

BOOK REVIEWS

WAR AND THE NEW DISORDER 21ST CENTURY

JEREMY BLACK
Continuum, New York, 2004



This excellent little book manages in its 180 pages to raise a variety of disquieting questions about some of the West's assumptions (often unconsciously held) about the nature of the post-Cold War 'peace' and the type of military preparedness required to preserve it.

Black argues that the end of the Cold War led to attempts to redefine an international order in which superpower conflict and the ultimate threat of mutual nuclear annihilation were replaced only briefly by concerns for a human security more broadly defined and guaranteed by multinational policing. Such musings were interrupted by the events of 11 September 2001, which re-aroused American militarism in the face of what suddenly appeared to be poorly controlled global

disorder.

He sketches these developments against the deeper background of changes in popular Western thinking about the role and possible shape of future wars. Some of this thinking had been conditioned by the implausibility of waging interstate wars in circumstances where nuclear Armageddon would be a logical outcome. Economic and social advances in the richer countries of the world had also led to changes in popular consciousness in which the claims of the state to compel its citizens to do military service under dangerous circumstances were regarded with suspicion and even revulsion. This led to the comforting but premature assumption that conflict situations could in future be shaped to suit Western technological solutions.

In addition, there was a chain of thought that held that since the US now possessed an overwhelming preponderance of military power, based on its economic and technological hegemony, it was foolish to consider security in terms of the lessons of the major wars experienced in Europe and the Far East in the 20th century. Such thoughts came to be encapsulated in what became known as the revolution in military affairs (RMA), which added the dimension of information warfare to the range of military capabilities in which the USA was deemed unchallengeable.

Black believes that the emphasis on American pre-eminence is misplaced, not because he thinks that its technological superiority can be challenged in the foreseeable future, but because he doubts the wisdom of treating the leading military power as a paradigm force. Instead he sees the USA as essentially atypical, and its assumed dominance as based on Americo-Eurocentric preconceptions, which take the Western state as the norm and focus on technological triumphalism.

If nothing else, he argues, the events in post-intervention Iraq and Afghanistan should have given us pause for deeper thought. In

short, has the obsession with Western types of warfare led us to overlook the global diversity of conflicts? 'Smart' weapons and technological advances in military systems, he claims, have failed to incorporate the multiple contexts of war, and especially the idea of what 'victory' might mean in such circumstances and from varying perspectives.

Even the building blocks of what was once described as the international order are no longer as sturdy as they once seemed. Not only has there been an increase in domestic conflict, but the state's loss of the monopoly of lethal force has had a remarkable effect on the conduct of foreign relations. Black goes on to analyse the difficulty of maintaining systems of international agreement and mediation, and notes the irony inherent in the West's premature self-confidence that the end of the Cold War would herald a period of virtually

untrammelled cultural, political and economic influence masquerading as globalisation.

From here he speculates on the future shape of conflict and the means with which it will be waged, emphasising the shortcomings of a narrowly technological approach.

The author is only too aware that so bold and broad a study, a series of linked essays, occasionally will leave the specialist reader uncomfortable about certain generalisations. But he is right to question the neat categorisations and classifications that have tended to lock thinking into an inflexibility that scarcely does justice to the fluid reality of international, and military, affairs.

If ever there was a book by this prolific historian that deserved a wide audience, this is it.

Richard Cornwell

YOU, THE PEOPLE

The United Nations, Transitional Administration and State-Building

SIMON CHESTERMAN

Oxford University Press, New York, 2004



This excellent book by Simon Chesterman, executive director of the Institute for Law and Justice at New York University, School of Law, is essential reading for any serious student or practitioner of peacekeeping, peace-building and current debates around post-conflict reconstruction. The book was completed in late 2004 when peacekeeping practice in Afghanistan (2002–) had departed from the expansive political functions in Kosovo (1999–) and East Timor (1999–2002), presenting a philosophical challenge to the increasing aggregation of sovereign powers exercised in United Nations (UN) peace operations since the 1990s. This became known as the ‘light footprint’, in which Lakhdar Brahimi sought to rely on as limited an international presence and as many Afghan staff as possible.

