Chapter 16

Working with host countries

16.1   The relationship with host countries is critical to the success of peacekeeping operations. To achieve a secure and stable environment in which local people can build a sustainable peace, peacekeepers need to be in a constructive partnership with both the host government and the local community. Cultural differences, changing political priorities and varying or shifting expectations are a few of the factors that can strain the relationship and adversely affect a peacekeeping operation.

16.2   In this chapter, the committee discusses the nature of the relationship between those contributing to a peacekeeping operation and the host country. It seeks to identify the fundamental principles for developing cooperative and productive relationships.

Sovereignty and intervention

16.3   The challenge confronting peacekeepers is to help restore, maintain and build peace and stability while respecting the right of the local people to determine their own affairs. It is no small matter for a sovereign government to seek international assistance to establish or maintain internal peace. Professor Edward Wolfers, a former adviser to the Papua New Guinea Government, provided some insights into the sensitivities attached to inviting external assistance:

> It is hard to describe how difficult it can be for politicians and officials proud of their country's sovereignty and independence and sensitive to criticism and perceptions of failure to recognize the necessity (or, at least, the possible advantages) and agree to an external, third-party presence and role in the resolution or aftermath of an internal conflict…Acknowledging the need for a third-party is, in certain respects, both an unwelcome intrusion into a vision, even a dream, and an unwelcome, discomforting admission of failure in practice.[1]

16.4   Thus, there will always be tensions and sensitivities in the relationship between peacekeepers and the people of the host state. In this context, the committee looks at the challenges confronting peacekeepers in resolving the paradox of promoting national self-determination through outside intervention.[2] They include:

- maintaining the legitimacy and credibility of a peacekeeping operation in light of differing priorities, changing expectations and cultural sensitivities;

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1   *Submission 39*, p. 10.

2   See Roland Paris and Timothy D. Sisk, *Managing Contradictions: the Inherent Dilemmas of Postwar Statebuilding,* International Peace Academy, November 2007, p. 4.

- restoring or rebuilding state institutions without reinforcing the structures that gave rise to the conflict or imposing unwelcome outside norms and values; and

- building local capacity while avoiding host country dependency on the participating countries.

Legitimacy and credibility

16.5   In Chapter 6 of this report, the committee noted that the legitimacy conferred on a mission can be fragile if parties to the dispute question the status of the legal documents authorising the operation; if they re-interpret the documents; or if they withdraw their consent. Further, it noted that the public's attitude towards the mission is a key factor influencing the perception of legitimacy, which is why local priorities and expectations are important considerations for peacekeepers.

Conflicting priorities

16.6   Different views on how an operation works toward achieving its objectives can lead to vastly different perceptions about the legitimacy of a mission. A 2006 report by a UN special committee emphasised that the government of the host country has the sovereign right and primary responsibility 'to determine national priorities for peacebuilding activities'.[3] Nevertheless, the hopes and goals of the host country and those of the participating countries are not always the same. The AFP observed:

> It is a difficult task with all peacekeeping operations to balance the need to enable local government to run its affairs as a sovereign authority when there is an overwhelming requirement to maintain security and law and order.[4]

16.7   Professor Andrew Goldsmith, Flinders University School of Law, noted that an initial peacekeeping role, where warring parties are separated and basic law and order is restored, is something which meets with 'pretty universal regard from the local populations'. On the other hand, he argued that as operations progress:

> …the longer term and often more politically contested activities around capacity building and peace building [are] where many of these political problems and perception problems become more manifest and difficult to engage with.[5]

16.8   Such a situation developed in Solomon Islands where some local groups, at first favourable to the intervention, changed their minds as RAMSI progressed. In his research on international state-building, Dr Michael Fullilove, Lowy Institute for

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3   UN General Assembly, *Report of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations and its Working Group at the 2006 substantive session*, New York, 27 February–17 March 2006, A/60/19, 22 March 2006, paragraph 114.

4   AFP, answer to written question on notice 6, 25 July 2007.

5   *Committee Hansard,* 20 August 2007, p. 48.

International Policy, noted that even though the restoration of law and order in Solomon Islands was in everyone's interests, including the Solomon Islands elite, the 'concentration on economic reform and clean government threatens some of those interests'.[6] Associate Professor Wainwright also observed that 'some of the people implicated in corrupt activity are among those who invited RAMSI in to Solomon Islands'.[7] Indeed, the 2005 Report of the Pacific Islands Forum (PIF) Eminent Persons Group (EPG) categorised some critics of RAMSI as belonging to a group 'who feel that their individual vested interests are threatened by RAMSI's presence'.[8]

16.9   RAMSI also provides a recent example of the friction that may occur between members of the host government and a participating member after basic law and order have been restored. During 2007, tensions mounted between Australia as a major contributor to RAMSI and some members of the Solomon Islands Government.[9] According to the then Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Alexander Downer, there appeared to be in Solomon Islands 'a deliberate push to undermine RAMSI, to tarnish its reputation, and make it hard for it to continue its work'. He indicated that RAMSI personnel and their families were having difficulties entering and remaining in Solomon Islands. He also mentioned that the Solomon Islands Government had 'spoken about removing the legal protection which allows RAMSI personnel to undertake their work efficiently and independently'.[10]

16.10   This dispute resulted in the Australian Minister for Foreign Affairs using the local media to publish an open letter to the people of Solomon Islands seeking their continuing support for the mission. The Solomon Islands Prime Minister, Manasseh Sogavare, strongly objected to this approach, finding it 'absurd for the Foreign Affairs Minister of a foreign state to have the guts to appeal to the people of Solomon Islands

6   Dr Michael Fullilove, *The Testament of the Solomons: RAMSI and International State-Building*, Lowy Institute for International Policy, 2006, p. 18.

