

THE RESPONSIBILITY TO REFLECT:
LEARNING LESSONS FROM PAST HUMANITARIAN
MILITARY INTERVENTIONS

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ABSTRACT

While the current debate over the international community's 'responsibility to protect' civilians in cases of mass human rights abuses and/or genocide is of great importance, it assumes that the international community is capable of mounting successful humanitarian interventions. This article analyzes the track record of humanitarian intervention in order to determine whether members of the international community *can* undertake successful military action in response to humanitarian crisis, and if so how. The first section establishes several criteria for measuring the success of such operations and identifies two successful missions in recent history: INTERFET in East Timor and Operation Palliser in Sierra Leone. Based upon these two successful operations, the second section argues that the ability of a humanitarian intervention to succeed hinges upon four vital factors: the intervener's willingness to take sides in the conflict, the intervener's willingness and ability to use robust force, the willingness of a lead state (or NATO) to head the mission, and the intervener's long-term commitment to helping foster a lasting peace. Learning from the rare successful cases of humanitarian intervention is necessary to help ensure that when it is determined that the international community *should* intervene, it has the tools, means, and strategies so that it *can* do so successfully.

INTRODUCTION: The Limits of Good Intentions...

With the publication of "The Responsibility to Protect" by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty in 2001, the debate over humanitarian intervention reached a new level.¹ While the report argues the necessity of international action in cases of mass human rights abuse and/or genocide, critics point to the dangers of eroding sovereignty and the potential for imperial escapades by strong states against weaker ones under the banner of humanitarianism.² The essence of the debate is in attempting to find consensus on a deceptively simple question: *Should* the international community intervene in a sovereign state for

¹ ICISS, *The Responsibility to Protect: Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, Ottawa: International Development Research Council, (2001)

² For a sampling of the debate, see: S Neil Macfarlane, Carolin J Thielking, and Thomas Weiss, "The Responsibility to Protect: Is Anyone Interested in Humanitarian Intervention?" *Third World Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 5, (July 2004): 977-992; Mohammed Ayoob, "Humanitarian Intervention and International Society," *International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 6, No. 1, (Spring 2002): 81-103 ; David Chandler, "The Responsibility to Protect? Imposing the 'Liberal Peace,' *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, Is. 1, (Spring 2004): 59-82; Thomas Weiss, "The Sunset of Humanitarian Intervention? The Responsibility to Protect in a Unipolar Era," *Security Dialogue*, Vol. 35, Is. 2, (June 2004): 135-154; Daniel Warner, "Responsibility to Protect and the Limits of Imagination," *International Journal of Human Rights*, Vol. 7, Is. 3, (Autumn 2003): 154-160; Jennifer Welsh, "From Right to Responsibility: Humanitarian Intervention and International Society," *Global Governance*, Vol. 8, Is. 4, (Oct/Dec 2002): 503-522

humanitarian reasons? The debate is necessary and complex (especially in the wake of the debate over the humanitarian justification of the Iraq invasion), with serious repercussions for international peace and security in the twenty-first century, but it presupposes the answer to an even more fundamental question. *Can* members of the international community intervene for humanitarian reasons in a way that produces humanitarian results? The historical record on this issue is murky and mixed, but interventions undertaken throughout the 1990s clearly demonstrated a vitally important maxim: good intentions do not always equate to good results. Attempting to determine if military intervention can be an effective tool in addressing humanitarian crises (and if so, how) is an urgent task, in light of such seriously flawed efforts as those in Somalia and Bosnia. Garnering an international consensus mandating a ‘responsibility to protect’ through intervention would be a folly if those interventions were to merely be replays of the disastrous missions of the past.

The current study analyzes the track record of humanitarian intervention in order to determine whether members of the international community *can* undertake successful military action in response to humanitarian crisis, and if so how. The first section defines the types of missions being analyzed, establishes several criteria for measuring the success of such operations, identifies several successful missions in recent history, and provides a brief overview of these efforts. The second section distills four ‘lessons learned’ from the successful missions identified. These four components are the most critical factors to determining the success or failure of military interventions aimed at ending civil wars: the intervener’s willingness to take sides in the conflict, the intervener’s willingness and ability to use robust force, the willingness of a lead state (or NATO) to head the mission, and the intervener’s long-term commitment to helping foster a lasting peace. Examples from interventions in Bosnia, Kosovo, Somalia, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, East Timor, and the Democratic Republic of Congo are used to highlight

the importance of these four factors. The final section offers an overall conclusion and some cautionary words.

ACCOUNTING FOR THE MISSING PEACE: The Unfortunate Realities of Military Interventions

There are a variety of conditions in which outside actors can play a constructive role in helping to facilitate negotiation and implementation of peace agreements to conclude civil wars. Through assistance with disarmament, monitoring and reporting the actions of both sides, and helping rebuild state institutions, outside powers can help diminish the security dilemma that often accompanies cease-fires and help to forge a stable future for countries emerging from conflict.³ This scenario, however, is only likely to succeed in cases where the warring factions have determined their desire to cease fighting and work towards developing a compromised conclusion to the conflict. While there are numerous means by which the international community can help parties take steps along the difficult road to lasting peace, international options in cases where one or more of the combatants are determined to continue fighting are more limited and fraught with peril. Distinguishing between situations where combatants are ready to make peace, whether due to a mutually hurting stalemate (as in Cambodia) or a loss of external patronage (as in El Salvador), is the first and most important task of any would-be intervener.

