The Brahimi Report at Thirty (Months):
Reviewing the UN’s Record of Implementation

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In August 2000, on the eve of the United Nations Millennium Summit, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan released the Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations (the “Brahimi Report”), a landmark document that recommended sweeping reforms in the way that UN peacekeeping and associated post-conflict peace-building are conceived, planned, and executed.¹ This article traces its implementation through the end of 2002, with emphasis on the official UN implementation record, supplemented by interviews with practitioners conducted by the Henry L. Stimson Center’s Project on the Future of Peace Operations.

The UN Secretariat demonstrated remarkable tenacity over more than two years in advancing the implementation of the Brahimi Report, creating detailed plans that fleshed out the operational and financial implications of the Report’s many recommendations and working with the UN’s complex network of inter-governmental bodies to win their approval.² The first implementation document emerged only two months after the Report, in October 2000. The second round followed in 2001 with

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² The inter-governmental bodies are those composed of UN Member States. Key bodies for implementing the Brahimi Report included, for policy matters, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (“the Special Committee”) composed of up to 100 Member States that are past or current contributors of peacekeeping personnel, which reports to the General Assembly’s Fourth (Special Political) Committee of the whole (for more information online, see: http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/ctte/CTTEE.htm). On financial matters, the gatekeeper is the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (“the ACABQ”), a 16-member body that reviews and makes recommendations on every budget-related document before it is sent to the GA’s Fifth (Financial) Committee of the whole. See,

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completion of a comprehensive management review of Secretariat offices involved in the support of peacekeeping and of major UN operations in the field. Member States by and large welcomed the changes and supported them both politically and financially.

Meanwhile, new leadership in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) pressed for the key changes in management culture stressed by the Brahimi Panel as crucial to all other reforms. By the end of 2002, DPKO had a greater capacity to plan and support peacekeeping operations; the Secretariat was doing a better job of telling the Security Council "what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear"; the UN had adopted deployment benchmarks for planning its operations; and DPKO was building a new strategic deployment stock of equipment at the UN logistics base in Brindisi, Italy to support rapid deployment of operations.

This article relates in greater detail how these and other key recommendations of the Panel have or have not become reality, and identifies some reasons for that success, failure, or delay. It also examines the status of key Report elements that depend more heavily on the actions and engagement of UN Member States, such as robust forces and mandates and the provision of well-equipped and well-trained troops and civilian police to UN operations. The support of developed states, both as partners in training and equipping other states’ forces and as troop contributors themselves, will be critical to the long-term success of the process of reform and renewal that the Brahimi Report accelerated.

1. **Doctrine, Strategy and Decision Making for Peace Operations**

The Panel’s terms of reference were broad. They defined peace operations to encompass conflict prevention and peace-building measures as well as peacekeeping. Because there were no consistently applied UN definitions of the first two terms, the Panel defined “conflict prevention” as activities that take place before conflict breaks out and “peace-building” as activities to restore the foundations of peace after conflict has ended. Conflict can be cyclical and thus peace-building shades into prevention over the long term, but the definitional distinction allowed the Panel to consider separately the unique needs of pre- and post-conflict situations, especially to the extent that peace-building activities were defined as elements of Security Council-mandated field operations.

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3 A/55/305, para. 64d.