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## **CONFLICT RESOLUTION PLANNING**

### *Challenging, Essential and Elusive*

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## **ABSTRACT**

Armed intervention usually has dramatic effect. This paper explores that effect and argues that strategists do not devote enough timely effort or thought to the military's significant impact on the phase after battle has been waged. The reality is that military operations set the stage and the mood for all initiatives that follow and must be tempered accordingly.

The importance of considering conflict resolution is relatively easy to substantiate, however, finding solutions to all the challenges involved is problematic. This paper thus also examines some of the difficulties in getting it right and offers some considerations for the future.

There will likely never be a case where an ideal solution for conflict resolution is definable (let alone attainable), either before or during the crisis. This does not in any way diminish the need to understand the requirement and the factors at play. Being aware of the challenges and putting in place whatever mitigation is possible, may not result in stable peace, but may put us one step further away from continued or repeated conflict.

# CONFLICT RESOLUTION PLANNING

## *Challenging, Essential and Elusive*

*If you concentrate exclusively on victory, with no thought for the after effect, you may be too exhausted to profit by the peace, while it is most certain that the peace will be a bad one, containing the germs of another war.*

*B.H. Liddell Hart*

### INTRODUCTION

Does the dog that chases the fire truck give any serious thought to what would happen if the 20 tonne prey were actually caught? Analogy aside, does the grand strategist effectively deliberate armed intervention to its ultimate end?

Military force is a powerful tool with significant potential influence on interstate and intrastate friction. This paper will explore this influence and will argue that strategists do not devote enough timely effort or thought to the military's significant impact on the phase after battle has been waged. Much like the dog that does not have an adequate plan for ending his situation (less giving up and going home), strategic military planning does not effectively develop campaigns that fully integrate conflict resolution considerations from beginning to end. This error reduces the potential benefits of the use of military force and opens armed intervention to tremendous criticism (and even on occasion, like the dog, ridicule) as a tool for long-term peace and stability – criticism that may be avoidable.

Before I begin the debate, certain terms must be defined. A *conflict* is “a struggle or clash between alliances, individual states or factions within a state to achieve political objectives. When military force is used, the conflict becomes an armed conflict”.<sup>1</sup> *Conflict resolution* is the process or end state through which a lasting settlement or stable peace has been attained based on mutual acceptance by all concerned parties. Conflict resolution is achieved through the use of all instruments of power including, but not

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<sup>1</sup> B-GG-005-004,

limited to, political, judicial, economic, informational and military.<sup>2</sup> The entire spectrum from forceful intervention to the rebuilding of a war-torn society, if necessary, is implicit in this definition.

That said, the term *conflict resolution* does not distinguish the point in the sequence of events where the use of military force is no longer necessary and could be withdrawn if so desired. This point is usually when combat operations are complete, the required initial secure environment has been established and the military force, if retained in theatre, is transitioning to non-core tasks such as humanitarian relief or nation-building functions. In short, *termination of armed conflict* has been attained but the conflict is most likely not yet fully resolved.

Confusion in terminology arises since US doctrinal publications and corresponding journal literature often use the term *conflict termination* interchangeably within *conflict resolution*. In other words, depending on whom you read, the two terms could mean the exact same thing. For my purposes in this essay, I will use the holistic description of *conflict resolution* – that is, all aspects necessary to create the conditions for lasting peace. The phrase *termination of armed conflict* will be used to describe the point where armed intervention is no longer required. The term *conflict termination* will be avoided, less when quoting others who are using it as a synonym for *conflict resolution*.<sup>3</sup>

With terminology now defined, my thesis and approach in this paper can be further detailed. Political leadership and military commanders at the strategic and operational levels of war do not consistently and effectively incorporate conflict resolution considerations in the development of military campaign plans; regardless of whether military forces have been assigned any direct responsibilities for post-hostility measures

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<sup>2</sup> There is no doctrinal definition available for conflict resolution within CF, US, UK or NATO doctrine. This description of conflict resolution is a synthesis or many separate references to the idea within various literature. This lack of a definition and corresponding doctrine will be discussed later in this paper.

<sup>3</sup> Other terms such as *conflict management* and *conflict settlement* also exist and are used in select literature. For definitions of these terms see Rubenstein, Richard E. “Conflict Resolution and Power Politics”. Speech transcribed in [ICAR Working Paper 10](#). Institute for Conflict Analysis and Resolution at George Mason University, January 1996. pp 2-4.

after the termination of armed conflict. The reality is that military operations set the stage and the mood for all initiatives that follow and must be tempered accordingly. This paper will explore the importance of continually considering conflict resolution issues before and during the conduct of military operations. As Strednansky suggests,

“A review of the literature indicates that most authors agree (1) conflict termination planning and the development of an exit strategy prior to or at the beginning of the conflict is a must, (2) not enough time or thought are dedicated to termination planning, (3) current doctrine does not provide the necessary guidance to military strategists, and (4) more work in this area is required.”<sup>4</sup>

Although the importance of considering conflict resolution can be easily substantiated, finding solutions to all the challenges involved is daunting. This paper will thus also examine some of the difficulties in getting it right and offer some considerations for the future, while also suggesting that the perfect solution may continue to elude those who seek it. In short, although getting better is a must, there is certainly some doubt as to whether we can ever get good enough to have well-defined, clearly-stated plans that more or less guarantee conflict resolution.

From the outset, the fundamental distinction in conflict resolution planning, and its corresponding priority, in total versus limited war must be recognized. Total war implies that the future existence of the nation is at risk.<sup>5</sup> When war is waged for true survival, one can hardly fault strategic decision makers for placing little emphasis on the ‘morning after’. All of the nation’s power and energy should be focused on the task at hand – decisive victory on the battlefield.

