POLICY BRIEF 2013:2

The Death of Doctrine?

Are 'Fit-for-Purpose' Peace Operations the Way Forward?

This discussion paper discusses some of the new and continuing challenges confronting contemporary peace operations and aims to offer an alternative optic, provoke some 'outside the box' thinking — or perhaps just to provoke — and to lay the ground for further productive and topical discussions.

This policy brief is commissioned for the Challenges Forum. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Challenges Forum Partnership.

The canonical view of peace operations in general, and peacekeeping in particular, is that it tends to go in cycles. Periods or epochs are informally measured by the characteristics and conditions under which the missions take place. Has the Council authorized the launch of additional operations? Is it a period of growth or contraction? Are robust mandates being considered or is the membership skeptical of the UN's ability to plan, direct and implement difficult deployments? Are troop- and police-contributing (TCC/PCC) countries with effective and developed uniformed services willing to contribute personnel? Are the Blue Helmets relevant or peripheral? In the early 1990s, a series of successes — El Salvador, Mozambique, Cambodia, Namibia — drew the world's attention to the potential application of peacekeeping in the post-Cold War era. This was underpinned by a generally united Security Council that tended to be able to forge consensus on big issues. In the mid-90s, peacekeeping over-reached and the failures in Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Somalia and Liberia prompted many to declare the institution 'dead'. This spawned a period of self-reflection that in turn generated a proscribed, considered and doctrinally-driven approach to future peace operations.

The architects of peace operations successfully argued that future peacekeeping deployments could work, but only if the institution learned from its mistakes, got better at its core business, made the relevant adjustments and understood — and explained — what it could and could not intrinsically do. The international community in turn was encouraged to look at peacekeeping as simply one tool out of many to address the

issues on the Security Council's docket. This tool, it was argued, enabled a menu of options, all of which could perform certain tasks but not others, each with both specific fixed costs and achievable 'outputs.' Each model brought its own advantages and limitations, but the fundamental bargain with the peacekeeping paymasters was that the more support that was provided along a clearly articulated continuum of international action, the more a mission could achieve. In the wake of a series of horrific failures peacekeeping had reinvented itself as a scalable and marketable institution with a varied and dependable product line.

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By the mid 2000s, a revitalized peacekeeping was undeniably in a period of growth and increased relevance in the international system. At the start of the current decade, the 'surge' seemed to finally be receding. Large missions in Kosovo, Timor-Leste, and Liberia, having to a large extent successfully completed their mandates, beginning to downsize, close and transition towards peacebuilding. In recent years, the cycle has begun to upturn once again; peace operations remain a central crisis management tool in the international community's tool kit at both a regional and a global level. Missions continue to be asked not only to address the most difficult problems, but to evolve and develop as they work. Those that oversee and direct peace operations are now being asked not only to 'build the ship while sailing it', but to steer it in several directions at once while concurrently repelling boarders. UN-led peace operations once again find themselves cast as 'first responders' for many of the thorniest problems on the international community's agenda. This turn of the wheel has been characterized by a number of fundamental shifts in how the international community (meant in this case as those who vote, those who pay, and those who deploy), looks at peace operations.

Inherent in the mid-2000s 'menu of options' approach to operational deployments was an acceptance, by both the implementers and the requesters, of the limitations and costs attached to whichever option from the carte du jour the international community selected to address a particular problem. Underpinning this inputs/outputs approach was the broad acceptance of what had become known in-house as the 'Brahimi Doctrine', which was, by and large, a product of the hard lessons learned from the catastrophes of the mid-90s. In 2006, for example, it was unlikely that many would have argued with Brahimi's dictum 'don't try to keep peace if there is no peace to keep.' The international community stood behind this approach, and while partnerships with other organizations — regional and multilateral — were pursued, few would have questioned the primacy of muscular UN-led peace operations, armoured with the approval of a 'multi-dimensional, integrated mission' approach that folded the UN family under the political authority of the head of the mission –– the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. Today the game has changed. In eastern DRC, Mali, Somalia, and South Sudan, new UN mandates shift away from the 'doctrinal'

approach and instead embrace a more ad-hoc, 'fit-for-purpose', 'right-sized', 'boutique' approach which leverages partnerships, regional initiatives, coalitions, unilateral deployments and even use of private contractors.

