

Forum: Security Council

Issue: Reviewing the protocol for United Nations peacekeeping forces

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Introduction

United Nations peacekeeping forces are peacekeepers deployed by the United Nations at either the request of a nation or the Security Council, often with the purpose of restoring or maintaining peace and stability in an unstable/conflict region. Protocol for these forces include their rules of engagement, under what circumstances will they be deployed, and their missions (length and purpose). Due to the changing nature of conflicts, there is no one single protocol that is followed. A variety of documents set up a general framework for the peacekeeping forces, with specifics being addressed individually by the Security Council, the Secretariat and the Headquarters of the specific mission. Lack of proper codification of protocols poses as a problem in handling peacekeeping operations. In 2005, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations prepared a reform strategy entitled "Peace Operations 2010" that introduced reforms in five key areas: personnel; doctrine; partnerships; resources; and organization.

Definition of Key Terms

Peacekeeper

Although not strictly defined by the United Nations a peacekeeper is casually defined as an individual who helps oversee the peace process in a region following a conflict, and assist ex-combatants through facilitating the successful implementation of the terms of the peace agreement. These duties can be extended to helping restore war-torn regions, enforcing the rule of law, and other mechanisms to assist in economic or social development. Therefore, they can include personnel of various professions, such as administrators, economist, human right monitors and specialists in civil affairs and governance, etc..

Protocol

Protocol(s) are simply the guidelines/framework that a UN peacekeeper follow, and they include various aspects, such as those mentioned above in the introduction. The purpose of the protocol is to give structure and organization so that the UN peacekeepers can more effectively carry out their duties.

General Overview

Why would the protocol for UN Peacekeepers need to be reviewed?

The reason that these protocols may need to be reviewed is that as UN peacekeepers are used in a wide variety of situations, one strict guideline may not be relevant to all scenarios, hence revision is necessary. With conflicts as varied as ones in Darfur, Haiti, and Eritrea, UN Peacekeepers cannot always rely on a general set of guidelines; there may be a need for more specific protocol relevant to particular issues.

Protocol regarding rules of engagement

UN Peacekeepers have highly specific rules of engagement when faced with a combat scenario, and these must be taken into consideration when reviewing these protocol. UN Peacekeepers are not allowed to initiate an attack under any circumstances, they can only use lethal force in self-defense, and this has several weaknesses. There have been several instances including in areas such as Darfur where UN peacekeepers are faced with civilians being murdered, however they cannot respond as they are not directly under attack. Such issues have raised the question of alteration of rules of engagement to allow UN peacekeepers to fight not only in self defense, but also under other circumstances.

Protocol for missions

As UN peacekeepers are often assigned to UN Missions, such as the United Nations Mission to Sudan (UNMIS) or the United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (MINUSTAH), there are some protocols they have to follow in regards to these missions. UN Missions have a certain time-frame, and are usually restricted to this time-frame; a mission cannot be extended without the authorization of a mission extension by the Security Council, hence causing problems if there is disagreement on an issue, in light of new developments.

Misconduct of UN Peacekeeping Forces

In some cases, misconduct of UN Peacekeeping forces has been found. The United Nations adopts a zero-tolerance policy on misconducts. However, checks have been less than stringent and some misconducts are not reported. Often, the issue lies in the speed in which the misconduct is dealt with. It is often a slow and lengthy process to review the actions of a peacekeeper and decide if misconduct took place.

Department of Peacekeeping Operations

The Department of Peacekeeping Operations was established to help plan, prepare, manage and direct UN peacekeeping operations. It oversees and provides political and executive direction all UN peacekeeping operations. It is the medium of communication between the Security Council and each UN

peacekeeping Operation. Its most prominent set of guidelines is the Capstone Doctrine. It was completed in 2008 and describes the various stages of setting up a Peacekeeping Force. It is one of the first major attempts to codify the process and lessons learned from years of peacekeeping.

A major report entitled “Building on Brahimi – Peacekeeping in an era of Strategic Uncertainty” was done for the DPKO for its New Horizons Project in April 2009. It analyzed the various situations and obstacles facing peacekeeping forces around the world and gave suggestions on improving the way peacekeeping operations are managed. The Brahimi report was one done on peacekeeping operations in 2000 produced by the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations.

Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations

The Special Committee was established in 1965 to conduct reviews on peacekeeping reports. Its most recent report was published in March 2009 and presented to the Sixty-third Session of the General Assembly. It contains recommendations of the Special Committee and issues that surfaced in 2009.

Timeline of Events

Date	Description of event
June 26 th 1945	UN charter created, peacekeeping established
1948	With the first UN Mission (sent to oversee the creation of Israel), protocols are established for all future missions
1992	UN department for Peacekeeping Missions created, in accordance to increasing demand for missions
1994-1995	UN peacekeeping failures (notably the Rwandan Genocide and massacres in Bosnia and Herzegovina) led to some degree of reform, as the methodology of UN peacekeepers was re-examined
2008	Capstone Doctrine was published – possibly the first organized effort to codify peacekeeping protocol
April 2009	New Horizon initiative was launched to maintain and intensify the dialogue among peacekeeping partners. It serves to improve UN peacekeeping in current and future operations.

UN Involvement, Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

This issue is a complicated issue that requires the constant attention of the United Nations and its member states. As mentioned above, committees and a department have been set up in regard to this issue. There are also many reports and recommendations regarding the issue. There are also reports

from the Secretary General on Peacekeeping Best Practices where certain valuable successful experiences are listed.

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