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In Pursuit of Sustainable Peace

The Seven Deadly Sins of Mediation

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One of the most important roles played by the civilian leadership of a peace operation is to help the parties to a conflict resolve their fundamental political differences through dialogue and compromise, rather than through violence. This role can be described in various ways: diplomatic efforts, mediation, peace-making, political facilitation, political process management or, simply, as the "political role" of the operation.[1] It is an extremely difficult undertaking by any name, where success is difficult to achieve, but mistakes come easily. Some of these mistakes can have fatal consequences for the peace process in which the operation is embedded, and are referred to here as "the seven deadly sins." These are: ignorance; arrogance; partiality; impotence; haste; inflexibility; and false promises.

It is easy to lose sight of the connection between mediation and peacekeeping.

The Context

The opportunity to commit one of these seven deadly sins arises in a number of different contexts, from diplomatic efforts to prevent an initial outbreak of fighting to the negotiations that seek to stop a conflict that is underway. The need for effective mediation is also required after the conclusion of a peace agreement and the deployment of a peace operation.

It is easy to lose sight of the connection between mediation and peacekeeping, once attention shifts to the deployment of military, police and civilian personnel and the individual tasks they are expected to support, such as: restoration of security and basic services; disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of soldiers; return of displaced persons and refugees; the holding of elections and adoption of constitutions; promotion of the rule of law and human rights; repair of infrastructure and re-building of institutions; and, revitalization of the economy. These are all crucially important activities to be sure, but the manner in which they are conducted can threaten the core interests of any one of the parties leading them to reconsider agreements they have made. Skilled political process management is critical to keeping the parties engaged and effective mediation is also needed to broker additional political agreements between the parties, as one agreement is seldom enough.

Most peace agreements that call for the deployment of peace operations to assist with their implementation only partially address the underlying political problems of the conflict. In some instances, agreements signed in bad-faith unravel and have to be renegotiated (Sierra Leone, 1999). In other cases, those who have signed the agreement represent only a fraction of the actors whose consent and cooperation is required to bring peace to a war-torn area (Darfur, 2006). Unresolved political problems rather than technical difficulties can account for delays in the implementation of key provisions of an agreement, for example, the disarmament of soldiers or registration of voters (Côte d'Ivoire, 2002). Constitutional or electoral processes can create a new set of political problems, especially if one or more of the parties are not willing to accept the result (Angola, 1992). Latent political tensions can surface even after the successful installation of a democratically elected government (Timor-Leste, 2006). In other cases still, the operation might have been deployed before a political agreement has even been reached (Kosovo, 1999).

[1] The role of a third-party to help warring parties reach a negotiated political settlement to a deadly conflict is often described as one of "mediation" or "peace-making". The management of the political aspects of that settlement, often with the assistance of peacekeepers (military, police and civilian peacekeepers), can be referred to as "political process management" or, the "political role" of the operation. Where political settlements are being negotiated and implemented concurrently, it is easy to get into a debate about terminology. The terms are used interchangeably in this essay.

The circumstances will vary, but one thing remains constant across peace operations: the political role is vital. It manifests itself at many levels, from the high politics to conclude formal agreements, to low-key engagement with those parties that might rethink the wisdom of the concessions they have made.

In the case of the United Nations (UN), the political role may be entrusted to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) who also serves as the civilian head of the peace operation on the ground. SRSGs in charge of the larger multi-disciplinary operations are responsible for: mediating political disputes among the parties to the conflict; overseeing international military, humanitarian, human rights and peace-building in a particular theater; and, ensuring that all these and related international efforts contribute positively to the political process (in DRC, Liberia, Haiti, Timor-Leste).[2] But in many other cases, these responsibilities are divided among several individuals and organizations, (in Lebanon, Sudan, Afghanistan, and Kosovo), the consequences of which are highlighted in a thematic essay on inter-institutional arrangements found in the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2008*. [3]

