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Working Journey Stories

The Working Journey of

Eben Barlow

A Jaquesian Analysis

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Working Journey Stories

Introduction

I am going to tell you an unusual story. This is a very different journey and is about a man who revitalized of what is arguably the second oldest profession in the world. The Working Journey of Eeben Barlow (EB), the founder and CEO of Executive Outcomes (EO), created the first Private Military Company (PMC)ⁱ. In compiling these case studiesⁱⁱ I was keen on adding a military case study, given the fact that Elliott Jaques work has been so extensively used in that field.

Elliott Jaques's work with human capability and its mirror construct, Levels of Work (which he originally called Stratified Systems Theory) was researched extensively and used by the US Army in its restructure post Vietnam. Research was done on by the US Army Research Institute f research into Jaques concepts and published its findings in a series of papers over a decade.ⁱⁱⁱ It is reported that Generals Colin Powell and Norman Swarzkopff both went through a capability interviews. In 1997 I presented a paper on Third Wave Warfare, human capability and Levels of Work and shortly afterwards spoke to the South African National Defense Force (SANDF) Defense Parliamentary subcommittee^{iv}. In 2000 I submitted a paper to an Australian Federal Government Review on capability of the ADF and in 2004 their Joint Chiefs of Staff went through capability interviews. This was followed up in 2005 by an additional 40 mid-career officers following the same capability interview path^v.

I was also interested in a specific military genre when in 1983 Alvin Toffler in his book "*War and Anti-War*" wrote with remarkable prescience about how the role of Special Forces would increase in importance as the world splintered. I knew what I wanted to cover but had no real contacts into that area of non national military careers. Executive Outcomes (EO), as the first PMC, would fall under the category of being a Special Force, called in by governments and private agencies to accomplish missions that were sensitive or which could not be carried out by conventional forces. I also had the "in" I wanted, as EO's CEO and I had served together as young men. It was not easy tracking him down, as he did not want a raised public profile, but eventually I was successful.

EB's Working Journey is entrepreneurial and business focused, rather than a traditional military career, since it fits my definition of an entrepreneur, namely *a person with an idea or opportunity, who through implementation, builds an enterprise, be it in response to social or business needs and who generates a profit through these activities*. However, not everyone is able to create an enterprise that *can dominate an industry* and in so doing can *create the future and hold dominance over the past*. It is more than being able to seize an opportunity and capitalize on it through their knowledge, skills and experience. EB created a model which would revitalise the industry.

An Exceptional Life -

In 1981 I met Eeben Barlow when we were both young men. I was an officer in the Marines, while he was a young Sapper officer. We immediately struck up a spark of friendship. I recognised in him a spark that many years later I would be able to identify as high potential. He was also English speaking, a plus in a predominantly Afrikaans speaking community. EB was doing the "suicide run", the nightly trip to clear mines and attempting to entice the enemy into contact. He had been wounded some months early, with thirty stitches to his head and after receiving a "Dear John letter", had

returned to the bush, deciding to make the Army his career. We parted company but I never forgot that bright, interesting and inquisitive young man.

We lost contact and the decades blurred. EB had in the intervening years re-shaped an entire industry, moving it from a world inhabited by shady characters, dubious ethics, myths and adventurers to a professional business standing in a reborn industry. It is not surprising that its birth was painful and the new baby unwelcome, given vested interests. Eben recently published his story, a book about himself and his company “Executive Outcomes”¹. The book describes him thus –

Eben Barlow a former lieutenant-colonel in the Permanent Force of the South African Defence Force, served in the Engineer Corp, the Reconnaissance Wing of the elite 32-Battalion, Military Intelligence and in the shadowy Civil Co-operation Bureau division of Special Forces.

When the government disbanded the CCB Barlow found himself on the street. Taking advantage of his exceptional military skills he formed Executive Outcomes, a private company under whose aegis he was invited to train the SADF’s Special Forces in intelligence skills and to stem the flow of stolen diamonds from the De Beers Corporation’s properties.

He was then invited to recruit a force of ex-servicemen retrenched from the SADF to assist an oil company in the recovery of equipment that they had been forced to abandon at Soyo in north-western Angola after it was overrun by UNITA rebels. EO’s successes resulted in a contract to re-train the Angolan army and lead it in a fight to defeat the UNITA rebels.

A contract to restore order in Sierra Leone and other like contracts followed, including one to rescue Western hostages taken by separatist rebels in Indonesia^{vi}

EB offers us a view in his book that if we appreciate carefully allows us to distill his need and drive to actualize his capability. This story, like the others in the series is about how our Cognitive Power (CP) provides the fire in the equation to strive and to the greater the amount of CP, the more complex landscape we will seek to operate within. CP is as far as we can tell is the result of nature and through various processes can be assessed and *the future growth potential of the individual predicted.*

The rest is nurture and opportunity. EB’s cognitive capability pushed him to create an enterprise that served to allow him to do the work he valued and which fulfilled his passion (or what we call Values) and it brought into play his knowledge, skills, and experience (K/S/E) collected during his journey. It would seem that he built durable relationships that have served him long after he has left EO (Wisdom or Wi). Elliott Jaques offered us a formulae for gauging the effective level of work (which he referred to as Current Actual Capability or CAC) of any individual and which is dependent on all these criteria being satisfied (CAC=function of CP.K/S/E.Wi.V).

EB’s growth in cognitive capability (or cognitive power) allowed him to create and operate in an ever more complex picture that encompassed the growth of his own company through its start-up phase, bringing in the different work levels as the complexity increased. He quickly allowed for effective delegation and while we do not have a Requisite Organisation lens, it would seem that many of its principles were in place. For example, he did not mix the operational and the strategic and separated them as soon as he could. He gave full authority and accountability to his commanding officers in carrying out their offensive operations, while retaining the strategic portfolio dealing with business development, client relationship management, external positioning and internal organisational capability. He was the source of the Strategic Intent.

