

## United Nations Peace Operations: Evolution, challenges, and new dynamics

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# United Nations Peace Operations

Evolution, challenges, and new dynamics

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## Abstract

We analyze the operational, institutional, and normative evolution of peace operations, intending to highlight discourses and practices that sought to model this peaceful mechanism of international politics. United Nations peace operations are central to our analysis but we recognize that other international organizations have a similar tool. The reason for choosing them is justified by the universal character of both troop mobilization and the possibility of geographical deployment sites, as well as the complex operational structure and various political actors present in this type of deployment. We start presenting how peace operations are divided into three stages: classic or traditional (during the Cold War), transition phase (1990s), and the consolidation of complex operations, from the perspective of sustainable peace in which the conditions necessary to provide political stability and security for society fall on the peace process conducted by the United Nations peace operations. In the last section, we discuss recent developments in practices and discourses associated with peace operations in which terms such as local empowerment, human security, and prevention become more prominent and operational, often disputed by those who evaluate the results of these mechanisms.

**Keywords:** United Nations, peace operations, civil wars, conflicts, peace studies.

## Introduction

In the 21st century, the term “peace operations” (PO) evokes the image of a soldier wearing a blue helmet and modern weapons, widely disseminated by international media. Generally, it is located in some developing countries in the Global South where even the most basic resources, such as potable water, are scarce, and where human suffering reaches catastrophic levels. Belligerents fight without any concern about protecting or preserving the lives of civilians. There are no boundaries limiting clashes on the ground or conventional rules of engagement that enable predictability in the use of force, whether in proportionality or displacement in the field. In this image, the peacekeeper is often sent to civil war and conflicts inside a state that might provoke compulsory migrations to neighbor territories. Two initial inferences are suggested by this picture: peace operations are essentially military interventions and that they are authorized for humanitarian reasons. Another finding would indicate that these peace operations are an exclusive prerogative of the United Nations (UN) since their soldiers can be recognized by the blue helmets. While numerically the UN maintains a predominance of peace operations deployed around the globe, counterbalancing regional efforts or support for these operations is increasingly gaining ground and recognition in the international political system. Our reflection stems from the contestation of this image by answering some essential questions. First, we define the object, what do we mean when we use the term “peace operations” in the present? Second, we seek to understand its fundamental characteristics such as what are its objectives. Who authorizes peace operations? Who implements them? Why did POs become more important in the post-Cold War era? Recently, the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operation (HIPPO 2015) has indicated that the use of force is relevant to protect civilians in current conflicts because they are extremely dangerous to locals and peacekeepers<sup>1</sup>. This addresses the following question: are there really “new conflicts”? Is the use of force to protect civilians the only reason for expressly authorizing the use of force in peace operations? In the past, the term “new conflicts” and “highly dangerous conflicts” were already part of the rules that guided peace operations, and the use of force was already binding on the mechanism.

<sup>1</sup>The use of the term “conflict” appears with the meaning expressed in UN documents. Thus, armed conflict is the conflict manifested by physical and direct violence. The maximum scale of armed confrontation is the declaration of war between states or civil war (belligerence declared between armed groups that want to overthrow the government). It is noteworthy that there is literature that understands conflict as inherent in human relations, seen as a conflict of ideas (Lederach 2011; Ramsbotham, Miall, and Woodhouse 2011). Most of our descriptions referring to UN POs will be directed to the so-called “intrastate conflicts” when no civil war explicitly term will be mentioned.

In this way, what is new?

Therefore, it is intended to systematize the evolution of peace operations. We believe that most of the time, it is possible to understand that POs were more in the service of ceasing conflicts in regions of the globe where permanent members of the Security Council wished to do so than this pacific UN tool was approved solely to humanitarian purposes. Thus, the emancipation of local societies was not a priority. POs have often undermined the local power of building their driving path from genuinely domestic policies and initiatives, as the pattern of implementation of UN activities is extremely top-down and liberal-oriented in designing new economies and local institutions.

The structure of this working paper has been organized to understand the evolution of peace operations: (1) the rise of POs; (2) the characteristics of Cold War peace operations; (3) the change engendered in the peace operations of the 1990s; (4) the characteristics of peace operations from the 2000s.

## The rise of peace operations

The terms “peace operations”, “peace support operations”, “peace missions” or “peacekeeping” are regularly used without distinction and may guide our reader to understand them as synonyms. The lack of precision for the term “peace operation” is a consequence, at least in part, of the way this instrument was developed within the UN as an alternative response to its collective security system in the maintenance of peace and security in the international system. The United Nations Charter (1945) had not foreseen the advent of this mechanism. In 1947, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) was established to observe the end of hostilities between Israel and Palestine with unarmed military observers and it has represented an innovation in the use of soldiers in peacetime or a transitional period for peace (Zwanenburg 2005). After reviewing the specialized literature, the first source of research that gives us a generic definition of the term comes from the United Nations’ internal regulations. In 1965, the UN General Assembly created the *Special Committee on Peace Operations* (C34) with a mandate to conduct a comprehensive review of all PO-related issues. The Committee pro-

duced an initial report in 1974 in which it systematized the norms that should guide the development of POs authorized through the Security Council and in accordance with the principles established by the United Nations Charter<sup>2</sup>. However, more appropriate definitions for the term would emerge only in the early 1990s with increasing interest in the use of peace operations. Faced with a concern to consolidate the principles that should guide its practice, particularly with regard to the use of force, the former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld would respond to this debate on the constitutional basis of POs by placing them under a metaphorical “Chapter VI and a half” of the United Nations Charter<sup>3</sup>.

