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MODERN UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING: TOWARDS A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ADDRESSING CONFLICT

BY SEUN ABIOLA AND JOHN OTTE



Introduction

Modern peacekeeping has evolved from its early years as a tool used by the United Nations (UN) to monitor ceasefires and conduct truce supervision in interstate conflicts, into missions that are more involved in intrastate conflicts and which rebuild national structures and elements of civil society while maintaining the peace and conducting security sector reform (SSR). Indeed, the UN has worked towards a more systematic way of conducting peacekeeping operations, particularly in the context of conflicts within states – balancing the need for immediate response to crises with the provision of security, humanitarian assistance and protection to civilians with

longer-term considerations for post-conflict peacebuilding and development.

Peacekeeping is part of the holistic approach to addressing conflict, along with conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement and peacebuilding. The June 1992 *Agenda for Peace – Report of the Secretary-General* defines these concepts, and examines them as integrally related and major elements of a holistic

Above: Peacekeepers with the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) provide security during Liberia's presidential run-off election, in Monrovia (8 November 2011).



A peacekeeper from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA) Formed Police Unit speaks to residents while patrolling the streets of Gao, in northern Mali (May 2014).

approach to maintaining international peace and security.¹ The spectrum of such peace and security activities was further codified in 2008, in the *UN Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (otherwise known as the Capstone Doctrine). Modern peacekeeping continues to develop within the framework of its own contribution to this holistic approach, which goes beyond a military or security response to address the root causes of conflict, and thus also the larger development agenda.

PEACEKEEPING IS PART OF THE HOLISTIC APPROACH TO ADDRESSING CONFLICT, ALONG WITH CONFLICT PREVENTION, PEACEMAKING, PEACE ENFORCEMENT AND PEACEBUILDING

This article highlights the development of peacekeeping in the holistic approach to addressing conflicts within states. In particular, it provides an overview of the role of multidimensional peacekeeping in implementing comprehensive peaceful settlements, as well as facilitating post-conflict peacebuilding, prevention of relapse to armed conflict, and progress towards sustainable peace and

development. Furthermore, it identifies key considerations for enhancing effectiveness to better plan, support and conduct such operations.

The UN Holistic Approach in the *Agenda for Peace*

The *Agenda for Peace* contains the foundation of peacekeeping that emerged in the first 45 years of the UN. It is a holistic approach to the maintenance of international peace and security in that it acknowledges the integrally related interventions of preventing conflicts, as well as preventing relapse and building sustainable peace through effective preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding strategies. The 1990s experienced a dramatic increase in intrastate conflicts, characterised by multiple armed factions with differing political objectives and fractured lines of command. In the post-cold war era, the UN shift in focus from interstate to intrastate conflicts was accompanied by a consideration that 'security' extends beyond the security of nation states, to a people-centred concept of 'human security' that focuses primarily on protecting people while promoting peace and assuring sustainable continuous development.² The *Agenda for Peace* reflects the emerging paradigm of 'human security', later popularised by the UN Development Programme (UNDP) in its 1994 *Human Development Report*,

which links various humanitarian, economic and social issues to alleviate human suffering and ensure security.

The report reflects thinking on the “new dimension of security”³ that the effort to build peace, stability and security should go beyond military threats, especially given the non-military sources of conflict. Over time, consensus has been reached that ‘security’ means more than the absence of conflict, and that sustainable peace will be achieved through a comprehensive approach to addressing, for example, issues relating to education, health, democracy, human rights, protection against environmental degradation, proliferation of deadly weapons, poverty alleviation and justice.⁴ As an integrally related and major element of the holistic approach, peacekeeping as a technique expands the prevention of conflict and peacemaking, as well as post-conflict peacebuilding, contributing to a comprehensive strategy for durable peace and security. In particular, peacekeeping missions support early peacebuilding, facilitate post-conflict peacebuilding, prevent relapse of armed conflict, and make progress towards sustainable peace and development.⁵

Definitions of UN Peace and Security Activities⁶

Conflict prevention involves the application of structural or diplomatic measures to keep intrastate or interstate tensions and disputes from escalating into violent conflict.

