



Emerging Views on Global Peace Practice: New Directions in UN Peace Operations at the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Signing of the UN Charter

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On 14-15 July 2015, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), the Conflict Prevention and Peace Forum (CPPF) of the Social Science Research Council (SSRC), and the Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO) in collaboration with the U.N. Association of China (UNA-China) convened a roundtable workshop to discuss new strategies of involvement in UN Peace Operations. The workshop, held around the occasion of the 70th anniversary of the signing of the United Nations Charter, sought to consider the findings from the UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, the Review of the United Nations Peacebuilding Architecture and examine China's engagement on Security Council Resolution 1325 in light of the High-Level Review of 1325. The main purpose of this convening was to also assess key challenges in the implementation of the Reviews' and provide recommendations to the process. The workshop brought together over forty academics, civil society practitioners, and experts from Africa, China and the UN. This meeting note summarizes the ideas and suggestions that arose during the workshop, which was conducted under Chatham House Rules in order to enable participants to candidly assess the future direction of UN peace initiatives.

Introduction

It is evident that much has changed over the past decade in UN Peace Operations with the expansion of multidimensional peacekeeping and special political missions as well as the establishment of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture (Peacebuilding Commission, *PBC*; Peacebuilding Fund, *PBF* and the Peacebuilding Support Office, *PBSO*). Within this context, China has rapidly increased its participation in UN Peace Operations, and has become more involved in supporting peace operations and peacebuilding in conflict afflicted and post conflict states, especially in Africa. Chinese scholars have continued to embark on fieldwork which has looked both at China's involvement in UN peace operations, as well as

focused on understanding approaches to security issues initiated by various development actors. The workshop *“Emerging Views on Global Peace Practice: New Directions in UN Peace Operations at the Occasion of the 70th Anniversary of the Signing of the UN Charter”* was focused on assisting Chinese, international peace practitioners and researchers to reflect on possible strategies of involvement in UN Peace Operations yielding the following key insights.

Recommendations: Improving UN Peace Practices

Link Peace and Development

Robust peacebuilding requires a focus on development support and a strong development agenda must be tied to efforts that build peace. While peacekeeping operations and post-conflict reconstruction tends to have a strong Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and Security Sector Reform (SSR) focus, the priority should be in ensuring that a solid foundation for political and security reform exists. China’s prioritization of peace in its engagement in development initiatives especially in Africa is imperative and the international community could pursue a similar agenda. Incorporating the sustainable development agenda that includes key development actors can easily be linked to peacebuilding efforts in both a conceptual and structural level. Regarding the implementation of peacekeeping operations, priorities should shift to development as early as deemed possible, with a focus on building sustainable peace through strengthening institutions.

Include Local Perspectives

Both the UN Peace Operations and Peacebuilding Architecture Reviews highlight the lack of local perspectives as one of the major shortcomings of the UN peace practice in conflict affected countries. More than anything, the UN should engage with local partners and assist them in the design and implementation of peacebuilding projects.

Commit to Gender Equality

Gender equality and the role of women is equally critical in maintaining international peace and security. Through dedicated commitment to the role of women in peace operations, the UN and peace initiatives will live up to their potential.

Commonalities in the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and UN Peace Operations Reviews

Several commonalities between the two Reviews were discussed, particularly noting the connection between both sets of recommendations which call for a comprehensive approach to addressing threats and challenges to peace and stability, while fostering sustainable peace. The discussion focused on three key elements that many participants returned to as priorities to be strengthened going forward: the primacy of politics, the need

for prevention, and the linking of peace approaches to a development agenda. Prioritization of politics should not be left solely in the remit of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) and Peacebuilding Commission (PBC), but must include the main intergovernmental bodies of the UN, notably the Security Council, Human Rights Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), and UN Member States. Politically-driven processes are the basis of sustainable peace, and diplomatic efforts should be strengthened in peacekeeping missions and throughout all phases of creating sustainable peace.

It was identified that prevention of relapse into conflict is a key priority for the UN, maintaining that parties should make more efforts to effectively intervene in countries as the root causes of conflict begin to manifest. The participants noted the importance of a UN system that addresses long term prevention issues and the importance of the Peacebuilding Architecture, Security Council and relevant General Assembly members in adopting this approach as the best opportunity to address emerging conflicts. The issue of sovereignty was also discussed as a potential challenge to early warning intervention, with a number of participants calling for a need to balance respect for sovereignty with conflict prevention. Participants acknowledged the challenge to raise funds for prevention efforts compared to the financing of response and humanitarian issues and subsequently called for an increase in the availability of programmatic resources to invest in key long term prevention and development areas such as institution building, the rule of law, and strengthening governance. The cost of responding to crises is often higher than early stage preventative actions.

