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THE PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICE OF MILITARY INTERVENTION IN THE POST MODERN WORLD

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SALUTATION

Your Royal Highnesses, Mr Dean, My Lords, Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen

INTRODUCTION - EARLY INTERVENTION

I want to take you back to the ancient world. We are in Israel in 860 BC, we are near Mount Carmel and it is hot and dry. There has been a drought for three long years. Elijah the great prophet recognises that only with the assistance of the Almighty would the situation be remedied. To Elijah, this was not simply a vague supposition; it was a matter of faith. But there were others to be convinced, not least the King of Israel. So Elijah gave the King a stark choice: follow the Lord and he would end the drought. But, at that time, loyalties were split with Baal as a major competitor to Elijah's God. So Elijah challenged the people to choose; but much as the electorate of today, they would not voice an opinion.

So, as was the custom of the time, Elijah organised a contest. Each side arranged a sacrificial bull on top of an unlit fire and the strongest god – given suitable invocation would light the appropriate fire. The 450 prophets of Baal backed by 400 prophets of Ashvah failed to get a response from their god. In mocking tone, Elijah then poured water on his sacrificial fire and, of course, the Lord answered Elijah's call. "Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked-up the water that was in the trench" or so the first Book of Kings tells us. The gathered multitudes then recognised that Jehovah was the true God. So far- so good! But then Elijah ordered his people to seize the prophets of Baal and slaughter them, which they duly did.

What were his motives for this drastic approach? Was he concerned for the self-defence of his people? Could he see an impending humanitarian disaster if the prophets of Baal escaped? Or did he simply feel that they represented a threat to international peace and security? For these are the criteria by which he might be judged today. As for his use of force, was it legal? Did removal of his objective - the prophets of Baal - represent military necessity? Was the target sufficiently distinct as a military target? Was his approach proportional - 750 dead? This is how the law of armed conflict would apply today.

OUTLINE

So what I want to do in this lecture is; firstly, outline the nature and threats inherent in the post-modern world. Secondly, look at the principles that apply in adopting a military solution to these conflicts? And, thirdly examine some of the practicalities - the realities if you like. But on this day, we cannot embark on any military journey without recalling the events of 60 years ago. At this very hour, 60 years ago, Group Captain Dr James Stagg, the Met man, told General Eisenhower that there would be a tiny weather window on 6 June. Having already delayed by 24 hours, the die for D-Day was cast. All over the United Kingdom, the invasion force wondered what lay before them – many of them were a long way from home. The world has changed since then – or has it?

In spite of the media-driven individualistic world in which we now live, where consumerism, celebrity and lifestyle dominate the agenda, we cannot shy away from the fortunes of the rest of the world. There have been 194 separate conflicts since 1945 of which most have been in developing countries or those in transition. Between 500,000 and 1 million people are killed each year because of war. A British serviceman or woman has been killed in action every year since 1945, except 1968, 2600 in all. The year 2003 saw 35 violent conflicts of which 12 were in sub-Saharan Africa. Some 21.5 million people are currently fleeing from hostilities and most disturbing of all, 300,000 children under the age of 18 are directly involved in conflicts as combatants¹. The developed western nations have a responsibility to address these challenges, now made more complex in our post-modern world. Freedom from want and freedom from fear is not much to ask for at the beginning of the twenty-first century.

POST MODERNISM

What then do I mean by a 'post-modern' world? In international politics, the great homogeneous truths of Marxism and liberalism had universal rights as their aim. This has now given way to more ambiguous, individualistic groups who see the protection of their own cultures and identities as being the real requirement. So, the American Revolution declaring universal rights for everyone, the French Revolution based on the universal rights of liberty, equality and fraternity and the Marxist cry of "Workers of the World Unite!" have been replaced by fragmentation. Ethnic strife, religious intolerance, the quest for civil rights and environmental concern has taken root².

A further driver comes from, the trend towards globalisation. This has altered the well-ordered understanding of where the economic boundaries of states actually lie. The movement of resources both in terms of value and speed within multi-national companies has dwarfed the power of individual states to respond. Hardly surprising when we recognise that of the 100 biggest 'economies' in the world, 51 are corporations and only 49 are countries³. Such a statement relies on a fair degree of double-counting but, even in value-added terms Wal-mart is bigger than Pakistan, Peru and Algeria⁴. This is important because it blurs the distinction of vital national interest and gives us a new lexicon, which includes the notion of marginal national interests.

