

THE FUTURE OF PEACEKEEPING:

An Experts' Discussion to Contribute to the Dialogue on Foreign Policy

March 21st, 2003

A workshop co-hosted by the Liu Institute for Global Issues, University of British Columbia, Centre for Global Studies, University of Victoria, The Canadian Centre for Foreign Policy Development, the Canadian Consortium on Human Security and the Simons Centre for Peace and Disarmament, Liu Institute

Report

by

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Introduction

Twenty experts met at the Liu Institute for Global Issues on March 21 to contribute to the dialogue on foreign policy, specifically to provide insight into the challenges of contemporary and future peacekeeping operations.

The workshop addressed the following six areas: the future of peacekeeping; the status of the Brahimi Report; efforts to enhance UN rapid deployment; the further development of the multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG); the use of force to protect civilians in armed conflict and, finally; to explore whether the SHIRBRIG may have some potential in operations mandated to protect civilians. Although the agenda was subject to competing interpretations, it is noteworthy that these topics reflected overlapping, complementary priorities.

It is widely apparent that this is an important time to explore Canada's policy options. The international order is being challenged. Our security environment appears to be changing rapidly. The implications are not comforting. Deep fault lines are developing, increasing the prospect of violent conflict. Despite new pressures, the United Nations is unlikely to fade into irrelevance. Despite competition and increasing demands, the need for United Nations peacekeeping is unlikely to dissipate.

Inevitably, however, there will be new needs and new expectations. Some have recently been addressed in the Brahimi report and implemented by the UN Secretariat. There are indications of modest progress in enhancing UN rapid deployment. For example, the SHIRBRIG is the most advanced multinational mechanism for UN peace operations developed to date. Important lessons were learned in its initial deployment to UNMEE. The brigade is now available for both Chapter VI and VII operations. Notably, the UN has authorized the use of force to protect civilians in four recent operations. The SHIRBRIG should be prepared accordingly. Canada is well placed to help on several critical issues. Hopefully, this report will stimulate further thought and effort.

Contemporary and Future Challenges in UN Peacekeeping Operations

Summary:

Anthony Craig, Office of the Military Advisor, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations

Mr. Craig's presentation outlined the following 4 areas where UN peacekeeping operations face challenges:

- 1) Revitalizing support from Northern countries
- 2) Overcoming the perception that the UN cannot handle robust operations
- 3) Obtaining the right capabilities in a timely fashion
- 4) Establishing effective communication systems within UN bodies, between the UN and military officials and between the UN and national capitals.

Mr. Craig indicated that a key priority of the UN Department of Peacekeeping (DPKO) is to restore the support and participation of Northern member states. It is evident that there are active efforts to push missions onto regional groups with insufficient capabilities. This is viewed as a dangerous trend as it is essential to have the continued presence of strong and well-organized forces to ensure that peace is indeed kept.

The Under-Secretary General is particularly interested in hearing the concerns of the Northern member states. The DPKO is also interested in the focus of this workshop, including a discussion of the SHIRBRIG's potential for the protection of civilians.

There is a perception in certain quarters, that the UN cannot handle 'heavy lifting' or what some refer to as 'robust operations'. While there are limits to the UN's capacity, the UN can deploy peacekeeping operations in areas where there are what Ambassador Brahimi termed "spoilers". In some cases, UN missions include the use of attack helicopters.

Clearly, there are problems, which often stem from the military contributions provided by member states, or the lack thereof. Nevertheless, it is resulting in a movement by some countries to operate under the auspices of organizations outside the UN with regard to these types of operations. This trend is unwarranted. In identifying the limits, he suggested the UN was capable of dealing with these "spoilers"; the UN was incapable of handling large, organized belligerents. While conceding that the UN would still encounter difficulties with something like the JNA (Yugoslavian Army), he

expressed confidence that it is increasingly capable of coping with a force such as the RUF (Revolutionary United Front in Sierra Leone).

A key factor that most inhibits rapid deployment of a UN mission is securing a decision from the member states. This situation could be improved if member states committed to the new Rapid Deployment Level of the UN Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS), providing the necessary information to facilitate planning and movement. The response, to date, suggested the need for additional membership at this level. However, within UN circles, the SHIRBRIG is seen as particularly useful and important.

Mr. Craig acknowledged other factors that have been raised by some in the North when indicating a reluctance to help in UN operations: alliance commitments; concerns about mission management; the insufficient ratio of military personnel in DPKO; the vagueness of UN command and control doctrine, and; military concerns about using national command and control, as well as concerns about mission composition and whether there would be sufficient resources, particularly a deterrent capability.

