

Chapter 8

Exit date, exit state, exit strategy

8.1 In 2002, the then Minister for Defence, Senator Robert Hill, stated that it is 'always easier to get into an intervention than out of it'.¹ The strategy for withdrawing from a peacekeeping operation is a real and practical problem and another key factor influencing the decision to contribute to a peacekeeping operation. In this chapter, the committee examines current thinking on how and when to conclude a peacekeeping mission. It seeks to establish the importance of an exit date, exit state and exit strategy to the success of a peacekeeping operation and the consideration that the Australian Government gives to these factors in its decision to contribute to a mission.

Timeframe for peacekeeping operations

8.2 Consideration of the length of a peacekeeping operation or how to conclude it begins with the formulation of the mandate. As noted in Chapter 4, the committee underlined the need for a mandate to have clearly stated objectives which then provide a starting point for determining the time required to achieve these goals.

8.3 Defence provides advice to government on what it thinks the duration of a mission should be and how the deployment should be structured. Lt Gen Gillespie explained that Defence uses all of the assets at its disposal to gauge the potential for success of a mission and how long that might take to achieve. For assessments, such as the likely length of a mission, he informed the committee:

We would tend to do it jointly and, in that particular sense, ONA may have a very large role to play in providing advice on how that looks. You start off at that level and make some macro assessments of how long the mission might last and then you can start to provide advice to the government on how long you might participate in that, given a whole range of circumstances, expectations, developments in your region and in other parts of the world et cetera.²

8.4 He also indicated that Defence provides government with a number of options, whereby things such as duration of the operation may be discussed. According to Lt Gen Gillespie, even if Australia were to deploy without a specific timeframe, the government on an annual basis reviews all Australia's military commitments to operations around the world.³ He noted further that the government may come up with an exit strategy for Australia and stipulate that:

1 Minister for Defence and Leader of the Government in the Senate, opening address, International Peace Operations Seminar, Parliament House, Canberra, 29 April 2002.

2 *Committee Hansard*, 24 July 2007, p. 18.

3 *Committee Hansard*, 24 July 2007, p. 18.

Australia will support this for X period of time. We will give a two-year commitment to this mission and at the end of two years we will be out. The United Nations has a two-year warning period to find somebody to replace us if the mission goes beyond that time.⁴

8.5 Even so, the committee expects that to be effective, Australia's participation in a peacekeeping operation would be considered in light of the mission's objectives, the time expected for the successful completion of the mission and how Australia's contribution would fit with the overall goal of the mission. The following section considers the problems in determining a timeframe for withdrawing an operation.

Traditional operations

8.6 Lt Gen Gillespie noted that traditionally, the UN did not place a high priority on setting an exit date. He explained that prior to 1985, the UN 'tended to get into missions and work at them until they were done. If they took 20 years, then that is how long they took'.⁵

8.7 The UN mission to Cyprus is an example of such a protracted engagement. It was established in 1964 to prevent further fighting between the Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot communities. Yet, over 40 years later, the mission is still a ceasefire operation. The AFP has been continuously engaged in peacekeeping operations in Cyprus since then and today deploys 15 officers who, with other United Nations Police (UNPOL) officers, police the buffer zone.

8.8 In July 2006, with the encouragement of the Secretary-General, the Greek Cypriot and the Turkish Cypriot leaders recognised that the status quo was unacceptable and made a commitment to ensure that the right atmosphere prevailed for the process 'involving bi-communal discussion' that would contribute to a comprehensive settlement. The Secretary-General, however, continues to urge both sides to move the agreement forward indicating that the UN would continue to put pressure on the parties to do so.⁶

8.9 This mission highlights the propensity for some peacekeeping operations to be open ended. Without an incentive to end the conflict, parties to the dispute make no real progress toward a lasting resolution and the mission continues indefinitely.

4 *Committee Hansard*, 24 July 2007, p. 5.

5 *Committee Hansard*, 24 July 2007, p. 5.

6 A Statement by the President of the Security Council on 17 April 2008 stated that the Security Council was encouraged by 'the launch of the Working Groups and the Technical Committees that will prepare the ground for the start of fully fledged negotiations...on a durable settlement', S/PRST/2008/9.

