

Enhancing Peace Operations' Capacity to Face Threats Against Peacekeepers¹

BACKGROUND PAPER

ANNUAL FORUM 2014: Building Capacity for Peace Operations in Response to Diversified Threats: What Lies Ahead?

Challenges Forum, 14–16 October 2014, Beijing, China.

Aim, Scope and Intention

This paper addresses critical issues for the effective planning, conduct and evaluation of modern multidimensional peace operations. The paper deliberates on a number of present-day and emerging concerns, assesses risk and explores prevention and mitigation strategies to reduce risk to peacekeepers to acceptable levels. The intention of the paper is to establish a starting foundation for a discussion on enhancing peace operations' capacity to face threats against peacekeepers. Recently, the United Nations initiated a major review of peacekeeping operations; the outcome of the discussion may contribute to that review.

A Necessary and Short Tutorial on Security Threat and Risk

Threat is what will hurt you. Risk is a combination of the likelihood of a threat-based incident occurring and the impact of that incident upon you. This paper considers human threat of violence, that is, security threat; other natural or manmade hazards are outside this paper's scope.

In accordance with the United Nations security management system policy and guidance, security threat to peace operations is normally categorised and assessed in terms of armed conflict, terrorism, civil unrest and criminality. Once threat is assessed, vulnerabilities of a specific peace operation are analysed and a risk level determined. Peace operations are conducted under conditions of acceptable risk. Therefore, if risk is assessed as higher than is acceptable, it must be reduced. Risk reduction involves lowering the likelihood of a threat-based incident taking place and/or reducing the severity of the impact.²

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¹ This paper is a commissioned background paper for the International Forum for the Challenges of Peace Operations. The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Challenges Forum Partnership or the Host.

² United Nations, United Nations Security Management System Policy Manual, Chapter III, Applicability, 8 April 2011; Chapter IV, Section A, Security Risk Management, 20 April 2009; Chapter IV, Section B, Security Level System, 8 April 2011; and, Chapter IV, Section C, Determination of Acceptable Risk, 5 May 2009. The United Nations security management system does not apply to formed military units in peacekeeping operations.



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Lowering likelihood involves the implementation of prevention measures (e.g. training or physical security) whereas lowering impact involves the application of mitigation measures (e.g. medical response).

To be most effective, the assessment of risk and, if needed, the determination of initial risk reduction measures must be accomplished prior to the deployment of a peace operation. As security threat emanates from a specific operational environment, security-related dynamics associated with that peacekeeping environment must be understood from the perspective of their influence on threat and risk.

Present-day and Evolving Security Dynamics

Contemporary conflicts tend to be prolonged and involve numerous local, regional and transnational actors. This is particularly striking in Africa as seen in the Central African Republic (CAR), eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Darfur, Mali and South Sudan where actors include combinations of host government and anti-government forces, state-sponsored militias, violent non-state groups, ethnic-based militias, armed criminal elements, other governments' military forces and/or regional organizations' military. In many instances, actors are outside normal political peace building processes; in some cases, actors pose a direct or indirect security threat to peacekeeping personnel and activities.³

There is an imperative, especially from the Security Council, for faster deployment, mission start-up and initiation of robust operations to stabilise the security situation, protect the population, support humanitarian efforts and facilitate a peace process.⁴ Increasingly, the deployment of peace operations occurs prior to a post-conflict period, in the absence of a political framework to steer a long-term political solution and with consent, at best, of only some of the actors. The absence of a comprehensive political framework heightens the possibility of actors resorting to violence, especially during mission start-up. To illustrate, as of August 2014, over a period of 16 months, the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) has been the primary or secondary target of 74 hostile acts killing 11 peacekeepers and injuring an additional 58.

