

Forum: General Assembly 4

Issue: The Improvement of Special Political Missions

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Introduction

While UN peacekeeping missions craft the most media coverage — as well as judgment — about the mechanisms of the United Nations, special political missions are formulated in order to aid the UN in obtaining conflict resolution, and, in the best of situations, maybe even complete prevention. Nonetheless, the ability to understand the many different substantive discrepancies amidst peacekeeping and peace operations and special political missions is essential to ensuring that all of the missions are as successful as they can be. In a world reaching its brim due to an influx of conflict and state and international hostility, special political missions are imperative to maintain peace and security.

The staffing of these missions also illustrated a window for discourse, and clear improvements, as numerous issues have been raised. In accordance to some of these issues, there is a call for gender-equality, after statistics have demonstrated that more senior posts are those of men rather than women. Furthermore, reports dating back to 2010 have now illustrated that the plurality of the staffing of these special political missions stem from Western Developed Countries, with the United States and the United Kingdom being the two main contributors. Hence, this calls into question whether regional issues need to be dealt with staff that has a deeply rooted understanding of the mission's purpose and causation.

Furthermore, it is also of considerable importance that there be a mechanism to directly address a measure of whether the Mission has achieved a proposed target or not within a given time period. This is so the United Nations can understand when and whether to withdraw a mission for maximum efficiency. Hence, the issue at hand and the debate of this matter is to inspect and scrutinize whether the given framework during this time is adequate in the efficient execution of special political missions and if not, how as a collective organization and unit of member-states are we to improve this.

Definition of Key Terms

Special Political Mission

Special Political Missions are variants of one another as they all serve unique functional roles and attributes. Nonetheless, they all pertain to the *raison d'être* which is broadly translated as civilian missions that pertain to conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding. They are mainly enforced in order to help bolster the efforts of a particular Member State of the General Assembly.

Peacekeeping Operation

Peacekeeping operations conducted by the United Nations are dictated by three governing principles: consent of the parties, impartiality and non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate. As a conglomeration of Member States, peacekeeping is regarded as one of the most effective tools in aiding the Member States in navigating through a difficult path economically, socially and politically by consolidating reasons for conflict in finding peace. Peacekeeping also has the capacity to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to advance multidimensional mandates; while also being recognized as a legitimate and burden sharing force. As of now, along the space of four continents, 15 UN peacekeeping operations have been deployed and are effective.

Charter of the United Nations

Also regarded as the United Nations Charter, was formulated at the termination of WW-II as the foundational document of the United Nations, an intergovernmental organization. It was ratified by 50 Member States in San Francisco in 1945, however, it only came into force once the five permanent Member States of the United Nations: China, United States of America, United Kingdom, Russia and France ratified it to establish the United Nations Security Council. Furthermore, the Charter is the elementary foundation of the International Court of Justice

The Department of Political Affairs

The Department of Political Affairs pertains to all special political missions that are demonstrating efforts in tension resolution, peace-making, and post-hostility accord and peacebuilding within Africa, Central Asia and the Middle East. The Department remains true to a policy of preventive diplomacy

to help prevent and inhibit the development prospective conflict, support any political transitions within administrations in accordance with the resolutions and accords presented by the United Nations.

Special Envoys

Someone who is officially appointed by His Excellency the Secretary-General to investigate and deal with a rigid set of specific issues.

The Department of Peacekeeping Affairs

An organ of the United Nations that is responsible for the planning, preparation, management and direction of all United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Office of Mission Support (OMS)

A stem of the Department of Peacekeeping Affairs, the office takes care of all logistics and administrative divisions, including but not limited to: financial support, personnel and logistics. The Office also keeps in mind the welfare of troops and all services pertinent to peacekeeping missions.

Background Information

The History of Special Political Missions

The term 'Special Political Mission' is a fairly recent one and only appeared at the beginning of the 1990s, the history of the United Nations' political functions began with the United Nations. In order to fulfill the aim of the 1945 UN Charter that was signed at the conclusion of the United Nations Conference on International Organization, political missions have spanned conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding functions; these early missions are what make up the sturdy foundation for today's current 37 political missions.

The first United Nations' 'mediator' was given his position in 1948; Count Folke Bernadotte was assigned Palestine and worked alongside the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization. From then onwards, more envoys or mediators were deployed for such political missions. Around the same time, field missions were also taking place; 1949, for instance, saw the establishment of the United Nations Commissioner in Libya, it aided Libya in formulating an independent government.

Moreover, after the cold war and the threats of international security that emerged as a consequence, the world was in need of the United Nations support through political missions. Demands ranged from electoral assistance to constitution-making and new missions were created to meet such demands.

