

STRENGTHENING UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

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United Nations peacekeeping operations are expected to greatly increase in size and number in coming years. Despite some measures of recent success, significant problems still plague current efforts and threaten to undermine future expansion. This paper recommends specific institutional reforms to improve the accountability, coordination and sustainability of UN peacekeeping operations. The authors advocate a multi-pronged approach to match mission capacities to needs, decrease deployment delays, coordinate diverse peace actors, improve transitions between phases of the peace process, and empower local populations to engage in the peacekeeping process.

United Nations peacekeeping (hereafter used interchangeably with “peace operations”¹) has a problematic historical record, exemplified by its devastating failures in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia in the 1990s. While the UN has implemented several reforms in response to these failures, significant challenges remain. Approximately half of countries emerging from war revert back to conflict within five years.² With levels of UN peacekeeping projected to increase 50% by the end of 2007, efforts to address these challenges are increasingly important.³

While nesting peacekeeping within the UN system necessarily imposes political and bureaucratic constraints, it is our position that institutional reform can greatly increase the success rate of peacekeeping missions. In order to identify potential opportunities for such reform, we examined several different types of peace operations, including ceasefire monitoring missions, civilian protection missions, missions to enforce peace agreements, and peacebuilding operations. Our analysis included these operations’ diverse actors, regional needs, mission capacities and constraints, and revealed key problems that can be improved through institutional reform. The most prominent of these obstacles are: disparities between mission resources

and needs; troop delays and shortfalls; accountability failures that undermine mission legitimacy; uncoordinated peacekeeping actors; and poorly managed transitions between peacekeeping phases.

This report makes five recommendations for the United Nations, targeting both the planning process and substance of peacekeeping missions:

1. Develop “model mandates” as guidelines for matching appropriate mission functions and capacities with on-the-ground needs;
2. Incentivize major Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs) to create Designated Country Brigades to meet UN deployment needs;
3. Enhance the capacities of the Peacebuilding Support Office (PBSO) to serve as a hub for coordinating peacebuilding actors;
4. Establish Mission Transition Authorities to institutionalize links between different actors and phases of peace operations;
5. Link the local population to the mission through the establishment of a Mission Ombudsman’s Office.

Recommendation One: Use Model Mandates as Guidelines for Matching Mission Capacities with Operational Needs

Many of the shortcomings of peacekeeping missions can be traced to the supply-driven nature of the mandate authorization process. Within this framework, mandates are crafted based on the availability of peacekeeping resources, the political will of the Security Council, and the Troop Contributing Countries' interests in the mission, rather than on the actual capacities needed to achieve the mission's objectives. To reduce disparities between mission capacities and country needs, we propose a demand-driven authorization framework that allows missions to respond to realities on the ground, rather than donor resources.

Such disparities between need and capacity are often observed when mandates are weak and ambiguous, with limited operational capabilities.⁴ The UN peacekeeping missions in Bosnia in 1993 and Somalia in 1994 for example, were developed as efforts to protect civilians from violence, but mission mandates limited the use of force to the protection of UN and humanitarian personnel. Indeed, as the situation worsened in Bosnia, the Security Council recognized Srebrenica as a "safe area" that should be free from any armed attack, but failed to provide troops with the power to use force to meet this additional responsibility. As a result, the mismatch between mandated capacity and mission needs allowed the massacre of approximately 7,000 civilians.⁵

To reframe the authorization process, we propose that the UN use "model mandate" templates. These model mandates would endow missions with default troop levels and tasks to be undertaken, and would be based on the typical needs of specific types of peace operations (i.e. enforcement of a peace agreement, enforcement of embargoes, disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, geographical area, etc.). With model mandates as a reference point for appropriate mission capacities, opponents would be required to argue against appropriate capacity to change the institutional status quo.

One concern with model mandates is that they will "lock in" peacekeeping practices at the lowest common denominator. To confront this potential problem, we recommend that primary responsibility for the development of model mandates be given to outside actors.