¹ Barlow, E., *Executive Outcomes – Against all Odds*. Galago Press. 2007

Executive Outcomes (EO), one of the first of to be termed a Private Military Companies (PMC) provided military personnel, training and logistical support to officially recognized governments. This later included committing combat teams and support. The mission statement of EO was as follows:

- ✪ To provide a highly professional and confidential military advisory service to legitimate governments.
- ✪ To provide sound military and strategic advice.
- ✪ To provide the most professional military training packages currently available to armed forces, covering aspects related to sea, air, and land warfare.
- ✪ To provide advice to armed forces on weapon and weapon platform selection.
- ✪ To provide a total apolitical service based on confidentiality, professionalism, and dedication."

Barlow is clear that his company worked only for legitimate governments, was far more aggressive in making its presence known and in marketing itself, and was composed of experienced officers and NCOs. Image and reputation were important and the PMC is like a corporation in this regard. EO was regarded as a “force multiplier” in that it could do all three layers of support – firstly training and guarding of installations; secondly, support for combat operations and thirdly, involving itself in combat operations. South Africa it is said, possessed one of the finest bush fighting armies which was rapidly demobilized, causing a great deal of bitterness. EO absorbed many highly skilled operators. Contextually EO was born in a cauldron of change in South Africa, as Apartheid ended. This and the fact that EO accepted work from enemies of the “old” South Africa, invoked the wrath of vested interests. Accusations were made that EO services included the provision of military support to international and multinational corporations to control natural resources in failed states through payment with mining concessions. Whether these reports are true or not, that debate is not within the scope of this paper.

EO fought on behalf of the Angolan government against UNITA after a 1994 peace settlement broke down. It played a key role in ending the Angola’s civil war, one of the longest civil wars in world history. EO then contained an insurrection at the request of the Sierra Leonean government, driving the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) back to the borders of the country and secured the diamond producing areas for government revenue. When EO left under international pressure RUF remerged and took power with a military junta, unleashing a blood bath. The UN would later struggle to achieve what EO had accomplished, at a massive cost and with 17,500 personnel as opposed to the 500 of EO. In both cases EO was credited with rescuing legitimate governments from destabilizing forces.

EO also had many enemies at governmental level who orchestrated a relentless information war on it, eventually closing it down through South African government legislation in 1998. But PMCs continue to flourish and is now a significant and very contentious growth industry.

Our Working Journey...

As our capability grows (our CP) and we acquire the K/S/E we become comfortable and effective (CAC) in a specific Work Level. When our CP changes, (and we have no control over this and the rate of change differs from person to person), we **transition** into a new type of cognitive processing and start looking for work challenges in this Level of Work. In common terms, *we seek actualization*.

This change and its rate of change is measurable and predictive and is extrapolated from the findings of in-depth interviews or card sort games and based on Elliott Jaques's Growth Curves.

Technically, transitions points are *when we move from one order of mental processing to another and into a new level of work ability*. Transition points are critical for everyone, because it is a time when we experience an involuntary new Call to Adventure; to new and bigger challenges, maybe new horizons and sometimes complete reformulations of our Journey. It may not impact us if we are in challenged and recognized in our current role. Some of us may only experience one transition in our life, others two or more and a rapidly decreasing number will experience an increasingly greater number of transitions. These are the individuals we refer to as high potentials.

We may choose to ignore these Calls to Adventure at great personal cost since it represents that deep order calling on us to actualize our capability, to seek challenges to find fulfillment and a sense of destiny and as Mihály Csíkszentmihályi says, flow.

Flow is defined *as a high level of engagement in what we are doing, when our capabilities and skills are matched with work we value and we feel energized and enthused by our work*. If we are not in flow with our work, we all know it immediately. We become bored and underutilized over time or conversely, if promoted or have grown into a work level we are not able to cope with, we may become anxious and worried and eventually overextended. Our intuition deserts us in both scenarios and we may end up very stressed out and potential at risk of illness.

The general principle is *people make a change to their Working Journey when they transition from one type of cognitive data processing to another higher level*.

If we have advance warning on when we may transition, at what possible ages, what the next stage may be like, how many more are there likely to be, where am I now *vis a vis* where I should or might be, we have navigation beacons and a broad direction into the future. This compass bearing enables us to plan how we may optimize our journey for enjoyment and purpose, what detours are not worth the risk, what skills and experience we should seek and when. To this extent this gives validity to that age old concept of predestination, but the bearing will not reveal the multiple destinations, the outcomes – successes and failures, good or evil, actualization or no. It gives us advance knowledge about the fundamental nature of ourselves. For entrepreneurs, it is an essential part of planning. We can use our limited resources better.

EB's Working Journey and his approximate transitions points are indicated in schematic form based on Jaques Growth Curves in **Figure I on page...**

Eben's transition to Work Level III Capability - at approximately 14 – 16 years of age

*The capability of people in flow with this level of work is summarised by the term **CONNECTING** or **SERIAL PROCESSING**. Here the person weighs up the current situation against that which is planned. Alternative paths are created and weighed up for the most favourable solution to meet future needs and to ensure continuity of what is. A dynamic picture is thus created looking for alternative ways of achieving goals, which consider the principles of how different parts of the work system connect together to ensure workflow both present and future. Here one uses symbolic Sequential Thought Processes for dealing with one issue at a time. The alternatives are real and tangible.*

EB joined the South African Defence Force (SADF) at the age of eighteen with a keen desire to follow a military career. Eben was commissioned as an officer at nineteen, with an engineering mustering. Contextually the SADF were in the stages of entering a war in Angola and like many young men, he wanted to get into the action. Over the ages of 21 – 24 he grounded himself in the technical skills of his trade; “being loaned to 32 Battalion”, he became involved in Special Forces operations, primarily reconnaissance and small team operations, often operating behind enemy lines. He learnt soldierly skills backed up by experiential learning and good mentorship. It is interesting at this stage to see his capability coming through in introducing and perfecting methods of combat techniques such as perfecting a technique for anti-ambush (which would later become adopted as standard practice) and also technical solutions and methods for “the suicide run”. It was during his time he ended up in a long range reconnaissance and operations deep behind enemy lines. Plate I on the right, shows Eben in his early twenties, in Ondangwa, South West Africa where we first met.