Although disregard (at least initially) of conflict resolution considerations may be understandable in total war, the outcome is nonetheless predictable. The actions of the military forces during the combat operations, and the ensuing peace treaty that terminates the armed conflict, have direct impacts on the potential for a lasting settlement. Conflict resolution planning is thus necessary in all wars regardless of whether they are total or

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<sup>4</sup>Strednansky, Major Susan E. Balancing the Trinity. The Fine Art of Conflict Termination. Maxwell AFB, Air University Press, February 1996. p 3.

limited. However, since serious consideration of the issues involved usually occurs after national survival is no longer at risk, and since most recent wars and all peace support operations are not total wars, this paper will avoid the unique considerations that apply when nations are fighting for their very existence.

In limited war, interveners often have greater freedom of action and can consider many different options for battle. In these situations, successful early conflict resolution planning can pay great dividends if given high priority and if the armed intervention is orchestrated to meet the longer-term needs.

## THE DYNAMICS OF MODERN WAR

*The fundamental shift in character of war is illustrated by a stark statistic: in World War I, nine soldiers were killed for every civilian life lost. In today's wars, it is estimated that 10 civilians die for every soldier or fighter killed in battle.*

*International Committee of the Red Cross Report 1990*

Finding statistics that clearly demonstrate changing trends in the nature of war is difficult. There are many different interpretations of what defines a conflict, whether it is major or minor, and whether it has been resolved or not. Therefore, resulting statistical analyses are equally varied.<sup>6</sup> However, regardless of whether the past quarter-century has seen fundamental change in the nature of war<sup>7</sup>, there are some defining characteristics of modern conflicts that dramatically affect how we prosecute combat to obtain lasting peace.

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<sup>5</sup> Clausewitz suggests that national survival is a characteristic of total war.

<sup>6</sup> Miall, Hugh and Ramsbotham, Oliver and Woodhouse, Tom. Contemporary Conflict Resolution. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 1999. pp 22-32. The authors highlight the difficulties in obtaining consistent statistical data but nonetheless draw some generalized conclusions similar to those reflected by other authors in this paper.

<sup>7</sup> Kimberley Maynard in fact suggests that the nature of war has changed from *Trinitarian War* witnessed up to the late 1980s – combat dictated by the state, conducted by its military and waged on behalf of its people to *Identity Conflicts* in the post-Cold War. See Maynard, Kimberley A. Healing Communities in Conflict: International Assistance in Complex Emergencies. New York; Columbia Press, 1999. Chapter 2, “The Nature of Conflicts and Complex Emergencies”.

Traditional large-scale interstate wars are becoming quite rare. Between 1989 and 1997, only six of 103 conflicts were interstate<sup>8</sup>, yet, for a variety of reasons, worldwide impacts remain profound whenever war occurs. Civilians were 90% of all war casualties in the 1990s<sup>9</sup> and thus war has become an event felt by every part of society and consistently condemned, in the international community, for human rights violations and horrors. War is no longer the unique realm of professional soldiers on some distant battlefield but, rather, a reality that strikes very close to home. Wars undermine the economies and environments where they are fought, to the point where recovery is difficult and very expensive. This is not new, however, there is an increasing tendency to seek or assume international or multi-lateral support to help ‘pay the bills’. As examples, the estimates for “rebuilding Kuwait and Bosnia after their wars started at \$50 billion each, which is more than all the money the industrialized countries spend on foreign aid each year.”<sup>10</sup>

Even though most recent wars have been intrastate, the vast majority have had some form of foreign intervention (political, economic or military). This has been attributed to the direct impacts of globalization, the increased awareness provided by the media, and the increased desire nations have to act on their own national interests and values worldwide.<sup>11</sup> Also, intrastate wars often have unintended spill over effects that, in turn, expand the conflict.

“For example, the civil wars in Rwanda and Burundi of the 1990s mutually influenced each other to some degree; and the Rwandan genocide of 1994 had a powerful spill over effect on the former Zaire, including the overthrow of the Mobutu dictatorship and, since then, the insurrection against the ensuing Kabila regime that has drawn six neighbouring states into the fray.”<sup>12</sup>

Most recent wars “revolve around emotional charged religious, ethnic, linguistic, and racial disputes, which are much harder to resolve than geopolitical issues that have

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<sup>8</sup> Renner, Michael. “Ending Violent Conflict”, *Worldwatch Paper 146*. Ed. Jane A. Peterson. Washington DC: Worldwatch Institute, 1999. p 17.

<sup>9</sup> Sollenberg, Margareta, ed. *States in Armed Conflict*. Upsala, Sweden: Upsala University, Department of Peace and Conflict Research, 1998.

<sup>10</sup> Hauss, Charles. *International Conflict Resolution*. London: Continuum, 2001. p 5.

<sup>11</sup> Renner. pp 17-19.



sparked most previous wars.”<sup>13</sup> Furthermore, understanding the root causes behind a conflict and the motivation of the belligerents is increasingly complex. As an anecdotal example of some of the complexities, “in many cases it is not clear that the ‘insurgents’ have any interest in or intent on gaining political power or responsibility; and there is little sense of boundaries on the extent of violence both sides would commit. These conflicts seem, indeed, to be a new kind of war.”<sup>14</sup>

Modern war has also been influenced by the pervasive presence of Non-Government Organisations (NGOs).<sup>15</sup> Essential to relieve human suffering, their very existence often exacerbates conflict resolution since “in such places as Bosnia and Rwanda, the food, clothing and medicine the international community sent served to strengthen the resolve of one side to the conflict and thus helped prolonged the fighting.”<sup>16</sup> Therefore, their presence has changed the make-up of war.

This changed make-up is not solely due to any dependencies created by their assistance. Organizing NGOs is much like herding cats. Although all interveners in a conflict share common goals (resolution of crisis and termination of suffering), NGOs cherish their autonomy and usually refuse to be coordinated even though most want coordination.<sup>17</sup> This is exacerbated by the reality that NGOs and military forces sometimes have different priorities. For example, in Somalia, military engineers were used to quickly rebuild roads so that food delivery could begin. From the perspective of many NGOs, the decision not to use local Somalis, despite the fact it would have taken much longer, was shortsighted and did nothing for conflict resolution.<sup>18</sup> In short, political and

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<sup>12</sup> Renner. p 18.

