

## **Peggy Mason Presentation to Panel Four: Contributions by Canada to UN Peace Operations**

In the four webinars thus far (keynote and three panels), two key themes have emerged: (1) The primacy of politics or what Jean-Marie Guéhenno described in his keynote presentation as the “pre-eminent UN role in facilitating conflict resolution and (2) the need to rebuild or forge a new consensus around the fundamentals of UN peacekeeping, based on the core principles of consent of the parties, impartiality and limited use of force.

Turning first to the “primacy of politics”, the 2015 High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (known as HIPPO for those of you wondering what that acronym meant, since it has been referenced a few times in our discussions to date), that report defines “politics” in this phrase to mean, in its most basic form “the search for negotiated solutions”. As for the “primacy” of that activity, HIPPO goes on to say:

“[t]he main effort of any peace operation must be to focus international attention, leverage and resources on *supporting national actors* ... to restore peace, address underlying conflict drivers and meet the legitimate interests of the wider population, not just a small elite.”

Before going any further, let me underscore the words “*facilitating* conflict resolution” and “*supporting* national actors” in the two definitions I have just noted. It bears emphasizing and repeating that the primary responsibility for conflict resolution is on the parties themselves and it is the role of the international community (including Canada) to facilitate them doing so, in as coherent and mutually reinforcing a manner as possible.

Let me again refer back to our keynote speaker, and to recall his discussion of the three circles involved in finding a comprehensive solution – the national level with the parties themselves but reaching all the way down to the grassroots level, the regional actors who may be directly involved or supporting one or the other of the parties and the global actors, the big powers who, again may be directly or indirectly involved. Hence the need for a process specifically designed to address these various types of actors and for the dedicated diplomatic expertise to support it.

Tori Holt added to this discussion in her remarks in Panel Three, on Saturday 3 October, where she referenced a very recent Stimson Centre Study entitled *The Political Practice of Peacekeeping*. Quoting from that study:

Political primacy” means placing the political solution at the centre of the work of a peace operation and articulating how all other mission activities would contribute to that solution.

In explaining this concept to NATO military commanders at a 2014 seminar where I was speaking on the “value added” of UN peacekeeping (and less than subtly demonstrating its superiority for building the peace, as compared to military-led missions with no such political role), I used the terminology that the “centre of gravity” of a UN peace operation is the peace process, which in turn means that the military and police (the security elements), while vital, are SUPPORTING elements in an overarching *political* effort.

The Stimson Report goes further in defining “political solution” in a peace operations context as one where parties reach negotiated, inclusive agreements to halt the killing and attempt to address the major grievances that triggered the violent conflict or are likely to trigger further violent conflict.

As such, a political solution offers a comprehensive framework for a sustainable transition to peace, and a clear set of commonly agreed elements for achieving it.

Well that is the goal anyway! And happily, that same Stimson report suggests there are lots of ways a UN peacekeeping mission can still arrive at a durable political solution, without the best-case scenario of being able to deploy in the context of a comprehensive peace agreement or an agreed process to that end.

Nevertheless, at a minimum, the mandate must be built around the core conflict resolution facilitation activity.

But already when I gave that lecture to NATO military commanders in February 2014, the “value added” or the “primacy of politics” in UN peace operations was under greater and greater stress.

The Stimson Report echoes Ambassador Guéhenno and other panelists’ discussion of the increasing complexity of conflicts over the past decade, with a tripling of major civil wars, driven by the growing role of non-state actors, the greater impact of violent extremism and the influence of transnational crime networks.

This has led to UN peacekeepers increasingly being deployed not only in the absence of viable peace processes but in the midst of ongoing large-scale conflict, [ South Sudan, Mali, CAR] substantially increasing the risk to peacekeepers and civilians alike and resulting in some cases [ as previous speakers have mentioned] in the protection of civilians and even the security of the mission itself becoming the highest mission priority NOT the resolution of the conflict.

I wish to turn now to the other key theme that has emerged from our webinars - the need to rebuild or forge a new consensus around the fundamentals of UN peacekeeping based on the core principles of consent of the parties, impartiality and limited use of force.

All three principles are under direct assault from so-called stabilization mandates from the UN Security Council which call on the peacekeeping missions to support the government (including by military means) in re-establishing state authority. Jane Boulden talked about the threat to impartiality posed by such mandates, from the perception of the opposing parties and indeed the population as well. While Tori Holt in Panel Three reminded us that impartiality is not neutrality and use of force in defence of the mandate might require “taking sides”, I would argue that a mandate that puts impartiality at such grave risk is not a sustainable course. And this is particularly true when the government being supported in this way is itself guilty of human rights violations against its own citizens or other blatant instances of poor governance.