The young man had begun to question the reason for the war in Angola and who was actually benefitting. The questions he was starting to raise about control of natural resources and vested interests in maintaining instability would strongly influence his future course of actions and unknown to him at that stage, influence his future strategy formulation. Contextually the Angolan civil war was regarded as part of the Cold War and South Africa was supported in its fight by the US against the communist Angola and its Cuban allies. UNITA, the rebel force, were seen as pro Western.

At 26 he was recalled to South Africa to do the prerequisite course required for the rank of major. After the course he was transferred to the Directorate Covert Intelligence (DCI), where he was sadly underutilised. Coming from the relative freedom and adrenalin rush of life in the bush to an office setting with a strict military hierarchy and protocol, no clear role and incompetent managers; coupled with neglect and a wrong level of work; frustration and boredom were inevitable. Like most high potentials, who prefer asking for forgiveness then begging permission, he looked for gaps where he could pour his energy into and found one, where he *started to carve out his own niche in DCI*. This often happens when high potentials are neglected or alternatively, they just leave, but for a soldier committed to a military career, the former option was the only viable alternative.

One benefit that accrued early from this unfortunate time was a trip abroad to Turkey, his first abroad and the travel bug bit - travel was to become a key part of the way the young Eben would do business in the future.

Transition to Work Level IV Capability - at approximately 27 – 30 years of age

This capability is what we refer to as “Parallel Processing” and the cognitive processes is to construct a mental model of how things may work and assume that the gaps in knowledge are either not important, because the general outcome is envisaged or that the gaps offer opportunities. With this thinking comes the ability to hold in mind and compare the merits of alternative processes, systems and approaches to achieving that mental model, and to alter the mental model as reality unfolds. Thinking often takes place within constructed frameworks guided by hypothesis. The individual can conceptually hold in mind a number of actual or envisage different processes, operating independently or linked, aimed at achieving the constructed mental models.

Level IV work (see Table I) is the first level of general management work or the military equivalent of a US one star general or a brigadier-general. It is the first level of executive leadership.

As EB transitioned, his frustration continued to grow. He had added useful skills to his repertoire at DCI, primarily around relationship management. By the age of 27 he had built an extensive network of agents, in both friendly and enemy organisations. Relationship Management skills are essential at all Work Levels but become broader, more critical when moving into Work Level IV where the focus of the work shifts from predominantly internal to far more external. At 28 he said he could see the writing on the wall in South Africa and that a negotiated settlement with the ANC was on the cards. Barlow confided that if he was a young black man, he would probably have been fighting for the ANC.

EB, caught working at the wrong work level could identify all the inefficiency and frustrations caused by lack of effective leadership at Work Level IV and above. He commented extensively on the ineffective work systems in place, the confusion of who is doing what, failure to integrate and coordinate work, lack of clear accountability and duplication.

But a new phase of his Journey was hurtling towards him, one which would herald real adventure and which would herald a phase of Life that would last for close on ten years before the next transition...He was about to get a new set of challenges that would bring him back "into flow" and max his comfort zones... .

Time at the DCI was running out. Eeben had been identified as a high potential individual with an unusual Special Forces skill set. He was asked to join CCB as a deep cover regional commander for Europe and Asia with the rank of Colonel. The CCB has its counterparts in many countries, but it was the activities of its South African based cell and its excesses that would result in the entire CCB operation being closed down. Eeben knew none of this as he considered the offer. The CCB offer gave EB the ideal opportunity to learn a new set of skills, namely business and do what he enjoyed.

At 32 years of age, he was already growing strongly into Work Level IV and was becoming ever more deeply frustrated. He was concerned that he would have to resign from the military to take up this deep cover role. Leaving the military had not been part of his career plan and he was concerned that this role would stretch him. Not only would he have to survive on his own skills, he had to do his CCB work with little or no funding. Moving from the "sheltered employment" of the military to fending for oneself is a daunting task without the requisite knowledge, skills or experience and being unsure if he would value the business of business...

His capability helped him construct a mental framework of how he might operate. He started to lay down the ground work for how to be employed in profit generating companies. EB knew he needed to set up or join companies to fund and act as a front for his activities for CCB. He used his network to become involved in a number of business concerns, becoming MD of Mellor Imports where he worked to learn the business of business. Eeben conformed two general principles of high potential entrepreneurs – he enjoyed travel from the sense of experiencing the new, creating conscious and subconscious connections and linkages that may or may not be relevant immediately, but which causes the subconscious to process information in the background for future use and in his concern about going out on his own into "business". Many entrepreneurs are concerned initially if "they can cut it", if they will survive when the security blanked of corporate or salaried employment is lifted.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, the cognitive capability associated with this work level is that one attempts to construct a general picture, a mental model, that while incomplete,

offers a compelling picture of what one desires and hopes might be and which seems feasible on what is known. The general desired outcome is known and this provides sufficient direction as a guide to action. As one works towards accomplishing the picture, feedback on our and others actions allows for modification, refinement or in some cases, abandonment.

EB built up a fluid picture, with many different parts of his puzzle interacting, such as a partner with Geo Political Trading CC, lecturing at the Military Intelligence College and developing specialist courses for Special Forces. He registered his own company, Executive Outcomes, as a vehicle to do the Special Forces training courses and to source covert surveillance equipment that Apartheid sanctions denied the country. He said *“this was an exciting and difficult time of my life”* He reactivated all his agents from his time in Directorate Covert Intelligence and began to travel extensively.

But the following year his planning started to unravel as CCB was shut down without notice. He desperately needed something else to do as he had almost become bankrupt in the process and he was unemployed, the CCB not paying out promised disbursements. The only thing he had which was his own was Executive Outcomes. He decided to market aggressively. His reputation had grown and he was thrilled when he was approached by a South American Drug Enforcement Agency to develop a plan to combat drugs. EB, in what would become his characteristic fashion articulated a clear and comprehensive strategy for his client, with an execution plan. However, he could not be hired due to US involvement.

EO was also getting traction elsewhere as Eben became involved with other business entities such as De Beers. He soon set up another company with a partner, Barlow Ranking Management Services which was sourcing and selling hardware. He kept EO separate from these activities. By 34 he was working in Botswana and Namibia and had offices and agents in seven countries. EO was able in 1990 to offer classified and sensitive surveillance equipment to Special Forces, National Intelligence and De Beers.

