

Comments

Dame Margaret J. Anstee.

The Walled Garden
Knill, Presteigne
Powys, United Kingdom.

Dame Margaret Anstee spent 41 years in the United Nations, rising to the position of Under Secretary General in 1987. She headed development cooperation programs in various countries in all developing regions of the world, and at UN Headquarters in New York. She was involved in a number of disaster relief operations. As Director General of the UN Office in Vienna, she headed all UN narcotic drugs and crime programmes. In 1992-1993 Margaret Anstee was the Special Representative of the UN Secretary General in Angola and Head of UNAVEM II. She is the author of the book: "Orphan of the Cold War: The Inside Story of the Collapse of the Angolan Peace Process 1992-1993." Since retirement from the United Nations, inter alia, she has advised the Bolivian Government (1993-1997) and has written and lectured on UN matters. She is the Chairman of the Advisory Board of the Lessons Learned Unit the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations. Margaret Anstee is the author of several reports to the UN Secretary General on peace building. She has been a participant in numerous simulated peacekeeping training exercises in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia, Latin America, Africa, and for NATO.

The following comments on some of the materials presented at the workshop have been graciously provided by Dame Margaret Anstee (MJA) at the request of the senior proceedings editor.

COMPLIANCE ASSESSMENTS IN THE BALKANS

In comments on the paper: *Compliance Assessments in the Balkans* by Dr. George Rose and Mr. Mike Neighbour, MJA remarked that, once again, the vast difference in the availability of resources to a multi-national, NATO operation as compared to a UN-led operation has been made very apparent. A similar capability in operational analysis would have been invaluable for UNAVEM II in Angola. Even today, the limited budget and staff provided to UN-led operations make it difficult to accommodate this vital function.

She enquired whether the model for assessing military compliance could be equally applied to non-military obligations on the parties to the conflict, and specified in the relevant peace or cease-fire agreement. She also observed that assessments on military compliance were of considerable relevance to the UN Special Representative heading the political mission, and asked to what extent such information had been conveyed to him. Did security restrictions impede the free flow of such information? The UN was prohibited by member states from gaining "intelligence" in the military sense. This considerably hampered its peace operations, and the Special Representative of the Secretary General had to rely on such information as governments possessing advanced intelligence capabilities deemed fit to impart.

INDICATORS OF SUCCESS IN COMPLIANCE AND PEACE BUILDING

In comments on the paper: *Indicators of Success in Compliance and Peace Building* by Rear Admiral (ret.) Gary Wheatley, MJA clarified that she had not said that neutrality was impossible as the speaker had implied, but rather that the problem was one of the perception by the affected parties. Thus, an action or statement that was completely impartial in motive and substance, could be interpreted quite otherwise by any party that subjectively judged it to have adversely affected its interests.

While recognizing that every conflict situation is different MJA expressed the view that the indicators need not necessarily be restricted to “scenario specific” use. There were certain general principles, applicable to the broad generality of conflict situations.

MJA added her voice to that of others who had, on a number of grounds, queried the validity of using the flow of foreign investment as a measure of the stability in a country. She cited the case of Bolivia which, since 1985, had followed a strictly orthodox policy of economic liberalization, and become the model child of the International Monetary Fund. Notwithstanding, the expected flow of ‘private foreign investment’ anticipated as a consequence of this sustained policy, had not materialized, in contrast to the investment poured into Brazil and Argentina, despite the fact that their economic policies had been much less strict. Recent events in Argentina had surely demonstrated that this had not been a valid indicator of stability.

PEACE BUILDING THROUGH EDUCATION

In comments on the paper: *Interdisciplinary Peace Operations Professional Development: Investing in Long-Term Peace Operations Success* by Lieutenant Colonel Christopher Holshek, referring to the speaker’s statement that security considerations now transcended national borders, with which she fully agreed, MJA pointed out that, over the last decade, the concept of security had been widened further still. No longer confined to purely military or defence concerns, it now embraced issues essential to social stability, nationally and internationally, such as poverty levels, the wide gulf between the very rich and the very poor (both within and between countries) and the lack of access to even minimally decent conditions of living for millions of people. Unless this problem was seriously tackled, an increasing number of conflicts would be spawned and the breeding ground for terrorism would rapidly expand.

The observation having been made that “Lessons Learned” was not an entirely felicitous term, MJA informed the meeting that the Unit in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations had formerly borne that name had now been re-titled the “Best Practices Unit.”

MJA agreed with the speaker that UN personnel practices and recruitment procedure, particularly the prevalence of short-term contracts, constituted a serious obstacle to efficient peace operations. She pointed out, however, that this was largely due to budgetary and policy restrictions imposed by member states (including geographic distribution of posts) and was unlikely to be radically changed in the near future.

She also agreed that serious problems of coordination persisted both at UN Headquarters and in the field, despite repeated attempts at reform over many years. The root of the problem lay in the piece-meal way which the UN “System” had been set up by its founders, resulting in a number of virtually autonomous agencies, each jealously guarding their own prerogatives. As the realization grew that many problems required an integrated approach (e.g. peace building), the areas of overlap had increased as each agency tried to meet this new requirement by broadening its scope. When such duplication occurred, member states ritually called for “more coordination.” In her view, more crimes had been committed in the United Nations by these demands for coordination than anything else. They invariably led to new layers of coordinators coordinating other coordinators and leaving little leeway to those who actually do the job!

She was hopeful (though only cautiously) that some improvement would follow the recommendations of the Brahimi report and of the new UN Plan of Action on Peace Building in the drafting of which she herself has been involved. In the final analysis, much depended on the persons involved, rather than on the bureaucratic regulations, and, in her experience, matters were much easier in the field, especially if the personnel concerned were together facing a dire situation and difficult living conditions.

The central thesis of this “Plan of Action on Peace Building” was that peace building must be “home grown” and based on a national strategy, drawn up, to the maximum extent possible, by the national authorities of the country concerned, in fullest possible consultation with civil society, local communities, etc. It should specify priorities and targets, and the amount of national resources (human, technical, and financial) available to carry out the programme. The resource gap needing to be met from external sources should be the basis for a consolidated appeal to the international community. If all donors, including bilaterals, used this strategy as a framework for their own contributions, then many problems of coordination, among donors, as well as between UN agencies, would be resolved at one fell swoop, and optimum use would be made of scarce resources.