As Zwanenburg referred to the United Nations normative: “As its practice at the United Nations evolves, peace operations are now defined as an operation involving a military but non-enforceable component under UN command to assist in the maintenance or restoration of international peace and security in conflict areas. These operations are voluntary and based on the consent and cooperation

of the parties. Although involving the use of military personnel, these operations achieve their objectives without the use of the military, in contrast to the UN ‘enforcement actions’ provided in article 42.” (Zwanenburg 2005, p. 17).

This definition, dating from 1990, sets out the three basic principles of displaced POs under UN command: (1) the **consent of parties** involved in belligerence, particularly of the state or states receiving a PO; (2) **impartiality**, respecting the principle of nonintervention in the domestic affairs of other states and simultaneously conducting negotiation between parties in conflict, and finally (3) the **use of force** only in self-defense of peacekeepers. Agreement and adherence to these principles allowed the deployment of international forces to regions where international peace had been broken and needed to be reestablished. These principles mainly serve to dissociate POs from another instrument provided for by the Organization’s collective security system: military intervention. The table that follows helps to understand it.

Table 1: Differences between peace operation and military intervention

<b>Dimension</b>	<b>Peace Operation</b>	<b>Military Intervention</b>
<b>Consent</b>	Yes	No
<b>Impartiality</b>	Yes	No
<b>Use of force</b>	Self-defense	Offensive
<b>Equipment</b>	Light arms	Heavy arms

Source: Diehl 2008, p. 6.

At this point, we are seeking to define peace operations, but definitely, they are not observation missions as instituted in 1948 as truce supervision of ceasefire between Israelis and Palestinians nor even other to separate Pakistani and Indians in 1949. POs have varied throughout for their development in their objectives, mandate, size, use of force or even in the range of those participating or authorizing deployment.

A considerable number of typologies and taxonomies have been devised to define and compare

the peace operations we can currently find in the field. However, these categories tend to classify POs according to their mandates of rules of engagement. They are concerned with defining them from their short-term field goals, looking for a metric that can infer their success or failure. There is a growing demand for micro-level analyses that seek to demonstrate the effectiveness and efficiency of this peaceful mechanism, particularly when it comes to securing support and funding for new operations of the renewal of previous mandates. However, while

<sup>2</sup>Despite its establishment in 1965, most of the work of this committee made available to the public is dated from 1999, coinciding with a systematic review of POs and their role in the international system. Some reports are available at <https://www.un.org/em/peacekeeping/ctte/CYYE.htm>. Accessed on November 11, 2019.

<sup>3</sup>This debate discussed the origin of POs and the legal provisions that provide the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) with a constitutional basis and legitimacy for authorizing POs with mandates that would sometimes be allocated under Chapter VI (with no explicit mention in the UNSC mandate) and several others under Chapter VII when the UNSC mandates have to explicitly mention it.

these categories are useful to decision-makers, they do not provide a comprehensive view of the patterns these operations have been adopting and how these patterns reflect changes in the international political system itself, especially as we look at recent transformations in the use of these policies.

As Roland Paris stated: “Those who study peace operations, apparently concerned with the practical problem of increasing the effectiveness of future missions, have overlooked broader macro theoretical questions about the nature and significance of these operations in our understanding of international politics.” (Paris 2000, p. 44).

He argued that no theory of International Relations makes direct mention of this mechanism (Paris 2000, p. 29). Part of the explanation lies in the temporal mismatch between the emergence of major theories of international relations such as realism and idealism, and the subsequent use of peace operations by the United Nations. Nevertheless, the POs emerged as alternative mechanisms for the management and resolution of international conflicts at a time when the UN collective security system reflected in its tight operationalization of relations between the US-led power blocs and the other led by the Soviet Union. Therefore, considering the systemic conjuncture under which POs were developed, one can use the assumptions of these first International Relations theories to analyze the questions proposed above, regarding the objectives and actors involved in this practice.

No matter what format it may take, the primary objective of peace operations has been to mitigate the ills of war, international or civil. However, the strategies adopted for their materialization depend on two key assumptions: first, the objectives of the operation tend to vary according to the international community's view of the nature and causes of violent conflict; second, the answers vary according to the political will to mobilize the resources of international society to solve it (Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin 2004, p. 5). Therefore, the format of an operation responds to both systematic and conjuncture factors and the specific context to which it is moved. Thus, despite their many variations, it is possible to identify some periods in which peace operations presented similar patterns.