<sup>13</sup> Hauss. p 6.

<sup>14</sup> Snow, Donald M. Uncivil Wars: International Security and the New Internal Conflicts. Boulder CO: Lynne Rienner, 1996. p 6.

<sup>15</sup> The World Bank defines NGOS as “private organizations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development.”

<sup>16</sup> Hauss. p 24.

<sup>17</sup> Last, David. “Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding”. Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution. eds Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham. London: Frank Cass, 2000. p 89.

<sup>18</sup> Aall, Pamela. “NGOs, Conflict Management and Peacekeeping”. Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution. eds Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham. London: Frank Cass, 2000. p 137.

military leaders must consider the goals and actions of NGOs due to their influence on potential conflict resolution.

Finally, while military strength is still a vital measure of a state's capabilities, the circumstances under which armed force will be used have expanded in recent years to well beyond creating and maintaining sovereign states. The establishment of organizations such as the UN, and its Charter, have in the post-Cold War era, "opened the door to a whole series of collective efforts to guarantee or impose peace."<sup>19</sup>

In summary, although the nature of war may or may not have changed over the past few decades, there are some key defining characteristics of modern war that directly impact on why, when and, most importantly, how nations intervene. These interventions must be carefully orchestrated to achieve lasting peace.

## **IMPORTANCE OF GETTING IT RIGHT - THROUGH EXAMPLES OF GETTING IT WRONG**

*Fighting a war can cost more in blood and money than any other undertaking in which nations engage. And to wage war, governments develop more detailed plans... Yet despite all this elaborate and intense dedication, the grand design is often not grand enough: most of the exertion is devoted to the means – perfecting the military instruments and deciding on their use in battles and campaigns – far too little is left for relating these means to their ends.<sup>20</sup>*

When Japan was deliberating whether to attack the US at Pearl Harbour, one of the many questions posed within the imperial staff was how the war would end. However, as planning proceeded, the discussion was so monopolized by the possible date of attack that there was never any serious discussion on how to terminate the armed conflict or resolve the long-standing disagreements.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Aall, Pamela. p 122.

<sup>20</sup> Ikle, Fred Charles. Every War Must End. New York: Columbia University Press, 1991. p 1.

<sup>21</sup> Ikle. pp 2-5.

In 1956, British and French leaders were convinced that the Egyptian government of Colonel Nasser seriously threatened their foreign interests. War planning was detailed in terms of the military operations to be undertaken, logistic support, public affairs and friendly casualty mitigation. To comply with political restraints, Port Said was designated as the landing site vice Alexandria and operations were to focus on the Suez Canal area. Prime Minister Eden,

“... with all the careful attention he bestowed on reducing costs and risk of the war’s beginning, neglected to plan for an ending that would have accomplished his war aims. How could the landing in the Suez Canal area bring about a situation in Egypt that would have resulted in the overthrow of Nasser?”<sup>22</sup>

The Dayton Accord, which stopped the fighting in Bosnia, at first glance, appears to be a success in terms of conflict resolution. However, what defines success for long-term stability? If conflict resolution in Bosnia is best achieved through the creation of three very distinct societies unable to fully integrate (ie, the equivalent of three states), then Dayton can be viewed as a success. However, the creation of distinct societies was not the original intent since stable peace was deemed dependent on a unified Bosnia. If this is still the correct long-term vision, then the Dayton Accord has failed – to this point in time.

Today Bosnia and Herzegovina has three *de facto* mono-ethnic entities, three separate armies, three separate police forces, and a national government that exists mostly on paper and operates at the mercy of the entities. Indicted war criminals remain at large and political power is concentrated largely in the hands of hard line nationalists determined to obstruct international efforts to advance the peace process. In many areas, local political leaders have joined forces with police and local extremists to prevent refugees from returning to their pre-war homes. The effect has been to cement pre-war ethnic cleansing and maintain ethnic cleansers in power within mono-ethnic political frameworks. The few successes of Dayton – the Central Bank, a common currency, common license plates, state symbols and custom reforms – are superficial and were imposed by the international community. Indeed, the only unqualified success has been the four year absence of armed conflict.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Ikle. pp 6-7.

<sup>23</sup> International Crisis Group. Is Dayton Failing: Four Years after the Peace Agreement. Unpublished paper, 1999.

Although the assessment of the International Crisis Group is quite critical, Charles Hauss points out the need for patience in building a long-term strategy.<sup>24</sup> The fundamental question is, however, whether the path being taken is even the correct one – slow as it may be.

In 1984, US Secretary of Defense Casper Weinberger, in an attempt to avoid another situation such as the one faced in Vietnam, outlined the six conditions that a conflict should meet before the United States considered involvement. Weinberger believed that these conditions for intervention would prevent another quagmire and ensure “firm national resolve...to achieve our objectives.”<sup>25</sup> The six principles were:

1. The conflict should be of vital national interest to the United States and its Allies.
2. Intervention must occur wholeheartedly with a clear intention of winning.
3. The country must have clearly defined political and military objectives.
4. The relationship between the objectives and the forces must be continually reassessed and adjusted if necessary.
5. There must be a reasonable assurance that the American people and Congress will support the intervention.
6. Commitment of US forces should be a last resort.<sup>26</sup>

Based on armed intervention experiences since 1984, several issues arise from the above principles. First, the word *vital* was not defined by Weinberger (although many have attempted to define it since). This has led to many different interpretations of various world situations in which the US has chosen to engage.<sup>27</sup> Second, how does one assess or define *winning*? Third, judging the support of one’s nation is extremely difficult in that opinions registered in polls can change dramatically depending on the questions posed and on recent events. For example, the loss of 18 US lives and 72 wounded soldiers prompted the American public to demand a withdrawal from Somalia despite the earlier cries for humanitarian support.<sup>28</sup> Fourth, although Weinberger demanded clear objectives, he failed to insist or identify that they be realistic and attainable. As late as the campaign planning for operations in Afghanistan, US objectives in war zones were still contradictory. On the

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<sup>24</sup> Hauss. p 180.