Angola

In 1990 a serendipitous meeting gave EB the opportunity to ramp Executive Outcomes into a whole new level of business complexity. EO was awarded a contract to provide security for a company to salvage expensive mining equipment of out of a rebel held port in Angola, called Soyo. The Mining Company had leased the equipment and could not get it out, but still had to continue paying heavy leasing charges. EB hurriedly assembled a team to extract the equipment. He hoped to get in and out quickly, without alerting the UNITA rebel forces to their presence.

That was not to be. At the age of 36, he was suddenly heading a small organisation that had a company of 72 men in combat, supplied by aircraft in continual shuttle between South Africa and Angola, a 3000 km long logistical pipeline nightmare. It was also Eben's baptism of a different kind of fire, as his efforts were greeted by a hostile press. This, he quickly realised was another front that had few rules and one he was not equipped to deal with. A great deal of political pressure was exerted and the warning was clear, don't mess in this playing field with its powerful interests. EO was portrayed as supporting the communist government of Angola, which the South African Government did not recognise and who supported UNITA, the Angolan rebel movement which held Soyo. A police investigation also started at the same time into EO activities. This was a stressful time as he was working a 20 hour day to meet internal and external demands.

EO had ratcheted from a one man show into a fully operational 24x7 business that required continual resupply, logistics, intelligence, casevacs, PR and operational planning. EB was busy with transport, food, medicines, pay, public relations and management of stakeholders.

He would later reflect that *“Soyo was pivotal to my life and the fortunes of EO”* The combat role that eventuated had not initially been planned, the press helped transform EO from a security / protection company into a company capable of deploying combat teams. This happened through the press reports which alerted the rebels to the EO presence and brought them post haste to Soyo. The EO Company repulsed the attacks and the mission was accomplished.

The situation post Soyo grew dire as the Special Forces training programmes had come to an end and EO had no clients. This is an all too familiar entrepreneurial story. EB knew he had to market EO aggressively but as a result of Soyo, the company was branded *“untouchable”*. The stress resulted in him being briefly hospitalised and suffered what he described as a *“mini stroke”*

But fortune favours the brave and a surprise phone call from General Faceira of the Angolan Army saw a meeting take place in which EB, at the age of 36 was asked to take on the role of training the Angolan Army. EO would be involved in Angola from 1993 to 1996. In his clear and unambiguous manner he drafted a strategy to help train the Angolan Army, his old foe and particularly 16 Brigade to beat the rebel forces of UNITA. This time he made certain not to repeat the mistakes of Soyo. Infrastructure was paramount and he ensured the logistics and human resource infrastructure were in place to deal with this rapid growth in size and complexity of operations.

Executive Outcomes purchased two Boeing 727s to deal with logistic supply issues that had so plagued Soyo and EB set this up as a separate company, Capricorn Systems. Capricorn Systems would provide regular services for business people and NGOs. By October EB had recruited ex SADF combat helicopter pilots to train the Angolan Air Force for close support and EO fighter pilots were doing conversion to MIG 23s. While this was happening EB continued working with De Beers; battling the negative press issues. UNITA were portrayed as the *“good guys”* and the legitimate government of Angola as communist puppets. Indeed, when Barlow was with 32 Battalion, UNITA were regarded as allies. Public Relations had become a full time job. UNITA claimed it held 80% of Angola and the Angolan Army (FAA) was seen as acting reactively allowing UNITA to seize, hold and exploit the initiative. Plate II below above shows Eeben Barlow with FAA Special Forces in Angola in 1994.



EB was coming close to another transition point and it may already have been under way. Life was about to become very full, complex and quick paced...

In early 1994 EB appointed a Brigadier to command the Angolan project, which could be viewed as a Strategic Business Unit. The project slowly moved into gear for training the Angolan Army. The Angolan Army had a very poor record of standing up to UNITA and it was after decades of fighting, in poor health, suffering low morale, lacked equipment and the will to win. EB worked on a strategy for defeating UNITA with the Chief of the Angolan Army and with the Head of Intelligence, General Itha. Itha knew EO ran its own intelligence operation and was interested in its

intelligence reports and predictions of UNITA's course of action. EO's Strategic Intelligence Group ran agents in many different countries and organisations, supplying a steady stream of intelligence from different sources, agents and combat actions.

EB persuaded the Angolans that the best military strategy was to cut off their funding by retaking the diamond mining areas and then attack their logistical and supply routes as funding for purchasing arms and equipment dried up, the logistical routes would become more vulnerable and critical to keep them fighting. The Angolan generals made it clear that they wanted UNITA to come to the peace table so that they could be reintegrated into the future country as they were all Angolans.

The key to defeating UNITA, EB believed, were to make lightning strikes against targets that were not expecting it and while the Angolan Army did not have that capability, EO did. They started to transfer the knowledge and skills. EO intelligence was tasked with arm twisting the generals to give EO responsibility for aerial reconnaissance and providing tactical battle field capability. This would be expanded later with modern technology to allow the FAA to bring in fast and hard hitting mechanised motorised warfare. EO set about equipping aircraft with intelligence collection equipment. To support this activity a dedicated film processing laboratory and editing suite was set up in Luanda under great secrecy.

Strong media attention on EO and the actions of the South African government left no doubt they wanted EO out of the equation. In trying to combat the steady and prolonged attacks on image and reputation Eben took the head of the ANC's intelligence on a tour of the Angolan Operations in 1994. He regularly wrote articles and countered claims in the press. UNITA had come to the peace table but this soon broke down. The UN Secretary General reported to UN that there was a deadlock in the negotiation process and UNITA used the respite to rearm and commenced the offensive.

This prompted the MPLA government to escalate its plans for attack and by mid 1994 the war in Angola reached its most crucial phase. Now or never, was the mood of the FAA general staff. On the home front the dirty tricks campaign continued with allegations EO was involved with the Chinese mafia, smuggling vehicles, diamonds and carrying out assassinations. In the meantime EO worked with Wild Life NGOs on projects to save wild game, such as the giant Sable.

