

Minutes

A Canadian Perspective on Peacekeeping – Matching Demand and Capacities

Friday, 22 October 2010, 12:00 p.m. – 1:30 p.m.
Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Berlin

What are the experiences with capacity building for peace missions? What are the current challenges? Can the demand of peace missions for highly qualified personnel be met?

These and other questions were debated during a lunch discussion organized by the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung with support of the Canadian Embassy. It focused on “a Canadian perspective on peacekeeping” which was presented by Peter Miller, Vice President of Programs at the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre (PPC), a Canadian NGO based in Ottawa (www.peaceoperations.org).

Core issues of the Presentation

To improve the effectiveness of peace missions under the United Nations and other international and regional actors, PPC pursues a comprehensive approach to building capacity which is multidimensional, multilateral, multicultural and multidisciplinary. One core interest is to foster cooperation between military, police and civilians. But PPC has not only increased its activities in training of mission-personnel but also tries to engage higher government levels in partner countries to raise awareness and enhance management structures for peace missions.

With regard to the African Peace and Security Architecture (APSA), PPC’s aim is to help establish a level playing field for the different actors. The Centre also tries to improve the communication between the regional bodies and the African Union (AU) to support the harmonization of training, analysis and capacity building, thus advocating sustainable approaches with a long-term perspective. In order to enhance local ownership it aims to facilitate the emergence of the AU and potential African states in a leadership role in peace missions. While there is substantial positive development in some areas, APSA and its components still have to be significantly strengthened in others. The personnel needs to be better qualified and procedures have to be optimized. Core challenges are: *too long terms for mission contingents*, a *lack of commitment to deploy the most qualified forces* (especially when it comes to the police, which is also “needed at home”), *shortcomings in comprehensive pre-deployment training* and *prompt deployment of sufficiently strong contingents* in times of crises.

Points of discussion

One central issue in the discussion was that efforts to support capacity development for peace missions in Africa require a more effective coordination at the international level to avoid competition between donors. At the same time, it was noted that the gap between perceptions on the ground and in New York – as well as in capitals around the world – still proves to be a significant obstacle, too. Additional topics discussed were the *acceptance of missions by the local population*, the *right sequencing of integrated missions* (gradually shifting the focus from the military more towards the civilian and political tasks) *raising awareness for the particular potential of women* in peace missions, the *absorption capacity of local structures* in terms of international support and the potential of *African peacekeeping contingents to be deployed outside of Africa*.

While the presentation and the first part of the discussion predominantly focused on the situation and the programs implemented in Africa, the general discussion broadened the scope to lessons which could be learnt from the mission in Afghanistan as well as to other international actors in the field of capacity development for peace operations. Especially the emerging profile of China in international peacekeeping aroused interest during the discussion.

Yet, it was also underlined that even if capacities of potential troop contributors increased significantly, the decision of any country to get involved in a particular peace mission might not only result from financial considerations and the availability of qualified contingents, but also remain a strategic choice. Even if there were sufficient civil and military personnel available to meet the demand of international peace missions, still the individual states might consider participation not in their strategic national interest.