

Opening Presentation: Peace Operations: A Dynamic Concept

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There can be little doubt that peace operations (as they are usually called in UN documents) or peace support operations (a term increasingly used in the context of NATO) have developed considerably over the past fifteen years. At the same time, their appreciation by the public (and in publicized opinion) has oscillated between their appraisal as a nearly universal miracle medicine for crises worldwide, and their (and the world organization's) damnation as insufficient and failures. Success stories (such as the operations in South West Africa/Namibia, in 1989-90, or on the Macedonian-Serbian border, from 1992 to 1999) were easily forgotten or ignored, while less successful missions (such as those in Rwanda in 1994, in Somalia in 1993-95, or in Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1992-95) were seen as complete failures, which keep bedeviling the international organizations involved. The truth, as usual, is not to be found in images of stark contrast between black and white, but rather in varying shades of gray. It should not be denied that very few missions, if any, can qualify as total success stories, nor were there many total failures. Most operations succeeded in some of their tasks while failing in others. Some missions – because of realistic mandates, good management and leadership, and a sound portion of luck – resulted in lasting improvements, while others – even if apparently successful for contemporary observers –

brought no lasting peace to the region concerned. The following presentation provides an overview of international peace operations as they stand in late 2005, roughly fifteen years after the end of the East-West conflict of the ‘Cold War’ years.

What are International Peace Operations?

Peace (support) operations are international missions to stabilize trouble spots or prevent the outbreak of new conflicts. There are so many different terms (often confusingly) used in this context that it appears useful to start this text with some ideas at definitions.

The terms ‘peace operations’ and ‘peace support operations’ are indeed synonymous, both used to encompass the whole range of international operations described in the following paragraphs. The United Nations Organization as well as United States parlance at this moment still favors ‘peace operations’ as an ‘umbrella term’ for international missions of the peacekeeping, peace enforcing, or humanitarian variety.⁵ Because the term ‘peace operations’ is rather vague, the British (Interim) Manual 5/2 (‘Operations other than War/Wider Peacekeeping’) of 1994 introduced the term ‘Peace Support Operations’ (PSO) to better describe the aim of such missions: to support the preservation or restoration of peace in an international context, usually under a mandate from the United Nations or another international body. Since then, the term ‘peace support

⁵ See, for example, the U.S. Army Field Manual FM 100-223 ‘Peace Operations’ of December 1994.

operations' is increasingly used in NATO documents. In non-anglophone countries such as Austria or Switzerland, PSO are sometimes misinterpreted to refer only to more robust ('enforcement') missions, not to traditional 'blue helmet' peacekeeping (such as separation of forces, or monitoring of an armistice agreement). But this is an incorrect interpretation, not consistent with relevant UN, U.S., or NATO documents.

Other terms used in this context are less precise, and usually refer to a wider spectrum than peace operations. The concept of 'low-intensity conflicts' (LIC) was popular in the eighties, and more or less replaced the earlier term 'small wars'. It included peacekeeping operations besides other missions such as counter-insurgency or guerrilla warfare. In the nineties, when peace operations became more numerous, the U.S. military often used the term '(Military) Operations other than War' (MOOTW, OOTW) as being synonymous with peace operations. This was not the case, however, as (M)OOTW always referred to unilateral as well as to international actions, and included such diverse tasks as counter-drug operations or purely humanitarian relief missions in addition to peacekeeping. Therefore, since 1995, use of the term (M)OOTW has been 'de-emphasized' as too imprecise although it is still occasionally used, especially among U.S. Marines.⁶

⁶ See also John Mackinlay (ed.), *A Guide to Peace Support Operations* (Providence RI: Brown University/Thomas J. Watson Jr. Institute for International Studies 1996).

In Europe, peace operations are sometimes referred to as ‘Petersberg Missions’. This name is derived from the German government guest house on the Petersberg near Bonn, where, on 19 June 1992, the Council of Ministers of the West European Union (WEU) declared its willingness to extend the scope of its activities beyond European defense and ‘to support, on a case-by-case basis and in accordance with our own procedures, the effective implementation of conflict-prevention and crisis-management measures, including peacekeeping activities of the CSCE or the United Nations Security Council’. (CSCE refers to the Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe, which in 1994 became the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, OSCE). These missions were specified as ‘humanitarian and rescue tasks, peacekeeping tasks and tasks of combat forces in crisis management, including peacemaking’. This formulation was incorporated into the EU Treaty of Amsterdam in 1997. It is open to interpretation, however, as this definition – like LIC or (M)OOTW – goes beyond peace operations and could also cover campaigns such as Operation Allied Force (the air war against Yugoslavia in 1999) that clearly went beyond the scope of peace operations.