The three categories of Special Political Missions

Special Envoys, Advisers and Representatives

The first type of political missions refers to mediation functions which are carried out by high level envoys. A Special Envoy of the Secretary-General (SESG) is a senior United Nations official appointed by the United Nations Secretary-General to deal with a set of specific issues. SESGs deal with issues entailing HIV and Aids in Africa, to children affected by armed conflict. Examples of SESGs include the former US president Bill Clinton, as he was the special envoy to Haiti in 2009 and the former prime minister of the UK, as he was named special envoy on global education in July of 2012. There are 11 missions entailing special envoys today; one of them being Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria; Staffan de Mistura is the envoy for this mission, he also previously served as head of the UN missions in Iraq and Afghanistan.

Sanctions Panels and Monitoring Groups

There are currently also 11 of this type of mission, of which five are based in New York. Monitoring teams, groups and panels are composed of technical experts who monitor the implementation of Security Council resolutions and track and report on the sanctions measures imposed by the Council, such as, but not limited to, arms embargoes, asset freezes and travel bans. Areas of expertise in these monitoring teams, groups and panels include banking, finance and alternative remittance systems; conventional arms and armed groups; customs, export control and travel ban enforcement; information analysis and counter-terrorism; transport; international humanitarian law and human rights; natural resources; political analysis; and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery. These teams, groups, and panels report to the Security Council through the relevant committee.

Field-based Missions

There are currently 15 such missions deployed around the world, with different structures and functions. Ten of these missions are based in Africa, four in the Middle East and one in Asia. These field operations are headed by senior representatives of the Secretary-General and provide a forward platform for preventive diplomacy and other activities across a range of disciplines, to help prevent and resolve conflict, support complex political transitions, in coordination with national actors and UN development and humanitarian entities on the ground. Field-based missions include country-

specific missions and regional offices. Their sizes vary from small missions such as the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Sierra Leone (UNIPSIL) to larger assistance missions deployed to countries where international military forces are present, such as UNAMI, the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA).

Major Countries and Organizations Involved

Africa

Special political missions play a central role in countering regional instabilities and conflict in Africa. The majority of African sent envoys work in coordination with the African Union (AU), a continental union comprised of the 55 states based on the African continent, and other sub-regional bodies. For example, a hybrid mission in Kenya led by Kofi Annan and the AU's Panel of Eminent African Personalities has given way to a special political mission – the Coordination and Liaison Office of the Panel of Eminent African Personalities. Together, these supranational organizations act as mediators in resolving disputes that plague the nations of Sudan, Kenya, Liberia, Guinea-Bissau, Somalia, Burundi, Sierra-Leone and more. The African region has employed the greatest number of special political missions at 22.

The Middle East

Middle Eastern political missions possess similar goals to that of missions in Africa, albeit with uniquely distinct circumstances and conflicts needing to be resolved. Middle Eastern projects possess the highest concentration of special envoy and investigative mandates missions as opposed to other regions which focus on field-based political assistance. The UN works in coordination with other region specific organizations as well in resolving conflict in Iraq, Syria, Israel, Lebanon, Libya and others. These missions have grown in frequency following the onset of heightened internal conflicts that have recently riddled the region. The Syrian Civil War prompted the UN Security Council to establish the Organization for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW), that fulfills an investigative role in substantiating criminal claims on the alleged use of biochemical weapons by the Assad Regime. The UN has been involved in 9 SPMs in the Middle East.

Asia and the Pacific

Asian and Pacific based political missions have been in place since the conception of the UN SPM program. From investigative mandate missions on corruption charges against Pakistan's Benazir Bhutto to field-based political assistance to disenfranchised citizens in Afghanistan amidst a chronic civil war, Asian and Pacific missions have covered diverse bases in addressing pressing issues the region faces. Nonetheless, SPMs to this region have primarily consisted of soft power field-based assistance programs.

Currently, The UN, much like for Latin America and the Caribbean, is not as active in its deployments of such missions in stabilizing the region. Over the course of time, Asia and the Pacific had been involved in 11 missions, but only the mission in Afghanistan is still in full effect.

Latin America and the Caribbean

Latin American and Caribbean countries, aside from Western Industrial democracies in Europe and the United States and Canada, have been the recipients of the least amount of special political mission aid from the United Nations. Only 6 missions have been sent to the countries such as Guatemala, El Salvador, etc., but only two are currently still functioning: an investigative mandate mission on human rights atrocities and abuses of power by the Venezuelan government and a field-based political assistance program in Columbia meant to develop Colombian communities impacted by the rise of local drug crime and cartel violence.

