

Franco-British Council

**Peacekeeping and
International Crisis
Management**
French and British approaches

Report of a seminar held in Paris

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Peacekeeping and International Crisis Management

INTRODUCTION

Due to the end of the cold war and the increase in the number of local conflicts, the problems of crisis management and peacekeeping have become key international issues for the major European states. The nature of these problems has changed, since they no longer occur within the context of East-West confrontation, and public opinion, roused by the media, calls on governments to intervene to put an end to the most shocking consequences of the conflicts

In taking up this theme, the Franco-British Council's starting point was the observation that during the last ten years France and Britain have been called upon to play a leading role in crisis management, in keeping with their historical responsibilities and their military resources. Particularly since the St Malo declaration of 4 December 1998, this role has been widened to include the drawing up of a defence and security policy within the framework of the European Union. However, the aim of the seminar was not to discuss issues under negotiation between the EU member states, but to examine the extent to which a shared outlook could emerge from the experiences of the French and the British in peacekeeping and crisis management.

PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS

Everyone was agreed that it would be better to avoid the outbreak of a crisis through various preventive measures, such as supporting the forces of democracy, technical assistance, sending specialists, or all forms of aid from food to financial loans. The difficulty of taking these preventive measures was emphasised. Would it have been possible to offer aid to Yugoslavia following the death of Tito without being accused of interfering in the country's internal affairs? Would not the same accusation have applied just before the Kosovo crisis? As long as a crisis has yet to erupt, intervention is difficult. One speaker claimed that the period between the beginning of protest and the eruption of violence was usually about ten years. In an age when small groups (either of dissidents or of criminals) can organise via mobile phones and the internet, good intelligence gathering and assessment and was felt to be as important as ever. A British speaker suggested that there could be a wider sharing of intelligence among EU countries, though some on the French side felt that Europe should have systems independent of the USA. Another British speaker doubted whether the UK could keep its intelligence links with the US whilst at the same time building them with the EU.

Also, some forms of humanitarian aid can be hijacked by unscrupulous administrations to consolidate their power over the people while worsening the impending crisis. Therefore it is difficult to take action before the crisis, though there have been some examples of timely measures (in Macedonia, for example).

Over the last ten years French and British interventions have been essentially humanitarian. The immediate effect of the outbreak of a crisis on public opinion is a demand for intervention. This has been called, in France especially, “the duty to interfere” (le devoir d’ingérence), and overrides all notions of sovereignty. International law must adapt to events, and legal obstacles are swept away by public opinion when the crisis is very grave.

The media play a very important part in justifying interventions, as the government cannot take action without the support of public opinion, which played a major role in the case of Kosovo, for example. Reaction can be triggered by the broadcasting of emotive images, and by what was dubbed by one speaker “telediplomacy”. Nevertheless, the public are increasingly aware of both the need to “do something” and the limits imposed by their reluctance to get involved in a conflict.

Intervention usually follows an emotional public reaction. According to one speaker, one must recognise that the sequence of events was presented as being more logical than it actually was. He suggested that the British intervened in Bosnia in response to a request from the Americans, and ultimately to give a new lease of life to the Atlantic Alliance.

Will it now be more difficult than in the past to obtain public support for a policy of intervention? Perhaps one can no longer count on massive support as in the case of the Gulf War or the Kosovo conflict. This may increasingly be the case as public opinion grows weary, and effective interventions require longer-term commitment. It is all well and good to act quickly, but if it is necessary to stay on the spot for ten or even twenty years, is the public prepared to do this?

Europe is surrounded on all sides by potential crises, from Kaliningrad to North Africa to the Ukraine, the Caucasus and the Middle East. Clearly, irrespective of the severity of these crises, public reaction will be different according to whether they threaten the peace and stability of Europe or regions not regarded as high priority areas. Africa is a case in point. One speaker gave a pessimistic description of the reluctance of the public to see their leaders intervene in places considered non-essential areas. However, another pointed out that this could be dangerously short-sighted. There seems to be no solution to this dilemma. In some regions intervention is

impossible for political reasons. Such is the case of Chechnya: it is very moving but the West cannot intervene there.

There was lively discussion on the question of decision-making, as methods in the two countries were compared. The speed with which French leaders act is striking; it is attributable to the structure and operation of the special committee for defence issues, consisting of the President of the Republic, the Chief of the Defence Staff, the Prime Minister, the Foreign Minister, the Minister of Defence, the Chiefs of the President's staff and of the Armed Forces. Decisions, which had been prepared by contact between officials, were taken quickly. It was a matter of military interventions with humanitarian aims.