Indeed, in tracing the development of the POs from 1947 to the present, there is a systematic change in the rules governing peace operations identified by some experts on the subject with an evolution of the practice itself. This one-way view does not reflect field experience, nor could it easily be translated into diverse contexts without any adaptation. However, to clarify the above issues, we identified

in the next section three moments when the field-displaced POs had common features, particularly as regards the limits imposed on the use of force by their agents, addressing issues of power and legitimacy that challenge and guide the evolution of field operations. These are the classical or traditional POs deployed during the Cold War; the transition phase in the 1990s; and the consolidation phase of complex operations (post-Brahimi report operations after 2000s).

## **Traditional peace operations during the Cold War (1946-1988)**

The first UN peace operations were inspired by the observation operations conducted during the period of the League of Nations. Although this international organization had little relevance to keep collective security system working properly, the peace operations approved by the League have left a legacy to future UN peace operations because they were conciliation missions and force was the last resource used (Diehl 2008). During that time, the classic model of peace operations would be designed to separate belligerent parties through a third party and the establishment of a demilitarized zone between them would create an enabling environment for dialogue and conflict resolution. In this parameter, operations were deployed just after a ceasefire to ensure continuity, and before a peace agreement was reached. Among the operations carried out by the League before the advent of peace operations, the most relevant precedent may have been the deployment of an international observer force to the Saar region between Germany and France. The territory was under international administration, transferred to the League of Nations, during the first years after World War I and until a formal referendum could be held to define its integration into one of the border countries. Operations such as this involving the international administration of territory would only take place decades later the 1990s, with UN operations in East Timor and Kosovo, even though the latter's military command belonged to the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO). However, before the Saar operation, no international forces had been under the direct command of the League with the forces commanding their national units. Another important legacy of this operation lies in determining the level of force that would be employed, restricted to a minimum level. Limiting the use of military force in peace operations was one of the recommendations proposed

by the Saar commander, General Brind, in his final report. The recommendations made at this point ranged from troop composition by countries that had no direct interest in the conflict to the size of the force that could be displaced by assessing that a small force would already be sufficient to meet the limited objectives of operations such as had commanded. The Brind Report, therefore, contained the first provisions for peace operations developed two decades later (Diehl 2008, p. 16-17).

The United Nations collective security system contained at its core the same vices that led to its predecessor's failure: the veto-right mechanism elaborated with the establishment of the UN Security Council (UNSC) restricted its actions just as the need for a unanimous vote had done with the executive organ of the League of Nations. Therefore, when having to decide about crises in Iran or Turkey<sup>4</sup>, involving at least one of the superpowers, the system paralysis was inevitable. With the intensification of the so-called "Cold War" the emergence of proxy wars<sup>5</sup> in the Middle East and around the world, the new system's inability to act has become evident. Nevertheless, the relative success of its initial interventions in Greece to mitigate internal tensions and in Indonesia to ensure a peaceful transition to independence showed that peace operations could be conducted under the bipolar confrontation even when displaced within national borders. Early operations include the development of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO) in 1948 to oversee the ceasefire in the Arab-Israeli conflict, and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP) in 1949 to investigate the causes of conflict and mediate the confrontation between these two countries. Upon obtaining the ceasefire, UNMOGIP maintained its presence in the region to oversee its implementation (Diehl 2008, p. 40-42). These two missions are still in the ground and are considered to be observation missions (ceasefire monitoring with non-weapon troops in the assisted zone).

In the next decade, the intensification of the Arab-Israeli conflict in the Middle East would require concerted action by the world powers gathered at the UN. The nationalization of the Suez Canal by Egyptian President Gamal Nasser, Israel's offensive response to Egypt and the escalation of the armed conflict with the presence of troops from France and the United Kingdom confronted the UN collective

security system with the possibility of a veto. Under this scenario, Lester Pearson, Canada's Foreign Minister, proposed the creation of an international force with a mandate to oversee the ceasefire achieved in the region. Dag Hammarskjöld, then the United Nations Secretary-General (UNSG) corroborated this idea delivering days later a report outlining the fundamental guidelines for conducting the mission, including that the commander-in-chief would be appointed by the UN and accountable to it before the General Assembly and the Security Council. Its proposal was endorsed by the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in its resolution "Uniting for Peace Resolution" (A/RES/377) on November 3, 1950. However, when adopted by the UNGA, this resolution could not be displaced under Chapter VII of the Charter which required UNSC authorization. Finally, following the recommendations of the UNSG, it was established that this force would only operate as long as there was the consent of the parties involved. Under these principles, the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was approved on November 7, 1956 (A/RES/1001).

Unlike previous operations, UNEF was the first armed peace operation authorized to use force in self-defense. This experience resulted in three core principles: consent of the parties of the conflict, impartiality, and limited use of force. According to Paul Diehl (2008), the mission represented a dramatic innovation for peace management and international security by sending armed soldiers to perform specific functions in interstate conflict, including monitoring troop withdrawal. For this author, the period that created UNEF in 1956 inaugurated the first "golden age" of peace operations. Between 1956 and 1978, ten peace operations (maintenance and observation) were deployed to various regions of the world, although some territories under the influence of the superpowers were excluded from this practice. In the following decade, no new operations were created.