A communication problem stems from the fact that some of the permanent missions in New York and national capitals can have differing views. A channel should be opened to allow for more direct communication between governments and the UN. This channel should provide a forum for member states to constructively criticize UN procedures and operations. Further, this might help to share threat assessments prior to the preparation of a UN mandate.

Summary:

Cliff Bernath, Director Special Projects, Refugees International

Mr. Bernath asserted that refugee camps do not provide a long-term solution for the states or humans involved in a conflict. We must, therefore, address what creates refugees: war. For this reason, the focus for the UN and like-minded organizations should be on peacekeeping, rather than war fighting. He then outlined five essential elements of UN peacekeeping operations.

International Will: Defined as the commitment by governments “to get done what has to be done”, this is the most important element of any peacekeeping operation because it determines the shape of the remaining elements.

Mandate: This is a reflection or manifestation of international will. A mission's mandate is a political rather than a military product in that it reflects political rather than military reality. A key problem with this element of peacekeeping operations is that mandates are normally only understood by those who draft them. As such, mandates are often misunderstood or misinterpreted on the ground.

Forces: Adequate military personal and equipment will only be supplied to a conflict zone if the international will exists to make it politically viable. This often results in the inadequate deployment of military personnel.

Rapid Deployment: If a sufficiently strong and well-equipped force can be deployed within an appropriate amount of time, conflict and killing can be halted.

Nation Building: It is much more expensive, time consuming and complicated to build rather than destroy. It is therefore necessary to foster international will such that countries remain engaged until the mechanisms of good government have been established and integrated. If this task is avoided, the risk of renewed conflict remains.

Discussion

The ensuing discussion on this topic focused largely on three themes: (1) the disengagement of the North, especially with regard to missions in Africa; (2) perceptions and misperceptions regarding Chapter 7 missions and (3) the barriers to protection of civilians during UN missions.

First, it was generally agreed that there are numerous factors accounting for Northern disengagement from UN peacekeeping. Several problems stemmed from insufficient political will, limited funding and other institutional preferences. Moreover, there are competing priorities amidst limited resources. Increasingly, Northern member states were overstretched with commitments to other organizations. One participant claimed that some Western defence establishments have a strong NATO bias and a preference for "big-league, big budget, advanced technology, war-fighting roles". Others pointed out that there is a misperception that other institutions, such as the EU and NATO, are better able to manage robust operations. Alternatively, a concern was expressed that countries, which participate in overseas missions, should be commended regardless of whose auspices the operation is under.

Several participants feared there was an impression among Northern governments that Africa might be a 'lost cause'. It was thought that this contributed to a lower level of international will for UN missions to Africa. The example of Sierra Leone was cited to demonstrate that certain missions to Africa are, in fact, working very well. It was generally agreed that good lessons can, and should, be taken from the current operation in Sierra Leone.

Another reason behind the North's reluctance to engage in Africa is the increased use of Chapter 7 mandates. There is a widespread, albeit questionable, perception that such missions are far more dangerous for troop contributors. The representative from the UN referred to a recent study, which indicated that casualty rates under Chapter 6 mandates stand at 34 percent while casualty rates for Chapter 7 mandates stand at 6 percent. Further, there was a shared sense that Chapter 7 missions would tend to be safer given the authorization for the limited use of force, the capacity to act, as well as a credible presence that would more likely deter violent behavior.

Vague and unviable mission mandates were cited as an impediment to the effective protection of civilians during UN missions. It was stated that individual nations have an aversion to Chapter 7 mandates because they fear losing troops and the higher costs often associated with these missions. Another aspect of this problem was attributed to complicated mandates that are not understood by troops on the ground. Complex mandates may be politically useful, but they must be translated into something that is clearly understandable for UN commanders on the ground if they are to be militarily useful. This suggestion sparked several comments on rules of engagement in UN operations. It was explained that each force has its own, national rules of engagement that it must adhere to. The fact that UN missions are multinational leads to obvious problems. Developing a unified system of rules of engagement for all UN missions was deemed to be inappropriate due to the fact that each UN mission is unique. However, it was brought to the group's attention that countries that train together generally have similar or complementary rules of engagement, thus helping to nullify this problem in an actual conflict situation.

Status Update on Implementation of the Brahimi Report

Summary:

Victoria Holt, Senior Associate, The Henry L. Stimson Center

Ms. Holt reviewed the implementation status of reforms recommended by the August 2000 report of the *Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, referred to as the “Brahimi Report.” This work is part of her Stimson Center project (www.stimson.org/fopo) that tracks these and related reforms and works to see them implemented. Since the report’s release, the UN has undertaken new peacebuilding missions (e.g. Afghanistan) and transitioned peacekeeping operations (e.g. Sierra Leone, Bosnia, East Timor, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo). But it has not taken on any new UN peacekeeping operations that would test its capacity (e.g., changes in peacekeeping doctrine and strategy, achieving clear and credible mandates – such as threshold conditions being met – assembling leadership at the U.N. prior to deployment, funding DDR with the deployment, and providing strategic guidance to mission leaders.)