Even in established missions, the security situation may dramatically change testing a mission's flexibility to deal with a new security reality. The United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), in Golan, operates under a mandate dating to 1974 that deals with maintaining peace between the Governments of Israel and Syria. UNDOF enjoyed a largely benign security environment for 38 years. However, with the advent of the Syrian civil war, present-day

³ Examples of groups that posed or pose direct or indirect security threats include the former M23 Movement of eastern DRC, janjaweed in Darfur, jihadist armed groups such as Al-Qaeda in the Islamic Maghreb or Ansar Dine in Mali, and the Nuer White Army in South Sudan, and armed criminal elements in Darfur and northern Mali. Examples of other governments' or regional military forces are the French Operations Sangaris in CAR and Barkhane in Mali, Uganda's Zulu Task Force in South Sudan, and the African Union MISCA in CAR.

⁴ Recent examples of this type of deployment are the United Nations peacekeeping missions in CAR and Mali.

UNDOF operates in the midst of active ongoing hostilities amongst the Government of Syria armed forces and an estimated 40 anti-government armed elements employing heavy weaponry and a variety of improvised explosive devices. During 2013 and 2014, UNDOF transformed itself to address the new security environment. Nevertheless, government artillery and tank fire has produced unintended, collateral damage in UNDOF, while anti-government armed elements have kidnapped, hijacked, denied freedom of movement, stolen weapons and vehicles and, in August-September 2014, directly and intentionally attacked UNDOF personnel. One could conclude that UNDOF is conducting a peacekeeping operation in the midst of war and wonder on the limits of a peacekeeping operation under such circumstances.

Similarly, as a consequence of the recent return to violence in South Sudan, the United Nations mission in South Sudan (UNMISS) had to rapidly adapt to implement a revised Security Council mandate that refocused the mission's main effort from promoting development and nation-building to protecting civilians and ending the violence in South Sudan. Protection of the some 75,000–80,000 civilians currently in United Nations camps has often involved direct confrontation with armed groups and has, since December 2013, led to the death of two and injury of six peacekeepers. It is anticipated that as the UN mission in CAR expands and establishes its sectors, the protection of civilians mandate will likely look similar to South Sudan.

Faster deployment or rapid mission refocus and robust operations, in areas of prolonged conflict, where a political framework may not exist and before a cessation of hostilities, in remote areas with limited infrastructure and numerous actors of whom many may represent a significant threat support a deduction that contemporary United Nations peacekeeping operations operate in higher security risk environments.

Peace Operations' Challenges in Higher Risk Security Environments

The overarching challenge to security risk reduction is to successfully match the capabilities of civilian, military and police peacekeepers to the security-related aspects of contemporary operational environments and mandated tasks. This involves three crucial areas: a realistic conceptual approach; environment and mandate task-specific training; and suitable resources. Each of these areas requires the collaborative engagement of United Nations Headquarters, peacekeeping missions, member states, and, where feasible, the host government.

First, the conceptual approach explains what needs to be accomplished, and how, and provides the foundation for mandate implementation in a risk acceptable fashion. The conceptual approach brings together: a political framework; mandate; strategic and mission-level guidance and planning; direction; operational, support and emergency plans; security policy; and, tactics, techniques and procedures that are fitted to the operational environment, including the security situation, and mandated tasks.

A political framework establishes the political process to ultimately arrive at a political solution to the conflict. The framework is a vital tool to establish parties' and the international community's expectations and to create norms for parties' behaviour, ideally including relationships with the peacekeeping mission. One of the short term aims of most political frameworks is to reduce violence and tension amongst the parties; in this respect it serves as a high-level security risk management instrument. A political framework also separates those parties to the conflict that are within the political process from those who remain outside. From a security risk perspective, this assists in clarifying actual or potential threat and risk and, thereafter, risk reduction measures. Where a political framework is completely or partially absent, an early and vital challenge for the mission and other relevant actors is to establish a political basis to support political end states and security risk management.

The United Nations methodology for strategic and mission-level assessment and planning is found in the United Nations Integrated Assessment and Planning Policy⁵ and the Integrated Assessment and Planning Manual.⁶ This process has evolved since 1999, but has yet to be fully institutionalised within the Secretariat. Integrated planning accounts for a likely mandate and addresses both the operational environment, including the implications for mission security. From comprehensive and integrated strategic guidance flow coherent and synchronised operational and support concepts and plans, including a security. Unfortunately, in many cases, planning is conducted in stovepipes and without the needed integration. The consequence is the high potential for incoherent plans, wastage of resources and higher security risk.

