

UN Peacekeeping Operations Capstone Doctrine

Report of the Tfp Oslo Doctrine Seminar
14 & 15 May 2008, Oslo, Norway

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NUPI Report

Security in Practice No.14
[A Publication in the NUPI Series on Security in Practice]

Utgiver: NUPI
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ISSN: 82-7002-200-4
ISBN: 978-82-7002-1200-2

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Front page photo: Austrian Armed Forces Photograph

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Cedric de Coning, Julian Detzel and Petter Hojem¹

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INTRODUCTION

In early 2008, the United Nations' (UN) Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) released a hundred page document entitled: "United Nations Peacekeeping Operations: Principles and Guidelines". With this publication the UN has taken the ambitious step of attempting to capture the experiences of six decades of UN peacekeeping, and more than sixty peacekeeping operations. For the first time in the UN's history, it has produced a doctrine that sits on top of the large number of directives, guidelines, standard operating procedures, manuals and training materials issued by DPKO and the new Department of Field Support (DFS) over the years, not unlike the capstone of an arch or other structure that locks it together through the authority of its downward pressure.

The Peacekeeping Best Practices Section of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Training for Peace Programme at the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI), with support from the Royal Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, organized a seminar in Oslo, on 14-15 May 2008, with the aim of providing a small but globally representative group of researchers the opportunity to discuss the new doctrine with the drafters. The aim of the seminar was to create an opportunity for the research community to engage the authors of the doctrine, to facilitate a dialogue on the key issues contained in the doctrine, and to stimulate further knowledge development about the future of UN peacekeeping operations.

This report is not meant to serve as a full record of the rich discussions that characterized the seminar. Instead it will attempt to summarise some of the main issues that emerged, with the aim of introducing those new to the UN peacekeeping debate to the key considerations that has shaped the development of the doctrine.

CONCEPT & PRINCIPLES

There are many concepts in the peacekeeping field that have more-or-less the same meaning, but they often reflect important differences in their respective doctrinal approaches. 'Peacekeeping' traditionally referred to operations where lightly armed soldiers were deployed as a neutral 3rd party cease-fire monitoring group between two clearly identifiable opposing forces. In the 1990s the so-called Brahimi report introduced a new term 'Peace Operations' which were meant to reflect the new multidimensional post-Cold War UN operations that were tasked with supporting the implementation of comprehensive peace agreements. The African Union, many European countries and NATO adopted the 'Peace Support Operations' concept. In the post-9/11 era in the United States, the term 'Stability and Reconstruction Operations' have gained wide usage, whilst the European Union has developed its own concept of 'Crisis Management Operations'. The 2008 UN doctrine reclaims 'Peacekeeping Operations' as the distinctive UN concept for all its consent-based missions.

The conceptual debate that underlies terminology issues in the UN is driven, in part, by a North-South tension, where the South is concerned about the North misusing UN peacekeeping operations as a Trojan horse through which it is shaping the world

system according to its own interests. The South favours a more restrictive concept that is limited to traditional peacekeeping roles, whilst the North favours a more transformative concept that provides for nation- and state-building functions and greater robustness in security and stability operations. The political process at the UN has resulted in a doctrine that compromise between peacekeeping in form and peace operations in function.

The 2008 doctrine re-confirms and provides a contemporary understanding of how practitioners might apply the UN's three basic peacekeeping principles, namely: consent, impartiality and non-use of force, except in self-defence and defence of the mandate. 'Consent' by the parties to the peace- or cease-fire agreement, is a dynamic and multilayered concept; it is essential for mission success and must be constantly managed, but it is understood that it may often be lacking at the tactical level. 'Impartiality' means that the mandate must be applied without favour or prejudice to the parties to the peace agreement, and should not be confused with 'neutrality'. 'Non-use of force' is re-interpreted to refer to the strategic level, i.e. Non-use of peace enforcement. The doctrine argues that the UN is best suited to undertake consent based operations, but introduce the concept 'robust peacekeeping' to signify recognition that the use of force at the tactical level may be necessary to defend the mission and its mandate from spoilers, and to protect civilians (when mandated).