Complex operations

8.10 Lt Gen Gillespie explained that the UN has changed its approach to setting a time for withdrawing an operation:

In my experience, Namibia was the first UN mission where the UN said quite emphatically—and the UN Security Council and the General Assembly enforced it along the way—that, to create an independent nation, conduct the elections and do all of the things that we had to do, 12 months was an appropriate time. They worked very hard at achieving the mission inside the 12-month mandate that was given, and they did.

...I think that the UN, since Namibia, has come a long way in trying to determine how long a mission should take and then hold people accountable for doing it. Although, given the nature of some of the conflicts that we have around—for example, the UN deployment in Lebanon at the present time—it would be hard to say, 'You've got a mandate for 12 months and we'll all be out in 12 months time; here's our exit strategy.'⁷

8.11 Setting an exit date leaves no doubt about when the mission is to end, and is likely to provide a powerful incentive for all parties to the dispute to reach a settlement and restore peace and stability. A set date, however, also creates difficulties. Austcare suggested that:

Placing artificial time constraints on peacekeeping operations, mainly for political purposes, is unlikely to be helpful to the people living in conflict-affected countries.⁸

8.12 Some studies prefer to focus on an end state rather than end date for withdrawing a peacekeeping operation.⁹

End state

8.13 The International Force in East Timor (INTERFET) is often cited as an example of a mission where a clear mandate, adequate resources and commitment to the operation set a solid foundation for its success. Defence said:

INTERFET benefited from a clearly defined mission and endstate—a clear goal to which the coalition could be led. A timely and appropriate United Nations mandate, together with nations willing to contribute quality assets to a common cause was also important to success.¹⁰

7 *Committee Hansard*, 24 July 2007, p. 5.

8 *Submission 11*, p. 10.

9 See for example, Austcare, *Submission 11*, p. 10. Austcare contended that sunset clauses are important for the purpose of reviewing commitment timetables and achievements, but considered that 'more emphasis be placed on the achievement of "end state" rather than "end date"'.¹⁰

10 Department of Defence, answer to written question on notice W3, 24 July 2007.

8.14 INTERFET, however, had been established in September 1999 as a multinational force under a unified command structure with a limited and explicit mandate. It was to restore peace and security to East Timor, protect and support the United Nations Assistance Mission in East Timor (UNAMET) in carrying out its tasks and, within force capabilities, facilitate humanitarian assistance operations. The mandate also stated clearly that INTERFET was to be replaced 'as soon as possible' by a UN peacekeeping operation.¹¹

8.15 During February 2000, responsibility was transferred in phases from INTERFET to the military component of the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET).¹² Established in October 1999, UNTAET had a much broader and longer-term objective. It was tasked with the overall responsibility for the administration of East Timor and was empowered to exercise all legislative and executive authority, including the administration of justice.¹³ It is this type of complex multidimensional mission that poses significant challenges for decision makers in determining when a deployment should be withdrawn.

8.16 Today, many studies tend to see these complex missions progress through phases from a shorter-term peacekeeping operation to the longer-term peacebuilding processes. For example, in 2000, the importance of ensuring a smooth transition from the conflict phase to a post-conflict peacebuilding phase was a dominant and recurring theme in a UN debate about peacekeeping operations.¹⁴ Reflecting on this debate, the Secretary-General noted that the ultimate purpose of a peacekeeping operation is to achieve an enduring peace. He then highlighted the complex challenges and the large costs in attaining lasting domestic peace:

It becomes sustainable, not when all conflicts are removed from society, but when the natural conflicts of society can be resolved peacefully through the exercise of State sovereignty and, generally, participatory governance.¹⁵

8.17 A number of witnesses to this committee also conceived of a successful peacekeeping operation moving through phases to a post-conflict peacebuilding

11 UN Security Council, Resolution 1264, S/RES/1264 (1999), 15 September 1999, p. 12..

12 UN Security Council, *Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor*, S/2000/738, 26 July 2000, paragraph 51, p. 7.

