

Rhetoric vs. Reality: Traditional Peacekeeping in the Contemporary World

The term ‘peacekeeping’¹ came into use in the United Nations’ vocabulary in the 1950s. Since then, UN peacekeeping has changed considerably. It started from traditional peacekeeping field operations, such as observing ‘neutral zones’ and interposing forces between interstate combatants and has evolved into peace operations which are situated in intrastate conflicts and may involve not only peacekeeping, employing both military and civilian personnel, but also conflict prevention, peace enforcement, peacebuilding, and regional arrangements. Considering such an evolution,² it is reasonable to question whether or not traditional peacekeeping is still in demand.

In order to answer this question, the analysis first examines the traditional model of UN peacekeeping established during the Cold War.³ Then it sheds light on the evolution of peacekeeping’s aims, tools, and basic principles, such as consent, impartiality, and the appropriate use of force, during the post-Cold War period. Lastly, it estimates the demand for traditional peacekeeping in the contemporary world.

UN Peacekeeping in the Cold War

The concept of UN peacekeeping began to form almost from the beginning of the founding of the organization. The idea of peacekeeping became an alternative way to maintain international

¹ Within the framework of this study, UN peacekeeping, UN peacekeeping operations/missions, UN peace operations are used interchangeably.

² The study categorizes the evolution of UN peacekeeping in accordance with UN documents. Due to numerous existing categorizations of UN peacekeeping in the academic literature, the study does not employ such categories as ‘generations’ or any other typologies of peacekeeping offered by academics and research centres. For this reason, the phrase ‘classic model of UN peacekeeping’ is not employed in the study. Instead, to be consistent with UN terminology, the author of this analysis uses ‘traditional peacekeeping’ or ‘traditional model of UN peacekeeping.’

³ The year of the division between the Cold War and the post-Cold War period can vary. According to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, 1988 is a year which divides the Cold War from the post-Cold War period.

peace and security since the initial plan of a collective security system was blocked by the constant confrontation between the United States and the Soviet Union. Owing to the flexibility of the UN Charter, UN peacekeeping appeared as *ad hoc* response to particular conflict situations, and its legal framework was generated through practical application.⁴

Over the Cold War and its fifteen peacekeeping missions,⁵ the fundamental principles of UN peacekeeping were established. They are premised on host state consent, impartiality, and the minimum use of force. The first component, consent, implies that the state on whose territory peacekeeping forces would be deployed has to give its permission, including which troops are deployed. If for any reason, permission is withdrawn, peacekeepers must leave the country accordingly.⁶ Impartiality means that peacekeepers do not represent the interests of any side and do not intervene in the fighting; “there is no designed aggressor, and the peacekeeping forces are to implement their mandate without discrimination.”⁷ The requirement of the minimum use of force allows peacekeepers only to carry light weapons, typically rifles or side arms, and to use force only in self-defence and, since 1973, in defence of their mandate as well.⁸

⁴ Alex J. Bellamy, *Understanding Peacekeeping*, 2nd ed.. (Cambridge, UK ; Malden, MA: Polity, 2010)., 49.

⁵ Fifteen UN peacekeeping operations were counted for the period from 1948 to 1988.

⁶ Paul F. Diehl, *International Peacekeeping, Perspectives on Security* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993)., 6.

⁷ Diehl., 7.

⁸ Marrack Goulding, “The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping,” *International Affairs* 69, no. 3 (July 1993): 451–64, doi:10.2307/2622309, 455. Since peacekeepers were frequently blocked by armed persons to fulfill their mandate, for instance, soldiers of one of the conflicting parties could create a roadblock and refuse a UN convoy in passing through, the use of force began to apply in defence of the mandate as well. Later the Brahimi Report will elaborate more on the use of force in defence of the mandate. See, the section on UN peacekeeping in Post-Cold War.

National military and later police personnel⁹ are the only sources for the UN uniformed forces (i.e. no hired mercenaries).¹⁰ Among other characteristics, it is worth emphasizing the prerequisite of a ceasefire agreement, the contribution of contingents on a voluntary basis,¹¹ the multinational composition under UN command, and international backing especially from the Security Council.¹²

In the Cold War period, UN peacekeeping was performed by two types of field operations: observer missions and lightly armed peacekeeping missions. However, there were some notable exceptions.¹³ Moreover, most of the operations during the Cold War had only military components and did not have modern day “whole-of-government” partners. Peacekeeping missions typically occurred in the period following a ceasefire agreement and were to facilitate political dialogue between conflicting parties.¹⁴

As such, the traditional model of UN peacekeeping created in the Cold War period is characterized by the following features. First, traditional UN peacekeeping operates in interstate

⁹ Police personnel have been deploying in UN peace operations since the 1960s. Traditionally, the mandate of police officers include monitoring, observing, and reporting. In the post-Cold War, the responsibilities of police were extended.