Peacemaking generally includes measures to address conflicts in progress, and usually involves diplomatic action to bring hostile parties to a negotiated agreement.

Peacekeeping preserves the peace, however fragile, where fighting has been halted, and assists in implementing agreements achieved by the peacemakers.

Peace enforcement involves application, with the authorisation of the Security Council, of a range of coercive measures, including the use of military force, in situations where the Security Council has determined the existence of a threat to the peace, breach of the peace or act of aggression.

Peacebuilding involves a range of measures to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels of conflict management, and to lay the foundation for sustainable peace and development.

‘Robust’ peacekeeping versus peace enforcement: Although the line between robust peacekeeping and peace enforcement may appear blurred at times, there are important differences. Robust peacekeeping involves the use of force at the tactical level with the consent of the host authorities and/or main parties to the conflict, whilst peace enforcement may involve the use of force at the strategic or international level, which is normally prohibited for member states under Article 2 (4) of the UN Charter, unless authorised by the Security Council.

Figure 1 depicts the UN’s perspective on the interconnection between the various peace and security activities.

Linkages and Overlaps in Peace and Security Activities

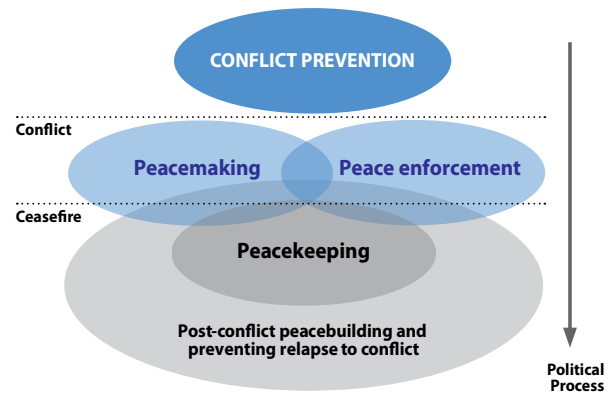


Figure 1: Linkages and overlaps in peace and security issues.⁷

The Role of Multidimensional Peacekeeping in the Holistic Approach

UN peacekeeping was not originally envisaged in the UN Charter as among the measures designed to preserve international peace and security, but emerged out of necessity during the cold war as an ad hoc improvisation.⁸ More than half a century after the establishment of the first UN field operation in 1948, peacekeeping has evolved from a primarily military model of observing ceasefires and separating forces in interstate conflict to a multidimensional model that incorporates a mix of military, police and civilian capabilities to support the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements and help lay the foundations for sustainable peace and legitimate governance within countries emerging from conflict.⁹ Over time, the theoretical boundary between peacekeeping and other UN activities seems to have become blurred as the functions of UN peacekeeping operations have expanded in three directions: peacemaking, peacebuilding and peace enforcement. Experience has shown that these activities rarely occur in a linear way, but are mutually reinforcing, providing a holistic approach to addressing conflict.

An overlap between peacemaking and peacekeeping emerged when UN peacekeeping operations took on new tasks, such as supervising the implementation of peace accords and election processes. With the liberal peace paradigm dominating during the 1990s, peace was associated with democratisation and electoral participation was determined to be an integral human right; hence, peacekeeping exit strategies were based on elections.¹⁰ However, peacekeeping operations declared successful relapsed into conflict after the mission was withdrawn, which led to the development of a comprehensive list of conditions that need to be fulfilled before ending a peacekeeping mission, subsumed under the concept of peacebuilding. This list includes elections as only one component, in addition to SSR, disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration and repatriation (DDRR) of former combatants, and institution building.¹¹ UN peacekeeping strategies adapted to provide an adequate

response to the people-centred security needs of intrastate conflicts, with a focus primarily linked to the objective of peacebuilding.