In cases where all parties are not committed to making peace, external military interventions face a large array of challenges that make them unlikely to succeed in truly resolving the conflict. Failure to adequately recognize these challenges characterized intervention efforts in the early 1990s, which significantly underestimated the difficulties in forcing parties to make peace. Distinguishing between coercive ‘peace enforcement’ operations and consensual ‘peacekeeping’ operations is both necessary and challenging.

³ Barbara F. Walter, “Designing Transitions from Civil War,” in Barbara Walter and Jack Snyder (eds.), *Civil War, Insecurity, and Intervention*, New York, NY: Columbia University Press, (1999)

What Peace Enforcement is and What it is Not

This analysis does not claim to offer suggestions to all types of interventions into internal conflict. It is focused primarily upon ‘peace enforcement’ missions, where one or more parties to a conflict are engaged in violence and where the intervention is tasked with entering a zone of combat in order to halt the fighting and stabilize the security situation.⁴ Distinguishing ‘peace enforcement’ from other forms of intervention, such as ‘peacekeeping’ and ‘peace building,’ is at once both necessary and misleading. It is necessary because failure to recognize the coercive requirements of a ‘peace enforcement’ operation (and failure to provide the necessary means and mandate to deal with such an environment) is a recipe for disaster that threatens the safety of both interveners as well as the local population. Peace enforcement is a robust military mission and must be treated as such. Failure to do so can (and often has) result in tragedy.

Yet at the same time, to imagine that there is a clear, recognizable chasm between peacekeeping and peace enforcement is misleading, in that it fails to recognize the multitude of scenarios that can quickly leave a non-coercive intervention force in the midst of renewed conflict. This can occur through one or both parties’ defection from a peace agreement or the emergence of ‘spoilers.’⁵ Therefore, even non-coercive interventions should be based upon worst-case scenario planning and be prepared to switch to a peace enforcement strategy should it prove necessary. The strategies and recommendations outlined in this paper are targeted to ‘peace enforcement’ operations where mass human rights violations or genocide prompt an outside intervention to halt ongoing violence. While some of the recommendations may make sense for other forms of intervention, coercive missions are the focus of this work.

⁴“*Peacekeeping: Definitions*” in *the Conflict Management Toolkit*. Johns Hopkins University: Paul H. Nitze School of Advanced International Studies, Conflict Management Program.

⁵ Stephen John Stedman, “Spoiler Problems in Peace Processes,” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2, (Fall 1997)

One final note about attempting to define the scope and strategies required for different forms of interventions is necessary. Just as the line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement is fragile, so to is the distinction of peace building. While the aim of a peace enforcement operation will usually be to halt the fighting, this does not equate to establishing conditions for long-term peace. While that should be the ultimate objective, it is often difficult to achieve absent a long-term commitment. The primary reason why military intervention fails to achieve conflict resolution in most cases is that it addresses the symptoms of the conflict (fighting) without adequately dealing with the true underlying causes that gave rise to the violence to begin with. It is important to remember that internal conflict is “fundamentally a political, economic, and social problem” and that true conflict resolution requires solutions that address these root causes.⁶ While military intervention may succeed in temporarily stopping the fighting and suppressing violence, this does not equate to conflict resolution. The continued presence of over 7,000 European Union troops in Bosnia (and the widely held belief that their departure would lead to renewed fighting) attests to this reality.⁷ Despite the costs and obstacles to helping facilitate self-sustaining peace (discussed further below), the international community will at times be forced to make a decision as to whether halting wide-spread atrocities (even if full conflict resolution cannot be achieved) is preferable to remaining passive in the face of crimes against humanity.

⁶ Brown, Michael. “Internal Conflict and International Action” in *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (1996), p. 625

⁷ “Back to Bosnia” *The Economist*, (19 March 2005)

Measuring Success and Failure in Previous Military Interventions

One of the difficulties in attempting to analyze the successes and failures of previous peace enforcement operations for the purpose of distilling what conditions and strategies are likely to produce effective missions is that there is a lack of consensus as to which past operations constitute success and failures. Owing to the absence of any universally applicable ‘measures of success’ for rating peace operations, analysts have reached conflicting conclusions based on their unique criteria for judging such operations. For example, proposals for defining ‘success’ in peace operations have ranged from the ambitious “creating conditions that will allow peace to endure long after the peacekeepers have left” to the decidedly more limited “large-scale violence is brought to an end while the implementers are present.”⁸

For the purposes of this study, successful military interventions are defined as those that have produced a lasting peace to date, even after the removal (or significant downsizing) of the international security apparatus. The reality is that there are some civil war situations where the devastation becomes so heinous (such as a campaign of genocide), that intervention, even if it fails to produce a timely or complete resolution of the conflict, is preferred to unabated violence. These operations qualify as ‘mixed outcomes.’ This category includes missions (such as KFOR in Kosovo) where the continued presence of foreign troops is widely believed to be necessary to prevent a resumption of conflict. Failures are defined as interventions that have failed to halt large-scale violence or where conflict was halted in the presence of the interveners but resumed after their departure. A brief overview of some peace enforcement and (since lasting peace is part of the measure of success) follow-on peacekeeping missions are listed in Table 1 along with

⁸ Ambitious quote from Paris, Roland. “The Perils of Liberal International Peacebuilding” *International Security*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (Fall 1997); Second Quote from Downs, George and Stephen John Stedman. “Evaluation Issues in Peace Implementation” in Steadman, Rothchild, and Cousens (eds.) *Ending Civil Wars: The Implementation of Peace Agreements*, Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, (2002), p. 50

their respective assessments. What becomes clear through this analysis is that fully successful operations have been the exception and not the rule.

