The **Global Peace Operations Review** is an interactive web-portal presenting in-depth analysis and detailed data on military peacekeeping operations and civilian-led political missions by the United Nations, regional organizations, and ad-hoc coalitions. The web-portal is a product of the **New York University Center on International Cooperation (CIC)** and a continuation of its long-standing print publications the **Annual Review of Global Peace Operations** and the **Review of Political Missions**.

Providing the most comprehensive overview of multilateral contributions to **peacekeeping**, **conflict prevention**, and **post-conflict peacebuilding**, the Review aims to initiate and inform discussions on the comparative advantages and appropriateness of different missions, and through constructive analysis to further strengthen existing partnerships necessary for them to succeed.

Through the **Country & Regional Profile pages**, the Review provides background information and regularly updated key developments on peace operations and the contexts in which they operate. The analysis is further enhanced by the provision of detailed data on each of the UN's peace operations, and headline data on missions fielded by regional organizations and ad hoc missions, which can be accessed in full through the **Data & Trends** section. Data on non-UN peace operations was compiled by the **Stockholm International Peace Research Institute (SIPRI)**. For more details, please see our **Data guide**. The **Strategic Summary** provides an overview of main developments in mission settings over the past year and presents analysis on trends and the impact these may have on shaping peace operations of the future. Thematic essays presented in the In Focus section unpack issues critical to peace operations, providing analysis and guidance on possible approaches.

The Library section enables readers to download full text .pdf files of past editions of the **Annual Review of Global Peace Operations** (2006-2012) and the **Review of Political Missions** (2010-2012). For those interested in conducting their own analysis using the data generated for these publications, we have provided spreadsheets of all the **statistics** used to compile these reports.

### Scope of the Global Peace Operations Review

The Review covers more than one hundred multilateral peace operations active in the previous year including missions fielded by the UN, AU, EU, ECOWAS, OSCE, OAS and coalitions. It uses a **broad definition of peace operations** that includes multilateral and ad hoc military and police missions, as well as civilian led political missions. Neither type of mission has a simple definition. Alongside more straightforward peacekeeping missions, the Review, mindful of the need for peace operations to adjust to the changing nature of conflict, also includes peace enforcement operations that employ the use of force and engage in active combat.

Under political missions, we include multilateral civilian-led missions that have political engagement in the form of launching and supporting political processes at their core. This includes, for example, the EU's Special Representatives and the African Union Liaison Offices that support the implementation of peace agreements and accompany political processes. We have excluded missions, such as EU delegations and other liaison offices that may engage in political activities, but as their core function serve more as regular diplomatic or developmental presences. Along the same reasoning, we have also excluded election observer and human rights monitoring missions.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

**Thematic Essays**

Choosing Envoys Wisely 4
Bart M.J. Szewczyk

Three’s a Crowd? Inter-Organisational Cooperation in Conflict Mediation 10
Alischa Kugel

Lessons from Multilateral Envoys 17
Richard Gowan and Alischa Kugel

The Practical is the Political: The UN’s Global Study on Women, Peace and Security 21
Rob Jenkins

Triangular Cooperation - Key to All 27
Alexandra Novosseloff

**Commentary**

Charm, Criticise, Compromise 33
Richard Gowan

**Interviews**

“Good Offices” Means Taking Risks 35
Tamrat Samuel

**Maps and Country Profiles**

**Related Publications** 45
CHOOSING ENVOYS WISELY

Bart M.J. Szewczyk

THIS IS THE THIRD ESSAY IN A SERIES OF SEVEN THAT LOOKS AT THE ROLE OF MULTILATERAL ENVOYS IN PEACEMAKING.

Special envoys are, by definition, agents appointed by a principal or a group of principals for a particular task. Yet their scope of power and authority varies across institutions. Different international organizations have made distinct decisions in terms of selecting special envoys; defining their mandates; deploying, financing and supporting an envoy’s support team; and establishing report and oversight mechanisms. These formal decisions occur in the context of informal customary practices, which are for the most part beyond the scope of this study.

Whether by design, default or accident, these constitutive choices become more apparent through a systemic analysis across international organizations and across stages of the institutional process of envoys. Each of these steps is an opportunity for the principals to create and maintain control over their special envoys in order to achieve desired policy objectives. Conversely, inattention to the overall structure in which envoys operate can lead to unintended consequences.

SELECTION

The selection of special envoys has two types. Within some institutions, envoys are chosen by a wide group of political stakeholders. In other organizations, they are appointed directly by the head of an institution, although there may also be informal consultations and vetting with other relevant actors.

Within the European Union, EU Special Representatives (EUSR) are appointed by the Foreign Affairs Council (the EU national ministers for foreign affairs, defense and development who meet collectively on a monthly basis) at the suggestion of the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR), who also chairs the Council's meetings. While there is no formal nomination process, the HR generally leads the process. The ten current EUSRs act as the “voice” and “face” for the EU on specific policy areas. Generally, EUSRs tend to be selected from among diplomats and foreign policy experts rather than political leaders, with the notable exception of a few EUSRs in Bosnia such as Paddy Ashdown (former head of the Liberal Democrats party in the United Kingdom) or Miroslav Lajčák (former foreign minister of Slovakia).

Similarly, the African Union special envoys (titled variously as special representative, special envoy, high representative and chairperson) are selected by the Peace and Security Council (PSC) and the AU Commission Chairperson. The PSC, patterned on the structure of the UN Security Council, has fifteen members elected by the AU Assembly for two- or three-year terms. AU special envoys tend to be former African heads of state or government, such as Thabo Mbeki of South Africa or Alpha Konaré of Mali.
In the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), a trade bloc of eight countries in Eastern Africa, special envoys are appointed through an endorsement of their nomination by respective member states. Notably, IGAD representatives have been appointed in pairs for each conflict (in Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan), providing a potential tension in the unity of institutional representation.

Uniquely, the Quartet Representative, currently Tony Blair (former UK prime minister), was selected by the Quartet Principals: UN Secretary-General, U.S. Secretary of State, Russian foreign minister and EU High Representative. Although this institutional model is an outlier in the analyzed group of special envoys, it also illustrates the range of possibilities of institutional representation whereby one individual is a multi-hatted envoy of actors relevant to the particular conflict.

In contrast to the EU and AU, special envoys at other international organizations tend to be chosen by the respective institutional heads. Sometimes, leaders of multilateral organizations find it useful to appoint an envoy informally for a particularly sensitive mission, allowing the scope for plausible deniability in case that becomes necessary.

At the UN, the Secretary-General has the sole prerogative of appointing special representatives, envoys, and advisers. In practice, however, the selection is made after an informal process of consultation with actors relevant to a particular situation, such as partner countries, warring armed groups and other governments and international actors. The selection of the different types of special appointees is oftentimes communicated to the Security Council by letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the Council, who then acknowledges the selection. There are currently over 50 special envoys, representatives and advisers to the Secretary-General. These are also sometimes dual-hatted as head of mission to a particular country.

In NATO, the Secretary-General has periodically appointed special representatives for specific issues, such as women, peace and security (in 2012) or for the regions of the Caucasus and Central Asia (in 2014). In these two cases, both individuals had already been serving within NATO, one as a deputy ambassador to NATO and the other as NATO’s spokesperson.

At the OSCE, special representatives are selected by the Chairperson-in-Office, a position which rotates every year among foreign ministers of OSCE member states. The current thirteen OSCE special envoys, more like the EUSRs rather than the AU special envoys, are generally drawn from diplomatic and military services. The OAS Secretary-General appoints representatives from among OAS permanent staff, outside diplomats or political leaders, such as Bill Richardson (former governor of New Mexico and U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations). At the time of writing, there were five OAS special envoys.

Likewise, the International Organization of la Francophonie (OIF) has two special envoys appointed by the OIF Secretary-General. Both are political leaders from their respective countries, Belgium and the Ivory Coast. In the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), the Commission President selects special envoys, of whom there are currently five. The Commonwealth of Nations had three special envoys in 2013, selected by the Commonwealth Secretary-General at the recommendation of the Political Affairs Division, as determined by consultation between the Good Offices Section and the relevant Regional Section.

It is unclear to what extent the choice between the two types of selection processes has practical consequences. Generally, envoys selected by a group of principals could claim greater authority because they represent a larger constituency. Perhaps for this reason, envoys are sometimes dual-hatted or even multi-hatted by several organizations, although in practice they are likely to have one primary institution as the lead principal. But presumably, even when a special envoy is directly appointed by the head...
of an international institution, that head is responsible to a wider group of actors. Moreover, the effectiveness of special envoys depends on having the political support and confidence of constituents beyond the appointing heads. Nonetheless, these informal channels of control can be more uncertain than the formal power to select an envoy, or block his appointment in the first place.

Upon being selected, a special envoy’s marching orders are enclosed in the mandate of appointment, another mechanism through which principals can guide their representatives’ scope of action toward desired outcomes.

**Mandate**

Not surprisingly, mandates of special envoys are generally determined by the principals that select them. For instance, the EU Foreign Affairs Council (and the EU High Representative), the AU Peace and Security Council (and the AU Commission Chairperson), the IGAD Council of Ministers, and the Quartet set forth the jurisdiction and policy guidance for special envoys through resolutions. At the UN, the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations negotiate the terms of reference for the Secretary-General’s approval. The final mandate documents are typically confidential until released by the UN. Within the OSCE, mandates are defined by the Chairpersons-in-Office in the official appointment letters. The OAS General Secretariat develops mandates for its special envoys, sometimes also in consultation with a host government. At the OIF, the Secretary-General defines the terms of reference on the basis of an evaluation undertaken by the Peace, Democracy, and Human Rights Department and in accordance with the OIF foundational legal document, the Declaration of Bamako. In ECOWAS, mandates are set by the Commission President on the advice of the Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace & Security. In the Commonwealth, the Good Offices Section, in consultation with the Regional Section, develops the terms of reference, which are then approved by the Secretary-General after making any necessary amendments.

Mandates vary in their level of specificity and comprehensiveness. In some cases, particularly within the EU, they can be highly detailed and include instructions regarding policy objectives and priorities, strategy and tactics, implementation, reporting, and oversight. In other cases, the constitutive documents appointing special envoys are more general in describing a representative’s role. In terms of duration, some mandates are open-ended, whereas other organizations such as the EU and the Commonwealth generally have a specified time limit after which a mandate is terminated, reviewed or extended.

To be sure, there are benefits and burdens inherent in each approach. Detailed mandates ensure greater mission clarity and can serve to exercise greater control over envoys by their principals. Moreover, within groups of principals such as the EU Foreign Affairs Council and the AU Peace and Security Council, codifying an envoy’s strategy can help prevent unilateral attempts by some principals to shift the strategy in their preferred direction after agreement has been reached.

On the other hand, crisis situations that lead to the appointment of special envoys in the first place can be unpredictable and are not amenable to precise instructions. Less tactical detail provides greater operational flexibility within the overall policy objectives. Particularly where special envoys are directly appointed by the head of an international organization, mandates can be defined as much by informal and unwritten understandings and expectations. These can have the benefit of greater flexibility, as opposed to more rigid formal constitutive documents.
DEPLOYMENT, FINANCING AND SUPPORT

The extent of deployment, financing and support of special envoys depends on the particular mission and institution. Within the EU, budgets and team sizes of special envoys are typically established by the Council decision document appointing the envoy and setting forth the mandate. EUSRs are supported by geographic units within the European External Action Service, as well as by EU delegations in the particular countries covered by special envoys. The existence of EUSRs alongside heads of EU delegation can lead to friction in cooperation and a lack of mission unity. Indeed, the current model is under review and may be replaced by double-hatting specific EU ambassadors as EUSRs. Were the current arrangement to change, however, EU member states acting through the EU Foreign Affairs Council would lose their direct financial control over EUSR budgets, which would then be absorbed into the overall EEAS budget.

At the UN, a specially-designated Mediation Support Unit (MSU) was established in 2006 to provide envoys with proper staff assistance and advice. Envoys are financed in one of three ways: raising new funds from governments; through the Secretary-General’s Unforeseen Fund; or by reallocating funds approved biannually from the special political mission budget. Staffing is mostly by officials from within the UN Secretariat through a recruitment process coordinated by MSU in consultation with the Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations. MSU also manages a UN Standby Team of Mediation Experts, an “on call” group of advisors that can assist envoys on their missions.