Each deployment seems to break established patterns, and peacekeeping finds itself confronting a dramatically different political operational landscape. So what has changed? Do the rules need to be amended, or has the ground shifted so much that the playbook needs to be entirely re-written? Or perhaps the change has been even more tectonic: is peacekeeping doctrine dead?

The global shift toward fiscal austerity has not produced a decline in deployments, perhaps due in some part to the cost savings inherent in the 'burden/cost sharing' structure of a multilateral deployment versus 'going it alone'. The paymasters of peace operations simply have less tolerance for hearing why a particular challenge cannot be met using the range of tools at the UN's disposal. While the system has responded to unfolding crises by launching a number of new missions over the past few years, these deployments have not stopped the UN's budgetary bodies from seeking cuts across all missions — and the peacekeeping budget itself — for three years in a row. The Brahimi principle of 'peacekeeping is not the right tool for every job' is greeted with frustration rather than agreement. From the perspective of member states confronting a range of international crises and an increasingly frugal home front, it is easy to see why many would believe that they should have the right to instruct their Organization how and where it should act without having to hear a litany of explanations as to why it will be difficult to accomplish.

Also, the international community now has a broader range of options available in addressing the crises of the day. Particularly in Africa, regional organizations, sub-regional groupings and localized and hybrid coalitions are increasingly willing to engage directly in addressing developing transnational issues. The financial advantages of the unique UNSOA/AMISOM model — where the UN pays for and supports the continuance of a deployment by another organization — is likewise being carefully looked at by organizations and groupings considering 'getting into the game.' The marketplace is much more competitive; increased demand is now being accompanied by increased supply, allowing the consumer to be pickier, demanding higher standards of service and a lower price point. The Blue Helmets are not the only multilateral game in town.

In addition to new entrants into the marketplace, there are also a series of new and challenging threats with which the international community is required to grapple. In the same way that an earlier generation of peace operation needed to move away from the 'classical' inter-state, inter-positional, Chapter VI style of observation and monitoring deployments

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to address the emerging challenges of intra-state conflicts, today's system is likewise having to pivot to stay relevant. Contemporary peace operations can no longer ignore significant transnational challenges not traditionally within the remit of peace operations. The definition of a peace and security issue has broadened, and with it the task list peace operations are asked to address. These include cross-border threats such as organized crime, trafficking and other illicit international networks, terrorism (meant here as 'the deliberate targeting of UN/international personnel for ideological reasons unrelated to the specific deployment'), natural resource diversion and environmental degradation. Missions have begun to address some of these issues, but efforts thus far have been haphazard and ad-hoc and have achieved varying degrees of success. The environmental dimension, for example, is particularly complex. Missions deploy into areas where scarce resources — and the struggle over their control — is frequently a major driver of conflict. The depletion of these resources frequently has catastrophic long-term effects for the people of the entire region into which a mission deploys, but addressing the causes of these issues is beyond the traditional remit of a peace operation.

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There is thus an argument that we have moved into an era of 'fit-for-purpose', 'right-sized' or 'designer' missions, where each mission is sui generis — designed and configured using the resources available for that specific circumstance to address the particularities of that situation. For example, the deployment of the FIB (Force Invtervention Brigade) in Eastern DRC, which has proven thus far to be a tentative success, would have been problematic if decided against the principles of peacekeeping (considered absolute in the mid-2000s). Missions succeed, according to Brahimi's doctrinal point, when they are impartial, use force primarily in self-defense, and have the consent of the parties to the conflict. The FIB fulfills none of these criteria and yet thus far it has undeniably made a difference on the ground.

Traditionally, UN-funded peace operations, as a mater of principle, steered away from accepting contributions of uniformed personnel hailing from countries in the region of the proposed deployment. And yet AMISOM, a mission that made a critical contribution to the defeat of the radical Islamist insurgents, Al-Shabaab, as a fighting force, and played a central role in the establishment of the country's first representative government in decades, was composed entirely of countries from the east African region throughout most of its lifespan. Subcontracting means a different set of options.

Because of the mandate requirement of overseeing a disarmament process, UNMIN, the special political mission deployed to Nepal, would have

traditionally included a military component — or at least uniformed military observers — and yet UNMIN was able to successfully complete its complicated mandate without a single soldier deployed. Clearly, an entirely demand-driven approach not only has advantages, it has already worked in a number of theatres.