Timeline of Events

26 June 1945	The Charter of the United Nations was signed
24 October 1945	The UN Charter came into force
1948	First United Nations mediator appointed
1949	The General Assembly established a United Nations Commissioner in Libya
1993	The deployment of the Special Mission to Afghanistan

Relevant United Nations Treaties and Events

In accordance to the Security Council of the United Nations, there have been two fundamental Security Council resolutions pertaining to the issue of Improving Special Political Missions. Furthermore, there have been a few meeting agendas within the Security Council that demonstrate attempts at improving the standards of Special Political Missions. These include but are not limited to:

- Resolution 2378 (2017)
- Resolution 2377 (2017)
- The Provisional Meeting Transcript of the 8051st, 09/20/17
- Resolution A/55/305–S/2000/809

Previous Attempts to Solve the Issue

High Level Independent Panel

Former Secretary-General of the United Nations, Ban Ki-moon, implemented the UN's very first High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations on 31 October 2014; which the conventional wisdom that it must craft comprehensive assessments of the conditions of every single political mission the UN execute. Furthermore, the Panel also scrutinizes what needs for the future political missions would have. Another one of its main aims was to increase the transparency of these political missions between all member-states, and they considered a wide array of matters pertinent to peace operations, including the changing nature of conflict, evolving mandates, good offices and peace-building challenges, managerial and administrative arrangements, planning, partnerships, human rights and protection of civilians. As of now, the overwhelming majority of this Panel assert that political missions should intervene not only to assist military forces in regions of hostility but to also extend the journey for stability into humanitarian efforts, as well as disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of ex-combatants, support for the rule of law, electoral assistance and economic reconstruction. The majority of these perspectives stems from previous conflict resolution experiences in Sierra Leone, Kosovo, Timor-Leste and Afghanistan, and also states that it will be imperative to work with other United Nations organs, particularly the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to improve the efficiency of special political missions.

Brahimi Report

By March of 2000, His Excellency the Secretary-General appointed the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, as stated previously, to scrutinize the happenings of political missions. Their findings in the domains of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding condensed into the Brahimi Report which in essence, renewed political commitment on the part of Member States, advocated for significant institutional change and called for increased financial support of special political missions.

Resolution 1502

As a repercussion to the terrorist attack on the United Nations headquarters within Baghdad, Iraq, the urgency for reforms pertinent to safety and security of peacekeepers and all humanitarian workers within zones of conflict were debated. The plurality of member-states asserted that any sort of violence of harm towards peacekeepers and workers be punishable under the International Court of Justice and international law as a crime against humanity. This was welcomed under the unanimously adopted Resolution 1502 sought-after an increased level of protection for all those a part of political missions. The international community expressed distaste for any attempts at impeding the efforts of workers of political missions - who were certainly becoming targets of terrorists and bandits. Resolution 1502 had deployed a clear message that the Panel, acting on the foundation of law, did not mean to tolerate aims of torpedoing peacekeeping operations and would see to it that the perpetrators did not go unpunished.

Possible Solutions

Codification of organizational cooperation

Partnerships are critical for the successful implementation of the mandates entrusted to special political missions. Coordinated action with regional and sub-regional organizations have a multiplying effect in advancing international peace and security because of their proximity to the situation on the ground and strong networks with national stakeholders. These organizations have legitimacy and political influence in their respective communities. Measures could be made to demand liaison and joint mission efforts between the UN and these autonomous bodies in hopes of reaching central goals outlined by SPM mandates.

Inter-mission cooperation

Special political mission foci are innately specified in their measures to counter particular instabilities or conflicts to be resolved. Even within the same country, UN field-based assistance programs and specialized envoys tend to concentrate their attention to unique, distinct spheres. An umbrella cooperation amongst these groups may potentially produce a synergistic effect towards advancing the mandates entrusted to SPMs as resources of separate groups become pooled together in hopes of achieving their ultimate objectives.

Protections of SPMs

Special political missions operate in increasingly volatile security environments during active conflicts, or barely post-conflict contexts. Missions in Somalia, Yemen, Afghanistan and others operate in areas with fragile security environments. Under such stresses, a mission's ability to deliver its mandate can be effected quite significantly. Resources are limited in their ability to be transported from site to site. United Nations personnel will be unable to interact with regional and sub-regional bodies in all aspects of mandate implementation. Such factors prove to be considerable impediments towards fulfilling SPMs agendas in volatile parts of the world. Perhaps deploying with these missions peace keeping forces or police force units may ensure the administrative process of such SPMs are not as adversely affected.

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