While external expectations of peacekeeping operations often clash with political and financial realities, allowing these high expectations to anchor and guide the current ad-hoc process of mission preparation will ensure a status quo driven by regional needs. Model mandates should not aim to create cookie-cutter prescriptions; instead the goal should be improved standards across all missions.

Acknowledging that model mandate standards will only be a starting point for Security Council negotiations on each specific mission, we recommend that at a minimum, model mandates address the following areas:

Troop levels. A model mandate should contain a minimum troop level so that there are sufficient troops on the ground to carry out the tasks established in the mandate, and to match the needs of the mission. Designating a maximum troop level would alleviate the UN and Troop Contributing Countries' concerns about the possibility of mission creep.

Civilian protection. When crises call for civilian protection, mandates should be given broad Chapter VII authorization and have directions for appropriate rules of engagement.⁶ The tragic failures in Bosnia and Rwanda resulted in part from weak mandates that did not unambiguously authorize peacekeepers to use force for civilian protection. Although the Security Council has shown an increased willingness to use the Chapter VII authorization of the use of force in recent years, it is not always given at the mission's outset and is often restricted to specific areas of the mandate.

Peacebuilding. Many modern peace operations become permanent installations or fail to prevent cyclical conflict because mandates do not transfer reconstruction and development responsibilities to local actors. In Haiti, Angola, East Timor, and Democratic Republic of Congo, today's new crises are the sites of past peacekeeping interventions.⁷ Mandates should ensure that all peacekeeping missions include sustained peacebuilding efforts that put countries on sustainable development trajectories away from conflict.

Trade-offs: Mandates attuned to regional needs, especially the need for more extensive Chapter VII authorizations, might absorb greater resources and decrease the quantity of interventions the UN can au-

thorize. Our view is that peacekeeping missions that lack sufficient capacity will fail to deliver the desired results, and in doing so may undermine the legitimacy of peacekeeping writ large and even the UN itself. If the resources to fully endow all peacekeeping missions with sufficient capacity are not forthcoming, the Security Council will need to prioritize operations through its own political process.

Increased use of Chapter VII authorizations, while giving troops greater capacity to protect civilians against attacks, may also discourage countries from volunteering troops for more complex and dangerous missions. We hope to partially address the concern by advocating for indexed reimbursement (see Recommendation Two), which would reward TCCs for contributing troops to more dangerous missions.

Recommendation Two: Create Designated Country Brigades to Match Troop Contributors to UN Deployment Needs

One of the most serious problems facing peace operations is the consistent difference between the number of troops authorized by the Security Council and the number that are actually deployed.⁸ Furthermore, troop deployments are delayed and troops that do arrive are not adequately trained or equipped. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that the UN must negotiate the use of troops for each new mission authorized and whenever an existing mission is expanded. These time-intensive negotiations prevent the UN from rapidly responding to crises.

Currently, the UN receives 60% of its troop contributions, totaling nearly 600,000 military and police personnel, from ten developing countries.⁹ We recommend that the top ten TCCs create Designated Country Brigades. These brigades would consist of troops that remain within and are paid for by national military structures but are trained specifically for peacekeeping operations and will be available for rapid deployment. While participating TCCs would maintain the right of troop refusal, the existence of these brigades would ensure that the UN could call upon rapid-response units of known size and capacity.

To encourage the creation of Designated Country Brigades, we recommend that the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) develop

a program allowing developed countries, aid agencies or private foundations to sponsor brigades by paying for their peacekeeping-related training or equipment. DPKO could identify matches among interested countries, foundations, and Designated Country Brigades, and standardize the type of training and equipment necessary to qualify for the program.

We further recommend that the UN change the peacekeeping pay structure to provide incentives for countries to create high capacity country brigades. The current UN Peacekeeping reimbursement system offers a fixed sum to the Troop Contributing Country per soldier, irrespective of the type of mission or the soldier's skill.¹⁰ More robust missions require better troops and greater investment from TCCs, which in the past has deterred contributions to more difficult missions. Larger reimbursements to TCCs for troops that have been trained to a particular standard would increase the incentives for TCCs to engage in this kind of training, and better prepare country brigades for use in difficult and complex missions.