From a security perspective, the strongest body of policy is found in the United Nations Security Management System policy manual. This manual is a compilation of United Nations System-agreed security management policies that specify methods, procedures and standards for the security management system that is applicable to all United Nations civilian staff and individually deployed police and military personnel. Attempts have been made to expand this security management approach to formed military units, but these efforts have not enjoyed success. As a consequence, military and United Nations Police units have no established and agreed standards for their own force protection and rely on whatever national standard exists. The lack of standardised and member state-agreed security policy and standards results in an ad hoc and poorly-defined force protection posture.

Finally, military, police tactics, techniques and procedures must fit the operational environment and security situation. Traditional peacekeeping techniques were found inadequate for the United Nations mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH) when it needed to reduce criminal gangs in Port-au-Prince. The mission demonstrated innovation and flexibility by adopting tactics and techniques more familiar to urban conflict to accomplish

⁵ United Nations, *Policy on Integrated Assessment and Planning*, April 2013.

⁶ United Nations, Integrated Assessment and Planning Working Group, *Integrated Assessment and Planning Handbook*, December 2013.

its task. The protection of civilians mandated task in many missions demands a proactive and integrated mission operational psychology and approach that combines needed civil affairs, humanitarian, mission support, military, and police capabilities. UNMISS is a leader in this area and lessons-identified need to be institutionalised for use by other and future missions. The tactics, techniques and procedures lessons of UNMISS will serve to reduce security risk to protected populations and mission personnel.

Second, pre-deployment and during deployment training needs to focus on security risk management. Training prepares personnel to effectively operate in a specific security environment. Tailored and effective training imparts knowledge of how to work in higher-risk situations. Examples of such training range from the Safe and Secure Approaches in Field Environments (SSAFE) provided to all civilian and individually deployed military and police personnel in United Nations higher-risk missions to member state pre-deployment/pre-operations training for military and police units.

A challenge is for the United Nations to appreciate and then impart to member states those environment-specific training subjects that enhance military and police force protection and, thereby, retain security risk at acceptable levels. This is a difficult endeavour for pre-deployment training and becomes almost impossible during 're-hatting' of already deployed forces. As an example, military units deploying to UNDOF need specific training in counter-improvised explosive detection and response, mine awareness and the use of medical trauma bags to name three topics. If this is not conducted before deployment, it increases deployed unit's security vulnerability and necessitates the mission to expend resources to provide the needed training. Currently, a methodology to work in close collaboration between the Secretariat and member states to appreciate the security threats and risk, identify and communicate preventive training and ensure such training is conducted is not apparent.

Third, resources involve: personnel, United Nations Owned or Contingent Owned Equipment (COE) and mission support capacities that reduce security risk associated with the type of operations undertaken in the mission area. Also included are the supporting financial resources.

As with operationally-focused training, specialist personnel, units and equipment can significantly reduce security risk. In the present-day operational and higher-risk security environments, a premium is placed on enabling and force multiplying capacities notably in the areas of: intelligence and information; engineering; medical; utility and attack aviation; aerial surveillance systems; counter-improvised explosive device; explosive ordnance disposal; civil-military cooperation; security and force protection; and, others. These assets are essential not only for implementation of mandate tasks, but also to reduce risk associated with those tasks.

While many enabling and force multiplying assets are military or police, the timely deployment of civilian enablers is equally important. Maintaining momentum of a peace process is a factor in reducing security

risk to the mission. The availability, at the right time, of civil affairs, disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration; security sector reform; justice and corrections, protection of civilians and many other disciplines, maintains momentum.