7   Associate Professor Elsina Wainwright, *How is RAMSI faring? Progress, challenges, and lessons learned,* Australian Strategic Policy Institute, April 2005, p. 5. Assistant Commissioner Jevtovic also noted, 'It is difficult in the context that our presence is not always welcome. We often find ourselves in situations where the majority of the community want us, but certain elements don't.' 'Policing the neighbourhood and keeping peace in the Pacific', *Platypus Magazine,* Edition 96, September 2007, p. 15.

8   Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *Mission Helpem Fren, A Review of the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, p. 15.

9   Reason for opposition was that there was not a satisfactory plan for training, purchasing, maintenance and security of weapons; the intended timeframe for re-arming was too short; and there was no evidence of broad community support for re-armament. RAMSI, *RAMSI concerned about plans to re-arm Solomon Islands police*, Press Release, 19 January 2007; The Solomon Islands Government did not progress plans to re-arm the police: *RAMSI welcomes decision not to re-arm police*, 25 February 2007, www.ramsi.org, (accessed 27 February 2007).

10   A letter to the People of Solomon Islands from the Hon Alexander Downer MP, Minister for Foreign Affairs, Australia, Attachment A to answer to question in writing no. 5423, *House Hansard*, 22 March 2007, p. 206.

to allow their laws to be trampled on by foreigners'.[11] In October 2007, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Solomon Islands raised in the UN General Assembly the matter of RAMSI and his country's sovereignty:

> However disguised and rationalized, intervention and occupation allow assisting nations to spend and earn substantial revenue for their supporting businesses and industries. My Government is too nationalistic to become captive to the fortunes that justify our perpetual retention under a state of siege. My Prime Minister and my fellow ministers and parliamentarians remain unmoved by Australian resistance to our attempts to reclaim our sovereignty and independence.[12]

16.11   The Australian Government refuted these assertions as 'completely unfounded'.[13] Although relations between the two governments have since improved, these incidents highlight the potential for conflict to arise between host and participating countries.

16.12   The Pacific Islands Forum EPG was of the view that those in Solomon Islands who feel as though their vested interests are under threat from RAMSI are 'clearly adept in their usage of the media'. The committee also notes the EPG's observation that communication with the people of Solomon Islands is an important means of staying on top of misinformation.[14]

Expectations

16.13   Peacekeeping operations in both East Timor and Solomon Islands also show the importance of managing local expectations. A number of commentators have referred to the unrealistic hopes generated by the deployment of peacekeeping operations in East Timor.[15] For example, Sergio Vieira De Mello, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, noted in 2000 that the high expectations of

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11   Prime Minister Sogavare also said that 'it was the rightful duty of his government to express concern over the RAMSI arrangement amid fears that the mission had become Australia's agent, designed to suppress the legitimate government of Solomon Islands'. Solomon Islands Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Sogavare denies claim on undermining RAMSI,* 26 February 2007.

12   UN General Assembly, 13th Plenary Session, A/62/PV.13, 1 October 2007, p. 25

13   UN General Assembly, 15th Plenary Session, A/62/PV.15, 2 October 2007, p. 47.

14   Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *Mission Helpem Fren, A Review of the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, p. 15.

15   See above footnote and Katsumi Ishizuka, Kyoei University, Japan, 'State-building in East Timor', IAPS seminar series, 2004/2005; Hansjoerg Strohmeyer, 'Policing the Peace: Post-Conflict Judicial System Reconstruction in East Timor', *UNSW Law Journal*, vol 24, no. 1, 2001, p. 177.

the East Timorese people had not 'translated into immediate, visible, large-scale development results' causing frustration, impatience and disappointment.[16]

16.14   A similar trend can be detected in Solomon Islands. The 2005 Pacific Islands Forum EPG report found that RAMSI's 'initial successes were strongly felt on the ground' and that support and appreciation for its work was 'overwhelming'. Success, however, had generated high expectations: according to the report, there seemed to be 'broadening expectation that RAMSI will be responsible for, or will fix, everything'.[17]

16.15   The report argued that this misperception needed to be addressed 'to avoid the further growth of unrealistic expectations'. In its view, it was important for Solomon Islanders to understand that the role of RAMSI was 'to help create the conditions necessary for a return to stability, peace and a growing economy'.[18]

16.16   In this regard, the committee draws attention to the comment by the EPG, cited earlier, on the importance of communication with the local people in countering negative views of the mission.[19] The committee also notes a recent Oxfam report that found that, while many Solomon Islanders welcomed RAMSI's role in ending conflict, the wider population appeared to have little understanding of the full range of the mission's activities and how these extended beyond policing.[20]

Committee view

16.17   East Timor and Solomon Islands provide examples of the importance of respecting a host country's sovereignty. They point to the need to ensure that accurate information about the mission, its goals, progress and limitations is disseminated widely to keep local people fully informed about, and to help manage expectations of, a mission. In this regard, the committee notes that transparency and open communication in a peacekeeping operation is an effective means of garnering support and strengthening the perceived legitimacy of the mission. The committee believes that developing policies and strategies for managing local expectations is a major consideration when planning a peacekeeping operation. Establishing effective means of conversing with local authorities and the community more broadly also has implications for the mix of skills required of a peacekeeper.