<sup>25</sup> Weinberger, Casper W. “The Use of Military Power” speech, National Press Club, Washington DC., 28 November 1984. p 4.

<sup>26</sup> Weinberger. p 28.

<sup>27</sup> Strednansky. p 8.

one hand, US forces were to remain in country until a stable regime was established, including a trained Afghan army. Yet, at the combined joint task force headquarters in theatre, there was little to no indication of strategic plans to help develop the other pillars of national power necessary for a stable regime (judiciary, police, economic, etc) and, more importantly, a specific and unrealistic timeline (18 months) was set for mission length. Despite the recent experiences in the Balkans and Africa where conflict resolution did not conform to the preconceived notions of set timelines, the US and other allies persisted in setting these artificial goals for Afghanistan.<sup>29</sup>

Despite the above criticisms, the Weinberger principles are still used as a litmus test for US military engagement. General Colin Powell believed in the principles and refined them when he was Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff during the 1991 Gulf War. He stipulated that if the United States was to succeed, armed interventions must: be kept short, have few casualties, and the force used must be decisive and overwhelming. This brute-force approach may work in certain circumstances but may not be applicable in many situations where conflict resolution is dependent on activities after termination of armed intervention. Overwhelming domination certainly affects ‘winning the hearts and minds of the people’.<sup>30</sup> Many conflicts require military force not for decisive victory but to support “diplomacy, protect [other] peacekeepers, or carry out humanitarian tasks.”<sup>31</sup>

The Clinton administration continued to honour the general ideas behind the Weinberger principles but abandoned the term vital in favour of an approach that demanded a high return on investment. In defining objectives, they too stipulated that specific timelines were needed.<sup>32</sup> In reality, conflict resolution often takes longer than most national leaders are willing to openly admit. Also, “there is a danger that if a specific timeline is set ... the belligerent will try to wait out the peacekeepers.”<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Strednansky. p 8.

<sup>29</sup> Personal interpretation as the Senior Canadian Officer Afghanistan March-July 2002.

<sup>30</sup> Strednansky. p 11.

<sup>31</sup> Gordon, Michael R. and Trainor, General Bernard E. The Generals War: The Inside Story of the Conflict in the Gulf. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1995. p 469.

<sup>32</sup> Bennet, Douglas Jr. Peacekeeping and Multilateral Relations in US Foreign Policy, address, UN Association, Princeton University, 29 November 1994.

<sup>33</sup> Strednansky. p 12.

Finally, in general terms, the US and most of its major allies have had wartime strategies of overwhelming force, focused on the defeat of opposing armies.<sup>34</sup> With this approach, advocates argue that termination of armed intervention takes care of itself as does the corresponding conflict resolution. Failures to achieve favourable conflict resolution in limited wars such as Korea and Vietnam, where overwhelming force was not well applied, have only served to reinforce the beliefs of those who support ‘domination’ as the means to the end. Bruce C. Bade argues that we are formed by our experiences and that the mentality of overwhelming force is often too powerful to resist and has resulted in limited thought devoted to other conflict resolution approaches that could be readily embraced.<sup>35</sup> Samuel Huntington wrote, “when those situations (justifying the commitment of US forces to combat) arise, the United States should intervene rapidly, in an decisive manner, and so far as possible with overwhelming forces in the shortest time possible.”<sup>36</sup> Bade sarcastically writes, “...certainly this implies that war termination will take care of itself – we will just get there and win.”<sup>37</sup> Unfortunately, conflict resolution is just not that simple.

## **DIFFICULTY IN GETTING IT RIGHT**

*Nothing is more divisive for a government than having to make peace at the price of major concessions.*<sup>38</sup>

Wars often take on a life of their own and once begun, are very difficult if not impossible to stop until all sides have exhausted their means. Khrushchev wrote to Kennedy during the Cuban Missile Crisis “if indeed war should break out, then it would not be in our power to stop it, for such is the logic of war.”<sup>39</sup> Although Khrushchev was

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<sup>34</sup> Bade, Bruce C. War Termination, Why Don't We Plan For It? Essays on Strategy XII. ed John N. Petrie. Washington DC: National Defense University Press, 1994. p 210.

<sup>35</sup> Bade. pp 210-211.

<sup>36</sup> Huntington, Samuel P. “American Military Strategy”. Institute of International Studies – Policy Papers in International Affairs No 28. London: Institute of International Studies, 1986. p 3.

<sup>37</sup> Bade. p 211.

<sup>38</sup> Ikle. p 59.

<sup>39</sup> Kennedy, Robert F. Thirteen Days; A Memoire of the Cuban Missile Crisis. New York, NY. W.W. Norton, 1969. pp 86-87.

making as much of a political statement as anything else, there was clearly some truth to his assertion. Why is it so difficult to end or resolve conflict and get it right?

In part, the deficiency “stems from the intellectual difficulty in connecting military plans with their ultimate purpose.”<sup>40</sup> Leaders (both political and military) sometimes fail to understand that it is the outcome of war, not the outcome of individual battles or campaigns, that determine how well the use of force serves the nation’s interests.<sup>41</sup> “Devising strategies for war termination takes the strategist from the realm of purely military planning into the behavioural and psychological dimensions of bargaining, game theories, theories of escalation, theories of deterrence, and theories of communication. It is a world of great uncertainties.”<sup>42</sup> The focus of operational art at the strategic level must be on getting this right – on developing the overall plan that achieves the ultimate purpose.

Human nature plays a dominant role. Nations or states at war become more obstinate and usually tend to demand settlements that offer greater potential for lasting peace than that that existed before the fighting broke out.<sup>43</sup> “Thus, by prolonging a war to obtain a settlement that seems more secure than the prewar situation...they may render more difficult the task of future reconciliation with the enemy.”<sup>44</sup> Ikle further suggests that conflict resolution must be recognized as a process where not only must national interests be satisfied, but also personal agendas and motivations – not the least of which is ego.<sup>45</sup> This makes conflict resolution not only business but also personal in nature and thus emotive and difficult to achieve. “If the decision to end a war were simply to spring from a rational calculation about gains and losses for the nation as a whole, it should be no harder to get out of a war than to get into one.”<sup>46</sup>

War without gain is difficult to justify by the leadership of a nation and by the public at large. When Austria and Germany began serious discussions in 1918 on

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<sup>40</sup> Ikle. p 1.