Holt reviewed the state of progress on most of the major Panel recommendations. Substantive progress has been made on: the creation of Strategic Deployment Stocks and refurbishing of the UN Logistics Base in Brindisi, Italy; hiring of new staff for, and structural adjustments within, the DPKO; creation of Quick Impact Projects (QIPs) in missions such as UNMEE; endorsement of more fact-finding missions; creation of an on-call list of 100 military officers within UNSAS; pre-commitment authority for the Secretary General; adoption of a definition of rapid deployment within 30/90 days for traditional/complex peacekeeping missions; and a doctrinal shift in use of civilian police, rule of law elements and human rights experts.

Partially-implemented recommendations include: the creation of an Integrated Mission Task Force for Afghanistan (without full decision-making capacity); improvement of the UN Standby Arrangement System (needs fuller participation, more enabling forces and lift capacity, and listing of coherent brigade-sized units); writing of an Executive Committee on Peace and Security (ECPS) peacebuilding strategy (without

apparent implementation); creation of a roster of civilian specialists; and improvements to mission leadership.

Slower progress is clear in developing a capacity to deploy within 30/90 days; developing civilian policing (including pools, regional training and on-call lists for the security sector); shifting more logistical support to UNOPS for smaller operations; and obtaining financial support for the Election Assistance Division.

Stalled recommendations include: creating the analytical capacity of an ECPS Information and Strategic Analysis Secretariat (EISAS); a Peacebuilding Unit in DPA; a third Assistant Secretary General in DPKO; an interim criminal code; allowing review by member states of draft Security Council mandates; and, funding in the UN regular budget for more DPKO staff.

Overall, Holt highlighted the question of resources and funding. Additional progress depends on Member States providing resources, personnel and equipment, especially for UNSAS, on-call lists, security sector support and brigade-level training. Increased funding is also needed, such as in the UN regular budget for DPA measures, as well as fuller funding in voluntary account and the peacekeeping support account for DDR, election support and QIPs. Some developed nations face tensions between improving UN capacity and participating in UN peacekeeping and their own reduced militaries, defence/foreign affairs spending and a tougher economic climate. Nevertheless, the political will to press forward with these measures could make the difference for a real capacity for future UN peace operations.

Discussion

For several, the value of the Brahimi Report is that it provides an effective, non-nonsense list of recommendations that, if adopted, would improve UN peace operations. Specifically, this report was seen as a necessary extension of the report that followed the debacle in Srebrenica.

Although relatively comprehensive, it was pointed out that the Brahimi Report did not cover all necessary areas of UN reform. Among the examples of 'missed areas' cited were reform at the employee level, both at the level of removing ineffective employees and creating new positions for people to synthesize information from various offices with

the UN. Rather than condemn the report for what it does not do, others argued the necessity of implementing the few recommendations that have not, as yet, been tackled. One idea raised in the session was to bring in outside groups, such as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to help promote the remaining agenda and overcome the lack of political will for further reforms.

Several panelists challenged the perception that the Brahimi report dealt primarily with traditional peacekeeping. They noted that the emphasis from the start had been on robust operations and ensuring sufficient military capacity to deter and, if necessary, take action to prevent further atrocities.

It was the opinion of one participant that implementation of the Brahimi recommendations had exceeded earlier expectations and that having accomplished many of the objectives demanded by member states, there should be a corresponding increase in national contributions. Yet repeatedly, even resolutions of the UN Security Council warned of a commitment-capability gap, as numerous member states continued to deny the UN sufficient personnel, mechanisms and funding. Aside from shifting the heavy burden onto developing countries, this generated concerns about an increasingly unrepresentative two-tiered system that is far too selective and slow. In its own words, the Brahimi Report had focused on “the minimum threshold of change” necessary.

Efforts to Enhance Rapid Deployment to UN Peace Operations

Summary:

**Dr. H. Peter Langille, Senior Research Associate and Human Security Fellow,
Centre for Global Studies**

According to Dr. Langille, improving UN rapid deployment is proving to be a slow process. Routine delays of four to six months had become the norm by 1997. In an emergency situation, delays of this length frequently entailed serious consequences for civilians. If the objective is to protect, he emphasized that the UN must get to the mission quickly with a credible presence so there is far less likelihood of people being murdered on a large scale or mass ethnic cleansing.