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16   Sergio Vieira De Mello, Statement, Lisbon Donors' Meeting on East Timor, 22–23 June 2000, p. 6.

17   Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *Mission Helpem Fren, A Review of the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, paragraphs 19, 27 and 28.

18   Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *A Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, p. 10.

19   Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *Mission Helpem Fren, A Review of the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, p. 15.

20   Oxfam Australia and Oxfam New Zealand, *Bridging the gap between state and society,* July 2006, p. 7.

Conduct of peacekeepers

16.18   The conduct of peacekeepers also has the potential to affect the credibility of an operation. Inappropriate behaviour can weaken local support and provide fuel for those seeking to discredit or otherwise spoil an operation. Dr Breen commented that an 'elite lifestyle of partying' and fraternisation, in particular, are 'not a good look'. He said:

> These operations emphasised being a guest in someone's country and behaving appropriately. I think it has to be understood by our troops that that is a winning card, a very positive thing. It requires a certain amount of discipline but, again, it goes back to family respect. You are there to help families, so you behave yourself. You are not there to party on in nightclubs.[21]

16.19   At this point, the committee notes that a number of UN reviews have been conducted to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeepers in places such as the Democratic Republic of Congo, Sudan, Haiti, Sierra Leone and Timor-Leste.[22] These incidents severely damaged the reputation of the UN and international peacekeeping operations.[23] The revelations prompted re-thinking and reform of the UN's approach to preventing and punishing violations of its standard of conduct.[24]

16.20   Although there has been no suggestion of such misconduct by Australian peacekeepers, the committee recommends that the Australian Government and relevant agencies exercise constant vigilance to minimise the risk of it occurring. The committee notes that as personnel from a number of agencies, including contractors, now contribute to peacekeeping operations, it is important that standards of behaviour are maintained across Australia's whole contingent. The behaviour of personnel, both on specific duty and during their own free time, is critical to host country perceptions of an operation.

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21   *Committee Hansard,* 5 September 2007, p. 54.

22   See for example, Update Report No. 3 Sexual exploitation and abuse by UN peacekeeping personnel, 20 February 2006.

23   Letter from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly dated 24 March 2005, A/59/710. Then UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, reported 'Such abhorrent acts are a violation of the fundamental duty of care that all United Nations peacekeeping personnel owe to the local population that they are sent to serve'.

24   In 2005, the report *A comprehensive strategy to eliminate future sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nation Peacekeeping operations* was released, leading to a two-year package of reforms. These reforms focus on preventative measures, enforcement measures and remedial action to assist victims of abuse. UN General Assembly, A/59/710, 24 March 2005; DPKO's Comprehensive Strategy on the Elimination of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/CDT/strategy.html (accessed 1 April 2008).

Peacekeepers in the local community

A Civil Military Liaison Officer assists a child to take a mark at the Burns Creek district in Honiara, Solomon Islands (image courtesy Department of Defence).

16.21   In a 2006 article, Dr Michael Fullilove spoke of the 'profile' that is adopted by different international missions. He noted that 'one of the striking things about RAMSI to an outside visitor with experience of other international interventions is the relative lightness of touch it exhibits'. He observed that compared to some other international missions, RAMSI has adopted a 'fairly low profile' with the main contingent housed in an old resort near the airport. Dr Fullilove contrasted this modest accommodation to

the 'grand government buildings in the centre of town occupied by the UN in Dili and the Coalition Provisional Authority in Baghdad'. He wrote of RAMSI:

> One result of this basing decision was that the infamous white four wheel drives are out of sight. A 'no-fraternisation' policy, designed to avoid prostitution and other unattractive spillover effects, has largely been followed.[25]

16.22   Nonetheless, he accepted that 'RAMSI's presence is noticeable, especially in Honiara, where the influx of expatriates has increased certain living costs'.[26]

Committee view

16.23   The committee recognises that the presence of peacekeepers in a small island state such as Solomon Islands affects the local economy and may cause resentment among some of the local people. Such a situation highlights the need for Australia, as the main contributor to RAMSI, to ensure that the local people are equipped to take charge of their own affairs as soon as practicable. This matter is discussed later in this chapter.

Recommendation 20

16.24   The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider the lessons from RAMSI regarding the positive local reaction to the mission's 'relatively low profile' with a view to adopting this approach as policy and best practice.