13 UN Security Council, Resolution 1272, S/RES/1272 (1999), 25 October 1999.

14 UN Security Council, Press Release SC/6951, 15 November 2000; and UN Security Council, 4223rd meeting, S/PV.4223 and S/PV.4223 (resumption 1), 15 November 2000.

15 UN Security Council, Report of the Secretary-General, *No exit without strategy: Security Council decision-making and the closure or transition of United Nations peacekeeping operations*, S/2001/394, 20 April 2001, p. 2.

stage.¹⁶ Associate Professor Wainwright drew on Australia's experience to describe the transitional phases of a mission:

The military presence initially is there to restore security and it needs to be strong at the beginning. But, then, as things stabilise...there is scope for large numbers of the ADF to scale down and to just maintain a training capability, continuing within the defence cooperation program, for example—continuing training and ongoing assistance and relationship building. Likewise the AFP, which again comes in at the outset and is working to build up the local policing capability. When it is judged that the local policing capability has been built up effectively and can do the job on its own, the AFP can scale that down, perhaps keeping a small presence for any continuing capability building and relationship maintaining. Then there is the long-term institution building end of things, which is going to be there for many years to come, in my view.¹⁷

8.18 Witnesses, such as Associate Professor Wainwright, stressed the importance of ensuring that the identified end state anticipates the difficulty of achieving sustainable peace. She recognised that many of the conflicts are 'generational' problems that 'require a long-term commitment on the part of the Australian Government and others to try to grapple with them'.¹⁸ Christian World Service suggested that 'a viable exit strategy should be a condition of entry' into a humanitarian peacekeeping operation.¹⁹

Exit strategy

8.19 In 2001, the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade recommended that Australia should only commit support to a peace operation where, *inter alia*, there is 'a specified exit strategy within the operation'.²⁰ In its response, the government agreed with the emphasis placed on the importance of exit strategies. It further explained that Australia had previously nominated a specific end-point for

16 Dr Anthony Murney, AFP, suggested that peace operations are 'about continuance, and the nature of the future relationship that you might have with the nation that you have been dealing with'. *Committee Hansard*, 25 July 2007, p. 13. Professor Raymond Apthorpe suggested that the objective of an international involvement is to create good relationships which do not end when the specific purpose of the first phase of the intervention ends. *Submission 32*, p. 3.

17 *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007, p. 12.

18 *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007, p. 12.

19 *Submission 31*, paragraph 3.1.2.

20 Joint Standing Committee on Foreign affairs, Defence and Trade, *Australia's role in United Nations Reform*, June 2001, p. 57.

Australia's participation in peacekeeping operations where it had been possible and appropriate to do so.²¹ It indicated:

Australia will continue to encounter circumstances where the exit strategy decision must focus on the achievement of a lasting peace, rather than on set time limits. In complex post-conflict situations like East Timor and Bougainville, a date-defined exit strategy may be challenging to achieve, and must be weighed against other important issues such as ensuring the sustainability of the peace and security of those areas and ensuring the stability of our close neighbourhood.²²

8.20 An exit strategy is not only concerned with identifying an end state but, more importantly, with how that state is to be achieved. A review of UNTAET found that from the outset it was clear that the mission was to be an interim administration whose end state was known—the political process of transition was completed with East Timor's independence. Even so, it observed that the Security Council had prescribed an end-state without an accompanying roadmap. It noted the value of having a mandate implementation plan, explaining:

It is a tool for missions to 'exit with a strategy', placing milestones along the way that guide the mission to its eventual exit.²³

8.21 The International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) stated that no matter how 'well or ill-defined the end state of intervention, political vision should encompass what it will take to get there—conceptually, as well as in terms of resources'.²⁴ Along similar lines, Roland Rich, former Director of the Centre for Democratic Institutions, proposed that 'the end point may not always be predictable but the direction should be clear and a point should be ascertainable where the emergency intervention ends and the regular processes of development assistance

21 Government response to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade report on *Australia's Role in United Nations Reform*, 27 March 2003, p. 1. It stated: 'The Government has done this with respect to our participation in the UN Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea and to our contribution to the (non-UN) International Military Advisory and Training Team (IMATT) in Sierra Leone'.