¹⁰ Goulding, “The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping.”, 455.

¹¹ “Peacekeeping | SAIS,” Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies, accessed August 9, 2017, <https://www.sais-jhu.edu/content/peacekeeping>.

¹² Ramesh Chandra Thakur and Albrecht Schnabel, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Ad Hoc Missions, Permanent Engagement* (Tokyo ; New York: United Nations University Press, 2001)., 10.

¹³ Some UN peacekeeping operations of the Cold War had functions of not only monitoring ‘neutral zones’ and interposing forces but also peacemaking, state-building, and humanitarian assistance. These operations include the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), a small political transition mission in West New Guinea (UNTEA/UNSF), the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL).

¹⁴ Bellamy, *Understanding Peacekeeping*., 174.

conflicts. Second, it relies on “the holy trinity”¹⁵ of peacekeeping: consent, impartiality, and the minimum use of force. Another important feature, noted by Rosalyn Higgins and Brigadier Michael Harbottle, is that Cold War peacekeeping did not include enforcement action. Peacekeeping emerged due to “the inability of the Security Council to put in place the collective security system of Chapter VII of the Charter.”¹⁶

UN Peace Operations in the Post-Cold War

After the end of the Cold War, a new international context changed the nature of armed conflicts and led to a shift from interstate to intrastate conflicts. Intrastate conflicts peaked at around fifty conflicts in 1991. In 1946, it was about seventeen conflicts.¹⁷ Even though the number of civil conflicts has been rising since the end of the Second World War,¹⁸ according to Roger Mac Ginty and Gillian Robinson, these conflicts, especially ethnic,¹⁹ have become more prominent since the 1990s.²⁰

¹⁵ Bellamy., 173. Alex J. Bellamy and Paul D. Williams called consent, impartiality, and the minimum use of force as the “holy trinity” of traditional peacekeeping.

¹⁶ Michael W. Doyle and Rosalyn Higgins, “Second-Generation Peacekeeping,” *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting (American Society of International Law)* 89 (1995): 275–279.

¹⁷ Erik Melander, Therése Pettersson, and Lotta Themnér, “Organized Violence, 1989–2015,” *Journal of Peace Research* 53, no. 5 (September 2016): 727–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0022343316663032>, 729. The authors imply only intrastate conflicts. Internationalized intrastate conflicts are considered separately.

¹⁸ Melander, Pettersson, and Themnér., 729.

¹⁹ Thakur and Schnabel, *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*., 28. Roger Mac Ginty and Gillian Robinson explain the term “ethnic conflict” as an intergroup conflict “that often occur within a state boundary, although they can spill across international boundaries.” They also warn that ethnic conflict “should not be taken to mean that the conflicts are sparked by ethnicity.”

²⁰ More on the reasons why intrastate, especially ethnic, conflicts became more visible since the 1900s, see Thakur and Schnabel, 29-30.

The shift towards intrastate conflicts affected the concept of traditional UN peacekeeping considerably. UN peacekeeping is no longer perceived as a “homogeneous activity.”²¹ In the post-Cold War, peacekeeping was integrated into the concept of peace operations that includes other elements of conflict resolution, in particular, conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, and peacebuilding.

According to the latest report on UN peace operations, the HIPPO Report,²² there are three types of missions that are collectively referred to as UN peacekeeping. A ceasefire monitoring mission maintains a presence in a latent, or unresolved conflict where political settlements remain illusive.²³ A peace implementation mission is a multidimensional peacekeeping operation aimed at maintaining a peace agreement and supporting political transition.²⁴ Conflict management operates in violent conflicts “in the absence of a viable peace process or where the peace process has effectively broken down.”²⁵ The first type is the traditional model of UN peacekeeping established during the Cold War which includes observer missions and the interposition of forces. Other two types are a reflection of a new environment of the post-Cold War period.

²¹ Goulding, “The Evolution of United Nations Peacekeeping,” 456.

²² In 2014, approaching the 15-year anniversary of the Brahimi Report, Ban Ki-moon, the Secretary-General from 2007 to 2016, established a High-level Independent Panel on UN Peace Operations (HIPPO) chaired by Jose Ramos-Horta to revise the current state of peace operations and assess the emerging needs for future operations. In 2015, Ban Ki-moon, the then Secretary-General received the recommendations of the Panel. “The Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People,” United Nations, 2015, http://www.un.org/en/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=A/70/95.

²³ “The Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People,” 29.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid.

Regarding the three essential principles of UN peacekeeping (consent, impartiality, and appropriate use of force), even though all main UN documents²⁶ of the post-Cold War period reassert them, their implementation became more flexible in order to permit the use of force in cases of not only self-defence and defence of the mandate, but also for the protection of civilians. For this reason, in order to allow more robust rules of engagement, the mandates of some post-Cold War peacekeeping operations are Chapter VII operations. What is more, the Capstone doctrine²⁷ mentions additional criteria for the successful implementation of peace operations. Besides the three fundamental principles, there is also the international legitimacy and credibility of UN peacekeeping operations, as well as promotion of national and local ownership of UN missions.²⁸ The suggestion to have an additional set of criteria is a result of the extended role of peacekeeping as ‘blue helmets’ started to participate in national political processes.

