
Cedric de Coning*

The first thought that came to my mind when I picked up this book, was how can the report of a conference that took place in 1999 possibly still be of interest two, three or more years later. In our fast paced world journals and quasi-academic magazines, not to even mention electronic journals, have almost replaced books as the medium through which to publish material still relevant to the ever changing current context. A report of a conference, published as a book a year later, thus seemed, at first, to defy common sense. As I paged through and then started reading, however, I realized that this collection of papers, presentations, debriefings and recommendations is an incredibly rich collection of knowledge and information on the nexus between peacekeeping and peace building, that is, and will remain for some years to come, essential reading for anybody who wants to stay on top of the developing knowledge base in this field.

We all become so conference fatigued that it has become rare to come across a meeting that seem to have really achieved what so many set out to do, but fail. I have not attended the November 1999 Singapore Conference, but when reading the Report, almost two years later, it becomes clear that the co-organizers: the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR), the Institute of Policy Studies in Singapore (IPS) and the Japan Institute of International Affairs (JIIA), managed to bring together an extraordinary group of participants from the United Nations, development agencies and humanitarian organizations, governments, the military and then created an environment within which these two groups could exchange information, knowledge and analysis that resulted in a very meaningful set of recommendations and conference papers.

The Conference took place at a time when the United Nations and other multilateral and bilateral agencies were struggling to conceptualise and implement peace-building strategies in the wake of military operations in Kosovo and East Timor. The Conference reviewed four peacekeeping op-
erations: Angola, Cambodia, Haiti and Mozambique. Lessons of the nexus between peacemaking and peace building were drawn from these missions and the Conference then tried to apply them to two (then) new operations: the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) and the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET). I am sure the events unfolding in these two regions at the time of the Conference must have served as a constant reminder of the significance of the work being undertaken by the participants. The Summary of Discussions and the Conference Co-chair's Recommendations captures the inspiration and motivation the participants must have felt, and one comes away with a feeling that a sense of measured optimism prevailed at the Conference.

The papers collected in this volume provide a comprehensive review of all six cases, both from the perspective of those who were involved, as well as from those that could observe compare and analyse these missions against existing theories, policies and trends.

Part One captures the introductory remarks and keynote speeches, including a message from Kofi Annan, the Secretary General of the United Nations, and presentations by Prof. S. Jayakumar, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Minister of Law of Singapore; Hedi Annabi, an Assistant Secretary General for the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO); Jacques Forster, Vice-President of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the principals of the co-organisers, IPS, JIIA and UNITAR.

Part Two is a debriefing by the research and policy community on the existing knowledge base on the nexus between peacekeeping and peace building. Part Three contains the lessons learned from Angola, Mozambique, Haiti and Cambodia. This section contains the various background papers on these past operations. In most cases these are by practitioners, e.g. on Angola by Dame Margaret Anstee, a former Special Representative of the UN Secretary General (SRSG) for Angola, and on Mozambique by Denis Jett, a former US Ambassador to Mozambique and now with the Carter Centre. The organizers have chosen their presenters well and almost all of these background papers are full of insights and useful facts. Denis Jett, argues, for instance, that there is not only a nexus between peacekeeping and peace-building, but a tension as well. Peacekeeping involves specific steps to be accomplished on a fixed timetable whilst peace-building requires the strengthening of local institutions and local capacity that can take years if not decades. He argues that given the cost of large,