MILITARY POST MODERNISM

But in military affairs, it was the end of the Cold War coupled with huge shifts in technology - mostly but not exclusively to do with the microchip - that heralded the post-modern era. Bi-polarism, as represented by NATO facing the Warsaw Pact, acted as a framework of symmetry, which minimised ambiguity and ensured that the threat was major, and the results of mishandling, cataclysmic. Having been in the profession of arms through this transition, I likened it to performing as the second violin in a large symphony orchestra. Like NATO's former General Defence Plans, the musical score defined the individual musician's activity; set notation, probably written a long time ago, defines what to play and when; the conductor is somewhat distant; there is little room for creativity and the tempo is defined to within close limits. Even the style of playing is codified. More importantly, it is possible to practice over and over again, until the orchestra operates in perfect harmony.

That was then. So what of the post-modern world. Now the musical equivalent is jazz. There is no sheet music. Improvisation is required around a central theme; the tempo is variable and complex, and mostly in the gift of whoever is the lead player at the time. The band is diverse in character yet has to be close-knit in approach. Each session produces a different treatment of the same tune. Jazz musicians live by their wits and the quality of their ear. Military commanders now also live by their wits and by their intuition.

THREATS AND RESPONSES

So what emerges by way of threat from this post-modern world? First, and very much at the door of technology is the proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction. Second, international terrorism has taken-on greater significance, both in diversity and effect. Rarely can we now apply the black and white label of 'state sponsored'. Rather, the challenges confronting an unrepresentative government which operates against a backdrop of poverty, AIDS and corruption is hard for it to master; priorities often sit elsewhere. But the export of terrorism is likely to become a characteristic. And in this scenario we recognise the certainty of the rational Cold War enemy is a long way from the non-rational enemies of today whose ability to destabilise is out of all proportion to their size and their real military or destructive capability – compared with armies at least. If you find this hypothesis hard to believe, think back to the Madrid train bombing. At the time, it could have been ETA or Al Qaeda, both had the capability and possibly the intent. In the event, the action caused the downfall of a western government.

As for the causes of terrorism, there is a common thread. There are clear cases where inadequate governance by regimes provided few legitimate political outlets for genuine opposition. Equally, weak economics, often based on complacent management result in high unemployment among the younger sector of the population. The 22 Arab countries have a combined population of 280 million of which 38% are under the age of 14. Many of these young people are well-educated⁵. Any frustration over employment or governance can thus be readily exploited by radical or extremist sentiment. The impact of a globalised economy which generates a globalised culture does little to help.

Third comes the threat represented by failing states themselves. Again, poor governance and seemingly insoluble problems such as international debt, urban drift, rank poverty, AIDS, corruption and a breakdown in routine law and order are frequently present. With these three classes of threat in mind, recall if you will the symphony orchestra versus the jazz band.

SELF DEFENCE

On that basis, there could be three scenarios where we, the UK, may feel it appropriate to become engaged, either individually or in coalition. First, there could be a need to act in self-defence under Article 51 of the United Nation's Charter. Traditionally, we would have talked of a threat to our vital national interests. But in the ambiguous, post modern world, I have already highlighted the complexity in drawing such boundaries. The term marginal interests presents a real problem in judgements over where and how to respond. Throughout the Cold War, we defended our vital national interests through the doctrine of nuclear deterrence. Mutually assured destruction was sufficient for a rational enemy to set the high jump bar at a level that lowered the odds of conflict, whilst recognising that the results, should they arrive, would be both devastating and final. But what of terrorist organisations that might have access to crude chemical, biological or even nuclear weapons. At the strategic level, how does deterrence theology work in the face of an organisation that is loose-knit and cellular, that has none of the land, infrastructure or wealth of a state at its heart, and where human life - even of its own supporters - is judged to be of little value? At the tactical level, what sort of deterrence could ever stop a suicide bomber? This makes for a difficult target in every sense of the word. And none of this is completely hypothetical as the Sarin attack on the Tokyo Metro in 1995 makes clear. As did last week's attack in Al Khobar with the subsequent rise in the price of oil.

INTERVENTION

The second scenario covers humanitarian intervention. From a military standpoint the stress is on intervention rather than simple humanitarian assistance. Here again the boundaries are blurred. The Kosovo air campaign of 1998 was an example of precursor activity aimed at preventing a humanitarian disaster - the wholesale displacement and possible ethnic cleansing of the Kosovar Albanians. Yet it was conducted by NATO and without a UN Security Council Resolution.

