

IMMEDIATE INTERNATIONAL DEPLOYMENT

The PLO has requested an "international protection force". Several countries, including the United States, France and Britain, have moved quickly and are currently planning either an observer mission or something more robust than that (with the powers to intervene in low level friction). The UN Secretary-General has been asked by the Security Council to start planning a mission, though no commitment has been made that either a mission will be deployed or that it will be a UN mission. The Secretary-General is considering attaching an advance team of observers to the expected fact-finding mission. In the meantime, he has instructed the Department of Peacekeeping Operations in the UN Secretariat to start planning a mission. The position of Israel has shifted significantly towards permitting some kind of intervention.

These developments suggest that momentum towards an immediate international deployment will continue to accelerate. The PLO is in a strong position to request: (i) the kind of mission that is deployed; (ii) its composition (such as the participating nations, some individual staff members and the operational leadership of the mission); and (iii) whether or not the mission should be a UN or non-UN mission. If the PLO does not participate strongly in these decisions soon, it will have to accept a mission that may adversely affect the conditions for the outcome of a final settlement with Israel. If such a mission goes badly, it may undermine the confidence of Palestinian people, Israel and other states in a third party intervention to guarantee the final settlement and seriously jeopardize the necessary ingredients for an effective operation at that time.

Whatever the short term rationale of the PLO for requesting international forces, it is now confronted with a choice that can affect the outcome of a final settlement with Israel. It is imperative for the PLO to decide what it wishes such a mission should really do in the context of the road to a final settlement. The request for international protection has been met with discussion of observers: it is certain that the formula of needing protection and deploying observers is unworkable. As former Yugoslavia proved, a defensive peacekeeping mission called a "Protection Force" failed tragically and was quickly detested on the ground, by the parties and internationally.

The expectation that the mere presence of international personnel on the ground will act as a catalyst for the next step or resumption of a peace process is a precarious proposition. This amounts to planning for a best-case scenario outcome when all the experience of the past and the current indicators suggest that planning for a worst-case scenario will be the best means of preventing it. Whatever the configuration of the deployment, it will be challenged, either by the Israelis to see what they can get away with, or indeed the Palestinian population. If a Palestinian individual does not receive the "protection" expected, either in terms of freedom of movement or freedom from intimidation and physical hostility, then the credibility of the international force will be undermined quickly. Alternatively, if the mission deployed can make a real and positive difference in the daily lives of Palestinians, while a final settlement is pending, then such a mission will sustain its credibility. It may also help foster conditions for both the final

settlement itself as well as a follow-on third party intervention to guarantee its implementation.

To achieve this latter scenario in the interim, energy will need to be spent on ensuring that the short term option is an effective one. This will take energy away from concluding a final settlement. However, now that there is significant international movement on an immediate deployment, the terms of such a mission will have to be addressed by the PLO to avoid a negative outcome for the PLO, the Palestinian people and the final settlement in terms of substance and implementation.

Furthermore, the current Israeli demand for a "ceasefire" as a precondition for the resumption of negotiations, is an opportunity for the PLO to make clear demands on the kind of mission deployed in the short term. One condition of a ceasefire should be a freezing of the status quo in the occupied territories: this will enable international personnel to intervene in expansion activities of individual settlers and defuse this as a source of friction.

1. Option A — "Observers": By definition, "observers" do not have the powers to protect the local population or intervene in any incidents on the ground. They will be strictly limited to watching and reporting on the occurrence of incidents. While they may report on incidents, they may not necessarily lay blame. Observers will be comparable to the TIP in Hebron. It is not clear whether the observer group will be strictly military or military and civilian — it should be both. Military "observers" do not have the means to use any kind of force. Even side-arms, if mandated, are unlikely to be a reliable form of self-defence. As TIPH has found, carrying individual weapons without any back-up force can cause an escalation to the detriment of the observer. Reporting on incidents will not necessarily translate to influencing the redress of those incidents.

The number of observers currently being discussed — 2000 — does not seem to be linked to a coherent set of tasks to be accomplished by the mission. The strength of any mission should be determined on the basis of the tasks to be accomplished and the geographic scope of deployment.

