

EDA WORKING PAPER

Executive Summary

Urban Warfare: Stabilisation of Cities

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- High levels of rapid population growth have been accompanied by increased convergence towards urban centres. Today, approximately 55% of the world's population reside in urban centres. Of the 8.5 billion global inhabitants expected in 2030, 60% will be based in urban areas.
- Developing countries are driving current and future demographic and urbanisation trends.
- Local authorities are often unable to meet the needs of new urban dwellers who converge to cities in large numbers seeking employment, better prospects and security. The result is the establishment of informal settlements or slums.
- Conflict is becoming intrinsically urbanised in this century: combat is impacted by the urban terrain and, in turn, the fighting impacts infrastructure, the continuation of day-to day economic and social activities in a given city or town, the provision of services, and long-term plans for post-conflict reconstruction.
- Approximately 50m people around the world were affected by armed conflict in cities in 2015.
- Academics and military practitioners have long focused on urban warfare as an all-out struggle in densely-built areas. The understanding of urban environments as *battlefields* has resulted in silos when trying to design urban security policies.
- Given the multifaceted challenges presented by urban conflict and post-conflict scenarios military or security interventions on their own are insufficient. Stabilisation would benefit from being significantly broadened to include humanitarian, aid, development and – specifically with regard to cities and towns – urban planning and reconstruction components. Additionally, urban planning could become a “vital ingredient in the process of national recovery after wars”.
- Conflict cities would benefit from ‘area-based’ approaches. They involve targeting aid and action to promote the recovery of specific areas such as building public services in a given neighbourhood. Crucially this approach rests on greater participation by local communities in defining priorities and strategies.
- The area-based approach and any other strategy that involves long-term urban recovery require tight cooperation among various policy actors, the military, the humanitarian sector, and even non-state armed groups. Long-term measures however do not eliminate the need for some short-term, interventions which in some cases are helpful temporary fixes.
- As conflicts become more protracted the lines between conflict and post-conflict become blurred.
- The nexus between conflict and crime is particularly evident in conflict-affected

and post-conflict cities and impacts security, governance, economic and societal development.

- The ability of cities to adapt to post-conflict requirements through effective urban management, community participation and development to complement security efforts is crucial to build resilience to future challenges. Some lessons include:
 - o All post-conflict cities share ineffective police forces and security provision tends to be fragmented, localised and temporary. The promotion of legitimate security has to be prioritised. Security programmes should require cooperation between the police and the public.
 - o Community participation in post-conflict reconstruction helps increase cities' resilience to future shocks.
 - o The experience of Iraq post-2003 highlighted the importance of decentralising decision-making at the provincial and municipal level and delegating sufficient authority to local development agencies and municipal councils, i.e. a more participatory model of urban management.
 - o It is vital to promote urban mobility to ensure as many people as possible avoid being trapped in depressed neighbourhoods from which they are unable to access employment opportunities in the post-conflict economy.
- Urban planners and architects should be involved in stabilisation efforts in cities.