Like the UN, IGAD has a Mediation Support Unit, which is currently finalizing the roster of prospective mediators and a list of technical experts ready for deployment. Missions are financed through direct fund-raising efforts with IGAD development partners or, in the case of preventative diplomacy efforts, under projects already funded at the secretariat level in the IGAD Peace and Security Division. Similarly, ECOWAS is establishing a Division of Mediation Facilitation to coordinate a standby roster of experts and support envoy missions with advisors. ECOWAS missions are financed mainly through the community levy paid by member states.

In the OSCE, the Conflict Prevention Centre has a Mediation Support Team, which supports the work of envoys through training, retreats, debriefings, expert deployments and operational support. Although there is no standby unit of envoys, there is a roster of OSCE officials who have indicated their willingness to be deployed as “first responders” in support of crisis response actions. The OSCE also maintains a roster of external mediation experts who can be deployed in support of mediation and dialogue facilitation efforts. Envoys are financed either by the country holding the chairmanship in a given year or as part of the general OSCE budget.

The Quartet Representative employs about twenty advisors, as well as administrative and security staff. The team is financed through the UN Development Programme by the U.S., the European Commission, Norway, Canada, UK, New Zealand, Australia and Netherlands. Policy experts are either seconded by partner countries and institutions, or employed directly by the Representative. Notably, the current Representative, Tony Blair, does not receive any compensation for his work nor reimbursement for travel expenses; however, when in Jerusalem, he receives lodging and meals.

Within the AU, funding for envoy missions comes from the general AU Peace Fund or, more commonly, from partners’ contributions (in particular, the European Commission, Denmark, UK and Spain). Envoys have experts working on a six- to twelve-month contract basis, some of whom are seconded from governments and other international institutions. Although there is no standby unit equivalent to the UN MSU, the AU has desk officers that help as experts.
The other institutions in this study—NATO, OIF, Commonwealth, and OAS—have neither any standby rosters of envoys nor experts, but support envoy missions with staff from the particular organization. They finance missions through their general budgets.

**REPORTING AND OVERSIGHT**

Report and oversight mechanisms flow to the principals that select and mandate envoys in the first place. For instance, EUSRs formally report to the EU Foreign Affairs Council as well as the High Representative, who can propose to the Council to terminate a special representative’s mandate. Similarly, the AU special envoys report to the AU Commission Chairperson and the Peace and Security Council, as well as the UN Security Council if the envoy is dual-hatted with the UN. Within the UN itself, special envoys report directly to the Secretary-General following the informal process of consultation that precedes their selection. They also brief the Security Council, the General Assembly and other actors relevant to a particular situation. At IGAD, special envoys report to the IGAD Summit and liaise with member states’ high-level authorities in order to conduct their business.

The Quartet Representative regularly updates Quartet Principals on any developments. In addition, his head of mission updates the local representatives of the Quartet through regular meetings and teleconferences with their staff on the ground in Jerusalem and Ramallah, and during visits to capitals.

In ECOWAS, special envoys report to the Commission President on a monthly basis, and sometimes more frequently during crises. Similarly, the Commonwealth special envoys submit reports after each mission visit and, at the conclusion of an assignment, each envoy is required to write a final report with assessments and recommendations. These confidential reports are submitted to the Commonwealth Secretary-General and are also available to the Political Affairs Division. While envoys have no obligation to report to member states, they may brief regional countries and representatives of member states serving on the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group as a matter of courtesy. Within NATO, OAS and OIF, special envoys report to the respective secretaries-general and, in addition, may brief member states depending on the perceived need.

Envoys who are dual-hatted or multi-hatted report to their respective institutions, although in practice there is likely to be one organization that is the lead principal. And even envoys that represent a single organization are likely to be more effective if they are able to brief multiple actors relevant to a particular situation.

**CONCLUSIONS**

Crisis situations normally do not allow for reflection on the overall institutional process established to select, mandate, deploy, finance, support and oversee special envoys. Moreover, some design choices such as appointment and oversight are likely to reflect the political structure of a given organization and may be relatively inflexible to change.

Yet, as this brief study shows, there is a range of design choices available to international institutions with respect to the role of special envoy. In particular, given the contemporary ubiquity of special envoys, multilateral organizations could consider establishing permanent budgetary lines to support their activities. Additionally, mediation support units established at the UN and AU are useful institutional models in providing both a readily available roster of potential envoys and policy advisors able to staff and support them. Some crises may necessarily demand ad hoc approaches or require outside experts, but such rosters at the very least provide good default options.
The surveyed institutions also cover the spectrum of choices with respect to mandates, from general to granular and from public to private. An envoy's terms of reference are instrumental not only to controlling his or her conduct and guiding it in the direction of a principal's desired policy objectives, but can also communicate to a wider constituency the principal's strategy in a particular situation and the scope of the envoy's authority.

On the other hand, some situations may require less disclosure and more discretion, in which case the appointment of an informal special envoy might be considered. Utilized by some international institutions, informal envoys can provide their principals with the same intelligence-gathering and mediation functions, but under the cover of plausible deniability in case a principal perceives a need. Informal envoys are likely to be more feasible in multilateral organizations, in which the institutional head appoints the representatives directly, rather than in institutions such as the EU and AU, where a group of political stakeholders is responsible for selecting envoys. Nonetheless, even those institutions might consider the potential utility of informal representation if the required confidentiality could be maintained.

To be sure, none of the specific choices with respect to special envoys are necessarily linked to their ultimate effectiveness. But their continued and growing use should trigger additional attention to the various phases of the institutional process of special envoys so that the overall structure reflects greater design rather than default or accident. Moreover, there is likely to be significant room for intellectual exchange among the various international institutions regarding their experiences with special envoys and any lessons learned. Since the overall policy objectives of conflict resolution and peacebuilding are common to the surveyed organizations, and the specific envoys and experts sometimes work across various institutions, there is great potential value in further study of the role of special envoys.

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THREE’S A CROWD? INTER-ORGANISATIONAL COOPERATION IN CONFLICT MEDIATION

Alischa Kugel

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Out of the at least 51 multilateral envoys deployed in 2013 to address conflict situations around the world, 28 envoys from different multilateral institutions worked together in mediating conflicts in the same country, region or sub-region across Africa, Asia, Europe and the Middle East. With over half of multilateral envoys active in 2013 working alongside each other in various conflict settings, inter-organisational cooperation in conflict mediation is an increasing necessity. Cooperation in mediation processes involves a wide range of multilateral actors and can take different forms. Each presents advantages and disadvantages impacting both the actors involved and the respective mediation processes.

Using some recent mediation processes as examples, it is useful to review how envoys from different institutions have worked together by looking at their policies, guidance and mechanisms. Examining the detailed functioning of envoys lets us see their strengths and weaknesses as well as how joint envoys that represent more than one institution can or cannot work together. Finally, in today’s crowded mediation field, it is worth analyzing the benefits and drawbacks for envoys working with other actors that engage in mediation such as governments and private organisations, as well as actors from the wider UN system. To obtain a complete picture, it is important to study how envoys navigate these relationship, including with heads of peacekeeping operations and political missions, and actors in the development, human rights and humanitarian realm.

COOPERATION BETWEEN ENVOYS FROM DIFFERENT ORGANIZATIONS

WHY COOPERATION?

Mediation and good offices form part of the core tasks of the UN Secretary-General and his representatives, and the UN is the main actor in mediating inter- and intra-state conflicts. However, regional and sub-regional organisations play an increasingly important role in the peaceful settlement of conflicts. Their involvement is enshrined in Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, which states that the Security Council is to encourage pacific settlement of local disputes through regional arrangements or agencies.

Regional actors have unique advantages in local conflict resolution, including closer access to conflict situations as well as more knowledge of and leverage over conflict parties. In the last five to ten years, regional and sub-regional organisations, particularly in Africa but also in the Middle East, have taken a more prominent role in addressing political crises. In 2013-14, the African Union (AU) and the Economic Commission of West African States (ECOWAS) have worked together in addressing crises from Cote d’Ivoire to Guinea-Bissau to Mali, while the Inter-Governmental Authority on Development (IGAD) has engaged with the conflicts in Somalia and South Sudan. In the Middle East, the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the League of Arab States (LAS) played noticeable
mediation roles in Yemen and Syria. The UN is increasingly working with regional organisations in different ways, including in a “lead role, in a supporting role, in a burden-sharing role, in sequential deployments and in several joint operations”.

Whatever form cooperation takes, mediation actors need to agree on a lead actor by consulting early and in a transparent manner on existing organisational capacity, capabilities and available resources. This will allow informed decision-making on the division of labor based on comparative advantages. The UN’s Guidance for Effective Mediation underlines that coherence, coordination and complementarity of mediation efforts is indispensable and recommends that cooperation should be based on “a common mediation strategy”, ensuring “consistent messaging to the parties”.

ADVANTAGES AND DISADVANTAGES

The involvement of envoys from different organisations in a mediation process has its benefits, as each actor and their respective institutions bring particular strengths which enable a division of responsibilities. Furthermore, each envoy can make unique contributions to a process by employing different skills and expertise to the various phases of a mediation process.

The April 2010 political crisis in Kyrgyzstan, in which the government was overthrown, illustrates the advantages of cooperation between different organisations in mediation. In the aftermath of the crisis the UN worked alongside special envoys of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the EU in mediating between the conflict parties. The engagement was coordinated through an OSCE-initiated tripartite mechanism, called the “Troika,” which included the OSCE Chairperson-in-Office and the EUSR for Central Asia, as well as the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) and head of the UN’s regional office for Central Asia.

Both the OSCE and the EU’s mediation roles were constrained during the crisis. The OSCE, which maintains centers in all five Central Asian countries (including a field presence in Kyrgyzstan in place since 1999), was able to make use of its extensive network of contacts with government officials and civil society. However, its role in mediating the crisis was hampered by the OSCE chair at the time, a position held by Kazakhstan, which was perceived by some Kyrgyz actors as biased. Similarly, the EU, which had deployed an EUSR to the region since 2005 and was able to play a useful advocacy role, was seen by some Kyrgyz political actors as an outsider with a Western political agenda. The UN in turn was perceived as an unbiased actor with the additional ability to leverage its capabilities in facilitating the conditions necessary for humanitarian response and mobilization of resources.

By working closely together, these three actors were able to pool together their respective strengths. In addition, the Troika sent consistently unified messaging that lent legitimacy to the transitional government and reinforced a united stance on the need for stability and respect for human rights. Through their successful cooperation, the Troika achieved sustained international attention on the conflict and contributed to preventing a deterioration of the situation in Kyrgyzstan.

More recently, the UN, AU and ECOWAS successfully joined efforts in mediating a return to constitutional order in Mali following the March 2012 coup. The organisations continue to work together in finding a political solution for the conflict that ensued in the country’s north. And in Yemen, the UN’s Special Advisor worked closely with the Gulf Cooperation Council in facilitating the latter’s power-sharing agreement that led to a relatively peaceful hand-over of power in February 2012.
WHEN ELEPHANTS FIGHT, IT IS THE GRASS THAT SUFFERS

However, inter-organisational cooperation in mediation can also bring disadvantages that at their worst jeopardize the very processes they were supposed to support. Deciding on a lead actor can pose the first hurdle to effective cooperation. A leaked exchange between two US state department officials over why the UN and not the EU should lead efforts to oversee a political transition in Ukraine in early 2014, illustrated that **decision-making on the lead actor is a sensitive political process** that is often driven by the interests of influential countries. Complicating matters, the UN Charter does not offer clear guidance on the question of whether it is the world organisation or regional organisations that should take the lead in mediation efforts. Further, the 2009 report of the Secretary-General on enhancing mediation and its support activities acknowledges that there is no clear framework for effective decision-making between the UN and regional organisations regarding partnership arrangements.