Many modern peace operations become permanent installations, or fail to prevent cyclical conflict, because mandates do not transfer reconstruction and development responsibilities to local actors.

Trade-offs: The General Assembly is wary of the notion of designated brigades, fearing they might effectively function as a Security Council army. It is our position that because TCCs will ultimately control troop deployments through their right of refusal, this concern is outweighed by the potential rapid-response benefits that Designated Country Brigades provide. In addition, some may fear that the UN would have to pay for the brigades full-time in order for the rapid response benefit to be realized, and that this, in turn, would entice the Security Council to deploy them more often. However, we recommend that TCC's only be reimbursed for their brigades when they participate in a peacekeeping operation, as is current practice.

Recommendation Three: Enhance the Capacities of the Peace Building Support Office to Serve as a Hub for Coordinating Peacebuilding Actors

While the recent proliferation of peacebuilding actors in post-conflict situations is encouraging, the lack of centralized coordination among these actors is often a significant hindrance to their efforts. Peacebuilding efforts often result in program duplication in some areas and complete gaps in others as a consequence. For example, the division of labor under the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor has been criticized for creating friction between agencies, delaying emergency responses, and pitting long-term and short-term interests against each other.¹¹

Additionally, some external actors have unknowingly undermined sustainable development by acting as substitutes for rather than partners of state entities. In the Brcko region of Bosnia, for example, an international administrator appointed by the United States held responsibilities “right down to determining who will live in which house, the list of required attendees at meetings of the local police chiefs, the ethnic composition of the local municipal council and the pace at which privatization [would] proceed.”¹² These tendencies fostered a culture of dependency and stifled longer-term local self-government objectives. This is one reason why the Office of the High Representative (OHR) now finds itself unable to withdraw from Bosnia without risking the collapse of the state.¹³

The UN has recently created a new institution, the Peace Building Commission (PBC), to fund and coordinate peacebuilding activities in post-conflict societies. The PBC is an advisory body of UN member states, bilateral donors, troop contributors, regional organizations, and international financial institutions, which manages a fund for early recovery activities. The Peace Building Support Office (PBSO) is the small operational arm of the PBC tasked with providing planning and policy analysis support to the activities of the Commission. However, the office currently has no operational capacity and is significantly understaffed.¹⁴

To improve coordination of peacebuilding actors, we recommend a sizeable increase to the resources and staff of the PBSO. We further recommend that the PBSO assume a central role in coordinating the

peacebuilding activities conducted by NGOs, UN agencies, the World Bank, and other agencies as a way to address program duplication. We are not advocating for the PBSO to coordinate aid money. Rather, we recommend that it function as a clearinghouse for matching government priorities with projects, services, and resources offered by the humanitarian and development communities.

Lastly, to bridge the gap between donor services and local needs, we propose that state governments, in conjunction with the PBC and international organizations (such as World Bank and IMF) draw up peacebuilding plans based on local priorities and development needs. Coordinating peacebuilding activities around this plan will encourage national ownership of the peacebuilding process, increase accountability to the local population, and strengthen the legitimacy of the local government.

Trade-offs: In countries that still have an active peacekeeping operation, a strengthened PBSO may be viewed as an encroachment on traditional DPKO activities. In such cases, we recommend that the DPKO remain the lead coordinator on peacebuilding activities until mission drawdown, at which point all peacebuilding coordination should transfer to the PBSO. In addition, member states may be concerned about the increase in cost of strengthening new institutions within the UN.