<sup>41</sup> Ikle. p 2.

<sup>42</sup> Bade. p 213.

<sup>43</sup> Ikle. p 9.

<sup>44</sup> Ikle. p 11.

<sup>45</sup> Ikle. p 15.

adjustments to war aims due to the reality that the war was not going well, Ludendorff, despite now being in a position where the very survival of his nation was seriously at risk, still argued that Germany could not surrender territory since “if Germany makes peace without profit, then Germany has lost the war”.<sup>47</sup> The notion of cutting one’s losses, common in everyday life, seems elusive in war.

The opposite may also occur, that is, if success is too rapid or comes at too high a price to the adversary, adjustments in the war objectives may be necessary due to public pressure to be seen as humane and compassionate. “Towards the end of Desert Storm, the order to stop came before the planned envelopment had a chance to unfold fully”<sup>48</sup> due in large measure to the reality that “there was some concern about the attacks and carnage on the highway from Kuwait to Basrah.”<sup>49</sup>

There is also a misconception that escalation of the conflict may serve to more quickly resolve the situation. Historical review shows this is often not true. Escalation involves great uncertainty with regards to the enemy’s reaction – most notably whether it will simply cause a more entrenched position. Even if the escalation forces the enemy to the peace table, the bitterness of significant defeat, combined with pride, may make a lasting peace impossible to negotiate.<sup>50</sup>

Ending or resolving a conflict is often exacerbated by the reality that the reasons for entering in the first place, and the ultimate aims and objectives, are often not mutually agreed upon before involvement begins. If strategic leaders are in disagreement as to why their nation must be engaged, how can they possibly agree on ends and means?

“The political dissention at the time of a conditional surrender or a costly compromise peace is inevitably foreshadowed in the internal disagreements about war aims...the struggle between “doves” and “hawks” over when and under what

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<sup>46</sup> Ikle. p 16.

<sup>47</sup> Czernin, Ottokar. In the World War. p 247.

<sup>48</sup> Strednansky. p 15.

<sup>49</sup> Atkinson, Rick. Crusade: The Untold Story of the Persian Gulf War. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1993. p 473.

<sup>50</sup> Ikle. p 38-58.



terms the fighting should stop is preceded by disagreements over what the war is all about.”<sup>51</sup>

Bruce Bade suggests, “virtually every study of war termination concludes that failure to define objectives is the most common obstacle to rational war termination. War termination strategies cannot be devised nor can war termination decisions be made in the absence of clearly defined objectives.”<sup>52</sup> Bade also suggests that objectives are often cast in ambiguous terms “because credibility suffers if they are not achieved. This same motivation focuses political leaders on avoiding undesirable outcomes rather than on achieving desirable outcomes”<sup>53</sup>

Once engaged, Ikle offers the premise that political manoeuvring is a significant impediment to honest assessment and analysis of the developing situation.

“The political struggle within each country affects everything that matters in ending a war. It intrudes into the formulation of the war aims, it colours and distorts military estimates, and it inhibits negotiation with the enemy. Those who want their country to pursue ambitious war aims will seek out favourable military estimates and find reasons why negotiations ought to be avoided. Those who want negotiations to move ahead will select the unfavourable military estimates to argue that war aims should be scaled down [or altered].”<sup>54</sup>

Ikle further suggests that as pronounced as difference of opinions may be, sometimes they will not be debated to logical conclusion since such debate would be perceived as lack of common purpose and may be used as encouragement by the enemy.<sup>55</sup> Therefore, without full debate, consensus and unity of effort are seldom achieved.

Even if aims are clear at the beginning, there is a requirement to adjust as the situation develops. Ikle passionately writes that we become entrenched in purpose.

“How long is it worth while to suffer – and to inflict – further casualties and destruction in order to accomplish the initial objectives of fighting? When has the

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<sup>51</sup> Ikle. p 74.

<sup>52</sup> Bade. p 216.

<sup>53</sup> Bade. p 217.

<sup>54</sup> Ikle. p 85.

<sup>55</sup> Ikle. pp 75-80.

time come to make concessions, so as to avoid the losses of continued warfare? Should the fighting go on to reduce the risk that the enemy will ever strike again in the future? Or can this very risk be better avoided by ending the war so that one's own and the enemy's population will suffer less and reconciliation might become easier?"<sup>56</sup>

Finally, the number of actors involved in modern limited war also contributes to the difficulties in achieving a clear path towards conflict resolution. War is no longer, if it ever was, limited to involvement of military forces. Civilian police, humanitarian agencies, politicians and diplomats not only from the parties directly involved but from other interested nations, human rights agencies, democratization organizations, development agencies, the media and multi-lateral bodies such as the UN, OSCE etc all have powerful voices that should be heard.<sup>57</sup> Friction has all too often been present amongst interveners despite the fact that they are supposedly working towards the same end (conflict resolution). This recognised weakness led to the creation of Civil-Military Operations Centres (CMOCs) in Bosnia in 1992 to improve relationships between NGOs and UNPROFOR.<sup>58</sup> CMOCs are now common practise in virtually all military operations due to their ability to improve civil-military cooperation. However, CMOCs are but a 'drop in the bucket' for the required successful integration of all actors (not just NGOs) in modern limited war.

## **PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS**

*We need to know the destination – if not in a precise way, at least in a generalized way. Before we actually translate something into reality, we must be able to dream about it. If we do a good job in identifying our destination, more innovations and changes will take place to help us reach it.*

*Muhammad Yunus (Founder of micro-credit for poor entrepreneurs)*

Fundamentally, use of military force in peace support operations has many of the same challenges as in limited war. This section of the paper complements what has already been discussed by providing additional comments on some key considerations.