The capstone doctrine highlights three success factors: legitimacy, credibility and local ownership. The legitimacy of UN peacekeeping operations is derived from its unique position in international law, the UN Charter and UN Security Council authorization. This legitimacy is rightly seen as one of the key assets, and comparative advantages, of UN peacekeeping operations. UN operations can lose legitimacy when perceived to be serving national or regional interests, and when it fails to secure local ownership. A peace process cannot be consolidated if it is not locally owned, and if the host-nation cannot assume responsibility for its own governance. The doctrine recognizes that it is extremely difficult to achieve meaningful local ownership. In reality most UN missions, and other international actors, often contribute to undermining local ownership by, for instance, employing local professionals who should ideally have rather been in government or local civil society where they would have contributed to local capacity. It is challenging, but important, to also maintain the third success factor, namely credibility, throughout the lifetime of a peacekeeping operation. Missions have often lost credibility because they were unable to meet the expectations of local communities, and because of negative side effects such as sexual abuse and exploitation – the so-called unintended consequences of peacekeeping.

CORE FOCUS AND ROLE OF UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

The new doctrine aims to contribute to creating a common understanding of UN peacekeeping. It attempts to explain the complex environment within which UN peacekeeping operations operate. Whilst the doctrine positions itself around the current dominant form of consent-based robust UN peacekeeping operations, recent UN Security Council mandates in contexts such as Darfur, Chad and the Central African Republic, appear to be steering the UN increasingly into stabilisation-type missions. This trend raises the question whether this new doctrine is only valid for

consent-based UN peacekeeping operations, or whether it will guide all types of UN peace operations. Perhaps there is a danger that UN stabilisation missions like UNAMID in Darfur will misapply the new UN peacekeeping doctrine, even when it is not appropriate to do so in settings where there is no peace to keep. However, if one recognizes the inherent limitations of UN peacekeeping, an alternate view is that a doctrine which articulates clearly the environment and techniques that are conducive to more successful UN peacekeeping at least provides a navigation aid to decision-makers, planners and practitioners to guide an operation over its lifecycle to safer ground even when deployed in suboptimal settings.

The doctrine is built on the important principle that whilst UN peacekeeping operations are meant to support a peace process, it cannot deliver peace on its own. The capstone doctrine thus understands and accepts that UN peacekeeping operations are part of a larger peace process. Within this larger context, it argues that the core business of UN peacekeeping is to create a secure and stable environment, including strengthening the capacity of the state to provide security, with full respect for the rule of law and for human rights. In addition, by virtue of the role of a Special Representative of the Secretary-General as head of mission, UN peacekeeping operations should facilitate the political process by promoting and facilitating dialogue and reconciliation and support the establishment of legitimate and efficient governance institutions. In pursuit of the Secretary-General's integration agenda, UN peacekeeping operations should also provide a framework for ensuring that the UN family as a whole, and other international actors, pursue their activities at the country level in a coherent and coordinated manner. The 2008 UN peacekeeping doctrine thus understand UN operations as essentially political and security focussed, but with an important role to also facilitate overall coherence and coordination.

Whilst this emphasis on the political and security dimensions was welcomed for the clear focus it brings to the role of UN peacekeeping, it raises the question whether the new doctrine will result in a narrowing of focus for future missions. The doctrine states that peacekeeping operations should play a 'catalytic' role in 'critical' peacebuilding activities while recognising that they are neither designed nor equipped to engage in longer-term institution or capacity building roles. In these roles, the doctrine says, the peacekeeping operation should limit itself to supporting others, when requested and within the limits of their mandate and available capacity. Current multidimensional UN peacekeeping operations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti, Liberia and Sudan include civil affairs, human rights, humanitarian liaison, recovery and reconstruction, and a range of other non-political and non-security roles, many of whom act as either liaison functions between the mission and other actors that have a primary responsibility in these areas, or has a bridging role to deal with key needs until such other actors arrive in theatre and have established their respective programmes.