Like the Petersberg Tasks, the term ‘Crisis Response Operations’ (CRO) increasingly used in NATO parlance actually goes beyond the range of peace operations and includes humanitarian and disaster relief operations as well as combat missions. Therefore, in these pages, I will stick to the term ‘peace operations’.

Attempts at a Definition

Peace operations are a political instrument to stabilize crisis regions. The concept was developed gradually in the 19th and 20th centuries at the same time as the international system of states took on its present form. In principle, peace operations can be divided into two main categories:

- those established to deal with conflicts between states ('inter-state conflicts'), e.g. to monitor troop disengagement's after a war or prevent the outbreak of fresh fighting, and
- operations dealing with internal conflicts ('intra-state conflicts').

The number of operations in internal conflicts caused by ethnic, religious or political disputes has increased dramatically since the end of the Cold War, although this does not mean that inter-state conflicts have become a thing of the past. In fact, one of the more recent UN missions was established as a traditional peacekeeping operation to monitor the cease-fire between two states, Ethiopia and Eritrea.

While peace operations vary dramatically in their practical implementation – ranging from unarmed observers or police officers to heavily armed combat forces – they generally share the following five characteristics:

1. an international mandate,
2. a multi-national composition,

3. a mandate to preserve or restore a status quo or to administer a territory during a transition period (i.e. a colony in the lead up to independence),
4. deployment with the agreement of the host country, or at least in the interest of the population, and
5. the use of measured force only to ensure minimum (collateral) damage.

All these principles apply to the background of the mission rather than to its execution – they are the common denominator of peace operations. In their practical implementation, these missions range from unarmed civilian observer missions, to police or military observers and the deployment of lightly armed forces, to major military operations carried out by combat forces, in response to the individual situation.

A second major defining factor is whether the peacekeeping troops are supposed or will be obliged to use force. For this reason, peace operations generally fall into one of three major categories:

- Classic or traditional peacekeeping missions to monitor cease-fires and troop disengagement's in conflicts between states (or state-like entities) with the agreement of the parties to the conflict. International personnel include military observers (usually unarmed) and/or lightly armed troops. Generally, weapons may only be used for self-defense.
- 'Wider peacekeeping' operations with a similar mission in internal conflicts. In addition to the

military presence, civil and administrative duties can include organizing elections and rebuilding police and judicial systems or caring for refugees and returning them to their homes.

- ‘Robust peacekeeping’ or ‘peace enforcement’ operations. These are also deployed in internal conflict situations, but have a mandate to use force if necessary.

Incorrectly Referred to as Three ‘Generations’ of ‘Peace Operations’

These three types of mission are sometimes referred to as three ‘generations’. This is historically incorrect however – a point which cannot be emphasized too often: They developed parallel to one another and continue to exist side by side. They represent different operations answering different challenges – not a generation-type sequence. In fact, historically speaking the ‘third type’ (robust intervention in internal conflicts) is older than the second type of ‘wider peacekeeping’, which in turn pre-dates ‘traditional’ peacekeeping missions. Also, all three types continue to exist side by side.

One should remember that existing definitions are often vague and terms are frequently used inconsistently, often giving rise to misunderstandings. The term ‘peace making’, for example, usually refers to diplomatic mediation efforts or peace negotiations – but is sometimes also employed to mean the use of military force. The operation in Somalia in 1992-94, for example, was referred to as a ‘peace enforcement’ mission in the

U.S.A., while in Canada it was called a ‘peace making’ mission (as opposed to peacekeeping in the traditional sense). While NATO uses the term ‘peace making’ to describe mediation efforts, the WEU tended to use it in the sense of ‘enforcement’. In the sixties, robust operations like the UN operation in the Congo (1960-64) were sometimes called ‘peacekeeping-enforcement’.

