

## Is Peacekeeping still effective?

With more than 100,000 military and police personnel currently serving in 16 missions on four continents, Peacekeeping (PK) represents the largest deployed military force in the world.

PK has proven to be one of the most effective tools available to the United Nations (UN) to assist host countries in the transition from conflict to peace.

PK has the ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe, integrating them with civilian peacekeepers to implement multidimensional mandates.

Success is never guaranteed, being UN PK involved in the most physically and politically difficult environments. Nevertheless, in recognition of their performance, the Nobel Peace Prize was awarded to the UN PK forces in 1988.

The next commitment of UN PK could be Syria in order to uphold any peace deal that eventually emerges and thus improving, through the intervention of the international community, the chances of peace in that battered country.

### What is PK?

PK is the maintenance of international peace and security by the deployment of military forces in particular areas.

PK provides security and the political support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.

UN PK is guided by three basic principles: consent of the parties, impartiality, and non-use of force except in self-defence and defence of the mandate.

PK is flexible and able not only to maintain peace and security, but also to facilitate the political process, protect civilians, support the organization of elections, promote human rights and assist in restoring the rule of law.

PK will thus be instrumental in Peacebuilding (PB), the process ensuring national reconciliation and moving the country towards recovery,

reconstruction, and development.

## The origins of PK

UN PK was born during the Cold War and was primarily limited to maintaining ceasefires and stabilizing situations on the ground through military observers with monitoring, reporting and confidence-building roles.

The first two PK operations, which continue operating to this day, were in 1948 the UN Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) in Palestine, and in 1949 the UN Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP).

With the end of the Cold War, the strategic context for UN PK changed dramatically, shifting from “traditional” missions involving generally observational tasks to complex “multidimensional” enterprises. These multidimensional missions had to ensure the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements and assist in laying the foundations for sustainable peace.

The nature of conflicts also changed over the years. UN PK, originally developed as a means of dealing with inter-State conflict, was increasingly being applied to intra-State conflicts and civil wars.

Although the military remained the backbone of most PK operations, there were now many civilian peacekeepers.

Since then UN PK has entered a phase of consolidation with a high demand for field missions whose scope and mandates, including on the civilian side, remain very broad.

## Characteristics of PK

UN PK is supported by all the 193 UN members states with 128 of them contributing troops, police, and civilian personnel. Women make up 30% of civilian, 10% of police, and 3% of military peacekeepers. Currently, there are 5 women leading PK missions in South Sudan, Liberia, Haiti, Ivory Coast, and Cyprus.

So far 71 PK operations have been deployed by the UN, 56 of them since 1988, and more than 3,326 UN peacekeepers have died while serving under the UN flag.

On September 28 2015, world leaders convened at the UN for a summit on PK operations. President Obama said: “We are here today, together, to strengthen and reform UN peacekeeping because our common security demands it. This is not something that we do for others; this is something that we do collectively because our collective security depends on it.” The major recommendations of the ensuing report were: primacy of politics, prioritization of prevention and mediation, and people-centered missions.

## The process of a PK Mission

Once a PK mission is authorized by the Security Council, the Department of PK Operations begins planning for the necessary elements, seeking contributions from UN member nations. Since the UN has no standing force or supplies, it must form “ad hoc” coalitions for every task undertaken.

PK forces are contributed by member states on a voluntary basis. Pakistan, India, and Bangladesh are among the largest individual contributors with around 8 – 9,000 units each.

When all agreements are in place, the required personnel are assembled, and final approval has been given by the Security Council, the peacekeepers are deployed to the region in question.

A UN PK mission has three power centres. The first is the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, the official leader of the mission. This person is responsible for all political and diplomatic activity, overseeing relations with both the parties to the peace treaty and the UN member-states in general. He is often a senior member of the Secretariat.

The second is the Force Commander, who is responsible for the military forces deployed. He is a senior officer of their nation's armed services, and is often from the nation committing the highest number of troops to the project. Finally, the Chief Administrative Officer oversees supplies and logistics, and coordinates the procurement of any resource needed.