Local values and institution building

16.25   A number of submitters emphasised the view that to engage effectively with the local community and to create a favourable impression, peacekeepers must also be aware of, and sensitive to, societal and cultural differences. This awareness is most important where peacekeepers are helping to restore or rebuild local institutions. According to Dr Breen:

> …the measure of success…is whether our peacekeepers make contact in a way that quickly restores the public's confidence in their security and therefore has the knock-on effect of getting them back to being productive, to going home, to planting crops, to getting the kids off to school. From the

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25   Michael Fullilove, 'RAMSI and State Building in Solomon Islands', *Defender,* Autumn 2006, p. 34. See also Dr Bob Breen, 'Peace support operations' in Australian Strategic Policy Institute, *Australia and the South Pacific: Rising to the challenge*, Special Report, Issue 12, March 2008, pp. 43–53: he noted the success of a 'low-profile', culturally-sensitive mission in Bougainville, (p. 47).

26   Michael Fullilove, 'RAMSI and State Building in Solomon Islands', *Defender,* Autumn 2006, p. 34.

peacekeepers' end, if they are culturally sensitive and linguistically competent they facilitate that process much faster.[27]

16.26   Professor Edward Wolfers similarly noted the importance of understanding the local and political context of a conflict in order to be able to assess the peace process. He observed in Bougainville:

> The fluid and evolving character of the Bougainvillean factions is pertinent to explaining the impatience, amounting at times to frustration, displayed by foreigners (including members of peace missions) not familiar with Melanesian forms of social organization and mobilization when they could not discern what was happening at key points, pressed for greater activity, and expressed fear that the entire peace process might break down. What they did not always appreciate was that the communities and the organizations involved in the Bougainville peace process were not command systems…In practice, almost everything had to be negotiated, especially if more than one local community were involved. For this to happen, mutual confidence and sufficient trust to co-operate had to be built, even among leaders and commanders identified as members of the same faction.[28]

16.27   Dr Peter Londey, Australian War Memorial, suggested that sometimes peacekeeping operations try to 'introduce a culture of government which is just completely alien, in a sense, to the local culture'.[29] Indeed, Dr Jeremy Farrall, ANU, highlighted the short-sightedness of introducing systems without regard to the customs and traditions of the local people. He argued that the foundations for rule of law institutions can be strengthened by basing them as much as possible in the local context.[30] In his view:

> ...there is a real danger that, if these institutions are set up according to foreign models and supported by foreign actors, when the international community withdraws, as it must one day do, these institutions may implode.[31]

16.28   Similarly, Professor John Braithwaite, ANU, observed that 'Where there is a need to establish a new system, it needs to be grounded in the local society for it to

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27   *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, pp. 52–53.

28   *Submission 39*, p. 7.

29   Dr Peter Londey, *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, p. 52. See also Bu Wilson who cited the 'overwhelming' failure to pay attention to local context as one of the significant mistakes made by UNTAET in the development of an indigenous police force in East Timor. Bu Wilson, *Challenges to Sustainable Police-Building: the Development of the Policia Nacional Timor-Leste*, conference paper, included in Lisa Palmer, Sara Niner, Lia Kent (Eds.), *Exploring the Tensions of Nation Building in Timor-Leste*, Proceedings of a forum held at the University of Melbourne on 15 September 2006, Research paper number 1, School of Social and Environmental Enquiry, University of Melbourne, 2007, p. 52.

30   *Submission 29*, p. 7.

31   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 21.

become accepted'. He observed that this approach was taken in Bougainville where the police service has been built on a village community policing model, with part-time police trained by the New Zealand police in each village.[32] The process of reconciliation in Bougainville provides another example of where strategies and solutions were adapted to local conditions:

> …the Bougainville political and justice system leadership have chosen to go down that informal reconciliation route. It is more of a restorative justice route, if you like. That has worked well and has connected to their traditions of doing justice.[33]

16.29   Professor Braithwaite contrasted the reconciliation process in Bougainville with that in Solomon Islands where the traditional systems were susceptible to exploitation:

> Thugs were using traditions to try to get compensation payouts, which was sort of a monetarising of traditional, customary reconciliation, so that maybe the more formal rule of law path in the Solomons was the right way to go. So it was one of those areas where we perhaps did better than in some areas because we were listening rather than having some template for the right way to do rule of law capacity development throughout the region.[34]

16.30   Clearly, when helping to re-build or create new institutions, peacekeepers must be careful that, while respecting local customs and norms, they do not replicate a system that gave rise to the conflict in the first place. Thus the capability, capacity and willingness of the local population to embrace reforms is another major consideration for a peacekeeping operation. Professor Braithwaite used Solomon Islands and East Timor to make the point that each mission is different, requiring tailored-made solutions to nation building. Referring to Solomon Islands, he said:

> …the positives would be that the central banking institutions work terrifically well under indigenous leaderships. The courts also work terrifically well. The prosecution and defence part of the system works very well.[35]

16.31   He stated that, in contrast, the introduction of the central banking institutions, the courts and judicial system did not work in Timor.[36] This observation was reinforced by Professor Hilary Charlesworth, ANU:

> The UN did not grapple sufficiently with specific Timorese social networks that refused to map readily onto the Western model of citizen/state

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32   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 22.