Transitional administrations represent the most complex operations attempted by the UN. The missions in Kosovo and East Timor are commonly seen as unique in the history of the UN. But they may also be seen as the latest in a series of operations that have involved the UN in ‘state-building’ activities. Here the UN

attempted to develop the institutions of government by temporarily assuming some, or all, of those sovereign powers – but with very different levels of success.

Chesterman eschews the dead-end street of many analysts who use the framework of first-, second- and third-generation peacekeeping as the lens through which to understand UN missions. His view is that unpredictable events demanded new forms of missions with practice running well ahead of theory and that this will continue to happen. For him the focus must be on the local political context within which the various operations function – that is, the core function or purpose of the peace mission rather than its technical mandate in terms of Chapter VI or VII of the UN Charter. This is akin to approaches adopted by other noted scholars such as Michael Doyle and Jarat Chopra, who have proposed categories of transitional authority, and indeed of peacekeeping.

The first two chapters survey the brief history of transitional administrations, starting with the League of Nations and touching on colonialism and military occupation, then moving on to discuss the evolution of UN Security Council practice since World War II. Chesterman takes a refreshingly candid look at colonialism and the Trusteeship System – the former now condemned as an international crime and the latter untenable in today’s politically correct world – by arguing that: “An age less attuned to political sensitivities also provides a clearer-eyed assessment of the requirements of such administration, challenging the conventional wisdom that ‘ownership’ on the part of the local population is essential to the process” (p 6). He returns to this theme in a separate chapter, arguing that contemporary transitional administrations might benefit from being more, not less, ‘colonial’ at the outset of their mission. Other key and forceful arguments are presented eloquently but similarly provocatively and with irrefutable logic. For example, he takes a pragmatic view, based on his interpretation that the UN Security Council traditionally “provides legal authorization only for those enforcement actions that coincide with the willingness of certain key states to lead a military operation” (p 49). Hence his view that the reality of how

UN peace operations happen is the reverse of prescribed theory: “[M]ember states determine what resources they are prepared to commit to a problem and a mandate is cobbled together around those resource – often in the hope that a political solution will be forthcoming at some later date” (p 98).

Much of his argument on this issue refers to the fact that the UN Security Council had not explicitly authorised transitional administration-like powers in the three most complex and challenging instances, namely Congo (1960–1964), Somalia (1992–1995) and Sierra Leone (1999–).

Chapters 3 to 7 examine five key issues that have posed the greatest political and practical challenges to transitional administrations: peace and security, the role of the UN as government, judicial reconstruction, economic reconstruction, and exit strategies. On the first, he argues, persuasively, that the “single most important aim of any peace operation is to establish the conditions for sustainable security for the civilian population” (p 112) – a task that inevitably falls upon the military in the absence of a readily deployable UN civilian police force and one that will have to be accepted by military peacekeepers for years to come. But Chesterman goes beyond the provision of protection. In an immediate post-conflict environment lacking a functioning law enforcement and judicial system, rule of law functions may have to be temporarily entrusted to the military. Furthermore, when it comes to the administration and enforcement of the rule of law and law and order, he argues that sustainability (that is, local support and relevance) should generally take precedence over its international ‘quality’. Basically then, “... an appropriate balance of short-term measures to assert the (re-)establishment of the rule of law, and longer-term institution-building that will last beyond the life of the mission and the fickle interest of international actors” (p 182).

While peacemakers often speak of getting combatants to buy into a peace process, Chesterman argues (Chapter 6) that the dominant factor affecting how assistance is allocated and spent is the politics of the donor countries themselves. This is music to the ears of critics of donor politics, who would generally agree

with his assessment that “[h]umanitarian and development assistance remains, therefore, a voluntary and essentially ad hoc enterprise” (p 203) where there is astonishingly little interest in assessing whether aid achieves what it is intended to do.

Beyond the requirement for civilian protection, Chapter 4 looks at the nature of governance (provocatively entitled ‘Consultation and Accountability: Building Democracy Through Benevolent Autocracy’) where Chesterman presents his view that local ownership may be the desired end state – indeed part of the exit strategy – of a transitional authority, but that it cannot be the means. Much of what Chesterman argues is base logic – hence it is difficult to fault his blunt view that the international community is too reluctant to accept that the legitimacy of a transitional administration stems, in large part, from military occupation and that the emphasis is too often on form (such as the technical prowess in running elections instead of measuring what elections are meant to achieve in themselves (local legitimacy and process). “More often than not,” he argues, “elections may simply be a short-term tactic that is used to encourage actors to buy into a peace process – or they are staged because they are part of an accepted template of what typically happens towards the end of a peace operation” (p 206). Inevitably the question of the proposed elections in Iraq (in October 2005) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (in 2006) comes to mind – although Chesterman does not deal with the prospects for either.