The effective exercise of the political role of SRSGs and other international mediators is acutely needed now in several conflict areas where over 160,000 peacekeepers are already on the ground under the flag of the UN, the African Union (AU), the European Union (EU) and NATO. Fundamental political problems – be they disputes over power, territory, resources or spheres of influence – in Lebanon, Sudan, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Eritrea/Ethiopia, Côte d'Ivoire, Georgia/Abkhazia, Somalia, Chad, Nepal, Afghanistan and Kosovo have yet to be fully addressed. The parties concerned are not in a position to resolve these political differences without third-party mediation. The unresolved political problems in any of these countries may well present formidable challenges in the coming year. The various SRSGs and other international mediators concerned might not be able to effectively meet all of these challenges, however, for reasons that are not entirely within their control.

Challenges to the Effective Exercise of the Mediator's Role

First, the SRSG's and other international mediator's political room for maneuver and leverage increases when (s)he is acting on behalf of a united Security Council and with the backing of key regional players. In several of the conflict areas where peacekeepers are presently deployed, divisions within the Security Council and between the regional players remain, in some cases due to competing strategic national interests. Divisions are arguably growing. The current geo-political landscape is far more fragmented than in the immediate post-Cold War "honeymoon" period when the international community brokered political solutions to the problems that had plagued Namibia, Lebanon, South Africa, El Salvador, Cambodia and Mozambique. The international consensus required for political solutions to several current crises is not remotely as strong today. As a result, recent operations have deployed not only without the benefit of a comprehensive peace agreement in place, but also without the necessary leverage in hand

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[2] With exception of life-saving humanitarian assistance, which should be delivered on the basis of need and not as reward for participation in the political process or punishment for lack thereof.

[3] See A. Sarjoh Bah and Bruce D. Jones, "Peace Operation Partnerships: Lessons and Issues from Coordination to Hybrid Arrangements" in *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations 2008* (Lynne Rienner Publishers, Boulder, CO 2008) pp.21-30.

to overcome political dead-lock during the implementation phase.

Second, as implied earlier, the proliferation of peacekeeping partnerships such as "hybrid operations" has obscured responsibility for the political role in many situations, for example, in Afghanistan and Sudan. The increasing role played by regional organizations and high-level ad-hoc arrangements in conflict management is a very positive development, not least because it has increased the level of attention and expertise certain crises receive. At the same time, having multiple high-level mediators and several international organizations with a large operational presence on the ground can create confusion about who is in charge of the political role.

The unresolved political problems in any of these countries may well present formidable challenges in the coming year.

Third, modern day peace operations are remaining in theater longer than those created in the immediate aftermath of the Cold War. This is a positive development, insofar as more resources, time and attention are now being afforded to help re-build the institutions of war-damaged states. At the same time, there may well be an inverse relationship between the longevity of the peace operation and the room for it to play an effective political role. As the host government rebuilds its legitimacy and strength over time, it understandably and rightfully might see international mediation as undermining its authority. Ideally, the ground should be prepared with the host government long in advance to assure them that the objective remains for the peace operation to phase out, as quickly as possible, including on the political front, and that mediation assistance can be provided in more discrete ways that pose no threat to the government's authority. When that does not happen, however, the host government can seize the opportunity of a new SRSG's arrival to curtail the political space available to him or her at the outset.

Fourth, there is a tendency to change the profile of the leadership of operations from a politically-oriented to a more developmentally-oriented one over time, on the assumption that the conflict has moved out of the political crisis phase. Key members of the international community, likewise, might downgrade the seniority or switch the profile of their "point persons" on the conflict, at capital and country level. This transformation can help to assure the host government that its authority is being respected. And it makes perfect sense when the fundamental political problems have, indeed, been solved. But, it can prematurely deplete political expertise and capital when that is not the case.