On the British side, the procedure was slower, aimed at taking all the consequences of the decision into account. Emphasis seemed to have been placed less on rapid implementation than on the necessity of knowing exactly what they were committing themselves to, by using all means of assessing the situation. But when necessary (e.g. in Sierra Leone), the British had also moved fast.

For intervention to be legally valid, it must be supported by a mandate. It was generally recognised that UN is the only body authorised to override the prerogatives of sovereign states and to issue a mandate for intervention against their will (under chapter VII of the UN Charter). Some speakers stressed that the seeking of this mandate could not block all action, and that the threat of a Russian or Chinese veto need not be prohibitive. In the case of Kosovo, NATO did act without the express authorisation of the Security Council. From a military point of view the questionable quality of UN leadership was a disincentive.

Does the mandate have to be clear? Some flexibility was thought to be necessary. Account should be taken of developments on the ground and of the problems resulting from coalitions in which the players do not share the same goals. In some circumstances no breach should be tolerated: in others a little flexibility should be accepted. Also, the at times contradictory resolutions of the Security Council add an element of vagueness. The UN, of which the Committee of the Chiefs of Staff rapidly ceased to exist because of the cold war, is ill equipped to take on this sort of operation.

INTERVENTION

Once the crisis has been clearly identified, the decision has been taken, and a mandate for intervention has been given to one or more States in the name of the international community, the armed forces start to take action. It was noted that sometimes a particular intervention has been less effective

because of a lack of judgement and resoluteness. Rwanda was cited as an example. Amarylis and Turquoise were successful operations, but the feebleness of reactions to what became the genocide of the Tutsis was strongly criticised. The Balkans crisis also showed clumsiness and mistakes on the part of the West, and Sebrenitsa remains in everyone's memory.

Many speakers emphasised that military intervention is only the first part of a process of the re-establishment of the structures of civil society. The army separates the combatants and restores the basis for reconstruction. But the army is no substitute for the experts charged with re-establishing civil order by reorganising the police, the legal system and a market economy. The army can only take palliative measures. Military experts attending the seminar regarded this first, military phase as the easiest. That does not mean that it is unnecessary to maintain a military presence to prevent further outbreaks of fighting between opposing factions.

After crises like the Balkans there is a great risk of the development of mafia-like organisations, which, if one is not careful, will succeed in diverting to themselves aid given by the international community. In the vacuum created by the destruction of the state structures which had been responsible for the crisis, and with the forces of intervention looking on powerlessly, a powerful illegal organisation develops, financed by the resources of the country (diamonds and oil in Africa and drugs in the Balkans). To re-establish the rule of law, members of the seminar called for the presence of police forces (e.g. gendarmes or carabinieri), which would be separate from but linked to the armed forces. They would help to rebuild the local police. Judges and higher civil servants should be called upon to rebuild the legal and administrative systems. But all this requires a new corpus of international law, which does not yet exist, to govern the use of such personnel. The aim of the presence of armed forces is to guarantee the stability which will allow the transition to the rule of law. The maintenance of peace depends on the maintenance of order.

On the question of mafia-type organisations, it was pointed out that in the age of the Internet and the mobile phone, the old structures are no longer relevant. A "virtual State" is now a possibility. Criminal organisations build up from a relatively low level of violence which is difficult to combat. Moreover they may have diverse origins: from 'pure' criminality (drugs etc) to 'political criminality' designed to destabilise and supplant existing structures. New responses have to be invented. UN must play its role, and the EU must work on the problems of good governance and development.

The length of engagement is a problem that has only been recognised belatedly. Would the reaction of public opinion have been the same had it been known that military presence would extend to ten or twenty years? Another factor is the limited number of troops which can be maintained on

the ground, and their morale. As one speaker said, “one posting to Bosnia is exciting, a second is less so, but a third is unbearable”. There are not many units trained for this type of operation, so the same ones have to serve several times.

The trend towards the professionalisation of the military is favourable for peacekeeping and humanitarian operations. For political reasons, the civil power is required to ask the armed forces to take responsibilities which their military training does not equip them for. The international community also shows a lack of understanding in being too quick to judge and condemn, whereas the process of restoring peace is a long-term operation.

In general the NGOs working in the humanitarian sector have managed to form useful relationships with the intervention forces, bringing valuable assistance to the population. But on the negative side was the deplorable laxness of some NGOs, and the UN, in allowing themselves to be abused by the “warlords”, who in some cases managed to divert some of the aid.

Sometimes military intervention ends in a freezing of the situation. For example, in Bosnia the combatants were separated, but a viable pluralist society could not be created. Perhaps this is the case because the objectives of the international community are not sufficiently clearly defined. The time to take the initiative is when the troops are deployed. If nothing is done then, difficulties quickly reassert themselves.

