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Session II: Civilian Perspectives (2) Introductory Remarks

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I

There are two main ways in which so-called second generation—post-Cold War—UN peacekeeping differs from the classical operations of the Cold War period. First, the earlier operations were undertaken with the consent of the parties—typically states ending a war—and sought to maintain an image of strict neutrality vis-à-vis the parties. Secondly, the earlier operations were overwhelmingly military ones, however unorthodox or unwanted it seemed (and still seems!) to many in the military to be carrying out peace operations. Today, matters have changed on both fronts. Consent is often lacking entirely or is paper-thin; and in the face of such gross human rights violations as ethnic cleansing, systematic rape, and murder, third-party neutrality is becoming harder and harder to sustain. Moreover, such operations now contain sizable nonmilitary components: IOs like the UN and its agencies, as well as others such as the OSCE, ICRC, World Bank or IMF; and a plethora of NGOs, some very large and approaching the major IOs in scale, budget and bureaucratic complexity—CARE, Save the Children, etc.—some virtually “Mom and Pop” operations run out of a post office box and a fax machine (and nowadays, a website as well), and everything in between.

These two changes, the erosion of consent and neutrality, on the one hand, and the increasing participation of civilian third-party actors, on the other, are not unrelated. They are connected by way of the nature of the interventions now presenting themselves, and specifically to the derogation of the state (the state in which the operation takes place, that is) as a fully independent actor and to the depreciation of sovereignty as a principled perquisite of the state. The derogation of the state that precedes these operations is often self-inflicted by the parties: nowadays we speak of fragile states or collapsed states. (Perhaps the paradigmatic example of this is Somalia: essentially stateless by early 1991, when the dictator Syad Barre fled the capital Mogadishu and, after two UNOSOMs and a UNITAF, stateless yet today.) In contrast, the depreciation of sovereignty is something determined by the international community, or at least by the concrete actions of the third-party intervenors

claiming to represent that community. Once a state has collapsed, like Somalia, or is so fragile, lawless, and internally-riven that it cannot resist (or like Iraq, just lost a war), then the hallowed principle of sovereignty—hallowed in at least some key parts of the United Nations Charter—is set aside. Whatever else has changed in the post-Cold War era, the veteran American diplomat Cameron Hume has written, "The prohibition against foreign intervention in a state's domestic affairs has eroded" (Hume 1997:319).

At least for the Western democracies, and taking into account the ability of transnational media to bring powerful images of suffering into our livingrooms nightly (the so-called CNN effect), it is undoubtedly the widespread and very public concern with human rights that has helped to undermine principled sovereignty and eroded the prohibition against intervening in the domestic affairs of other states. The United Nations is the principal international entity caught in a bind, here, since *other* parts of its Charter commit it to protecting human rights, too, putting it in direct conflict with Charter sections that prohibit it from interfering in the internal affairs of states—thus, it ends up in conflict with itself. This contradiction was not so apparent during the Cold War, when the superpowers saw it to their advantage to keep the UN out of the internal affairs of what were after all *client* states, and when human rights were not—before Helsinki at least—a main item on the international agenda. Of course, in pointing out the "emergence" of this inherent conflict for the UN now I am purposely downplaying the ability of lawyers and other scholars of international law to square just about any circle they wish—including this one. Still, the very existence of a circle that needs squaring indicates something is amiss in the system.

The concern with human rights also has contributed to increasing the civilian composition of these missions, since the military—whatever its traditional (that is, warfighting-relevant) strengths in such areas as logistics, lift, presence, surge-capacity and communication—which in other ways equip it so well for these emergencies—has no special, intrinsic qualities that recommend it for human rights related roles. (Or *does* it?) Civilian agencies are called for here, those focused on human rights monitoring together with those that specialize in addressing the deleterious effects associated with severe human rights disasters (one thinks of Kosovo). Such traditional civilian roles as providing food aid, refugee and displaced person resettlement, medical and psychological trauma care, and infrastructure rebuilding, are called for. In fact, because of the collapse of states that so often accompanies these emergencies (as in Somalia), or the effective delegitimation of states that allowed or encouraged them to happen in the eyes of many, if not all, of their erstwhile citizens, (Haiti under Cedras, the former Yugoslavia under Milosevic), the larger task which faces the third-party intervenors in these operations comes down to repairing and/or rebuilding state structures themselves. When the nature of this larger task became clear in the unraveling of UNOSOM-II in Somalia—an operation first presented as one of simply getting food to starving people—it became the maledict "mission creep" of many Pentagon planners, and soon enough the anathematized "nation-building" of many others on Capitol Hill. Both have combined to produce what Michael Pugh, editor of *International Peacekeeping*, has called "mission cringe" (in Weiss 1999:199).