Fifth, today's peace operations continue to grow in breadth and complexity, placing enormous demands on their leadership. SRSGs ignore at their peril the administrative and logistics aspects of missions comprised of tens of thousands of military, police and civilian personnel, with budgets of up to one billion dollars per annum. SRSGs cannot shirk their leadership responsibilities to ensure good order and discipline of personnel, proper management of mission assets and effective integration and unity of effort across components. Attention to the managerial role, however, can come at the expense of the political role, and vice versa. A single Principal Deputy responsible for overseeing daily management of the mission, in all its aspects, can help an SRSG to do justice to both roles. But few UN peace operations are presently designed and staffed accordingly.

For these reasons, among others, the SRSG's political role is more difficult than ever. Meanwhile, the direction (s)he receives in its performance remains scant. Security Council resolutions do not provide a road map on how the role is to be conducted and there is still no official political doctrine upon which to rely.[4] General blue-prints, in any event, can only go so far in navigating one through the treacherous waters of any specific conflict. SRSGs and other international mediators are thus left to define and conduct the political role as best they can. It is not surprising, therefore, that there is such variance in the manner in which different SRSGs approach the job.

The Seven Deadly Sins

Each conflict is unique but at the same time, based on bitter personal experience in the management of several political processes and close observation of the work of others, there do appear to be certain recurrent traps that materialize in many different situations, across the spectrum of crisis response, and regardless if the mediator is operating with a small team or heading an operation comprised of thousands of personnel. Seven of the traps can be fatal to the ability of an SRSG or other international mediators (terms used interchangeably) to conduct the political role effectively. These are: ignorance; arrogance; partiality; impotence; haste; inflexibility; and false promises.

1. IGNORANCE

In order to be in a position to help the parties identify and reach solutions to their political problems, the SRSG obviously must have a basic understanding of the country in all its facets, from the history and culture to the economy and social structure. They need to be aware of the different explanations for why the violence erupted in the first place, why the conflict has persisted for as long as it has, and what solutions have already been tried and discussed. And, they need to understand the motivations, interests and strengths of those with whom they must work. Namely, they must have what one might call "the political map" of the area.

A detailed political map requires answers to key critical questions, which among others include: Who are the national actors with the power to stop or re-start the war and from where are they acquiring external support (e.g. arms, financing, and recognition)? Do they believe they can still prevail militarily, or have they accepted the need or desire to reach a negotiated solution? Which key constituencies can they legitimately claim to represent? Which key constituencies are unrepresented in the current political process? Which actors have opted or been left out of the process, why and what capacity do they have to disrupt or derail it? To what extent are the relevant members of the international community—neighbors, key regional players, big powers—united or working at cross-purposes with one another? Do they consider their strategic national interests to be at stake? Which of the domestic and international players welcome, are undecided about or actively oppose the mediator's role?

General blue-prints, in any event, can only go so far in navigating one through the treacherous waters of any specific conflict.

[4] While no official UN political doctrine currently exists, the newly created Mediation Support Unit in the Department of Political Affairs has assembled a very useful on-line database of past political agreements and various lessons learned during their negotiation. The Best Practices Section in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has developed on-line systems for collecting and disseminating lessons learned on all aspects of peace operations, including those related to political processes. UNITAR has developed some relevant training material on the role of SRSGs. NGOs have also produced some useful guidance material. For example, the Henri Dunant Centre has recently produced a useful guide for Mediators. And Fafo's 1999 Report, "Command from the Saddle," continues to provide nuggets of insight that remain relevant today.

It can be a daunting challenge for SRSGs and other international mediators to confront these questions when they are deploying to regions unfamiliar to them, with an insufficient complement of seasoned regional specialists on their political staff, inadequate knowledge management systems in the field or at headquarters on which to rely, and interlocutors who have an obvious incentive to feed them with biased or deliberately misleading information. The odds are that it will take far longer than they might wish to alleviate their ignorance of the political map. They do not have the luxury of waiting several months to take key decisions on the political process, however. As a result, they may end up in the position of making misinformed and misguided choices early on, only to then spend much of the remainder of their tenure trying to recover from them.