Why? Because Russia was clear that she would veto any such proposed resolution. But, of course, this humanitarian intervention ultimately included the bombing of Belgrade and the subsequent climb-down of Milosevic and the withdrawal of Serbian forces. It certainly also fuelled the political process which led to Milosevic's own electorate removing him from power and to his current residence in the Hague to answer his indictment as a war criminal. But this occurred at a time when 200,000 people had already died in the Balkans because of war and ethnic cleansing. A litmus test that applies in these cases must balance humanitarian need with the notion that such intervention crosses the boundary of sovereignty. Thus, increasingly, the convention that, 'a state's internal affairs are for it alone', enshrined in the Treaty of Westphalia of 1648 is called into question. In the post-modern world, the badge of statehood does not confer the legitimacy to ride roughshod over human rights or to ignore the plight of indigenous populations regardless of their ethnic origin.

BROADER THREATS

So, if the seemingly straightforward aspects of self-defence and humanitarian intervention now bring with them growing complexity, what then of our third category? That of the need to address threats to international peace and security. By definition, we are considering collective security here. How do we gain consensus in the UN or elsewhere about an impending crisis when perceptions will vary according to a particular nation's political, economic and historical baggage? The glue of fear, which bound NATO together throughout the Cold War, is missing. Given that the threat in this sense consists of a combination of capability and intent, there is much room for national variations in judgement. How can we define with certainty, the precise capability of a terrorist organisation with a dirty nuclear device? How would we have defined Al Qaeda's capability to use airliners as guided weapons within the defended airspace of the United States? Traditionally, defining capability has been the easy part. Counting tanks, watching trials, surveillance from space, even good old spying used to remove uncertainty. Not so now. And what of intent? How seriously should we take Osama bin Laden's appearances on Al Jazeera? Do we read Kim Chung Il's approach to international relations as bluster or real intent? What should we make of Beijing's recent statement that China might attack Taiwan if the newly re-elected President Chen re-drafts his country's constitution to separate Taiwan from the Chinese mainland; after all Tianamen Square happened 15 years ago today. The straight answer is we don't know; governments simply have to make the best judgements on the basis of the available evidence as it is presented to them and, importantly, assess the implications should they decide not to act.

PRINCIPLES OF MILITARY INTERVENTION

Grand Strategy

So how might we define the principles to be applied when contemplating military intervention? First, we must recognise that, from a UK point of view, the instruments of grand strategy within the international political system are represented by the trinity of diplomacy, economic power and military power. These levers are inexorably linked and must be used one with another in an

appropriate mix. It is a truism that diplomacy and economic power deployed through sanctions, do need to be underpinned by the credible threat to use force.

Information

Secondly, the credibility of this threat comes from our being able to deliver that force should conditions require it. We thus need to make our credibility clear. For this reason, I would now wish to include ‘information’ as an instrument of grand strategy. The nature of the modern media with the power of the internet and the ubiquity of twenty-four hour TV news stations provides an alternative lever of influence. Synchronising the way information is communicated is a difficult task, particularly when working in a coalition. Any amount of elegant diplomacy, robust sanctions and effective military action can be undone by poor presentation, which will be exploited by the competitive nature of the modern media.

Effects-Based Approach

Thirdly, central to the principles of Military Intervention in the Effects-Based Approach We classify this, in a graduating scale of intensity as eight outcomes. Prevention, stabilisation, containment, deterrence, coercion, disruption, defeat and destruction. On the basis of these effects, political direction for military action can be formulated – and strategic political direction is the starting point for military planning.

Legality

But the really difficult bit then follows as the fourth principle. Having selected the required effect to be achieved, we then need to make judgements about whether it can be achieved in line with self-imposed limitations arising from moral, ethical and legal considerations. In this later case, the UK’s approach is based on customary international law plus those conventions, which our country has ratified. These centre on the four 1949 Geneva Conventions and the two Additional Protocols of 1977. The key tenets of these conventions require that combatants should at all times be distinguished from civilians; that only legitimate military objectives be attacked; that such attacks must be proportionate in that any civilian casualties and damage to property must not be excessive in relation to the direct and concrete military advantage anticipated. These are not just ethereal concepts. Responsibility for compliance with the law of armed conflict applies to every member of a nation’s armed forces engaged on operations regardless of the degree of intensity. This is why we spend so much time and effort in developing Rules of Engagement and ensuring that our people both understand them and can apply them in the heat of battle. But there is complexity here. Regardless of Rules of Engagement, individuals have the inherent right to use force to protect themselves. However, for British forces personnel, UK domestic law still applies to the exercise of self-defence. In other words, only reasonable force may be used and lethal force is only justified when life is endangered and there is no other way of averting that threat. Again, more of that in a moment.