The other important effect that the increased focus on human rights had was to undermine self-assured commitments on the part of third-parties to the virtues of maintaining strict neutrality and/or impartiality. Who can recommend such a stance in the face of brutal ethnic cleansing or incipient genocide? The ICRC in particular has come under intense criticism for attempting to maintain this stance (e.g., Hutchinson 1996). In this connection one should

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remember that the roots of the influential and highly political NGO *Médecins sans Frontièrs* (MSF—Doctors Without Borders) go back to the 1968 Biafran war, when it was conceived as a sort of "anti-ICRC" (Kouchner 1991). As Weiss (1999) argues, ultimately all humanitarianism in these instances is *political* humanitarianism. And this means that the many and varied civilian agencies and actors in such interventions are ultimately political creatures. This is the fundamental lesson for the military to understand in such operations, as well as that working with civilian agencies in these settings, they become political creatures, too.

Do we possess any models for conceptualizing this complex marriage between military and civilian actors in such peace/humanitarian operations? Cornwallis-IV was convened to explore just this question, "Civil-Military Interactions," and to propose models. Ironically, one set of models exists which no one—save occasionally the *objects* of the intervention themselves—wants to talk about. I refer to the old colonial model, especially British and French, where civil authorities, as the vaunted District Commissioner of British Africa, or the *contrôleur civil* of French Africa, coordinated closely with their military counterparts, who were usually, in today's parlance, just "over the horizon" and ready to deploy at the first sign of civil trouble or the request of colonial civil authorities. In this model, Lord Lugard and Marshall Lyautey had got it right. It is of course not surprising that few want to make explicit use of the colonial model in endeavors that many critics have labeled as "neocolonial" in the first place. But certainly the indigenous actors understand the comparison and make use of it. General Aideed did so quite effectively when, after a price was put on his head, he accused UNOSOM of trying to recolonize Somalia (and convert everyone there to Christianity). Most Haitians see the Americans pulling the strings in any operation there, regardless of what colors the vehicles or helmets are, or from what language the acronyms come. And many in Bosnia today—Serbs and Croats in particular—derisively refer to the presence of the international community, as backed up by NATO, as constituting a Euro-American "protectorate" there. Occasionally a representative of the international community will also use this locution, but (thus far, at least) usually "off the record." One Croatian journalist speaking with me in the summer of 1998 compared the Office of High Commissioner to Pontius Pilate. And how else but by invoking the notion of protectorate can one talk about the impending NATO stay in Kosovo—just beginning (late-June, 1999) as these words are written? Indeed, the nation-building (or "peacebuilding") tasks taken on by some civilian entities, seen in this light, seem suspiciously like the educational institutions and railroads gifted by the British in their Indian raj; while the lessons on democracy, capitalism, civil society, and conflict resolution seem to many "on the ground" like latter-day versions of the grand "civilizing missions" once undertaken by the French.

Of course, one problem with this analogy—among others—is that the colonial metropole knew, or thought it knew, what it was getting for itself from its expenditures of personnel and materiel: gold, or rubber, or tea, or a secure route to the relevant canal to get gold, rubber, or tea from some other colony farther on. So far as the colonizer was concerned the "national interests" inherent in colonialism seemed self-evident. (In fact, in the longer run they often turned out to be grossly overestimated.) However, as any one who has watched the debates on Capitol Hill about support or funding of peace missions knows, such a clear sense of America's national interest for expenditure of materiel or—worst of all—personnel, is often not present (Serafino 1998). (The case of Kuwait, sitting on so much oil, was not a problem in this sense; Rwanda, alas, was.) Hence, once again, we confront the crucial importance of human rights—or their gross and visually documented violation, to be precise—for the

mobilization of American public opinion. If mobilized, a higher morality can then define American national interest (at least for awhile); and the military is called in, along with more or less appropriate civilian actors, as constabulary to take part in these intensely politicized and moralized missions. In this context it is worth recalling remarks made by the diplomat Walter Clarke, "There are three Ps the military hates: politics, peacekeeping, and police work" (in Avruch 1998:119). More pointedly, a participant at a recent conference on the civil dimensions of military operations reported what his soldier-students called these things: "Operations Other Than What-I-signed-up-for" (in Guttieri and Manwaring 1998:12).

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Except in snatches or after-hours sessions, these were not the topics considered by most participants in the fourth Cornwallis conference. Focused on action "on the ground" (or on its computer-generated simulacrum), and oriented pragmatically to the needs of practitioners and players, most of the papers dealt with more nuts-and-bolts questions surrounding civil-military interactions. In many cases the emphasis was on the actual *structure* (a physical place) wherein civil and military actors come together to coordinate. Like all matters military, there are acronyms here and they change: HOC (a UN term from Somalia: Humanitarian Operations Center); HACC (Humanitarian Assistance Coordination Center); CMOC (a U.S. military term: Civil-Military Operations Center), and CIMIC (a higher-level or cover-term, used by NATO, denoting Civil-Military Cooperation). A major exercise at Cornwallis-IV, taking up an entire day's worth of activities, was in fact devoted to identifying major problems associated with setting up an effective CMOC in a complex humanitarian/military intervention (see Narel, this volume).