Langille noted that, once again, speakers at the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping stressed that rapid response was the key to saving lives and reducing costs. UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan had also recently urged member states to intensify their attention and response to assist with rapid deployment. However, the focus of attention was changing, with wider agreement that the UN Secretariat had fulfilled much of its share of the bargain to modernize and reform. The onus now is very much on the member states, particularly those from the wealthier developed world who demanded the reforms as a precondition to further participation.

Indicating the need for more ambitious changes, Langille briefly overviewed five areas of recent progress and complementary reforms. First, as a result of the Brahimi report and related efforts, the DPKO had been expanded in a manner that would facilitate planning, management and support. Second, there are now sufficient strategic deployment stocks at the UN Logistics Base in Brindisi to provide the basic infrastructure and kits for prompt start-up of a complex operation. Third, the on-call lists for a military mission headquarters attracted sufficient responses to fill each of the 154 positions with two nominations, possibly giving it some potential as a future rapidly-deployable mission headquarters. Fourth, the UN Standby Arrangement System (UNSAS) was again modified. It attracted conditional commitments of personnel and equipment from seventy-five member states. A fourth 'rapid deployment level' was added to clarify pledges and reduce movement and administrative delays. Fifth, the SHIRBRIG is operational and presumed to be ready for another deployment. This multinational, standby high readiness brigade was designed to complement the UNSAS and to provide approximately 5000 troops, within 15-30 days for up to six months.

Combined, the UN finally has a basic foundation for peacekeeping, including limited operations for protection of civilians. However, it is not yet a foundation capable of ensuring rapid deployment or protection. There are inherent limitations in the current arrangements, particularly the UNSAS and even the SHIRBRIG, which still depend upon the political will of the participants and prompt national approval for any use of their personnel. Due to the preferences of the member states, this foundation was established upon existing arrangements and available resources, not new effective structures.

Nevertheless, the SHIRBRIG was the most advanced mechanism for UN peace operations and this was a foundation to build upon. As authorization for the limited use of force and for protection of civilians had recently become the norm, it was imperative that SHIRBRIG be better prepared for such assignments. A major effort would be needed to recruit new members, expand the headquarters, planning element and brigade pool, as well as to develop appropriate doctrine. Given the challenge of avoiding a more divided and risky world, Canada should encourage forward thinking on complementary national defence reforms and work toward the establishment of a dedicated UN Emergency Service.

(There was no immediate discussion due to time constraints, but the participants returned to address the subject later in the afternoon.)

Discussion:

It was noted that broad discussion of this issue began in 1992 with the *UN Agenda for Peace* and by 1994, several like-minded countries were engaged in national studies that would subsequently form the basis for a multinational initiative, which came to be known as the Friends of Rapid Deployment. Although there had been progress in a number of related areas, it was suggested that SHIRBRIG is the only multinational rapid deployment force for UN peace operations.

Almost a decade later, there is no consensus on the future of rapid deployment as some view the need for strengthening existing arrangements and others would prefer the more ambitious option of a new, standing UN mechanism.

One participant warned against being too optimistic about UN rapid deployment, suggesting there was simply too much opposition from the non-aligned movement (NAM). However, the continued opposition of this group was questioned by another participant who indicated the views of the NAM were changing quickly in response to world events; that while there were still three or four strident opponents, the majority of the NAM had helped to initiate many of the promising reforms recommended by Brahimi. Another pointed out that progress has also been made on establishing several rapidly deployable brigades; SHIRBRIG is only unique because it can go anywhere while the other groups (SEEBRIG, OAU, ECOWAS) are regionally focused.

During the general discussion on rapid deployment, conference co-chair, Dr. Lloyd Axworthy, broached the subject of creating a standing UN constabulary or UN Legion as initially proposed by Sir Brian Urquhart. Several proponents argued that a standing UN force with no national ties to complicate and slow decision making and deployment would be the only way to provide a reliable, rapidly deployable force capable of halting conflict before it could escalate and spread. It was argued that the cost of developing and equipping a force of 5000, estimated at \$1 billion USD, as well as annual recurring costs of approximately \$1 billion USD, would still be relatively cost effective because the constabulary or legion would help to prevent prolonged armed conflict, damage to infrastructure and harm to civilians.

When probed on where a constabulary force could be useful, Dr. Axworthy noted that if the UN had such a force now, it might have been of use in Iraq, and thus prevented the US from unilaterally waging war on the country. He also cited the example of Italy dumping radioactive waste off the coast of Somalia, explaining that a UN constabulary force could enforce law in and off the coast of failed states.

