

TASK 1

SEPARATING POLICY LEVEL ISSUES CONCERNED WITH PRACTICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION FROM DOCTRINE LEVEL ISSUES

Rationale

- 15 The participants were asked to consider two theoretical questions in a plenary session. The first concerns levels of military decision-making and responsibility in PSOs. Was the traditional separation of strategic, operational and tactical levels appropriate to the conduct and study of PSOs and related doctrine, or was a new formulation required?
- 16 To achieve greater clarity on the boundary areas during this and subsequent deliberations, the following was suggested as an initial attempt at delineation:

POLICY AREA	DOCTRINE AREA
Legal and political arrangements within international organisations (global, regional or subregional)	Mandate questions
Decisions to apply non-forcible measures, externally, to parties in a conflict	Consequences of political guidance arrangements
Financial questions re intervention	Concepts of operations
Decisions to intervene (consensually forcibly), or not	Force composition questions or (including burden sharing)
Decisions on when to intervene	Command arrangements
Origins of mandates for forces committed to intervention operations	Rules of Engagement
	Tactics

Task

- 17 The participants were challenged with the task of clarifying the boundary between policy and doctrine, as framed by the following questions:

- *Can we agree, or refine, the boundary between strategy/policy questions in PSOs and those at the operational and tactical levels?*
- *Is there any other conceptual packaging of the issues which would assist our work?*