During this period, identified as the classic phase of peace operations, they had some common features, among which we highlight their dispatch after a ceasefire was reached, but before the parties reached an agreement for resolution. The conflict between them, as this would be one of the objectives of the missions. Besides, most operations conducted during this period involved interstate conflict management, with few exceptions, most notably the

<sup>4</sup>In the twentieth century both countries faced numerous political crises, often in an armed confrontation. In the last decades of the twentieth century, these crises culminated in the Iranian Revolution and the subsequent war between Iran and Iraq, and the intensification of clashes between the Turkish government and the Kurdish ethnic group organized in the Kurdistan Workers Party (PKK). Civil massacres occurred on both sides, however, no international action would be taken until the early 1990s.

<sup>5</sup>This term is used to indicate wars or armed conflicts in which the main actors face the right confrontation through the use of other means, often other actors, who represent their interests in confrontation (Bar-Siman-Tov 1984).



operation in Congo during the 1960s, the first intrastate conflict to which the UN sent troops. The intervention model of operations in this period, later classified as traditional, proposed to send them as interposition forces that should separate the combatants and prevent new military confrontations. In this role, the objective of the international forces would essentially be monitoring the ceasefire previously reached and assist the parties in the peaceful resolution of disputes that might arise with the end of hostilities. Under this scenario, the belligerent parties were mainly the nation-states and their regular armed forces. However, the United Nations Operation in Congo (ONUC) which ran from 1960 to 1964 differs from this model in many ways and anticipates operations conducted in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries when the use of force turned to be approved more frequently followed by several activities to achieve peace.

Following its independence from Belgium, ONUC was created to help the transitional government of the Congo to preserve territorial integrity in the postcolonial state in the face of the breakdown of established law and order. Contrary to previous experience, this operation was not sent after a ceasefire was achieved but rather to an active conflict in territory fragmented by civil war. The initial objective of the operation was to restore order and monitor the withdrawal of Belgian troops. The mandate, however, had to be revised, making it an offensive military force to prevent the order from breaking completely. At the same time, the UN organized a conciliation commission that sought to lead the armed factions into dialogue, achieving a ceasefire and then agreeing to establish a new unified government<sup>6</sup>. The ONUC was allowed to use all necessary means including force to preserve stability in Katanga territory (Diehl 2008, 45-47). Decades later, new operations were shifted to the region, demonstrating how ephemeral a peace imposed from the outside could be.

## Peace operations between 1989 and 1998: from keeping to building peace

After the distension of the Cold War, peace operations return to the center of the international political arena. The new international context allowed these operations to develop rapidly given the UN's

need to respond to the challenges posed by the sociopolitical and transnational nature of emerging conflicts in the late 1980s and early 1990s. The intrastate conflicts were located in various regions of the world. This rise reflected a transitional period in the shaping of power relations, engendered by the period of containment between the United States and the Soviet Union. As the gradual distance that superpowers were taking new ideological alliances were arising.

According to Tarrise da Fontoura, the United Nations returned to the center of the global governance system (Tarrise da Fontoura 1999, p. 84). Between 1948 and 1989, UNSC approved 18 POs in total. In the 1990s, 35 mandates authorized POs around the globe of which 24 were sent only between 1989 and 1995. With the suppression of tensions between superpowers, the use of the veto ceased to exist. This has contributed not only to the increase in the number of internationally displaced POs but also to a systematic reflection in the UNSC on the role of these operations in the collective security system.

It is noted from the Boutros-Ghali report "An Agenda for Peace" (A/47/277 – S/4111) presented by the current Secretary-General in that time on June 17, 1992 that most of the intrastate armed conflicts involved irregular armies (those which did not correspond to the national armies) as belligerents, and that the clashes were not battlegrounds determined, as often what was at stake was the change in state political configuration through organized violence. The extension of these antagonisms, with the disruption of the political and social order, has made civilians as the main victims of contemporary armed conflict. The escalation of violence has aggravated humanitarian crises and unleashed unprecedented migratory flows, symbolizing the desperation of civilians who sought the least stability and support for their survival on other frontiers. Boutros-Ghali pointed out that the challenges posed by the "collapse of state institutions" would not be overcome by traditional POs (Boutros-Ghali 1998).

In the post-Cold War era, a reconfiguration of power relations began in the international political system that implied continuous adjustments and structural reforms across the various systemic level such as international, regional, national, and local. As systemic changes were being consolidated, the transition to the new configuration of forces is inevitable. Thus, the mechanisms designed to manage the "risks" of this transition to materialize the desired end that was also reformulated. From that moment on, the so-called "liberal peace" is gradually being

<sup>6</sup>The UN's conduction of this PO was not impartial as Prime Minister Lumumba was assassinated, facilitated by the lack of protection of some peacekeepers (De Witte 2001 cited by Maschietto 2005, p. 90).

consolidated and the beginning of a normative and institutional review of peace operations.

When this discussion took place, the “new conflicts” affected civilians and it would be up to the UN to prevent humanitarian disasters. However, the civilizing profile acquired by the POs is not exempt, according to which the UN would bring the “ideal” format of peace and state (vertical and liberal designed) to societies where barbarism prevailed in the eyes of hegemonic view of the Western powers (Pugh 2006).