Three central factors will need to be addressed if the 'fit-for-purpose' concept is to be moved forward as a new, non-doctrinal doctrine:

- Proper planning;
- Assiduous, accurate analysis and;
- Informative intelligence

Modern operations are remaining in theatre for years and yet the authorization cycle for most missions remains generally stuck at one year and planning horizons are politically rather than operationally driven. Longer approved deployments would allow for more long range planning and more robust supply chain management to ensure necessary staff and equipment are on the ground and 'dug in' in a timely fashion. Light and nimble operations will fail if they cannot concentrate their resources where they are most needed.

Likewise, without expert level analytics feeding leadership what they need to know in real time (and generating sound and informed strategic decision making), it will be difficult for the new approach to function at the level required. Future 'fit-for-purpose' missions — as well as contemporary, more traditional operations — must be able to leverage all available resources to ensure that these lighter, more nimble deployments can successfully achieve the complicated tasks to which they have been assigned. Without the ability to dominate the environment through sheer numbers, future missions will need to rely on timely and accurate information and intelligence to ensure that scarce resources — both operational and political — are deployed where and when they are needed most. New technologies such as UAVs, digital information gathering assets and other surveillance equipment, use of ECMs, next generation digital media technologies, crowd sourcing/conflict mapping within the geographic information system (GIS) framework must be mainstreamed until it is considered a standard deployment package. This in particular, will require dialogue with the membership at the highest level (in particular the Peacekeeping Group, C-34 etc.), as many have long been skeptical of or even hostile to the idea of the UN acquiring indigenous intelligence capabilities of any kind. It is worth noting that many of the traditional concerns — e.g. support from a unified Security Council; clarity on use of force questions; protection of civilians issues; engagement from professionalized, competent uniformed services; support from the region; and firm standards of conduct and discipline not only still apply, they are amplified in these smaller, more agile operations that inherently

depend on the deployment of highest caliber of personnel available.

The proliferation of partnerships and the 'fit-for-purpose' approach can muddle the central question of political primacy, i.e., who is ultimately in charge within the international community on the ground. The expansion of the range of actors engaged is a positive development to be sure, but having multiple high-level envoys and several multilateral organizations, all with a stake in the process and operational presences on the ground, can create confusion about who actually sets the strategy and makes key decisions. It dilutes both suasion and responsibility and provides opportunities for cynical stakeholders to play different international actors off against each other. Clear and agreed goals are paramount, and ensuring that the on-the-ground team is moving in the same direction is perfectly in-line with the current 'Delivering as One' SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures). More broadly, one of mission leadership's key tasks is cobbling together a political coalition comprised of, at least, Security Council members, regional powers, local stakeholders, national leadership, donors, TCC/PCCs, international financial institutions, multilateral organizations and the UN family. Without them on board throughout, supporters can quickly become spoilers. Clear, undivided and determined political leadership will be a central plank of future effective engagement platforms.

All these changes will require greater flexibility for DPKO/DPA along the lines pursued by FPD (Field Personnel Division) with the GFSS (Global Field Support Strategy) initiative. The system will need to leverage all resources available to it, whether internal (e.g. greater fungibility between missions), with donors (e.g. gratis specialist capabilities) and even through traditional avenues such as the use of private contractors in particularly non-permissive environments (StratComms, static protection, e.g.). However, the success of this approach is contingent on direct, candid and repeated engagement with the entire peace operations community, as it will require both careful consideration of the future ramifications and broad agreement for formalizing the shift already underway.

A 'fit-for-purpose' approach also does not change the fact that ultimately, political problems require political solutions. As Brahimi has argued, military force, police deployments, human rights investigators, POC personnel and international aid workers will never be able to provide security, justice, social services and jobs for the millions within a post-conflict host community. The peace operation is one modest component of a broader

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engagement strategy to address their needs and expectations for security, justice, employment and development together to break the cycles of fragility and violence. For this approach to work going forward, a number of alterations will need to be examined carefully and at length. The Brahimi Doctrine was a product of hard lessons learned in some of the worlds most difficult conflicts and a year's worth of diligent analysis by a panel of eminent experts--to simply discard the lessons learned that underpin the way peace operations do business without carefully considering the costs and benefits would be foolhardy and dangerous.

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