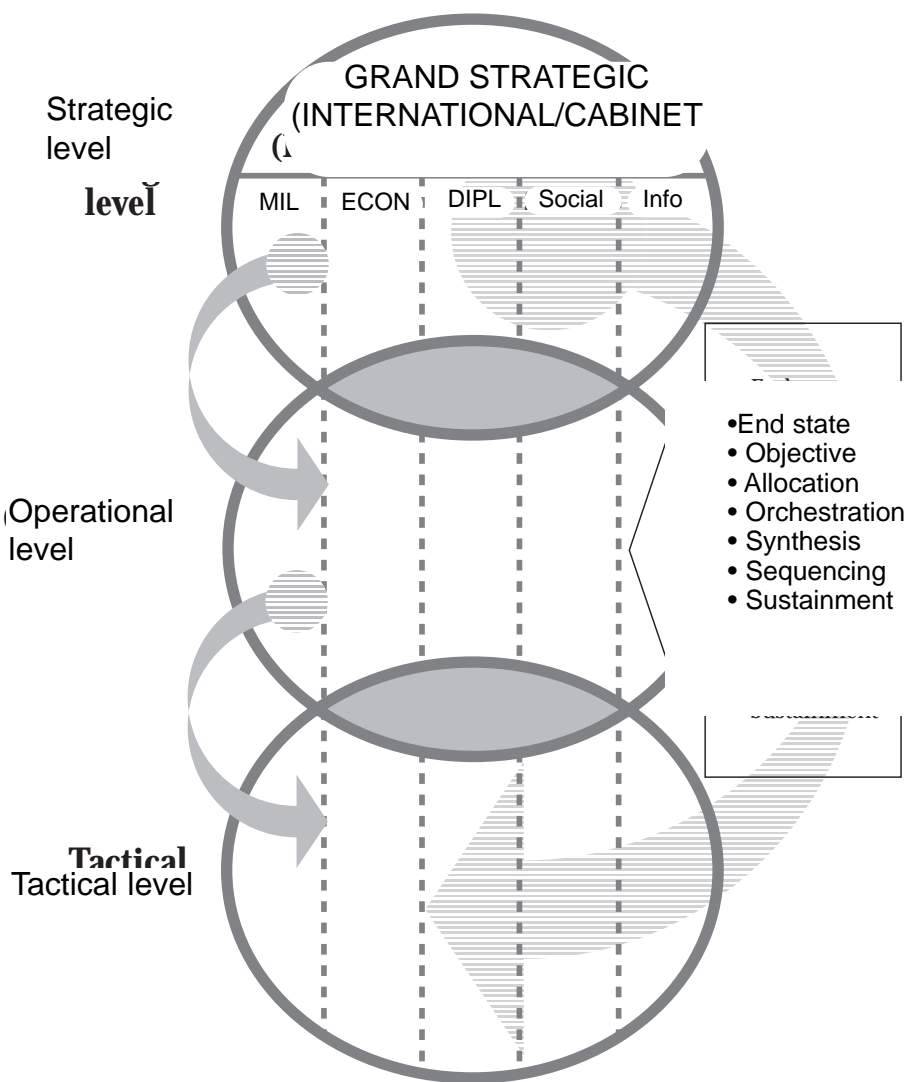
Summary of points made in discussion

- 18 The difference between policy and doctrinal issues, or the differences between 'what to do' and 'how to do it' in the realm of both war-fighting and conflict resolution is traditionally expressed in terms of three basic levels:
- **strategic** – governmental, involving commitment of national and international resources;
 - **operational** – involving force commander's planned use of these resources in a campaign plan; and
 - **tactical** – missions and operations conducted by commanders to implement the campaign plan.
- 19 However, this simple arrangement is not adequate for complex PSOs involving a range of civilian and military actors which are international, multinational, national and subnational in character. After discussion, the participants agreed that a clearer picture of the stratification of decisional authority during contemporary PSOs is shown as follows:
- **international grand strategic level** – authorising body/governments belonging to the intergovernmental organisation;
 - **strategic level** – head of mission (HoM);
 - **operational level** – force commander (FC); and
 - **tactical level** – subordinate commanders and contingents.
- 20 Levels of decision-making (and planning) can be observed in various locations: the international grand strategic level links decisions taken in international forums, national capitals and by the most senior individual officials and officers.
- 21 Regardless of the type of PSO, decision-making and planning at the (international) grand strategic level should reflect the international context of the authorising body and result in clear mandates on what should be achieved at the levels below. At this level, military professionals expect to see a definition of strategic direction, starting with a mission plan comprising, *inter alia*, the political end state and objectives of the military elements of the overall operation, as well as some indication of resources, limitations, constraints and co-ordination requirements. Past experience has indicated that this type of strategic direction is not always forthcoming. For example, deployments all too often occur before an end state or defined mission plan is constructed. Military commanders may therefore have to 'back fill' (develop their own version of grand strategy) when not

given guidance and options to inform the operational level.

- 22 During a 'classical' intervention/interposition mission, for example, the military will function primarily at the tactical level, with little risk of confusion between aims and methods. In traditional peacekeeping, the FC strategic and operational decisions are straightforward, at least for as long as the stable, consensual 'peacekeeping' situation prevails.
- 23 In many recent PSOs, however, there have been and are marked variations on the levels and locus of decisional power. Where UN missions are concerned, there is normally a representative of the authorising body (the Special Representative of the Secretary-General or SRSG) who is the in-theatre head of mission. The SRSG deals with policy/strategic level issues and decisions. He/she also gives guidance on some sensitive military decisions.
- 24 In a rapidly changing situation, this authoritative guidance role can lead to disputes between the SRSG and the FC and between them both and representatives of national contingents. The type of mission will also determine whether the FC is operating at the operational level or also at the strategic level.
- 25 Questions of 'command style' or philosophy also received some attention. Disputes between SRSGs, FCs and national contingents often arise because of differences in style or philosophy. Orders given to contingents may be 'prescriptive' or 'outcomes-based'. The latter is the conceptual or 'manoeuvrist' approach to generic military operations. The mission is stated, along with specific restraints on commanders' decisions and actions. It is an approach based on co-ordination, rather than the provision of detailed orders.
- 26 Where the style or philosophy adopted by the FC is different from that of a national contingent, it is likely that the contingent commander will feel obliged to consult his national authorities, especially before accepting new tasks from the FC.
- 27 The discussion also considered that, in UN missions (and other PSOs), senior civilian officials will also have decisional authority over a range of civilian actors. The various agencies of the UN, such as the United Nations International Children's Education Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the World Food Programme (WFP), each have their own separate mandates. These agencies do not have to formally 'obey' the SRSG, but they are required to work with the United Nations Resident Co-ordinator/Humanitarian Co-ordinator structure, responsible for co-ordinating all UN humanitarian agencies through the United Nations Country Team forum. Lines of

Diagram 1



authority at the operational level will be set for each mission by the particular circumstances in the mission area. What is clear is that all mission components need policy/strategic guidance.

28 But the question remains whether the three traditional levels – strategic,

operational and tactical – are still useful constructs for conducting (and studying) PSOs. As a second attempt at conceptualising the various levels of authority during PSO, participants considered the schematic representation in Diagram 1.