Recommendation Four: Establish a Mission Transition Authority to Institutionalize Links Between the Phases of Peace Operations

Developing efficient peacekeeping missions with rapid deployment structures requires effective coordination between all stakeholders, as well as sustained and adequate capacity-building assistance from external sources. Currently, the cooperation that occurs among the UN and regional organizations is largely ad-hoc, and key transitions between different forces are often poorly coordinated as a result.¹⁵

To facilitate better coordination in transitions, we propose the creation of a Mission Transition Authority that would bring together the lead actors in each phase of a peace operation into a single planning team. Its purpose would be to provide an institutional

structure through which these actors could share information, coordinate planning and objectives, and develop strategies to facilitate smooth transitions.

The Mission Transition Authority would improve transitional military force planning by uniting the UN Department of Peacekeeping advisors, military commanders of a specific mission, and their counterparts in the relevant regional organization or multinational force. When peacekeeping missions change hands between these forces, the Mission Transition Authority will help improve planning and facilitate the integration of the authority that will assume responsibility of the mission.

An initial improvement to the transition planning process can be achieved by including peacebuilding staff and those involved with long-term development from mission inception. This will better prepare the Peace Building Support Office to develop plans that reflect realities on the ground and to later manage the mission in its subsequent stages. To reinforce this change, the Security Council should authorize peacebuilding benchmarks that respond to the particular needs and challenges of each mission for three-year phases.

To assist the Mission Transition Authority, the UN should strengthen and institutionalize its relationships with troops, NGOs, local government officials, citizens, regional and multilateral organizations and the other myriad actors involved in and affected by peace operations. This will facilitate transparency and accountability in the management of peacekeeping transitions and promote the legitimacy needed for more successful missions.

In order to attract these various actors and to avoid open-ended peacekeeping operations, the Mission Transition Authority should define more explicit phases of peace operations with clearly defined benchmarks in terms of “end states” rather than “end dates.” This will make points of transition more clear and allow teams to transfer responsibility with confidence once they have accomplished their phase-specific objectives.

Trade-offs: The phased benchmark approach to transitions might cause uncertainty regarding the length of any country’s commitment to a peace operation, and thus discourage countries from committing

troops. Others may object to what they perceive as an additional layer of bureaucracy that would limit flexibility.

Recommendation Five: Link the Local Population to the Mission Through the Establishment of a Mission Ombudsman’s Office

The success of any peace operation depends upon its legitimacy to the host nation and population. Legitimacy is lost when peacekeeping personnel engage in improper or abusive conduct, or when peacebuilding personnel are perceived as unresponsive to the needs of the local population. To improve accountability and legitimacy, we propose the creation of an independent and in-country Mission Ombudsman’s Office for every peace operation.

A Mission Ombudsman’s Office would increase the mission’s accountability to the local population by providing a mechanism through which local citizens can air grievances, seek justice for improper conduct by combatants (i.e. violations of human rights or international humanitarian law), and receive public reports on the status and outcome of these investigations. Through these measures, a Mission Ombudsman’s Office would enhance mission legitimacy by forging stronger and more direct links with the local population. To ensure accountability to the UN, the Mission Ombudsman should also produce an annual report that will be on the Security Council agenda along with the overall peacekeeping operation’s annual review.

The Ombudsman should be appointed by and report to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The Ombudsman’s Office should be given sufficient resources for grievance investigation and media outreach and be staffed by independent experts named by the PBSO. For peacebuilding missions, the Ombudsman’s Office should also allow local stakeholders to challenge the governance and development decisions of international actors.

Trade-offs: National militaries may be uneasy about the idea of an independent Mission Ombudsman out of fear of exposing mission personnel to politically motivated prosecutions. Recognizing this potential source of opposition, we recommend that the Om-

budsman be able to investigate complaints and make public recommendations for their resolution, but not have prosecutorial powers.

CONCLUSION

The recommendations contained in this report target both the planning process for UN peace operations and the substance of resulting missions on the ground. Specifically, this report has identified a number of institutional reforms that can be used to reduce the gaps between capacities and needs, and to build ties between peacekeepers and peace builders. Our recommendations aim to enhance the capacity of the UN along every step of a peace operation, and to form stronger cross-institutional linkages that enhance mission efficiency and accountability.