It is both naïve and arrogant, and often a recipe for failure, to rely almost exclusively on the views of those who flatter us and appear to most resemble ourselves.

Arguably, this ignorance-based decision-making process is the norm rather than the exception in post-conflict environments and is the original sin of mediation.

2. ARROGANCE

The first step in alleviating ignorance is for one to openly acknowledge that "I do not know enough" and to ask for help. Many SRSGs and other international mediators are keenly aware of their ignorance and the need to seek the view of others, particularly the people of the country themselves.

One challenge is to know which individuals to approach and what to ask them. An easy trap to fall into is to depend heavily on 'the 50 people in the country who are most fluent in English' who readily say exactly what the mediator wants to hear. It is both naïve and arrogant, and often a recipe for failure, to rely almost exclusively on the views of those who flatter us and appear to most resemble ourselves.

To compound matters further, the temptation is great to conclude that: "I have seen this all before;" the problems in this country are "just like x" (where one happened to have served previously); the views of the belligerents should not be taken too seriously because "they caused the problems in the first place;" the particularities of the conflict in question are not that relevant because "we already know what works and what doesn't" (which is certainly questionable); and/or "there is no point exploring all these options because the donors and implementing agencies have other priorities."

Of course, an entirely custom-tailored approach is not always realistic, particularly when narrow windows for peace have to be capitalized on quickly. Certain dynamics and trends can be discerned across a variety of conflicts. General lessons learned in previous experiences should be taken into account. It is true that, in the aftermath of war, the parties to the conflict do not have all the answers themselves and require third-party assistance. And institutional and donor interests cannot be ignored, as discussed subsequently.

Nonetheless, the people of the country concerned—the educated and the illiterate, the governors and the governed, the suspected perpetrators of the violence and the victims, the men and the women, alike— understand their own country far better than the foreign mediators who have just arrived on the

scene. They will have to live with the consequences of the political process long after the mediator has departed. They also can help the mediator to identify where a potential course of action could lead to a dead-end, fail to command domestic support, or worse, exacerbate political divisions in the country and potentially provoke violence. It is therefore not only a question of shrewd diplomacy, but good sense and basic respect to listen to a diverse range of views in the host country.

The combination of arrogance, which takes many forms, coupled with ignorance, can be a particularly deadly combination for a mediator's credibility with the parties and for the viability of the political proposals (s)he makes.

3. PARTIALITY

One of the mediator's indispensable contributions to the political process is the ability to tell the parties when they do not appear to be 100 percent right or their adversaries 100 percent wrong; where their arguments are not supported by evidence or their previous commitments are not being honored; how their actions are inconsistent with the wishes of the vast majority of the population or violate international law; and why the time has come to contemplate politically sensitive compromises that had hitherto been declared off-limits or taboo.

Some mediators are listened to seriously when they deliver these most difficult messages, but many others are ignored, met with active hostility or declared personae non grata not long after. Why? Much depends on whether the substance of the message is informed by a sophisticated understanding of the issues. The deftness of the diplomacy plays a part: how, where and when something is said matters as much as what is being said. Perhaps most of all, the parties' perception of the messenger and his or her motivations can be decisive.

The mediator can say a great deal and be heard when (s)he is accepted as an impartial and honest broker. An impartial and honest broker is seen to be—and is—able to work with everyone who can contribute to the peace, without creating the impression that (s)he is doing so on behalf of or actively against any one of them, or in pursuit of any agenda other than to help all the people of the country concerned attain a sustainable peace.

The trap one quite easily falls into is to begin delivering the tough messages to the parties, even publicly, prior to having been accepted by them as an honest and impartial broker. What might otherwise be received as constructive criticism instead is perceived as evidence of partiality.

The deftness of the diplomacy plays a part: how, where and when something is said matters as much as what is being said.