On 12 April 1994 EB received a call from UN representative asking if EO would be able and prepared to stop the genocide in Rwanda. EB said he would get back in 24 hours and EO presented a plan with time frame, force level, cost, deployment and execution of the operation. The UN response was that it was too expensive. By July it was estimated that more than one million people had died.

One of the outcomes EB said of the disinformation campaign about EO working in the Great Lake area was that the company was asked to undertake work in Uganda. Some EO men were placed in the areas where armed attacks were taking place against commercial interests, others in Kampala.

After fourteen weeks of the genocide, Paul Kagame's RPF declared an end to the civil war and took control over Rwanda. EB says the German intelligence met with them in an effort to get EO involved in Rwanda. Eben met Paul Kagame in 1995 and they discussed the situation. EB was of the opinion no one in the international community cared what happened in Rwanda, there was neither oil nor diamonds, except EB said, with prescience, water, and one day the world will go to war for that. All African conflicts were a play for natural resources EB felt, a view that had hardened since he first started questioning South Africa's role in the Angolan conflict and for holding on to South West Africa (Namibia). He outlined to Paul Kagame how EO would deal with the Rwanda issue, offering a clearly defined strategic intent and the "business plan" to achieve the desired outcome.

Executive Outcomes had the hallmark of offering clients a clear and cohesive strategy in all their contracts, with costs and timelines. In reply to Kagame's request for assistance, EB politely turned it down because there was already so much bad press about EO and also accusations that it

represented a form of neo-colonialism. The ANC government had come to power and brought changes to the intelligence community. In response to this EB took a representative of the South African Secret Service on a tour to Angola. EB was later introduced to the deputy minister of Defence in the new government to explain EO's position. During this time EB continued to follow up other business leads, which ranged from resource companies to meeting from Iraqi Armed Forces. EB would not consider contracts that were not from legitimate governments. The media war intensified and an attempt was made on his life.

The loss of the city of Cajun in Angola signalled the closing chapter of the war in Angola as it represented a severe blow to UNITA morale and funding. The FAA was attacking UNITA in other provinces and areas that had long been held by UNITA gradually started to change hands. The FAA took Soyo again in October 1994 and opened it up for the oil industry to start operating and to generate government revenue. EO was asked to deploy a force to provide security and set up clinics.

UNITA was on the run. On November the 11th 1994 UNITA finally agreed to sign the UN Lusaka Protocols. There was a lot of pressure on the Angolan Government to terminate the EO contact. A press release stated that the South African Dept of Foreign Affairs had a dossier on EO and would be taking legal action. EO's legal team followed this up and the rumour was disproved. EB said the media not interested in his story and it was a one sided reporting.

The company finally left Angola in January 1996, with a great deal of thanks, pride and sorrow. It was not a peace that lasted and UNITA returned to the struggle in 1998. It would not end until Jonas Savimbi, the UNITA leader, was killed in 2002, reputedly by FAA soldiers supported by mercenaries recruited from Executive Outcomes and Israeli Special Forces.^{vii}

Sierra Leone

By 1994 Sierra Leone was a microcosm of the breakdown of law and order that was occurring in West Africa. The international community had no desire to become embroiled and the UN was dealing with the aftermath of seeing dead American soldiers being dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, and other incidents in Bosnia and Rwanda in which the UN peacekeepers had publically failed.

The rebel movement in Sierra Leone, the RUF, were particularly savage in its treatments of civilians, the hacking of limbs, eating and torture and murder of villages had taken control of the diamond mining areas of Soirée Leone and had also deprived the government of revenue. The rebel forces were massing to take the capital. The President, president through a military coup, was introduced by the British to the Ghurkhas Security Guards (GSC) who were contracted to train the presidential guard and the army in counter insurgency. The Ghurkhas, under the command of an American, were ambushed in 1995, their OC and 19 members killed. They left the country short afterwards.

Tony Buckingham, CEO of Heritage Oil, who had given EB the original Soyo contract, contacted EB again, asking if EO was willing to go to Sierra Leone to assist the President, no blushing violet himself, had taken power through a coup. EB was told of the enveloping chaos and he agreed to go and talk to the President. The UN, not surprisingly suspicious of the President, stood by watching as the anarchy unfolded. Sierra Leone had tensions with its neighbours who were aiding and abetting the RUF. Diamonds and mining issues were at the heart of it as the diamond fields allowed them to fund their activities and buy arms and support neighbouring regimes. Liberia was growing rich out of the RUFs control of the diamond fields.

EB recognised the only way to bring the conflict to an end was to launch an aggressive offensive operation, take the pressure of Freetown, seize the diamond fields; deny the rebels their

funding, then size the initiative and put them on the run, aggressively hunting them down, destroying their basis, befriending the local population while building up and supporting the Sierra Leonean Army. This would then force them to the negotiating table. EB knew the media would say that EO was there because of the diamonds. There were deeply vested interests in the diamond fields, from foreign governments, respected resource companies, to members of the Sierra Leonean government and Army. Eben could see a plan coming together but one which was geared around flexibility as EO had very little information to work with on arrival. An advance party quickly established itself, with the purpose of obtaining effective intelligence, a sound command and control system and to set up state of the art communications. The campaign moved ahead although with a small force seldom over 250 men using second rate equipment and one helicopter gunship. They launched aggressive combat patrols and hunted the rebels, taking the diamond fields in record time.

EO's involvement was from 25 May 1995 until March 1997. Shortly after EO left, the UN's promised peacekeeping force did not materialise, its members baulking at the cost and a coup brought the RUF back from the brink of defeat and in an alliance with a military Junta, into power. Sierra Leone fell apart with much bloodshed. After bitter fighting and the intervention of the British, order was restored. In 2003 a democratically elected President Kambah would say how his hand been forced to terminate EO's contact in spite of popular opposition, huge loss of life and heavy financial consequences that followed the wrongful and premature termination of that contact.