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<sup>56</sup> Ikle. p 80.

<sup>57</sup> List loosely based on the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre's participants in their coined phrase "The New Peacekeeping Partnership".

<sup>58</sup> Williams, Michael C. "Civil Military Relations and Peacekeeping", Adelphi Paper 321. New York: Oxford University Press, 1998. p 37.

The issues raised are not all inclusive nor are they necessarily inter-related. They are, however, significant in developing sound campaigns that incorporate conflict resolution considerations.

Like in war, contributing nations would ideally want clearly articulated objectives and a sound campaign plan with a well-defined exit strategy for peace support operations. Although limited war may be waged by only a few nations, modern peace support operations are most often multi-lateral with a large number of contributing nations and thus a wide range of opinions on how to proceed.

“Achieving unity of effort is often elusive in that the premier pitfall is in the failure to reach agreement on the desired end state or strategic objective. If there is no agreement on the range of outcomes that can be defined as acceptable end states, then there will be no unity of effort. Lack of an agreed upon end state clearly dooms any effort to failure.”<sup>59</sup>

Also, peace support operations are, by their very nature, often discretionary. In many cases, nations can decide whether to become involved. Even if national interests demand engagement, choice is still usually available in terms of the type and degree of commitment. The discretionary nature of most peace support operations, combined with the usual multi-lateral participation resulting in varied national agendas or desires, exacerbate the challenges in developing a coherent, mutually agreed upon, conflict resolution strategy. A recent UN report perhaps best summarises the many shortfalls. The report highlighted serious deficiencies in unity of effort, strategic direction and decision-making, rapid deployment, operational planning, and use of information technology. The report further suggested that three fundamental conditions were required for success in the future: political support or will, rapid deployment with robust forces, and a sound peace-

It is not a lack of desire that is making peace-building strategies, which in turn lead to exit criteria, elusive. In general terms, strategic leaders are now recognizing the requirement to clearly articulate military objectives based on overall strategic goals and conflict resolution demands. However, even with this recognition, exit strategies have remained undefined in many recent peace support operations due to the uncertainties and complexities involved – many of which have been described earlier in this paper during the analysis of limited war. For example, a former Canadian Ambassador to NATO, Adm (Retd) Anderson described how SACEUR repeatedly approached the North Atlantic Council (NAC) members for an exit strategy before engagement of IFOR in Bosnia. In fact, the exit strategy was never well defined prior to the commitment of forces since the NAC could not resolve the complexities and conflicting national thoughts and desires.<sup>61</sup>

Since decisions are so difficult to make, often those that can be made are taken in lieu of those that must be made. When the United Nations Security Council passed a resolution creating “safe areas” in Bosnia in 1993, they did so with the best of intentions and yet it resulted in arguably the single worst war crime in Europe (at Sreberenica) since World War II. Yasushi Akashi, Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) in the former Yugoslavia stated at the time, “I think that the Council’s approach, no matter how well-meaning it may have been, has been an instinctive, ad-hoc reaction to events rather than the consequences of a long-term, well thought out peace strategy”.<sup>62</sup>

The discretionary nature of peace support operations also demands that leaders convince their publics of the importance of engagement. This challenge often takes on a life of its own.

“The need to gain domestic support for pursuit of objectives can lead to inflating their importance. That sets in motion new dynamics: the more important the objective, the more likely it is to drive toward extreme measures. Extreme measures in turn raise the stakes – means begin to determine ends.”<sup>63</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> Based on an interview with Adm (Retd) Anderson conducted 13 February 2003.

<sup>62</sup> Akashi, Yasushi. “The Dilemmas of Peacekeeping”, Brown Journal of World Affairs Volume 3, No 1. Winter/Spring 1996. p 80.

National agendas are always at play in war and the same holds true for peace support operations. Each political entity will have its own reasons for being involved and its own goals and desires. Multi-lateral initiatives are also characterized by the reality that nations and groups will have their own understanding of terms and concepts used to describe objectives and end states.

“As a result, end-state statements often seem fuzzy and broadly worded because they have to be approved by all those who will be involved. This includes...US ...United Nations and coalition partners. By the time the goals get approved at all levels, even an end state that started with concise and quantifiable objectives has been turned into something like “safe and secure environment” which is open to much interpretation.”<sup>64</sup>

As mentioned during the analysis of limited war, the pressure to do something to resolve conflicts is often overwhelming. In peace support operations, even though involvement may be discretionary, this pressure nonetheless often prevails. However, getting involved for the sake of getting involved is problematic. Difficult questions arise to which clear-cut answers are not always available.

First, is the proposed military operation nested within a broader political framework?

“Conceptually, the decision to deploy peacekeeping forces cannot, as in the case of Yugoslavia, be divorced from the considerations of the long-term political and administrative arrangements which the UN involvement is designed to promote within fractures societies. The corollary to this is that the UN must be prepared to withdraw or abstain from intervening in conflicts where peacekeeping does not reinforce a broader political process for the resolution of conflict.”<sup>65</sup>

Second, recognizing that military forces cannot resolve conflict alone, is there a willingness or appetite to do what is needed? Lieutenant-General Dallaire wrote, “I am adamant that conflict resolution must not be attempted unless we are willing to address all

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<sup>63</sup> Bade. p 217.

<sup>64</sup> Strednansky. p 16.