Table 1: Selective List of Recent Peace Enforcement/Peacekeeping Operations

Country	Mission	Intervener(s)	Assessment	Why?
Haiti	-Operation Restore Hope (1994-95); -UNMIH (1993-2000)	US UN	MIXED	-Succeeded in ousting junta, failed to establish long-term security and stability/relapse into conflict and state breakdown
Bosnia	-UNPROFOR, -Operation Deliberate Force (1995)	UN, NATO	FAILURE MIXED	-Continued Presence of EU troops (7,000) required to maintain security. Long-term stability/peace questionable
Rwanda	-UNAMIR I and II Operation Turquoise (1994)	UN France	FAILURE MIXED	-Genocide on its watch -Allowed escape of genocidaires -Genocide was nearly complete already
Kosovo	Operation Allied Force (1999) UNMIK/KFOR (1999-)	NATO UN	MIXED	-Most 'ethnic cleansing' occurred DURING operation -Continued presence of troops required to maintain stability
Somalia	UNOSOM II (1993-95)	UN	FAILURE	-Failed to halt fighting/anarchy
East Timor	INTERFET (1999) UNTAET (1999-2002)	Australian-led Coalition, UN	SUCCESS	-Rapid Deployment helped establish security -New state built from scratch
Congo	Operation Artemis (2003) MONUC	France, UN	MIXED	-Artemis helped stabilize situation in Bunia, but the security situation remained bad (worse) elsewhere. Peace prospects dim.
Sierra Leone	Operation Palliser (2000) UNAMSIL (1999-)	Britain UN	SUCCESS MIXED	-Helped undercut RUF and re-establish security -After a terrible effort at ensuring security early on, improvements in civilian/political reform have helped maintain fragile peace

This analysis does have a positive light however. The two cases that qualify as successes (INTERFET in East Timor and the British intervention into Sierra Leone) suggest that efforts at intervening to halt massive violence *can* be successful. It is imperative that these cases are fully examined in order to glean what conditions and strategies allowed for a successful outcome. A brief summary of these two operations follows below. Also, the numerous cases that qualify as 'MIXED' outcomes hold both successful as well as failed components. The successes deserve scrutiny so that they may be adapted to future operations. One final reality that should be

recognized is that the ‘measure of success’ of ‘lasting peace to date’ is obviously an ideal outcome. There have been, and will likely continue to be, cases where efforts that manage to halt massive, unconscionable violence (even if they fail to usher in ‘lasting peace’) are often better than failing to act and allowing the continued slaughter and terrorizing in large numbers of civilians.

Brief Overview of Two Rare Successes

The following description is meant to provide only a basic overview of the two successful interventions. Exhaustive descriptions are beyond the scope of this study. The second half of this study draws four lessons from these cases and discusses certain aspects of the operations in further detail.

INTERFET IN EAST TIMOR. Conflict in East Timor began in the early seventies as groups agitated for independence from Portuguese colonial rule. When Portugal began undertaking steps to hand administration of the territory over to a provisional government, civil war erupted between those seeking independence and those desiring integration into Indonesia (who were supported by Jakarta). Indonesia intervened and forcibly integrated East Timor as the 27th province of Indonesia in 1976. After over two decades of international diplomacy and continuing violence between the Indonesian military and the Fretilin independence movement, an agreement was reached in 1998 allowing for a popular referendum to determine if the people of the island sought greater autonomy within Indonesia or complete independence. The agreement allowed for the deployment of a UN mission (UNMET, authorized by the Security Council in June 1999) to organize and oversee the balloting, although the Indonesian military was responsible for the maintenance of security in the run-up to the election. Despite insecurity and reports of violence, the referendum was conducted on August 30th and the results (an 80% vote for independence) were announced on September 4th. Within hours of the announcement,

pro-Indonesia militias unleashed a wave of violence and destruction throughout the territory, displacing an estimated 300,000 internally and an additional 200,000 or more were forcibly expelled into West Timor (out of a population of roughly 850,000).⁹ The exact number of deaths remains uncertain but has been estimated at “greatly in excess of 1,000 persons.”¹⁰ Indonesian military forces did not act to halt the violence and many witnesses reported that they actually coordinated and assisted in the destruction.¹¹

An intense round of diplomatic pressure calling upon Indonesian President Habibie to allow for the deployment of a multinational intervention force ensued after repeated claims that the Indonesian military would halt the violence proved hollow. Habibie relented on 12 September and the Security Council authorized the deployment of the International Force for East Timor (INTERFET), to be led by Australia, through Resolution 1264 on 15 September. The mission was authorized under Chapter VII, allowing it to take “all necessary measures” to fulfill its mandate.¹² INTERFET commenced its deployment only five days later and would eventually host an operation of 10,000 troops. The mission aggressively set about securing the region and reinstating public order and confidence to allow for the return of refugees. Although the operation faced little resistance from the militias (estimated at 10,000 persons) and suffered few casualties, the mission was operating in an openly hostile environment and demonstrated its robust capabilities through patrols throughout the area. After the security had been restored, INTERFET handed over power to the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) in February 2000. The operation was widely praised, with two commentators noting that

⁹ Human Rights Watch. *East Timor: Forced Expulsion to West Timor and the Refugee Crisis*, Washington, DC: Human Rights Watch, (December 1999)