Risk

Fifth, comes political judgements over risk. These, in my view, itself falls into three areas. Firstly, what is the risk that we won’t be able to achieve the desired effect in quite the way that we thought? Secondly, what is the level of risk to the UK forces themselves, or in other words what level of casualties can be expected. Thirdly where does all this sit against the degree of public support for intervention and how might the fortunes of war see this change?

An obvious conclusion that we can draw at this point is that we need considerable flexibility in our military strategic doctrine. Much of what we are faced with is not unfamiliar to a nation like ours, which had an Empire to police. Given this backdrop, it is unsurprising that we became quite slick at it. The shortest war in history owes its roots to this legacy. On 27 August 1896, the British Navy's Cape of Good Hope Fleet under the command of Rear Admiral Sir Harry Holdsworth Rawson arrived off Zanzibar to sort out Said Khalid, the Pretender Sultan who was occupying the Royal Palace. The Admiral delivered the final ultimatum declaring a state of war. Fighting broke out at 9.02AM: reached its peak at 9.15 and the war was over by 9.40. So, a whole war was fought and settled in just 38 minutes. History records that the jewel of the Zanzibar defence Force was its only warship, the Glasgow, an ageing ocean tramp. The turning point in this short war came when it was sunk with only two shells. The Sultan's Palace was completely wrecked and, to the delight of Her Majesty's treasury, we asked the local residents to pay for the ammunition expended⁶. Historians are divided as to their response!

Iraq 2003

Now for a more contemporary example; Iraq in 2003.

Having taken the decision to invoke the requirements of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1441, it was necessary for coalition planners to recommend to government, the effect to be achieved. Past efforts involving containment, deterrence and, more latterly, coercion were deemed to have been ineffective. It was therefore necessary to disrupt the Saddam regime to prevent their continued violation of UN Security Council Resolutions. Turning to the precise definition, this would see the regime isolated, physically and psychologically from their support - such that it was – leaving them dislocated and disorientated. Unsurprisingly then, the intent on which the military campaign was founded was:

"To attack simultaneously along several different axes in time and space so as to create multiple dilemmas which the Iraqi leadership would be unable to comprehend and to which they would be unable to respond."

Turning that intent into action required further analysis against the framework of international law. The enemy Centre of Gravity in the Iraq war was the Saddam regime itself. Its critical vulnerability was its ability to exercise military command and control. So, our requirement was to deny them the use of the physical infrastructure by which they exercised that command and control. Thus, in defining the targets for the air campaign, we were required to show an audit trail from strategy to the individual task or target. In other words, each target had to contribute directly to the overall effect but the degree of damage had to be the absolute minimum required to achieve that incremental contribution. Overlaid on that had to be the four fundamentals which I mentioned earlier of distinction, proportionality, necessity and humanity. Although the wider availability of precision weapons assists this process, each target requires very careful and lengthy consideration. Great care is rightly applied in reaching these assessments to minimise risk. If there is doubt, the target is not cleared.

But what might have improved the conduct of the campaign. Two aspects in my view as the overall British commander; more intelligence and stronger UN leadership. I pass no judgement on the quality of intelligence on which we planned and executed the combat phase: Lord Butler is engaged in just that. But where our knowledge was thin was over the likely dynamics of the collapsing regime.

This is a hugely complex subject which sits right at the heart of behavioural science and there are so many variables which will affect things one way or another. But judging the effect of

removing the steel band of fear from around the minds of the Iraqi people that emasculated their lives throughout more than 35 years of Ba'athism was hugely problematic. A deeper understanding of the prevailing mood and culture would have helped. Whether that would have been in the art of the possible remains debatable.

As for the UN, I would wish to have seen their engagement as a decision-making body as soon as the major combat operations ceased.