Before the mediator even arrives in theater, assumptions are made about his/her partiality on the basis of nationality, religion, prior public pronouncements, organizational affiliation, past associations, international reputation and hearsay. These prejudices can work both for and against the mediator. Sometimes the negative prejudices can be assuaged, on the basis of assurances from trusted intermediaries, but not always or entirely.

The mediator does well to assume that one or more of the parties consider them to be partial and motivated by various personal and external agendas from the outset; they will have to work hard to prove otherwise through everything they say and do, throughout their tenure. The mediators commit a deadly sin when they take their status as impartial and honest brokers for granted.

4. IMPOTENCE

A well-informed, honest and impartial broker plays an indispensable role in the political process, but within limits. Just because the parties are willing to listen to the mediator with an open mind does not mean that they will do what the mediator suggests or even what they themselves promise to do. Parties that believe they are 100 percent right do not opt for a negotiated solution because they are inclined to make painful concessions, but rather because circumstances might have left them no other choice. Their continued participation in the political process often depends on the negotiated option being the least unattractive option available to them.

The parties need to see a tangible connection between the recommendations the mediator makes and the decisions and actions these members of the international community take.

The SRSG or other international mediator is entirely reliant on the relevant members of the international community to make the negotiated option more attractive to the parties relative to the alternatives. Thus, an honest broker can be an irrelevant broker as well if (s)he does not carefully manage his or her relations with the relevant members of the international community. The parties need to see a tangible connection between the recommendations the mediator makes and the decisions and actions these members of the international community take, especially in the face of refusal to compromise or unwillingness to abide by commitments.

Naturally, the key members of international community will not back the mediator if they perceive (s)he is indifferent to, or working against, their legitimate concerns and interests. Security Council members need to be constantly consulted and assured that the courses of action the mediator proposes are faithful to the mandate that they have authorized (and carefully calibrated to reconcile points of disagreement among them). Countries in the region, neighbors in particular, have an understandable interest in the kind of government that will emerge in the post-conflict period, particularly where there has been a legacy of hostile relations, the flow of illicit arms or drugs, or destabilizing refugee movements across porous borders. Troop contributing countries have a legitimate interest not to be drawn into a role for which they did not sign up. Donor countries have a legitimate concern in their financial contributions being used as intended.

These various interests and concerns cannot be ignored. To the contrary, the mediator has to help satisfy these external stake-holders' interests in a way that contributes positively to the political process, or at minimum, helps to avoid the stakeholders working at cross-purposes to it. If the mediator fails to take these interests into account, then (s)he will quickly find himself or

herself impotent to stave off the death of a political process in the face of impasse.

5. HASTE

In order to obtain a clear picture of the political map, gain the confidence of the parties, build their sense of ownership of the process, and identify common ground among domestic and relevant external actors, the SRSG or other international mediator will need to consult with hundreds of actors, over and over again. Even if working at the pace normally demanded of mediators, and depending on the number of parties involved, this may require several months of effort.

No matter how sound an SRSG's or other international mediator's proposals might be, they risk being rejected if they have not emanated from a process that enjoys the confidence of all the parties to the conflict and is considered legitimate in the eyes of the population at large. The process matters and it takes time. A particular peace conference itself might conclude an agreement in days or weeks, but rarely without the months or years of consultations prior to convening it. The failure to recognize this crucially important point can be deadly to a political process. The best way to kill a potentially viable political solution is to float it prematurely.

In the rush to conclude an agreement or implement its key political provisions—such as the demobilization of soldiers, the adoption of a constitution or the conduct of an election—the mediator can simply forge ahead with only some of the parties on board. It is tempting to exclude the most difficult hold-outs, especially if the leaders concerned are considered to be irrational. A small group of individuals should be not allowed to hi-jack a process, especially if they may be motivated more by personal gain rather than legitimate grievance.