Responding to the Organization’s own operational needs, the UN Department of Peace-keeping Operations (DPKO) created in 1992 was subordinate to the UN General Secretariat. Originally, this department was tasked with training military and police contingents and prepared civilians to act in POs. In addition to this, the DPKO was responsible for preparing the logistics and providing financial support for the activities of POs, after the General Assembly approved the appropriate budget for each of them<sup>7</sup>.

The end of the bipolar era also brought changes to the UNSC. Previously, many resolutions had been vetoed, 279 in total, because of the decisions of the United States or the Soviet Union and the mutual rivalry between them (A/47/277, 1992, paragraph 14). Nevertheless, in the post-Cold War world, the UNSC should be able to discuss and deliberate resolutions that would maintain peace and security in the international system, and then the preparation of the new guidelines took place.

It was mentioned in the report (A/47/277 – S/4111) that the “ideological barrier of recent decades” has increased ethnic, religious, social, cultural, and even linguistic antagonisms. Added to this were concerns about weapons of mass destruction, racism, environmental damage, disrespect for human rights, and the fragility of the political institutions of some states that would be “potential forces” detrimental to international security (A/47/277, paragraph 8). According to Boutros-Ghali, the causes that would lead to insecurity in the world would be even more “devastating” and diverse. These include the “exacerbated” growth of the world’s population, large numbers of refugees, poverty, epidemics, and several other threats that demanded efficient action by the UN.

After identifying changes in the international context and new threats, the Secretary-General recommended practices to be applied by the UN to

contain and resolve conflicts, which can be summarized briefly in: (1) preventive diplomacy, (2) peace-making, (3) peace-keeping, (4) post-conflict peace-building and (5) peace-enforcement.

Diplomacy would have to resolve hostilities through negotiation and in a preventive manner (1) so that the conflict would not reach more serious proportions than those identified or even occurring (A/47/277, paragraph 20). Peace-making (2) is defined as “action to bring the parties to the conflict to an agreement, essentially by peaceful means such as those provided in Chapter VI of the United Nations Charter”. Therefore, it comprises actions based on peaceful dispute settlement mechanisms, such as negotiation, mediation, judicial settlement, and arbitration. In such cases, the UN could facilitate the process that leads the actors involved in the dispute to seal a peace pact. Finally, peace-keeping (3) is defined as “(…) the United Nations landing in the conflict region, with the consent of the parties, composed of United Nations personnel such as military, police, and civilian. Peace-keeping is the mechanism for expanding possibilities to prevent conflict and achieve peace” (A/47/277, paragraph 20).

Accordingly, “An Agenda for Peace” determined the main difference in the characteristics of POs of the 1990s redefined as “multidimensional operations” or “second generation operations” (Mackinlay and Chopra 1992; Kenkel 2013) when compared to those that preceded them. The distinction in its diverse composition is: it has included police, diplomats, and civilians in the traditional military contingent to adequately respond to the complexity of those conflicts. Other authors also refer to these POs as “Chapter VI and a half” operations (Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin 2010, p. 194), as they are between the peaceful settlement of the controversy (UN Charter, Chapter VI) and authorization for the use of force (UN Charter, Chapter VII).

Thus, in the aforementioned document of the Secretary-General, POs were facing the need far beyond stabilizing belligerence, Boutros-Ghali suggested peace-enforcement (5): “[...] forces [...] to respond to imminent or current aggressions [...] in which the United Nations [...] are called to send forces to restore or maintain a ceasefire [...]. It would consist of volunteer troops for such a service. They could adopt heavier weapons than those used in peace-keeping operations and would [...] act under article 40 of the Charter” (A/47/277, paragraph 44).

<sup>7</sup>The submission of a PO assumes approval by the UNSC (objectives and composition) and further review by the UN Secretary-General (UNSG). The UNSG is responsible for consulting states that voluntarily wish to send contingents to the country highlighted by the mandate. Following this political consultation, operational issues follow such as the forwarding by the UNSC decision to the General Assembly for approval of the budget. Once this step is completed, SGNU sends the request to DPKO to prepare the logistics and training for the military and police, according to the UNSC mandate.

Peace-enforcement was suggested to be the landing of UN troops authorized to use force to cease hostilities, seeking to prevent the escalation of the conflict and provide military protection while humanitarian assistance was offered. Peace-enforcement would have its mandate approved under the supervision of the General Secretariat<sup>8</sup>.

Finally, the post-conflict peace-building was described in the document as “action to identify and support structures that will tend to strengthen and solidify peace to prevent the return of conflict” (A/47/277, paragraph 21). Peace-building encom-

passes support for local structures that promote economic and social development, the defense of human rights, and the strengthening of democratic institutions. These are actions that cooperate in the development of a peaceful atmosphere in post-conflict regions, seeking to carry out projects that prevent these problems from recurring<sup>9</sup>.

The actions described in the “Agenda for Peace” lead us to visualize a complex range of UN action. After reviewing the approved PO mandates, we can list the following assignments in Table 2 below.