## The UN and the EU

While the demands for UN peace operations keep increasing, the UN has difficulties coping with international challenges on its own. This prompted the organization to seek for closer partners, which have adequate

capabilities to support UN peacekeeping operations.

In light of this, the UN tried to improve its cooperation with the European Union (EU). Both organizations are considered to be 'natural partners' due to their common values, norms, goals, and political interests. UN-EU partnership was established in September 2003 through the cooperation in Bosnia and Herzegovina where the EU Police Mission took over the UN international Police Task Force, and in Democratic Republic of Congo where the EU conducted Artemis, one of its first military operations.

Even if the Kosovo crisis shares both successes and failures of the UN-EU cooperation, throughout UNMIK and EULEX-Kosovo with overlapping competencies, delays in decision-making, and different political agendas, EU is still considered a UN reliable partner.

Today, the EU is a major contributor to UN peacekeeping with 38% of the UN's budget. It also provides sizeable contingents of peacekeepers to the UN peacekeeping.

## Considerations

Being a global and not a regional institution, the UN does play an important role in the humanitarian, political and security responses. UN PK is the only mechanism that allows to combine forces from every region in the world to tackle crises or conflicts wherever they occur. Regional organizations cannot send Pakistani troops in central Africa or Egyptian troops in East Timor or European forces in Haiti. Thus, notwithstanding its limitations, the UN is the only tool available for effective global burden-sharing.

This is why when we hear about failures and setbacks in PK (as in Bosnia, Rwanda, and Somalia), that should not affect the UN successes in either helping to end a war, securing a part of territory, or protecting a portion of a population.

When PK is effective it is usually because both sides of a conflict genuinely desire to keep the peace. This is rare: it is far common for peacekeepers to instead find themselves caught between fighting forces with little interest in peace. In this case PK cannot just be an aspirin but must be a powerful antibiotic addressing the root causes of the conflict.

Unfortunately, UN PK has become increasingly dependent on troops from countries that cannot boast first-class, well-trained and fully-equipped

militaries such as Ethiopia, Rwanda, Nepal, and Senegal that are paid a cash fee for their soldiers.

Furthermore, no shortfall should affect a PK mission: perceived shortfalls in an operation's legitimacy can seriously undermine its effectiveness. Legitimacy comprises three interlinked and mutually reinforcing elements: political consensus, legality and moral authority.

So how can the ratio between success and failure be improved? By getting better quality troops into the UN, by cost efficiency, by putting an end to sexual exploitation and abuse, and by effective leadership. Italy suggested, last June, that strengthening the gender perspective of peace operations would effectively protect civilians and this can be achieved both by increasing the overall number of women serving in peace operations and, during the mission, by reaching out to women and girls in local communities, engaging them as actors of peace and prevention.

Effectiveness also means being flexible about how PK forces are structured. Besides the traditional “blue helmets” operations, that is, operations centrally controlled by the UN Secretariat, there is a powerful alternative in the UN tool-kit, namely UN-mandated multi-national forces under the lead of a regional organization (EU, NATO, African Union, etc.) or of a country. A further option which could be explored is having the UN and a regional organization fuse their forces into a single structure.

## Conclusions

With the increasing numbers of actors involved in the global agenda for peace, UN PK is an indispensable instrument for the international community.

UN will still provide legitimacy and legality for necessary actions and be the primary coordinator of the international response to future global and regional crises. UN will still be the main forum for the international dialogue on PK, conflict prevention, and conflict resolution.

PK is not an end in itself. This is why rather than attempting to do everything, UN should focus on its core objectives and move away from the so-called “Christmas-tree” type of mandate, which includes every wish and desire of what UN would like to achieve. Overly ambitious mandates, without the necessary diplomatic preparation and resources, are a sure recipe for failure which will undermine UN credibility. A healthy dose of pragmatism and humility is necessary to make a PK mission successful.

As for Syria, it is necessary to deprive ISIS of its sanctuary and stabilize the country. Consequently, a peace operation under the auspices either of UN or NATO and the Arab League will surely be needed: independently of how that war may end, it will restart without a viable external entity, well protected and resourced, and able to concentrate efforts whenever and wherever needed.