22 Government response to the Joint Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade report on *Australia's Role in United Nations Reform*, 27 March 2003. p. 1.

23 Conflict Security & Development Group, King's College, London, *A Review of Peace Operations: A Case for Change: East Timor*, 10 March 2003, pre-publication copy, paragraph 360. This was a project funded by the governments of Canada, Germany, Norway, Sweden and the United Kingdom.

24 International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, *The Responsibility to Protect*, December 2001, paragraph 7.15, p. 60.

take over'.²⁵ A report on a recent Wilton Park Conference on International Peace Support Operations also found that:

Benchmarks, or measurements indicators, need to be built into the planning of peace support operations to enable progress to be assessed and transition or exit strategies established.²⁶

8.22 A number of witnesses to the inquiry took this same view. Associate Professor Wainwright supported the concept of having an exit state but also spoke of 'exit strategies'—of how the end state is to be achieved:

When we are seeking to devise an exit strategy we should look less to a certain date in the future—and in this case long into the future—than a state of affairs on the ground. That state of affairs should be, broadly speaking, that a particular state can maintain its own security; that it has a viable and working police force which can seek to maintain law and order; and has institutions which can continue to promote economic growth to maximise the stability and prosperity of those states. So we are looking, broadly speaking, at an exit state such as that and therefore the exit strategy has to be: how do we work towards that?²⁷

8.23 Mr David Purnell, United Nations Association of Australia, suggested that any operation should have 'contingency processes worked into it so that it would be reviewed at certain points and choices would be made about what changes would be made—whether there would be a reduction in deployment, a rearrangement of deployment and all that sort of thing'. Otherwise, he argued, there is the 'danger of things drifting'.²⁸ He suggested:

...if there were a clearer, more transparent analysis of what was needed and what the stages might be so that everybody understood what we were committing ourselves to then we could assess...what was going on.²⁹

8.24 While Assistant Commissioner Walters recognised that ideally an exit strategy would be part of the planning, he was of the view that 'in some circumstances the exit strategy might not be as detailed as in others'. He used RAMSI as an example:

...when you look at RAMSI, the exit strategy is very much couched in terms of saying that we will be there as long as it takes to get the job

25 Roland Rich, *Crafting Security Council Mandates*, The Centre for Democratic Institutions, p. 18, <http://polsc.anu.au/rich%20paper.rft> (accessed 21 January 2008). The paper appeared as a chapter in United Nations Press, *The United Nations Role in Promoting Democracy: Between Ideals and Reality*, Edward Newman and Roland Rich, (ed).

26 Report on Wilton Park Conference 'The White Paper on Transnational Terrorism', WP844, *International Peace Support Operations: How can the Capacity Challenges be Met?*, 4–7 June 2007.

27 *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007, p. 12.

28 *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, pp. 25–26.

29 *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, p. 26.

finished. From a policing perspective, it is to capacity build the Solomon Islands police force to a point where it can stand on its own two feet and serve the people of the Solomon Islands. We expect that our contribution in terms of numbers and resources will be drawn down over a period of time, but rather than set a time frame around dates, it is more around achieving milestones regarding the capacity building or the development of the Solomon Islands police.³⁰

Milestones

8.25 Many of the references cited above refer to the importance of an exit strategy having milestones or benchmarks. A number of commentators have drawn attention to the importance of understanding the significance of these markers. Professor Simon Chesterman, New York University, noted that elections are often cited as 'the appropriate endpoint for international engagement in a crisis'.³¹ He observed that elections in conflict areas such as Cambodia and Bosnia, or 'impoverished countries' such as East Timor are 'rightly regarded as technical triumphs'. He stated, however, that technical triumphs have 'only rarely been matched by political success' and 'in general, the emphasis has been on form at the expense of substance'. He said:

The transition to democracy requires a transformation in public mentality similar to that which underpins respect for rule of law. Elections may provide evidence of this transformation, but they are only a small part of what is required to realize it.³²

8.26 Mr Michael Maley from the Australian Electoral Commission reinforced this point. He said that the introduction of electoral processes into peacekeeping operations 'is not a magic formula for resolving political conflicts'.³³

8.27 UNTAET again provides an example of the importance of having appropriate milestones as reliable indicators of real progress. Sergio Vieira De Mello, Transitional Administrator for East Timor (1999–2002), highlighted the need for substance in determining a milestone or end state. In 2001, he informed the Security Council that UNTAET would be judged 'not just on how many schools it rebuilds or roofs it replaces'. He explained:

30 *Committee Hansard*, 25 July 2007, pp. 12–13.