The UN Charter and the ‘Agenda for Peace’

Although United Nations peace forces, with their typical blue helmets, are often regarded as the very symbol of the work of the UN, neither they nor the term peacekeeping are referred to in the United Nations Charter.⁷ As Chapter VI of the Charter discusses settling international conflicts without force, while Chapter VII includes provisions for the use of force, traditional UN peacekeeping missions were often referred to as ‘Chapter VI’ operations, while the term ‘Chapter VII’ was occasionally used for wider or robust peacekeeping missions. In recent years, this has changed. Traditional peacekeeping missions are now described as ‘Chapter VI operations’, while operations requiring the use of force are referred to as ‘Chapter VII operations’ because their mandates are based on Chapter VII of the UN Charter. However, in practice it is impossible to draw a clear-cut distinction between Chapter VI and Chapter VII missions, and the borders between the different types of

⁷ This applies to the English text. In the French version, the phrase ‘maintien de la paix’ is found, but it refers to ‘keeping international peace and stability’ rather than to peace operations as such.

missions are often vague. It is more important to have a proper mandate suited to the specific requirements of a mission than to worry about its labeling. After all, Chapter VII was originally intended to justify operations of a major scale, such as in the Second World War, and not for the sake of comparatively minor operations.

A systematic approach of a different kind formed the basis of the document written in June 1992 by the then Secretary General of the United Nations, Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Originally a report submitted to the UN Security Council, his 'Agenda for Peace' detailed the possibilities of UN action to protect and restore peace, especially in internal conflicts. In this report he specified four phases of international conflict management:

- **conflict prevention**, with the aim of preventing a crisis from developing into an open conflict. The instruments range from preventive diplomacy to the preventive deployment of troops along, for example, a disputed border,
- **peace making**, i.e. intervention to end wars with instruments ranging from mediation and negotiation, to sanctions and the use of fighting forces ('peace enforcement'),
- **peacekeeping**, i.e. maintaining a cease-fire through a military or other UN presence, and eventually
- **peace building**, denoting the long period required to rebuild a civil society after a conflict. This process is vitally important to prevent fresh fighting, but also demands a strong political will on the part of the international community.

Mr. Boutros-Ghali's report, published under the title 'Agenda for Peace', has often been misunderstood as a definition of different types of peace operations. In fact, it was an attempt to provide a chronological approach. The supplement to the 'Agenda' that was published in 1995, however, deviated from this systematic approach in a number of respects and thus only increased the confusion.

Some of the terms used by NATO to define peace or crisis response operations have been borrowed from the 'Agenda for Peace'. In addition to peacekeeping and enforcement, NATO lists preventive deployments, peace making in the sense of negotiations, peace building and humanitarian missions such as disaster relief or refugee assistance.

Peace Operations during the Cold War

A more detailed study of the development of peace operations through the 19th and 20th centuries has been provided elsewhere and needs no repetition here.⁸ UN operations in particular have experienced their ups and downs in almost regular sequence. Following their 'success' in the fifties in the Middle East, UN blue helmets were sent to the (former Belgian) Congo in 1960 to keep (or, rather, restore) law and order and to prevent the country's fragmentation. This demanding task and the

⁸ See especially my article: 'The Evolution of Peace Operations from the Nineteenth Century', in: Erwin A. Schmidl (ed.), *Peace Operations Between War and Peace* (Ilford, Essex: Frank Cass 2000), 4-20.

ensuing growth of forces (before, UN peacekeepers numbered some 6,000 men, while the Congo operation alone called for up to 18,000 troops) overextended UN resources. Following the Congo debacle and the ignominious withdrawal of the UN Emergency Force from the Sinai in 1967, UN peace operations were reduced in scale, being limited to the force in Cyprus (established in 1964) and a couple of observer missions.