Those opposed to the idea of a UN constabulary argued that, although the logic is sound, there is little point in discussing the development of a UN standing army, as the idea remains both politically and economically unfeasible. One participant pointed to the difficulties already encountered in the financing of UN peacekeeping – with insufficient money for reimbursing troop contributors – the option of a new UN force was deemed a ‘non-starter’. Another questioned the composition of such a force, its potential leadership and whether it would be legal if the force was not provided from national contingents. The opposition of the U.S. administration to a standing UN army was also cited as major impediment.

This provoked a brief discussion on appropriate terminology. One participant claimed that the term ‘standing army’ attracts political opposition and unwarranted fear. He suggested there was likely to be a better reception to the more appealing and politically marketable concept of a ‘UN Emergency Service’. Aside from being less offensive in some regions, the term would provide a more accurate depiction of the purpose for such a UN service. To address contemporary armed conflict with a broad

range of useful services, it would have to be composed of dedicated military, police and civilian elements.

This workshop provided a clear indication that the issue of a UN rapid deployment capability remains popular. Although far from attracting a consensus, the majority of participants were inclined to elaborate on some form of UN mechanism, while a minority opposed any further discussion of the related options.

Canada's Peacekeeping Agenda

Summary:

Brigadier General Gaston Côté, Directorate of Peacekeeping Policy, Department of National Defence

Canada has a strong commitment to UN peacekeeping operations. However, due to the resource limits on Canada's military, the government has experienced problems with numerous commitments overstressing the Canadian Forces (CF). Better resource management was essential. Moreover, to enhance rapid deployment Canada adopted a policy of 'early-in' and 'early out'. Aside from being quicker in, there would have to be an exit strategy and an assurance of replacements. The Department of National Defence (DND) was devoting a lot of attention to rapid deployment.

It was noted that there were also problems with regard to peacebuilding initiatives. It is essential for work on this level to begin immediately upon deployment to prevent development lag. As well, work must be done to facilitate communication between DND, DFAIT and CIDA; these organizations should play complementary roles with regard to post-conflict reconstruction and development whereas they are currently competing with one another in what is occasionally a non-constructive dialogue. It may be beneficial to include civilian experts in this effort.

Brigadier General Côté went on to argue that UN rapid deployment capabilities must be improved in order to provide truly valuable assistance to conflict areas in a cost effective manner. Small groups of thugs can be brought under control if a strong fighting force is on the ground in a timely manner. This was among the reasons explaining the Canadian Forces' support of SHIRBRIG, as well as its active campaign to recruit a broader membership for the brigade. It was also acknowledged that with a Canadian due

to be appointed as the SHIRBRIG force commander in 2004, Canada may be effectively bound into the next deployment.

In reviewing the history of SHIRBRIG, Brigadier General Côté noted an evolution that included a few major departures from the original restricted mandate. For one, the initial deployment to UNMEE quickly overrode the earlier agreement to avoid deployment into desert conditions. This operation had helped to foster mutual respect between the SHIRBRIG headquarters and UN staff. The latter retain a very high opinion of the SHIRBRIG planning element and hope to see a larger SHIRBRIG mission headquarters in the near future.

Brigadier General Côté proceeded to explain that Canada's agenda for the next year would entail efforts to show more flexibility. Civilians would be included in the Headquarters to provide peacebuilding expertise in the earliest stage of a deployment. The Chair would identify and solicit support for other tasks such as humanitarian assistance, providing observers, providing personnel for the core of a rapidly deployable mission headquarters and providing a formed planning and reconnaissance team. Aside from the effort to recruit new members, there would be an attempt to attract other similar brigades. By necessity, this would have to be a careful selective process, but there were hopes for countries from Africa, the Far East and South America.

Finally, Brigadier General Côté indicated it was too early to move on *The Responsibility to Protect*. He noted that the project is in its early stages and the concept needs to be operationalized through dialogue with DFAIT before marketing it with others. Essentially, a better understanding of what *The Responsibility to Protect* entails from a military perspective is necessary before it can be incorporated into UN missions and mandates.

Summary:

Tony Anderson, Regional Security and Peacekeeping Division, Department of Foreign Affairs

Mr. Anderson explained that in some quarters, there is a strong perception that Canada continues to be a world leader in UN peacekeeping. In others, however, there is a competing perception that this country has stepped away from its peacekeeping role and moved towards a war-fighting role and a preference for NATO. Mr. Anderson noted that some now say Canada only ranks 39th in UN peacekeeping with only 200 troops in UN operations. This is misleading and it does not help. The reality is that Canada is in the process of adapting its policy to fit the new and greatly changed international security environment.

