
UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION of GREATER BOSTON



TOPIC: STRENGTHENING UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

INTRODUCTION

United Nations peacekeeping operations date back to 1948 when the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was launched to monitor the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict. UNTSO still exists today, but the face of peacekeeping has changed over the years. Since 1948, there have been 63 missions deployed to regions all over the world. Some of them have made significant progress while others have been described as failures. Currently, 17 peacekeeping missions are working in the field. The effectiveness of United Nations peacekeeping operations has come into question time and time again, especially during the 1990s when demand increased for United Nations peacekeeping and the organization spread itself thin.



A map peacekeeping operations as of October 2007.

Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm>

BACKGROUND

The United Nations Charter and Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping, a term not used in the United Nations Charter, has become one of the main functions of the organization and although the Charter never calls for the use of peacekeeping missions directly, certain sections have been used to support the implementation of these missions.

Missions are authorized under either **Chapter VI** or **Chapter VII** of the United Nations Charter. Chapter VI outlines the “*pacific settlement of disputes.*”¹ This element of the charter authorizes

peacekeepers to maintain peace or restore order solely through the use of peaceful diplomatic measures, such as mediation and fact-finding. Chapter VI does not authorize any mission to use force. Chapter VII, however, discusses “action with respect to threats to the peace, breaches of the peace, and acts of aggression.”² Chapter VII is the more powerful of the two, and does authorize missions to use force, including embargoes and military intervention.

DUTIES OF THE PEACEKEEPERS

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations outlines the duties that many missions are required to perform.

“Depending on their mandate, peacekeeping missions may be required to:

- Deploy to prevent the outbreak of conflict or the spill-over of conflict across borders;
- Stabilize conflict situations after a cease fire, to create an environment for the parties to reach a lasting peace agreement;
- Assist in implementing comprehensive peace agreements;
- Lead states or territories through a transition to stable government, based on democratic principles, good governance and economic development.”

Source: <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/info/page3.htm>

The Role of Sovereignty

A nation’s **sovereignty** comes into question when a peacekeeping operation is deployed, particularly when a mission’s **mandate** receives Chapter VII authorization. The United Nations Charter empowers peacekeeping forces to act only when a mission is authorized under Chapter VII. This authorization has come under critical review in recent years. Many nations reject Chapter VII authorization with the belief that it is an infringement on sovereignty. However, Chapter VI authorization has in many cases left peacekeepers inadequately equipped to make progress on the ground.

CRITICAL THINKING

How can officials and member states better predict whether a crisis requires Chapter VI or Chapter VII authorization? What steps should be taken to be sure the right approach is taken?

East Timor and Rwanda

Peacekeeping in East Timor and Rwanda serve as examples of missions that were mandated by Chapter VI, but in reality, required Chapter VII authority to effectively address the situation on the ground. In East Timor, a referendum was passed in 1999 that moved to end Indonesian rule over the territory. The first mission in East Timor, the United Nations Mission in East Timor (UNAMET), was mandated to “be responsible for monitoring the fairness of the political environment.”³ However, the mission lacked any authority to troubleshoot the crisis that broke

out, and Indonesian authorities that were charged with restoring order did not do so. Indonesia's national sovereignty and the limited scope of the mission's mandate under Chapter VI prevented United Nations officials from intervening further. Because of this, a neighbor in the region, Australia, set up a multi-national force to help quell the violence in East Timor. Later, in response to the region's continued crisis, additional UN missions have been authorized by the Security Council under Chapter VII.

Similarly, UN peacekeepers received authorization under Chapter VI in 1993 in order to help establish peace among the warring parties in Rwanda. The United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (UNAMIR), headed by Force Commander Romeo Dallaire, was initially charged with implementing the Arusha Accords, an agreement that sought to put an end to the civil war in Rwanda. Peacekeepers, which did not have authority to assist in mitigating the developing violence, were forced to stand by. Under a Chapter VI mandate, any action taken by these peacekeepers would be dangerous and would not be supported by sufficient intelligence information. With signals from the ground, Dallaire was able to foresee trouble and sent a fax to UN Headquarters in New York on January 11, 1994, a memorandum that became known as the "Genocide Fax". Dallaire asked for additional assistance, but was denied, and many now cite UN inaction as one of the reasons for the violence that continued in Rwanda.

A LIMITED MANDATE

General Romeo Dallaire, Force Commander of peacekeeping missions in Rwanda discussed his dilemma with Chapter VI authorization on PBS' *Frontline*.