A BROADER RANGE OF EXAMPLES

Let us now look at further recent examples to understand the practicalities of military intervention. In so doing, we need to recognise that the common strategic aim regardless of the level of intensity of the crisis or conflict is to convince the adversaries that there is more to be gained by good behaviour than by bad. Let us look at the history of the so-called safe areas in Bosnia from 1993-95 where the international community reacted with less than total engagement. Then at Rwanda in 1994 where there was virtually no engagement at all - the two are not entirely unconnected. Then at Sierra Leone in 2000 where the UK ultimately opted to act. In all three of these examples, governments were in a position to exercise choice over their decision to become involved.

SREBRENICA

In April 1993, faced with a deteriorating situation in Bosnia, the UN passed Security Council Resolution 819 which designated as a 'safe area' Srebrenica and its immediate surroundings. The same applied to 2 other locations – Gorazde and Zepa.

The Netherlands was a strong supporter; support was lukewarm elsewhere. But the Dutch military had reservations, which centred on two things; the sacrifice of the cardinal principle of evenhandedness in peacekeeping, and that their battalion would be isolated in the midst of what might become hostile territory. Nevertheless, the Dutch Government deployed their forces and saw their stand as setting an example that would inspire similar offers from other nations. And the situation was pretty desperate. In 1993 alone 30,000 people in Bosnia had been killed out of what was to become a pan-Balkan figure of 200,000 by 1996.

By early 1994, the precariousness of the Dutch battalion's position was self-evident. The Bosnian Serb Army could intercept the logistic supply lines at will and freedom of movement outside the enclave was minimal. Dutch soldiers had been held hostage by the Bosnian Serbs.

Over a nine day period in July 1995, the Bosnian Serbs mounted a concerted attack against the enclave, eventually occupying the entire 'safe area'. Following the fall of the town, some 6000 Bosnian Muslim men were slaughtered; the mass graves are even now being uncovered. Two indicted war criminals, General Ratko Mladic (Commander of the Bosnian Serb Army) and Radovan Karadic (the Bosnian Serb President) are charged with responsibility for the massacre.

So where did it all go wrong. With the benefits of hindsight - a difficult commodity considering the complexity of the Balkan soup in the early 1990's – we can make some judgements. First, the UN mindset and that of the international community was configured around peacekeeping, yet there was no universal peace to keep. In terms of the security of the safe areas, there was no real analysis of the effect that had to be achieved. In essence, this was at least deterrence if not coercion against the Bosnian Serbs. Yet the UN, at the time, demonstrated a marked reluctance to use force rapidly and decisively. Also, there was no attempt to deploy an early proportional response to Bosnian Serb bad behaviour. As we now know, all this led to yet further escalation in the shape of the Summer 1995 Bosnian air campaign. Secondly, judgements over the likely

Bosnian Serb reaction were wrong. The degree to which a token deterrent is effective against rampant nationalism was not hard to judge but the extent to which Karadic and Mladic would be prepared to push out the boundaries of extreme action - some 6000 Bosnian males slaughtered - required a deeper understanding of their warped minds than we had at the time.

I shall set to one side the thought that European governments were more focussed on reaping peace dividends after the Cold War rather than stabilising the real aftermath of the removal of bipolarism.

RWANDA

Now for Rwanda. If we start on 6 April 1994, the Rwandan President was killed when his aircraft was shot down. He was returning from Tanzania having agreed a power-sharing arrangement with the rebel Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF). This would mean the end of 20 years of one party rule, which was deeply unpopular with his more extreme supporters. Almost immediately, the Rwandan armed forces and the extremist militia known as the Interhamwe began the organised slaughter of moderate Hutus and Tutsi leaders. Within 24 hours the US decided to evacuate its citizens, the UN directed the Canadian commander of the UN Peacekeeping force (UNAMIR) not to intervene, and 8000 people were dead - Srebrenica proportions already. UNAMIR's mission until this flare-up of violence was to disarm both sides in preparation for elections. Four days later some 32,000 Tutsis were dead. Within a week, 10 Belgian peacekeepers were killed causing the withdrawal of all but a token UN force. By then, the death toll was 112,000. Little of this was going-on unnoticed. Human Rights Watch was reporting regularly and the world's media covered events. After much vacillation, the UN agreed on 16 May to the deployment of UNAMIR II, a 5500-strong force of mainly African UN forces. The necessary armoured vehicles took a further month to arrive among continued wrangles over costs and bureaucracy. Ultimately, the UN Security Council authorised France to act unilaterally in Southwest Rwanda. But by then the RPF had captured Kigali. The Hutu government fled to what was then Zaire with a tide of refugees in their wake. It is July 17 – Day 100 - and the death toll reached 800,000⁷, making the machete the predominant weapon of mass destruction of the late 20th century.

