

# COUNCIL *on* FOREIGN RELATIONS

## *International Institutions and Global Governance Program*

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### **The United States and the Future of Peacekeeping**

Workshop in Washington, DC  
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In 2000, the United Nations (UN) published the landmark *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*, also known as the Brahimi Report. That report recommended sweeping reforms of UN peacekeeping, from the introduction of a peacebuilding strategy to improved logistical support in the field. A decade later, the UN has enacted many of the Brahimi Report's recommendations, though numerous policy issues remain partially or not at all addressed. With the New Horizon Initiative, a multi-year peacekeeping reform process, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) is making a renewed push to improve UN peacekeeping.

Due to engagements in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as the threat of terrorism from conflict zones around the world, the United States has renewed its interest in peace operations. Washington has increased capacity building and logistical support for UN, regional, and bilateral peacekeeping forces. Nevertheless, the United States has not yet articulated an updated peacekeeping strategy that takes into account the current strains on U.S. forces and likely sources of future conflict. As the primary funder of UN peacekeeping—contributing 27 percent of the budget—the United States has a vested interest in increasing its effectiveness and efficiency. However, internal politics on both sides has impeded robust synergy between the United States and the UN.

As part of the Making Multilateralism Work series, the International Institutions and Global Governance (IIGG) program sponsored a workshop on December 15, 2010, in Washington, DC, to bring together stakeholders from the UN, the U.S. government, think tanks, and academia to discuss the United States and the future of peacekeeping. What follows is a summary of the discussion, which was conducted on a not-for-attribution basis.

### **Ten Years After Brahimi: An Assessment of UN Peacekeeping**

The United Nations has entered an unprecedented era of peacekeeping. Even as UN officials speak of a period of “consolidation,” more troops than ever before are deployed around the world in support of fifteen peacekeeping missions. When the Brahimi Report was published, the UN had 27,000 peacekeepers deployed; today, there are over 120,000 in the field. This surge in deployments exposed structural weaknesses in UN peacekeeping, prompting the New Horizons reform process. Further, relations between major UN stakeholders remain strained—particularly

between the UN Security Council, which creates missions' mandates, and troop-contributing countries (TCCs), which provide personnel to carry out those mandates.

Despite its flaws, the UN retains several important comparative strengths. First, it is unique in its ability to deploy and sustain troops and police from around the globe in a multinational force that has an advanced capacity to approach conflicts comprehensively. Second, it has flexibility in adjusting to diverse needs on the ground, including through experimentation with different command-and-control structures. Third, it has international legitimacy unparalleled by any other security-focused organization. Fourth, it is cost effective—a critical attribute given the current financial environment.

#### *The New Horizons Initiative: A Progress Report*

DPKO's New Horizons Initiative aims to improve four main areas of peacekeeping:

- *Policy Development*: DPKO is working to clarify main components of peacekeeping mandates and to improve their implementation. The UN seeks to refine the protection-of-civilians mandate, including planning for mission scenarios and mapping the capabilities and resources necessary for civilian protection. The political transition from conflict to peace is another important issue for the UN. Peacekeepers are important actors in the early phases of effective peacebuilding: they are responsible for articulating peacebuilding priorities while also supporting consensus among national counterparts; enabling peacebuilding assistance programs through security and creation of political space; and implementing peacebuilding support in limited areas. Finally, DPKO wants to hone its robust approach to peacekeeping by achieving consensus among TCCs on the appropriate balance of deterrence and use of force.
- *Peacekeeping Capabilities*: DPKO is working to identify and sustain the required capabilities for peacekeeping operations, moving from numbers-driven to capability-driven peacekeeping. To generate and sustain the necessary resources and capabilities, DPKO is developing guidance and capability standards involving TCCs and police-contributing countries (PCCs); strengthening training through monitoring standards and assessing troop readiness; and encouraging more contributions from PCCs and TCCs in the global South while leveraging western countries' high-end capabilities.
- *Reforming Field Support to Meet Twenty-first-Century Requirements*: DPKO has already produced a Global Field Support Strategy, which aims to transform service delivery to the field by arranging civilian logistic support for military deployments. Nevertheless, the Department of Field Support requires greater professionalism and cost efficiency.
- *Strengthening Planning, Management, and Oversight of Peacekeeping Operations*: The UN has already enacted measures to institutionalize “triangular cooperation” through systematic consultation between the Security Council, TCCs and PCCs, and the UN secretariat. There are now secretariat briefings of Security Council members, PCCs, and TCCs before and after technical assessment missions, as well as regular consultations with TCCs and PCCs. DPKO is also evaluating peacekeeping command and control models, a process that will take until next summer.

