

ODUMUNC 2009 Issue Brief
Sixth Committee (Legal)
**Comprehensive Review of
Peacekeeping Operations**
In all their aspects
Akin Guneri



Peacekeeping operations are among the most powerful and popular tools available to the international community for dealing with international conflict. Since 1948, the UN Security Council has authorized 63 peacekeeping operations. Although they do not authorize forces large enough, or with a mandate to fight wars and actually settle conflicts, peacekeeping operations play a vital role suppressing conflict. They allow combatants to end hostilities and inhibit a return to fighting.

Today there are 16 on-going, UN-sponsored peacekeeping operations (PKOs). The UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) supports additional operations under non-peacekeeping mandates. Other peacekeeping operations around the world are sponsored by regional organizations such as the European Union (EU), the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), and the African Union (AU).

While individual peacekeeping operations usually must be authorized by the Security Council, the rules of peacekeeping in general, reform of peacekeeping practices originates in the General Assembly. More generally, the General Assembly is empowered with a mandate to make “non-binding recommendations to states on international issues” within the scope of UN so as to strengthen commitments of member states to the fundamental matters. The list of issues for peacekeeping reform are numerous. Among the most important:

Peacekeeping reform: The problems of peacekeeping are well known. *The Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (the Brahimi report) of August 2000 recommended a series of reforms to improve the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping. Few of its recommendations have been acted on. And there are many issues it found too controversial to agree on.

The design of the Security Council: Because they are guided by the UN charter and the priorities of sovereign states, there are important limits of peacekeeping as well. The veto power of the five permanent members of the Security Council (the P-5) insures that no UN operation can be authorized against their will. The P-5 tend to protect not only their own interests, but allies and friends as well. As a result, peacekeeping often is impossible where it is needed most.

While the P-5 can be a barrier to action, action is impossible without them. Conflicts can be too distant and lacking international attention, or they come during moments of international fatigue, which also results in inaction. The most difficult examples involve countries of little interest to any of the P-5. The genocide in Rwanda in 1994 is a classic example of UN inaction.

Security Council mandates: The Security Council is required to authorize PKOs, but it can only ask member states to provide the needed money and personnel. While the

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Department of Peacekeeping Operations has impressive organizational skills, it cannot provide resources. Thus there is a tendency for the Security Council to expect more than is possible on the ground. PKOs tend to be chronically understaffed and under funded, lacking vital equipment like trucks and helicopters.

Mandates also can be too weak for forthright action. During the worst years of the Bosnian war (1992-1995), the Security Council was too divided to approve strong action to end the humanitarian disaster there. Instead it could agree only on a small force, allowed only to bring humanitarian assistance. The result was the war causing the disaster continued for years.

State sovereignty vs. Responsibility to Protect: Rarely are formal PKOs authorized for civil wars, since this would violate the strong belief of most member states in the primacy of state sovereignty. Intervention in civil wars usually is seen as illegitimate meddling in domestic affairs. A growing group of states, mostly in Europe, but including some from Africa and Latin America, challenge this predisposition. They argue that the sovereignty of the individual can be equally important as the sovereignty of the state, and when states blatantly violate the human rights of their people, through warfare or genocide, the international community as a “Responsibility to Protect”, sometimes called R2P. Obviously R2P is highly controversial. Some states believe it violates the essence of the UN system, while others maintain it is the essence of the UN. Some dismiss it as simple imperialism, others believe it is essential to the credibility of the UN.

Providing personnel: A major problem for any PKO is finding personnel. Although the Security Council can ask countries to offer personnel, in practice there often is resistance to supplying enough. The countries with the largest armed forces often are too controversial to serve as neutral peacekeepers (especially Russia and the United States). Others are hesitant to involve their armed forces outside their own borders (China).

Often, poorer countries furnish troops, with financial support from richer ones. The largest providers in 2007 were: Pakistan (10,173), Bangladesh (9,675), India (9,471), Nepal (3,626), Jordan (3,564), Uruguay (2,583) and Italy (2,539). Other major supporters were Ghana, Nigeria and France. In the past Fiji and Nepal also furnished many personnel. This approach has come in for strong criticism, since soldiers from poorer countries may lack the education or skills required for highly sensitive operations. Creation of a permanent UN peacekeeping force would solve many problems, but financing is an enormous problem, and some countries are suspicious of creating a force that could, conceivably, be used against them.

Paying for peacekeeping: The enormous cost of PKOs makes it impossible to fund them through normal UN operating funds. Regular annual donations are insufficient. The UN,

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moreover, must balance its books annually, making it currently impossible for the organization to save money in a trust fund for peacekeeping emergencies. Everything depends on the steady flow of country donations. But in practice, donations rarely match promises and operations must be trimmed.

