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Peacekeeping 2014

An Agenda for Enhanced Effectiveness

Summary

- Effective peacekeeping must incorporate expectations management, mission and mandate clarity, enhanced bilateral and coalition-based partnerships, and the use of innovative technologies and strategies.
- The United States and Europe should reinvigorate their current engagement in U.N. and regional peacekeeping, while opening avenues to new types of engagement through troop contribution and mission entrepreneurship in the U.N. Security Council (UNSC).
- Thematic discussions on the mission-specific aspects of peacekeeping like the role of regional bodies, protection of civilians, and rule of law will guide endeavors to craft more successful and efficient peacekeeping efforts.

Introduction

The countries comprising the International Security Assistance Force are preparing for the post-2014 drawdown from Afghanistan in the midst of global financial austerity. Such fiscal and political constraints compel traditional peacekeeping contributors to retreat from their international role, creating a vacuum of leadership and a desire in the U.N. for new contributors. At the same time, international leaders are debating how to stop further bloodshed in Syria, ramping up intervention in Mali, and facing new and complex threats in places like Guinea-Bissau. Additionally, the U.N. needs to reappraise the “Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations,” known as the Brahimi Report, in light of the modern challenges facing U.N. Peacekeeping Operations (PKOs). The time is ripe to discuss how to make PKOs more effective at addressing the increasingly complex nature and multivariate types of international security needs.

Emerging Trends in Peacekeeping

The growing diversity of challenges to international peace and security requires an expansion in the nature of peacekeeping models and configurations. In just the first few months of 2013, the U.N. Security Council approved Resolution 2086 on multidimensional operations and two other resolutions establishing missions. UNSC Resolution 2098 strengthens the U.N. Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO) via a proactive intervention brigade. UNSC Resolution 2100 created the U.N. Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), to intervene alongside French forces. Hybrid missions, such as the United Nations/African Union Mission in Darfur (UNAMID) represent possible evolutions in the peacekeeping

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model. Overall, there is continued movement toward more robust mandates—a trend supported by many African countries and subregional organizations.

In addition to operational and institutional challenges, PKOs confront a rapidly changing risk and threat environment. Facing threats from improvised explosive devices (IEDs) to suicide bombers, peacekeepers must often take on counterinsurgency and counterterrorism roles. In addition, increasingly sophisticated criminal networks and rebel groups have developed advanced operations and capabilities that require PKOs to adapt and modernize. The use of Unarmed Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, remote sensing, and other information-gathering assets presents opportunities to modernize and improve the effectiveness of peacekeeping, but also presents numerous political and operational challenges.

PKOs are also increasingly dependent on regional bodies, national governments, and other international organizations. It is vital to properly identify how to best mobilize and manage coalitions and partnerships to achieve a high standard of operations, ensure dynamic missions, and adapt to an environment of fiscal austerity. Partner relationship management in this interdependent context is also vital. Communication can be essential to overcome the often contentious interaction between troop-contributing countries (TCCs) and fund-contributing countries (FCCs). Further, mission leadership should lay out clear boundaries to facilitate collaboration with the humanitarian community while protecting the distinction between humanitarian and peacekeeper objectives in multidimensional missions. Mission leadership should more clearly define peacekeeper roles when undertaking parallel missions. Finally, relationship management is hinged on understanding culture, adequate education, and consistent training across all nationalities of peacekeepers and domestic security forces, all three of which must receive greater focus in the future.

The United States, as a critical FCC, should provide more material support (such as helicopters) or even troops. As a UNSC permanent member, the United States can also assist the formation process of PKOs by depoliticizing the appointment process of Special Representatives and by promoting merit-based leadership.

Europe and the Return to U.N. Peacekeeping Post-Afghanistan

European Union (EU) member states provide nearly 40 percent of the U.N.'s peacekeeping budget, and in return the U.N. offers the EU important legitimacy to its military engagements. As major FCCs, there has been hopeful speculation that EU member states may increase their engagement as TCCs post-2014. But, this outcome appears unlikely, as neither the political appetite nor the financial capacity to enter new military engagements exist in many EU member states. Experts note that operations taking place are likely to occur under the flag of the EU and their Common Security and Defense Policy (CSDP) rather than the U.N., and are likely to be limited to Europe's immediate neighborhood.

Opportunities for increased EU engagement still exist, however. First, there is a space between "all in" and a "full retreat" for Europe, which could involve new training programs or field support to tighten the relationship between FCCs and TCCs, or foster new North-South joint ventures. Second, some member states may be more amenable to engage independent of the EU, such as France in Mali. Because strong European bilateral ties to former colonies persist, other joint operations between these two groups of states may be explored to target crises. Finally, Europe specializes in many of the civilian aspects of missions, and could provide valuable support in areas such as police or Rule of Law (RoL) training.

There is also a potential role for U.S. interlocutors in encouraging their European counterparts bilaterally to enhance their engagement independent of regional activities.

Protection of Civilians

The protection of civilians (POC) is often embedded in the international community's implied understanding of the role of PKOs. This effort materializes in three non-sequential forms: protection through political processes, establishment of a protected environment, and protection from imminent physical violence (the third being the primary action item of PKOs). The prominence of civilian protection in eight—soon to be nine—mission mandates represents the international community's commitment to ensuring that peacekeeping operations address civilian needs. Ninety-four percent of all peacekeepers are involved in missions possessing a POC mandate, yet basic problems remain in understanding and execution.