#### *Persistent Challenges for UN Peacekeeping*

DPKO is acutely aware of the need to do its job better as the international security landscape grows more challenging and the future of the global economy remains uncertain. Looking ahead, DPKO is preparing itself to do more, be more effective, and be successful with fewer—or perhaps static—resources. Part of this process, as one participant noted, involves identifying what DPKO cannot be expected to perform and implement, as well as areas where implementation is feasible but DPKO needs to improve its capabilities.

In workshop discussions, participants agreed on several persistent challenges for UN peacekeeping:

- *DRC and Civilian Protection*: Because it is the largest-ever peacekeeping operation, many look to the UN mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) for evidence of peacekeeping reform's impact. MONUC's and now MONUSCO's struggle to protect civilians focused attention on the need for greater DPKO capacity to fulfill this mandate requirement, which is active in eight ongoing UN missions. DPKO is developing a strategic framework for the protection of civilians in consultation with UN country teams. The framework seeks to define the role of the host government, UN mission, and the planning process in ensuring civilian protection. The framework is part of a larger effort to improve performance in implementing mandates, and to convey realistic messages to the Security Council about what can be achieved on the ground—particularly in the case of Congo, which is the size of western Europe.
  - *The Intersection of Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding*: One major paradigm shift resulting from the Brahimi Report was recognition by member states that peacekeeping and peacebuilding are not separate endeavors; rather, peacebuilding starts on day one of a peacekeeping mission. Despite the existence of the Peacebuilding Support Office, the UN lacks a coherent strategy covering the full spectrum of peacebuilding activities, which involve a wide array of actors throughout the UN system. While tools such as the Integrated Mission Planning Process have been developed to coordinate peacebuilding actors, many gaps remain at the mission level. One area needing improvement is prioritization: when compressed into a short timeframe, the peacebuilding process creates what the World Bank calls “policy stress,” which detracts from overall effectiveness. Better prioritization is needed so that the most important activities—usually security and rule of law—receive attention in the early stages of peacebuilding. The peacebuilding funding structure also requires reform: as the UN hands over peacebuilding to national governments, UN agencies must continue sustainable assistance programs; however, the voluntary contributions that fund these agencies do not arrive on time, causing budget shortfalls and inconsistent assistance delivery.
  - *Realistic Mandates*: Many participants noted the discordance between peacekeeping mandates approved by the Security Council and the resources available to DPKO from TCCs and PCCs. Helicopters were an often-cited example of a critical resource that DPKO lacks, but chronic gaps should be identified and addressed. There is a need to harmonize realistic mandates and capabilities, which is a goal of the New Horizons Process, though acceptance of a “two-step” mandate process—which would involve an iterative exchange between the Security Council and TCCs/PCCs—is unlikely in the near future.
  - *Resources*: Some participants raised the question of distribution of resources among peacekeeping missions; both long-standing missions like the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP), which began in 1964, and large, ongoing missions like those in the DRC and Darfur, Sudan, can strain financial resources. DPKO hopes to stabilize the peacekeeping budget by improving performance.
  - *Police*: Participants agreed that DPKO's police capacity is in poor condition. DPKO is not getting the support it needs from donor countries to improve police quality and there are no standard specifications among those police already in the UN system. A greater challenge is adapting police to local situations: because police come from diverse PCCs with different legal and policing systems, and because DPKO lacks a coherent strategy for building local police forces, UN police officers often create confusion in the communities in which they operate. Although police serve an important function in training local forces, the UN also needs more experts who can design new police structures that reflect local needs rather than imported norms and procedures. Several interlocutors referenced the ongoing debate over whether police capacity building should remain the purview of DPKO; for the foreseeable future, DPKO will remain the primary locus.
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- *Civilian Capacity*: DPKO suffers from insufficient civilian capacity to support its missions. The human resources system at the UN struggles to update and maintain rosters of civilian experts around the world. There is also a need to identify more experts from the South. To address this problem, a civilian capacity review is under way, the results of which will be released in a report in January.
- *Regional Organizations*: Although cooperation with regional organizations is an objective that dates back to the UN Charter, procedures for cooperation between the UN and regional organizations on peacekeeping remain inchoate. DPKO is testing different models: a hybrid UN–African Union (AU) mission in Darfur (UNAMID) and a UN-supported and AU-executed mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The UN community does not view the hybrid UNAMID model as a success because the UN and AU differ on major strategic issues; consequently, it is unlikely to be replicated. AMISOM is viewed more favorably, especially by the AU, which prefers to have a unified AU command structure with UN support. In the coming year, DPKO will examine UN regional organization arrangements from a policy perspective in order to better understand the role of the Security Council, mandate formation, reporting structures, command responsibilities, and appropriate rules of engagement.
- *Training*: One of the greatest challenges for DPKO is ensuring the high quality of its personnel. When the training budget was cut this year, the UN organized a donor conference, but member states opted to devote extra-budgetary contributions to “sexier” issues like civilian protection, rather than field recruitment. Peacekeeping training centers play an important role in filling the UN’s capability gaps. DPKO is seeking greater partnership with these centers, several of which have expressed interest in collaboration. China, for example, has demonstrated a strong interest in assuming a greater role in peacekeeper training; China has two large peacekeeping training centers, and the Chinese government recently organized a one-week course on UN peacekeeping for senior military commanders. The United States also conducts training through the Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI). The challenge for DPKO, however, is holding regional training centers to UN standards. One U.S. government participant noted that there is insufficient visibility and transparency about what other training and equipment contributors are doing; this lack of openness creates inefficiencies because countries cannot build on each others’ successes.