Since the arrest of General Pinochet in London and the bringing to trial of Yugoslav leaders by the International Criminal Tribunal at The Hague, leaders who commit war crimes and attract the condemnation of the international community have reason to fear being brought to justice.

At Rambouillet the Allies believed that their ultimatum on Kosovo would be accepted by the Serbs after two or three days of bombardment, as had happened in Bosnia. This did not prove to be the case, and they came close to having to deploy 50,000 men on the ground. No one knows what the result of such a land operation would have been. So the success of the sort of military intervention which could bring about a complete change in the situation is never totally assured.

Peacekeeping operations as a whole are not without a certain confusion. After armed intervention a clear sense of direction is lacking, and the mandate is less certain. Transition towards peace requires some support on the spot. As soon as the fighting stops, a power struggle, sometimes of a criminal nature, sets in. What is the international community to do? As one member gloomily remarked, are we condemned, in Africa for example, to have recourse to methods each as bad as the other.

LEADERSHIP

At no point was doubt cast by seminar members on the obligation to act to bring a crisis under control or to deal with humanitarian problems resulting from it. This would be unacceptable to public opinion. Nowadays it is impossible to get away with the massacre of entire populations without news of it getting out, even in countries where the press is strictly controlled.

Many members stressed that it was France and Britain that were best placed to take the initiative. Whilst there was no doubt that ideally UN should authorise or recommend an intervention, there was generally critical reaction to the concept of action led by UN. A British member suggested that roles could be divided. UN would deal with the mandate for intervention and the re-establishment of the rule of law; the Atlantic Alliance would have the task of military engagement; and the EU's task would be the financing of the re-establishment of peace and the aftermath of the crisis.

This outline was to some extent overtaken by the emphasis placed on leadership and on political will, with France and Britain seen as the countries most suited to recommending action. The impossibility of anything being done in Europe which was not supported by the two countries was underlined. As permanent members of the Security Council they are able to refer matters to international authorities. Their history guarantees a unique knowledge of the theatres in which crises occur. For ten years the two countries have shared responsibilities in crisis management. The armed forces of the two countries have got used to cooperating, resulting in mutual knowledge and respect. Most importantly of all, they are ready to fight, and have shown themselves able to fulfil their responsibilities, particularly within the difficult context of Bosnia.

Possibly because the two countries have long had a global policy, they are more aware than others of the absence of Europe from crises which affect its moral concerns as well as its political and economic interests. At St Malo the French and the British, in a joint declaration, opened a process designed to give substance to the provisions of the Treaty of Amsterdam on joint foreign and security policy. The EU is acquiring the means to realise peacekeeping missions, known as "Petersberg missions".

As far as European action is concerned, most speakers placed emphasis on the leadership role of France and Britain and on the fact that action in Yugoslavia was only possible because the two countries and the two defence staffs worked together. The two countries can determine modes of action and give directives, thus enabling great coherence in operations.

On these foundations a competent chain of command can be organised, something which is lacking within the framework of the UN. But it does exist within NATO, and will perhaps one day be achieved in Europe, as it already is among France, Britain and the USA when the three countries are determined to act.

If the US assumes leadership of operations, the single chain of command works well under American authority. On the other hand, relations get complicated if there are two chains of command. Unity must be restored to achieve effectiveness.

On the question of co-operation with the Americans, some speakers observed that they had difficulty adjusting to the role of junior partner, even when the American forces had difficulty freeing up 2% of their troops for peacekeeping missions. But again, the weakness of European defence budgets did not help. In these conditions only the French and the British have the manpower and especially the determination to act. Co-ordination between their forces is not a problem and requires no new structures. It can be concluded that in this type of crisis the two countries should not hesitate to take a leadership role.

On the subject of institutions responsible for organising the management of crises, rather than create new structures which would be difficult to get rid of afterwards, it was better to be flexible. For example, it was necessary to create an ad hoc contact group for Bosnia when the Russians were to be included in the operation.

There was a lively debate on the problem of sharing resources. Some stressed the difficulty of building a common European policy on security and defence matters. The EU can serve as a framework for the resources to put in place. However, in practice should one not make use of a kind of informal board? Some reacted negatively to the concept of a European army. So one must stick to the idea of sharing resources and show imagination and flexibility. Sometimes a limited group of countries will be best placed to act.

The need for a better use of resources was emphasised. Now some funding has to be set aside for the maintenance of ground forces, in Bosnia and in Kosovo in particular. At best, budgets only allow for the sustaining of existing outgoings. The civil tasks of reconstruction are onerous. As a result a number of members were doubtful that Europe could commit itself in future to large-scale operations.