33   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 23.

34   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 23.

35   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007. p. 22.

36   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 22.

relations, where the idea of branches of government, such as the judiciary, the legislature and the executive, structure political life.[37]

16.32   Adding weight to these views on the importance of understanding how the local community works, Professor Goldsmith observed that in Timor-Leste:

> We were training police in basic investigative notebook maintenance and things like this while the ministry of interior was self-destructing, leading to the implosion of the police more generally…I think this re-emphasises the fact that it is not technical issues that we need to be strengthening our hand in in many respects; it is really about the deeper politics and the more broadly based cultural context in which we are trying to do what we regard as often being very basic police development activity. We cannot decouple our police training from these contextual political issues.[38]

Committee view

16.33   When it comes to rebuilding a state's institutional infrastructure, each peacekeeping operation is unique. The long-term success of a peacekeeping operation relies on proper planning based on a sound knowledge of the local context and a comprehensive analysis of the mix of factors that contributed to the conflict. There must be a strong understanding of the political and socio-economic context in order to align the peacekeeping process with the host country's priorities, its capacity, local capability and commitment to manage and administer the system. It also needs to be embedded in the host country's society and political structures without reinforcing the structures that gave rise to the initial conflict.

Australia's dominance in the region

16.34   Evidence before the committee indicated that the perception of Australia as a commanding presence in a peacekeeping operation could also undermine the credibility of a mission. According to a number of analysts and submitters, Australia's dominance in the region heightens sensitivities to Australia's lead role in peacekeeping operations, particularly in RAMSI, and has the potential to adversely affect the local attitude toward the mission. Oxfam noted:

> …there is a danger that intervention in Solomon Islands is very much an action by outsiders, driven by external imperatives, with little engagement of the people in whose name they act. Some Solomon Islands critics have argued that, in many areas, the reform process is being driven not by local need, but by the needs of Australia as the key regional power.[39]

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37   Hilary Charlesworth, *Building Democracy and Justice after Conflict,* Academy of the Social Sciences 2007, Cunningham Lecture 2006, p. 4.

38   *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007, p. 50.

39   Oxfam Australia and Oxfam New Zealand, *Bridging the gap between state and society,* July 2006, p. 16. See also Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *Mission Helpem Fren, A Review of the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, p. 10.

16.35   Professor Goldsmith also noted that 'one can visit Honiara or go to the Solomon Islands and be struck by the huge Australian footprint that the mission evidences'.[40] He explained:

> There is a natural regional dominance. We have the relative scale and ability to respond. One would have to ask: along with that capacity to respond, what is our commensurate cultural and political aptitude to do so?...Australia faces an almost inevitable perception in the region of being a kind of symbolic big brother, and that poses a number of legitimacy problems. It raises the question of how Australia does engage—whether there are ways of tackling some of these issues that do not pose the big bully or big brother symbolism that is easily generated out of these kinds of engagements, even with the best will in the world of the Australian side of the engagement.[41]

16.36   The United Nations Association of Australia (UNAA) also referred to recent non-UN-mandated interventions by Australia in the Pacific region and the problem of the perception of dominance. It suggested that Australia's dominant political and economic position in the region allows these interventions to be characterised more easily as 'self-serving'.[42]

Local ownership and capacity building

16.37   Establishing good relations with the local population is vital to the credibility of, and continuing local support for, the mission. Ultimately, however, the people of the host country will assess the operation on how successfully they believe it is moving toward lasting peace and stability and creating the conditions that would allow them to take charge of their future. To manage their own affairs effectively, the local population need to have the necessary skills and resources. Thus, a peacekeeping operation must consider how best to assist the local population build its own capacity for self-government.

Involving the host country

16.38   The *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* state clearly that national and local ownership is 'critical to the successful implementation of a peace process'.[43] Reviews and submitters to this inquiry further underlined the importance of promoting local ownership. They recognised that while peacekeepers may be able to enforce security, peace needs to be made, owned and supported by host countries. For example, although a 2007 review by a PIF Task

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40   *Committee Hansard,* 20 August 2007, p. 50.

41   *Committee Hansard,* 20 August 2007, p. 49.

42   *Submission 3*, paragraph 4.3.

43   UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines,* 2008, p. 39.

Force found 'strong and widespread support' for RAMSI throughout Solomon Islands, it reported that:

> …while RAMSI's presence in Solomon Islands was designed to strengthen Solomon Islands sovereignty through support to key institutions, questions of sovereignty and sustainability have emerged as key issues. The Task Force found a sense among Solomon Islands elected political leaders that they did not have full control of the direction their country was moving. Notwithstanding the extensive consultation that has taken place at officials' level between the SIG [Solomon Islands Government] and RAMSI, the absence of effective information flows and the inadequacy of mechanisms for engagement at the higher levels of SIG emerged as a constant theme. [44]

16.39   The Task Force review process itself initiated reforms in this area, including the appointment of a Solomon Islands Government Special Envoy to RAMSI to work with the RAMSI Special Coordinator and PIF Representative. It recommended a regular meeting of this group with the SIG Cabinet, to 'ensure that Ministers are fully informed of RAMSI activities and take ownership of its work, to ensure full understandings of RAMSI's operations and to facilitate the resolution of any differences'. [45]