<sup>65</sup> Woodhouse, Tom and Ramsbotham, Oliver. “Peacekeeping and Humanitarian Intervention in Post-Cold War Conflict”, Peacekeeping and Peacemaking: Towards Effective Intervention in Post-War Conflicts. New York, St Martin’s Press, 1997). p 67.

dimensions of the a problem (this is political, humanitarian, security, and economic factors) and to do so over the long term – for decades if necessary.”<sup>66</sup>

Finally, are the desired objectives attainable? Military commanders carry out political decisions, they do not make them. However, they can dramatically influence their political leaders with their ‘can-do’<sup>67</sup> attitude; often overstating the realm of the possible or the influence that the military can have towards long-term conflict resolution.<sup>68</sup>

Enthusiasm must be tempered by reality and the complexities at hand. O’Hanlon wrote that in some cases the best mandate is no mandate and that the best exit strategy is to not get involved in the first place.<sup>69</sup>

Support of belligerent factions or host nations is also an interesting dilemma for intervening parties. In traditional peacekeeping operations under Chapter VI of the UN charter (or similar arrangements), the presence of foreign military forces and other assistance is generally accepted and thus eases some of the conflict resolution challenges. However, when the intervention begins under Chapter VII (peace enforcement) then the peacekeepers can be, at worst, viewed as an occupation force and, at best, are involved in operations where the belligerents do not all consent to their presence and where the desire to fight remains.<sup>70</sup> Once again, what is clear is that the military intervention dramatically affects the nature and style of potential conflict resolution measures.

There are two capability gaps that must be addressed when attempting to establish a stable peace during peace support operations. The first is a gap in our understanding and

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<sup>66</sup> Dallaire, Lieutenant-General Romeo A. “Command Experiences in Rwanda”, The Human in Command: Exploring the Modern Military Experience. New York, Kluwer/Plenum Publishers, 2000). p 49.

<sup>67</sup> A recognise term showing the willingness of military commanders to engage forces despite tremendous and sometimes almost impossible challenges. Canadian military commanders were accused of this approach in the Somalia Commission Inquiry Executive Summary.

<sup>68</sup> David Last points out in “Organizing for Effective Peacebuilding”, International Peacekeeping 7:1 (Spring 2000) pp 82-83, that the military is but one contributor to conflict resolution and that we should not assume that the military can stand alone. In fact he argues that the wrong type of security presence can also be dangerous and provocative.

<sup>69</sup> O’Hanlon, Michael. Saving Lives with Force: Military Criteria for Human Intervention. Washington, Brookings Institution Press, 1997. p 49.

<sup>70</sup> Cimballa, Stephen J. Through the Glass Darkly: Looking at Conflict Prevention, Management, and Termination. Westport Connecticut: Praeger Publishers, 2001. pp 152-154.

capability to put the hawks in a box – to keep them under control. The second is a gap in our ability to rebuild trust that permits cooperation between the parties (including the hawks) and lets the doves out of their box.<sup>71</sup> The delicate balance between the two is fundamental to successful conflict resolution.

In peace support operations, the cultural challenges are pronounced. “Today’s missions are multi-culturally composed and trans-nationally executed across a diversity of cultural contexts... The challenge of culture and cultural differences merits systematic analysis...”<sup>72</sup> yet seldom is the time available to do so.<sup>73</sup> The cultural divides are not only with the host populations. Up to 1988 only 26 countries had participated in peacekeeping operations. By 2000, over 80 countries from all over the globe had contributed forces.<sup>74</sup> Furthermore, there is a “cultural abyss” and thus a fundamental lack of understanding between military forces, NGOs and other development agencies.<sup>75</sup>

Finally, two miscellaneous but important points on combined operations (international and inter-agency) must be mentioned. First, for obvious reasons, nations seldom provide forces without a say on their employment. This results in a natural tendency for governments to interfere in the conduct of operations outside of the prescribed coalition/alliance chain of command, even though there is a clear recognition that confusion and serious problems could occur when forces act under national command.<sup>76</sup> These problems usually have a direct influence on the ability of the international military commander to use his force in the best way possible to contribute to conflict resolution. Second, the ad hoc and incremental engagement of a plethora of agencies from throughout the international community.

the entry strategy – that is getting a coherent organization in place. As a result, conflict resolution and exit strategies are often short-changed.<sup>77</sup>

## CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE FUTURE

*Only the dead have seen the end of war*

*Plato*

There is no blueprint for conflict resolution. The purpose of this essay is not to provide a roadmap or the ten easy steps for stable peace since, above all else, I have attempted to show that the complexities involved in getting it right do not lend themselves to simple or textbook solutions. If it were so easy, Plato's assertion would be wrong since wars would be obsolete.

Clearly, more education of military strategists and political leaders is required. As a pre-cursor, more information on conflict resolution must be included in doctrinal literature to increase awareness.<sup>78</sup> The simple fact that the term *conflict resolution* is not defined in NATO, US or Canadian doctrine<sup>79</sup> speaks volumes on the lack of detailed information and 'food for thought'. International relations mainstream literature is abundant but has generally focused on one of two areas – either the termination of armed conflict or the nation-building and post-hostility activities. There is not a great deal written that meshes these two activities together to de-conflict actions and achieve synergy.<sup>80</sup> In short, awareness of the complexities of the issues is lacking within political and military leadership and must improve.

Next, the mindset of the use of overwhelming force in limited war or peace support operations must be tempered or at least recognized as not being the solution in all

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<sup>77</sup> Wilkinson, Philip. "Sharpening the Weapons of Peace". Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution. eds Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham. London: Frank Cass, 2000. p 68.

<sup>78</sup> Reed, James W. Provides a summary of how little information is available within US doctrine in his "Should Deterrence Fail: War Termination in Campaign Planning". Parameters US Army War College Quarterly - Summer 1993. pp 41-52.

<sup>79</sup> Based on a search by the author of definitions in NATO, US and Canadian keystone manuals on joint and combined operations.



circumstances. Clausewitz stated that the smaller the penalty you demand from your opponent, the less you can expect him to try to deny it from you.<sup>81</sup> Liddell Hart notes that the most successful peace settlements (implying those that lead to long-term conflict resolution) are those made by negotiation rather than by decisive use of military force.<sup>82</sup> He suggested that leaders must reduce adverse consequences to the use of force and should accept the premise that less destructive approaches result in less resistance to conflict resolution on favourable terms to all parties.<sup>83</sup>

Also, extensive dialogue on conflict resolution options/issues, through formal arrangements and ad hoc discussions between political leaders, diplomats, military strategists and other involved groups in the conflict and post-conflict ‘nation-building’ process, is essential before and during the crisis. Even with this, politicians are not usually experts on grand strategy or military strategy and therefore professionals must answer the call through aggressive proactive approaches.

