace. There is no real peace if it is not supported by equity, truth, justice and solidarity. Any project that keeps divided the two concepts that are indivisible and interdependent: that of peace and of a development that is integral and uniting is destined to fail” (Message of John Paul II – World Day of Peace, 2000).



UNTSO IN JERUSALEM - M. GEN. M. FINN HEAD MISSION



UNESCO - MS BOKOVA DIRECTOR GENERAL

The University enables, through formation and education in human rights, to reason and analyse the human diversities forming people to be able to satisfy the basics of freedom especially, and above all, with the passing of time. Injustice, economical and social imbalances, envy, indifference that is present raging between the parts represent a threat to peace and causes wars: there are always found at the origin of conflicts and in the prosecution of the conflict situations, ethnic wars, genocides and violations of human rights.

A critical study of the phenomenon enables the formation of personnel able to operate in emergency situations and not only to apply but to transmit to the people in the different emergency situation a strong motivational inclination that represent the base of every action aiming to recreate a social unity destroyed by conflicts and violations of human rights. Very often people are found in panic situations, unable to combine a normal life of

work with that of the family that is distraught by mourning, tensions, or the impact of catastrophes on their psycho-physical balance.



**SARAJEVO – UNIVERSITY COOPERATION PROGRAMME FOR PEACE  
FIRST MEETING AFTER THE CONFLICT BETWEEN RECTORS OF SARAJEVO AND BELGRADE (left)  
MEETING WITH THE EUFOR FORCE COMMANDERE AFTER 10 YEARS OF COOPERATION (right)**

In the Universities it is also possible to encourage the understanding of the parts and the collaboration between the different institutions which are charged with the normalisation and maintenance of peace.



**LEBANON - MASTER IN UNIVERSITY COOPERATION FOR PEACE WITH THE STUDENTS (left)  
AND WITH GEN. SERRA UNIFIL FORCE COMMANDER (right)**

Organisations that normally are not able to collaborate for institutional reasons in the field, can, within the context of university formation and applied research find common points, know each other better and cooperate successfully in preparing projects that are extremely useful from a social point of view in crisis situations. The collaboration between people begins here, in the classroom, in the corridors of different departments, where together it is possible to give a concrete answer to the needs of societies.

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**University of Roma Tre :** Director of Rome International Seminar University of Roma Tre (Editions: 2016/2017/2019/2022) Video: <https://youtu.be/9Me4K3Hx8Bg>

**University Hospital Campus Bio-Medico:** Coordinator of the International Program "Health and Diplomacy" 2019/2020. Convention between University Hospital CBM with MAECI and Ambassadors to the Holy See - Video PUCBM: [https://youtu.be/so4iue0a\\_p8](https://youtu.be/so4iue0a_p8)

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**Sapienza University of Rome: JERUSALEM ROME** Secretary General Master on "Social Sciences and Humanitarian Affairs" with Israeli and Palestinian Universities (2005/2015) with the Patronage of UNESCO (Paris) Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Db95tvOUvbg>

**LEBANON:** Secretary General of the Master on "University Cooperation for Peace and Development" with USEK and Lebanese Universities (2008/2014) Professor (contract) of Human Rights and Humanitarian Affairs Courses (2012/2013) Video:

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**ROME :** Development and Crisis (2013/2014) at the Degree on Sciences of Development and Cooperation - Faculty of Political Sciences ERASMUS Students Courses

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**Italian Basket National Team:** Medical Doctor of the National Teams (1986/87)