### *Ideas for the Future*

Workshop participants offered a variety of ideas for how the UN can address the aforementioned and other challenges it faces in years ahead.

- *Greater Role for Emerging Powers*: As Group of Eight (G8) industrialized countries (the United States, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, Russia, and Canada) draw down their military commitments to reduce financial strain, emerging TCCs like China and Indonesia may pick up the slack. The new Security Council includes several large and important TCCs (including India and Brazil) who will add their voices to the peacekeeping debate. Further, the Group of 20 (G20) may become a venue for expanding the conversation about peacekeeping beyond the G8. Despite differences of opinion about whether peacekeeping is an appropriate topic for the G20—which has previously focused exclusively on economic issues—several participants agreed that peacekeeping is a subject about which G20 states share common ground.
- *Expanding DPKO’s Range of Options*: DPKO should expand its flexibility so that the international community will have more options to choose from when addressing threats to peace and security. Ideally, capabilities would range from heavy peacekeeping for civilian protection missions to a light footprint for ceasefire monitoring and peacebuilding.

- *Enhancing DPKO's Capacity*: According to participants, DPKO needs greater expertise in these areas: conflict early warning, political and strategic analysis, operations management, logistics and financing, peacebuilding programming support, development and humanitarian assistance, and rule of law and police functions. While the New Horizons Initiative will address some of these shortcomings, member states need to take a sustained interest in the nuts-and-bolts, if “unsexy,” aspects of peacekeeping.

## **The United States and the Future of Peacekeeping**

### *The Obama Administration and UN Peacekeeping*

Despite intermittent enthusiasm and rhetorical support for UN peacekeeping at the UN and in the National Security Strategy, Quadrennial Defense Review, and Quadrennial Diplomacy and Development Review, the United States lacks a clearly articulated strategy for peacekeeping. Inattention to UN peacekeeping comes at the United States' peril, several participants suggested, given emerging threats around the world as well as China's increasing involvement.

Other interlocutors were more sanguine about Washington's approach, contending the Obama administration is attuned to the need to get inside the UN and aspires to be deeply engaged in multilateral affairs and to partner with international institutions. The United States is focusing diplomatic attention on marrying the political strategies of peacekeeping with successful mission function. If mandates do not match capacity, or if peacekeeping becomes unhinged from the political track, missions will fail. In recent months, the U.S. government has engaged diplomatically in numerous countries to support the goals of the UN peacekeeping operations there: Cote D'Ivoire, Sudan, DRC, Liberia, Haiti, and Somalia.

Of course, the fruits of engagement are not immediately apparent. Some participants suggested expectations for the Obama administration's multilateral engagement set the bar too high. Even as the United States has engaged on Sudan and Somalia, UN member states accuse Washington of “selective engagement” and criticize the lack of attention to other hotspots with a UN presence. The NGO community expected a high-profile rollout of a new peacekeeping strategy; when this effort stalled after the January 2010 Haiti earthquake, many experts concluded that the Obama administration was doing nothing on peacekeeping.

Given American commitments in Iraq and Afghanistan, DPKO is looking to Washington mostly for political and financial support. Even though the United States contributes 27 percent of the UN peacekeeping budget, its paltry personnel contributions engenders negativity from large TCCs and PCCs. Leadership on peacekeeping by the Obama administration could pay large dividends: when President Obama met with major TCCs at the UN in September 2009, the response was overwhelmingly positive. There is a need for leadership in the search for creative solutions to UN peacekeeping's problems, and the United States can fill this gap.