The risks in failing to establish a clear lead are manifold. Organisations with diverging interests may launch parallel processes in competing for a mediation role, creating an “opportunity for forum shopping as intermediaries are played off against one another. Such a fragmented international response reinforces fragmentation in the conflict and complicates resolution.” In Côte d’Ivoire following the disputed 2010 presidential elections, the AU and ECOWAS both engaged in parallel mediation processes that had contrary approaches to the crisis. While ECOWAS, along with the UN, took a firm stance on the need for the incumbent Laurent Gbagbo to yield power to Alassane Ouattara, the AU’s envoy, former South African president Thabo Mbeki, insisted on a power-sharing agreement between the two. Though the AU soon endorsed the ECOWAS decision to recognize Ouattara as the winner, divisions on the way forward within the AU mediation panel, **particularly driven by South Africa**, persisted. Responding to the persistent differences, then-ECOWAS president James Victor Gbeho warned of a lack of unity in the approach to the crisis and charged that these actions undermined ECOWAS’s mediation efforts.

Even with an established lead in the mediation effort, lack of coordination on the way forward among stakeholders as well as the lack of a coherent mediation strategy can still prove problematic. Following the military coup in Guinea-Bissau in April 2012 that took place just ahead of the presidential elections, ECOWAS took over the lead in mediating an agreement for the return to civilian rule. The mediation efforts achieved an agreement wherein the junta ceded power to a transitional civilian government, which, however, did not include any members of the government overthrown in the April coup. The ECOWAS agreement created deep divisions between national and international stakeholders that either supported the transitional government or wanted to see a return to constitutional order with the authorities in place prior to the coup. The differences were particularly stark between ECOWAS and the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries (CPLP), which wanted to see a resumption of the presidential vote.

The failure to agree on a common strategy further emboldened some political actors to refuse compromise, halting domestic political progress. In addition, the unease with which the agreement was received among the international community made it difficult for the transitional government to receive broad recognition, which affected its ability to mobilize resources for the transitional period.
WAYS TOWARD IMPROVED COORDINATION

These setbacks notwithstanding, cooperation in mediation processes, as mentioned in the introduction of this essay, is increasingly common. This is in part due to the growing assertiveness of regional organisations to address conflicts in their respective areas of influence. In recognition, the UN and regional organisations have begun institutionalizing processes to enhance cooperation in mediation. These include exchanges between organisations on lessons learned and best practices, including joint training exercises that help to build stronger ties between organisations and enhance cohesion.

The UN has also entered into partnership agreements with several regional and sub-regional organisations including the AU, EU, OSCE, OAS, CARICOM, ECOWAS, SADC, ASEAN and OIC. These relationships aim to strengthen mediation capacities and enhance “more coherent and complementary approaches in specific mediation processes”. These partnerships range from multiyear programs with “institutionalized cooperation procedures such as desk-to-desk interactions” to more flexible approaches like joint deployments. Meanwhile, the AU’s Peace and Security Council Protocol, under Article 16, provides a framework to enhance the AU’s cooperation on peacemaking activities with other regional organisations, aiming to promote effective continental mediation and conflict prevention measures.

The most advanced formalized cooperation agreement to date exists between the UN and AU in the form of draft joint mediation guidelines. These aim to enhance the sharing of information, as well as the coordination of policy and strategy to make joint mediation efforts more coherent. The guidelines are intended to help map out the organisations’ core competencies. Work on the joint guidelines began in 2008, with a first draft completed by 2010. The process, however, was marred by disagreements between the AU and UN over the electoral dispute in Cote d’Ivoire in 2010/11 and between the UN and NATO and the AU over the use of force in response to the crisis in Libya in 2011. These difficulties notwithstanding, the AU recently proposed in its submission for the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) that the two organisations should revisit these guidelines with the aim of finalizing and adopting them.

JOINT ENVOYS

The closest type of institutional cooperation takes the form of joint envoys that represent more than one institution. This form of cooperation between institutions is fairly new and examples are few and far between. In 2013, there were only two joint envoys: Mohamed Ibn Chambas, the Joint African Union-United Nations Special Representative for Darfur, and Joint Chief Mediator and Lakhdar Brahimi, the Joint Special Representative of the United Nations and the League of Arab States for Syria. The position for the AU-UN joint Mediator was established in 2008, while the UN-LAS post was created four years later in 2012. An earlier example of a joint envoy not involving the UN includes the AU/SADC Envoy to Madagascar, appointed in 2009.

The main advantage of a joint envoy is the added political weight the position receives through the representation of two institutions. Regional organisations are likely to be more familiar with the conflict and benefit from access to and influence over conflict parties, while the UN’s participation signals the attention of the international community to the conflict, and the direct involvement of the Security Council that can take wide ranging punitive measures if needed.
The appointment of a joint envoy can also be used to refocus international attention on a country’s situation. For example, the establishment of the AU-UN Joint Mediator position that combined the previously separate UN and AU envoy positions to the Darfur conflict was conceived as part of an effort to revive momentum toward achieving a resolution. The appointment can also come out of a compromise with the parties involved. For the Darfur conflict, the government of Sudan reportedly wanted to see an African-led process and was reluctant to accept the UN’s role, while the AU lacked the necessary instructional capacity to take on a larger role. The Joint mediator position provided a solution that worked for all stakeholders.

Joint setup also enables a division of labor according to the respective institutions’ comparative advantages in the conflict setting, as well as the sharing of support functions and overall financing. The UN-LAS envoy, for example, received support in exercising his mandate from two deputies, each appointed by one of the two organisations, and held an office in Cairo, the headquarter location of the LAS.

However, the joint envoy model can also prove difficult. Regional actors may feel marginalized in the decision making process at the Security Council, which is ultimately determined by the five permanent members. Once the LAS brought the Syria crisis to the attention of the Security Council, for example, the League’s influence over the process was hampered – even with the establishment of the position of the joint envoy – and meaningful progress was obstructed by China and Russia. There may also be a blurred understanding of responsibilities toward the respective organisations from one side of a joint envoy. In 2011, the AU voiced concern that despite repeated instructions from its Peace and Security Council, the then-Joint Mediator did not liaise or coordinate efforts with the other AU mediation entities on the ground. The AU specifically requested the Joint Mediator to consult with it before taking further decisions, and both the AU and the UN requested the Joint Mediator to provide a comprehensive report on his activities and any future plans, indicating a clear lack of such consultations previously.

While the reporting practices and level of cooperation with other entities on the ground can depend on an envoy’s personal approach to their work, the joint deployments setup may put one or both organisations at a disadvantage. It may also expose a lack of coordination between the organisations’ headquarters that can encourage joint envoys to take initiatives into their own hands without communicating to the organisations’ respective oversight bodies. The lack of consensus on a political strategy between the organisations can also send confusing messages to an envoy that at worst can paralyze a process. Close and effective cooperation between organisations deploying a joint envoy is therefore paramount to avoid “a clash of political or bureaucratic approaches”.

**COOPERATION WITH OTHER ACTORS ON THE GROUND**

Envoys rarely operate alone in a specific conflict setting. In the majority of cases, along with the likely presence of actors from regional and sub-regional organisations there frequently already exists a network of UN Country Teams (UNCTs), civil society groups, international NGOs, private diplomacy and bilateral actors. Mediation is also not an exclusive task for envoys. Heads of peacekeeping operations and political missions conduct good office functions on behalf of the Secretary-General and support compliance with and implementation of peace agreements.

In countries where the UN does not have a political presence, it increasingly relies on UNCTs for political analysis, but also for early warning, prevention and early engagement to address tensions on the ground. It is important to note here that the political engagement by UNCTs is limited, as they don't have a mediation mandate. Similarly, NGOs and civil society groups can provide
crucial analysis on the potential and actual impacts of a situation on the ground and make recommendations on further action for the international community. Furthermore, both individual states that act as third-party intermediaries and private diplomacy actors can play an important role in early engagement with conflict parties, as they can react quickly, discreetly and with flexibility. Private diplomacy actors may have the added advantage of being perceived by the conflict parties as not pursuing their own agenda, and can thus be more acceptable to the parties involved. They do, however, lack the influence over conflict parties that individual states or multilateral institutions may have.

Once an agreement is reached, the various actors – particularly field missions, UNCTs, NGOs and civil society groups – assist through the provision of technical knowledge and local expertise in implementing the various aspects of a peace agreement. These can range from security sector reform efforts and rebuilding institutions to national reconciliation and reviving the economic sector. **Local partners can also be key in generating pressure on domestic elites**, mobilizing constituencies and sustaining pressure for peace on the national and sub-national level. In working with local civil society groups, it is important to be aware of their possible connection with the government or opposition parties. One of the main challenges is thus to ensure a balanced representation of groups in order to avoid a biased approach.

At times the presence of a multitude of actors can lead to a maze of fragmented peacemaking efforts, inhibiting a clear definition of roles and hindering effective cooperation and coordination. **Teresa Whitfield recounts that in Nepal**, between 2002 and 2006, in addition to UN involvement,

> ... international NGOs engaged in peace efforts ... included the Carter Center, the Centre for Humanitarian Dialogue, Crisis Management Initiative, Community of Sant'Egidio, Friedrich Ebert Stiftung, International Alert, International IDEA, Transcend and the US Institute for Peace. In addition, there were workshops organized in Denmark, Finland, Germany, Sweden, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, the United States, as well as in Nepal; ... and offers of specific help in mediation from the governments of Norway and Switzerland.

It is important to note, however, that a number of these actors, particularly those that engaged in the conflict over the longer term, were able to make significant contributions to peacemaking efforts in Nepal.

The various actors on the ground are thus vital interlocutors for an envoy, who can make use of their knowledge and expertise to make progress on political processes and ensure the implementation of agreements. Mary Robinson, the then-UN Envoy for the Great Lakes region, tapped into the existing network of women’s groups in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the region to build an “inclusive peace dialogue” aimed at **ensuring women’s participation in peacebuilding efforts**. In addition to the AU Special Representative of the African Union and the European Union Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes Region the Envoy also worked closely with the US Special Envoy for the Great Lakes Region and the DRC on implementing the Peace, Security, and Cooperation (PSC) Framework Agreement. **The U.S.’s long-standing diplomatic and security engagement in the region**, its important role as a bilateral donor to the DRC, and its considerable influence within international financial institutions that provide funding and technical assistance to the DRC government, allowed the US Special Envoy to exert considerable influence over the process and makes him an important partner in its implementation.
In some cases, envoys may also leverage peacekeeping operations, political missions or UNCTs to their advantage. In the DRC, Mary Robinson fully supported the military offensive by the UN’s Force Intervention Brigade against the M23 rebels in the DRC, which through its military gains has enabled advances on the diplomatic track. In addition, Robinson and the head of the UN Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo (MONUSCO), Martin Kobler, collaborate closely and have daily interactions on approaches to developments on the ground. The presence of liaison officers in MONUSCO and the Envoy’s office in Nairobi, respectively, further ensures their linkage and close cooperation.

Envoys with regional mandates frequently coordinate their efforts with relevant UNCTs to harmonize political, security and development approaches to specific crises. The Great Lakes region once again serves as a good example, where the UN Special Envoy initiated the close involvement of UNCTs in the implementation of the PSC framework. Since then, country teams in the signature countries agreed on each others’ specific role in the framework’s implementation and laid out a plan to move forward.

As with the other cases discussed, effective cooperation lies at the core of a fruitful relationship between envoys and other actors on the ground. Successful linkages to these actors can influence peace processes from the early stages to the implementation of peace agreements – even after the envoy’s engagement has concluded. Crucial also is the necessary support and buy-in from headquarters, which often have to overcome existing divisions between departments to enable collaboration on the ground.

**THREE’S A CROWD, OR THREE’S COMPANY?**

The deployment of multilateral envoys is an important and effective tool in civilian crisis management. But mediation is no longer an exclusive task carried out by the UN. With the increased engagement by regional actors and the presence of actors on the ground making critical contributions to peacemaking efforts, effective cooperation between multilateral envoys is vital for effective engagement in a conflict. Only well-coordinated efforts can bring the benefits that international cooperation has to offer.

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LESSONS FROM MULTILATERAL ENVOYS

Richard Gowan and Alischa Kugel

THIS IS THE FIRST ESSAY IN A SERIES OF SEVEN THAT LOOKS AT THE ROLE OF MULTILATERAL ENVOYS IN PEACEMAKING.