The UN has experienced mixed outcomes in addressing intrastate conflicts, with successful peacekeeping operations in countries such as Cambodia, El Salvador, Guatemala, Mozambique, Namibia and Tajikistan, and lessons learned from failures in Rwanda, Somalia and the former Yugoslavia. The majority of conflicts continue to take place within rather than between states, with 90% of conflicts between 2000 and 2009 occurring in countries that had previously experienced civil war.¹² Practice has always preceded the conceptualisation of UN peacekeeping and, as an evolving concept, it has developed after repeated trial and error in the field.¹³

The 2000 *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, commonly referred to as the Brahimi Report, was a comprehensive review of the whole concept of peacekeeping, and stressed the “pressing need to establish more effective strategies for conflict prevention, in both the long and short terms”, identifying peacebuilding as a key element of this approach. The creation of the UN peacebuilding architecture, including the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) in 2005, reflected the increase in awareness of the links between peacemaking, peacekeeping and peacebuilding roles. The unanimous adoption of UN Security Council Resolution 2086 in January 2013 recognised multidimensional peacekeeping as a tool for peacebuilding and longer-term development. Such operations have an important role to assist host countries in developing critical peacebuilding priorities

and strategies, help to create an enabling environment for national and international actors to perform peacebuilding tasks, and implement early peacebuilding tasks themselves. This consideration for early peacebuilding tasks is reflected in the mandates and composition of operations, and such contribution to long-term peacebuilding objectives allows for the successful transition and withdrawal of the operations.

UN Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2086 (2013) on the Importance of a Multidimensional Approach to Peacekeeping¹⁵

Multidimensional peacekeeping operations that aim to facilitate peacebuilding and prevent a relapse into conflict have mandates to:

- provide support to basic safety and security by assisting national SSR programmes of military, police and other law enforcement institutions;
- enable DDDR;
- support the strengthening of rule of law institutions of the host country, such as the police, judicial institutions and correctional system;
- provide for rapid response in mine action;
- support peace consolidation and inclusive political processes, including the local population and civil society;
- facilitate the delivery of humanitarian assistance;
- contribute towards protecting human rights;
- protect civilians, particularly those under imminent threat of physical violence;
- cooperate and coordinate with UN agencies, funds and programmes, as well as all relevant partners, to support the host government in poverty reduction and economic development; and
- support the participation of women in conflict prevention, conflict resolution and peacebuilding.

Over the last 20 years, UN multidimensional peacekeeping has become an important international peacebuilding instrument, usually playing a more prominent role at the early stages of a post-conflict peacebuilding effort, which can last decades.¹⁶ Ten of the current 16 UN peacekeeping operations are multidimensional in nature and have been mandated by the Security Council to perform a broad range of peacebuilding activities.¹⁷ Also, out of the 16 current missions, there are nine missions with Protection of Civilians (PoC) mandates.¹⁸ On 10 April 2014, the Security Council authorised the deployment of the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (CAR) (MINUSCA), which is mandated to protect civilians as its utmost priority and support transition processes. Military, police and civilian personnel work towards a common outcome, with an understanding of their roles and responsibilities in the complex mission and their contribution to a more holistic approach to dealing with conflict. The unique skills and resources contribute towards both alleviating the suffering of people affected by conflict, and assisting them in the reconstruction of their post-conflict societies.

UN PHOTOESKINDER DEBEBE



The United Nations Security Council unanimously adopts resolution 2149, establishing the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) for an initial period from 10 April 2014 until 30 April 2015 (10 April 2014).