Some themes stand out in this book. One is the issue of political clarity about the purpose and end-state of any transitional administrative system – and realism about what is practically achievable. A second is the responsibility that inevitably accrues to military peacekeepers to protect civilians and provide law and order and how important this is to make an early impact. A third is the utility of elections, not as is often seen as an end in itself, but merely as an important step in a process where the ultimate criteria of success may not be to transpose democracy and impose international human rights standards, but to set a country off on a different path and break a cycle of conflict. A fourth is simply

that of practicality – that the judgement of a new constitution is not in the ‘objective’ (or Western) quality of its human and international rights standards, but in its improvement on a previous situation and the genuine ownership of new laws and institutions by an oppressed and abused public. It is both inaccurate and counter-productive, he argues, to assert that transitional administration depends upon the consent or ownership of local populations. “It is inaccurate because if genuine local control were possible than a transitional administration would not be necessary. It is counter-productive because insincere claims of local ownership lead to frustration and suspicion on the part of local actors” (p 239). A final theme is the requirement for predictability, relevance and local control (either by the mission or through engagement with the affected population) of relief and reconstruction funds.

This being said, some of Chesterman’s prescriptions may themselves be too dirigiste, such as

his view that local elections should precede national elections, and his disdain of the impact of ‘gender-mainstreaming’ in peace operations. Yet throughout Chesterman buttresses his arguments and views with a razor-sharp analysis of the characteristics of past and current peace missions – reflecting a profound understanding of peacekeeping in all its permutations and forms. At a time that the US (the unaware imperial power, in his view) is contemplating not an insurgency, but civil war in Iraq in the run-up to the October elections, one cannot but conclude with the logic that “[s]tate-building after a war will always take years, perhaps decades, and it is disingenuous to suggest otherwise to domestic publics ... Elections may prove evidence of this transformation, but they are only a small part of what is required to realize it” (p 235).

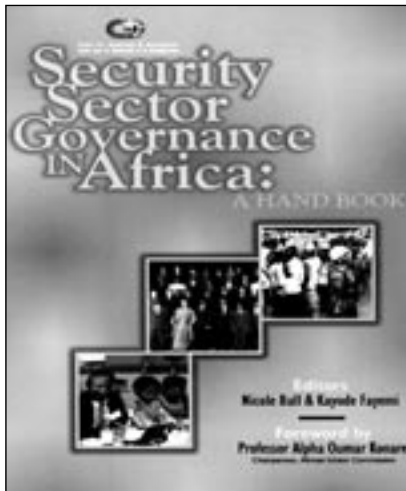
This is a gem of a book.

Jakkie Cilliers

SECURITY SECTOR GOVERNANCE IN AFRICA:

A Handbook, 2004

NICOLE BALL AND KAYODE FAYEMI



The issue of security is as old as civilisation. As civilisations evolved, human beings had to build collective security structures to protect themselves from other human beings and beasts. In the early civilisations of the Middle East, pastoral peoples formed the first city-states to provide defence and protection against nomadic marauding tribes. And so security services were born. Over the ages these security services have evolved and expanded their roles in the overall governance of the state. Unfortunately, owing to the power vested in them – the monopoly of force and violence – these security services often became powers unto themselves and threats to the state and the people. Coups d'état and military regimes were prevalent in much of Africa, Latin America and the Far East in the 20th century. There were also instances of governments misusing their security forces to protect the security of the regime rather than that of the people.

In the post-Cold War era, with a new focus on human security and democracy, there is an evolving understanding of the linkages between security and development in the under-developed world. Nobody disputes that security is a requisite for development, just as nobody can ignore the essentiality of development for ensuring

sustainable human security. The human security paradigm makes development and security two sides of the same coin. Within this paradigm, how should the security sector be governed to ensure appropriate, adequate, accountable and affordable security services that will contribute to human security and development? This question is of particular importance in Africa, where the need for human security and sustainable development is paramount.