### *Congress and UN Peacekeeping*

Given the legislative environment in Washington, workshop participants questioned whether Congress would be supportive of more vigorous American engagement with the UN on peacekeeping—for example, extra-budgetary support for high-priority initiatives. There was particular concern that the new Congress would push for cuts in American contributions to the UN, or make contributions contingent on reforms. As one participant noted, the “quietness” of the Obama administration's approach to peacekeeping may be gaining points at the UN in New York, but it is losing political capital in Washington. Another warned that the State Department's failure to give precise accounting of its expenditures on peacekeeping would have dire consequences for future budgets in Congress. Others were more optimistic, describing a bipartisan consensus about the importance of the UN in Lebanon, Haiti, and Iraq

and Afghanistan over the long term. The best way to ensure congressional support for the peacekeeping agenda would be better reform management, accountability, effectiveness, and budgetary oversight.

### *Mechanisms for U.S. Peacekeeping Support*

Going forward, the U.S. government should increase the quantity and quality of its linkages with the UN. The current administration must build on the enduring bureaucratic architecture devoted to peacekeeping to make ongoing programs as effective as possible.

- *Global Peace Operations Initiative*: The Global Peace Operations Initiative (GPOI) is the primary mechanism of U.S. support for international peace operations, including the UN. It is responsible for U.S. efforts to build and maintain capability, capacity, and effectiveness of peace operations through seven objectives and activities: training and equipment, regional and institutional capacity building, clearinghouse activities, transportation and logistics support, deployment equipment, stability police, and support for sustainment and self-sufficiency. The UN hopes to work more closely with GPOI in aligning U.S. resources with UN needs.
- *Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance*: The U.S. State Department's Africa Contingency Operations Training and Assistance (ACOTA) program implements about half of GPOI's funding. ACOTA has invested in training peacekeepers as well as trainers. Since most peacekeepers in Africa are from African TCCs, ACOTA has built up national training center capacities in TCCs such as Uganda, Ethiopia, and Senegal. Ninety-two percent of peacekeepers trained by ACOTA deploy to peacekeeping missions; training peacekeepers for deployment to AMISOM is a top priority, followed by UNAMID, other missions in Africa, and regional standby brigades. While success is difficult to determine, peacekeepers trained by ACOTA are tracked through after-action review conferences. DPKO hopes to work with GPOI and ACOTA to evaluate staff officer candidates as well as infantry performance.
- *Staff Officers*: Although President Obama pledged to increase American staff officers at the UN, due to the UN's regional quota system, there are few opportunities for U.S. personnel. Americans are at a disadvantage because few have the requisite prior peacekeeping experience, and the inter-agency recruiting process takes a prohibitively long time. The U.S. government is working to circumvent this lengthy process by having eligible personnel on hand, but it is unclear whether and when this change will occur. Still, the question of congressional approval remains, though participants viewed Congress as favorable to U.S. personnel "enabling" UN peacekeeping, though not "directly participating." DPKO is interested in recruiting more staff officers from the United States and other western countries that do not contribute contingents to build understanding of UN peacekeeping.

### *Building a Peacekeeping Strategy*

Workshop participants offered a diverse set of prescriptions for a renewed American peacekeeping strategy:

- *Intelligence Sharing*: The United States could provide situational awareness as well as early warning information to the UN. While overt U.S. intelligence support would be toxic, the United States could pass information to DPKO that would increase mission safety on the ground and bolster existing early warning and analysis functions. Beyond information, the United States could also provide situational awareness technology and analysts to the UN.
- *Women in Peacekeeping*: Increasing deployment of women police and peacekeepers would advance the UN's goal of gender mainstreaming. The United States has a comparative advantage in deploying women because it allows women in combat and police roles.

- *Advocacy in Turtle Bay*: U.S. advocacy on the following issues could have positive impacts on UN peacekeeping:
  - The United States can send a strong message to UN leadership that the most important criterion for selection of senior mission leadership (such as special representatives of the secretary-general and their deputies, force commanders, and police commissioners) must be quality, rather than political considerations.
  - The United States can advocate for more coherent interventions on the ground, particularly better transitions from heavy military deployments, which are expensive, to lighter civilian-led operations.
- *Training Metrics*: To improve training of peacekeepers through GPOI, the United States could improve the tools used to measure trainees' success. A better understanding is needed of the gaps in training by American trainers, as well as trainers trained by the United States.
- *Lessons Learned*: With enhanced niche capacities resulting from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the United States can leverage new expertise and repurpose it for UN peacekeeping operations.