China's strength is its prioritization of development in its engagement in peace initiatives; many participants implied that the international community could pursue a similar agenda. Some voiced the position though that China's experiences could benefit from greater engagement with Do No Harm, and other frameworks for enhancing the conflict sensitivity of developmental initiatives. Regarding the implementation of peacekeeping operations, participants indicated that priorities should shift to development as early as deemed possible, with a focus on building sustainable peace through strengthening institutions. While a handful of UN agencies are making progress in linking development initiatives to peacebuilding, the main challenge is the coordination between UN agencies, many of which grapple with internal structural issues such as funding, reporting, and organizational structures.

Views from the Field: UN Peace Operations in PBC Countries

In examining the recommendations of the Peace Operations Review, the inclusion of local perspective was central to the discussion. Civil society practitioners outlined the challenges of UN peace operations in Burundi and Liberia, two of the six countries on the UN Peacebuilding Commission's agenda. Most participants noted the frequent disparity between the goals of peacekeeping mandates and the actual capacity of mission operations. A lack of political expertise, particularly in the cases of UN missions, was particularly

highlighted as a shortfall in peacekeeping operations. Other participants stressed the gap between state authority and local autonomy structures, noting that the UN tends to focus on a state-centric approach to peacebuilding, which often over represents the interests of elites at the expense of vulnerable members of the population. Inclusive national ownership of the UN's peacekeeping and peacebuilding initiatives requires equal attention to a people-centric approach placing civilians and civil society at the center of peace engagement.

The concern for youth engagement was also highlighted by participants. Peace remains fragile in conflict affected countries without rehabilitating the youth. In order to sustain peace, youth need empowerment, education and livelihoods. Participants recognized that many local civil society groups need capacity building in order to effectively bring change to their local communities and that the UN should provide capacity building support. Subsequently, participants agreed that UN peace initiatives in conflict-affected countries often lack conflict analysis as well as timely evaluation and feedback mechanisms. Conflict analysis requires both thematic and country specific expertise and often the short term UN mandates do not allow for continuity impeding integration of lessons learned and transfer of knowledge.

Gender in Peace Operations Prospects for Chinese Contributions

Participants reaffirmed that women are agents for peace and are critical in upholding peace. Sustaining peace requires women's leadership and representation at all levels of decision-making.

This discussion focused on Chinese contributions to Security Council Resolution 1325 and highlighted that the pace of China's implementation of the Resolution has lagged. There seems to be confusion around whether the Resolution applies to both developed and rapidly developing states in addition to conflict afflicted states. Since 2005, China has been consistently supportive of the women, peace and security agenda in these later contexts. On further analysis, participants indicated that the government largely considers full implementation of the agenda as increasing contributions of female peacekeepers and staff. To date, China has deployed a sizeable number of female peacekeepers to the UN, while the Peacekeeping Department of the Chinese People's Armed Police Force continues to provide gender sensitivity trainings for its staff.

The interagency coordination between the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Public Security and the All China Women's Federation in charge of implementing resolution 1325 has remained limited. While some participants suggested that the Chinese government has not adequately committed to gender mainstreaming, noting that some areas of government lack strong gender awareness, and research on 1325 suffers from both a lack of government funding and support, it was overall highlighted that gender mainstreaming is key and China has the ability to play an integral role in this agenda.

Conclusion: China's Engagement in Peacebuilding

Impartiality and the nonuse of force remain important to China. China has continued to approach peace issues bilaterally. Though perceived as limited, this engagement is in stark contrast to China's involvement in peacekeeping as the largest troop contributing nation amongst the P-5.¹

A major opportunity for China is providing academics the space to deepen research and continue developing a new knowledge base evidenced by the growing number of Chinese scholars actively researching UN peace initiatives. UNA-China is working to promote dialogue and exchanges between scholars on peace issues both nationally and internationally, including the decision to organize a follow up roundtable session for Chinese academics to continue discussions UN Peace Operations. The Forum of China and Africa Cooperation now has Peace and Security on its agenda. China can play stronger role in peace by developing integrated and coordinated responses to conflict.

¹ "Troop and Police Contributors", United Nations, accessed November 18, 2015, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/resources/statistics/contributors.shtml>