16.40   Professor Wolfers focused more broadly on the importance of engaging the wider community in the peacekeeping process. He was of the view that while the support of international operations in Bougainville was critical, peace was made by the people of the host country:

> The foundations of peace have been twofold: (1) the beliefs and actions of thousands of people, women, children and men, on the ground, praying, reconciling and taking practical steps to promote peace, including by putting pressure on others; and (2) the determination 'to secure lasting peace by peaceful means' at the national level on a bipartisan—in reality, a truly national—basis. [46]

16.41   Oxfam reached similar conclusions about Solomon Islands:

> …if Solomon Islanders at all levels of society are not genuinely engaged in the process of reconstruction and reconciliation, the causes of conflict will not dissipate but instead retreat to the shadows and margins of the state building enterprise. [47]

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44   Pacific Islands Forum*, Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)*, *April–June 2007*, p. 4, www.forumsec.org/_resources/article/files/RAMSI%20Review%20Task%20Force%20Final%20Report.pdf (accessed 24 January 2008).

45   Pacific Islands Forum, *Review of the Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI), April–June 2007,* p. 7.

46   *Submission 39*, p. 20.

47   Oxfam Australia and Oxfam New Zealand, *Bridging the gap between state and society,* July 2006, p. 18.

16.42   Although international observers on peacekeeping agree with the general view that the principle 'of 'local ownership' is central to the success of a peacekeeping operation, they also accept that 'its practical realization remains very difficult'.[48] For example, Associate Professor Wainwright commented on the need to provide the breathing space or the window of opportunity for the host country to endeavour to solve the deep-seated problems causing the conflict. She argued, however, that the task is 'enormously fraught and complex' but needs to be done, because if the problems are not resolved, 'you are going to continue to see the kinds of flare-ups we have just seen in East Timor in the last year'. She concluded:

> …the challenge for an assisting country such as Australia needs to be to work with the governments of the affected states to help generate the local political will and the demand within the affected populations for solutions—to find and to implement solutions to these crises.[49]

16.43   A number of analysts have cited UNTAET as an example of a mission that 'did not promote local ownership and failed to give sufficient attention to existing local structures and how they might interact with the new ones'. Mr David Harland, UN Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, has stated:

> Other than at the level of the political elites, UNTAET was not good at building local ownership of the transition process.[50]

16.44   He cited several factors that exacerbated this failure to engage Timorese in many day-to-day activities where Timorese support was needed and Timorese capacity needed to grow. These included lack of UNTAET personnel with relevant language skills and lack of translation service. He concluded:

> …future missions need to be able to communicate effectively from the beginning, and to bring host country nationals into decision-making at all levels, not just at the elite level.[51]

16.45   The discussion about local ownership again highlights the dilemma facing peacekeeping personnel. They must establish the correct balance between developing the administrative capacities of the host country while allowing the host country to manage its own affairs. For example, in some peacekeeping operations, local capacity

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48   See for example, Lara Olson and Hrach Gregorian, *Side by side or together? Working for security, development & peace in Afghanistan and Liberia,* The Peacebuilding, Development and Security Program (PDSP), Centre for Military and Strategic Studies, University of Calgary, October 2007, p. 15; UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008, p. 40.

49   *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007, p. 13.

50   David Harland, *UN Peacekeeping operations in post-conflict Timor-Leste: Accomplishments and lessons learned, UNTAET Governance and Public administration: 1999 to mid–2000,* UN Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, April 2005, p. 9.

51   David Harland, *UN Peacekeeping operations in post-conflict Timor-Leste: Accomplishments and lessons learned, UNTAET Governance and Public administration: 1999 to mid–2000,* UN Peacekeeping Best Practices Unit, April 2005, p. 9.

may be so lacking that mission personnel are needed to fill key positions, including in the areas of law and order. Indeed, a number of Australian peacekeepers have and are currently working in line positions in various institutions in host countries.

16.46   RAMSI provides a case study. It has been structured with local capacity building and strengthening of host country institutions as a central part of the mission. For example, experienced Australian public servants have been placed throughout the justice system in Solomon Islands 'to strengthen the country's ability to deal with the large number of arrests going through the court and prison systems'.[52] There are also advisers in line positions 'to get the bureaucracy functioning again'.