So why was the international community so reluctant to act. Well, 10 years ago, the world was new to this type of peacekeeping and peace enforcement. The notion of consent and even-handedness in Bosnia, still then in the UNPROFOR era had yielded examples of the difficulty in preventing ethnic cleansing whilst maintaining an acceptable risk to the deployed forces involved. More particularly, the US experience in Somalia only two years previously had acted as a severe warning to those who believed that intervention between warring tribes or factions in Africa was easy. History now recognises that the Interahamwe had planned this campaign of genocide over a long period and in detail. As for the UK response, it was 24 May - Day 49 by which time the death toll had reached 390,000 before there was substantive debate in the Houses of Parliament. In an adjournment debate, Tony Worthington MP pointed-out:

"An unbelievable atrocity has been going on for months; yet this is our first opportunity to debate it. There has been no Government statement, and as yet the House as a whole has displayed very little interest despite the fact that Rwanda dwarfs Bosnia in terms of casualties. At the tail end of a parliamentary day, in the minor event of an Adjournment debate, we are able to discuss the issue only because of my luck in a raffle."⁸

The UK's ultimate military contribution was fifty 4x4 trucks.

So what went wrong here? The UN's own report talks of failure within the organisation to generate both the resources and the political will to prevent or stop the genocide. It points out that the UN Department for Peacekeeping's analysis was flawed. Equally, the report says, the Secretary General could have done more to argue the case for reinforcement in the Security Council. But it also makes the point that key members of the international community failed in their duty to acknowledge and respond to genocide, principally because Rwanda was not regarded as being of strategic importance. Pray God that the Sudan is not seen in the same light. There 300,000 have fled to Chad; 1.2 million are homeless and maybe 250,000 will die of hunger. The conflict is a decade old

Returning to Rwanda and as a footnote, I assess that by early May, the situation had accelerated out of control such that nothing other than defeat of the two warring factions would have halted the genocide. This would have taken a huge military contribution and given the nature of the geography of the theatre and the warring factions this would have indeed been a high-risk venture. Thus, here is an example where prevention, stabilisation, containment and deterrence (the first four of the effects that I mentioned before) require early military action. This then must be our sixth principle – act early.

SIERRA LEONE

Finally then, Sierra Leone. The history of the conflict is symptomatic of Africa's problems, corruption, the illegal seizing of natural resources – in this case diamonds - and the settling of ethnic scores. Its history goes back to 1990. Both the Revolutionary United Front or RUF led by Foday Sankoh and Charles Taylor's National Patriotic Front of Liberia had a hand in its gestation in an attack on the South-Eastern border district. Government forces were ill-equipped to cope. A military coup by disaffected soldiers saw the creation of a new government, which, through mishandling, drove the RUF to ground. The RUF created revolutionary bush camps and took the diamond-rich province of Kono soon to be followed by the titanium and bauxite mines. The government lost its source of income and the RUF began an advance on the capital, Freetown. Some members of the Sierra Leone army collaborated with the RUF and the word *sobel* was coined - soldier and rebel - or soldier by day and rebel by night. Mercenaries, notably Executive Outcomes joined the fray under contract to the Government and local vigilante groups were set up to protect individual neighbourhoods. Things could not get any more complex, surely. But they did. Executive Outcomes with all their expertise from South Africa and Namibia drove the RUF back, killing a third of them, with the remainder becoming more callous and indiscriminate. A change of government - through another military coup - saw the emergence of a ceasefire and multi-party elections. The RUF responded by amputating the limbs of civilians who voted. President Kabbah made it to power; the Abijan Accord, which was brokered by the UN, was signed aimed at bringing peace. Fortunes ebbed and flowed between the combatants with the capital, Freetown changing hands a number of times. By July 1998, all parties, agreed to end the conflict and UN sent a force of 13,000. Freetown again came under threat hence the need to deploy British troops in May 2000 to protect and evacuate 450 UK nationals. They rapidly secured Lungi airport as an essential precursor to both the evacuation and as a bridgehead for more effective UN deployments. In so doing, the UK made it clear that its forces would not be deployed in a combat role in support of the UN. But the mere presence of UK forces - not in blue berets - did much to stabilise the country and add impetus to the efforts of the UN forces. Subsequently, we have provided training teams to re-model Sierra Leone's armed forces. And yesterday war crimes trials began in Freetown.