Elizabeth Rubin in a New York Times article on 4 Feb 1999 wrote a piece titled "Saving Sierra Leone" and in this she said; *"The Company was willing to do what the UN cannot; take sides, take casualties, deploy overwhelming force and fire pre-emptively. Executive Outcomes agreed to put down the rebels and restore law and order in return for \$15million and diamond mining concessions. Relying on about 200 solders and a helicopter gunship, it nearly succeeded; 300,000 refugees were able to return from squalid camps in neighbouring Guinea that were costing the international community \$60 million a year. And within a year, the people of Sierra Leone voted in their first presidential election in twenty eight years"*

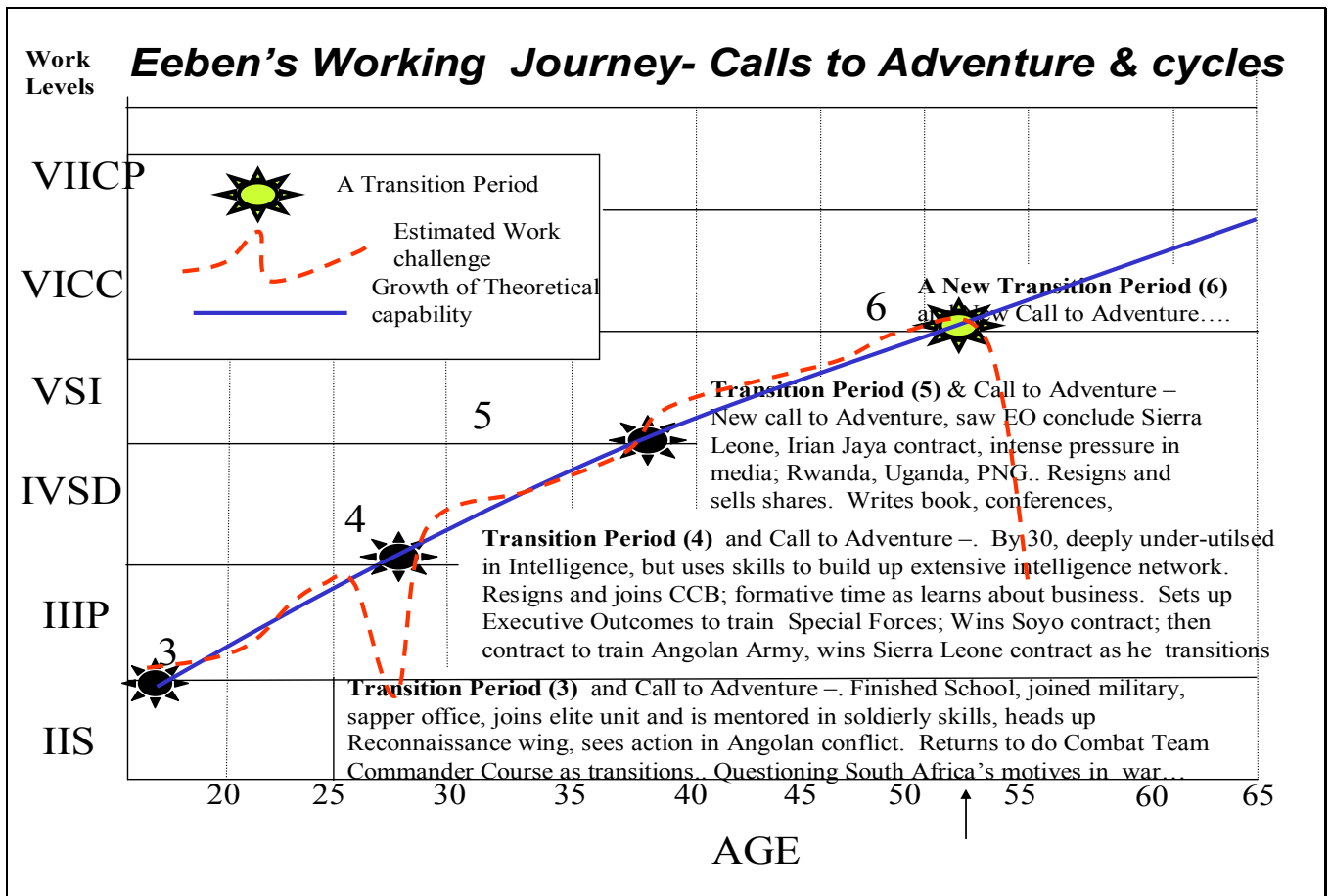
Transition to Work Level V Capability: at approximately 37 – 40 years of age

*In summary, the capability associated with this Work Level is the first level where fourth order sensed intangibles (e.g. culture and values, markets, industry trends, foreign policy, currency markets, free trade, globalism) **become key parts of judgement making**. Judgement making is based on the interconnectedness of events across a broad spectrum of political, social, economic and the spiritual. The capability at this level sees potential links between events or changes and the impact on the unified system. Judgment is the ability to discern which links may have ramifications or hold opportunities and how they may unfold in the future. Links are seen between apparently unrelated issues or events and these may be as interesting as the issues themselves. New knowledge may be created at this level through new configurations and patterns of understanding. Such capability allows redefining previously relationships and boundaries and even holding that redefinition open as it creates new fields of knowledge or in the reformulation of frameworks for achieving innovative progress.*

These were some of the activities engaging EB as he transitioned....

- EO was working with Indonesia Special Forces to rescue hostages in Irian Jaya. The International Committee of Red Cross of Indonesia had tried unsuccessfully to negotiate the release of aid workers. EB was flown to Indonesia and had to devise an action plan in four hours. The Indonesians did not want the world to know EO is involved and the public learned of a successful and daring SAS raid which had released the hostages. Praise turned to criticism when it was discovered that it was EO and not the SAS. Work continued with Indonesia through Orion Professional Management Pty Ltd – company partly owned by EO which focussed on physical security and investigations related mainly to criminal activities and industrial espionage.

Figure I



- In 1996 the UN despatched a Special Reporter to investigate the mercenary issue and produce a report. EB was often openly critical of the UN's failure to act in hotspots and its inability to produce results.
- Sandline, founded by Lt Col Tim Spicer OBE^{viii}, used EO as a template. EO subcontracted and EB accused Spicer of poor planning, when its project in Papua New Guinea was dumped

in EO's lap. The Media came up with the story Sandline and EO linked, which EB strenuously denied.