Add to that dilemma what Ambassador Guéhenno has called in another context the “polluting” of peace operations by counter-terrorism operations, where the UN peacekeeping mission, as in the case of Mali, is deployed at the same time as two separate counter-insurgency missions (one

led by France, the other by a group of neighbouring countries) in respect of which the UN peacekeeping mission is called upon to coordinate and support those efforts.

Not only does this make the UN mission a soft target for terrorists, and undermine the perception of mission impartiality, but also, as Richard Gowan pointed out in Panel One, counter-insurgency operations can significantly impede the UN's ability to reach out to extremists with national agendas that could otherwise be amenable to negotiation.

And- where a mission is almost completely focused on its stabilization and protection of civilian mandates, another pitfall awaits – to the extent that the peacekeepers succeed relatively well in these tasks, the government may feel no pressure to make the compromises necessary to address governance shortfalls underpinning the conflict, leaving the UN trapped in the mission with no exit strategy in sight. (Guéhenno again).

Here I wish to refer once again to the Stimson report, which makes an exceedingly important point for those like Canada that have put a priority on protection of civilians in their pre-deployment training of Canadian military peacekeepers.

The Report emphasises that the mandated task of the protection of civilians must not be a separate objective, unconnected to the broader political solution or, to put this another way, the political strategy must “position the protection of civilians as a clear *enabler* for a political solution, rather than a stand-alone activity”.

Whither Canada?

This brings me to the role for Canada in helping address the twin challenges our webinars have highlighted in particular – restoring the pre-eminence in SC mandates for UN peace operations of the UN role in facilitating a political solution to the conflict and rebuilding a consensus among troop contributing nations, Security Council members and the broader international community around the three core peacekeeping principles of consent, impartiality and use of force.

The agenda we need to champion is clear. How might we do it?

Well let me start with the fundamental pre-condition. No matter how many good ideas we have for advancing this agenda, if we want to have influence, we need to fully re-engage in UN peacekeeping, as our government promised way back in 2015 and reiterated at the 2017 Vancouver conference that Tori Hunt mentioned. Walter Dorn has spoke to that directly.

Full re-engagement means first and foremost we need to put sufficient military and police boots on the ground.

We've made some important promises in specific areas, that Walter and Stephen have mentioned, including not least the Women, Peace and Security Agenda and the development of doctrine in relation to child soldiers. But these are NOT a substitute for getting our military and police contributions up to par.

And that will in turn put Canada in a better position to help overcome the mandate dilemmas I and past speakers have highlighted.

Had we won a seat on the UN Security Council, we would of course have been directly involved in helping fashion UN Security Council mandates for peacekeeping operations but there is still much that we can do as a troop contributing nation and in a range of diplomatic settings, not only multilateral ones but, as Tori Holt reminded us, in bilateral contexts as well.

Our Permanent Representatives in New York, our Ambassadors on the ground in the conflict-affected countries where the PKO's are situated, our Ambassadors in the capitals of the P5 countries, our Ambassadors resident in key troop contributing nations, including of course those who are also on the Security Council (as Norway and Ireland will be in 2021-22) – all have a role to play in reinforcing support for the UN mission's conflict resolution facilitation role and the core principles of UN peacekeeping.

But our Ambassadors need clear direction from our Foreign Minister that this is a priority for Global Affairs, the lead Canadian government department on UN peacekeeping. (How many Canadians even know that it is Global Affairs, not National Defence that has the lead?)

Let me also say a word about coordination. Paul Williams in Panel Two talked about the plethora of actors on the ground with which the UN mission must deal. This is not a new phenomenon, but what *is* new is the erosion of consensus on the vital coordination role that the UN can and must play in theatre.

And that in turn means that troop contributing nations, like Canada, who are also potentially contributing humanitarian or development funds and other forms of assistance, must champion that coordination role and support, not undermine it, to garner attention or play into a domestic agenda. It's like the role of a mediator, his or her success is measured in the ownership over the deal that he or she instills in the parties and that means *quiet* diplomacy.

A word now about UNEPS, the UN Emergency Peace Service, outlined by Peter Langille in Panel Three. It is a vital step toward timely deployment of well-equipped and well-resourced military and civilian peacekeepers in the UN peacekeeping start-up phase, and a Canadian idea that deserves to be championed by Canada once again, especially given its conflict prevention and deterrence potential

But it will not be a substitute for addressing the current schisms among troop contributors and Security Council members on the fundamental role and promise of UN peacekeeping as a key enabler in the long overdue shift to a more cooperative global security environment.

Thank you.