



Orientation of the Canadian Study

This study employs the term "capability", a much broader term than more limited concepts such as "force" or "brigade". It is intended to embrace a range of procedures and structures along a continuum of UN action. Such a capability would need to be multi-disciplinary and multidimensional, encompassing non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the humanitarian, human rights, political and legal dimensions and the civilian police component which have proven to be crucial to most peace operations. It would include the "instrument" at the sharp end of future UN action, which we have called the "Vanguard Groups". While many of the recommendations in the report could usefully be implemented on their own to remedy deficiencies within elements of the UN system, the report advances the case for a more global approach to remedy the current "capability gap", - involving significant changes in many of the institutions through which the UN currently works.

The orientation of the Canadian study is therefore somewhat different than the complementary efforts currently under way in a number of other capitals, particularly by the Governments of the Netherlands and Denmark. These and other recent studies have focussed on improving the standby arrangements system, on strengthening the Secretariat in New York or on promoting the establishment of a Standing UN Force. The Canadian approach has been to build on these and other initiatives, reflecting the increasing interdependence of states, issues and disciplines, as well as the need to improve international structures that emphasize integrated action and coherence of purpose.

The Canadian study is divided along time lines. Some of the recommendations advanced in this report can readily be achieved in the short term, if sufficient support can be mobilized in the Security Council or General Assembly. Others are more properly designed for implementation in the medium term, as a certain amount of preparatory work needs to be done prior to implementation. The report does not attempt to define the short and medium terms precisely. Rather, they are intended to be indicative of realistic time-frames within which measures can be accomplished in the UN. Other measures are clearly meant for consideration over the long-term, recognizing that a great deal of new thinking will have to be done before consensus begins to emerge at the international level on these types of issues. While work on short and medium term options proceeds, the report suggests that there is merit in continuing to study long-term alternatives, as today's idealism may readily become tomorrow's realism.

At an early stage of this study it was decided that the best contribution which Canada could make to this ongoing debate would be a "technical" report, which would address practical issues of institutions, organization, resources and financing, focussing on how to make the elements of the international system more integrated and coherent in support of enhanced rapid reaction. The fundamental issue of "political will", that most elusive and crucial of questions, has also been addressed from the point of view of institutions and organizations. Improvements to the UN's ability to set-up and conduct operations could make it easier for Member States to take the necessary political decisions to participate, but the timeliness of these vital decisions remains the key element in assuring an effective UN response. At the same time, it must be acknowledged that, if the Security Council is unwilling, for whatever reason, to address an urgent crisis, then no mechanism, procedure or institution can wholly rectify this difficulty.

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