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KEYNOTE ADDRESS

WINNING MODERN WARS?
by
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Synopsis

In this presentation I argue that interventions to win wars are only useful if they are able to contribute to a lasting peace. Moreover, for peace to be lasting, the intervention must seek to contribute to an endstate that demonstrates an acceptable level of ‘human security’ for the population. By ‘acceptable’ I mean the ability for people to live in freedom from poverty and oppression. This approach demands effective coordination between civilian and military actors even before intervention, and ongoing collaboration with key stakeholders after intervention. Moreover, if humanitarian disasters are to be averted, and the rule of law established to sustain peace, more frequent and greater military and police support, rather than less, will be required for longer periods. Put simply, winning modern wars is a tough gig! There are no short term solutions or quick fixes! We are literally talking about ‘coordinating chaos’ so our expectations should not be too high, although we should aim to improve on achievements to date. In the short term there are probably only two outcomes that we should reasonably expect from such interventions: either failure or limited success. We should anticipate that every intervention will experience setbacks and extreme challenges.

I briefly cover the following:

- suggest some key factors for successful intervention;
- discuss the importance of improving civil-military coordination;
- explain why building human security is critical; and
- advocate for strengthening the capacity of the United Nations.

I conclude by emphasising four points:

- First, more, rather than less, legitimate force will be required in interventions to achieve a secure environment and to give peace a chance.

¹ Major General Smith is currently the CEO of Austcare, an independent and non-sectarian Australian humanitarian aid NGO whose mission is *to work with people affected by conflict and natural disaster to build human security*. For more detail on Austcare and a copy of Smith’s biography refer the Austcare website at www.austcare.org.au.

- Second, interventions need to be better coordinated between civil and military actors before and after intervention. This requires better entry and exit strategies, with a clear understanding of the endstate and a commitment for the long-term.
- Third, interventions need to be considered more through a human security prism than in terms of defeating an adversary. The APEC Leader's Declaration of September 2007 needs to be applied and extended, and the R2P framework needs to be operationalised.
- Fourth, member states need to strengthen the United Nations and work through or in agreement with the organisation to enhance prospects for sustainable peace.