Mediation was a central concern for the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations convened in October 2014. The group had a deliberately broad mandate to review the UN's peacekeeping operations (PKOs) and Special Political Missions (SPMs). It was authorized to assess and advise on challenges to the Secretary-General’s good offices and the “special and personal envoys of the Secretary-General” that are part of the broader category of SPMs. While the Panel discussed mediation issues in this context, it also had to consider how the UN's field-based political missions, regional offices and large-scale PKOs handle mediation issues. Additionally, its purview included the UN’s partnerships with regional organizations and other actors, allowing the Panel to look at how UN operations coordinated with regional players in cases such as South Sudan.

The Panel was well-positioned to propose improvements to the ways in which the UN selects, deploys and backstops envoys and mediators; supports mediation in cases where PKOs and SPMs are deployed; and works with partners, including not only regional organizations but also individual states and international NGOs on mediation. This is, of course, only one of many areas ranging from Security Council mandates to logistics chains that the Panel was mandated to study. It had to juggle the concerns and interests of numerous different constituencies inside and outside the UN.

A basic question for the Panel was whether the UN can defend its traditional role as an impartial actor in conflict prevention and conflict resolution. This is crucial in a period in which the Security Council has requested a PKO to “neutralize” specific opponents (e.g., the Force Intervention Brigade in the DRC), and many SPMs work closely with non-UN-commanded peace enforcement missions. Can the UN retain its role as mediator in parallel with coercive measures authorized by the Council?

This question is further complicated by the need for a realistic assessment of how non-UN actors’ mediation activities impact the work of UN peace operations. In many cases, hybrid mediation is clearly advantageous for the UN. Yet in several recent cases, such as South Sudan and Mali, blue helmet missions have been cut out of crucial political processes by regional actors despite having thousands of troops on the ground. What happens to a UN mission when it loses the political initiative in this way?

Considerable progress that has been made in terms of mediation support inside and outside the UN since 2000. The UN has strengthened its systems for deploying and sustaining PKOs in the wake of the 2000 Brahimi Report, and has taken significant steps to bolster SPMs. It has also expanded its support systems for envoys and mediators over the last fifteen years. The creation of the Mediation Support Unit and Mediation Standby Team – inspiring complimentary efforts in other regional organizations and in civil society – means that the UN is able to provide more consistent and professional support to political processes than previously capable.
Nonetheless, demands for such services from those working in the field is high. UN officials and friendly member states complain that mediation remains under-resourced. Strategic dilemmas confront the UN and other mediators in an increasingly fragmented international environment. There are obstacles to mediation, but there are also opportunities through partnerships with local actors in countries affected by conflict. How can the UN make best use of these relationships?

THE ENVOYS PROJECT

The essays in this series are based on research a Center on International Cooperation (CIC), largely undertaken in 2014, on multilateral envoys. CIC was lucky to have the advice and support of the Center in Humanitarian Dialogue as we designed and undertook this work (although the responsibility for the final conclusions is our own. As part of this research, CIC conducted interviews with the African Union (AU), Commonwealth, Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), European Union (EU), Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), Organisation internationale de la Francophonie (OIF), Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and UN officials and also studied public material on other organizations. The Center for Humanitarian Dialogue provided considerable support for this work.

This research – based on a study of 50 envoys with a focus on addressing specific conflicts deployed by the UN, regional organizations and other multilateral organizations at the end of 2013 – only gives part of the picture of international mediation. As another recent study has emphasized, “states still remain the single most important type of mediator” while NGOs are also key actors in the field. Even when the UN and regional actors are involved in a conflict, they do not necessarily deploy a formal envoy.

But studying formally-appointed envoys does help raise three questions that, while hardly unfamiliar to the mediation community, may need some answers. First, what are the strategic demands on multilateral mediators today, and what organizations are taking the lead in response to these demands? Second, how professional and systematic is the support is these mediators receive? Third, what are the lessons for the UN in terms of collaborating with other actors in mediation processes?

MULTILATERAL ENVOYS: A STRATEGIC PROFILE

As of late 2013, we identified 50 envoys meeting our criteria for dealing with specific conflicts mandated by the organizations covered by our study. Twenty-eight of these were working on a conflict where at least one other multilateral envoy was also active. Of these, sixteen were UN envoys; seven represented the African Union; eleven other African organizations; and sixteen other organizations. The concentration of multilateral activity in Africa is clear: 30 of the 50 individuals worked on the continent, in contrast to seven in the Asia-Pacific; six in the Middle East; five in Europe and two in the Americas. We are presently reviewing these figures to factor in the last year’s events in Ukraine, the Middle East and Africa but we presume that the latter will remain the main focus of multilateral efforts.

Reflecting this trend, 24 of the envoys we covered at the time of this research were Africans themselves (and 22 of them are dealing with conflicts on the continent). Multilateral envoy-hood otherwise appears to be a distinctly European trade: seventeen of our subjects come from Europe, with the remainder largely coming from the Americas and Asia-Pacific. Of the UN-mandated envoys in the study, six were African and five were European. Such categorizations can obviously obscure key factors about the personalities involved: as an Algerian, for example, Lakhdar Brahimi features in our data as an African but his experience and networks in the Middle East, Europe and globally are essential to his political leverage.
Nonetheless, the data emphasizes two points. The first is that, at least in the field of multilateral mediation, the mantra of “African solutions to African problems” is increasingly a reality. (As a point of comparison, five of the SRSGs currently leading UN PKOs in Africa are from the continent, whereas four come from elsewhere.) The second is that, in a global context where European power seems to be diminishing, Europeans punch above their weight in multilateral diplomacy. It is worth asking whether the increased tensions on Europe's borders will now absorb more of its best diplomats – and if there is a strategic case for expanding the pool of UN mediators from other regions. There is only one Asian and one Latin American citizen working as a UN envoy, SRSG or DSRSG dealing with conflict-related matters deployed in Africa at the present time.

The data also reaffirms the well-established observation that multilateral envoys typically deal with civil wars and their consequences: fully 26 in our sample were dealing with intra-state conflicts and transitional political processes in late 2013. Seven were dealing with conflicts involving non-state armed groups of various types, while seven more were focused on inter-state conflicts and six on land or border disputes between countries.

Again, these figures highlight a clear trend while obscuring a number of qualifying factors. They also obscure geographical factors, such as the absence of multilateral envoys from most Asian conflicts. A comparative study for this project by Teresa Whitfield emphasizes that multilateral envoys tend to be handling internationalized civil wars, whereas they are often excluded from more contained conflicts. Moreover, multilateral envoys have largely been excluded from mediating or facilitating peace talks with transnational Islamist extremist groups. Given the threat posed by such actors to peace operations and humanitarian efforts in cases like Libya, Mali and Syria, Whitfield's findings raise hard questions about how UN and non-UN mediators can adapt to current conflicts.

**MEDICATION SUPPORT AND PROFESSIONALIZATION**

The growing challenges to multilateral envoys raise questions about how well-supported and professional these individuals are. Academic mediation analysts typically underline the importance of mid-level staff in managing peace processes. Senior multilateral envoys do not always defer to their juniors so readily. In the words of one international official interviewed during our work, “sometimes we take for granted that high profile people will know certain things . . . we need people who know all the daily nuts and bolts of the process, someone who knows all the discussions and the complexity. Otherwise we can miss a lot.” Nonetheless, multilateral organizations (especially in Africa) continue to invest a great deal of trust in high-profile figures. The average age of the individuals in our sample was a little over 64 at the time the survey was completed – but depressingly, only three of the entire group were women. While there remains a strong case for involving senior figures as mediators, some African officials raised concerns about reliance on grandees: “They are limited in what they can do and bound by time constraints in a process that shouldn’t be bound by time.”

In this context, ensuring skilled and well-resourced nuts-and-bolts experts are in place to support mediation processes takes on additional importance. Whitfield argues that the UN's Mediation Support Unit (MSU) is “setting a standard” in this field through developing strategies and providing thematic advice on peace processes – in addition to acting as a “global asset” supporting mediation by non-UN actors. The Mediation Standby Team also plays a significant role. But, as noted above, diplomats and UN officials share concerns that the MSU and Standby Team are overloaded – and the need to liaise with non-UN actors frequently increases the strain.
For UN mediation to succeed, it needs strengthening of these centralized assets and a guarantee that individual UN mediators also have the staff and resources they require. Looking beyond the UN system, there is a further need to assess the state of mediation support within the UN’s partner organizations. Whitfield notes that the EU, OSCE and Commonwealth have all made progress in this area but that the AU and ECOWAS have less well-developed assets. In the AU, for example, “the high level of most envoys means that they receive no formal training, and the literature, tools, management skills and knowledge developed in recent years are still quite scarcely used.” The UN and non-governmental organizations still often provide considerable support to African-led peace initiatives, a fact reflected by projects such as AU-UN cooperation on drafting joint mediation guidelines. As these complex mediation partnerships are developing, one question is how to best target the UN’s assistance. Possible solutions include civil society organizations, who can play a role in providing advice on triangular cooperation between the UN, regional organizations (in Africa or elsewhere) and NGOs on matters ranging from policy formation to operational support.

**POLITICAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL CHALLENGES OF HYBRID MEDIATION**

Any commentary on cooperation between the UN and non-UN actors in peace processes needs to address political as well as organizational tensions. In many recent cases, cooperation has been marred by tensions between the UN and its partners. This certainly includes Darfur and Syria, where the UN has appointed joint mediators with, respectively, the AU and the Arab League. In such cases, as Alischa Kugel notes in her essay for this project, the joint envoy may receive “blurred” guidance from different institutions or “take initiatives into his/her own hands without communicating strategies to the organizations’ oversight bodies.”

It is surely safe to say that there is no single perfect approach to rationalizing and guiding hybrid mediation processes. But the mere fact that nearly two thirds of the envoys in our survey are deployed alongside another multilateral envoy - to say nothing of national, non-governmental and local actors - means that the recurrent challenges in hybrid mediation cannot be ignored.

How should the UN approach those cases where its mediators deploy alongside partners from other organizations, whether in a pre-arranged framework or an ad hoc fashion? And what of cases where field-based UN operations, whether SPMs or PKOs, operate in parallel with non-UN-led mediation processes? We have noted rising concerns with those cases, most prominently in Mali and South Sudan. UN PKOs are operating in volatile environments but are effectively cut out of related political talks. How long can the UN credibly undertake military and civilian tasks on the ground when its top-level political role is limited in this manner?

Further questions concern how a UN mediator works in conjunction with both non-UN political partners and a blue helmet PKO (most recently in the Great Lakes region with MONUSCO). Such arrangements may be operationally and politically useful or necessary on a case-by-case basis, but they risk obvious transaction costs. They also underline the questions about how to balance the political work of a UN mediator with the security activities of the peace operation. This is especially so when, as with MONUSCO, the latter is mandated to undertake coercive action against specific spoilers. There are no easy ways to resolve these dilemmas, but we hope this collection of essays on envoys makes a contribution to understanding the challenges involved as these issues are discussed and debated.

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THE PRACTICAL IS THE POLITICAL: THE UN’S GLOBAL STUDY ON WOMEN, PEACE AND SECURITY

Rob Jenkins

Weighing in at just under five pounds, the 417-page Global Study on the Implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1325, released last month, is nothing if not ambitious. Its expansive subtitle – “Preventing Conflict, Transforming Justice, Securing Peace” – correctly hints at the study’s broad thematic scope. Just recapitulating, classifying, and mapping the dozens of recommendations spread throughout the report’s thirteen main chapters required a 20-page annex, which despite the best of intentions is anything but reader-friendly.

This presentational confusion is symptomatic of deeper structural shortcomings in how the Global Study was conceived. The report’s outline lacks a clear organizing principle. The rationale for the definition of chapter topics, and their sequencing, is not obvious. There is considerable repetition. Some sections – Chapter 8 on conflict-prevention, for instance – are substantively thin. Others are overstuffed: Chapter 10 (on ‘Actors’) is three times the length of most others. As a result, clarity suffers.