"...[As a] Chapter VI peace keeping [mission, our mandate included] just self defense and responding to what either side are telling us in our patrolling. I had no intelligence capability, officially. ... I could not conduct any covert operations. I could not conduct hard intelligence gathering on either side, in the classic sense. I was totally dependent on the good will of both sides, and my ability to monitor. That was it. The ability to monitor is not necessarily always the most effective intelligence gathering; you do need other operations. You need even signals intelligence', the phones, the radios, all that kind of stuff."

Source: <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/ghosts/interviews/dallaire.html>

Mission Mandates

The *Report on the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* detailed reform options for United Nations Peacekeeping Missions. One of the recommendations that the panel made involved a call for "clear, credible and achievable mandates."⁴ In the past, missions that entered a crisis situation without a definite goal that could be achieved with available resources have not been very successful, whereas the most successful missions have had a specific mandate and have been provided adequate resources and support.

The *Report on the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* more specifically

suggested the following with regard to mandates:

“The Secretariat must tell the Security Council what it needs to know, not what it wants to hear, when formulating or changing mission mandates, and countries that have committed military units to an operation should have access to Secretariat briefings to the Council on matters affecting the safety and security of their personnel, especially those meetings with implications for a mission’s use of force.”

Source: http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/

The United Nations launched two missions in the southeastern European state of Bosnia and Herzegovina. The United Nations Protection Force (UNPROFOR) of 1992 was the first mission to enter Bosnia. UNPROFOR was also mandated to address issues in Croatia and the rest of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia including Serbia and Montenegro and Macedonia. Headquartered in Zagreb, Croatia, UNPROFOR’s initial task involved maintaining demilitarized zones in that nation. However, as other issues began to arise regionally, the mandate was expanded. UNPROFOR was ill-equipped to respond to problems in Bosnia and Macedonia in addition to its original mandate in Croatia.

In 1995, however, UNPROFOR was split up into three separate missions with specific mandates in order to more effectively address local events. The United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) replaced UNPROFOR in Bosnia and Herzegovina, dealing exclusively with that area. The new mission shared responsibilities with the NATO-led Implementation Force, IFOR. UNMIBH handled police and judicial reform along with maintaining general law and order while IFOR ensured security. With an achievable mandate carried out under a specific timeline along with collaboration from NATO, UNMIBH made significant progress in Bosnia and Herzegovina and withdrew in 2002.

“Through UNMIBH, the United Nations has demonstrated its ability to complete a complex mandate in accordance with a strategic plan and within a realistic and finite time frame. UNMIBH has completed the most extensive police reform and restructuring project ever undertaken by the United Nations.”

-Former Secretary General Kofi Annan

Source: Report of the Secretary General on the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina, S/2002/1314

Transitional Administrations

Missions that serve as transitional administrations enter a region and assume control of civil functions. These missions are necessary to restore order and provide control as an area transitions from one government to another. The 1990s brought a wide variety of missions to the United Nations agenda; however, unlike many other types of operations, transitional administrations were unprecedented.

Both East Timor and Kosovo required this form of peacekeeping operation. The United Nations Transitional Administration in East Timor (UNTAET) which was launched in 1999 gave the United Nations officials unlimited jurisdiction to make decisions as needed with regard to government functions. Though the mission achieved many short-term goals, it struggled with making long-term progress as its functions were wide open and it did not receive much guidance for moving forward. Transitional administration also raised the question of democratic practices. New York Times journalist James Traub accused the United Nations of “benevolent colonialism” for taking “absolute authority” in East Timor.⁵

CRITICAL THINKING

Considering Traub’s criticism, how can the United Nations implement a transitional administration without verging on “benevolent colonialism?”

The United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) is carrying out a similar function to UNTAET in East Timor. UNMIK exercises civil authority and has been responsible for arranging elections and providing necessary public services. UNMIK continues to assist Kosovo with rebuilding its government in the wake of the region’s recent declaration of independence on 17 February 2008. Both of these missions now provide examples for future transitional administrations regarding proper implementation.

Foreign Assistance

During the 1990s, when the United Nations was at its capacity for handling missions, further assistance was needed to move missions along. For example, NATO played a significant role in both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo by providing additional military and security protection. In East Timor, neighboring nation Australia organized International Force East Timor (INTERFET) to respond to escalating violence that the United Nations was not mandated to handle.

In another example, The United States unilaterally entered Somalia to assist the mission there. However, the United States prematurely withdrew leaving the United Nations mission struggling to continue. In this case, the United Nations did not have back-up support and could not carry out the remaining pieces of its mandate. Somalia is considered by many to be a failure for the United Nations.