16.47   For example, integrating RAMSI personnel, with the same powers as their Solomon Island counterparts, within the existing law and order and governance structures, was seen as important for both early results and longer-term structural reform.[53] RAMSI's police component (the Participating Police Force) is headed by AFP Assistant Commissioner Denis McDermott, who is also appointed as a Deputy Commissioner of the Solomon Islands Police Force.[54] In 2004, Mr Nick Warner, then RAMSI Special Coordinator, noted that over time in-line advisers 'will be training up their counterparts to take on these functions to ensure the change in practices is sustained and sustainable'. Referring to Solomon Islands, Mr Warner was of the view that:

> In-line powers were vital to our ability to ensure that the justice system functions effectively in the short term, while being strengthened in the long term. A lesson from RAMSI is that these powers were crucial in achieving the fast turn-around in law and order and public finances.[55]

16.48   In 2005, the Pacific Islands Forum EPG agreed with this assessment but on a broader scale:

> Since assistance was extended to the Department of Finance and Treasury there has been a substantial improvement in revenue performance, expenditure control and debt-servicing. This in our view has been achieved because RAMSI also provided expertise to fill the vacant in-line positions in the Department as well as appropriate advisory support. It is clear to us

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52   Nick Warner, 'Operation Helpem Fren: Rebuilding the Nation of Solomon Islands', Speech to National Security Conference, 23 March 2004, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, p. 7, http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/department/040323_nsc_ramsi.html (accessed 17 April 2008).

53   *Submission 15*, p. 5.

54   See for example http://www.afp.gov.au/__data/assets/pdf_file/71469/26_28_AsaferandmoresecureSolomonIslands.pdf (accessed 12 June 2008).

55   Nick Warner, 'Operation Helpem Fren: Rebuilding the Nation of Solomon Islands', Speech to National Security Conference, 23 March 2004, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, p. 10, http://www.dfat.gov.au/media/speeches/department/040323_nsc_ramsi.html, (accessed 17 April 2008).

that this success would not have been possible without the intervention of RAMSI personnel in the hands-on implementation of its assistance to the Department. It is important to involve Solomon Islanders but there is a lack of qualified and experienced staff. We offer this same view in the case of the Ministry of Health.[56]

16.49   DFAT acknowledged, however, that deploying experts within local administrations may create difficulties for local capacity building. Mr Potts, DFAT, identified the problem of displacing or turning advisers into administrative staff almost by default, particularly in a fragile environment like Solomon Islands or even in larger countries such as Papua New Guinea. He said it was not something 'we would want to do without at least knowing it is happening and then assessing the implications'.[57]

16.50   The Australian National Audit Office (ANAO) referred to the challenges the AFP experienced in training Solomon Islanders to be self-sufficient and to take on the responsibility for functions such as law enforcement. Mr David Crossley, Executive Director, ANAO, provided the following example:

> Police officers would go along to an event and say, 'I'm here to watch your RSIP [Royal Solomon Islands Police] member take a sworn statement from this witness', but the RSIP member had no idea of how to do that. So the police officer would get frustrated and do it himself. We are saying: 'That is not exactly capacity building. We understand that you've got to do it'.[58]

16.51   Where peacekeepers are called on to supplement or even substitute for particular capabilities, the ultimate goal is to replace them with local people. The UN *Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* states clearly that the aim must always be:

> …to restore, as soon as possible, the ability of national actors and institutions to assume their responsibilities and to exercise their full authority, with due respect for internationally accepted norms and standards.[59]

16.52   The experience of the police in RAMSI highlights some of the tensions around local capacity building. Although integrating personnel within local structures has helped achieve results, Professor Goldsmith also considered it has led to perceptions of dominance:

> …there is the perception—not just a perception, in this case—that Australians are running both the Royal Solomon Islands Police and the

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56   Report of the Pacific Islands Forum Eminent Persons Group, *Mission Helpem Fren, A Review of the Regional Mission to Solomon Islands,* May 2005, p. 13.

57   *Committee Hansard*, 13 September 2007, p. 7.

58   *Committee Hansard*, 6 September 2007, p. 57.

59   UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*, 2008, p. 40.

Participating Police Force, the PPF. It does not take any great observer of events there to sit back and say, 'It looks like there are a lot of Australians running both sides of the operation there.' In hindsight, that underlines something that one might want to think about if one were to do it again or something similar.[60]

16.53   Clearly, integrating Australian personnel into local institutions may compensate in the short term for a lack of experienced or skilled local people but may create longer-term problems of dependency or the perception of dominance. In Chapter 12, the committee pointed to the importance of Australian peacekeepers involved in local capacity building having the ability to impart their skills and knowledge.[61] The above consideration of integrating Australian personnel into local structures strengthens the committee's findings.

Working with community groups

16.54   Civil society and community groups are particularly important in building an environment conducive to long-term peace. Dr Breen observed that the success of peacekeeping operations in the region is 'about engaging local civil society, especially women, clergy and traditional leaders in facilitating the peace process or creating the preconditions for one'.[62] He saw room for Australia to engage in this process at a deeper level:

> …concurrently [with peace enforcement], not sequentially, we should make sure we engage as soon as possible with civil society, which has often been hit for a six in these settings, in order to reassure and build confidence. I think it goes beyond peacekeeping, peace enforcement and peace building in the area of engagement—as neighbours, we should engage with our neighbourhood to try to look at the deeper problems.[63]

16.55   Austcare also commented on the importance of engaging at a deeper level. In its view, the Australian Government has 'tended to think primarily in terms of supporting and strengthening the host government's apparatus'. While Austcare recognised that such support is important, it considered that this support is of limited value 'unless underpinned by robust democratic development strategies focussed at the grassroots'. Austcare considered that NGOs have a significant contribution to make at the local community level, underscoring the importance of collaboration between government and NGO sectors in planning and implementing peacekeeping operations.[64] Ms Bu Wilson, ANU, also observed:

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60   *Committee Hansard*, 20 August 2007. pp. 53–54.