But architectural elegance, conceptual consistency, and economy of expression are the wrong yardsticks by which to measure a report such as this. Far more consequential is whether its recommendations are sufficiently concrete, and bought into widely enough, to stand a decent chance of real-world adoption. In this respect, the Global Study is already a resounding success: some of its key recommendations were incorporated into a Security Council resolution (UNSCR 2242) the day before the report itself was launched. Other proposals emerging from the study will be the subject of high-level internal UN deliberations in the weeks and months ahead. To cite these practical implications is not to damn the report’s analytical quality with faint praise. Both the issues and reform proposals in, for example, Chapter 6 (on peacekeeping) are closely argued, and the study’s ability to combine internal UN information with the findings of social-science research is impressive.

The institutional and policy reforms proposed in the Global Study are directed at the usual range of stakeholders – UN departments and agencies, aid donors, member states in general, the Security Council, civil society organizations, the media – and cover everything from increasing women’s political participation in post-conflict countries to addressing gender-discrimination within traditional justice mechanisms. The broad canvas is altogether fitting given that the report was tasked with reviewing a decade and a half of progress on advancing the objectives of Resolution 1325 since its passage in 2000, including efforts to implement the many “women, peace and security” (WPS) resolutions adopted in the intervening years. Broad-spectrum coverage is also strategic: addressing a wider range of subjects and conceptual framings provides opportunities for a more diverse array of WPS advocates within and outside the UN to advance their specific agendas, whether these involve the rights of women refugees (Chapter 12) or reforms to how humanitarian services are delivered (Chapter 4).
STAYING IN STEP

The Global Study’s thinking and recommendations align fairly closely with the gender-related elements of the two other major UN peace and security reviews released this year: Uniting our Strengths for Peace, the Report of the Secretary-General’s High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO), and The Challenge of Sustaining Peace, the Report of the Advisory Group of Experts for the 2015 Review of the UN’s Peacebuilding Architecture. The consistency across these three reports is no coincidence. All three were subjected to similar inter-agency consultations within the UN system. Because this largely involved the same UN staff members from one report to the next – the Global Study’s lead author was also a member of HIPPO – a concerted effort at “coordinated messaging” was a prominent feature of the process by which the three documents were produced. In fact, it would have been surprising if the reports, all released within a 90-day period, had come to blatantly contradictory conclusions. These are, for the most part, consensus documents, and the balance of power among the key peace and security stakeholders – within the UN system as well as among member states – varies little from one month to the next.

Still, because it focuses on gender issues, the Global Study, which was requested by the Security Council in Resolution 2122 (2013), goes well beyond what could reasonably be covered in the two earlier reports. The willingness to outline a more far-reaching agenda was also a reflection of the Global Study’s organizational locus: while Uniting for Peace was coordinated by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), and the Department of Political Affairs (DPA) oversaw the drafting of Sustaining Peace, the Global Study was conducted under the auspices of UN Women. The study’s lead author, Radhika Coomaraswamy, formerly the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Children and Armed Conflict, not only knows the UN system well, but was well known within the system as someone willing to confront powerful actors that sought to obstruct her office’s ability to fulfill its mandate. This independent streak may help to account for the report’s willingness to stake out new ground.

Much of the analysis underlying the Global Study will be familiar to people who have followed the evolution of the WPS agenda. It reports, with updated statistics, on the still pitifully low proportion of women among negotiating delegations to peace talks; the continued lack of funding dedicated to advancing gender equality and meeting women’s needs in post-conflict situations; and the difficulties that women’s organizations in conflict-affected countries face when seeking access to international forums. These points are supported by a nicely curated selection of academic research, as well as the findings from a series of regional consultations organized to inform the Global Study.

One of the key messages that emerged from these consultations was the urgent need among local women peacebuilders in civil society for rapidly disbursing financial assistance to help them play the kind of active and sustained role envisioned for them in Resolution 1325. As a result, the Global Study recommended that a specialized financing instrument be created for this purpose. The UN system and some donor governments have already begun taking action on this proposal. Even if the idea of establishing a dedicated funding window for women’s peace organizations has been circulating for years, there is nothing like a high-profile public manifesto to galvanize action.
PULLING PUNCHES

For all its merits, the Global Study’s drafting team had to operate within institutional limits. Pressures from within the UN bureaucracy, particularly from the lead departments responsible for peace and security, effectively constrained the nature and the depth of self-examination the report could undertake. For instance, the report seeks to balance the bad news about women’s continued underrepresentation in the mediation field by celebrating, in a standalone box (p. 275), the appointment of Mary Robinson (a former president of Ireland and one-time UN High Commissioner for Human Rights) as the Secretary-General’s representative to the Great Lakes Region – ostensibly the first woman to be appointed a lead peace envoy by the UN. What the report avoids mentioning is that this post does not involve mediating an ongoing conflict, but rather facilitating the adoption of new guidelines and protocols in support of an existing conflict-prevention framework. This is not unimportant work, and Robinson has achievements to point to, but a more honest accounting of her appointment would have acknowledged that the UN has still, to date, never appointed a woman as a chief mediator.

One also gets the impression that the data behind some of the study’s charts and graphs has been carefully massaged to cast the UN – or parts of it, anyway – in a more flattering light. For instance, rather than reporting straightforwardly on the share of women among senior managers in UN peace operations, which would mean looking at the “director” level and above, a graph on page 271 depicts something slightly different: the proportion of women in a managerial bracket specifically devised to include more junior positions and exclude some that are higher up. This appears to show steady, if excruciatingly slow, progress in recent years. But inquiring minds might suspect that the trend would reflect less well on the UN had a less artful system of classification been used.

The Global Study also ignores uncomfortable questions that might generate a productive conversation about the reasons why the WPS agenda has progressed more quickly in some places than in others. For instance, the report might have asked why certain peace processes conducted outside the Security Council’s purview – those that do not constitute a standing item on the Council’s agenda – have arguably performed better than most UN-run mediation efforts when it comes to implementing at least some of Resolution 1325’s four pillars of prevention, protection, participation, and relief and recovery.

Take the example of the long-running civil war in Colombia, which was not subjected to continuous Security Council monitoring and was not the site of a UN diplomatic or security mission. Yet, the amount of activity undertaken to advance women’s leadership in conflict-resolution processes in Colombia is striking. In 2014, a “subcommission on gender,” consisting of representatives from both parties to the conflict, was established to inform the ongoing talks between the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the Colombian government. This built on earlier efforts to ensure women’s engagement (and the representation of gender issues) in peace negotiations.

By contrast, UN-administered processes typically do not achieve anything like Colombian levels of gender-responsive peacebuilding with respect to quotas for women in public institutions or other elements of the participation pillar. This may partly reflect Colombia’s middle-income status, the strength of its women’s movement, and even the support provided by UN Women (which gets a self-congratulatory shout out on page 46). Yet, it’s fair to say that if the Global Study had not been drafted by the UN, it might have taken greater pains to address the crucial unanswered question in this study, and on which Uniting for Peace and Sustaining Peace were equally silent: why has the UN been so stunningly incapable of taking even the procedural steps it prescribes for itself, to say nothing of achieving its desired outcomes? Examples of non-implementation are (sometimes) identified in the Global Study,
but the reasons behind such lapses are rarely if ever confronted honestly. In particular, the political struggles underlying non-implementation – within the UN system and among member states – are left almost completely unexplored.

The “Financing of the Women, Peace and Security Agenda” (the subject of Chapter 13) is a good example. The reader learns, through a wealth of data, that no standardized system for measuring gender-equality-focused spending in conflict-affected countries is in use across the UN system, nor is there a consistently rigorous channel through which UN entities report the gender-disaggregated spending data that they do generate. But no serious effort is then made to get to the bottom of why these problems have persisted. The report does not, for instance, examine the incentive for entities to reduce exposure to criticism about their under-spending on women’s post-conflict priorities. Nor does the Global Study adequately explain the UN system’s failure to reach even the modest spending target specified in the Secretary-General’s 2010 Seven-Point Action Plan on Gender-Responsive Peacebuilding: that 15% of post-conflict project funding be geared toward addressing gender-equality. (The Secretary-General’s Policy Committee agreed in late 2010 that this target would be reached by 2014.) Instead, the Global Study calls for applying the same (as yet unmet) 15% target more broadly – that is, to all peace and security spending “across the board”, including in UN missions and by member-states. In light of past experience, it is unclear why anyone should take these new pledges more seriously.

STRUCTURAL REFORMS

The Global Study rightly notes that fully implementing Resolution 1325 has been, and will remain, a matter for all actors – national and international, state and non-state. At the same time, it is perhaps inevitable that the most significant recommendations of a UN report will be targeted at the UN itself. Indeed, the Global Study proposes a number of structural changes to the UN’s WPS architecture. Three are particularly noteworthy.

The first structural change is a call to establish a Security Council working group to focus attention on the gender dimensions of the Council’s thematic agenda items (on the rule of law, the protection of civilians, etc.) and its country-specific work. The purpose is, among other things, to ensure that when the Council drafts mandates for the peace operations it authorizes, members have access to detailed information on country-specific gender issues across a range of functional domains such as transitional justice and security sector reform. To support its recommendation for a working group, the Global Study cites research conducted by several civil-society organizations, including the NGO Working Group on Women Peace and Security. These studies have documented the Security Council’s uneven performance when it comes to providing detailed instructions to mission leadership on how to advance women’s ‘participation,’ whether in peace talks, post-conflict planning or constitutional reform processes. This is in contrast to the often very detailed provisions the Council uses on ‘protection’ issues, particularly those related to conflict-related sexual violence, in its country-specific resolutions.

In Operational Paragraph 5 of Security Council Resolution 2242, passed on 13 October, the Council announced its intention to set up an “informal experts group,” more or less along the lines suggested in the Global Study. This is an idea that some Council members had resisted for years, and for which the Russian delegation continued to express a decided lack of enthusiasm even as it voted in favor of the resolution. (Resolution 2242 was passed on the day of the Council’s annual Open Debate on Women, Peace and Security, which in this 15th anniversary year of Resolution 1325 featured a record number of countries making statements in a marathon session that attracted significant media interest.)
Whether this informal expert group will become a lively part of the Security Council’s regular calendar – as is the case with the protection of civilians working group, for instance – is hard to say. The commitment of key member-states will be a major determinant, as will the skill with which the group’s working methods are designed. The recommendation that the group be co-chaired by one permanent member and one elected (i.e., fixed-term) member is a good start. An important constraint is the lack of a robust system for delivering policy-relevant information on country-specific gender issues to the Council in a timely and actionable form. This could be remedied by seriously strengthening UN Women’s field offices, which currently lack analytical capacity. The odds of securing new donor funding for such a purpose appear low at present.

The second structural reform concerns the architecture of UN field missions. The Global Study proposed that a senior gender advisor at the director level be assigned to advise each mission’s SRSG on everything from electoral systems and administration to the role of women in post-conflict economic recovery. Gender advisors of various kinds have been deployed to UN missions and country teams in conflict-affected countries for more than a decade, but they are often relegated to marginal activities. Even those with sector-specific expertise have been generally unable to ensure that mission leadership is continuously apprised of the gender dimensions of key issues, let alone influence decision-making.

The appointment of gender advisers is another proposal the Security Council adopted without delay. Operational Paragraph 7 of Resolution 2242 endorses the idea of the Secretary-General deploying senior gender advisors, which is as good an interim outcome as the Global Study’s authors could have hoped for. On the other hand, the ability of these advisers to shape policy or the design of decision-making bodies may well depend on what kinds of skills are prioritized in recruitment, which part of the UN assigns them to missions, and (most importantly) the entity to which they report. As of now, it seems that the gender advisors – which the UN system could well take years to deploy widely – will lack the quasi-independence enjoyed by human rights components within UN field missions. This will affect the quality of the advice rendered as well as the receptivity of mission leaders to its content.

The Global Study’s third major proposal is for the creation of a new high-level position in UN Women: an Assistant Secretary-General (ASG) for Women, Peace and Security. The new ASG would be charged with championing the WPS agenda, and representing UN Women at interagency forums and before intergovernmental bodies, including but not limited to the Security Council. The idea of a high-level official who could exert pressure on other parts of the UN system to live up to their commitments has a certain appeal. The case for a new leadership figure would be more convincing, however, if a truly independent office – outside the normal bureaucratic chain of command – were to be established. This was not to be. The report argues, cogently if not persuasively, that the nature of the issues do not lend themselves to the creation of a post along the lines of the SRSG on Sexual Violence in Conflict. That office has considerable latitude to speak out and exert pressure, including through its work with Security Council sanctions committees. Whether member-states, not to mention the UN’s senior management, will ultimately back the idea of a new ASG is hard to predict. (This is not a decision that can be made through a Security Council resolution.) But there does not seem to be a groundswell of support.