¹⁰ Dunn, James. *Crimes Against Humanity in East Timor, January to October 1999: Their Nature and Causes*, (14 February 2001) Report Available from East Timor Action Network, available at: <<http://www.etan.org/news/2001a/dunn1.htm>>

¹¹ Report of the Security Council mission to Jakarta and Dili, UN Document S/1999/976, (14 September 1999), available at: <<http://documents-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N99/270/21/pdf/N9927021.pdf>>

¹² Security Council Resolution 1264, (15 September 1999), S/RES/1264

“(w)hat distinguishes the East Timor intervention from other cases in the post-Cold War era is its success...”¹³

INTERVENTION IN SIERRA LEONE. Civil war broke out in Sierra Leone in 1991, when the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) launched its insurgency against President Joseph Momoh. Led by Foday Sankoh and funded by Liberian warlord (soon to be president) Charles Taylor, the RUF exploited “criminality, torture, drugs, plunder, and rape in battle” using terror and mutilation as tools against the population.¹⁴ The 1990s were marked by widespread violence, coups, and the use of mercenary forces in attempts to defeat the rebels. The Lome Peace Agreement in July 1999 sought to end the fighting and the Security Council authorized the United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNSAMIL) to monitor the process of the agreement and disarmament. Despite its Chapter VII mandate, the UN operation had neither the resources nor the size to take action when the RUF defected from the agreement and re-launched full-scale war. The rebels rampaged through the capital, held UN peacekeepers hostage, and unleashed a wave of brutality against the population. Some commentators predicted that the UN debacle in Sierra Leone marked “the end of UN peacekeeping.”¹⁵

UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan appealed to member states to respond. In May 2000, Britain launched ‘Operation Palliser.’ An 800-man battalion rapidly deployed to the country, secured the airport, and achieved “rapid results against the RUF which a UN military force ten times their size had not come close to matching.”¹⁶ The UK operation also undertook a massive training operation for government security forces, providing short-term training to 14,000

¹³ Wheeler, Nicholas and Tim Dunne, “East Timor and the New Humanitarian Intervention” *International Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (2001), p. 807

¹⁴ Chege, Michael. “Sierra Leone: The State that Came Back from the Dead” *Washington Quarterly*, Vol. 25, No. 3, (Summer 2002), p. 149

¹⁵ Bando, Doug, “The End of UN Peacekeeping” *The Washington Times*, (12 June 2000)

¹⁶ Connaughton, Richard. “The Mechanics and Nature of British Interventions into Sierra Leone (2000) and Afghanistan (2001-2002)” *Civil Wars*, Vol. 5, Is. 2, (Summer 2002)

members of the new Armed Forces and establishing a long-term program for follow-on units.¹⁷

The British operation was a major moral boost to the general population and the UN mission and gave UNAMSIL “breathing space to regroup, recover credibility and reassert its presence.”¹⁸ In the aftermath of the UK intervention, UNAMSIL was greatly expanded in size and became the largest peacekeeping force in the world. The next two years witnessed an eventual cessation of hostilities, the disarming of over 45,000 militia, and a democratic election in 2002.¹⁹

The insights offered from these two cases are multiple and should be adapted into future operations that are geared towards peace enforcement during ongoing conflict. While every situation and conflict is unique, four key characteristics emerge from an examination of the historical record and appear to have been crucial components of the few successful military interventions to be undertaken in recent history. The following section distills these important characteristics of the two successes, draws examples from multiple other interventions that proved less successful, and argues that these four components should be adapted into future missions.

GETTING IT RIGHT: Four Lessons From Successful Military Interventions

TAKE SIDES: The Folly of Impartiality

While UN peacekeeping has traditionally relied upon the doctrine of neutrality, operations undertaken since the early 1990s have demonstrated the limits of a strategy focused upon avoiding actions that might upset either party to the conflict. The disastrous UN operation in Bosnia (UNPROFOR), which attempted to remain neutral despite clear aggression and numerous cease-fire violations by Serbia and its proxy fighters, demonstrated the drawbacks to impartiality in operations placed into ongoing conflict. This neutrality played itself out in

¹⁷ *Lessons Learned From United Nations Peacekeeping Experiences in Sierra Leone*, Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, UN Department of Peacekeeping, (September 2003)

¹⁸ *ibid.* p. 13

¹⁹ Chege, “Sierra Leone: The State That Came Back From the Dead,” p. 150

Bosnia through such tragedies as the arms embargo (which essentially solidified the military advantage of the Serbs against the less well-armed Muslims) and produced an environment in which “UNPROFOR’s commitment to impartiality often ended up aiding the strongest side in the conflict against the weaker.”²⁰ The result of UNPROFOR’s unalterable neutrality was not an end to the violence, “but years of military stalemate, slow bleeding, and deflationary diplomatic haggling.”²¹ This failed strategy was recognized implicitly in the Brahimi Report on UN Peace Operations, which noted that “impartiality is not the same as neutrality” and that missions must be prepared to act against parties if necessary to accomplish the mandate.²²

Such a recognition is welcome and necessary to prevent the failures of the past, yet cases of ‘peace enforcement’ that lack consent and are aimed at halting a humanitarian crisis should go even farther. In some situations, international interveners should be prepared to choose a side in the conflict and should make it the goal of the intervention to assist in militarily defeating other combatants. While this strategy has several drawbacks, such as significant risks of casualties, high costs, and a likely increase in short-term violence, there are several benefits that recommend it as a successful strategy.