However, if Europe is to exist, it must be seen by the Americans as a true partner. The only way to do this is to show in a concrete way that Europe accepts that it must pay the price of facing up to its responsibilities. In fact

many Americans find it absurd that their country must maintain a force of fifteen thousand in the Balkans. The aftermath of the crisis poses a problem for which many thought Europe could provide effective assistance, without minimising the difficulties caused by crime, mafia organisations and “virtual States”. Some members felt that attempts at crisis management were hindered by the presence of several players: OSCE (The Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe), NGOs, NATO troops, European units, and experts.

Questions remain to be answered. In what situations is it necessary to intervene? Future crises will be different. Should one not remain pragmatic? Can one continue to count on American participation? How will operations be financed? Can one be a good European and a good Atlanticist? Can France and Britain do better together than operating individually? How will governments react to the mafia networks developing in the countries ravaged by crises?

A French speaker drew attention to the link between the various aspects of defence policy from humanitarian intervention to nuclear matters. The Americans are not in favour of the emergence of a European defence policy. A European voice remains absent from discussions on major issues. Franco-British co-operation on defence is accepted, but should there not also be discussions with the Americans on the ABM (Anti-Ballistic Missile) Treaty and NMD (National Missile Defence)?

Faced with these uncertainties, other members concentrated on what had been done so far. Without the creation of any new institutions, a representative of Europe can talk on defence with the Secretary General of NATO. A member of the European Commission monitors international political affairs. Certainly military budgets have been cut too much. Europe will learn through action, and if our wishes are based on reality, the Americans will take them into consideration.

The EU countries have set to work in a pragmatic way with a minimum of joint institutions. There is a Committee of Ambassadors to prepare initiatives and an embryonic defence staff (100 officers are a small group compared with the 4000 staff of SHAPE). In order for it to work, the system being developed will need to be backed by political will, supported by public opinion. Funding will also be necessary, along with good collaboration in intelligence, which is increasingly important in the context of the sophistication of organised crime.

CONCLUSION

The seminar did not attempt any firm conclusions, but some points did emerge, with which most though not necessarily all those who spoke appeared to agree.

It was generally agreed that an intervention should only be decided on after careful appraisal of whether the crisis was likely to be lasting, serious and the object of sustained public concern. Decision-taking procedures should be as streamlined as possible but the appraisal should include assessment of the basic causes of the crisis and the motivations and objectives of the various parties – including the potential peacekeepers themselves.

The basis of intervention should be a mandate, preferably from the UN, which will provide its legal basis and justify each intervention politically and militarily. Nevertheless there may be occasions when this is not obtainable and France and Britain, together or separately, may be obliged to go it alone. The military implications of the intervention should also be spelled out with precision - though again there may be occasions when some latitude in interpretation will be needed to give sufficient flexibility to meet developing situations.

Ground operations are becoming more complex and are not only of a military nature. The country which is the victim of a crisis should receive aid for administrative, police, legal and economic matters. This help should be thought of within the context of the process of emerging from armed intervention which may often be of a relatively short duration.

France and Britain have and will continue to have an influential role with their partners, beginning with those in the EU.

Co-ordination of efforts, within each country and among the participants, will be essential. It will have to include NGOs who are likely to be in the area both before and after the intervention, and be given practical effect on the ground.

The geographical area in which the European countries may be called on to act naturally starts with the "arc of danger" particularly around their northern and eastern borders. But the special interest of Britain and France in Africa makes that continent an important priority for future collaboration between the two countries.

A middle way must be found between doing nothing, which would be unacceptable to public opinion, and returning to the kind of interference inherited from our past history.

Is there any other option than to try to determine what role the UN might play in taking on those countries whose structures are too severely damaged?

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SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Tuesday 29 May

1445 **Introduction and opening remarks** by joint Chairmen
Ambassador Jacques Viot and Sir Peter Petrie

1515 **Session I Prior considerations (préalables) for
Peacekeeping** introduced by Lord Hurd and Pierre Joxe

- *Grounds for intervention: national interest, legal, moral*
- *Degree/Durability of support from Parliament, public, media*
- *What other means should be attempted first or concurrently?*

1545 DISCUSSION

Wednesday 30 May

1930 **Session II Mechanisms for decision-taking**
introduced by Amiral Jacques Lanxade and General Sir
Charles Guthrie

- *Need for clear mandate: how far obtainable at UN, EU, NATO, National Parliaments*
- *Relationship of humanitarian action to peacekeeping operations*
- *Planning and training of personnel*

1000 DISCUSSION

1430 **Session III Aspects on which UK/French action
might take the lead (again)** introduced by Lord Howell
and Pierre Lellouche

- *Geographical areas, depending on whether this is taken under auspices of UN, NATO, EU, or France and Britain alone*
- *What is possible without US assistance; and what is not*
- *Lessons to be learnt from previous experience in each of these contexts*

1500 DISCUSSION and CONCLUSIONS