

Multidimensional and Integrated Peace Operations: *Integrated Missions Revisited*
BEIJING PROCEEDINGS EXECUTIVE SUMMARY, OSLO, 26-27 March 2007

On 26–27 March 2007, the first in a series of comprehensive regional consultations and seminars to be held around the world took place in Beijing, co-organised by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the People’s Republic of China and the Norwegian Government. Participants discussed current trends and challenges facing today’s multidimensional UN peace operations.

Since the turn of the millennium, UN-led peace operations have experienced an unprecedented growth, both in terms of their number and size. But their growing multidimensionality also represents a clear paradigm shift in the history of peace operations. During the course of the seminar, participants identified and focused on a number of current trends:

- The renewed importance of the UN in planning, managing and conducting international peace operations;
- The fact that peace operations are becoming increasingly multidimensional;
- The importance of an integrated approach to the planning and management of international peace operations, both at international and national levels;
- The growing “civilian nature” of modern peace operations;
- The role of regional organisations and the related emergence of “hybrid” operations, whereby the UN and regional actors operate alongside each other;
- The role of Asian countries as the key providers of military personnel to UN peace operations; and
- China’s emerging role as a global peacekeeper.

These trends and the growth in operations has placed a significant burden on the UN system, with implications both at headquarter level and field level. Although significant efforts have been made to increase the UN’s capacity to manage these operations and integrate them within the larger UN system, there are still many challenges to be met in order for the UN system to deliver efficiently and effectively in the field.

During the two days of discussions participants focused on, among other things, the importance of the sustainability of troop levels. Many of the top troop-contributing countries have limited resources. Due to the demands posed by UN peace efforts that are growing both in size and number, the shortage of qualified troops and other personnel was identified as a potential challenge in the future.

The critical subject of local ownership was also discussed at length. With the ever-growing complexity and multidimensionality of missions, there are fears that establishing local

ownership and building local capacity have not been given enough attention. In connection with this, the UN also has to improve its communication strategies in order to realistically adjust local populations' expectations.

The need for stronger and clearer mandates, with robust Rules of Engagement was also stressed by participants. There was hope that the UN reform process would help improve the mandates of the Security Council by providing better channels of information with relevant analysis upon which to base mandates.

The need to re-evaluate the conditions for exit strategies was also discussed. Everyone agreed that in most cases, exits have been premature. It was suggested that the Peacebuilding Commission could play a significant part in providing a more realistic analysis of when an exit can be perceived to be achievable and responsible.

Challenges faced by the UN Headquarters were also allotted time during the conference. Here, the importance of solid joint analysis was stressed as essential when establishing strategies and plans that are commonly agreed upon. Participants also stressed that fixed templates should be avoided. Each mission is unique and requires unique and flexible guidelines and strategies. In other words, the structure of each mission must be adapted to suit the situation in the field; "form must follow function".

Participants also recommended that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) should be given greater authority, and identified this as an essential prerequisite if coordination in the field is to improve and the desired impact is to be achieved.

The need for integrating peace operations and peacebuilding response mechanisms in general and the challenges that arise when this is done were also discussed at length. It was suggested that the Peacebuilding Commission could play a significant role here by acting as a focal point for long-term strategic planning. In this way, the Commission could counteract the sequential understanding of how peace develops and act as an authority to help persuade all UN entities as well as key contributors of personnel and financial resources to give the necessary backing for implementing an integrated approach at field level. The importance of strengthening integration at the strategic level in both New York, Washington and Geneva was also emphasised, as was the importance of "integrating" national efforts and pursuing a whole-of-government approach in the way peace operations are dealt with nationally.

The importance of providing and safeguarding humanitarian space was also discussed. An integrated context does not imply the physical or structural integration of all parties, rather, more secure humanitarian space can be achieved through an integrated plan outlining what is to be achieved through dialogue and communication/coordination. It was

agreed that integration should not be seen as a structural set up, but a tool to improve the impact and delivery of services as set out in the mandate.

Last but not least, Asian perspectives and experiences from multidimensional and integrated peace operations were given. The rapid development in, inter alia, China and India in recent indicates a geopolitical shift towards Asia. This trend can have significant consequences for the further evolution and development of international peace operations. For the time being, though, participants stressed the importance of expanding civilian deployment in peace operations from Asian countries.