In the early seventies, parallel to the years of *détente* in the Cold War (at the same time, major disarmament negotiations started and the CSCE was successfully preparing the Helsinki Final Act of 1975), the UN went through another phase of optimism. Two new UN missions were established in the Middle East: the new UN Emergency Force in Egypt in 1973, and the UN Disengagement Observer Force on the Golan Heights in 1974. Both went so well that the UNO embarked on yet another more demanding mission in South Lebanon in 1978, which in turn (and predictably) proved far less successful. The difference was that both post-Yom-Kippur War missions operated under strict limitations, but with the full support of the governments involved, establishing a 'thin blue line' between the Israeli and the Egyptian and Syrian forces. In Lebanon, the parties to the conflict were armed bands difficult to control, rather than regular armed forces, and the two regional powers (Syria and Israel) were less than enthusiastic about ending the fighting. As a consequence, UN peace operations experienced yet another phase of stagnation. Two new UN observer missions were established in the eighties in Iran, Iraq, and Pakistan, but two larger multinational operations – the Multinational Force and Observers in the

Sinai, which still exists, and the ill-fated Multinational Force in Lebanon in 1982-84 – were created outside the UN system.

Peace Operations after the End of the Cold War

With the end of the Cold War, a new chance appeared to have come to renew the ‘spirit of the UN Charter’ and Sir Brian Urquhart, one of the father figures of UN peacekeeping, called for new UN missions to be better organized, to go ‘beyond the sheriff’s posse’ concept, as he wrote. Successful operations, like the observer mission in Angola in 1989 which paved the way for the settlement in (formerly German) South West Africa which became independent as Namibia with the help of another UN mission in 1989-90, followed by the UN-authorized coalition campaign to liberate Kuwait in 1991, and the ensuing UN operations in Iraq, appeared to open the door for new international co-operation under the blue flag. The ‘Agenda for Peace’ already mentioned was authored under the presumption that henceforth the UN would be in the lead of international efforts to end conflicts and assist peaceful transition, by all necessary means including forceful interventions.

Alas, this was not to be. The number and scope of UN missions rapidly expanded as new (and old) conflicts continued to erupt all around the globe. The ‘New World Order’ envisaged by U.S. President George Bush Senior in 1991 quickly became the ‘New World Disorder’. New UN peace operations were duly established (critics spoke of the ‘mushrooming’ phase of peacekeeping), often with

insufficient mandates and lacking the necessary force to fulfil their tasks.⁹ Within few years, UN peace operations expanded rapidly, from about 10,000 in 1991 to nearly 80,000 in 1993-94. These high numbers could not be sustained, and the UN lacked the structures necessary for directing more robust ‘enforcement’ operations. Missions like Somalia or Bosnia called for military, not diplomatic command structures.

Although the blame for these ‘failed’ operations should go to the Powers in the Security Council which issued insufficient mandates, and to the states which refused to commit sufficient troops, the UN as an organization was continually accused of failure. The UNO celebrations of its 50th anniversary in 1995 were overshadowed by these accusations, worsened by the world organization’s worst financial crisis since the sixties. Also, the consensus among the Permanent Members of the Security Council of the early post-Cold War years soon gave way to new rivalries. The most blatant case was when China refused in 1999 to extend the mandate of the successful UN mission on the Serbian-Macedonian border, only because Macedonia¹⁰ had signed a trade agreement with Taiwan.

⁹ For an overview of the subject, the reader is referred to the volume of the Henry L. Stimson Center edited by William J. Durch: *The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping: Case Studies and Comparative Analysis* (New York: St. Martin 1992); as well as the (now 3rd, unfortunately rather unhandy edition of the) official UN book: *The Blue Helmets: A Review of United Nations Peace-keeping* (New York: United Nations 1996).

¹⁰ Officially, Macedonia is recognised under the acronym FYROM (the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia).

In the field of peace operations, more demanding operations were increasingly taken over by other organizations or ad-hoc coalitions even though usually acting under a UN mandate (the Canadian Pearson Peacekeeping Center introduced the term ‘peacekeeping by proxy’). Following the Dayton accords, the UN mission in Bosnia was replaced by a major NATO-led operation (although in fact, many contingents already present in Bosnia just changed headgear). Likewise, interventions in South Eastern Europe – such as the coalition force organized by Italy and sent to Albania in 1997, or the NATO-led Kosovo Force established in 1999 – were carried out by non-UN forces, even though police components and some civilian administration missions were still provided by the UN. In East Timor (Timor-Leste), an Australian-led force established law and order in 1999 before handing over to the UN Transitional Administration in East Timor which governed the country until 2002. Generally, a division of labor came into being: more robust missions were carried out outside the UN system (though usually based on UN mandates), while the UN was reduced to ‘traditional’ peacekeeping, civilian administration, and police tasks. Consequently, the numbers of UN peacekeepers dropped, from the 80,000 of 1994 to less than 30,000 by January 1996, and further to 12,000 by May 1999 – which was not much higher than the figures for the late years of the Cold War.

