Introduction

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

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

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

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