UN Missions with Protection of Civilians Mandates¹⁹

1. UNIFIL – UN Interim Force in Lebanon (2006)
2. MONUSCO – UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (2010)
3. UNMIL – UN Mission in Liberia (2003)
4. MINUSTAH – UN Stabilization Mission in Haiti (2004)
5. UNOCI – UN Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (2004)
6. UNAMID – African Union-UN Hybrid Operation in Darfur (2007)
7. UNMISS – UN Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (2011)
8. UNISFA – UN Interim Security Force for Abyei (2011)
9. MINUSMA – UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (2013)
10. MINUSCA – UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in CAR (2014)

Immediate Response to Crisis Versus Long-term Peacebuilding

The established principles and practices of peacekeeping – as articulated in the Capstone Doctrine – have had to respond flexibly to new demands to help implement settlements that have been negotiated by peacemakers.²⁰ Peacekeeping increasingly involves internal conflicts with armed groups who are only partially under the control of those who consent to a UN deployment, and developments regarding the use of force – such as the Force Intervention Brigade of MONUSCO in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and the mandate of MINUSMA in Mali – highlight the contemporary challenges of deploying where there is no “peace to keep”.²¹ Whilst it has

been debated that UN peacekeeping doctrine should be adapted to reflect such challenges, it has also been argued that the strength of UN peacekeeping lies in its creative and spontaneous adaptation of general principles to a specific situation.²² Undertaking peacekeeping today in missions like the DRC, CAR, Mali and South Sudan highlight the continuous need to make peacekeeping operations more effective at addressing the increasingly complex nature and multivariate types of international security needs in the modern context.²³

It is evident that there are two main areas of concern for peacekeeping operations: the immediate requirements to respond to a crisis, and contributing towards long-term peacebuilding and development. It is an objective of operations to provide the host state and its citizens with a reasonable degree of security, which allows peacebuilding to be completed and long-term development to begin over time. A mission’s exit should be based on the “successful completion of its mandate, resulting in the establishment of a requisite political and security environment conducive to durable peace and/or a follow-on peacebuilding process”.²⁴ The UN Department of Peacekeeping operations (DPKO) and Department of Field Support’s (DFS) strategy provides guidance for peacekeepers on prioritising, sequencing and planning critical early peacebuilding tasks, and articulates that priority initiatives are those which advance the peace process or political objectives of a mission and ensure security and/or lay the foundation for longer-term institution-building.²⁵

UN peacekeepers deployed in an intrastate conflict area do not only maintain military security arrangements (such as ceasefires). Public security, such as the maintenance of law and order – the primary responsibility of the police component in the mission – also plays a significant role



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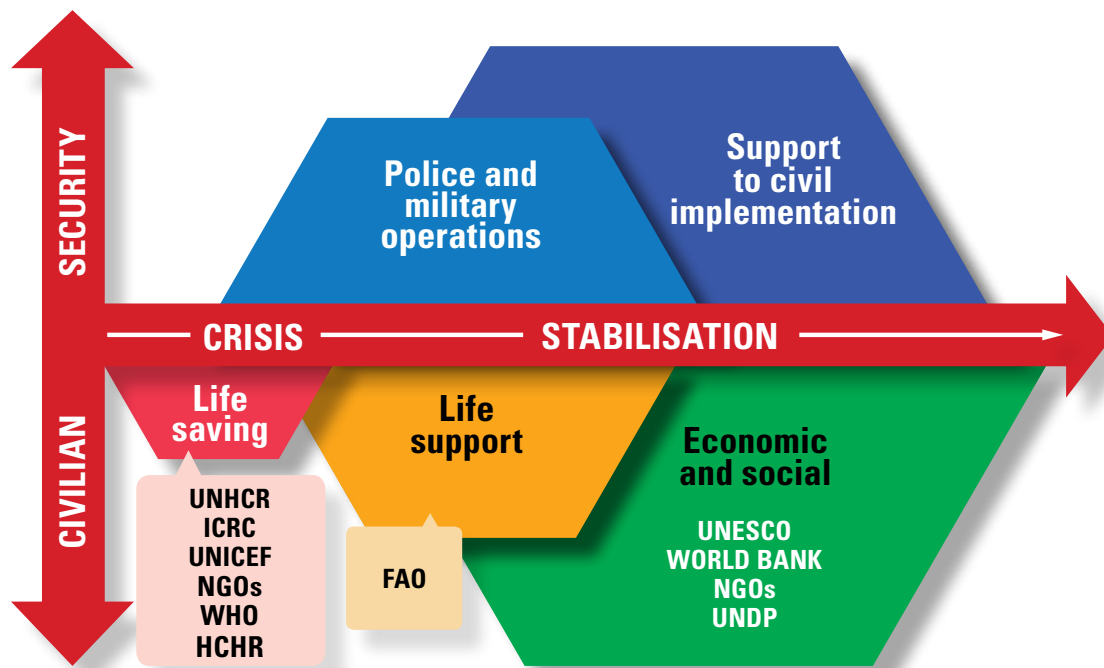
Multidimensional peacekeeping operations mandates includes the facilitation and delivery of humanitarian assistance.

