

5 POLITICAL DECISION MAKING

"The United Nations has no armed forces, no readily deployable large civilian corps, no significant stockpile of equipment and only a very limited Headquarters staff to manage the Organization's activities for the maintenance of international peace and security. The Organization can levy assessments but has no effective recourse should its Members, despite their clear legal obligation under the Charter, fail to pay on time. In short, its peace-keeping missions can only be realized when the Member States are full and committed partners, willing to provide the personnel, equipment and money to do the job." ¹³

This report only wants to touch lightly on the Security Council and other UN political decision making mechanisms. They of course play the critical role in UN peace-keeping rapid reaction. However, their activities are very much outside of the purview of DPKO, the rest of the Secretariat, and this study. As such, the effective limitations they place upon UN internal operations merits at least a quick review.

There is a large amount of contradictory political direction given to the Secretariat. This is reflected in the dichotomy and at times fundamental contradictions contained in member states' decisions and directions in fora such as the General Assembly, 4th Committee, and 5th Committee, (not to mention in specialised UN agencies). One result is that often there is a obvious mismatch between operational directives and resources provided to the Secretariat to do the job.

General Assembly resolution 48/42 paragraph 6 emphasised "the need for the United Nations to be given the resources commensurate with its growing responsibilities in the area of peace-keeping, particularly with regard to the resources needed for the start-up phase of such operations." This includes the issue of peace-keeping troops and equipment, which is the most intransigent of all impediments to rapid reaction.

During interviews with a number of UN staff, many raised the possibilities that further improvements in DPKO and other related parts of the UN structure might have an indirect bearing on the speed and quality of the political decision making process. Eg. if a rapid reaction force of some form did exist, would this facilitate the Security Council taking a decision because they are more comfortable with the capacity of that force?

Another issue is the interface between the operational people and the politicians. This takes place largely at the strategic level, and in the case of peace-keeping includes a large military component. Even a civilian-political interface is fraught with difficulties. The military-political interface is compounded by the cultural divide between military and the politicians who of course are largely civilian. The designers of the

¹³ para 12, A/48/403 (S/26450) 14 March 1994 **Improving the capacity of the United Nations for peace-keeping**, Report of the Secretary-General