Mr. Anderson argued that making a distinction between UN and non-UN peacekeeping missions was useless. Countries should be commended on peacekeeping work regardless of which organization is in charge. As he noted, we are proud of the UN flag and proud of the work we do in other coalitions. We do not see why Canadians are unhappy by Canada choosing to go elsewhere. Mr. Anderson cited a list of challenges currently facing peacekeeping missions:

- In order to avoid being discredited, the UN should not launch a mission unless it is effectively resourced. This leads to problem of getting rich countries, like the United States, to fund expensive operations.
- There is a fear of sending peacekeepers on missions to Africa due to pragmatic concerns regarding AIDS and the lack of a clean blood supply.
- There is a lack of political commitment
- Peacekeepers are increasingly facing unorthodox armed forces, including thugs and child soldiers; many do not have the skills to deal with these non-traditional combatants.
- The brutality of current conflicts makes it is difficult to comprehend “what goes on in these countries”.
- The United States and Canada are now obliged to commit significant funds to the War on Terror. This is contributing to previously mentioned problem of overstretch.

Mr. Anderson concluded his presentation by stating that rather than try to change the system and return to doing everything under a UN flag, we should celebrate successes regardless of which organization leads the mission.

(There was no immediate discussion due to time constraints, but participants returned to the subject throughout the day.)

Discussion:

Much discussion focused on Canada's perceived role as an international peacekeeper. Several panelists noted that Canadians, particularly youth, identify with their country's role as a peacekeeper, as well as with its longstanding support of the UN. For many, the UN clearly remains the institution of preference. Concerns were also expressed about the lack of departmental and government support for the UN over the past four years.

However, one panelist countered that modern peacekeeping is largely misunderstood by the general public; that peacekeeping is now more than simply 'blue helmets'. It has become a complex, multifaceted process that involves much more than a military component. Hence, it was argued that more weight and credit should be given to the non-military organizations, such as development groups, for peacebuilding work. It was also felt that the Canadian public should be better educated as to the current development, peacebuilding and peacekeeping work being done by various government departments and non-governmental organizations.

This idea of educating the Canadian public was then linked to SHIRBRIG. One participant feared that the public was largely unaware of the SHIRBRIG and that the lead Departments had not provided sufficient information to mobilize support for the brigade. Because of its relatively obscure status, there was a concern that it remained a low priority within DFAIT and DND. Another suggested that Canada was now well placed to organize and sponsor a conference on the SHIRBRIG, particularly given the opportunity to influence a wider discussion on its future. This proposal was met with general approval. Several thought it might be an effective way to advance the Chair's agenda, as well as other Canadian priorities. However, this idea concerned two panelists who expressed a reluctance to overload the agenda with additional objectives.

Lessons Learned from the IPA Seminar

Summary:

**David Lightburn, The Pearson Peacekeeping Training Centre and
Colonel Jussi Saressalo, The International Peace Academy**

SHIRBRIG was deployed for the first time under the mission heading UNMEE to help bring about the cessation of hostilities between Eritrea and Ethiopia in June 2000. In an effort to understand and learn from both the positive and negative experiences of UNMEE, the International Peace Academy (IPA) brought together over one hundred military and civilian experts to discuss SHIRBRIG's performance and formulate recommendations for future missions.

While each UN mission is unique, it was deemed that many of the lessons learned from UNMEE are applicable to peacekeeping missions in general. SHIRBRIG's first deployment was lauded as a success, which partly stemmed from 5 years of careful conceptualizing and planning. There were, of course, problems and challenges that the brigade faced on the ground that could only be discovered during an actual mission. As a result, the conference members determined four key 'lessons learned' from UNMEE.

First, SHIRBRIG forces are designed to be deployable within 15-30 days of respective national approval processes. This makes them the most rapidly deployable of all forces available to the UN. But, it still means they cannot deploy until the national approval process has run its course. Given difficult experiences in Rwanda, Somalia and Bosnia, even states committed to the SHIRBRIG were hesitant to provide troops to UNMEE without careful consideration of the potential risks. Aside from extensive risk assessments, delays arose from diverse parliamentary systems, which in some cases required extensive consultation and wider approval. To effect rapid deployment, SHIRBRIG members would need to develop a more efficient decision-making process.

Second, lack of previous collective training meant that the heterogeneous staff of UNMEE had difficulties working together in an efficient manner. Problems with language, computer literacy and training for specific posts could have been solved by a concerted effort to provide coordinated training in advance of the mission.

Third, National Support Elements (NSEs) were problematic during UNMEE because they were deployed rigidly rather than in a manner specific to the needs of this particular mission. Thus, it was suggested that common elements such as movement control and transport could benefit from common standards and procedures. There were further problems when the relatively cohesive UNMEE force handed the mission over to the new force commander after the initial six months. It was recommended that the ‘first-in’ officers should stay longer to ensure a smoother transition from the SHIRBRIG to a regular UN force.

