

better understanding of the various requirements, and many remain confident of their ability to participate in demanding operations. Improving the wider unity of effort and purpose is on the agenda of civilian and military participants, member states, NGOs, and the UN. In short, it was hoped that these arrangements would combine to establish a preliminary foundation for the prevention and management of armed conflict. With further reform and several successful trials, this foundation retains the potential to inspire wider support and confidence.

Initially, it appeared that there were good reasons for developing this UN capability in the context of prevailing practices, resources and structures. Considering the impediments of limited political will, insufficient funding, and overworked personnel answerable to 188 bosses with divergent interests, the progress between 1995 and 1997 should not be under-estimated. It was attained in the absence of powerful national champions. Moreover, most observers recognise that the larger UN system is not altogether amenable to rapid modernization. Indeed, the various efforts were somewhat akin to constructing a multi-faceted, evolving capability through a fractious committee operating by consensus.

Shortly after launching the initiative, Canadian officials assumed that the task was well underway, with seventy-three per cent of their recommendations either accomplished or in the process of being implemented. As early as 1996, they noted that, "between the Group of Friends and the initiative of the Secretariat, 19 of the 26 recommendations have been acted upon in the past nine months."⁸⁸ In the same year, Kofi Annan claimed that the lead-time of the UN's rapid deployment capabilities would be reduced by 50 per cent during the next two years.⁸⁹ The expectations were high and they were not easily sustained as the process moved beyond the short-term.

A year later, Hans van Mierlo, co-chair of the Friends of Rapid Deployment, conceded that progress has been modest; "...given the complexities, this is going to be an incremental process, but one where we cannot afford to let up."⁹⁰

Limitations of the Approach

Regrettably, several of the key member states did 'let up' and the incremental process has largely stalled. There is little indication that further steps are being actively pursued at the political level. In hindsight, moreover, the former assessments appear to have been overly optimistic. By the spring