The SRSG or other international mediator must resist the temptation to rush to judgement, however. Sometimes the individual leaders' unwillingness to compromise is motivated by a genuine belief—rightly or wrongly—in the justness of their cause. Even when it is not, it is one thing to side-line individuals and another to deny large key constituencies their rightful role in the political process. The peace will not be sustainable without these constituencies, especially if they remain well-armed and easily mobilized to use them. It should not come as a surprise when these processes run aground or are actively attacked by those excluded from them.

Haste partially explains why the agreements referred to earlier failed to resolve crucial underlying political issues and subsequently unraveled. Sometimes such haste is unavoidable simply to stop the fighting and to prevent the slaughter of thousands or tens of thousands. This cannot be discounted by any means. The sin in such instances is to treat agreements borne out of such haste as conclusive and comprehensive, rather than for what they are, namely elaborate cease-fire agreements or interim political arrangements.

The best way to kill a potentially viable political solution is to float it prematurely.

6. INFLEXIBILITY

Once an SRSG or other international mediator has constructed the political map, after several months of consultation, and has carefully said and done all the right things vis-à-vis the internal and external players to establish himself or

herself as an honest and serious broker, then (s)he might be in a position to propose the contours of the political process and even secure agreement on it.

It is crucial to remember, however, that the situation on the ground has not been frozen during this time. Skirmishes or full-blown fighting might have been occurring in parts of the country all along, as the parties seek to bolster their hand at the negotiating table. Old alliances might have been broken and new ones forged. Old leaders might have departed the scene and new ones taken their place. The contest for power within particular constituencies can be as fierce as the one that occurs between them. Whether "moderates" or "hardliners" emerge from that struggle can transform the dynamics of the political process. The mediator must be aware of this at all times.

Constantly evolving developments can create new opportunities to be exploited or new formidable obstacles to be overcome.

Meanwhile, developments elsewhere in the world could have altered external actors' perceptions, stakes or positions on the conflict concerned. For example, change of governments in major troop or financial contributors also can mean a decrease or increase in resources and attention available to respond to that particular conflict. On a more profound level, the start of new wars can transform the context for international action entirely. The start of the Gulf War in 1991 understandably took attention away from addressing the regional implications of the Taif Agreement on Lebanon brokered one year earlier. The events of 9/11, on the other hand, led to renewed attention to the festering problems in Afghanistan, only to be partially diverted again by the onset of the Iraq War in 2003.

Constantly evolving developments can create new opportunities to be exploited or new formidable obstacles to be overcome. The SRSG or other international mediator does not have the luxury of being indifferent to the change in context, simply because (s)he has invested too much time already in a process conceived in a different set of circumstances. Inflexibilty to adjust course in response to major changes in the political map or on the international scene can lead a peace process down a dead-end or away from new avenues to take it forward.

7. FALSE PROMISES

The preceding discussion should hopefully make clear that the SRSGs' and other international mediators' political role is a perilous one. At a minimum, this should lead them to constantly reinforce a few basic messages: progress will be slow; mistakes will be made; setbacks will occur; periodic review and course correction will be required; technical problems can be resolved through technical solutions but political problems need political solutions; painful compromises and concessions will be expected of everyone; there is no short-cut to sustainable peace in the aftermath of war; it will take several years if not decades to re-build a war-torn State and achieve reconciliation; and this is just the beginning of the process.

This message should be repeated loudly when the peace operation arrives in theater and often throughout its presence. Unless expectations are managed, the peace operation's welcome can wear thin and calls for its departure can grow surprisingly quickly. Tens of thousands of peacekeepers might be able to prevent poorly organized and ill-equipped "spoilers" or criminal gangs from hi-jacking a political process or threatening some population centres. Even if such peacekeepers are well-armed and well-trained, however, they will be no match for much larger and well organized forces intent on destroying the peace or committing mass atrocities. It has to be said upfront that the military forces, civilian police, human rights experts and international aid workers will not provide security, protection, justice, social services and jobs for all of the millions or tens of millions of inhabitants of the country. The peace operation can make only a modest contribution, at best, relative to the expectations and demands of the host population.