The primary benefit of the ‘picking a winner’ strategy (as described by Daniel Byman) is that in situations where one or more parties are unwilling to compromise on their demands, decisive military victory may be the only reasonable prospect for achieving a lasting peace.²³ The difficulties inherent in attempting to reach a compromised cessation of hostilities in internal conflicts is highlighted by the fact that less than 30% of post-World War II settlements have

²⁰ Daadler, Ivo H. “Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia” in Brown (ed.) *The International Dimensions of Internal Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press (1996), p. 56

²¹ Betts, Richard. “The Delusion of Impartial Intervention” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 73, No. 6, (November/December 1994), p. 25

²² Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping, UN Document A/55/305-S/2000/809 (1998)

²³ Byman, Daniel. *Keeping the Peace: Lasting Solutions to Ethnic Conflict*, Baltimore, MD: The John Hopkins University Press (2002), p. 199

ended through negotiated agreements that did not result in partition.²⁴ It is therefore an unfortunate reality that decisive victory by one side is often the most viable path towards creating a stable peace. The sooner the war is brought to a decisive end, the sooner all sides can begin the vital work of building a stable structure for preventing future conflict.²⁵

While impartiality makes sense in certain types of interventions (specifically ones that seek to oversee a cease fire which all sides have committed to), it is premised on the optimistic (and at times absurdly naïve) premise that all parties truly desire peace and can be trusted to fulfill their side of the bargain to achieve such peace. In reality, history has shown that parties have been willing to sign a peace accord even when they have no intention of respecting it, whether to buy time, gain military leverage, recruit new forces, procure more arms, or devise new strategies. In other cases, parties may legitimately commit to peace, but then renege when the situation does not unfold to their advantage or splinter into various factions, with segments of the party becoming ‘spoilers’ to the peace process. In yet other cases, parties may simply have a vested interest in the continuation of conflict and remain opposed to any steps that may halt the violence. Under such circumstances, the international community must recognize that if it is to take the serious step of intervening in the midst of ongoing violence, it must be prepared to pick a winner.

Sierra Leone offers the unique opportunity of viewing the two strategies (impartiality versus partiality) played out in the same environment simultaneously. The UN mission UNAMSIL attempted to play an impartial role in mediating the dispute between the RUF and the government by stressing its commitment to the Lome Peace Accords (which granted RUF leader and war criminal Foday Sankoh credibility by offering him the Vice Presidency), by distancing

²⁴ Kaufmann, Chaim. “Possible and Impossible Solutions to Ethnic Civil Wars” in Brown (ed.) *Nationalism and Ethnic Conflict*, Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, (2001)

²⁵ Luttwak, Edward N. “Give War a Chance” *Foreign Affairs*, Vol 78, No. 4, (July/August 1999)

itself from ECOMOG (which was widely viewed as biased towards the government), and by failing to take action against the RUF even when it became apparent they were in clear violation of the peace agreement.²⁶ This impartiality culminated in a new RUF offensive and the rebel's disarmament and abduction of 500 peacekeepers in May of 2000.

British intervention in Sierra Leone, however, was unambiguously partial. The UK recognized that the RUF and its leadership were unwilling to work towards resolution of the conflict, discredited by their continual violation of cease-fires, and illegitimate through their use of war crimes to terrorize the population.²⁷ The UK engaged militarily with the rebels, forcing them out of the town of Waterloo and re-securing Freetown from RUF control.²⁸ The British also launched a military assault on the rebel group West Side Boys, which had taken 10 British hostages, resulting in 25 deaths, 18 casualties, and the capture of the group's leader.²⁹ The British were unequivocally committed to assisting the government, as evidenced through their intensive training of the new Sierra Leone Army. This decisive action by the British is widely regarded as being the turning point in the entire Sierra Leone operation.³⁰

Similarly, INTERFET in East Timor had the clear objective of providing security and halting violence in the after-math of the election. Since the violence was being carried out by pro-Indonesian militia (the pro-independence FALINTIL-the military arm of FRETELIN- had agreed to voluntarily canton its troops in the run-up to the ballot to ease security concerns), the mission had a clear and definable enemy: the militias. By default, INTERFET essentially

²⁶ International Crisis Group. *Sierra Leone: Time For a New Military and Political Strategy*, Washington, DC: International Crisis Group, (11 April 2001)

²⁷ *ibid.*, p 7-13

²⁸ Nuamah, Kwaku and I William Zartmen. "Case Study: Intervention in Sierra Leone" National Intelligence Council Project: Intervention in Internal Conflict, (December 2001), available at: <<http://www.cissm.umd.edu/NIC/internalconflict.htm>>

²⁹ Chris McGreal, Steven Morris, and Patrick Wintour, "After 16 Long Days, Free in 20 Minutes" *The Guardian*, (11 September 2000)

³⁰ Harman, Danna. "Sierra Leone: The Path from Pariah to Peace" *Christian Science Monitor*, Vol. 94, Issue 207, (18 September 2002)

became the military wing of the independence movement on a mission to oversee East Timor's partition from Indonesia. However, this operation raises an important issue regarding the strategy of taking sides. Clearly, it is only a wise strategy when the intervening force is significantly stronger militarily than the combatants which are designated as 'enemies.' Australia would only agree to the INTERFET operation with the consent of the Indonesian government, fearing that it might be drawn into a wider conflict with the Indonesian armed forces (TNI). The operation put considerable effort into ensuring the cooperation of TNI, including high level military negotiations prior to INTERFET's arrival and continual communication between the Australian lead General and his Indonesian counterpart.³¹ So while it is sometimes vital that an intervention be willing to engage in battle against one side to the conflict, an obvious prerequisite to such a strategy is to ensure that the chosen 'enemy' is not so strong as to turn the mission into a full-scale war.