Even if this recommendation is not adopted, the Global Study will have achieved a great deal. In addition to the structural reform proposals mentioned here (and there are many others), the report establishes principles to inform what appear likely to be growth areas in the peace and security field. Perhaps most notably, the report (in Chapter 9) argues forcefully against incorporating the work of local women peacebuilders into the kind of soft, but still militarily driven, counter-terrorism strategies found in the emerging international agenda on “countering violent extremism.” This emphasis on strategic detachment – which aims to avoid
“instrumentalizing” the women’s empowerment agenda and tarnishing the reputation of WPS advocates through association with military actors – could, in theory, risk distancing gender equality advocates from high-level security-planning forums. That would be an ironic outcome, given the years invested in securing women’s participation in precisely such bodies.

A similar risk arises from another of the report’s notable preoccupations: its insistence (in Chapter 12) on identifying the links between WPS objectives and the legal and institutional foundations of international human rights. Could not these arguments also be used to support the claim – a favorite among WPS skeptics – that issues of women’s participation are a matter for the UN’s human rights bodies, and not a fit subject for the Security Council’s continued attention? The willingness of the Global Study’s architects to hazard such risks reflects a sense that securing practical, political gains need not come at the expense of principles.

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TRIANGULAR COOPERATION - KEY TO ALL

Alexandra Novosseloff

Triangular cooperation is an idea that has been around for many years. It is supported by many, feared by some, but so far it has never been implemented. The concept has now been resurrected by the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) report.

It is the key for all peacekeeping operations. Without cooperation between the UN Security Council, the UN Secretariat and those countries contributing troops, police, staff officers, and military observers, the system will not work effectively.

As the Security Council creates operations in less secure situations and pushes major contributors to take more risks, these contributors are demanding a greater say in how the Security Council shapes peacekeeping mandates. They are the ones implementing dangerous missions, and they pay the higher human price when their comrades are killed, while those who control the Security Council “only” receive the bill for these operations.

This debate has been ongoing for some time, but it took on new relevance with the deployment of the Force Intervention Brigade within the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) and difficult missions in Mali and the Central African Republic that have stretched peacekeeping to its limits. The Security Council has dealt with this issue in an episodic manner over the past 20 years, de facto letting the gap with troop contributing countries (TCCs) widen. The question is whether this situation is sustainable when the UN's resolutions are challenged by spoilers on the ground, and also - even more worrying - by those who are supposed to implement them.

ALWAYS WISHED FOR, NEVER IMPLEMENTED

Since the late 1990s, the issue of a strengthened triangular cooperation has regularly surfaced. Everybody agrees on its necessity but nobody is able to overcome the status quo or apparent inertia. The process generated by the HIPPO report offers one more opportunity to move forward with concrete proposals that would serve the interests of all parties.

In 2000, the Brahimi report advocated for “the establishment of ad hoc subsidiary organs of the Council”, as “Member States that do commit formed military units to an operation should be invited to consult with the members of the Security Council during mandate formulation; troop contributors should also be invited to attend Secretariat briefings of the Security Council pertaining to crises that affect the safety and security of mission personnel or to a change or reinterpretation of the mandate regarding the use of force”.

Following the report, Resolution 1327 (November 2000) “underlined the importance of an improved system of consultations among the troop-contributing countries, the Secretary-General and the Security Council, in order to foster a common understanding of the
situation on the ground, of the mission’s mandate and of its implementation”. It suggested “the holding of private meetings” which could be arranged at the request of TCCs or police contributing countries (PCCs). In January 2001 the Council then established a Working Group on Peacekeeping Operations aiming not to “replace the private meetings with the troop-contributing countries”, but regularly including them in its debates. However, real engagement with TCCs is made more difficult because this Working Group only meets irregularly, and in a way that is not always directly connected to the work of the Security Council. These issues were singled out by a Challenges Forum Report in 2015.

On April 2001, the Security Council adopted the cornerstone Resolution 1353 that issued a “Statement of principles on cooperation with troop-contributing countries” by which it “underlined that consultations between the Security Council, the Secretariat and troop-contributing countries should enhance the ability of the Security Council to make appropriate, effective and timely decisions in fulfilling its responsibilities”. The format of such consultation meetings, which could potentially involve agencies and host countries alike, proved to be problematic for meaningful exchanges - and in fact, these meetings never took place. Instead, the UN Secretariat convened “TCC meetings” when it needed to look for contributors to new operations or in times of crisis.

**CONSULTATION BEFORE PARTICIPATION**

In 2008, the Capstone Doctrine considered that “sustained consultations with TCCs/PCCs and other contributing countries at all stages of the planning and decision-making process are critical to the success of any UN peacekeeping operation”. It also recognized that “since UN peacekeeping operations would not be possible without the participation of contributing countries, it is critical that every effort be made to ensure that they are fully consulted on any decisions that may affect their personnel on the ground”.

One year later, the New Horizon document advocated for “a renewed global partnership among the Security Council, the contributing Member States and the Secretariat” with the objective of establishing “a clear peacekeeping strategy that is matched with resources for implementation”. It recommended developing “more meaningful consultation” between all these stakeholders “on proposed tasks affecting their personnel, before planning documents are issued”.

During that new reform process launched by the “New Horizon” agenda, the Turkish presidency of the Council in June 2009 organized a meeting to support the establishment of a “mutual, transparent and interactive dialogue”. In August 2009, the Security Council welcomed, in a presidential statement, “practical suggestions to deepen such consultations”, recognizing “that through their experience and expertise, troop and police contributing countries can greatly contribute to effective planning, decision-making and deployment of peacekeeping operations”.

From 2010 onwards, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) included a section on triangular cooperation in its annual reports. In 2011, it stressed in particular “the need to regularly assess, through consultations among the troop- and police-contributing countries, the Secretariat and the Council, the strength and composition of the peacekeeping operations and the implementation of their mandates, with a view to making the necessary adjustments, where appropriate, according to progress achieved or changing circumstances on the ground”.

Finally, the HIPPO report stated that “the Security Council should institutionalize a framework to engage troop- and police-contributing countries and the Secretariat early in the mandate formulation process”. There, “the purpose should be a dialogue
with political and military representatives that ensures a meeting of minds between the Secretariat and potential contributors on required capabilities, resulting in commitments to deliver on the mandate and concept of operations”.

The Secretary-General’s report underlined that a “sustained dialogue between the Council, the Secretariat and contributors is essential for shared understanding of appropriate responses and their implications for the mandate and conduct of a peace operation”. The Secretary-General considered that such consultations “should begin before mission establishment”. Consultations were linked to the proposal for a two-step approach in creating peacekeeping, i.e. to draft the resolution but to adopt only when sufficient troops are committed. Such an approach would enforce consultation prior to finalizing a resolution.

**HOW WOULD IT WORK?**

Much has been said about the usefulness of triangular cooperation. Many meetings are arranged between these various actors, either at the initiative of the Secretariat or of the Security Council, depending on the particular operation. But this activity is not taking place in a regular, systematic and institutionalized manner.

As pointed out already in 2009 by Fatemeh Ziai in a very comprehensive study on the topic, TCCs generally feel that there is a “lack of meaningful consultations”; “there is a feeling that dealing with TCCs and scheduling meetings just creates more work for the Council and especially for the Secretariat. As a result, TCCs feel that consultations have been pro forma and formulaic, with no opportunity for an interactive discussion”.

How could an “institutionalized framework” as envisioned by the HIPPO report be realized? Past proposals have demonstrated that such consultations, viewed by some Council members with great reluctance, should be held behind-the-scenes (at least for a period of time) and restricted. But they should also be regular, adapting to the timing of each and every peacekeeping mission. Some have suggested “groups of friends” being able to fill the gap, but these seem to be too ad hoc to have the required weight.

Strengthened triangular cooperation could be formed around the following contours:

- **Regular consultations**: These should take the form of regular informal and private meetings between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the major TCCs. Meetings should be first and foremost informal in order to facilitate constructive dialogue. This would also counter any fears by the Council (mainly the P5) that this might encroach on its decision-making prerogatives. The Council members could retain their space to maneuver, even when they need to take into account the major concerns of TCCs. The entire process would allow the initiation of a regular working relationship between these three actors.

- **Meetings before mandates**: These should be held before the renewal of the mandate of a mission, before and after a major strategic review has been conducted by the Secretariat, and when a major mission-related crisis occurs. Sufficient time should be afforded to all stakeholders to come to these meetings with appropriate feedback and input.

- **Experts, not permanent reps**: Meetings should be held at the expert level rather than at the permanent representatives’ level, or their deputies, in order to avoid any “precooked” speeches. These meetings should be political/military, since most
of the time, the military component is at stake. However, during times when stakes are higher, these meetings should be held at a more senior level in order to enable effective decisions.

**Operations, not strategy:** Meetings will need to be as concrete as possible, not merely talking about a grand strategy, but also looking at the daily operational challenges of the TCCs.

**Top Ten contributors by mission:** Meetings should involve the primary troop or police contributors specific to that mission, since they are taking the main risks in the field. Ten is a good number to allow a focused discussion. Some flexibility would of course be required when adjusting the exact number of attendees, but the meetings should not be transformed into fora where nobody would be willing to talk openly.

**Presidency before pen-holder:** Meetings should be convened by the Security Council, and in particular by the presidency in charge of the month. Meetings should not necessarily be convened by the pen-holder of the draft resolution on that specific mission: it would be preferable to integrate those involved in the regular work of the Security Council as a whole. Meetings could therefore be held in the informal consultations room near the Council’s chamber. The Secretariat could present the political-security situation, the penholder of that resolution could talk about the ongoing negotiation process, and major TCCs could share their concerns for their troops with direct feedback coming from the field.

Such regular and informal meetings should create a sense of common interest between all stakeholders of peacekeeping, enabling them to reach a common vision on how best to implement specific operations. Of course, these meetings would be of greatest benefit if everyone came to the table with a constructive mood and the objective of improving the efficiency of peacekeeping operations.

Member States need to ensure that their representatives in New York are fully and effectively prepared for consultations with the Security Council and the Secretariat. As pointed out by Fatemeh Ziai, “a proper chain of information from the contingents on the ground to the capital and then on to New York needs to be developed or improved”. The Secretariat would need to follow up in a coordinated manner with all requests or issues raised in these meetings. A strategic dialogue between the major countries of the Council and the major troop contributors would also need to be undertaken in order to give political weight to these consultations held in New York.

**WHY IS THIS IN THE INTEREST OF ALL ACTORS?**

What are the biggest incentives for the Council, the Secretariat and the TCCs to move forward on building triangular cooperation?

*It is key to the Security Council as a whole.* The Security Council clearly has no interest in creating or renewing mandates that would be challenged on the ground, as was the case in 2013 with the creation of the Force Intervention Brigade in Democratic Republic of the Congo. In that situation, several TCCs openly declared that they did not want to take part in this new reality created for MONUSCO. Major TCCs that are also members of the Council will rarely oppose the consensus. But they can counter the Council in a more subtle manner on the ground, refusing orders given by the mission leadership after the adoption or renewal of a resolution.
As Richard Gowan and others explained: “not only the Security Council but also troop contributors have an effective veto over the conduct of UN operations in dangerous situations. The troop contributors’ ‘veto’ is not, of course, a formal legal instrument. It is, instead, their power to block or undermine the Council’s will by controlling the supply and behavior of peacekeepers for individual missions”. Indeed, this is an unhealthy path for the Council and for peacekeeping operations in general.

The Council cannot work on these issues in isolation from the implementers of its resolutions. It has historically had a tendency to be too focused on its New York-based negotiating process, rather than on the conditions on the ground. This cannot work any longer in a world of quickly evolving threats, where peacekeepers are becoming targets and the financial resources of the international community are growing scarce. Such situations damage the credibility and authority of the Council vis-à-vis host nations and spoilers, and are likely to create more difficulties down the road. These situations also lead TCCs to move the political battle of influence to other fora such as the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34) and the Fifth Committee (which determines the budget of every operation). This is also unsustainable for the Council in terms of its authority within the UN system.