Security sector governance in Africa, a collaborative effort between the Centre for Democracy and Development in Lagos, the Centre for International Policy in Washington DC, and the Institute for Security Studies in Pretoria, is possibly the first attempt at developing a practical guide to the issues in security sector governance. It is heavily influenced by African experiences and thinking, and as such is of particular usefulness to Africa's developing democracies and post-conflict states.

The book defines the security sector as comprising all institutions of state responsible for securing the state and its population from fear of violence. It is unique in that, according to this definition, it discusses not only defence (as often happens), but also governance issues related to the armed forces, the police, intelligence services, paramilitary forces, related ministries and departments and governmental oversight organisations, as well as non-state security bodies and civil society. It stresses the importance of civil oversight, transparency and accountability, and recognises that in good security sector governance all the actors must cooperate in a spirit of mutual trust and understanding as well as acceptance of their responsibilities.

The book is premised on the existence of a functioning democracy, the rule of law, and a system of checks and balances as conditions for good, democratic security sector governance. The security services do not exist in a vacuum and the issue of good governance is applicable to the state on the whole. Good security sector governance requires functional democratic governance structures such as the executive, parliament, parliamentary committees and other oversight bodies such as an auditor-general and public complaints commissions. The essence of good security sector governance is ensuring that the security services are aligned with the core

values, principles and practices of democratic governance. The most important of these are transparency, accountability, a legal basis for the security services, and civil oversight.

The book offers practical guidance on the important function of policy development and implementation. Lack of a coherent policy framework often results in inappropriate and unaffordable security services. Policy provides clear guidelines for developing strategies and plans, enhances discipline in the utilisation of resources, provides predictability, and promotes performance measurement and accountability. Policy formulation is essentially a political process and security policies must be approved by parliament. The quality will be improved if policy formulation is an open and consultative process with all actors contributing equally. The chapter on policy development and implementation provides many diagrams and checklists to guide security sector practitioners.

Africa faces many challenges for sustainable development. In this light, responsible public expenditure management is crucial for 'a better future for all'. The security sector, like all other sectors of government, should thus be subject to the principles and practices of good public expenditure management. The book discusses these in detail and provides guidance on planning, programming and budgeting processes as well as expenditure control. It does not attempt to prescribe an ideal model but focuses on universal principles and procedural guidelines. It stresses the importance of transparency and accountability in public expenditure management, but admits to the need for some degree of confidentiality in matters of national security. It argues that this does not justify a lower level of oversight or lack of adherence to the stated principles but a different form of oversight for specific areas of national security. The decision to deviate from standard practice should be subject to parliamentary approval. The chapter on managing financial resources provides step-by-step guidance for the execution of public expenditure management processes.

The book takes cognisance of the developments towards regional and sub-regional security cooperation in Africa and the establishment of

the corresponding protocols and mechanisms. It positions security sector governance in the regional contexts and argues that the governance of the security sector requires a regional approach because of the common security needs of states, the cross-border nature of many security challenges, the need for collective responses and for coordination and harmonisation of the policies and actions of all actors. It argues that the main issues that have to be addressed by regional and sub-regional organisations are the harmonisation of policies and principles of security sector governance and monitoring the implementation of such policies. The underlying imperative is a commitment to democracy, human security and good governance.

The concluding chapter summarises the major challenges facing security sector governance in Africa. These include the lack of a tradition of democratic norms and practices in some countries; balancing the need for confidentiality with transparency, accountability and control; overcoming vested interests; ensuring a broad-based security sector approach; enhancing the knowledge base of all actors; and situating the transformation of security sector governance in the correct political context. These challenges are not unique to Africa. But in the African context, the challenge is to find African solutions to African problems.

Security sector governance in Africa makes an important contribution to the literature on this subject. Its most valuable attribute is its practical nature. Because it is based on African case studies particularly the work of African security sector researchers and practitioners, this adds to its relevance for the continent. In the foreword, Professor Alpha Oumar Konaré, chairperson of the African Union Commission, comments: "The practical tools and lessons presented here from a variety of experiences will inspire, support and assist our security institutions, military academies, research institutions, civil society organisations and international actors in the critical task of security sector governance in Africa."

Len le Roux