While it will at times be necessary (and wise) for an intervention to recognize the need to take sides in a conflict and help facilitate a decisive victory of one side over another, there are obvious downsides to such a strategy. The greatest downside is that it risks a short-term increase in violence, casualties, and destruction in order to achieve its long-term goal of lasting peace. The life and death nature of this trade-off (including a higher chance for casualties among the interveners) demands that the decision to pursue this course not be taken lightly. There is the hope, however, that a solid commitment to ensure a victory for one side of the conflict may have a deterrent effect and result in the giving up of arms by the designated 'losing side.' For example, the militias in East Timor chose to back down in the face of INTERFET's military superiority, the RUF in Sierra Leone eventually disarmed peaceably, and an argument could be

³¹ Wheeler, Nicholas and Tim Dunne, "East Timor and the New Humanitarian Intervention" *International Affairs*, Vol. 77, No. 4 (2001), p. 824

made that the threat of overwhelming force was a decisive factor in the US's virtually bloodless interventions in Haiti and Liberia.

The conclusion reached from examining successes and failures in past peace enforcement missions is that it will at times be necessary to actively seek to bring about a military defeat of one of the parties to the conflict. The Brahimi Report acknowledged this reality in reference to the genocide in Rwanda when it noted that "(i)n some cases, local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so."³² While taking sides may help facilitate a lessening of resistance from enemy combatants, this will only be true if the intervention is willing and able to use decisive force to achieve its aims.

DON'T BE SHY: The Logic of Robust Force

The second lesson gleaned through an analysis of successful and unsuccessful interventions in the past is that peace enforcement operations should be given the means and the authorization to employ robust force if necessary. In the case of peace enforcements undertaken in the midst of ongoing conflict, the need for rules of engagement that allow for lethal force are absolutely critical to the success of the operation. There are three separate, but related, components to fulfilling this need, including a strong mandate authorizing the use of force, on-the-ground permissive rules of engagement, and the capabilities and experience necessary to exercise force.

While non-use of force was the norm for UN operations throughout the Cold War (with the exception of ONUC in the Congo in 1964), the failures of humanitarian interventions in the early 1990s led to a recognition that strong, Chapter VII mandates are necessary in missions where the threat of renewed violence or ongoing conflict is evident. The weak mandate of

³² Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping, UN Document A/55/305-S/2000/809 (1998)

UNPROFOR in Bosnia and its inability and unwillingness to respond to violations of numerous agreements resulted in virtual impunity for combatants and left the UN, in the words of one commentator, unable to do more than “count body bags.”³³ The tragic Serbian takeover of the Srebrenica safe-haven, and the subsequent murder of 7,000 Muslims, clearly demonstrated the futility of an unwillingness to use force. While it is impossible to say with certainty what the effect of using force early on in the conflict would have had on Serb behavior, its absence provided “encouragement (to) the Serbs to continue with their aggressive behavior.”³⁴

Standing in stark contrast to this unwillingness to employ force are the two successful cases described above. Both British intervention in Sierra Leone and Australian-led intervention in East Timor were premised on a robust willingness and ability to employ force as necessary. In the case of Britain, as already noted, the intervention militarily engaged with the rebels and went out of its way to make clear “that the force was not casualty-adverse, and there can be no doubt that this essential message was taken on by the RUF.”³⁵ The British also engaged in public displays of its military prowess in Freetown and committed itself to an ‘over the horizon’ military commitment to serve as a deterrent to the rebel’s continued attacks.

In East Timor, the Australian government insisted on, and received, Security Council authorization to employ robust force. Resolution 1264 called upon INTERFET “to restore peace and security in East Timor, to protect and support UNAMET in carrying out its tasks and, within force capabilities, to facilitate humanitarian assistance operations” and authorized “the States participating in the multinational force to take all necessary measures to fulfill this mandate.”³⁶ The force deployed eventually included three brigades and nearly 10,000 troops. One

³³ Rieff, David. *Slaughterhouse: Bosnia and the Failure of the West*, New York, NY: Simon and Schuster, (1995)

³⁴ Daadler, “Fear and Loathing in the Former Yugoslavia,” p. 63

³⁵ Connaughton, “The Mechanics and Nature of British Interventions into Sierra Leone (2000) and Afghanistan (2001-2002)” p. 84

³⁶ Security Council Resolution 1264, (15 September 1999), S/RES/1264

commentator noted that “a highly disciplined force, robust rules of engagement, and a willingness to use deadly force (and to demonstrate that willingness) were all force multipliers.”³⁷

This robust display of force and willingness to employ it is credited (along with the gaining of Indonesian military consent with convincing the militias to back down).³⁸

One final operation deserves mention for its willingness to use decisive military force. The France-led EU Operation Artemis, undertaken in June of 2003 to suppress violence in Bunia in the Democratic Republic of Congo was notable for its robust engagement of combatants. Although the operation chose to remain technically impartial, this did not equate to passivity. The operation was authorized under Chapter VII and tasked with stabilization of the security situation in the town and protection of civilians. Within four days of the formal launch of the operation, the force had already engaged in pitched combat with both of the main antagonistic militias, killing several.³⁹ The operation was successful in returning security and stability to the town, although it has been criticized for the limited scope of its geographic focus and the fact that most militias simply retreated to areas outside of the EU’s jurisdiction.⁴⁰