While United Nations officials must ultimately adopt the changes we are recommending, we actively encourage outside groups – think tanks, NGOs, interest groups, and other civil society actors – to mobilize around these proposals in order to convince member states and UN gatekeepers to implement them.

Endnotes

- 1 Peacekeeping is a type of peace operation and refers specifically to preserving peace in post-conflict settings. However, “peacekeeping” is often used as a catch-all term to describe peace operations, as we will do in this paper.
- 2 World Summit Outcome: Peacebuilding Support Office: Report of the Secretary General – A/60/694. 23 February 2006. 20 November 2007. See <<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/252/89/PDF/N0625289.pdf?OpenElement>>.
- 3 In August 2006, the Security Council authorized three new or expanded missions that will likely increase UN peacekeeping levels by 50 %. “Twenty Days in August: The Security Council Sets Massive New Challenges for UN Peacekeeping.” *Security Council Report: Special Research Report No. 8*. September 2006. In July 2007, the Security Council passed resolution 1769 authorizing a peacekeeping mission of approximately 20,000 military personnel for the conflict in Darfur, with total costs for 2008 expected at \$3 billion.
- 4 The peacekeeping failures of the nineties have their roots in flawed and weak mandates. UNAMIR’s original mandate in Rwanda was designed for a basic peacekeeping mission and was thus completely inadequate once the genocide was unleashed. *Security Council Resolution 872* (1993), 5 October 1993. UNPROFOR in Bosnia was given increasing responsibilities, but was never given explicit authority for civilian protection. *Security Council Resolution 918* (1993), 17 May 1994. The limits of the mandates of in Sierra Leone and the Democratic Republic of the Congo created problems of non-compliance and prevented the missions from being able to adequately respond to new threats. Alex Bellamy, Stuart Griffin, and Paul William. *Understanding Peacekeeping*. Polity Press: Cambridge, 2004, pp. 145.
- 5 *Timeline: Siege of Srebrenica*. 9 July 2005. 16 November 2007. See <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/675945.stm>>.
- 6 The UN Charter contains provisions for more robust operations, referred to as “Chapter VII” or “peace enforcement” operations, where consent is not required and force is authorized. Article 42 of Chapter VII of the UN Charter states that the Security Council “may take such action by air, sea, or land forces as may be necessary to maintain or restore international peace and security.”
- 7 There have been five UN peacekeeping missions in Haiti since 1993 and four missions in East Timor since 1999. The UN sent four missions to Angola during a span of eleven years. The mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo has been ongoing since 1999. 15 April 2007. See <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/>>.
- 8 As part of pre-mandate commitment authority, the Secretary General now has the authority to canvass member states to contribute troops to a potential mission prior to a resolution for troops.
- 9 *United Nations Peacekeeping Q&A: Meeting New Challenges*. 31 October 2006. The United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. 8 May 2007. See <<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/faq/q11.htm>>.
- 10 From Salman Ahmed, Chief of Office and Special Assistant in the Office of the UN Undersecretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, during a presentation to Princeton graduate students at the United Nations on April 27, 2007.
- 11 See Gonzales, Duque Armando, *et. al.* “Evaluation of the United Nations System Response in East Timor: Coordination and Effectiveness,” JIU/R EP/2002/10 Geneva 2002.
- 12 Chandler, David. “Bosnia: the Democracy Paradox,” *Current History*, March 2000, p. 117.
- 13 Cox, M. and Knaus, G. “Whither Bosnia?” *NATO Review* Vol. 48 No. 3, 2001.
- 14 2005 World Summit Outcome: Peacebuilding Support Office: Report of the Secretary General A/60/694. 23 February 2006. 19 November 2007. See <<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N06/252/89/PDF/N0625289.pdf?OpenElement>>.
- 15 Holt, V. and Shanahan, M. *African Capacity-Building for Peace Operations: UN Collaboration with the AU and ECOWAS*. The Stimpson Center: Washington D.C., 2001.