2. Option B — "Peacekeepers": "Observers" act as individuals gathering information in a mobile capacity. This is distinct from military "peacekeeping" contingents, which tend to be deployed in fixed buffer locations. They rely on their mere static presence to function and cannot respond to any form of disorder or intimidation. As military contingents, they do have the means to use force to protect themselves, but they cannot protect the local population or intervene in incidents. The doctrinal subculture that has developed for peacekeeping, in the UN and national militaries, states that intervention of this kind is contrary to the neutrality of a "peacekeeping" mandate. This would frustrate the local population significantly. The deployment of peacekeepers reflects that there is relatively little international political will backing the mission. Contingents invariably take months to reach the field. Contingents vary considerably in their quality and technical capacity, and in some cases have been abusive and corrupt. As blunt military forces, there has been very poor integration with civilian tasks, which will be an unavoidable requirement in the context of Palestine.

3. Option C — Civilian-Military Security Units: At the opposite extreme to defensive "observers" and "peacekeepers", are enforcement operations relying on military force against the parties, which is not a consideration in the current context. In between these two extremes are missions that can defuse a variety of individual friction points in a social context. Defusion does not necessarily mean military force, but it is a mixture of credible presence and dynamic engagement with the population and parties in advance of, during and following incidents that helps deescalate or prevent them. This kind of activity has constituted the bulk of experiments in the last decade of peace missions and has caused a revolution in national military and political doctrine for peace missions.

It is this kind of mission that would be able to guarantee freedom of movement and freedom from intimidation and violent hostility. This kind of mission requires military and police integration with civilian functions. One way of achieving this is to include gendarmerie-type units (or police units with military status). The mission requires strong political direction in the theatre of operations and therefore the operational commander must be acting in a civilian capacity. Such a mission would not be deployed in a fixed location, thus making more permanent the lines separating zones A, B and C (and H1 and H2). Rather it would be deployed in its own areas of operation (AOR) throughout Palestine, according to the needs on the ground and in a space that cuts across zone lines.

Such a mission cannot alter the strategic environment — that is within the purview of the final settlement. However, it can alter the experience of daily life of the local population on the ground (which should be part of the clear instructions to the individual units deployed) and sustain a credible presence over time while a final settlement is being reached. To accomplish this, the mission must focus on the conditions of the local population and use small detachments to achieve its objectives. Required are mature, experienced personnel capable of handling significant responsibility without constant oversight. In these kinds of missions, authority must be delegated to the lowest levels to achieve flexibility and necessitating great initiative from officers in the field.

The UK military is well acquainted with this kind of mission. The Australian SAS and Federal Police, as well as their New Zealand counterparts, have shown they can conduct this kind of mission effectively. The Italian carabinieri has been the basis for multinational specialized units in the Balkans and elsewhere, which have proved useful in comparable environments. While the US can provide effective political top-cover, and is in the process of improving its political-military functioning, its military has been only marginally effective in this context. Of the Scandinavian units, the Norwegian military could best adapt to this kind of mission if it was clearly instructed to do so.

4. UN v. Non-UN Mission: UN missions have mostly failed to live up to their mandates in the last 10 years. There are a large number of reasons for this. These include slow deployments that miss critical windows of opportunity invariably at the start of a mission, a restrictive bureaucratic culture with excessive centralization in the field, and vast mediocrity amongst staff members (with profoundly significant exceptions). The UN does certain things well, and certain things badly, and is unlikely to field a high-quality mission to Palestine quickly. "Observers" and "peacekeepers" will be authorized under

Chapter VI of the UN Charter, while Option C does not neatly fit into either this provision or Chapter VII enforcement provisions.

A non-UN multinational mission tends to reflect a serious degree of political will from participating member countries. They are forced to care more than if the mission is under UN control as national responsibility is directly on the line. This will be reflected in both quick deployments and demand for high-quality security units and civilian staff. It will also be reflected in terms of actual responses to incidents as they arise, since the participating member states will be more directly engaged in the theatre of operations, rather than their will being diluted through the UN system as a whole. A multinational mission can avoid altogether UN Charter provisions and rely on the consent of the parties to achieve any mandate accepted by them. It will be easier to tailor a non-UN mission to the specific needs on the ground at this time, and continually adjust it as ground conditions change. In particular, necessary decentralization in operating style will be achievable. Although more flexible, efficient and reliable, an ad hoc funding mechanism will need to be determined.

5. Recommendations:

(i) Option C: Each of the three options will require an ending to the intifadah, but only in Option C will Palestinians be offered something in return. This mission will provide the best chance for creating the conditions for reaching a final settlement and for making it work. If military units are not available for this mission, it could be accomplished by the establishment of a multinational specialized unit.

(ii) Non-UN: A non-UN multinational coalition mission is more likely to be deployed quickly, to function efficiently and fulfil its mandate, and to be staffed with high-quality individuals and composed of high-quality security units.