“It is unlikely that, when war comes, political leaders will have thought through the demands of war termination strategy. Conceptual thinking and contingency planning will fall to the military professionals who must plan and execute the war. If such thinking and planning is incorporated into the military planning process, war termination strategies will be available and ready for political decision-makers when the call to arms is heard.”<sup>84</sup>

Although this quote focuses on the dialogue required between the military and the government, the equally important dialogue is the one with all of the other stakeholders in the conflict. As discussed earlier in this paper, the military has often worked in isolation – assuming it can resolve the crisis on its own through the application of force. This notion is dated and must be removed from the mindset of all concerned.

More and more academics and practitioners are devoting a great deal of time and effort towards *positive-sum* or *win-win* conflict resolution. The basic idea is that all parties

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<sup>80</sup> Hauss. p 55.

<sup>81</sup> Clausewitz, Carl von. *On War*. ed and translated by Michael Howard and Peter Paret. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1984. p 81.

<sup>82</sup> Liddell Hart, BH. *Strategy*. New York: Meridian, 1991. p 356.

<sup>83</sup> Liddell Hart. pp 356-360.

are satisfied with the negotiations through a give and take approach whereby the requirement for armed escalation is not required since all sides feel that they actually won something. The argument is that negotiation is much easier before either side has been seriously violated. Charles Hauss argues that in most cases, *win-lose* or *lose-lose* conflicts tend to produce temporary victors while the vanquished prepare for retaliation.<sup>85</sup> He also stresses

“Creation of stable peace does not simply involve being nice. People cannot ignore their own self-interest... Giving in to the other side tends to leave the actor who did so as dissatisfied as someone who actually lost and can thus lay the foundation for future conflict.”<sup>86</sup>

The basic tenet of the purest approach to *win-win* conflict resolution theory is that war should never be required if the theory is correctly applied. This, of course, is the extreme. However, the idea that negotiation is easier when bitterness and inferiority have not yet been experienced is something worth remembering even when application of military force is deemed necessary. To be clear, I am not advocating that force protection should be compromised or that winning is not essential. The issue is how the victory is achieved. There is a common metaphor amongst military leaders – ‘don’t bring a knife to gunfight’ – implying that military forces should always be well armed and overpower where possible. In this age, I would argue that perhaps we should recognize the need to ‘bring very big guns to knife fights’ but only to remove them from their holsters if absolutely necessary.

Two other mindsets must also change for successful future conflict resolution. First, warlords exist and have significant influence in conflict areas. Yet, “international military forces, humanitarian relief and development agencies ... spend little effort in defining and isolating this shadowy figure who will, in some form, be certain to impact negatively on their agenda.”<sup>87</sup> We must better understand them, and dare I say, to a certain degree, work better with them, for stable peace to be given a chance. The reality is that

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<sup>84</sup> Bade. p 227.

<sup>85</sup> Hauss. p 36.

<sup>86</sup> Hauss. p 40.

many of today's warlords become tomorrow's national leaders.<sup>88</sup> Second, a review of peace negotiations and conflict resolution discussions since the early 1990s shows a clear absence of female participation. For example, despite all the local organizations that represent women's interest in Bosnia, there were no female participants at Dayton. Women have been virtually excluded from all high-level negotiations despite their specific influence within their cultures. Not only do women in some cases have a certain power base, they almost always have a unique perspective within the community – a perspective that may not otherwise be understood.<sup>89</sup> Inclusion should not be tokenism but rather part of an all-inclusive effort to examine all facets and considerations involved in the conflict.

## CONCLUSION

Peace is not an absence of war; it is a virtue, a state of mind, a disposition for benevolence, confidence and justice”

Baruch Spinoza (17<sup>th</sup> Century Philosopher)

Modern limited wars, and peace support operations, take place in highly complex political strategic environments where actions and reactions are inextricably linked in a global maze of issues and concerns based on varied cultures, priorities and national or group interests. The situation requires a delicate mix of war fighting, diplomacy and nation-building initiatives most often in a hostile environment with deep-seeded hatred or mistrust.

The role of political and military leaders must be to enhance the potential for successful conflict resolution through timely thought and effort. Conflict resolution is challenging, essential and even elusive. Yet, progress is being made.

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<sup>87</sup> Mackinlay, John. “Defining Warlords”. Peacekeeping and Conflict Resolution. eds Tom Woodhouse and Oliver Ramsbotham. London: Frank Cass, 2000. p 48.

<sup>88</sup> Based on personal observations as Senior Canadian Officer Afghanistan.

<sup>89</sup> Ramsbotham and Woodhouse. pp 23-24.

“Stable peace is rare. It takes time and patience that is uncommon in political life. Still there are signs that the international community is taking the idea more seriously than ever before and is experimenting with new strategies to take societies closer together.”<sup>90</sup>

Practitioners of new theories may argue that the even the threat of the use of military force as an intervention tool in time of crisis is inappropriate since it serves to deepen rather than reduce antagonisms.<sup>91</sup> “However, the tragedies of Somalia, Rwanda, Bosnia and, especially, Kosovo have led some of them...to be more receptive to the limited use of force if it is part of an overall strategy for ending a conflict and moving toward a stable peace.”<sup>92</sup>

There will likely never be a case where an ideal solution for conflict resolution is definable (let alone attainable), either before or during the crisis. However, this does not in any way diminish the need to understand the requirements and the factors at play. Being aware of the challenges and putting in place whatever mitigation is possible, may not result in stable peace, but may put us one step further away from continued or repeated conflict.

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<sup>90</sup> Hauss. p 29.

<sup>91</sup> See Luttwak, Edward N. “Give War a Chance”. *Foreign Affairs*, July/Aug 1999, where he describes how, based on historical review, armed intervention has not been successful in conflict resolution.

<sup>92</sup> Hauss. p 72

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