Table 2 - UN POs mandates of the 1990s

• restore or establish a safe environment;
• demobilize irregular armies, focusing on their reintegration into civilian life and destroying their weapons;
• repatriate refugees;
• provide humanitarian assistance;
• supervise administrative structures;
• create new police forces;
• modernize armed forces;
• remove landmines;
• verify the respect of human rights;
• develop and oversee constitutional, judicial, and electoral reforms;
• monitor elections;
• develop and coordinate projects that enable the economic rehabilitation and reconstruction of the infrastructure of countries destroyed by civil wars;

Source: Matijascic 2014

Such complexity of tasks can be perceived in the expensive financial volume offered. The UN budget for POs jumped from approximately USD 230 million in January 1988 to 3.6 billion in December 1994 (Doyle 1998, p. 2). The rising budget put the UN in grave financial crisis in 1995. Thus, the expansion of the UNSC security agenda was not accompanied by the rapid settlement of disputes which extended

the stay of UN troops for more than six months. Initially, the mandates of the POs were very punctual. To meet them, the traditional six-month target has been agreed but this time has not proved to be sufficient for intrastate conflicts (Tarrise da Fontoura 1999; Cardoso 1998; Unceta 2005).

The consent of the parties to the conflict has been a principle preserved for POs from the 1990s. How-

<sup>8</sup>The subsequent document, Supplement to an Agenda for Peace (A/RES/51/242) was published in 1995 and is the immediate result of the UNSG’s response to the problems faced by POs in three countries: Somalia, Rwanda, and Bosnia. All UNSC mandates did not provide for authorization to use force (Chapter VII). Thus, the consequences observed when US soldiers were killed by Somali rebels (1993), the outbreak of genocide in Rwanda (1994), and the fatalities affecting civilians in a UN exclusion and monitoring area in Bosnia (1995) led the Organization to redefine the strategy of using force only in self-defense when the UNSC mandate was threatened, as well as for the preservation of lives (UN troops and civilians).

<sup>9</sup>Barnett (et al) identify three phases of this process, starting with public security reforms, continuing with the reforms of various state institutions and ending with humanitarian projects with civil society to solidify peace as a parameter to be followed by society traumatized by conflict and civil war (Barnett et al. 2007)

ever, in the Supplement to an Agenda for Peace, the Secretary-General recalls that the resurgence of the conflict could force the UNSC to act without the consent of one of the parties, especially when one of them was an “irregular army” or an “armed militia” (A/RES/51/242, paragraph 12). Thus, it is understood that this principle applies when local government consents to the deployment of POs.

In addition to this, the Supplement has included successful examples of peace-enforcement. The consent of the parties to the conflict would not be necessary when military protection for humanitarian assistance actions was a priority and, as an example, it was mentioned in the Supplement that the forced ceasefire was accompanied by humanitarian actions in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Somalia (both in 1994).

The principle of impartiality remained indispensable for the fulfillment of mandates in peace operations of the 1990s. However, the Secretary-General states that such a principle could be relativized when it was understood by the UNSC. Approval of mandates with the consent of the use of force against either party could occur if this facilitated the resolution of the conflict. Finally, from all the explanations of the 1995 document, what was a milestone that distinguished Cold War peace operations from those of the 1990s were the express permission to use force. Subject to the particular feature, Boutros-Ghali did not fully relativize the principles of POs: “[...] recent years have confirmed that respect for certain principles of peace operations is essential to their success. In particular, the three most important principles are party consent, impartiality, and non-use of force except for self-defense” (A/RES/51/242, paragraph 33).

Contrasting the view of UN documents, Neil Cooper also analyzed the role played by food and water, cigarettes, small arms, illicit drugs, diamonds and precious metals in the financing of the parties involved, presenting a variable that is the impact of interventions in POs and the balance of power among belligerent groups (Cooper 2001). The author reported situations in which humanitarian aid destined for the country was disputed by state troops and militias to keep soldiers engaged in combat and to entice men to search for food. In this way, POs can contribute to prolonging conflict rather than peace. Moreover, news can easily be found that addresses human rights violations committed by POs soldiers and police officers, often related to sexual assault. All incidences were treated as occasional violations of contingent members by the Organization, but they damage the credibility of the PO’s

action and often amplify the international community’s view of the weaknesses related to this dispute settlement mechanism, such as the sexual violations committed by peacekeepers in the missions of Haiti and the Democratic Republic of Congo<sup>10</sup>.

Another political aspect, but now reoriented at the macro level, on the problems arising from POs concerns the veto of UNSC permanent members (P-5). Often P-5 members use the veto (or absence) as a bargain to gain privileges in the exercise of power in certain regions of the globe. Thus, not vetoing a draft resolution implies obtaining support in an upcoming UNSC decision. As an example, the Russian Federation and the People’s Republic of China are countries that did not veto UNSC resolutions during the Haitian crisis of the early 1990s. Noting that countries on the American continent are within the United States’ area of influence, the two permanent members wanted to ensure that in future their political interests were preserved in a similar UNSC deliberation. They sought to ensure that there was no veto over their decisions in their areas of influence (Einsiendel and Malone 2004).