PAST INTERNATIONAL ACTION

Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations

In response to Former Secretary-General Kofi Annan’s request for a review of peacekeeping operations, six high level officials issued a report detailing areas where operations could use improvement. The *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* is now commonly referred to as **The Brahimi Report**, named after the Algerian Diplomat, Lakhdar Brahimi, who headed the panel’s work. The Brahimi Report was released in 2000, and is the first major look at possible reform for peacekeeping operations.

The Brahimi Report looked at every aspect of peacekeeping missions, and reasons for which some of them ended in failure in the past. Topics addressed by the report include preventative action, the need for clear mandates, and possible reform for the Department of Peacekeeping Operations. These are only three of the many facets of peacekeeping operations that The Brahimi Report explores in depth.

“There are many tasks which United Nations peacekeeping forces should not be asked to undertake and many places they should not go. But when the United Nations does send its forces to uphold the peace, they must be prepared to confront the lingering forces of war and violence, with the ability and determination to defeat them.”

– Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, August 2000

Source: http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/

The Zeid Report

After United Nations Peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo “were accused of being involved in sexual exploitation and abuse of the local population,” in 2004, former Secretary General Kofi Annan commissioned Prince Zeid Ra’ad Zeid Al-Hussein of Jordan to be his special advisor on this matter.⁶ In his role, Zeid worked on a report, now called *The Zeid Report*, which was released on 24 March 2005. *The Zeid Report* sheds light on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeepers. The report suggested that experts be summoned to investigate the allegations, that the organization be held to a greater level of accountability, and that individuals be held legally accountable. The 2004 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse damaged peacekeeping’s reputation requiring serious consideration of reform to restore the organization’s credibility.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FORMULATING A RESOLUTION

Peacekeepers are sent to some of the most volatile regions of the globe, often without critical resources and authority to allow them to make forward progress and reach their goals. When formulating a resolution delegates should consider:

- What elements have helped past missions successfully achieve their mandates?
- Which reasons caused past missions to fail at their outlined mandates?
- How have missions been modified along the way? How do these modifications reflect greater change that might be necessary when deploying a mission?
- How should the United Nations go about considering and implementing the Brahimi report? Which elements of the report are most crucial and should be considered priority?

QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. Has your country ever had a peacekeeping mission deployed within it or near it to respond to a crisis? Was the mission successful or was it a failure?
2. How active have peacekeeping operations been in your region?
3. Has your country contributed to United Nations peacekeeping operations? Were

- your contributions in the form of goods, funding or human capital?
4. Has your country proposed changes to the current method of deploying peacekeeping operations?
 5. Were other actors involved if a mission was deployed in your country or region?
i.e. NATO, other states

TERMS TO CONSIDER

Peacekeeping: A United Nations activity involving volunteers and troops entering a nation to either build peace or maintain a peace that faces a threat.

Chapter VI: A chapter of the United Nations charter under which missions are mandated. Chapter VI does not allow the use of force.

Chapter VII: A chapter of the United Nations charter under which missions are mandated. Chapter VII does allow the use of force.

Mandate: This is an outline of expectations that a peacekeeping mission should carry out.

The Brahimi Report: A document also known as the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* was released in 2000 detailing suggestions for improvements to peacekeeping operations.

SOURCES FOR RESEARCH

<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/> – This link leads to the text of the United Nations charter. Close analysis of the charter will help delegates to make recommendations to reform existing policies and procedure.

http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/ – This link leads to the full text of the *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, also called The Brahimi Report. It also includes a readable summary.

<http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/> – This is the homepage of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations. This is a useful tool for finding out information about particular missions and how the department itself runs.

REFERENCES

¹ United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations, Chapter I, Article 2.1*. 17 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>>.

² United Nations. *Charter of the United Nations, Chapter VII*. 17 Mar. 2008 <<http://www.un.org/aboutun/charter/>>.

³ United Nations. Security Council. Progress report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor S/1999/595/. 1999. 3.

⁴ Brahimi, Lakhdar (Chairman). United Nations. Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations. 17 Mar. 2008 <http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/>. (Summary of Recommendations, 4).

⁵ Traub, James. "Inventing East Timor." Foreign Affairs July-August 2000. Boston University, Boston. 7 October 2006. Keyword: East Timor

⁶"Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations Peacekeeping Operations." Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Denmark. 26 Apr. 2005. 17 Mar. 2008

<<http://www.missionfnnewyork.um.dk/en/menu/dkandtheUN/news/SexualExploitationandAbuseinUNPeacekeepingOperations.htm>>.