Fourth, it was determined that SHIRBRIG’s membership must be enlarged to provide a sufficient and effective operational pool from which to draw resources. When on the ground, SHIRBRIG needs to work more closely with the UN, observers and the civilian community in question. Work on this level will ensure a more coherent peace-building and development process, in the post-conflict phase.

Finally, it was pointed out that SHIRBRIG’s steering committee meets only twice yearly. It was suggested that another committee could be created that would be able to meet more frequently to ensure high levels of communication and understanding regarding practical elements of brigade deployments.

Discussion

Some participants commented that SHIRBRIG seems to act as a ‘fig leaf’ so some member states can say they are doing something when in reality they are not. Nevertheless, it was repeated that the lead departments within the UN are very supportive of SHIRBRIG because it provides coherence and accessible leadership. Many participants felt that SHIRBRIG itself is a useful tool that is improving as we learn from experience.

When asked why SHIRBRIG succeeded in UNMEE, it was explained that the forces were able to work together as a coherent team due to previous experience training together. All but one SHIRBRIG member, (which had observer status only) participated in Partnership for Peace training sessions and deployed to Kosovo together.

Perspectives on the UN's Potential in Operations that Entail Protection

Summary:

Anthony Craig, Office of the Military Advisor, UN DPKO

Mr. Craig briefly explained that the UN is capable of protecting civilians from harm against groups of thugs, but that protection is dependent on the number of belligerents, as well as their level of sophistication. Much also depends on the capacity of the resources provided by the member states.

At this time, no formal process exists within the UN mission planning process that allows for discussion of civilian protection. A number of Departments such as DPKO and DPA share an interest in protection of civilians and the lead agency is the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

Summary:

Colonel Jussi Saressalo, International Peace Academy

Colonel Saressalo cautioned that the political and military meaning of the term 'protection of civilians' must be fleshed out before a satisfactory debate on this issue can be held. The primary responsibility of governments is to protect their citizens, however, we have seen all too often over the past decade that governments are not always capable or inclined to perform this duty. In such situations, the international community is obligated to take action.

Colonel Saressalo raised the issues of impartiality and consent. He explained that UN troops with a strict peacekeeping mandate cannot protect civilians. There was a risk that if the UN crossed the line toward taking action against belligerents, it would have difficulty remaining impartial and might be drawn into further fighting. In such a situation, the operation might also lose the consent of the parties.

He stated that it is essential for UN missions mandated to protect civilians to be well equipped and significantly stronger than the belligerent force. A credible deterrent capacity was necessary. SHIRBRIG is capable of performing this mission, but only if there is a serious commitment on the part of member states.

Discussion

An important impediment to protection of civilians during UN missions was thought to lie with mission mandates. It was stated that individual nations have an aversion to Chapter 7 mandates because they fear losing troops and the higher cost often associated with these missions. Another problem was attributed to complicated mandates, which are not readily understood by troops on the ground. Complex mandates may be politically useful, but they must be translated into something that is clearly understandable for the UN commander on the ground.

This idea sparked several comments regarding the role of rules of engagement in UN operations. It was explained that each force has its own, national, rules of engagement that it must adhere to. The fact that UN missions are multinational leads to obvious problems. Developing a unified system of rules of engagement for all UN missions was deemed to be inappropriate due to the fact that each UN mission is unique. However, it was brought to the group's attention that countries that train together generally have similar or complementary rules of engagement, which may help to nullify this problem in an actual conflict situation.

Another impediment arose from the lack of appropriate doctrine for protecting civilians. One participant noted that protection of civilians was not formerly a military priority and that there was a considerable void in doctrine, tactics and training for such missions. Another participant spoke of how soldiers have twisted the rules of engagement in order to intervene on behalf of civilians in danger. Several instances of troops protecting civilians were cited, but these arose from troops taking personal initiatives rather than following specific guidelines for commanders and troops. There was evidence of widespread support in the workshop for further research and development of new military doctrine for protecting civilians.

Many participants were aware of the UN Security Council's increasing willingness to include protection of civilians in four recent mandates. While there is broad support for the new emphasis, workshop participants expressed some related concerns about vague mission mandates, inadequate rules of engagement, lack of standard operating procedures, questionable mission planning processes, and problems securing contributors who competent and were well-prepared for the assigned task.

As the most advanced mechanism for rapid deployment to UN peace operations, SHIRBRIG appears to have considerable potential to conduct operations that protect civilians. But one participant cautioned that the SHIRBRIG's potential still depends on securing political agreement among the participating member states to ensure the prior preparation of their military units for new missions. This was assumed to be feasible, but only if a concerted effort was made. A Co-Chair concurred that Canada had a unique opportunity as the Chair and President of the SHIRBRIG and that this opportunity should not be squandered.