There is ample evidence to suggest that the UN has learned the valuable lesson of providing operations in areas of continued or potential violence with the authorization to use robust force if necessary. The Brahimi Report called for mandates that explicitly authorized the use of force when necessary and “bigger forces, better equipped and more costly, but able to pose a credible deterrent threat, in contrast to the symbolic and non-threatening presence that characterizes traditional peacekeeping.” Indeed, nine of the last ten missions authorized by the

³⁷ Schwartz, Eric. “The Intervention in East Timor” National Intelligence Council Project: Intervention in Internal Conflict, (December 2001), available at: <<http://www.cissm.umd.edu/NIC/internalconflict.htm>>

³⁸ *ibid*

³⁹ Ulrkisen, Stale, Catriona Gourlay, and Catriona Mace. “Operation Artemis: The Shape of Things to Come?” *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 11, No. 3, (Autumn 2004), p. 519

⁴⁰ *Operation Artemis: The Lessons of the Interim Emergency Multinational Force*, Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, Military Division, UN Department of Peacekeeping, (October 2004), p. 14

Security Council were either Chapter VII missions or follow-on civilian missions to previous Chapter VII operations (see Table 2). This recognition of the need for a robust force is welcome, although some current operations have the mandate, but lack the means, to undertake decisive military operations, which is why it is at times necessary to illicit the leadership of a single nation to head the mission.

Table 2: Current/Ongoing United Nations 'Peacekeeping' Operations⁴¹

Mission	Location	Dates	Chapter VII?
UNTSO	Middle East	May 1948-	No
UNMOGIP	India/Pakistan	Jan 1949-	No
UNFICYP	Cyprus	March 1964-	No
UNDOF	Golan Heights	June 1974-	No
UNIFIL	Lebanon	March 1978-	No
MINURSO	Western Sahara	April 1991-	No
UNOMIG	Georgia	August 1993-	No
UNMIK	Kosovo	June 1999	No (but security guaranteed by KFOR which was authorized under Chap VII by Resolution 1244)
UNAMSIL	Sierra Leone	October 1999-	Yes
MONUC	Dem Rep of Congo	November 1999-	Yes
UNMEE	Eritrea-Ethiopia	July 2000-	No
UNMISET	East Timor	May 2002-	No (but successor to INTERFET which was authorized under Chap VII by Resolution 1264)
UNMIL	Liberia	September 2003-	Yes
UNOCI	Cote d'Ivoire	April 2004-	Yes
MINUSTAH	Haiti	June 2004-	Yes
ONUB	Burundi	June 2004-	Yes
UNMIS	Sudan	March 2005	Yes

FOLLOW THE LEADER: The Need for A Lead Nation

One of the interesting similarities of the two cases identified as being successful is that both were led by lead-nations. This is not a coincidence. The historical record suggests that in cases where peace must be actively enforced, there are a variety of benefits to having a lead nation take the role. The most fundamental benefits are the ability to rapidly deploy, the ability to mount a coherent mission, and the ability to fund a robust mission.

The chronic difficulty experienced by the UN is rapidly deploying forces in time-sensitive humanitarian emergencies stems from the ad hoc nature of the peacekeeping enterprise

⁴¹ Information drawn from United Nations Peacekeeping website, as of 18 April 2005, available at: <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/index.asp>>

(including the lack of a standing force) and the reluctance of member states to provide troops and materials in a timely manner (often due to a lack of political will to act and/or concern over casualties to domestic soldiers). The drawbacks of delayed deployment were most glaringly seen in Rwanda, but they are a consistent component of most UN interventions. In explaining the UN's chronic struggle to garner troops for a rapid deployment of an operation, Kofi Annan has compared UN peacekeeping to a volunteer fire department that must "find the fire engines and the funds to run them before we can start dousing any flames."⁴² In the type of humanitarian crisis where a peace enforcement intervention is called for, timely response is a vital component to the success of the operation. In the case of INTERFET, the first troops arrived in East Timor five days after the Council authorized the mission. For the British in Sierra Leone, the British Joint Task Force Commander was ordered to deploy to Freetown on 5 May. Within 36 hours, the first special troopers had arrived and taken control of the international airport.⁴³ For Operation Artemis, the Security Council authorized the mission on May 30, a hundred French troops arrived in Bunia on June 6, prior to the formal launch of the mission by the EU. By mid-June, the force was engaged in combat and reached its full strength by the first week of July.⁴⁴ The logistical capabilities and immediate availability of troops make a lead-nation intervention better suited for humanitarian crisis.

Interventions led by a national contingent also tend to operate more coherent missions. The UN relies upon forces drawn from a variety of countries, creating severe challenges to communications, equipment procurement, and command and control arrangements. While these

⁴² Annan, Kofi. *We the Peoples: The Role of the United Nations in the Twenty-First Century*, New York, NY: The United Nations, (2000), p. 49

⁴³ Connaughton, "The Mechanics and Nature of British Interventions into Sierra Leone (2000) and Afghanistan (2001-2002)", p. 84

⁴⁴ Ulrkisen, et al. "Operation Artemis: The Shape of Things to Come?"

challenges are understandable byproducts of an ad hoc structure, they are ill suited for the types of operations where coordinated and rapid action is needed.