- ✪ EO wanted to expand business in the Middle and Far East and had a stand at IDEX, the premier defence show case in 1997 in the UAE. 600 companies from more than 40 countries attracted at least 40,000 visitors.
- ✪ EB was asked to appear in the CCB court case in regards to the assassination of Dulcimer September in London.
- ✪ EB and EO invited to a closed door conference in Washington DC, hosted by US Pentagon and the US Defence Agency (DIA) in 1997. This was the first serious attempt to look at Private Military Corporations and EB was pleased that the DIA took note of the points he made about flexibility, knowledge, understanding of the problem, business integrity, expertise, confidentiality and an apolitical stance. Contextually, the US Military would make extensive use of PMCs in the wars that would arrive in the new century, especially in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

When EB last transitioned, he made a change to his Working Journey and this time was to be no different. The tumultuous ten year cycle ended and in June 1997 EB resigned from EO. He cites a host of reasons; disagreement, greed, meeting his personal objective and after giving his shareholding to his men he walked away, believing the company to be in good health. He felt he had achieved what he had started and he was tired.

A Footnote; Command, Control, Communications, Cognition, Intelligence (C⁴I)

People with capability to enter into and work through Work Level V in their forties (meaning their Growth Mode will take them strongly into the Values Domain of Work) often create innovations that will create legacy. There is no doubt Eben Barlow and EO left a legacy that is being played out today through many other PMCs and in 2003 The *British Army Review* in an article on Executive Outcomes by Mariyam Hasham said

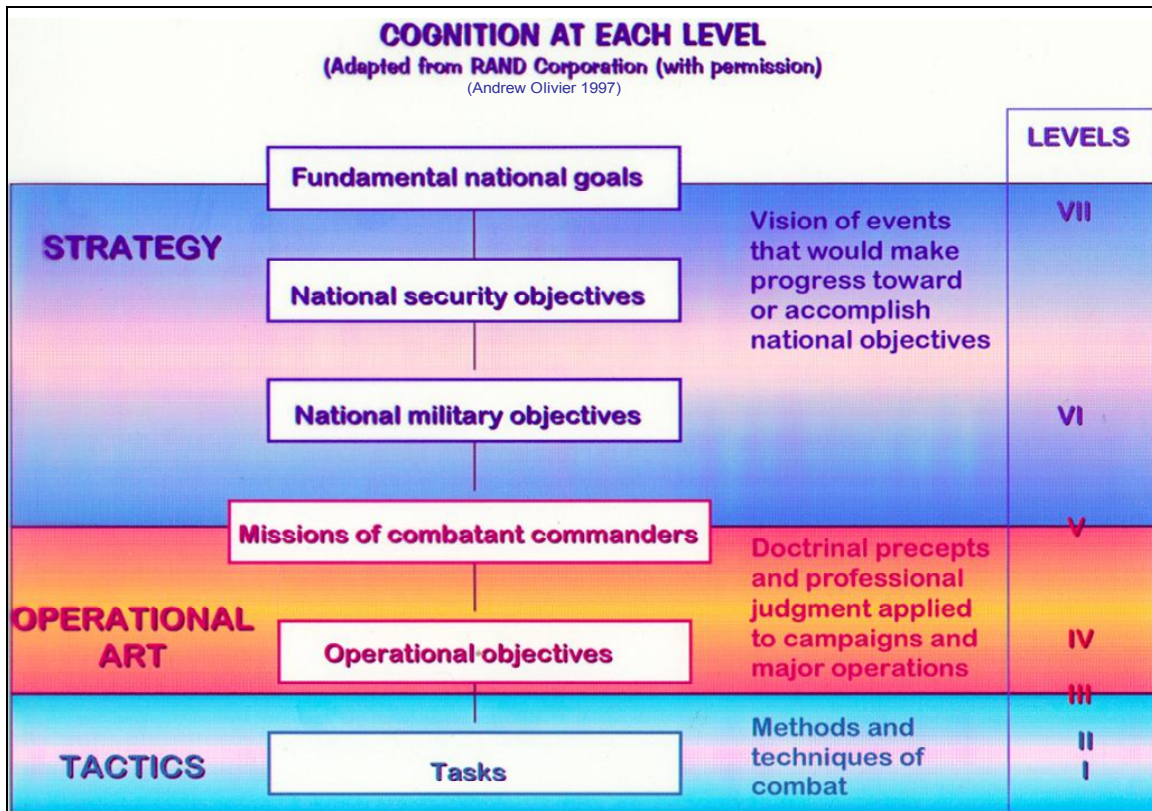
“.....what remains little understood is what kind of military instrument EO was. As a company, EO was rapidly deployable, cohesive and responsive to the high risk environments it worked in. It faced challenges no conventional military unit would ever have to deal with. Its comparative advantage was a unique organisational capability that allowed the company to master the risks of hostile environments, and to do so without the supportive functions provided by nation states. Analysis of PMCs as “dogs of war” whose presence signals arms trafficking, human right violations and violence may be comforting fiction in the current security climate, but not an accurate one.

Professional PMCs like EO, are tied to stability – either from the initial contract level or as the final product to their client. As existing peacekeeping models are redefined to reflect changes to the security landscape, companies like EO offer insights into different ways of working in complex environments. Just how EO set about mastering the shifting tectonics of war zones is the most interesting thing about the company....”

Let us examine EO as a military instrument. The “high tech” army of the 21st century calls for smaller, flexible, multi purpose structures, staffed with carefully selected and highly trained people, equipped with cutting edge technologies. Initiative, aggressiveness, high degree of connectivity, mobility, autonomy, synchronisation, cost effectiveness and minimal precision force are highly valued characteristics. In this new strategy possibly the key factor weaving it all together is the over arching need for dominating the *cognitive environment*^x

Dominating the cognitive environment is about effectively and timeously identifying, managing and exploiting the uncertainty and complexity that exists at all levels of the endeavour. This concept of dominating the cognitive environment is one that originated out of the concepts of C³I or Command, Control, Communication and Intelligence as the requisites for successful attainment of military objectives.