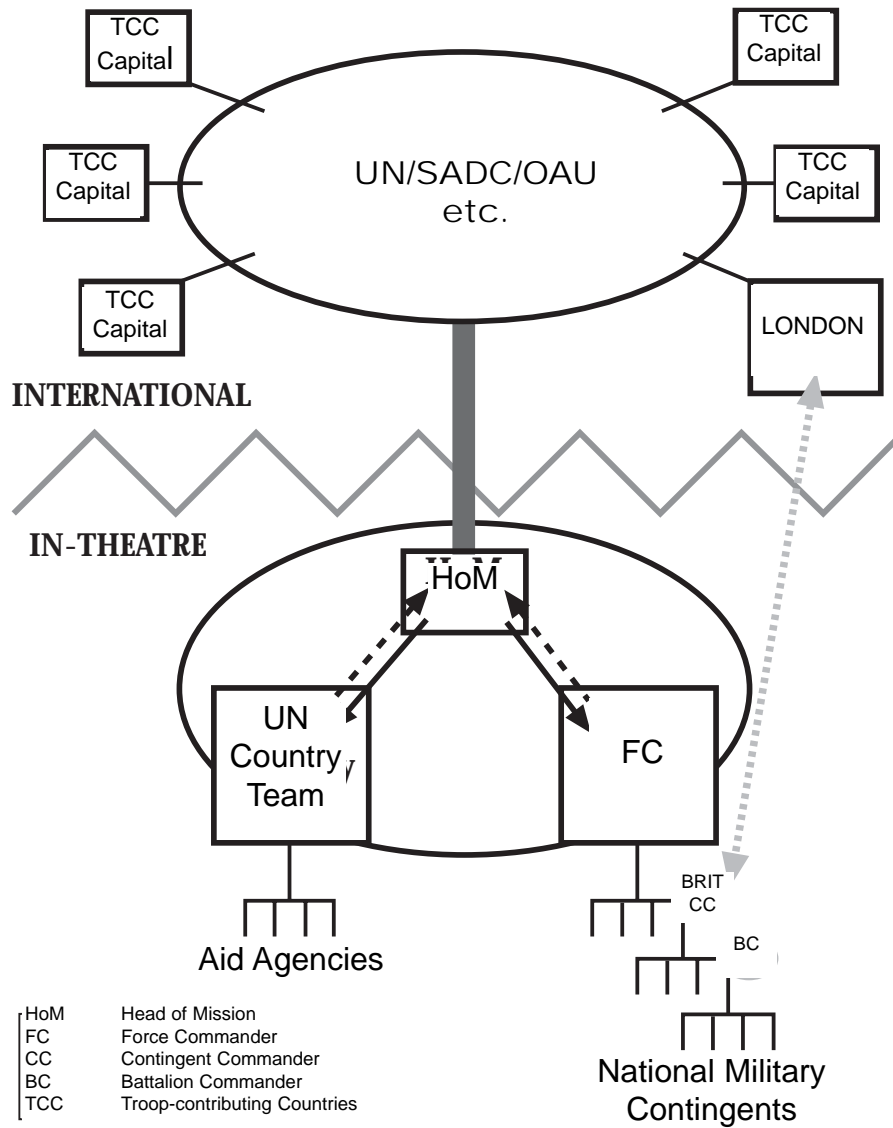
- 29 It is obvious that there are still grey areas between the three levels, as shown by the overlaps. This is where strategic/operational and operational/tactical issues merge with one another and, as this is unavoidable, the overlap must be managed as such.
- 30 There are also internal divisions. Moreover, according to this conceptualisation, military practitioners will actually deal with only one sector (the military one) at the strategic level.
- 31 The operational level organises policies from the strategic level into practical tasks, using such tools as defining end states and objectives, and dealing with such matters as logistic and personnel sustainment. Where the operational level works well, the operation is likely to be a success. Recognition of the operational level in the command structure (and doctrine) prevents a commander from getting bogged down in detail that could distract him from dealing with larger organisational matters, i.e. his true area of responsibility. It was noted that the various non-military sectors tend to be lacking in operational level organisation – hence the arrow in the diagram linking the strategic level directly with the tactical level.⁶ While this scheme may prove adequate for analysing and directing national armed forces, multinational operations need a more elaborate conceptual framework. The following diagram was proffered as a more realistic schematic representation of the actual lines of authority operating during a UN mission (see Diagram 2).
- 32 The international level (intergovernmental organisation and constituent members) should produce the mandate. At the theatre level, the HoM, in conjunction with the FC and the UN Country Team, should produce a strategic level political-military plan. The HoM, FC and Emergency Relief Co-ordinator should thus work together at the strategic level, after which the FC works at the operational level.⁷

6 The consequences are that, in the absence of operational-level 'headquarters' providing guidance, the strategic level authority tends to micro-manage the tactical level - instead of focussing on its core business (providing strategic guidance).

7 Theoretically, one may argue that the HoM should not operate at the strategic level. Rather, he functions in that area where strategic/operational overlapping takes place. As Head of Mission, he should have a campaign plan for the whole mission (of which the military operation is but one element). He also co-ordinates and provides the 'gearing' for the tactical level, whilst receiving his overall direction from the strategic level. The Force Commander and heads of other mission components are also theoretically at HoM level, as his primary 'advisory staff'.

- 33 A special consideration is that the national contingent commanders also have a link with their national capitals. The problem is how to link operational aspects of national contingent commanders' dealings with

Diagram 2



their capitals with the operational plan of the force commander. For example, in Bosnia, the British contingent commander (a one-star general), was often at loggerheads with General Michael Rose, the (British) FC. This often happens when tactical level commanders are given strategic level directives from their capitals. The time when this is most likely to happen is when the situation on the ground changes. Capitals and therefore also tactical commanders may be reluctant to make 'organic' assets available to the FC, especially if they feel that these assets will be at risk.