It is key to TCCs. Through increased engagement with the Council, TCCs would feel greater responsibility for the outcome of peacekeeping missions on the ground. Their presence on the ground would also afford information that would be useful for the Council when assessing the renewal of a mandate. As the Secretary-General stated in its report on the HIPPO, such meetings “would give the Council an opportunity to obtain insights on challenges and opportunities entailed in mandating certain tasks and in generating required capabilities under specific timeframes”.

It is key to the Secretariat. More engagement between the Security Council and TCCs would allow for more effective results on the ground. Orders given by mission leadership would be better followed through. Caveats will remain, being inherent to any military operation, but they would be less hidden, thus easing the task of the Force Commander in the field. Stronger triangular cooperation will also lead to a stronger UN chain of command: a Security Council more attuned to the challenges on the ground is more likely to hear the Secretariat’s concerns. These meetings could then also be used by the Secretariat to validate planned compacts with host nations.

WHY ARE WE WAITING?

As I have advocated, the strengthening of triangular cooperation should be one of the main outcomes of this reform process initiated by the HIPPO. The gap between the Security Council, the Secretariat and the TCCs has become too wide. Repercussions are visible on the ground. There is a political battle being fought between those who decide and pay, and those who implement. This struggle for power and control over peacekeeping operations is damaging the system more than the protagonists may think. It is hurting the authority and credibility of the principal organ dealing with peace and security, and it is hindering the tools it creates to mitigate some of the most complex crises in the world. Delaying forward movement on this issue can only worsen the situation. Peacekeeping is a partnership. All partners, if serious about peacekeeping, have to make efforts toward better coherence and efficiency.

Such initiative on triangular cooperation could be undertaken by members of the P5. For example, why not by France and the United Kingdom following the spirit of their 2009 initiative on Strengthening Peacekeeping? Alternatively, it could be achieved by interested non-permanent members that wish to improve the working methods of the Council. Institutionalizing triangular
cooperation could follow the adoption of a presidential statement or, even more effectively, a resolution that would commit all parties in a more concrete way. Triangular cooperation is a reform that is free of charge - indeed, it even increases the cost-efficiency of peacekeeping operations. Ultimately, all these efforts go both ways: those who contribute in troops need more say in the way peacekeeping operations are conceived and decided upon. Those who decide and pay need to do more to contribute.

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CHARM, CRITICISE, COMPROMISE

Richard Gowan

Good diplomats know how to deliver tough messages to important counterparts without creating havoc. It’s a three-part process. First, you need to butter up your target with compliments. Second, you have to express your concerns firmly, but not hysterically. Third, you must hint at a compromise that will let everyone save face. US Ambassador to the UN Samantha Power showed off this “charm, criticise and compromise” approach in New Delhi last week. The topic was UN peacekeeping. The goal was to resolve growing tensions over the performance of Indian troops in troublespots like South Sudan and the Congo.

US diplomats, and even UN staff members, argue that Indian units are too cautious in reacting to threats. This has been brought into sharp focus in South Sudan, where Indian peacekeepers have guarded thousands of vulnerable civilians on their bases but refused to take more robust action against marauding militias. Such incidents are hurting India's longstanding reputation as a pillar of UN operations.

Outgoing ambassador to the UN, Asoke Mukerji, has sternly and cogently picked apart criticism of Indian troops' performance. The Security Council, as he points out, has often pushed missions away from peacekeeping towards peace enforcement or outright war-fighting in the face of mounting violence. The P5 still risk relatively few of their personnel on UN missions, although China has recently promised to send up to 8,000 extra troops. Meanwhile, Delhi appears to be pulling back from UN missions. India has not sent troops to the UN's two newest operations in Mali and the Central African Republic.

More broadly, however, top Indian decision-makers don’t seem engaged with UN peacekeeping. In September, US President Barack Obama convened fellow leaders at UN headquarters in New York to discuss the organisation's missions. Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended. But neither his speech nor body language indicated a fascination with blue helmets.

The very fact that Obama hosted this summit points to a small but repeated irritant in US-India relations. The current US administration sees UN missions as useful, if flawed, mechanisms for maintaining international stability. And Power feels that UN troops have a moral obligation to take tough action in the face of serious challenges.

This was the core of her message last Friday. She didn’t have to work to butter up her audience, talking about India’s “astounding” contribution to UN operations since the 1950s and 1960s. Box ticked. Then she moved to the difficult bit. Power admitted that the UN's decision to deploy peacekeepers in risky environments “created a predicament for India and many traditional contributors to peacekeeping”. She went on to present an indirect but clear critique of the Indian forces' failure to use force on UN missions.
This was presumably meant to make Indian officials squirm. But Power had not just come to Delhi to spread discomfort. She also had a compromise to present. The Obama administration has, she noted, been pushing countries to “step up” and deploy more troops on UN missions. Obama’s September summit generated pledges of up to 50,000 new soldiers and police, and many appear ready and able to go on the hardest assignments. This being so, Power underlined, “countries that have qualms with the mandates, or doubt their capacity to do what is asked of them, should no longer feel pressured into deploying to missions simply because nobody else will”. This may sound dismissive, but it is in fact an olive branch. If India really does not believe in what the UN is doing in places like South Sudan, it has an opportunity to get its troops out.

This does not mean that the US wants India to give up on UN missions altogether. India could still play a leading role in places where the mandates are less sensitive. It can also buttress the UN system by deploying more specialised assets, like field hospitals and engineers, rather than combat troops, and using its experience in UN missions to train up-and-coming peacekeeping nations. India could establish a positive role as the guiding start of more or less standard peace operations, while other countries focus on peace enforcement. This would be a substantial, serious and relatively low risk responsibility. Either way, Power has offered India a way out of an unnecessary but nasty struggle with the US, with relatively few hard feelings.

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INTERVIEWS

November 23, 2015

“GOOD OFFICES” MEANS TAKING RISKS

Tamrat Samuel

“You can’t expect us to be of any help if we can’t speak to everyone involved. You may treat them as terrorists but if you want peace, you are going to have to bring those people on board.”

Tamrat Samuel recently stepped down from his post as Deputy SRSG (Rule of Law) for the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), but before taking part in this peacekeeping mission he had an extensive career with the UN Department of Political Affairs (DPA), including as Director of the Asia and Pacific Division, playing an integral role in peace processes in East Timor and Nepal, where he was also a DSRSG in the UN Mission in Nepal (UNMIN). While in the Asia Pacific Division at DPA he played an active part, on a number of occasions and over many years, in carrying out the Secretary-General’s “good offices”. In a recent interview with Jim Della-Giacoma he talked about this special brand of diplomacy.

JDG: The concept “good offices” is not defined in the UN Charter. As a practitioner of this special kind of diplomacy, what does the term mean to you?

Many different forms. For example, it may include, but is not necessarily limited to, mediation. The role could involve advising parties to a conflict or governments, carrying messages between opposing sides, or facilitating contact between groups without necessarily directly injecting oneself into the process. Also, providing specialized expertise to discussions and generally being a catalyst. In essence, you have a range of choices within the broad concept of a good officer.

JDG: What does it mean when the Secretary-General is exercising his “good offices”?

TS: The use of the Secretary-General’s good offices carries the prestige and credibility of his office and person as well as the weight of international public opinion that he and the organization embody. This could take two forms. First, the good offices tasks he undertakes on the basis of a mandate he is given by the Security Council or the General Assembly. However, he also has an inherent independent role, and even responsibility, by virtue of being the Secretary-General, to lend his good offices to any country or member state. Hammarskjold’s innovative “Peking Formula” established this in the mid-1950s. I think it is very important to understand that distinction. Sometimes it is critical, because there is a misperception that the Secretary-General’s involvement in any kind of third party role entails involvement of the Security Council, which can frighten parties.
JDG: You played the good offices role in then East Timor (now Timor-Leste) and also in Nepal. How did it differ in each place?

TS: In Timor, I supported the good offices of then-Secretary General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, which he personally led. The responsibility was then delegated to his Senior Advisors – initially Alvaro de Soto, subsequently Ismat Kittani and briefly Yasushi Akashi – with DPA largely managing the process on a daily basis, specifically then Asia Pacific Director Francesc Vendrell and myself as the desk officer. It entailed more than just the bureaucratic process of preparing for various rounds of talks between Indonesia (the Occupying Power) and Portugal (the legal Administering Power) under the Secretary-General's auspices. It meant immersing yourself into the issues, knowing the parties, talking to all sides, exploring possibilities. In the early 1990s, Timor was hardly on anybody's radar (save for the attention the 1991 Santa Cruz massacre generated) and was written off by many as a "lost case". Many argued at that time that the best possible solution for the Timorese would be to accept integration under the Suharto regime, hopefully with some degree of autonomy and improved human rights conditions. My role was to speak to Timorese on all sides and also engage Indonesia at different levels, as well as Portugal and other interested states that were following the situation either in the [UN Security] Council or outside the Council.

JDG: How did this begin?

TS: My first real exposure to Timor was when I traveled there in April 1993 with Amos Wako, the Secretary-General's Personal Envoy for the follow up of the [12 November 1991] Santa Cruz massacre in Dili. He had visited in 1992, submitted a report, and the recommendations had been given to Indonesia and Portugal confidentially. I had been desk officer for Timor for about a year by then. I accompanied him (along with colleagues from the then Centre for Human Rights) for this follow-up and became involved in advancing the issue of accountability for the Santa Cruz massacre. The visit also came a few months after the capture of resistance leader Xanana Gusmão. There was concern about his security and safety, and my role was to make sure Wako got direct access to Xanana. Within weeks I returned to Timor to observe the conclusion of Xanana's trial and sentencing in Dili.

JDG: Gusmão was a jailed rebel leader whom the Indonesians regarded as being a “terrorist”. Wasn’t this a highly unusual role for the UN?

TS: There was a formal mandate from the UN General Assembly via a 1982 resolution requesting the Secretary-General to “initiate consultations with all parties directly concerned” in order to find a lasting solution to the question of East Timor. So talks had been ongoing for over a decade. But up to that point the Timorese had been totally excluded from the discussions. The Portuguese had proposed, when talks resumed in 1992 after the Santa Cruz massacre, that the Timorese should be included. The Indonesians rejected this completely because, from their point of view, the Timorese had already decided to be part of their country. At our suggestion, the Secretary-General managed to get a concession from Indonesia that he would be free to consult with Timorese from the pro-integration and pro-independence camps. This was a way of bringing their views to the table, and it provided an opening for us to insist on speaking with all Timorese. Vendrell and I visited Indonesia and Timor twice in 1994 and each time we insisted on seeing Xanana in prison. Indonesia reluctantly allowed us, and this set a pattern. After that, meeting him became part of the routine. My approach was less formalistic. I maintained regular communication with the independence leaders in exile – Jose Ramos-Horta, Mari Alkatiri and others and cultivated a productive relationship with pro-integration figures like Lopes da Cruz, Abilio Araujo and others. Inside Timor, Bishops Belo and Nascimento were highly respected figures who spoke authoritatively
for the Timorese. I maintained excellent relations with Portuguese and Indonesian diplomats and even some degree of contact with some Indonesian military and security figures. You had to get your hands dirty in the engagement process. This intensified significantly after 1998 following Suharto's fall. The year before, the Secretary-General had appointed a Personal Representative for East Timor, Jamsheed Marker, with a view to accelerating the good offices. Marker began to visit more frequently and to meet Xanana and other leaders. The new opening enabled me to meet with hitherto inaccessible youth and community leaders in Timor, many of whom were part of the clandestine resistance and some are today taking over the leadership of the country, including current Prime Minister Rui Araujo. On the diplomatic front, we at DPA were deeply involved in exploring alternative ideas and proposals around autonomy, independence, transition, and in drafting the 5 May 1999 agreements on East Timor and the implementation of the historic referendum on 30 August 1999.