31 Simon Chesterman, 'Building Up or Building Down the State: State-building and Humanitarian and Development Assistance', Chesterman paper (02/11/05), SSRIC Humanitarian Action Seminar, 8 February 2005, p. 15.

32 Simon Chesterman, 'Building Up or Building Down the State: State-building and Humanitarian and Development Assistance', Chesterman paper (02/11/05), SSRIC Humanitarian Action Seminar, 8 February 2005. See also Roland Rich, *Crafting Security Council Mandates*, The Centre for Democratic Institutions, nd, p. 19, <http://polsc.anu.au/rich%20paper.rft> (accessed 21 January 2008). The paper appeared as a chapter in United Nations Press, *The United Nations Role in Promoting Democracy: Between Ideals and Reality*, Edward Newman and Roland Rich, (ed).

33 *Submission 21*, Annex 1, p. 14.

Rather, judgement will also rest on how successfully UNTAET is able to assist the East Timorese in fully realizing their independence as masters of their own future and their own democratic and independent State.³⁴

8.28 He stressed that the aim was to ensure that the transition to self-government occurred gradually throughout the mandate, rather than suddenly at the moment of independence.³⁵

8.29 This view was supported by others addressing the Security Council at that time who also stressed the importance of ensuring that benchmarks measure real progress. For example, Harri Holkeri, President of the General Assembly, stated that the international community 'cannot afford to exit East Timor prematurely, or without a well-prepared strategy'.³⁶ In 2006, the then Secretary-General, Mr Kofi Annan, observed that while the UN removed its last soldiers from East Timor in May 2005, 'within just one year an international force had returned to the country as it slipped back towards violence'. He reported:

Observing the setback in Timor Leste, we have been reminded that, while the concerns of the Organization's financial and personnel contributors must always be taken into account, it is important that the international community does not withdraw too hastily from conflict-scarred countries.³⁷

8.30 A recent report on the mission to Timor-Leste underlined the importance of using substantial long-term change rather than a 'technical' achievement as an indicator for a successful exit strategy. It noted that the elections in Timor-Leste in 2007 were peaceful and assessed as 'being free and fair'. It went on to find, however, that the violence that followed the announcement of the formation of the new government was an 'indication of the fragility of the political situation and the need for further sustained efforts to build a truly democratic society'.³⁸

8.31 A similar situation can be identified in Solomon Islands. Most observers agree that the ADF's pacification was a success with over 6,000 militiamen arrested, over 9,000 charges laid and more than 3,000 guns confiscated.³⁹ A recent study noted, however, that while civil stability has returned, 'security gains will prove temporary if the underlying economic stagnation that led to the civil unrest is not addressed'. In its view, the security gains are fragile and 'must be matched by efforts to reform the real

34 UN Security Council, 4265th Meeting, S/PV.4265, 26 January 2001, p. 8.

35 UN Security Council, 4265th Meeting, S/PV.4265, 26 January 2001, p. 4.

36 UN Security Council, 4265th Meeting, S/PV.4265, 26 January 2001, p. 16.

37 UN General Assembly, *Report of the Secretary-General on the work of the Organization*, Supplement No. 1, A/61/1, 2006, pp. 15 and 16.

38 UN Security Council, *Report of the Security Council Mission to Timor-Leste, 24 to 30 November 2007*, S/2007/711, 6 December 2007, p. 2.