Crimes and partisan behavior by peacekeepers:

Widespread allegations of sexual exploitation of refugees and displaced peoples, human trafficking, and spreading sexually transmitted disease, often includes HIV/AIDS. Peacekeeping troops also have been accused to supplying weapons and other military equipment to one or another side in a conflict. There often are no easy solutions to these problems, since aggressive action often endangers the whole mission or risks withdrawal of otherwise irreplaceable force.

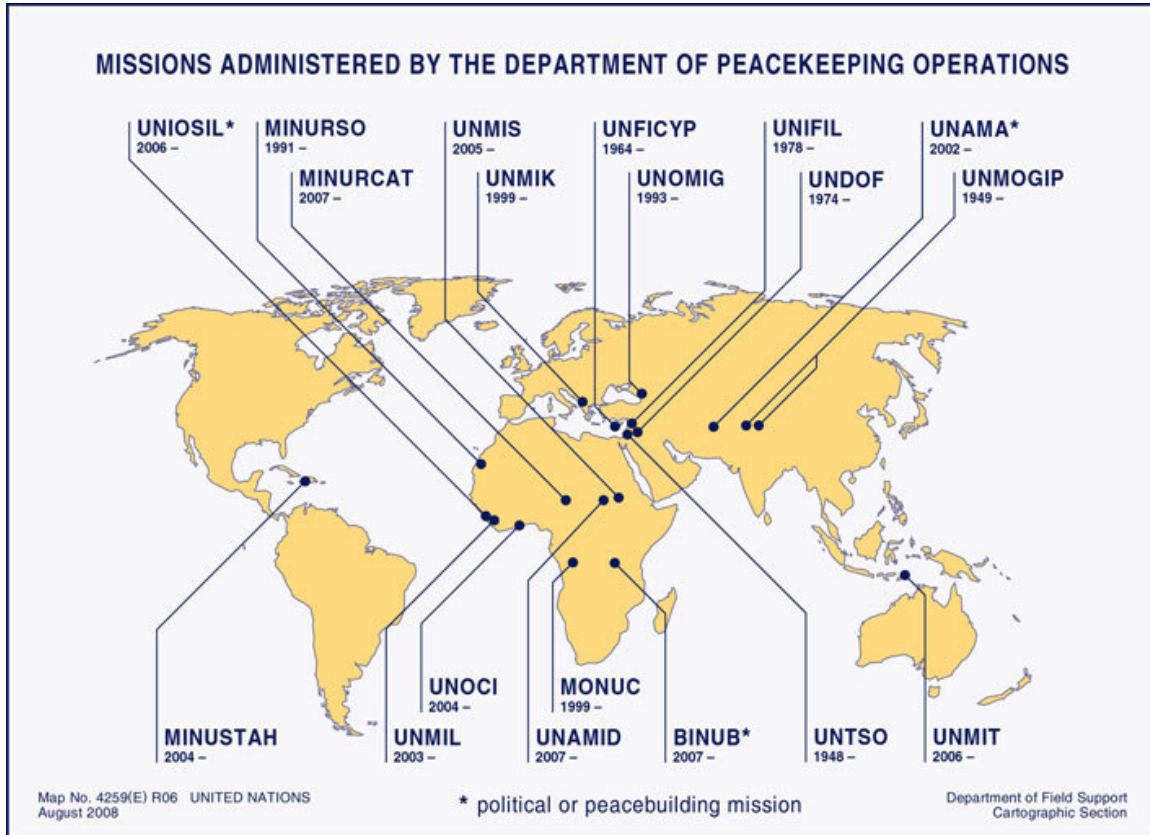
Systematic termination of PKOs: Not is lack of peacekeeping a problem, sometimes it is possible to have too much. Some critics argue that peacekeeping can become part of an international problem. In the Middle East, India-Pakistan and Cyprus, PKOs dating back as much as sixty years continue to this day. It has been argued that peacekeepers allow the states to avoid settling their differences. In this sense, peacekeeping perpetuates conflicts and increases the long-term risk of war. But there is no agreeing in the UN on how to terminate controversial PKOs.

Conclusion

The special committee considers peacekeeping operations in all aspects so as to increase the capacity of United Nations to meet its goals. The issues of comprehensive review of peacekeeping operations in all aspects varies ranging from women rights to UN personnel code of conduct, from the promotion of rule of law to number of peacekeepers to supervise the tasks in a given peacekeeping operation. Therefore, the draft resolution on this item plays a crucial role in the missions because of the fact that the proposals and recommendations of the special committee on an issue are the accumulation of the lessons learnt from the previous peacekeeping operations and experiences of peacekeepers and experts on the issue.

In practice, only as few very dedicated governments are seriously interested in peacekeeping reform. Most tend to get involved more to support their own, particular peacekeeping agendas. It is very common for a state to seek change in UN principles in order to insure a particular problem is solved the way it wants.

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Source: United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/dpko/bnote.htm>

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