Given the evolution of UN peacekeeping, the demand for traditional UN peacekeeping dramatically declined. Although there is no official division of UN peace operations, based on the tasks assigned by UN mandates and environment where these operations act, the following rough

²⁶ The UN main documents include *An Agenda for Peace: Preventive diplomacy, peacemaking, and peacekeeping*, the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace*, *The Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations* (also known the Brahimi Report), *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines* (also known the Capstone doctrine) and *The Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People* (also known the HIPPO Report).

²⁷ The Capstone doctrine (also known *United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines*) is a guidance document based on seminal works, such as *Agenda for Peace* and its *Supplement*, the Brahimi Report, internal and external research, and academic commentary. It provides the guiding principles and fundamental objectives of United Nations peace operations for all UN personnel working both in the field and at UN Headquarters, and partners.

²⁸ Legitimacy implies “the firmness and fairness with which a United Nations peacekeeping operation exercises its mandate,” the prudent use of force, personnel discipline, and respect of local customs, laws, and institutions. Credibility concerns rapid deployment as well as resourcing, and the ability to manage expectations effectively. Promotion of national and local ownership means building trust and cooperation among national actors. “United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines,” United Nations, 2008, http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/capstone_eng.pdf., 36-9.

estimate can be seen. From 1948 to 1988, the UN launched fifteen peacekeeping missions.²⁹ Eleven out of these fifteen operations were UN traditional peacekeeping missions, while only four could be considered beyond traditional.³⁰ In the period between 1989 and 1994, the UN launched twenty-one new peacekeeping operations and continued seven operations established in the Cold War.³¹ Only six out of twenty-one new operations could be referred to as traditional.³² The demand for UN traditional peacekeeping missions continued to decline in subsequent years. As of 2018, there are fifteen UN peacekeeping operations,³³ where only three can be called traditional peacekeeping missions, and these three originated from the Cold War.³⁴ There is indeed no demand for traditional peacekeeping anymore.

²⁹ Names of these fifteen UN peacekeeping operations, see “List of Peacekeeping Operations 1948 - 2013,” United Nations, accessed October 17, 2017, <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/documents/operationslist.pdf>.

³⁰ According to the author of this article, ONUC, UNTEA/UNSF, UNFICYP, UNIFIL had mandates beyond the traditional mandate, they contained the elements of peacemaking, state-building, and humanitarian assistance.

³¹ Names of these twenty new and seven previously-launched UN peace operations, see “List of Peacekeeping Operations 1948 - 2013.” The author of this article also added in this list of new operations, the mission, such as the United Nations Observer Group for the Verification of the Elections in Haiti (ONUVEH).

³² According to the author of this thesis, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM I), the United Nations Observer Group in Central America (ONUCA), ONUVEH, the United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda (UNOMUR), the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG), and the United Nations Aouzou Strip Observer Group (UNASOG) were in the frameworks of traditional peacekeeping.

³³ “Where We Operate,” United Nations Peacekeeping, accessed February 14, 2018, <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/where-we-operate>. As of 2018, these fifteen operations include United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA), United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID), United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF), United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL), United Nations Interim Security Force for Abyei (UNISFA), United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), United Nations Mission for Justice Support in Haiti (MINUJUSTH), United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), United Nations Mission in the Republic of South Sudan (UNMISS), United Nations Truce Supervision Organization (UNTSO).

³⁴ These three operations include UNTSO, UNMOGIP, and UNDOF. UNFICYP and UNIFIL are not considered as traditional peacekeeping missions, although they were launched in the Cold War.

Conclusion

The traditional model of UN peacekeeping derived from the context of the Cold War. The fundamental principles of UN peacekeeping were established gradually, through practical application. Most of the operations of that period were deployed in interstate conflict and lacked peace enforcement authority permitted by Chapter VII of the UN Charter.

In the post-Cold War, the traditional model of UN peacekeeping largely faded into the background. Instead, the 'umbrella' concept of UN peace operations became more applicable to the context of intrastate conflicts. This model of peacekeeping is significantly different compared to the traditional model. Besides a new conflict environment, peace operations may imply time-limited peace enforcement actions. Moreover, the three peacekeeping principles became more flexible and, simultaneously, difficult to follow due to existing terrorism and insurgency elements in peace operations. In fact, in the post-Cold War, there is more discussion on multidimensional and conflict management peace operations rather than traditional peacekeeping. The rough estimate of peace operations confirms this tendency that there is no demand for the traditional model of UN peacekeeping, at least for the current moment.

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