Adept, experienced mission leadership should manage expectations regarding the reality and limits of POC mandates. Most experts acknowledge the difficulty of protecting everyone and note the lack of clarity in how human rights, international humanitarian law, and POC activities intersect in the field. Rather than putting everything into a POC context, preventing targeted attacks on civilians seems a pertinent operational objective. Additionally, the policy formulation of the peacekeeping organizations and the development of a conflict often occur at different paces, which can lead to legal grey space in peacekeeping abilities. Peacekeepers in these situations are confronted with the need to respond quickly and effectively to crises, but many times do not have a clear mandate on proper protocol and operational parameters. There can also be discordance between U.N. mandates and international humanitarian law given this unaligned pace of conflict development.

Other challenges are mission related. POC should be integrated across mission components from the beginning, and should be realistic in its mandate. The potentially destabilizing effects of PKOs, which can exacerbate threats to civilians, should be recognized and countered early. Secondly, in some cases a host country is the perpetrator of offenses. The international community must find ways to hold the host government accountable for any human rights violations while preserving the principle of consent underlying peacekeeping missions. Building up host government capacity or requiring the signing of a social contract in the beginning of a mission could achieve this objective.

Innovative practices are also being explored to more effectively protect civilians. MONUSCO is using Joint Protection Teams with success. These multi-stakeholder, rapid response teams conduct field assessments, establish local action plans, and produce joint reports to improve POC. Community liaison assistants employ U.N. staff to coordinate local actors and military to increase prevention capacity and information gathering or sharing. Intermission border patrols also gather information while providing a visual deterrence. The Joint Mission Analysis Center (JMAC) and Joint Operations Centers (JOCs) provide other venues for informing threat assessments and seek to resolve staffing gaps in six-month turnovers with long-term personnel.

Looking forward, in the United States, the Department of Defense will release a report in September on perception, practices, and policies regarding POC, and the Army will publish a tactics manual covering POC in 2014.

Rule of Law, Police, and Formed Police Units

Rule of Law (RoL) is an important element in PKOs. While RoL is often seen as abstract and theoretical, the U.N. Office of Rule of Law Security Institutions is developing concrete and measurable indicators that reflect a state's ability to provide for domestic crisis response and enforcement. Even with indicators covering peacekeeper performance, civilian vulnerabilities, and RoL actor capacity and accountability, several RoL challenges exist in the peacekeeping framework.

ABOUT THIS BRIEF

This Peace Brief describes the key findings and conclusions from a May 10 symposium organized by the United States Institute of Peace and the United Nations Foundation/Better World Campaign. The participants included 60 leading policymakers, practitioners, and NGO leaders with a focus on peacekeeping. The findings inform future U.S. interagency and U.N. efforts to address the challenges and grasp opportunities in the current U.N. peacekeeping model. The authors are Hanne Bursch, a program assistant with USIP's executive office, and Ian Proctor, a research assistant with USIP's Center for Conflict Management.

The timeframe associated with this type of reform is problematic. Often, PKOs focus on one-off operational activities, rather than addressing deep-rooted values and practices. These attitude shifts require multigenerational sustained efforts, as the political and economic elite are often resistant. This decades-long process expands well beyond the PKO time frame, calling into question whether RoL is truly an operation of the U.N. Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) or should instead fall under the U.N. Development Programme (UNDP). Shifting from a supply driven approach – which focuses on increasing security sector capacity – to one driven by demand – which empowers civilians – could reform how DPKO engages in RoL activities, to include activities like informing the public on their rights and enabling civil society.

Given the nature of changing attitudes and the different interpretations of RoL, force commanders and mission leaders need to manage expectations that are aligned with training and implementation models to come up with realistic goals. Such management will provide peacekeepers from the onset with a unified way forward in a field that is often largely colored by cultural definitions and backgrounds. In this regard, the role of strong, qualified mission leadership cannot be understated.

Opportunities for advancing RoL could include identifying tangible benefits for host governments to incentivize and possibly expedite sustainable reform. A second avenue identified is increasing reliance on existing practices and cultures, to include local and informal institutions. Tufts University and the World Bank are both undertaking studies that explore the utility of informal justice institutions.

Conclusions

Peacekeeping operations are an increasingly necessary tool for peacebuilding. While it is not possible to identify all future threats, several themes should influence how the U.S. and the U.N. approach this flexible tool.

Partnerships, ever more important in an increasingly connected and currently austere financial environment, must develop the correct capacities and strategies, and should better incorporate TCC countries in these developments from the initial planning stage. The United States and European countries could lead on the creation of standards in these partnerships, and common doctrine across governments.

A political strategy of the mission should be directly aligned with operational practices and available resources. Host nation responsibilities ought to be included in this framework, and mechanisms for engaging earlier with emerging leaders should be explored. A deeper conversation amongst key audiences identifying ways to achieve political goals within or through PKOs would be instrumental to success.

On all points, international and local expectations must be managed. Resource scarcity directly impacts the quality of peacekeeping units. PKOs cannot be expected to protect all civilians nor build utopian societies. The realistic capacity for impact should influence the mandate and how the UNDPKO aligns resources, conducts training, and pursues interests. While the international community faces a common but difficult cause, peacekeeping operations remain a valuable tool that the United Nations can learn to wield effectively.



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