

UNITED NATIONS OPERATIONS IN THE MODERN CONFLICTS

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The United Nations (UN) have been confronted with cycles of repeated violence, weak governance and recurring instability. Even in countries that have successfully implemented peace agreements, political and criminal violence coupled with state fragility may still pose threats to long-term transitions and continue to affect the security of civilians. Furthermore, intrastate conflicts often take on a regionalized or internationalized character, which may make them more deadly – given the ease of access to arms and resources to conflict parties – and harder to be solved. Conflicts are increasingly concentrated in weak or failed states, where state capacity and authority are limited. Conflict parties are increasingly amorphous and transnational, they have loosely defined command structures and growing military capabilities and are motivated by combinations of political, exclusionist, economic, criminal and, in some cases, extremist aims.

UN peace operations are being deployed in changing ways as well. Peacekeeping operations (PKO) were once deployed primarily into post-conflict situations with peace agreements in place. Today, they are increasingly mandated to operate where there is no peace to keep. The majority of field personnel work in countries where fighting is ongoing and are increasingly the target of attacks. In the middle of conflict, UN peacekeepers are called on to protect civilians and in some cases they have also been provided with robust mandates and capabilities to counter threats, including asymmetric and unconventional attacks.

In the words of the current Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Edmund Mulet:

The world is changing. The threats are changing. The levels of conflict are changing in many places in the world...so we have to adapt and we have to evolve and we have to learn how to deal with these new challenges.

These new challenges are linked to a number of features of modern conflict. These developments are challenging the precepts that characterize what has been called the 'holy trinity' of 'classical peacekeeping,' namely: host-government consent, impartiality and minimal use of force.

OPERATIONS IN ASYMMETRIC ENVIRONMENTS

The conflicts of today involve armed groups with access to sophisticated armaments and techniques. They involve a mix of armed groups as well as transnational criminal networks and, for example, in Mali, terrorist organizations.

The presence of extremist groups has

brought with it asymmetric attacks against UN personnel. Those attacks on peace operations are not new, but the tactics are more deadly and the aggressor less politically compromising. The UN faces individuals that do not necessarily view the UN as either legitimate or impartial. In some cases the UN cannot negotiate with certain groups, removing the possibility of a political solution. Increasing counter-terrorist efforts by other actors in the same theater as a UN peace operation can bring their own complications, threatening perceptions of the UN's core principles as legitimacy and impartiality.

States and state actors have always been the primary focus of (and functional states the exit strategy for) UN peace operations. These states are being weakened by organized crime, illicit flows of goods and money, violent transnational non-state actors with global financing and/or recruitment and potentially other threats that can travel quite easily across a region, such as infectious disease.

Given the increasing relevance of non-state and transnational actors to international peace and security, are the current peace operations models still appropriate? Can the UN be successful operating on a country-specific basis (with some exceptions) or is there a need for a stronger push for and more creative thinking about regionalized presences?

Clearly there is a greater need for better analysis of the challenges and threats. How can the UN increase its analytical capability in missions and at headquarters? Do these threats call for more specialized policing capabilities? How can the UN convince states to part with such valuable resources?

How high on the priority list of UN peace operations should the threat of organized crime be? What capabilities would the UN need to more effectively address this component of state fragility and lack of legitimacy? What can regional political missions do to help states cooperate to prevent the spread of organized crime?

How should UN peace operations deal with asymmetric threats posed by extremist groups: threat mitigation, risk reduction, military force, negotiation or other means?

Should the UN work more or less alongside others who are engaging in counter-terrorism operations? Does UN need new doctrine and capabilities? Is it necessary a better clarification of the overall international framework for deploying and sustaining UN missions? Is it necessary a Brahimi's Report review, mainly on principles, approaches and methodology?

SEARCH FOR PEACE/ UTILITY OF FORCE

The conflicts like the Democratic Republic of Congo, Darfur and South

Sudan are confronting a second or third wave of conflict and these are not only complex civil wars. They have regional dimensions as well, thus greatly complicating their resolution. In fact some two-thirds of peacekeeping personnel today are deployed in the midst of ongoing conflict, where peace agreements are shaky or where there is no real roadmap for peace at all.