This paper will not discuss normal military, police and civilian equipment, but rather focus on the specific equipment needs of peacekeeping in security environments, as previously described. Peacekeeping military and police operations and civilian activities can be viewed as a four faceted operation as they take place across a wide geographic area (ground: length and width), using air mobility and surveillance (height) and with a need to be at certain places at certain periods (the time facet). Clear examples of this imperative are seen in almost all protection of civilians operations in CAR, Mali and South Sudan. This means that high mobility, agility and the capacity to maintain a higher operational tempo are required to make the most efficient and effective use of military, police and civilian capacities. Equipment that supports the attainment of high mobility and agility is a necessity. And, the requirement for high mobility and agility also define the types of equipment needed to rapidly emplace security risk reduction measures (or force protection in military terms).

Examples of equipment that supports mobility and flexibility includes: longer range, high payload rotary aviation; high-mobility ground vehicles suited for the terrain; readily transportable command, control and communications modules; mobile engineering equipment; aerial surveillance systems; mobile accommodation (tents and shelters); rapidly emplaced barrier and physical protective systems; mobile lighting and sensors; and, mobile medical trauma kits. In areas with large open space (e.g. deserts), there may be need for mobile longer range weapons systems.

Mission support is the administration, human resources, budget and finance, logistics and information technology and communications that underpin a peace operation. Without mission support, there is no mission. There is a dilemma in many peacekeeping operations to both establish operating bases and yet demonstrate mobility and agility while maintaining a security risk acceptable posture. Mission support is a massive effort that needs considerable time and resource mobilisation. Mission support operates best when a clear mission aim and operational concept are in place; major or numerous changes from planning are an anathema to any support function. The challenge is to have a clear operational concept while creating the capacities and methods to both accommodate and base the mission while ensuring the needed agility and flexibility.

The introduction of modern technology into peace operations is an investment with high potential return in increased efficiency and effectiveness. The need to operate in higher risk environments at remote locations with limited infrastructure and over vast areas of terrain, calls out for technology that can enhance the operational capacities of peacekeepers and lower vulnerabilities. The United Nations employed unmanned aerial systems for surveillance and the use of these systems is increasing to support protection of civilian activities as well as force

protection. The use of security technology in the form of enhanced closed circuit television, motion sensing lights, counter-improvised explosive device measures and enhanced building materials is expanding and the future envisages the use of cost-effective radar direction finding and remote sensors. Available medical technology has saved lives that, in previous years, would have been lost. Such medical technology can be applied to peace operations. Enhanced communications interoperability is a goal and the use of cloud computing technology is under development. The former is a long-standing issue in peace operations, the latter is a method of reducing the size of information technology and communications staff and equipment, the 'light footprint' concept. Aware of the potential of technology and mindful that some view the use of modern technology as 'spying' or as a means to reduce troop strengths, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UN DPKO) established an Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping to research and consider short and long term approaches that apply new technologies and innovations on a continuous and transparent basis.

Strategies for Consideration

There are a number of strategies that, if implemented, would serve to better match peacekeeping capacity to security risk in modern peace operations.

First, improve the mission planning process. Fully institutionalise and implement the United Nations Integrated Assessment and Planning (IAP) methodology, including expansion of security risk related processes, to ensure that the security environment and imperatives are fully integrated in the conceptual approach.

Second, ensure that the operational environment and security risk are considered and accounted for during Security Council formulation of mission mandates.

Third, consider developing, in close collaboration with member states, and adopting policy and guidelines on police and military security/force protection similar to that of the United Nations Security Management System.

Fourth, conduct a study to determine which military, police and civilian tactics, techniques and procedures fit the current and potential peacekeeping operational environments and mandate tasks. Develop a mechanism to include those tactics, techniques and procedures, including security risk management/force protection, in pre-deployment training requirements for all mission components.

Fifth, establish a mechanism to research and recommend equipment best suited for mission operational environments that require higher mobility and agility.

Sixth, establish a mechanism to continuously research new technologies and innovations, including a field mission experimentation programme.

The UN DPKO Expert Panel on Technology and Innovation in UN Peacekeeping is a solid start in this endeavour.

And lastly, use the ongoing United Nations review of peacekeeping to institutionalise and further the above recommended strategies.