Lastly, the lead-nation model is preferable in robust operations as a means of paying for expensive missions. Robust operations are not cheap to undertake, and financial considerations can severely hamper UN efforts to respond to crisis. For example, the cost of the INTERFET operation was estimated at nearly \$1 billion, with Australia paying a large portion of the costs up front in the hopes of being reimbursed through a UN trust fund.⁴⁵

All of these factors suggest that the lead-nation model poses the best option for peace enforcement operations. While UN expertise and experience may make it ideal for traditional peacekeeping operations and transitional civilian/political operations, it is not suited for large scale, robust missions. In some cases, the difficulties of the intervention will require a lead nation or organization to head the mission. As Stanley Hoffman has noted, absent the commitment of a great power or strong regional organization, the record of humanitarian interventions “is likely to be sad and disappointing.”⁴⁶

AFTERWARD NOT AFTERTHOUGHT: The Linchpin of Long-Term Commitments

The final lesson to be drawn from a survey of recent successes and failures in humanitarian military intervention is that efforts to build a lasting and self-sustaining peace in countries emerging from conflict are long-term endeavors. While the previous three lessons have specifically related to strategies for undertaking peace enforcement, the need for a long-term commitment to rebuild shattered states is vital. While this criteria may fall outside of the focus on military intervention since it is the follow-on component to successful peace enforcement, it deserves mention since it is likely the most determinant factor to whether an

⁴⁵ “UN Nod For Force of 11,000 in East Timor” *Singapore Times*, (26 October 1999)

⁴⁶ Hoffman, Stanley. “The Politics and Ethics of Military Intervention” *Survival*, Vol. 37, No. 4, (Winter 1995-96), p. 48

operation qualifies as successful (those that have produced a lasting peace after the interveners have exited the scene) or a failure. Both the British intervention in Sierra Leone and INTERFET in East Timor were replaced or handed off to UN missions tasked with the daunting task of reconstructing (or constructing from scratch in the case of East Timor) state institutions and capacity to foster long-term peace and reconciliation. As the UN mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has demonstrated, helping to rebuild war-torn societies is a long-term and costly enterprise, yet is vital to the prevention of future conflict. While a full survey of the necessity and challenges of such reconstruction is beyond the scope of this study, it is worth noting that any operation which successfully brings violence to a halt temporarily but fails to help facilitate a long-term resolution will likely be futile since the chances of violence reemerging will be high. If the international community deems a situation to be serious enough to warrant the difficult and dangerous option of intervening militarily, it should be committed to providing the commitment, energy, attention, and resources necessary to help rebuild the fractured society after the violence is suppressed. Absent this commitment, conflict is likely to resume.

CONCLUSION: The Need for a Hard-Headed Humanitarianism

As stated at the outset, the overall goal of this study is to attempt to answer a fundamental question: *Can* the international community effectively intervene in cases of massive violence, and if so, how? The answer to this question: yes. Interventions in Sierra Leone and East Timor demonstrate that it is possible, under certain conditions, to mount successful humanitarian interventions and bring a halt to the violence. The four necessary criteria for such success discussed above attempt to answer ‘how’ these interventions can proceed effectively (see summary in Table 3). While every situation will present its own unique challenges and requirements, these four strategic components should be adapted and employed when possible.

Table 3: Summary of Four Peace Enforcement Strategies

Mission	Location	Unambiguous Partiality	Robust Use of Force	Lead State	Long-Term Commitment (Post-Peace Enforcement)
Operation Palliser-Britain	Sierra Leone	X	X	X	X?
Operation Artemis-EU	Congo	-	X	X	?
INTERFET-Australia	East Timor	X	X	X	X

Beyond the recommendations for peace enforcement operations outlined above, this analysis suggests two important realities. First, enforcing peace through outside intervention is difficult and dangerous. Members of the international community should be extremely cautious in exercising this option and must be under no illusion as to limits and downsides of military intervention. Beyond a ‘Responsibility to Protect,’ the international community also has a ‘Responsibility to Reflect’ upon the unfortunate realities of military intervention and the difficulties inherent in forcing combatants to lay down their arms. As the historical record demonstrates, military interventions have failed more often than they have succeeded and it is therefore imperative that such enforcement only be undertaken as a final resort, after all non-military means have been exhausted, and the humanitarian emergency is devastating enough to warrant a strategy fraught with peril.

The second reality that emerges from this study is that, in spite of the myriad of drawbacks to military intervention, there are times when an imperfect and risky strategy must be preferred to inaction. Rwanda demonstrated the result of looking the other way in the face of slaughter on a conscience-shocking scale. While there is much debate about what an early international intervention could have accomplished in Rwanda, it is safe to say that the results

would have been better than the results of failing to act at all.⁴⁷ Genocides and massive human rights abuses will continue to occur in various regions of the world, eliciting cries for intervention on one hand and excuses for inaction on the other. While the debate over the international community's 'responsibility to protect' is necessary, it is essential that this debate not overshadow the equally important task of attempting to learn from past mistakes and develop new strategies for such operations. This will help ensure that when it is determined that the international community *should* intervene, it has the tools, means, and strategies so that it *can* do so successfully.

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⁴⁷ Kuperman, Alan J. "Rwanda in Retrospect" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 1, (January/February 2000); Des Forges, Alison L. "Shame: Rationalizing Western Apathy on Rwanda" *Foreign Affairs*, Vol.79, No. 3, (May/June 2000)