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# Preface

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The Center on International Cooperation (CIC) is committed to expanding and deepening the analysis of multilateral security instruments, ranging from sanctions to post-conflict peace-building. Our work – not least our *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* series, established in 2006 – illuminates the scale, complexity and diversity of international interventions in states and regions at risk of conflict. It is inevitable that some cases, such as Afghanistan, receive more day-to-day attention than others. But to understand the contribution of multilateral institutions to international security, it is necessary to map the much wider web of activities undertaken by the UN and other global and regional organizations.

What can we learn from these mapping exercises? This simple but important fact: “conflict and cooperation among states on matters of peace and security have been increasingly managed, regulated, or implemented by and through multilateral security institutions.”<sup>1</sup> Yet a great deal of academic literature on international cooperation ignores these operational phenomena. Policy-makers oscillate between searching for “off the shelf” conflict management tools at the UN and other institutions and announcing initiatives to transform those institutions – often repeating previous, forgotten experiments.

A fuller, more realistic understanding

of what international institutions are doing today – and what they have done, well or badly, in the past – is a prerequisite for managing more effective reforms in future.

This *Review of Political Missions* is CIC’s first attempt to map a poorly-understood but very widespread form of multilateral engagement in conflict-affected (or at risk) areas. It sheds light on the work of primarily civilian missions (occasionally buttressed by small numbers of military monitors and policemen) in mediating conflicts, devising and monitoring peace agreements and promoting good governance worldwide. Many of these missions exist in a gray area between large-scale military peacekeeping and more traditional development aid and human rights monitoring. The variety of additional tasks of the missions we analyze – from helping re-house displaced persons and refugees to advising on the destruction of out-of-date armaments – is remarkable. But as Ian Johnstone notes in his thematic essay, all are in some way involved directly or tangentially in “political process management.”

This may sound technocratic. But as Johnstone shows – and CIC has underlined in a series of reports published in recent years – successful political processes are essential to creating sustainable peace.<sup>2</sup>

Ian Martin has learned this the hard way. As he argues in his opening essay to this *Review*, all peace

operations are political. Some analysts forget this when dealing with large-scale peacekeeping and development issues: it is easy to focus on the number of blue helmets or aid dollars involved. When we turn to political missions, the challenge is different. How can we analyze and evaluate the impact of relatively small numbers of civilians on complex political processes, especially when some of these processes (like those in the Western Balkans) are more than a decade old. As Teresa Whitfield argues here, opportunities for mediation and good offices cannot be encapsulated in formal mandates. Politics is a slippery business.

We hope that, in mapping these missions, we can make their work a little easier to grasp. Precisely because “political process management” is so hard to grasp, we are confident that readers will dissent from many of our judgments and analyses. But we hope that they will appreciate that, by searching for commonalities and seeing patterns in disparate missions’ activities (such as those suggested in Richard Gowan’s strategic summary) we can sketch out the framework for better missions in future. Ian Martin, Ian Johnstone and Teresa Whitfield offer elements of this framework, ranging from planning to management issues and mandates to doctrine – although they each recognize the primacy of *flexibility*.

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We have learned a huge amount from all these colleagues, but all errors of fact, analysis and judgment in this editorially independent publication are very much our own.

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A special thanks is due to Ian Martin, one of the UN's most accomplished and principled officials. His essay in this volume offers a window into the insights he has gained as mediator, human rights observer, impartial investigator, election monitor, special representative and mission head in operations in Latin America, Africa, Asia and the Middle East.

At CIC – in addition to the authors listed at the start of this volume – we owe thanks to many colleagues including Yvonne Alonzo, Rahul Chandran, Lynn Denesopolis, Victoria DiDomenico, Antonie Evans, Shepard Forman, Noah Gall, Megan Gleason, Andrew Hart, Laurie Mincieli, Yanikk

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Five years of producing the *Annual Review of Global Peace Operations* have taught us a lot about the amount of intellectual and organizational labor that goes into such a volume. When we decided to use a similar model to examine political missions, there was one obvious decision: to ask Richard Gowan to reprise his highly successful role as impresario of the first *Annual Review*. In the interim, Richard has gone on to run the CIC end of the CIC-Brookings-Stanford collaboration on Managing Global Insecurity, as well as becoming a fellow of the European Council on Foreign Relations. I am very grateful that he was willing to lend his considerable talents to this fledgling edition of the political missions review.

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## NOTES

- 1 Bruce D. Jones and Shepard Forman, “Introduction: ‘Two Worlds’ of international Security”, in Bruce D. Jones, Shepard Forman and Richard Gowan, *Cooperating for Peace and Security: Evolving Institutions and Arrangements in a Context of Changing U.S. Security Policy* (Cambridge University Press, 2009), p8.
- 2 See, most recently, Richard Gowan and Bruce D. Jones, *Back to Basics: the UN and Conflict Prevention in an Age of Strategic Uncertainty* (Center on International Cooperation, 2010). All CIC papers are at [www.cic.nyu.edu](http://www.cic.nyu.edu).