While many would concede the risk in being too ambitious, too early, there may be also be a risk in underestimating the extent of support for protection of civilians, shared by other SHIRBRIG members and UN officials. With a commitment to protection of civilians, one participant claimed the SHIRBRIG member states could attract additional participants.

The initiative to enhance UN rapid deployment, the SHIRBRIG, *The Brahimi Report* and *The Responsibility to Protect* were primarily intended to prevent mass murder in any future Rwandas, Srebrenicas, Sierra Leones or East Timors. This workshop was organized to foster a dialogue on the future of peacekeeping that would link these complementary priorities, help to identify next steps and, hopefully, avoid the risks of 'too-little', 'too-late'.

During the extensive discussion following each presentation, a wide variety of questions and comments were raised. For the sake of clarity, these have been grouped into nine themes with corresponding recommendations:

NEXT STEPS/RECOMMENDATIONS

1. *The future of UN peacekeeping is being jeopardized by the official assumption, here and abroad, that the UN is not a priority Organization and that other organizations can better manage its tasks. This trend is short-sighted, risky and it does not reflect the preference of most Canadians.*

The Canadian Government has a significant stake in correcting this trend, particularly in the lead departments of Foreign Affairs and National Defence. There is a need for policy that demonstrates unequivocal support of the UN. There is also a need for tangible contributions to UN peace operations. Canada's policy and contributions should reflect its commitment to strengthening the only legitimate, universal Organization dedicated to maintaining peace and security, as well as promoting sustainable development, disarmament and human rights.

2. *Given the increasing reluctance of some Northern member states to contribute to UN peace operations, interested parties, institutes and NGOs should renew partnerships to encourage political commitments and appropriate contributions. A concerted effort will be needed to inform publics, politicians, parliaments and the media of the implications due to the current 'commitment-capacity gap' and the primacy of the UN in peace operations.*
3. *The UN Secretariat has made considerable progress in implementing many of the Brahimi Report's recommendations. However, without further support from the Member States it will be very difficult to achieve response times of 30 days for a traditional operation and 90 days for a complex operation. Further attention and support must be devoted to the development of partnerships for additional coherent brigade-size groups.*
4. *It is time to revitalize efforts to enhance UN rapid deployment. As affluent member states tend to be unique in having this capacity, they should be encouraged to designate, earmark and train brigade groups for rapid deployment to diverse UN peace operations, including those mandated to protect civilians. Clearly, all member states need to assign a higher priority to UN operations and to initiate complementary national defence reforms. Another useful step would be to provide support for the new 'Rapid Deployment Level' of the UN Standby Arrangements System.*
5. *There is an urgent need for an in-depth detailed study of doctrine, tactics and training for the protection of civilians in armed conflict. This study should commission papers to recognized experts and solicit the assistance of doctrine writers in national defence establishments. The Responsibility to Protect provided much-needed political doctrine, but there is little material on developing appropriate military guidelines. As this gap endangers practitioners and civilians, it should be addressed as a priority.*

6. *Immediate attention should be accorded to operationalizing the concept of protection in a way that can be conveyed to the foreign and defence policy establishments of the SHIRBRIG member states. A joint DND-DFAIT team could be assigned to translate The Responsibility to Protect into military terms, which can be readily understood and acted upon.*
7. *Further effort must be devoted to identifying the SHIRBRIG's limitations and requirements in future UN operations mandated to protect civilians. As a mission of this nature may be imminent, it would be irresponsible to neglect this task. Already, there are concerns that the SHIRBRIG will need to recruit additional participants and expand the headquarters, planning element and brigade pool. A four-day workshop would be conducive to addressing potential requirements at the political, strategic, operational and tactical levels. Prior planning will help to avoid potential failure.*
8. *Securing agreement and MOU for participating in UN operations that entail protection of civilians should be on the agenda of the next ministerial-level SHIRBRIG conference. Participants noted that the Steering Committee is not inclined to prompt modernization or adaptation, particularly when the issue may be relatively new and controversial. These are decisions, which merit the attention of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs and National Defence of the participating member states.*
9. *Given the importance of avoiding a more divided, heavily armed and risky world, governments should encourage further detailed study of a UN Constabulary or a dedicated UN Emergency Service. What would be required to initiate such services? Would it be cost-effective to develop a multidimensional service composed of professional military, police and civilian volunteers from all regions, recruited, trained and employed by the UN? What structure would correspond to the needs of diverse emergencies and future conflicts?*