This picture is incomplete, however, for two reasons. First, it forgets some of the more successful UN missions like the UN Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium which lasted

from 1996 to 1998. This interim administration of the last Serb-controlled region in Eastern Croatia included a strong military component; military, police and civilian administration components functioned under a centralized UN command, thus avoiding many of the problems which had arisen in Bosnia-Herzegovina and elsewhere, where different components were split between various organizations.

Second, it ignores the rise of UN operations in Africa since the late nineties. The catastrophe in Rwanda in 1994 had repercussions for the whole Great Lakes and Congo region, leading to more than ten years of bitter civil war in Zaire, now the Democratic Republic of the Congo, with involvement from nearly all of the country's neighbors. In 1999, a significant UN operation has been established in the Congo which in 2003 was briefly supported by an EU mission ('Artemis'). Since 2004, another UN mission is active in Burundi. In West Africa, smaller UN missions were established from 1993 to support and to monitor the peacekeeping efforts of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS). This eventually led to major UN operations in Sierra Leone, Liberia, and in Côte d'Ivoire. Finally, a traditional inter-state peacekeeping mission was established for the Eritrea-Ethiopian border in late 2000, and a UN mission for the Sudan started in 2004.

A dramatic increase in UN Peace Operations

While hardly noticed by the public, these efforts again led to a dramatic increase in UN peace operations.

Military, police and civilian personnel together again number some 70,000 men, close to the figures of a decade ago. This also means that more than half of the personnel in peace operations worldwide serves in UN operations, with the balance being provided by NATO-led forces (as in the Kosovo), EU-led forces (as in Bosnia-Herzegovina since the end of 2004), African Union (AU) forces (as in the Sudan) or coalition forces of varying types (as in Afghanistan or in post-war Iraq). More often than not, different organizations co-operate in these missions, usually catering for different components of peace efforts.

Possible Future Developments

More robust and complex peace operations have become the norm, but this has often obscured the fact that ‘traditional’ observer and peacekeeping missions are still necessary – from Cyprus and the Golan Heights to Ethiopia/Eritrea. It would be wrong to say that traditional peacekeeping missions have been ‘replaced’ by more robust ones – the fact is that the scope of international, multinational interventions has widened considerably. More actors are involved than in the past, adding to the complexity of the picture.

What has remained constant, are false concepts and irrational expectations. One of these concerns is the duration of peace operations. Especially the more complex peace building missions, with their demanding tasks of re-establishing a functioning administration, take time – and it would be futile to expect short-term ‘exit

dates' for these. Here, of course, different priorities prevail – no military commander, and no finance minister, is happy to commit forces for long-lasting missions with an open end, and for good reasons. However, premature withdrawals might eventually lead to renewed peace operations becoming necessary. This has recently been illustrated by events in Haiti, where the U.S. and later UN-led intervention of 1994 was at first deemed a major success. However, ten years later the situation in Haiti had worsened to such a degree that a new (and even more robust) peace operation became necessary.

Another issue is that the real demands of the crisis region or the host country might differ from what contributing countries are willing to commit. Public interest in the Western world wanes quickly, while peace restoration and development efforts are by necessity long-term projects. To maintain commitments even if they are not always popular remains a major challenge for democratic governments.

A final point should be mentioned here, again concerning false expectations. International peace efforts are often expected to 'solve' conflicts. But this is exactly what they are not able to do. The international presence can help to find a solution, it can stabilize a situation, it can help (or force) the parties to the conflict to stop fighting and start talking. But the real solution can only be arrived at by the parties to the conflict themselves. There is no substitute for this. Peace operations – and the whole spectrum of them – will continue to be a major tool of crisis management in the future. Different organizations

besides the UN will continue to be involved. It will certainly take much longer than hoped for in 1991 to establish a new, more peaceful 'world order'.