**JDG: And how was Nepal different?**

**TS:** This was an ongoing conflict since 1996, and UN engagement was initiated in 2003 despite the reluctance of the then government of Nepal and India. Ceasefires had been declared and talks started, but they broke down for the second time in 2003, and the Maoist negotiating team in Kathmandu had gone back underground. There was a serious deficit of trust and weak process management. I began talking to all sides and carried a few messages, particularly between the Maoists and the government. After I established contact with the Maoists, we were able to explore ideas for finding some common ground with the political parities and (for a while) with the king. The UN did not have a formal mediation role, which sometimes is an advantage because you can talk to all sides but are not directly responsible for ideas that may catch on or sink. We made good use of the “convoking power” and credibility of the UN, its impartiality. The UN also offered various tools and means for implementing a peace agreement, should one be concluded - from monitoring and verification to electoral assistance and the deployment of full-fledged peace operation. At the same time, there was also concern in Nepal that the involvement of the UN could mean the “internationalization” of the conflict or the country being seen as a failed or failing state. As the process advanced it was gratifying to see that, despite the fact that there was no formal UN mediation role, many of the ideas that I explored with the parties over the years formed the basis of the Comprehensive Peace Agreement of 2006 – the separation of forces, cantonment of the Maoist army, monitoring of the Nepal Army, UN supported election of a constituent assembly. The UN was then asked to help implement the CPA.

**JDG:** So, an agreement triggers a transition for the UN from “good offices” to a “special political mission”. Moving along the “spectrum of peace operations”, as the HIPPO report calls it, is the transition that simple?

**TS:** Yes, in fact, that is how it evolved. The issue is how to transition successfully from prevention and peacemaking to either peacekeeping or political mission deployment. But I think we have to see good offices as a holistic endeavor straddling all different phases of a dispute. You can have a good offices role in the prevention phase and/or the peacemaking phase and it will, in all likelihood, continue in the phase implementation and of peace operations. This is because, even if you have an agreement or “comprehensive” framework, details are often negotiated as you move forward.
JDG: And how did this work in Nepal?

TS: One of the key elements of the 2006 Comprehensive Peace Agreement was to negotiate arrangements for containment of the Maoist army and the restriction of the Nepal Army. The modalities for this and the monitoring of the weapons had to be worked out. Where were the weapons to be kept? What kind of UN monitoring would be put in place? All of these things had to be negotiated after the CPA was signed with UN facilitation led by Ian Martin, who became the SRSG. The implementation of a political agreement, in many ways, is more complex than negotiating it. There could be spoilers who are not satisfied with the agreement and who need to be brought on board by addressing their concerns. Agreements can unravel; you have to constantly prevent, address and resolve problems as you go. Thus, even after a peacekeeping operation or a political mission, peacebuilding is really prevention by another term. You are trying to avert a relapse into conflict.

JDG: I recall in November 1999 while I was serving in the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET), you came back to Dili from New York some months after the referendum to help the mission set up the first quasi-legislative body, the National Consultative Council (NCC). It was almost as if you returned to play a good offices role between the UN and the Timorese?

TS: East Timor is an example of mostly how not to do transitions. But it was good that Sergio Vieria de Mello recognized that he needed someone who knew the Timorese, their divisions, the dynamics and the pitfalls, to come help him in the initial stage of his role as Administrator. It didn't occur to him immediately. After departing New York, when he was in Portugal meeting exiled Timorese, it became obvious how deeply the UN had been involved through DPA. Before he got to Indonesia, he realized he needed the assistance of someone from DPA. I was specifically asked to come out. I joined him en route to Timor and we arrived together. To his credit, he was very open to listening to people. I briefed him quite thoroughly before our first meeting with Xanana, which helped him to understand the man and how to approach him. Setting up the NCC was a subsequent challenge, largely because the whole territory had been destroyed by the departing pro-Indonesian militias supported by Indonesian security personnel. People were concerned with their survival and their families' survival: they didn't have a roof over their heads. And we were asking them to come to meetings and talk about taxes, which was the last thing on their mind. In the end we managed to form a reasonably credible NCC despite the chaos and the absence of many credible leaders.

JDG: Why was such a role necessary?

TS: For continuity. Despite instructions from the 38th floor that both DPA and DPKO needed to work together to make sure that we utilized all the knowledge and assets we had, I don't think we did it sufficiently well. For example, even within some parts of DPA, there was a misperception that by working closely with the CNRT (National Congress for Timorese Resistance), the UN could end up aiding the creation of a one-party state. But the CNRT was an umbrella organization, not a single party, and there was no one else to work with in Timor in 1999. The CNRT had the network on the ground. It was the CNRT that was helping people deal with the aftermath of the violence of August and September 1999. We in DPA had the knowledge, but we could have exploited it much more. UNTAET was treated as a new undertaking in a new country rather than as a continuation of the UN's long involvement. In many ways, East Timor was a “UN child”. The UN still has much work to do in this area.
JDG: In both Nepal and Timor, large Member States had distinct interests. What pressures did you come under while conducting the “good offices” role? How important is it for the Secretary-General to provide you with the protection or space to have sensitive discussions with controversial figures?

TS: This was a key aspect of our work. Member States are often reluctant to fully embrace the role of the Secretary-General’s good offices because of their own political sensitivities. Member States’ attitudes can vary from support and engaged interest in the issues and role of the UN, to being skeptical, suspicious or downright hostile. In the case of Timor, there were a number of countries that consistently followed events with interest even when things were moving very slowly in the 90s. Besides Indonesia and Portugal, there was always communication with the U.S., Australia, New Zealand, the UK and Japan as well as a number of European countries. Austria provided the venue for all five rounds of Intra-East Timorese Dialogue that we facilitated between 1994 and 1998. The Lusophone countries in Africa provided support to the resistance movement in exile. Most Asian countries didn’t want to touch the subject of East Timor, seeing the conflict as an internal affair of Indonesia. After the signing of the 5 May Agreements in 1999, a small group of countries formed what came to be known as the Core Group: Australia, Japan, New Zealand, the UK, and the U.S. The Core Group provided vital political support to the SG’s good offices. Materially, they contributed tens of millions of dollars to the trust fund that was set up to help stand up the UN Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) in 1999 and made in-kind contributions that allowed for the mission’s rapid establishment. The Field Logistics and Administrative Division [FLAD] had said, “We can’t set up a mission in three months.” The general political support the Secretary-General enjoyed from member states in regard to East Timor, especially after 1998 made it possible for us in DPA to operate with a considerable degree of authority.

JDG: Nepal is a landlocked country wedged between the two giants of China and India. What geo-politics were at play there?

TS: India had great reservations about UN involvement in Nepal, particularly at the beginning. There was a lot of push back. There was pressure on the Nepalese to say no to the UN, and much of our work really consisted of convincing India that UN involvement was not a threat to their interests. We understood the special relationship between the two countries, and the open border they shared. There was also a historical relationship between the Naxalites in India and the Maoists in Nepal. Not surprisingly, India didn’t want to see the Maoists succeed in Nepal. We understood all of these things. We did not want to undermine India’s interests, but clearly there was a need for a third party to help build confidence and offer ideas on how to resolve this conflict that had claimed close to 15,000 lives. All my visits to Nepal included a stop in Delhi to brief the Indians on what we were doing, and foster open communication. Once the CPA was signed, India wanted UNMIN to start working immediately. It provided us with significant logistical support to expedite the mission’s deployment. But India remained wary of a “political” role for the mission. Indeed, the major weakness in UNMIN’s mandate was the conspicuous absence in the resolution establishing it of the reference to UNMIN’s good offices role that had been proposed by the Secretary-General’s in his report to the Security Council.

JDG: How important is it to talk to all parties, even those committed to using violence?

TS: It is critical. In 1992 the Secretary-General got an important concession from the Indonesians allowing him to speak to Timorese of all sides, including Xanana. Prior to this, even meeting people from the external wing of the East Timorese resistance was done almost surreptitiously. They had difficulty getting access into the UN building. To the UN’s credit, we pushed back against Indonesian objections to such meetings. Even at the senior level, we said, “You can’t expect us to be of any help if we can’t speak to
everyone involved. You may treat them as terrorists but they are integral. If you want peace, you are going to have to bring those people on board. If you don't talk to them, we have to talk to them.” In Nepal, we managed to gain acceptance and trust because we consulted as widely as possible and avoided what could sometimes become tempting “quick fix” solutions. These would have unraveled easily because of the exclusion or objection of one of the three antagonistic sides at the time (the political parties, the Palace and the Maoists). We invested considerable time and energy in trying to persuade King Gyanendra to look for compromises. I personally spent over two hours with him in early 2005 after delivering a letter from Secretary-General Kofi Annan. He staged his coup shortly after that with the help of the army. In May, at a one-on-one meeting in Jakarta, the Secretary-General tried to persuade him to change course, and to do so urgently - to no avail. It became clear that there would be a showdown. Indeed, the showdown came in 2006 and led to the King’s removal from power and the subsequent abolition of the monarchy, a centuries-old institution.

JDG: It is hard thing to imagine these days the UN having a mandate to talk to “terrorists”?

TS: Violent extremism has taken unprecedented forms with the emergence of forces that use inhuman methods of terror and destruction. These are not forces interested in or amenable to dialogue and political solutions. However, not every group that uses violence to advance its political cause falls in that category. It is very important for any third party trying to help resolve a conflict to be prepared to engage and work with insurgents of different varieties. It is often surprising to discover how ready they may be for dialogue and compromise. It may be that they don’t want to show any weakening of their resolve or simply that they are unsure as to how to go about opening channels. State security forces are often equally or more responsible for atrocities. The UN has to deal with all sorts of unsavory characters, while sticking to its principles in its engagement, and above all, in the content of agreements it brokers, particularly on accountability for grave violations. There are clear guidelines for UN mediators in this regard. It is not an easy task because if you are too much of a purist about these things you will be completely hamstrung. On the other hand, you cannot, for expediency, become a party to a bad agreement that leads to amnesty for grave crimes. When I was communicating with the Maoists of Nepal, some external actors asked me, “How can the UN talk to an outlawed group?”. Speaking to them didn't mean we were endorsing what they were doing or condoning their actions. In fact, raising the UN’s concerns about these issues is one of the key messages one has to deliver when engaging with insurgencies, as indeed with state actors about the unlawful behavior of their security forces. The UN has to uphold its impartiality and its independence of action regarding who it engages.

JDG: Looking back at your career in peacemaking, what were the skills and experiences that were most useful and where did you acquire them?

TS: I was fortunate to have been given an important dossier like East Timor as a junior officer. Having Francesc Vendrell as director at the DPA Asia Pacific Division from 1992 made a big difference. He encouraged initiative and a degree of risk-taking. The Under Secretary-General and Assistant Secretary-General became receptive and once your work is recognized you get support and you are listened to. Patience is something you cannot have enough of when you are dealing with an issue that remains stuck year after year – until one day the possibilities suddenly open. I see today quite a few talented and dedicated political officers in the UN. The problem in the UN is that there isn’t really a career development structure for staff. There isn’t a system whereby talented staff are recognized and given direction and a path in their development. This deprives the Organization the optimal use of its capacities. This needs to change.
JDG: What could be done to make DPA more field focused and people centered?

**TS:** The organization as a whole has to be really serious about investing in prevention and peacemaking. Everyone says prevention is better than cure. The Security Council and General Assembly have, time and again, said that the Secretary-General needs to be given adequate resources for this, but nothing has been done to improve the situation significantly. DPA is hugely dependent on extra-budgetary funding to do its core function, which shouldn’t be the case. This needs to be addressed and a group of member states need to champion prevention as their issue and push for change.

Second, the Secretariat itself has to show greater commitment to this. It has to engage member states in a sustained manner and ask that they follow their commitment to prevention with action, both in terms of political support/action and resource allocation.

Third, DPA needs to be more operational than it is today. It has already moved away considerably from a desk-oriented approach to prevention and peacemaking. It needs to continue to move in that direction. People have to go out and take risks. To come to your point, you cannot do this work from your desk and by telephone from New York. DPA’s big challenge is that it is a headquarters-based department trying to deal with problems around the world without being there. The next best thing to having a presence everywhere (which is neither possible nor desirable) is having regional offices. The three existing regional offices have proved their value. The Peace and Development Advisors attached to UNDP have been a huge asset. The liaison arrangements we left in Nepal after the closure of the mission, which is a little bit of an informal arrangement, has been a huge asset not only in terms of monitoring and reporting and analysis, but in keeping the communication channels open.

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