Noteworthy, the political interests of the P-5 tend to precede humanitarian interests. The procedural and remodeling issues of POs were revised in the late 1990s, following much criticism of the Organization’s role. The substantive results of this process are outlined in the final reports of two Panels on Peace Operations: one published in 2000 (Brahimi Report) and the other in 2015 (HIPPO).

## **From 1999 to the present: stabilization and peace support missions**

The last decade of the twentieth century was essential to the emergence of a new pattern in peace operations: peace support operations. We described the previous period as a transitional phase for this toll, as it sought to adjust the POs to the new contexts to which they were sent and to the new roles they would have to assume in maintaining, building, and often imposing peace wherever it was needed. Nevertheless, the failure to secure sustainable peace in the missions sent to Somalia, Bosnia (Srebrenica) and Rwanda during the early 1990s discredited the ability and effectiveness of these instruments to ensure international peace and security.

According to Lise Morje Howard, UN Security Council and the Secretariat, some members felt that

<sup>10</sup>These and other consequences of peace operations are discussed by various authors (Aoi, De Coning, and Thakur 2007).

these “weak” peace operations could facilitate rather than prevent mass atrocities from being used as weapons of war by the warring parties (Howard 2008, p. 300). By shifting them into a context of active conflict, on the assumption that a ceasefire would be sufficient to ensure an end to hostilities, these operations ended up giving the belligerents time to rest, regroup, train, and eventually organize its forces for a new phase of confrontations in protracted wars. Internally, these failures led the UN to initiate a review of the structures and practices aimed at the development and management of POs in a purpose to consolidate reforms over the next decade. At the same time, between 1995 and 1998, there has been a setback in peace operations activities due to a limited budget. Between 1996 and 1997, the UN would approve only one new peace operation in Eastern Slovenia.

The last years of the 1990s, brought several reflections about peace operations experiences and even led UN employees to think about broad reforms in institutions and processes. This moment was in the transition of the mandates from Boutros-Ghali to Kofi Annan. In 1997, a committee was announced to reform the UN and to plan the budget better in scope. As DPKO managed one of the Organization’s largest budget, the management of this department was particularly affected. In 1999, however, the international political landscape was once again conducive to the development of peace operations: Kofi Annan began his second term as UN Secretary-General who was going to revitalize peace operations activities. At the same time, the United States has resumed its contributions to the regular UN budget and also to that earmarked for DPKO activities. The new stance of the United States has been reinforced by the appointment of Richard Holbrooke as the country’s ambassador to the UN, known for his support of DPKO activities and the important role he played in the Bosnian peace process. Indeed, within six months, four new operations were set up in Kosovo, Sierra Leone, the Democratic Republic of Congo and East Timor (Howard 2008, p. 301).

Those years coincides with the Millennium Summit held during the 55th United Nations Conference. At that time, the General Assembly endorsed two key documents to strengthen the role of the organization in the following years: the policy paper “We the People: the Role of the United Nations in the 21st Century”<sup>11</sup> prepared by the Secretary-General which contained a strategic insight into the role of the UN in a globalized world, and the report commissioned by Annan from the High Level Panel for Peace Operations led by Lakhdar Brahimi,

known as the Brahimi Report (2000) which carried out an extensive review of peace operations practices, and listed recommendations including: the use of a robust military component capable of effectively protecting itself and the civilians under its responsibility, failure to approve any UNSC resolution authorizing a PO without first ensuring that it has at its disposal the necessary forces to execute the approved mandate; and, not least, the report recommended intensifying the consultation process between the UNSC and troop-contributing countries to streamline decision-making on issues involving the use of force.

At the same time, the Brahimi Report and the Peace Operations Doctrine developed by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) and the United Kingdom presented the first characterizations for peace support operations which are defined by the integrated format of their operational structure. While maintaining law and order and ensuring the security of its agents and civilian populations, or in building and consolidating peace by supporting structures capable of promoting local political and economic development. Under these new multidimensional operations, the links between security and development are becoming ever closer, a process that follows the revision of the international security regime. Through the concept of human security (UNDP 1994) individuals came to be at the center of the debate on new operational reforms, particularly concerning the strategic conduct or peace operations, aiming at the sustainability of the peace process they sought to implement. Two guidelines supported the new international security agenda for peace operations, consolidated in the 2015 High-Level Independent Panel on PO: (1) the civilian protection policy consolidated in the normative principle of “responsibility to protect”; and (2) the need to promote local empowerment by mobilizing and developing local capacities for the sustainability of the peace process with the withdrawal of international forces (Mancini 2015; Eide, Kaspersen, and Hippel 2005).

Briefly stating, peace support operations are distinguished from others by the breadth of their mandate, the centrality of their actions and, above all, by the limits imposed on the use of force and their ability to secure the consent of the parties. In particular, they stand out in the initial employment of UN-authorized peace enforcement troops but not under their command. These militarily robust multinational forces have the function of restraining violence and imposing peace (or restore order) by promoting adequate security conditions for the

<sup>11</sup>Available at <http://www.un.org/en/events/pastevents/pdfs/We.The.Peoples.pdf>. Accessed on: 31 October 2019.

establishment of standard multidimensional operation. Peace Support Operations (PSOs) are often identified as stabilization operations that would lay the foundation for a sustainable peacebuilding process. Therefore, the purpose of PSOs is to provide and ensure the necessary security for subsequent operations, often as a prelude to the creation of an interim territory administration mission to establish a functioning (liberal and democratic) state.