in the protection of civilians in a divided community or a failed state.²⁶ From a human security perspective, post-conflict strategies must not only include a guarantee of security, but also provide humanitarian relief – building social capital, nurturing the reconciliation and coexistence of divided communities and restoring governance.²⁷ Such technical assistance required by post-conflict countries (as reflected in the mandate) is mainly provided by non-military expertise, in the form of civilians.

Figure 2 shows the generic life cycle of a mission. Above the mid-line are operations performed by military, police and support forces, which help enable a safe and secure environment for all citizens in the mission area. The crisis–stabilisation timeline shows a crisis occurring that requires the deployment of an integrated, multidimensional peacekeeping mission to implement the complex security, protection, humanitarian assistance and development mandate needed to address the conflict in a holistic manner. The figure then shows how the mission progresses, after emergency life-saving actions and the re-establishment of a relatively secure environment. This allows peacebuilding to become the dominant focus of the mission. It should be noted that there are overlaps in areas of activity, which implies that many activities can occur simultaneously, and indicates that peacebuilding – represented by activities which occur primarily in the stabilisation phase – has its

foundations in the beginning of the mission. Tasks such as PoC and the re-establishment of the rule of law builds the basis for the respect of human rights. These are immediate priorities with long-term peacebuilding implications, which give the local population and host state the confidence that violence will not reoccur, allowing for the rebuilding of society and the start of reconciliation.

Unfortunately, there are high levels of relapse into violence, which is indicative of how post-conflict countries often continue to experience instability years after the end of the armed conflict, as reflected in South Sudan at the end of 2013. The causes of instability and relapse vary by context and may include external stresses such as the impact of cross-border conflict and international criminal networks, as well as internal factors such as political exclusion, real or perceived discrimination against social groups, severe corruption, high levels of youth unemployment, and unequal distribution of natural resource wealth.²⁸ These internal and external conditions can be profoundly destabilising for countries that have weak institutions and are politically and socially fragmented. Hence, inclusivity (inclusive political settlements, achieved either through a peace agreement and subsequent processes, or because of inclusive behaviour by the party that prevailed in the conflict) and institutional capacity-building (to strengthen formal and



Acronyms:	
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
HCHR	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
ICRC	International Committee of the Red Cross
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
UNDP	UN Development Programme
UNESCO	UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural
UNHCR	UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UNICEF	UN International Children’s Emergency Fund
WHO	World Health Organization

Figure 2: Activities undertaken during the life cycle of a mission – from crisis to stabilisation.

informal institutions, including restoring core governance functions and equitable service delivery) have been identified as critical in preventing relapse into violent conflict, and in producing more resilient states and societies.²⁹

Key Considerations for a Holistic Approach to Addressing Conflict in Peacekeeping

Peacekeeping designed to deal directly with the security needs of people must be aligned with the human security framework, which indicates that the focus of post-conflict strategies should not be limited only to effective peacekeeping narrowly defined, but should also include peacebuilding and sustainable development.³⁰ Some key considerations for improving the practice of UN peacekeeping in such post-conflict strategies follow.

