
Welcoming Remarks

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It is once again my pleasure to welcome you to the Cornwallis Campus of the Pearson Peacekeeping Centre. Over the years, the PPC has had the privilege to host people from 137 different countries. We pride ourselves on providing an excellent environment for reflection, dialogue and learning. We hope that your stay with us this year will be both productive and enjoyable.

Analysis for Governance and Stability, the topic being addressed by this year's meeting, is a timely one. As the international community becomes increasingly embroiled in conflicts throughout the world, our ability to develop realistic exit strategies depends to a large extent on our ability to support durable solutions and not just short-term stability. A lasting solution is preferable to periodic instability requiring intervention by the international community. While such a durable solution may require more investment in the front end, it will likely prove to be more cost effective in the long run. Durable solutions, with their driving political, ethical and moral imperatives, can transform countries from net drains on the international community to productive contributors. Once there is agreement on the objective of international intervention, the challenge becomes the question of "how". Researchers have a very important role to play in assisting policy makers to address this question.

Historically, the British showed that, although it is possible to eventually achieve stable and durable governance in countries where governance models are imposed from the outside (e.g. India), it is a process that takes generations and thus requires a very long-term commitment by the country or countries doing the imposing. Given the number of entrenched conflicts in the world today, this approach is not practical, as well as being politically questionable. As we search for conceptual models that can guide our actions, it is useful to think in terms of governance systems which are both culturally and politically sustainable.

Many would argue that in order to achieve this type of system, it is the national actors who must be the protagonists in its creation. A key question then becomes what is the role of the international community in assisting in the creation of sustainable governance systems. An important first step is understanding the specific context. The mantra of the real estate business is location, location, location. The corollary, in peace operations, would be context, context, context. The international community cannot pretend to play a constructive role in the development of sustainable governance systems unless it has a good working understanding of the context. This includes, but is not limited to, knowledge of a country or region's history, religion, politics, economics, educational system, gender relations and geography. Once again, researchers have a key role to play here.

UNAMA in Afghanistan is the first “post-Brahimi” peace operation. Here we see the United Nations experimenting with the concept of the “light footprint” whereby the international community becomes a facilitator of the political process. This approach marks a significant change and needs to be studied. Future policy needs to be informed by what is working and what is not working in Afghanistan. Iraq is likely to be another challenge that the international community must face in the come year. Only through rigorous comparative analysis will we have the information necessary to guide tomorrow’s policy. The Best Practices Unit of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations at the United Nations is seeking to develop close working relationships with those individuals and research centres interested in participating in systematic research at both the mission specific and general levels.

We have come a long way from the classic peacekeeping missions. The lines between war fighting and peace operations are becoming increasingly blurred. Although we have begun to develop new vocabulary that helps us in our analysis of these new realities, we still have a long way to go in the development of our conceptual thinking about peace operations and the principles upon which it should be based.

Iraq will pose these questions even more starkly. Heretofore, the term “peace operation” has been reserved for those interventions where the essential element was impartiality. The aftermath of the Iraq war is being referred to by some as a “peace operation”. Have we have moved into yet another generation of “peacekeeping” wherein the United Nations or some other international body replaces or supplants a victorious occupying power in fulfilling the requirements of reconstruction in the aftermath of war? Once again, researchers can play an important role in helping identify the issues and in framing the dilemmas which must be faced.

I would like to thank Ted Woodcock and Dave Davis for their kind invitation to address you this morning.