For myself, I think cultural issues are as important as structural ones; in practice the two interpenetrate and are interdeterminate. Above all, to speak of culture is to speak of the deeper and broader *contexts* in which these operations, and civil-military interactions in particular, take place. It is also to direct one's attention to the emergent systemicity that characterizes structures and their outputs. Cultural analyses are holistic in orientation, looking beyond "norms, attitudes, or values" to how structures and actors interact, often conflict, and create, sometimes unintentionally, new structures (and meaning). To look for systemicity means recognizing, for example, that an operation in Somalia wherein the military guarantees delivery of food when the food comes eventually to drive the conflict the military is expected to contain, will lead to systemic dysfunction—to intensifying conflict-spirals. To look for systemicity means knowing that a program in Haiti undertaken to rebuild the civil police in the absence of resources put forth towards the rebuilding of a judicial system is bound to produce systemic dysfunction—failure. If the police have nowhere to take those whom they arrest, then no matter how well they are trained, or what level of professionalism they attain, vigilantism (some by the folk, some, inevitably, by the police themselves), is invited. Very soon such vigilantism undoes all the training the international community has invested in.

Anthropologists—even those few studying peace operations—often use the stock and trade of our field, such notions as symbols and rituals, to make sense of the cultural contours of these things (see, e.g., Rubinstein 1998). But even some analysts not drawn by discipline to such technicalities come to recognize the importance of a broadly cultural approach to

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understanding actors and organizations in peace operations; such a perspective dominates Seiple's (1996) study. At Cornwallis-IV, Gwyn Prins spoke of the post-Cold War requirement for military (NATO) forces deployed in such operations to possess "more extensive and more *anthropological* intelligence requirements."

Perhaps the most important thing an anthropological (or more broadly, cultural) sensibility brings to these discussions is the requirement to conceptualize civil-military interactions beyond the specification of a single structure or physical location (CMOC or whatever), or a single officer with two noncoms tasked with "making it work," to an appreciation of emergent systemicity. *Culture*, specifically, is important in this because the systems which emerge do so with the communicational complexity characteristic of multi-actor/multi-cultural arenas. During UNOSOM-II in Somalia, for example, the military contingent hailed from about 30 different countries, while UNOSOM's civilian staff, of about 2800, came from more than 65 different countries. Not counting Muslim or indigenous NGOs, about 75 NGOs were active in Somalia in March, 1994, of which about 20 were based in the United States. By any measure in a situation such as this, the problem of ensuring effective inter-cultural communication is an enormous one. Cultural differences need to be conceived not simply at the level of "national culture," where most of the work and thinking has been done, but at the related levels of "professional culture" and "organizational culture," as well.

Partly what makes these operations so complex is that these three cultural variables can interact in almost free association, from situation to situation. A Russian infantry officer interacts with an American infantry counterpart (national and organizational differences, with shared professional); an American officer interacts with an American NGO representative (shared national culture, different professional and organizational); an American Special Forces officer interacts with a regular Army officer (shared national; different organizational—and professional?—cultures). I take the last example from Bob Shacochis' (1999) account of the hostility that often characterized interactions between Special Forces and "regular" Army personnel (especially those notionally commanding them) in Haiti, hostility due in large part to different (sub)organizational norms and values.

Finally, a cultural (and systemic) focus means that we should never lose sight of the third part of the civil-military interactions triangle, and that is, the indigenous cultural actors—and the complications that they bring to the situation. Cornwallis-IV largely ignored the problem of indigenes, as does Weiss' (1999) recent study. There are perhaps heuristic reasons for doing so: indigenous cultures seem to be the "wild card" that one is dealt when trying to model these things. But the paper by Jennifer Stewart, "Addressing Post-Accord Social Crime by Civil and Military Means," demonstrates, among other things, why in practice it is never a good idea to lose sight of indigenous actors. She notes that post-accord social crime has a way of involving some members of the third-party intervening sector (civil and military) in criminal networks and activities. This is to be understood as more than simple "corruption" that afflicts vulnerable members of the international community. It is, rather, testimony to the power of emergent cultural systems to inveigle all components within them; to the power, also, of the objects of these intervention to function as resourceful subjects as well, and to blur the lines, so clear in our conceptual models of these things, between third-party intervenors and the "targets" of their intervention.

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