- 34 This is not necessarily a universal problem. An example was provided by a former African national contingent commander in Somalia. Contact with his capital never created a problem, and his operational freedom was never compromised. On the other hand, it was mentioned that the Pakistani contingent had a control problem in Somalia, with the capital giving separate instructions to the national contingent. One should therefore expect differences in national style, and these may be related to the size of the contingents and the issues at stake. Normally, the system works fairly well; but it can begin to go wrong when there are casualties or when the likelihood of casualties is high. For example, in the 'safe areas' in Eastern Bosnia, General Rose was very clear about the numbers of troops he needed to defend the area, but troop-contributing states were very reluctant to provide the requisite manpower.
- 35 The fact that the FC's staff officers are drawn (more or less proportionally) from the national contingents under his command should theoretically reduce the need to refer back to national capitals. In practice, however, there are considerable differences in the impact of multinational staffing. Sometimes there is full co-operation, with officers acting as the FC's own staff, but sometimes staff officers basically act as liaison officers for the national contingents. Under some circumstances, the FC simply cannot trust some of his staff officers.

The way ahead

At the end of this discussion, there was general consensus on the following points:

- 36 Doctrine should lay down the minimum requirement for a clear mission statement from the authorising political body, but with the understanding that this may be an unrealistic aspiration. Policy makers should also be educated on the concept and context of PSOs, and made aware of the practical consequences of their political decisions through an understanding of PSO doctrine. From an operational angle, those who have to put the operation into practice should be included in the

development of the political-military planning process.

- 37 Participants expressed a clear preference for the 'manoeuvrist' (or mission-oriented) approach, where operational concepts are devised to allow tactical freedom for subordinate commanders. This allows individual nations to do business their own way, but mission-oriented command may not always be familiar to all. If the FC is not from a country that practices mission-oriented command, he/she may not apply 'manoeuvrist' methods. Another consequence is that national contingents that are subject to mission-oriented command may use the relative freedom of action to refer decisions back to national capitals – so there are pros and cons to this approach. It must also be realised that boundaries will always be permeable, and that the 'how to do' will necessarily influence the 'what to do.'
- 38 There has been too much emphasis in recent debates on the need for a clear military 'exit strategy'. Of greater importance in contemporary PSOs is a clear 'entry strategy' that involves not only a vision of the political end state of intervention, but includes some statement of ways and means of reaching what is to be achieved. This does not imply that higher political direction should be overly prescriptive.
- 39 There was a consensus that the defined levels of decision-making (and planning) of the past are now more diverse. The need to define decisional levels and boundaries better during PSOs arises partly because policy (grand strategy) will impact differently at the military strategic and operational levels. During PSOs, there are also confusing overlaps between the traditional military levels. This is caused by the fact that political considerations tend to impact at all levels of command during the course of multilateral and multinational conflict resolution interventions. Obviously, the type of mission will dictate who is operating predominantly at what level. Decisional levels are set by the operational context, and not by force levels or command appointments.
- 40 To return to the military dilemmas, it is evident that there is a need for an integrated doctrine for PSOs. If all governments signed up in advance to a UN doctrine (for instance), command relationships would be regularised. It may be accepted that the military has a need for liaison with national capitals, but this is not so far defined doctrinally. Where there is mission creep, for example, guidance to national contingents will come from capitals. But changes in mandate can lead different contingents to react in different ways. Unity of command and unity of effort – important general principles of war – are directly compromised when subordinate commanders take independent action.
- 41 One solution might be a formal agreement (such as a memorandum of

understanding or MOU) stipulating minimal conditions of subordination to multilateral authority, as a prerequisite for accepting troop contributions from any nation. Negotiations on the content of such an agreement should take place in advance between capitals and mandating bodies. This would minimise confusion at the operational and tactical levels at a later stage. It is also important that operational plans are formulated in a way that foresees possible dangers and other factors that may change the nature of the mission.

Unfinished business/Recommendations for further research

- 42 Some progress was made towards enhancing understanding of the complicated and permeable nature of the boundaries between policy and operational/tactical levels, and in providing some sort of conceptual packaging of the issues that may define the boundaries of PSO doctrine. However, participants felt that there is a need to analyse further and clarify the relationship between the structures outlined in the two diagrams above, in order to link national military concepts with those that are appropriate to multinational PSOs. Another useful endeavour would be a joint study by 'manoeuvrist' and a 'non-manoeuvrist' institutions to explore the implications of combining the two approaches within a PSO – drawing from past experience and identifying future implications.