The boundaries between peacekeeping and peacebuilding were questioned, and whilst it was understood that the capstone doctrine had to deal with the role of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), it was pointed out that the artificial boundaries and bureaucratic division of responsibilities between DPKO and other UN departments, agencies and offices have created both gaps and duplication and added additional room for political and institutional competition. In particular, the distortions brought about by the underlying funding arrangements; where the political

and security dimensions (peacekeeping) are funded by assessed contributions whilst the humanitarian, development and peacebuilding dimensions are funded by voluntary contributions, work against overall coherence and integration.

The progress made with the integrated mission concept was welcomed, and it was pointed out that the UN was years ahead of the AU, EU, NATO and others when it came to achieving meaningful integration. However, serious problems persist that cannot be resolved at the doctrinal level. Some of these problems relate to fundamental differences in principles and mandates that need to be proactively managed in the field on a case-by-case basis. Concerns were raised that the UN was overly pre-occupied with its own internal system-wide cohesion, e.g. in the context of the Integrated Mission Planning Process (IMPP), to the detriment of its ability to participate in larger strategic framework processes, and its ability to achieve meaningful local ownership. Whilst the doctrine focussed on UN mission planning processes, and recognised the need to establish meaningful partnerships, it did not go far enough in providing for a proactive role for UN peacekeeping operations in facilitating and participating in the development of overall strategic frameworks.

The relationship with regional organisations was discussed, and it was noted that whilst the UN's relationship with the EU and NATO in some contexts, e.g. Kosovo, were clearly defined and worked relatively well, there were other theatres, such as Afghanistan, where the roles could be better defined. The AU, EU and UN relationships in Darfur, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Chad/Central African Republic were mentioned as interesting examples of interlocking and mutually supportive peace and security arrangements.

USE OF FORCE

The new doctrine makes a distinction between peace enforcement, which implies the use of force at the strategic level, i.e. where consent is lacking, and robust peacekeeping, where there is consent at the strategic level, but where force may have to be used at the tactical level to manage spoilers. The distinction between peace enforcement and robust peacekeeping is thus not about how much force is being used, but rather about the context within which force is being used. Examples for the tactical use of force could be military actions against breakaway factions, criminal elements or spoilers that are trying to hinder the execution of the mandate, or pose a risk to civilians, aid workers and UN personnel.

Doubts were expressed whether the distinction between the use of force at the tactical and strategic level was tenable in the real world. It was argued that the boundaries between these levels of force are often blurred, for instance where parties to the peace process have given consent, but use proxies to continue the conflict, frustrate the peace process, and perhaps even destabilise the mission. The strategic and tactical environments may change after a mission is deployed and these dynamics cannot always be anticipated, or planned for, when the mission is initially deployed.

Some argued that a UN force, which is only mandated and capable of using force at the tactical level is doomed to fail if one of the main parties withdraws its consent, and may end up stuck in the middle of a new war without the capacity to even

properly defend itself. Others argued that the withdrawal of strategic consent requires a political solution. Iraq and Afghanistan demonstrate that significant military capability does not necessarily guarantee the maintenance of consent. The doctrine recognises that the UN is not well-positioned to project force at the strategic level, and it notes that regional organisations or coalitions of the willing have been called upon to stabilise such cases, or to augment UN consent based missions when strategic force becomes necessary. In doing so, the doctrine may implicitly recognise the Secretariat's preference for this division of labour given the operational limitations of UN peacekeeping operations and the importance of the UN having a legitimate and viable consent-based peace and security instrument at its disposal into the future.