The ambitious aim of these operations reflects the current consensus on the causes and consequences of armed conflict and humanitarian crises affecting thousands of citizens around the globe. In the globalized world, the sheer volume and speed of transnational flows challenge any state's ability to manage its internal resources and respond to the risks and threats directed at them. In this scenario, the main cause of contemporary social conflicts and crises has been attributed to the collapse or fragility of state structures, as well as to the non-liberal nature of the institutions in question. The assumption of this conclusion indicates that peace will only be stable within a liberal, domestic or international democratic society.

Boutros-Ghali (1992 cited by Zwanenburg 2005, p. 115) reflected on the transformation of POs at the end of the twentieth century, stating that they could involve nothing less than the complete reconstruction of a society and a state which requires a comprehensive long-term approach. However, the goal of building functional liberal states outlined in state-building practices involved a considerable expansion of peace operations activities to include civil policing, institutional building activities, urban infrastructure reconstruction, and national conciliation. Once the rule of law, democratic institutions, and state capacities were in place, the interim UN administration would transfer control to democratically elected local leaders (Bellamy, Williams, and Griffin 2004, p. 165).

Considering the peace operations created between 1999 and 2014 and the successive adaptations of its mandates in the field, it is possible to verify a gradual evolution in the UN action with more robust forces, the United Nations increasingly assume a position in the conflicts in the direction that changes should take in a post-conflict context (Eide, Kaspersen, and Hippel 2005). If the current role of POs is to ensure sustainable peace, the first step was to establish the minimum conditions of governance and security for the creation of the rule of law and liberal-democratic government, central pillars in a peace-building process. In these operations, which have as their initial objective the stabilization of the conflict on their armed roads and the implementa-

tion of a peace agreement, mandates may include peace enforcement and protection of civilians, support for humanitarian assistance, the organization of elections, the institutional development and social infrastructure, the restoration of state minimum capacities and security sector reform, which may or may not be integrated into a process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration of former combatants.

## Conclusion

At present, POs are sent in the field in the wake of peace agreements which range from peace operations initiatives such as facilitating dialogue between parties and monitoring the end of hostilities to peacebuilding and state-building activities. The new format of operations, whether described as multidimensional, complex or integrated, has as its primary objective the building of sustainable peace. However, as noted here, over the past 70 years of UN peace operation have tended to vary in size, mandate, duration, and rules of engagement (or use of force), as well as in number and variation of the actors involved. The format of each operation depends not only on the circumstances in which it is moved but, above all, on how international society understands this context. For those who analyze peace operations as an international instrument for conflict management and resolution, it is necessary first to understand the conception of the nature and causes of violent conflict that underlies the design of operations. By understanding the problem, identifying the associated threats and risks, we can then analyze the proposal that engenders and mobilizes the operational new framework of a peace operation.

Considering the three phases presented above, the emergence of (traditional) POs during the Cold War, their transformation into more complex POs in the 1990s (multidimensional operations), and their consolidation into a format proposed as "peace support" it is possible to understand that the development of operations occurred from ad hoc responses to particular problems encountered in the field and was not accompanied, simultaneously, by their normative and institutional development. Nevertheless, the last decades have provided a fruitful space for reviewing, standardizing, and institutionalizing peace operation practices.

Although the fundamental principles that underpinned the development of POs from the outset involved impartiality, neutrality, and minimal use of

force, their adherence to these principles often depended on the varying levels of political will of the actors involved, as well as how they understand and position themselves in conflict. These two elements will be decisive for the design and implementation, success or failure, of a peace process. While the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) reflect a growing demand for peacebuilding actions, and the 2030 agenda determines the need to make it sustainable in the long term by emphasizing conflict prevention and peacebuilding mechanisms, peace operations emerge as windows of opportunity for this agenda to materialize. Understanding the role of POs in the post-Cold War global governance system is today an essential task for those engaged in international security studies and particular peace studies.

Peace is inherent in human life, yet how we understand it and seek to put it into practice are continually debated and revisited by various academic and decision-makers. The historical development process of POs is marked by several experiences with unintended consequences and results different from what was planned or expected. Notwithstanding, the immediate effects of humanitarian protection and support for populations directly affected by humanitarian conflicts and disasters cannot be relativized. Equally, there is no manner to deny its mechanisms to facilitate a peace process by promoting a space for building trust between parties. Thus, the PO mechanism is not invalidated in situations of extreme human suffering. At the same time, the contradictions pointed out remained essential challenges to the success of peace operations currently in the field or in the future, in particular concerning mechanisms capable of ensuring effective local dominance over the peacebuilding process. It is observed that local actors cannot always fail to agree with the international peacebuilding agenda to be implemented, producing a local adaptation of international standards that is not always sustainable.

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