This modest contribution can provide the parties with the time, space and assistance required to contemplate, discuss and eventually put into effect the political compromises required for the peace to be sustainable. It cannot, however, obviate the need for these compromises to be made.

The SRSG commits the seventh and final deadly sin when (s)he fails to counter false expectations or promises that a peaceful and prosperous democracy will emerge relatively quickly from the ashes of war, even where it never existed previously, simply because the peace operation has appeared on the scene.

Concluding Observations

The inherent caution underlying the foregoing analysis of the "seven deadly sins" is neither new nor revolutionary. It bears repeating nonetheless because the sins keep getting committed, especially in peacekeeping contexts.

Fundamental political problems are seldom fully addressed prior to the peacekeepers' arrival, despite expectations to the contrary.

Unless expectations are managed, the peace operation's welcome can wear thin and calls for its departure can grow surprisingly quickly.

Given the unprecedented numbers of peacekeepers now deployed throughout the globe, in particularly volatile areas, the role of effective mediation in peacekeeping contexts needs to be given more attention, urgently. It is becoming considerably more complicated to manage these political problems—before and after peacekeepers arrive—due to evolutions on the geo-political landscape and in the practice of peacekeeping. Some of these complications limit from the outset how effectively the civilian leadership of peace operations can play the political role expected of them.

The year ahead promises to be a particularly challenging one for the UN and regional organizations engaged in peace operations. The unaddressed political problems are accumulating faster than they are being solved. This

presents a number of policy dilemmas that will need to be confronted, sooner rather than later. Three dilemmas are alluded to in the essay and warrant policy discussion in the coming year.

First, there is strong appeal for humility throughout this essay. The description of the sins concludes with a plea to diminish expectations as much as possible. In contrast, the mandate for each new operation appears to be even more ambitious than the last. Has the time come to declare a moratorium on new tasks until such time as capabilities and expertise are adequately built on the ones already assigned?

Failure is inevitable when we throw peacekeepers at conflicts as a substitute for facing the painful political compromises still to be made.

Second, it needs to be recognized that the SRSG's exercise of the political role while sitting atop a mission comprised of tens of thousands of personnel should not necessarily rely on exactly the same approaches and techniques employed by mediators operating with a small team prior to the mission's deployment. This essay has focused on the similarities. What are the differences? Presumably, the SRSG has much greater leverage at his or her disposal when (s)he can direct the mission's efforts in a way that informs, generates and underpins political solutions to the underlying problems in the country concerned. Does the SRSG really have that authority, or is it in name only? What needs to be done to better synchronize the mediation efforts with the all the other activities undertaken by a peace operation? Is such synchronization even realistic in those situations where there is no designated overall lead, such as in the "hybrid" arrangements, where responsibilities for the political process, military activities, and development efforts are divided between different organizations?

And finally, given the existing exposure to operational risk, it would be preferable if no new peace operations were deployed in circumstances where a durable and comprehensive political settlement has yet to been reached. Unfortunately, that is wishful thinking. If anything, recent precedent and prevailing geopolitical dynamics point to trends in the opposite direction. At least some peace operations will be called upon to deploy into situations where mediation efforts have not advanced the discussion very far on the core political issues, where there is only a partial peace to keep, and consent of the parties is ambiguous. The lessons of the mid-1990s would suggest that the deployment of peacekeepers in such circumstances can be a recipe for failure. Where should the line be drawn?

There are many more difficult policy questions that need to be confronted. They will not have easy answers. Even if the mediator can avoid the deadly sins mentioned in this essay, there is no guarantee of success. Failure is inevitable, however, when we throw peacekeepers at conflicts or cast stones at the mediator, as a substitute for facing the painful political compromises still to be made by all sides to achieve a sustainable peace.

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