In this global context, the Security Council has continued to turn to UN peacekeeping, often approving very comprehensive and at times robust mandates. The 121,000 military, police and civilian personnel serving in 16

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missions face constantly evolving challenges. Each situation must be addressed singularly to define the appropriate approach: risk mitigation, military force, negotiation, etc. or even to decide if the peacekeeping operation is exclusively the only (or more appropriate) option for that situation instead of other options as: local arrangements of force, alliance, etc.

UN PKO are not only military operations, as they deal with the whole spectrum of crisis management and UN always give priority to the political solution. However, peacekeeping operations are also military operations and the military component of multidimensional operations (which constitutes 80% of UN deployments on the ground) should be treated as such, i.e. have the means and the capabilities to perform their military tasks with efficiency. More than anytime in the history of UN peacekeeping the willingness to use force has been decisive if parties on the margin try to use violence to undermine the process. Peace agreements declared between warring factions don't have the same strength and solidity as agreements between states. UN have to have sufficient strength to stop would-be spoilers and prevent them from taking the whole process hostage.

PROTECTION OF CIVILIANS

There is a persistent pattern of PKO not intervening with force when civilians are under attack. This can be eliminated/mitigated by the issuing of clear mandates, clarifying better/precisely "what protection of civilians means" and the conditions of "imminent threat of physical violence". Troops should be early engaged/committed to deter violence against civilians. Although protection of civilians continues to be the highest priority in UN peace operations, it is still unclear how military force can and should be used to increase its utility to protect.

Successful protection operations rely on a different logic than traditional warfare and peacekeeping. Military forces are primarily trained to fight an enemy directly. In protection operations, however, understanding how and why perpetrators attack a third party – the civilians – is critical to identify the proper

military countermeasures. To maximize the utility of force to protect, different threats must be met with the appropriate function of military force, ranging from amelioration and containment, via deterrence and coercion, to destruction. In this context, the principle of minimum use of force cannot always be upheld. The way forward: the bedrock principles of peacekeeping operations should be reformed to enable effective protection of civilians under imminent physical threats.

Troop-contributing countries (TCC), unwilling or unable to accept all the risks associated with the use of force, regulate and limit the response of their contingents. Under their control, contingents may choose not to carry out some assigned tasks. When missions do not report such occurrences to UN Headquarters, the issue cannot be taken up with TCC. What is required is a frank dialogue on the issue within the peacekeeping partnership of troop, police and finance-contributing countries, host governments, the Security Council, the Secretariat and other actors. Solutions also require the involvement of the General Assembly as the main deliberative organ of the UN. A precedent exists: in 2009, the Assembly debated the issue of the "responsibility to protect". Situations in which contingents are hesitant or do not carry out duly issued orders from the mission military structure should be reported.

The issue of the use of force as the last resource by the UN to protect civilians under imminent threat of physical violence or under attack needs urgent consideration. The



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question is whether this distance between prescription and practice should be allowed to persist when enormous civilian suffering remains, when violent threats to them are increasing and when the only Organization such civilians can and often turn to for help and protection is the UN.

RAPID DEPLOYMENT

Rapid deployment of large peace operations into conflict zones worldwide is a demanding process. Within the UN system, the process is further complicated and frequently delayed by a long list of tasks, including the need to seek the support of member states for the deployment of their national personnel and resources. Yet, rapid deployment remains an important standard with specified response times and an objective that underpins many related reforms. Rapid deployment is critical, even for the most advanced and best prepared member states. The prerequisites usually include the immediate availability of highly trained, well-equipped personnel and dependable transport with secure supply chains.

The UN does not have its own rapid deployment capability per se. Nor there is a distinct UN system for rapid deployment. When the need arises, additional pressure is applied to the organization's system for launching peacekeeping operations. The recurring impediments to progress in this respect tend to be within the overlapping categories of insufficient political will,