Measuring success: Criticism that the holistic approach to addressing conflict through peacekeeping is too all-encompassing – which would mean failure in the achievement of such ambitious goals – is equally applied to the implementation of the concept of ‘human security’. The millennium development goals passed in 2000 were one attempt to codify the scope of human security and make it measurable. The challenge of peacebuilding, from the inception of a UN peacekeeping mission, is to ensure coherence between and integration of peacemaking, peacekeeping, peacebuilding and development to achieve an effective response to post-conflict situations, and these elements are addressed through integrated strategic assessment and planning processes from the outset.³¹

Transition/exit strategy: Peacekeeping is designed to be temporary, and the goal is to stabilise the situation and lay the groundwork for sustainable peace. Mission planning must, from the outset, include a transition/exit strategy, which may involve coordinating, planning and preparing the political groundwork for a successor mission, a systematic handover of responsibilities to local authorities and other partners, or a joint UN system effort to move from post-conflict priorities to a peacebuilding process.³²

National ownership: National ownership of the peacebuilding agenda is crucial, and should be supported by all the actors in the mission. The ‘light footprint’ approach advocates that UN activities should be limited to those that are appropriate to local needs and context, and that international staff should be limited to the minimum required, with an effort to ensure local capacity-building, so that nationals can take over from the UN as soon as possible.³³ National governments, the UN, and regional and subregional organisations are encouraged to continue to use existing civilian expertise, as well as to broaden and deepen the pool of civilian capacities for peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict, including from countries with relevant experience in post-conflict peacebuilding or democratic transition.

UN ‘Delivering as One’: The UN system should ‘Deliver as One’ at country level, with one leader, one programme, one budget and, where appropriate, one office.³⁴ Clarity on roles and responsibilities of UN peacekeeping operations, UN country teams and other relevant actors – including



The improvement of civil-military co-ordination within a peacekeeping operation facilitates positive interaction among the various components of the operation and is an important part of peacekeeping strategies that take into account humanitarian and development needs.

entities of the UN peacebuilding architecture and the UN agencies, funds and programmes for the delivery of prioritised support to a country, consistent with specific peacebuilding needs and priorities as outlined by national authorities – is necessary to ensure effective integration of effort.³⁵ There is also the need to make use of the advisory, advocacy and resource mobilisation roles of the PBC in peacebuilding activities; the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), which is the focal point in the UN system for conflict prevention, peacemaking and peacebuilding; and the UNDP to strengthen the security and justice sectors.

Coordination among the various actors: The improvement of civil-military coordination within a UN peacekeeping operation facilitates positive interaction among the various components of the operation, and is an important step towards forming peacekeeping strategies that take into account the needs of humanitarian and development actors working in the field. Close collaboration with key partners, such as international financial institutions and regional organisations, is also critical, with joint post-conflict needs assessments conducted by the UN, the European Commission and the World Bank contributing to more coherent approaches in a number of countries.³⁶ What is also important is partnership and cooperation with regional and subregional arrangements and organisations, in accordance with Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, in supporting peacekeeping and peacebuilding activities and forging greater regional and national ownership.

Resources: Countries emerging from violent conflict often lack sufficient and coherent international support and resources for peacebuilding to avoid a relapse into conflict during the immediate post-conflict period. Peacekeeping

has grown in complexity with an increase and broadening of tasks. Operations must not only be given clear, credible and achievable mandates, but these must also be matched by the appropriate resources – both financial and human. With regard to human resources, the implementation of complex mandates that include protection, DDDR, elections, humanitarian assistance and development has implications for the development of strategies, training and education, as well as administrative and logistical support systems for personnel.

Early Peacebuilding Critical Success/Risk Factors for Peacekeeping Operations:³⁷

- political will at national, regional and international levels;
- local knowledge through in-depth assessments;
- clear and achievable mandate supported with adequate financing;
- strong leadership;
- partnerships that reflect clear roles, comparative strengths and integrated approaches;
- national and local ownership;
- popular engagement in prioritisation;
- availability of appropriate skills and equipment; and
- rapid deployment capacity.

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