Participants commented that the “protection of civilians” did not receive adequate attention in the doctrine, and it became clear in the discussions that followed that there is a range of political and practical impediments to doctrinal treatment of the concept at this point in time. Politically the concept is associated with the ‘Responsibility to Protect (R2P)’ concept, which has polarised the UN community with strong opposing views between the North and the South. At the practical level, more needs to be done to develop techniques, tactics and procedures (TTPs) that will enable the type of forces the UN has at its disposal to meaningfully protect civilians. And Troop Contributing Countries need to be better trained and prepared in utilising such new TTPs in the specific mission contexts, and within the ambit of the specific mandates and Rules of Engagement, where they will be deployed.

Participants noted that the issue of policing was not adequately treated in the capstone doctrine. Some argued that the role of the police needs to be integrated within the larger Rule of Law context, whereas others argued for a more robust focus on the use of police, particularly special police units such as the gendarmerie. There was a tension between the more traditional observe, mentor and train approach to UN policing, and a more robust approach to using police, instead of, or in a more proactive role, complementary to military units. The latter school argued for a realignment in UN peacekeeping operations that would see greater use of police forces in tasks that require close proximity with the local population, for instance in urban centres and in protecting refugee and IDP settlements. Others argued that as there were far fewer police than soldiers available for deployment, the argument was academic.

MEASURING IMPACT

The importance of managing impact and monitoring progress was emphasized. There were two schools of thought: those that emphasized benchmarking and measuring the progress of a UN peacekeeping operation against its mandate and objectives, and those that favoured evaluating the changes in the conflict system itself as a reflection of the impact the UN peacekeeping operation, and other interventions, are having on the conflict system. It was agreed that both types of monitoring and evaluation was needed. The importance of monitoring not just the intended impact of a peacekeeping mission, but also the potential unintended consequences that may result from its presence, actions and omissions, was also stressed. These issues raise the need for UN peacekeeping operations to have a much more vigorous capacity to monitor progress

and evaluate impact together with its local and international partners, both internally for its own purposes, but also as part of a the larger peace process.

In this context the degree to which responsibility for mission assessments, planning, managing and evaluation should be devolved to the field was discussed. Some argued that the UN headquarters in New York should provide a strategic planning, policy and mission support role, whilst the missions, once established, should have the lead when it comes to operational planning, management and evaluation. This group argued that it is only at the field level that the mission can establish meaningful partnerships with the local authorities and civil society, as well as the other international actors, and that the field level is thus the appropriate level for integrated assessments, planning, coordination and evaluation. Others were sceptical of the degree to which the headquarters in New York would be able to devolve responsibility to the field, and questioned the capacity of missions to manage the political implications of its actions, or its relationships with other actors, when these decisions are often ultimately made in the respective headquarters of the partners in question. It was clear that finding the optimal balance between the field and headquarters was difficult to codify, and that it probably was situation specific.

CONCLUSION

The capstone doctrine reflects decades of UN experience with peacekeeping operations and will be an invaluable tool to provide orientation and guidance to new and existing UN peacekeeping personnel. However, as peacekeeping operations are ultimately a tool in the hands of the UN Security Council, and as the mandates given to specific missions are generated through political processes that require compromise and trade-offs, real-world peacekeeping operations are not likely to always fit the exact definitions or measure up to the success factors formulated in the doctrine. There are also many issues, such as the degree to which peacekeeping operations should be used to manage change, the use of force and the protection of civilians, that are still being hotly debated within the UN community, and which the Secretariat is thus not in a position to take a specific position on. However, overall the new doctrine is an important milestone in formulating what constitutes UN peacekeeping operations, and it will serve as useful guidance that will enhance a common understanding and approach to UN peacekeeping among Troop and Police Contributing Countries, and UN staff serving in peacekeeping missions.