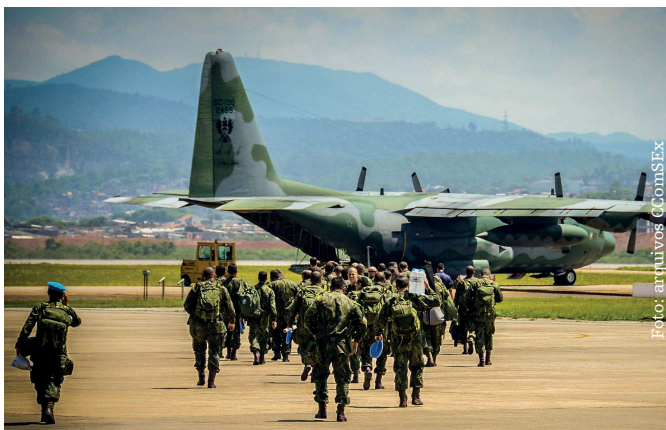
limited cooperation, inadequate UN funding associated with austerity and a zero-growth budget and the reliance on slow and unreliable standby arrangements. The absence of specific policy and guidelines to effect rapid deployment also renders it a difficult system to understand and explain. As various aspects continue to confuse analysts and member states alike, this also poses a challenge for efforts to adapt and reform.

Rapid deployment by the UN presents an array of challenges. As each conflict and each mandate is unique, each mission entails different requirements and challenges. Some aspects may align with recognized process, others must be improvised in haste. Once identified and approved, national military forces and formed police units must be trained for mission-specific requirements and prepared for deployment. Equipment has to be found, rented, or purchased, then inspected, loaded, and transported to the mission areas.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support (DFS) should continue to explore ways to acknowledge and reward service for emergency first responders and prompt providers. Contributors meeting or deploying under specified UN response times merit additional compensation.

TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

To address the threats in the modern conflicts the UN peacekeeping missions depend on the use of modern technology and



Air transportation capabilities are essential for a rapid deployment.



Mr. Hervé Ladsous, Under-Secretary-General for PKO, knowing a UN UAVs.

expedient processes to conduct operations, fulfill their mandates and account for the resources with which state has been entrusted. Indeed, no mission can be expected to succeed in today's complex environments without an ability to innovate and make effective use of technology.

In this regard there is a priority for improving intelligence and situational awareness. Effectively countering asymmetric and other threats to UN mandates implementation and to our troops requires accurate, comprehensive and up-to-date information on security threats, such as the activities of armed groups, weapons flows and population movements. UN need better human intelligence and information-gathering capabilities, as well as advanced capabilities such as surveillance and reconnaissance technology, including Unmanned/Unarmed Aerial Vehicle - UAVs (MONUSCO is the first mission in use) and stronger and more coherent information analysis structures and systems.

In Mali, once the All Sources Intelligence Fusion Unit – the ASIFU – is fully online, UN will have an unprecedented ability to gather and analyze information relating to threats to the mission troops and to the local population.

ALLIANCES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Alliances and partnerships rely on high-level discussions between UN and the considered allied organizations/countries on each partner's capability, willingness and limitations and are considerable effective to address transnational threats such as

organized crimes and terrorism.

There are areas of comparative advantage for partners outside the UN, such as: non-UN partners benefit from the stable environment kept by the mission and the mission benefits from information that partner can provide; non-UN partners complement mission capillarity and a great source of information. Regional organizations play a vital bridging role in many cases and building more predictable stand-by arrangements with them is key, while regional actors are vital partners for political engagement and many other elements of crisis response.

The question is whether this distance between prescription and practice should be allowed to persist when enormous civilian suffering remains, when violent threats to them are increasing and when the only Organization such civilians can and often turn to for help and protection is the United Nations .

Getting the partnerships or relationships right at the political-strategic, institutional and operational levels is important if UN are to increase the chances for success in the field. Cooperation needs certainly to be less ad-hoc and better structured. Increased communication, transparency, visibility and understanding of each other's working procedures and methods, decision making processes and so forth will go a long way towards

ameliorating tensions and promoting understanding. Political considerations will always be primary but practical cooperation can foster mutual understanding by the respective organizations of the situation on the ground and can support coordination of action prior to decisions being taken at the political-strategic level.