So what analysis can we make of this hugely difficult emergency. Firstly, the complexity defied the gathering of accurate information and the motivation of the warring factions made judgements over their intent and capabilities extremely problematic. Secondly, the UN was

unable to muster the level of political will that would have yielded decisive intervention. This was seen as Africa's problem with all the familiar ingredients of corruption, illegal seizure of resources - particularly diamonds, ethnic hatred and inflated egos - and simply not of strategic interest to the west. What chance for Sudan then?

CONCLUSION

What then can we say by way of conclusion about military intervention in the post modern world. The principles are hopefully clear: understand the deployment of grand strategy; use the information campaign effectively; take an effects-based approach; make careful judgements over legality; assess the risk; and act early.

But what conclusion can we make about the realities of all this. First, we should dwell on the complexity of the initial decision making. This is now heavily reliant on intelligence. In this ambiguous world of asymmetric opponents, non-rational enemies and failing states, even gathering the necessary data is problematic. The most useful intelligence comes from human sources, which are very difficult to place in the world that I have described. Yet we require our analysts to turn this raw data into assessments on which we can provide military advice to Ministers who ultimately have to make the decision to intervene or not. Defence of our vital national interests – if not our marginal interests - should be reasonably clear cut. Equally, humanitarian intervention usually – though not always – follows exposure on the world media. But information here can be exaggerated. Initial reports are often inaccurate and judging the extent and nature of the movements of displaced persons in inaccessible territory is hugely problematic. But the most difficult judgement arises in addressing the third scenario that I mentioned earlier – threats to international peace and security. Here, intelligence assessments over capability are one thing but judging intent is dramatically more difficult. Much of it depends on understanding the nuances of human behaviour, potentially against a very different cultural and ethical mindset to that prevalent in western liberal democracies. Ultimately, the buck stops with our Ministers and the judgements we now call on them to make – even when part of a coalition – represent greater complexity than at any time in history. Expectations are high at a time when our media-driven appetite for failure is minimal.

The second conclusion must centre on the role of the United Nations. The world has changed dramatically since 1945 when 50 countries gathered in San Francisco to draw-up what was to become the United Nations Charter. The core of the Charter was devised from the work of the four then great powers: China, the Soviet Union, the United Kingdom and the United States. Membership now extends to 191 countries and, unsurprisingly, gaining consensus has become much more difficult. As states reach maturity in their membership, it is axiomatic that they will wish to influence world events according to their national and regional interests. It is also true that there does remain a strong international demand to reach consensus over action - particularly military action - in an attempt to address regional crises. Such a consensus is clearly sensitive to the interpretations of international law, which, in my view, is itself set to change and develop in the light of experience over post-modern warfare. Equally, such a consensus forms around broad goals, which are notoriously difficult to translate into military action. Yet, the United Nations remains the only universal supra-national body, which can act as a forum for concerted action. As a result, for the future, we need to see a Security Council, which exhibits firm leadership. For the UK, this means that we expect to lead coalitions of the willing in implementing UN mandates on the basis of 'first-in' for early intervention. This is why our armed forces are configured for expeditionary operations.

Lastly, what should our expectations from a UK perspective be over what military intervention can achieve? I have deliberately reviewed some of the most complex and difficult emergencies of

the last 10 years. While, in each case, military intervention came either too late or in inadequate strength, there have to be doubts as to whether the crisis could have been solved by military intervention at the point in time that it was applied. Two deductions result. First, we need to address such crises early and as close as possible to the source of the problem; particularly in the case of international terrorism. Secondly, the UK's armed forces represent an international benchmark for professionalism, flexibility and determination. Success in many operations over recent years underlines this. But there is no guarantee that we will succeed every time. Multiple warring factions who use asymmetric methods in difficult terrain and for whom human life is cheap represent formidable enemies.

But let me tie-up two loose ends to finish. What became of Admiral Rawson after his spectacular victory in Zanzibar? A year later, he launched the Punitive Expedition on Benin (now in Nigeria) before retiring as Governor of New South Wales, the first naval officer to be so appointed since Captain Bligh!

As for Elijah, of course, God did indeed send rain!

Thank You

¹ Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung website (www.bmz.de) accessed 25 May 2004

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