A call for more scholarship and analytical critique of UN peace operations and the new UN Peacekeeping doctrine was emphasized. There was a feeling that much analytical investment was going into the operations conducted in Afghanistan and Iraq and around EU interventions, however, UN operations had not drawn as much academic interest in recent years despite the unprecedented levels of deployment. Participants believed it was particularly important to analyse current case studies of UN operations against the concepts expressed in the doctrine. It was noted that the doctrine would be reviewed in 2010 to determine if any changes are required and that any such analysis would usefully feed that process.

Annex A: Seminar Agenda

TfP Oslo Doctrine Seminar Programme

Tuesday 13 May

18:30 – 21:00 Oslo Ford Cruise: Ice Breaker & Dinner

Wednesday 14 May

08:30-09:30 Opening Session:

- Welcome by Cedric de Coning (NUPI)
- Opening address by Jan Egeland (Director, NUPI)
- Objective of the Seminar by Paul Keating (DPKO)
- Introduction of participants

09:30-10:30 Session 1: Introduction and Overview of DPKO Capstone Doctrine

- Introduction by Paul Keating
- Discussion Facilitated by Cedric de Coning

10:30-11:00 COFFEE BREAK

11:00-12:30 Session 2: Concepts & Principles of UN PKO

- Introduction by Ugo Solinas
- Discussion Facilitated by Chiyuki Aoi

12:30-13:30 LUNCH

13:30-15:00 Session 3: Core Focus and Role of UN PKO

- Introduction by Paulo Esteves
- Discussion Facilitated by Yvonne Kasumba

15:00-15:30 COFFEE BREAK

15:30-17:00 Session 4: Use of Force & Protection of Civilians in UN PKO

- Introduction by Peter Viggo Jakobsen
- Discussion Facilitated by Thierry Tardy

19:00-21:00 DINNER

Thursday 15 May

- 08:30-10:00 Session 5: Coherence, Coordination and Integration of UN PKO
- Introduction by Arturo Sotomayor
- Discussion Facilitated by Philip Rotmann
- 10:00-10:30 COFFEE BREAK
- 10:30-12:00 Session 6: Emerging Issues that will influence future direction of UN PKO
- Introduction by Michael Pugh
- Discussion Facilitated by Annika Hansen
- 12:00-12:30 Closing Session
- Wrap-up by Paul Keating & Cedric de Coning
- 12:30-14:00 LUNCH

Annex B: Participant List

TfP Oslo Doctrine Seminar Participant List

1. Prof Salman Ahmed, Princeton University
2. Prof Chiyuki Aoi, Aoyama Gakuin University
3. Andrew Attah-Asamoah, TfP/ISS (Institute for Security Studies)
4. Benjamin de Carvalho, TfP/NUPI
5. Cedric de Coning, TfP/NUPI & TfP/ACCORD
6. Julian Detzel, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)
7. Stein Ellingsen, CCMR, Naval Postgraduate School, Monterey
8. Prof Paulo Esteves, Pontificia Universidade Católica de Minas Gerais
9. Dr Annika S Hansen, Norwegian Defence Research Establishment (FFI)
10. Petter Hojem, NUPI
11. Dorotea Gierycz, NUPI
12. Dr Nina Græger, NUPI
13. Dr Thomas Jaye, KAIPTC
14. Prof Peter Viggo Jakobsen, University of Copenhagen
15. Kathleen M. Jennings, FAFO
16. Yvonne Kasumba, TfP/ACCORD
17. Paul Keating, PBPS, DPKO
18. Prof Michael Pugh, University of Bradford
19. Kari Osland, NUPI
20. Kristina Revheim, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
21. Philip Rotmann, Global Public Policy Institute (GPPi)
22. Niels Nagelhus Schia, NUPI
23. Dr Ole Jacob Sending, TfP/NUPI
24. Ugo Solinas, PBPS, DPKO
25. Prof Arturo C. Sotomayor, Tulane University
26. Dr Eli Stamnes, NUPI
27. Haakon Svane, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
28. Dr Thierry Tardy, Geneva Center for Security Policy (GSCP)
29. Ståle Ulriksen, NUPI