

Building on Brahimi: Peacekeeping in an Era of Strategic Uncertainty

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At the outset of the “New Horizon” process, the UN’s Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Field Support commissioned the Center on International Cooperation (CIC) to produce a forward-looking report to inform the reform agenda. The CIC’s independent contribution was intended to spur broader discussions within the UN and among member states looking to update peacekeeping to meet current and emerging challenges.

The report, *Building on Brahimi: Peacekeeping in an Era of Strategic Uncertainty*, published in May 2009, forecasts a continued demand for UN peacekeeping over the next five to seven years, identifies likely future challenges, and offers potential methods for overcoming them.¹ It uses as a point of departure a recognition that the difficulties experienced by peacekeeping are in part a function of the unlearned or unimplemented recommendations that were made in the landmark *Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations* (Brahimi Report).² These core issues surround the current crisis of confidence in peacekeeping and the breakdown of the political coalition that had enabled

UN peacekeeping operations to function as an effective tool for conflict management and recovery.

Central to *Building on Brahimi* is addressing the fundamental divisions that have emerged over peacekeeping and sovereignty. It posits that the majority of large-scale UN operations are deliberately designed to extend rather than limit the authority of states. This fact, often overlooked, is essential to explaining some recent successes and failures of peacekeeping—and may help guide future deployments. The evidence shows that the extension of state authority, through military means and policing as well as civilian assistance, has become a core function of UN peacekeeping. The UN’s large, multi-dimensional missions now frequently use force not merely to fend off direct attacks from spoilers, but as part of deliberate strategies to expand and secure the authority of a government in contested territories.

In conclusion, the report offers a three-part strategy for building a new coalition of support, as well as more effective and efficient management of peacekeeping operations—in the areas of strategy, rapid

deployment, security, and command and control. To reach these ends it calls for the following:

- *Concerted action on the hardest cases* to overcome gaps between expectations and performance—above all, addressing the dire problems in the Democratic Republic of Congo and the Horn of Africa (Chad, Sudan, and Somalia).
- *Institutional reforms* by the UN Secretariat, including engagement with the Security Council and General Assembly on reforms requiring new authorities or financing—with particular reference to the UN’s procurement and budgetary systems.
- *Strategic efforts* by key member states to utilize their capabilities more consistently in support of UN operations, including developing a consensus among governments on the limits and possibilities of peacekeeping operations—bringing together current troop contributors with permanent members of the Security Council to expand the military resources available to the UN.

Notes: 1. To access the report, visit: <http://www.cic.nyu.edu>.

2. UN Doc. A/55/305-S/2000/809, 21 August 2000.