



**Women's Foreign Policy Group UN Study Visit
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Ambassador Karen Pierce
Deputy Permanent Representative
of the UK Mission to the UN

*Pressing Issues Facing the Security Council:
The View from the United Kingdom Presidency*

Gillian Sorensen:

We'll have just a few more minutes with the distinguished Deputy Ambassador of the United Kingdom, now serving on the Security Council. She was to be with us this morning, and will have the chance to share a few thoughts, a few reflections on her work and the issues before the Security Council. Can I introduce to you Karen Pierce?

Ambassador Karen Pierce:

Well, thank you very much for that introduction, and apologies for not being there this morning. It's also very hard to follow a class act like Ambassador Khalilzad. In fact, it reminds me of what Prince Phillip used to describe himself as, which is second handshake to the Queen. So I feel rather like that now.

I'll just talk very quickly about what we did in our Security Council Presidency in April. We had a very interesting month. We presented a particular challenge to the Security Council in that my Foreign Secretary decided she wanted to have a debate on climate change within the

Security Council. And it's fair to say that this did not make us very popular with a number of member states who felt that that desire exposed a lot of the underlying tensions in the UN about the Security Council encroaching on the General Assembly's business.

On the other hand, we held the debate. My Foreign Secretary, Margaret Beckett came. And we had a full day's debate with more speakers than had ever been achieved for a thematic debate. And some of those who spoke may even be in the room now, spoke about the challenges the small countries in particular -- of what will happen in security terms if many of them are the victims of climate change and dramatic changes in the weather, flooding, more refugees, that sort of thing.

And interestingly, a number of countries also started to mention the concept of responsibility to protect in that context, and this struck Margaret Beckett as a very interesting development. She doesn't want to keep the issue in the Security Council. I think it's fair to say it has a niche role in this respect, but it started an interesting set of perspectives on climate change, which I think has only enriched the debate.

The other thing we did when she was here was we talked about Sudan. And I know that a number of you here will be very concerned about Sudan. And Sudan is an ongoing issue for the Council, and it's something we're going to have to try to find a way forward on over the next few months if not sooner. I think it's fair to say that most people on the Council are caught between the desire to put pressure on the Sudanese to allow the UN forces in. And the force we're trying to get in is known as the hybrid because it's the joint UN-AU venture -- and those people who want to give diplomacy and a peace process a little more time. And that's a very difficult tension.

On the one hand you have -- some of us on the Council feel that a particular part of

getting President Bashir to agree to the UN forces will be the threat if not the actuality of sanctions. On the other hand you have some other members of the Council who think we should rely entirely on a diplomatic process. And that is a tension actually that plays itself out on a wide number of issues before the Council. And in some ways Sudan is a bit of a microcosm to the sorts of tensions and talk and discussions that go on the Council. What is the right degree of pressure? What is the right level of diplomacy? How do you know when diplomacy is failing? And Ambassador Khalilzad referred to a toolbox. How do you get into that toolbox? How do you know which instruments to pick out of it at any given moment?

I think the other thing I'd highlight is a tendency on the Council that personally has worried me for a while. Back in the 1990s in the wake of the war in Bosnia and the breakup of Yugoslavia, we ended up with some very tough Chapter 7 Security Council resolutions that gave UN forces or forces like NATO acting under a UN mandate very powerful mandates to complete their mission. One of the things you're starting to see now in the Council is a reversion to a much softer mandate. Sometimes we cannot get a Chapter 7 mandate for peacekeeping force, and if you take that to its logical conclusion, it runs a very high risk that the forces, when push comes to shove, on the ground, will not actually be able to discharge their missions. And I think that's something we all ought to bear in mind and be aware of.

Some other things that were running during our presidency -- Ambassador Khalilzad was referring to Iran, and a number of you were interested in that. We had the Iran kidnap, if you like, of the British sailors. Now this was a purely national issue, but it does make the dynamic on the Council very hard to deal with when you're dealing with that region and it's coming to the Council and you have a big national, bilateral dispute running at the same time. And in the end, the Security Council helped us enormously by agreeing to a statement calling on

Iran to release the sailors. But that is an example of how different contexts can change the dynamic on the Council a little bit.

And I think the last thing I'd refer to, because Ambassador Khalilzad mentioned his Kosovo mission, we did start the Kosovo status process with President Ahtisaari coming to the Council to brief on the proposal he has come up with for the future of Kosovo. And as many of you will know, he is proposing a sort of supervised independence. And in doing that he has the support of the European Union, who will take on Kosovo from the UN. And again, I mention this. It's a very unusual process in a way. What tends to happen is that the regional organization goes in first. And again, one might think of Darfur in this context -- the AU goes in and then the UN takes over. One thinks of the AU forces going into Somalia and then the UN taking over. What we have in Kosovo is a reverse takeover. The UN is there now. The UN spends some \$280 million there. The UN will leave and the EU will assume that burden of helping bring Kosovo to normalization. And I think potentially it's very good for the UN to show that it can successfully complete a mission and withdraw. I think that's a mechanism we would all like to get to on a number of other conflicts.

Thank you. (Applause.)

Ms. Sorensen:

Well, thank you, Ambassador. (Applause.)