Figure II: Cognition at the Different Levels of Work



Ultimately cognitive dominance is to make decisions that are more timely, far sighted or holistic than ones opponents and to exploit the situation more skilfully. This definition is just as valid for successful business and one finds through the ages that entrepreneurs, commanders and corporate executives have tried to dominate the cognitive environment, often in very imaginative ways.

Creating a fighting force or a business enterprise with the capability for dominating the cognitive environment is not a short term process, but one requiring vision, commitment, leadership and a great deal of courage.

EO dominated the cognitive environment in its field of operations. EB brought significant cognitive capability to the game and such people lift the level of work complexity of their organisations, by pushing its envelopes. EB and his executive team did extraordinary things with sometimes very little.

What was the cognitive capability of his senior command team and their Level of Work? We don't know definitively, but they were high potential individuals in their fields. Bert Chase for example, who commanded the Sierra Leonean operation was highly competent and had served as OC of 5 Reconnaissance Commando, the Serous Scouts and the Rhodesian SAS. He had been awarded the coveted Sword of Honour at Sandhurst. It is possible that EO's command structure were high potential individuals. What we can surmise with some certainty is that they possessed the K/S/V.Wi for the work they did. They were experienced and functioned effectively as a coordinated and integrated team.

For each project EB articulated a strategic intent with a master strategy for success before the contracts were signed. This included carefully execution of the strategy. Strategy formulation seemed a company characteristic and is a basic premise of any Requisite Organisation and a key competence of all executives in Work Level IV and above. So is the creation of structure which follows strategy and once roles are defined, the right people are found and empowered to exercise judgment within the terms of the intent. What is also clear is that EB authorised his officers to carry out their accountabilities with very little if any apparent interference, unless serious disagreements on strategy or relations at the level above arose. As CEO, he was focussed on how he could add his unique value, without interfering with his team, which he felt were capable, committed and determined to follow the agreed course of action. It would also seem that he carried out the Manager Once Removed function, a critical component fro any CEO in building leadership, managing the talent pool and ensuring congruence of mission and understanding.

In Elliott Jaques terms, it would appear *prima facia*, that EO was a Requisite Structure and led by an individual with significant capability.

As for EB, since he has retired, there is little public information. I wonder what he is going to do for his next transition. It should be coming right up....!!

Post Scriptum

After leaving EO, EB took time out to clear his head and to decide on what to do next. He and his wife went to work on a ranch in Montana. On their return to Africa they bought a small ranch and started to keep some horses, mostly for their own enjoyment (growing up as a kid in Francistown, EB had enjoyed horses and rode whenever the opportunity presented itself).

They were soon approached by people asking for training and over the next six years their ranch became a training centre. EB spent those six years focussed on horses, writing articles on horses and refining different equestrian training techniques. He studied horsemanship in Spain, Portugal and Mexico. They attracted students from all over the world and EB felt they were successful in this field as their school became quite successful and well known.

It was during this time that EB started to write his book to set the record straight. In 2006 as his next transition loomed he received a request from an African government to act as their political and strategy consultant. He quickly realised that this was “same of, same of” and did not want to get into his old playing field. EB says he wanted “something more challenging to do” and was looking around for a new niche. *“I realized the inherent dangers crime poses to large organizations and governments but realized that everyone is taking a re-active approach to fighting crime. I analysed the modus operandi of crime syndicates, looked at where my “strengths” lay and decided on a completely different approach to fighting it. The way I do it is both novel and successful.”^x*

In late 2007 he was approached by a US based counter crime company and has been moving into this new field which he is enjoying and which has started to produce results.

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Table I: Levels of Work and Cognition

*Politics are almost as exciting as war, and quite as dangerous. In war you can only be killed once, but in politics many times. **Sir Winston Churchill***

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Endnotes

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- ⁱ The Private Military Companies (PMC) is the evolutionary development of what is arguably the second oldest profession in the world. A PMC is a legally established enterprise that makes a profit and has corporate structures, staffed by well trained officers, NCOs and men. PMCs may use armed force, hence defined as: *legally established enterprises that make a profit, by either providing services involving the potential exercise of [armed] force in a systematic way and by military means, and/or by the transfer of that potential to clients through training and other practices, such as logistics support, equipment procurement, and intelligence gathering.* **Conflict Incorporated: Selling the Art of War.** Transcript from <http://www.cdi.org/adm/1113/transcript.html> Produced December 7, 1997. Also see <http://www.privatemilitary.org>
- ⁱⁱ Case Studies; Muhammad Yunus, Ayaan Hirsi-Ali, James Lovelock, Richard Branson (op cit).
- ⁱⁱⁱ See for example; Zaccaro, SJ. *Models and Theories of Executive Leadership* (1996)., US Army Research Institute for the Behavioural and Social Sciences,; Lewis, PM., *Conceptual capacity & officer effectiveness* (1995)., Alexandria, VA: US Army Research Institute for the Behavioural and Social Sciences,
- ^{iv} The Chairman, Mr. Tony Yengeni, was suspended for corruption shortly afterwards.
- ^v This was actioned in 2005 when the ADF did capability interviews for career development. I was not unfortunately involved and I can only hope they realized the full potential (excuse the pun) of the information they would obtain.
- ^{vi} See Galago Publishing Company. <http://www.galago.co.za/> or click on the following for the direct link to the book at http://www.galago.co.za/CAT1_025.htm and
- ^{vii} [^ 'Dogs of War' ban will rob British Army of vital frontline soldiers - Times Online](#)
- ^{viii} Spicer's PMC, Aegis Defence Services, is based in London and in 2004 won a \$293 million three year contract in Iraq. It has some 20,000 soldiers and is a registered and active UN contractor and major security provider to the US government. See <http://www.aegisworld.com> and <http://www.britisheexpertise.org/clientProfile.asp?step=4&contentID=504>
- ^{ix} Acknowledgement to Bruce Pirnie and Sam Gardiner of the Rand Corporation who first coined the phrase. From - *An Objective Based Approach to Military Campaign Analysis* - Bruce Pirnie, Sam B Gardiner. Rand Organisation, 1996.
- ^x Correspondence with Eben Barlow, from June – July 2008.