POST-CONFLICT

Security is a necessary but not a sufficient condition. The UN mission has the role of establishing the foundations of a sustainable

peace. Part of that is to provide a measure of security. However, the UN military presence is just part of it and UN deploy both military and civilians in a way designed to integrate their efforts. The key to success in a post-conflict situation is “unifying the mission” in order not to have a disjunctive military and civilian effort. Unfortunately the hard way has been the teacher in all these current post-conflict situations. Therefore, it is vital to have one unified civilian-led post-conflict strategy in each country and for the military to be an element that supports that strategy. The military and police components are important instruments because if there is no security, nothing will work. But security is not the whole picture. The idea that by force alone you can bring peace is an illusion. So it is very important to have some basic political accord in the country where the UN want to help.

Once a peace deal is in place, how the UN must approach the job of peacekeeping and

peacebuilding? Looking at post-conflict situations, there are a number of recurring problems. First, there is a need to restore the basis of the state, which is the capacity to maintain law and order. Without it, all the rest is not sustainable. If the state can't maintain law and order, the government won't have the capacity to collect taxes. If it doesn't collect taxes, it won't pay the teachers neither build the roads, etc. Law and order means having police, having credible justice, having a credible correctional system of prisons and the like. This triangle is the foundation for the rule of law. So it is a matter of utmost priority in UN peacekeeping missions to start rebuilding these functions alongside the military work.

Another critical element is the disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) process. These are linked because during a conflict, people make a living essentially with their gun. The trick is to convince them to surrender their guns and then demobilize



Rebuilding country's infrastructure is fundamental at post-conflict.

them with stipends and by feeding them. Not all of them can be reconverted into security forces, so ideally train them a bit so that when ex-fighters leave the camps they have something to go to in civilian society and can make a living without a gun. In parallel UN mobilize the UN Development Program and other UN agencies, the World Bank and other donors, and other players such as NGOs – the whole system.

Of course, this approach does not guarantee only victories, specially because there are too many factors not under UN control. When in a post-conflict state has a political process to support, a peacekeeping can prevent the resumption of war, but cannot impose peace. However, a peacebuilding operation taken in place can increase the odds in favor of it.

CONCLUSION

The changing nature of conflict and the changing role of peace operations have required the UN to adapt and respond. In recent years DPKO and DFS have undertaken a wide variety of reforms aimed at professionalizing and modernizing peacekeeping operations. DFS has worked to develop global and regional platforms to enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of field support to all UN field missions. Substantively, field missions have worked to develop more sophisticated approaches to the implementation of mandated tasks, such as post-conflict stabilization, support to political processes and peacebuilding, including the restoration and extension of state authority and the rule of law.

At the political level, peace operations continue to face a number of key challenges that affect their ability to perform effectively in the field and require creative thinking and dialogue to overcome. There is a lack of consensus among the key political stakeholders of peace operations, including those member states that mandate, finance and supply uniformed personnel and equipment to operations, on key issues of policy and doctrine. These questions include the necessary conditions for the deployment of missions, outer boundaries of peace operations and issues surrounding the use of force by peacekeepers, performance and accountability, peacebuilding and stabilization efforts, mission planning and management as well as funding. Consistency and unity of resolve in the partnership of stakeholders to peace operations is critical to ensure that missions are given realistic mandates, supplied with the capabilities necessary to execute their tasks and are willing to implement their mandates to the fullest extent possible.

It is crucial for all relevant stakeholders to understand that the nature of peacekeeping under the auspices of the UN is expanding and currently requires robust mandates, such as the use of force under chapter VII (UN Charter) and interventions in challenging environments. Such empirical insight should be used to develop better guidelines on when and how military force can be used to protect civilians more effectively.

However, some states express reservations over the use of force and overly-ambitious mandates, seen as threatening

When a peacekeeping partnership has the necessary resources to deliver in the field, when it is empowered by its member states to be flexible and responsive and when it is energized by political will, UN peacekeeping has proven to be and will continue to be a powerful tool for conflict management and peace consolidation.



UN troops must have sufficient strength to fulfill its missions.

classical peacekeeping. On the other hand the modern conflicts have been challenging ineffective UN mandates. Therefore, it is arrived the time for creative and innovative approaches to ensure peacekeeping is up to the demands of both today and tomorrow. It is essential to face the significant gaps that have emerged between the commitments UN set down on paper, which constitute a responsibility to act, and the way missions perform in practice. The larger this gap

grows, the more vulnerable civilians become and the less credible this organization and the peacekeepers representing it become.

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