39 Gaurav Sodhi, 'Five out of Ten: A Performance Report on the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)', The Centre for Independent Studies, *Issue Analysis*, no. 92, 31 January 2008, p. 1.

bottlenecks in the economy'. It concluded that 'without addressing the real constraints to development, it has no exit strategy'.⁴⁰

Committee view

8.32 The committee notes that the success of a mission is secured not only through technical achievements such as an election, confiscation of arms or the physical repair or construction of homes and buildings, but rather through a longer-term process of state building. The end state and the exit strategy should recognise the challenge of establishing sustainable peace and the processes needed to reach that state. The committee recognises the importance of managing expectations about the success of a complex mission. It believes that the exit strategy should convey the message that achieving sustainable peace takes time and demands significant resources.

8.33 The committee acknowledges the views expressed on East Timor, especially that withdrawal from a post-conflict state should not be hasty and that despite other pressing concerns such as financial and personnel commitments, a mission's success depends on the painstaking task of state-building. Equally, it may depend on the willingness of domestic actors to engage in dialogue that addresses the root causes of civil breakdown which initially led to the need for a peacekeeping operation.

8.34 East Timor also shows that while peacekeepers may refer to the progress of a mission through phases toward the goal of lasting peace and security, that transition is not always linear and that a post-conflict phase may experience setbacks such as renewed outbreaks of violence.

Conclusion

8.35 The committee stresses the importance of specifying in a mission's mandate an exit state. Moreover, the mandate should recognise that a peacekeeping operation moves in stages toward its final objective. The committee agrees with the weight of evidence that the identified exit state should also be accompanied by a roadmap or exit strategy—a clear and structured plan for achieving the end state. This strategy relates back to the objectives set out in the mandate which, as noted earlier, must be clearly defined, realistic and attainable and based on a sound understanding of all facets of the problem. The committee believes that it is important for an exit strategy or roadmap for transition to contain milestones against which the outcomes of peacekeeping and peace enforcing measures can be assessed. The committee notes that these benchmarks should be more than indicators of 'technical' achievements and while identifying key attainments such as an election, should also take cognizance of, and mark progress toward, the ultimate goal of sustainable peace.

40 Gaurav Sodhi, 'Five out of Ten: A Performance Report on the Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands (RAMSI)', The Centre for Independent Studies, *Issue Analysis*, no. 92, 31 January 2008, pp. 1 and 18.

8.36 Nonetheless, the committee accepts that in a UN operation where Australia is not taking a lead role and its national interests are not vitally linked to the success of the operation, that the government may decide to commit forces for a specified time. As noted earlier, the UN requires 'a two year warning period' to allow it to find replacements. The committee regards this arrangement as reasonable. The committee believes, however, that even where the government's exit strategy is tied to an exit date, Australia's participation should fit into the overall strategy of achieving the mission's objectives. Thus, the government should clearly articulate the objectives of the Australian contribution in light of the mission's mandate and how they are to be achieved.

Recommendation 7

8.37 The committee recommends that, when considering a proposed peacekeeping operation, the Australian Government examine in detail the mission's exit strategy to ensure that Australia's contribution is part of a well-planned and structured approach to achieving clearly stated objectives. When committing forces to an operation the Australian Government should clearly articulate its exit strategy.

Part III

Preparation and coordination for peacekeeping operations

In this part of the report, the committee examines how the changing nature of peacekeeping operations has affected Australian government agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) in preparing their personnel for deployment. It looks at the role of respective organisations in peacekeeping, their personnel and equipment and pre-deployment training, including issues of health and wellbeing.

First, the committee discusses the two main Australian contributors to peacekeeping operations, the Australian Defence Force (ADF) and the Australian Federal Police (AFP). This is followed by a chapter on ADF–AFP interoperability. The committee then turns to other government agencies to explore how they prepare their personnel for deployment. The committee is particularly interested in examining how government agencies coordinate their activities in peacekeeping operations.

Having considered preparation for peacekeeping from a whole-of-government perspective, the committee looks at Australian NGOs. It explores their role in peacekeeping and their relationship with government agencies. Taking a whole-of-nation approach, the committee looks at the level of cooperation and coordination between the government and non-government sectors, which includes an examination of civil–military interaction.