61   See paragraphs 12.19–12.21 and recommendation 11.

62   *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, p. 43.

63   *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, p. 48.

64   *Submission 11*, p. 13.

It may be possible to create a quasi-functioning state that is able to restore law and order and serve the interests of the intervening forces, but it often does not address the underlying causes of civil unrest, nor can it build long-term peace. Almost invariably such external interventions do not engage extensively with the realities of existence outside the national capital, and can be characterised by a failure to engage with non-state or sub-national actors.[65]

16.56   Consistent with this view, AusAID stated that in Pacific communities, there is often a divide between state institutions and society. It pointed out the need to enhance not only state institutions but also civil society and the relationship between the two.[66] For example, women and women's groups can have a central role in moving the peace process forward. Their contribution to peacekeeping is discussed later in Chapter 18.

Building local capacity—Australian Electoral Commission

16.57   The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) provides a good example of how an Australian agency is having notable success in developing local capacity by educating and training local people and involving them in formulating and implementing programs.

16.58   The AEC civic education program (CEP) in Solomon Islands was part of a broader strategy to strengthen and promote good governance and build accountable relationships between government and society.[67] Local staff worked on the design of curriculum materials and day-to-day management of the project. One AEC coordinator was in Solomon Islands full time and another periodically; the field coordinators and educators were Solomon Islanders. Mr Maley described one of the positive outcomes:

> It is a matter of some gratification to us that some of the people who worked with us on that operation have since been able to work internationally in doing capacity building work in other countries. For example, one of our very best facilitators from the civic education program in the Solomons has spent quite a bit of time in the last 12 months in Papua New Guinea, working with the Papua New Guinea Electoral Commission. That is the sort of objective that we try to work towards in putting together these operations.[68]

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65   Bu Wilson, *Challenges to Sustainable Police-Building: the Development of the Policia Nacional Timor-Leste*, conference paper, included in Lisa Palmer, Sara Niner, Lia Kent (Eds.), Exploring the Tensions of Nation Building in Timor-Leste, Proceedings of a forum held at the University of Melbourne on 15 September 2006, Research paper number 1, School of Social and Environmental Enquiry, University of Melbourne, 2007, p. 52.

66   *Submission 26*, pp. 16–17.

67   *Submission 21*, p. 8.

68   *Committee Hansard*, 5 September 2007, p. 13.

16.59   In 2001–2002, the AEC also carried out an AusAID-funded electoral capacity-building project in East Timor to support the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) set up by UNTAET. The project included an electoral administrators' course undertaken by all East Timorese IEC staff, with four of them later becoming accredited to run the course. The AEC commented:

> Over the life of the project, 11 international and 37 East Timorese staff (including 23 district staff and 14 Dili-based staff) were employed. At the project's completion, a body of trained staff (as many as 4500 people when polling officials are included) had been developed to provide a pool of trained personnel to be drawn upon in the conduct of future electoral events.[69]

16.60   The AEC's ability to provide supervision and training in host countries to ensure that electoral processes are free and fair is an important contribution to Australia's peacekeeping efforts. Its work in regional capacity building by educating and training local people in election processes is producing significant dividends, especially as these people are now using their skills in other Pacific countries. The committee commends the AEC for its work in international electoral assistance and capacity building.

Committee view

16.61   The committee has identified some key factors that should inform Australia's approach to, and planning for, a deployment. They include the need to:

- understand and respect the importance that the host country's attaches to its sovereignty;

- appreciate that Australia may be seen as a dominating force in peacekeeping operations in the region and take steps to foster greater cooperative partnerships;

- promote transparency in the peacekeeping process by ensuring that the local population is fully aware of the mission's short and long-term goals and the progress it is making;

- have a sound appreciation of culture and local customs when introducing or rebuilding state institutions to ensure that capacity building aligns with the priorities, capacity and capability of the host country and does not replicate systems that gave rise to the initial conflict;

- use all available means to promote local ownership of the peacekeeping process by involving the local people in decision making, planning and re-building state institutions, and by encouraging, training and equipping local people to take over all aspects of the administration of the country; and

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69   *Submission 21*, paragraph 3.20.

- engage with community groups and local leaders and NGOs to help the mission achieve its objectives.

Recommendation 21

16.62   The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission independent research to test, against the experiences of past deployments, the relevance of the factors identified by the committee that should inform Australia's approach to, and planning for, a regional operation (paragraph 16.61). The committee further recommends that the information be used to develop a template for the conduct of future missions.

Conclusion

16.63   In this chapter, the committee considered Australia's role as a major participant in a peacekeeping operation and its relationship with the host country. It examined the complex environment in which peacekeepers and the host country work as partners to secure longer-term peace and stability. It notes that the efforts of Australian peacekeepers to assist a country end conflict and secure peace may fail if the people of the host country are not fully engaged in, or committed to, the success of the operation. The following chapter expands its consideration of the partnership to include other contributing nations.