The Challenges of Peace Operations

Outcome of the Final Session

Defence Academy of the United Kingdom, March 2005

By Chris Donnelly

Head, Advanced Research and Assessment Group, Defence Academy

The Strategic Overview

The United Nations is currently facing the most far reaching reform programme to be attempted since the Organisation was set up at the end of the Second World War. If the Organisation is to be a meaningful part of an International mechanism to deal effectively with the global security challenges of the 21st Century, then these radical reforms must be implemented quickly and thoroughly.

We are, in effect, experiencing nothing less than a revolution in the nature of international conflict, and this demands radical changes in the functions and structures of our national and international security institutions.

Not only the UN, but every one of the international security institutions set up to deal with the problems of the 20th Century – NATO, the OSCE, the AU, the EU, ESDP, and others, are also currently facing the need for radical reform in order to effectively address the new challenges to peace and security.

Likewise the national defence and security ministries and the Armed Forces of individual states are also facing serious problems as it becomes increasingly clear that the organisation, equipment and training which served them well during the 20th Century are no longer appropriate to the tasks that will face them in the 21st.

In this light, the international Challenges of Peace Operations programme coordinated by the Folke Bernardotte Academy assumes great significance. The 16th and final session of Phase II of this programme, held at the Defence Academy of the United Kingdom in March 2005, brought to a close the debate on "Co-ordination and Co-operation in Peace Operations" and finalised the comprehensive Report for the UN Secretary General.

Setting the Scene

The objectives of the seminar which opened the final session of Phase II of the Programme were three fold

- to bring together a wide range of experts and practitioners to focus on the most difficult challenges confronting those responsible for planning and conducting Peace Operations;

- to identify issues of Peace Operations that need action and to establish who could do this.

- to increase the impact of the UN High Level Panel's report on Threats, Challenges & Change in relation to Peace Operations

The "Brahimi Report" of 2001 had recommended how the UN, and especially its internal mechanisms, needed to be reformed and strengthened to improve its capacity to conduct Peace Operations.

But it is also essential to improve the capability and willingness of member states to support Peace Operations by providing the necessary resources – troops, police, civilian expertise, finance and logistics.

To this end, the objective of this, the concluding seminar, was to focus on the theme of cooperation and coordination between governments and between international and regional organisations. Such improved cooperation and coordination should promote a better understanding of the need for Peace Operations, should improve the quality and effectiveness of those operations, and should lead to better burden sharing and use of available skills and scarce resources.

The concluding report should not only identify problems facing UN Peace Operations but also influence member states to take action to resolve these problems. The Report will therefore not reflect a consensus of official news but rather expert advice as to what needs to be done if this crucial area of UN activity is to remain effective into the 21st Century.

The Challenges facing Peace Operations Today

Recent changes in the international security system have moved Peace Operations from the margins of military-political affairs to the very centre stage. There is a strong inverse relationship between peacekeeping deployment and war casualties – as peacekeeping goes up, casualties come down. With peacekeeping operations, the rate of success of peace agreements almost doubles. In purely economic cost-benefit terms – not counting the human cost – peacekeeping is one of the best possible investments.

But UN peacekeeping needs to change because of 3 major challenges to its effectiveness today: overstretch; the squeeze on member states' resources; and, the brittleness of the current international system.

1) Overstretch – The UN system is overloaded by the current surge of mission activity and the system faces collapse. In the past 4 years the commitment has grown from 12 missions and 30,000 personnel deployed to 17 missions with 70,000 permanently deployed.

To support those operations needs an annual turnover rate of 120,000 peacekeepers, half a million supporting staff movements and half a million tonnes of freight. The UN runs 14 hospitals and 120 clinics in the most hostile environments on earth.

Although the UN Secretariat's capacity to manage Peace Operations has improved – quicker finance, rapid supply, better airlift - and the UN has expanded its ability to do non military functions – police, prisons, demobilization and disarmament etc. – the system cannot meet the current growth in demand

2) The 'Squeeze'. The competing demand on member states' resources is caused by shrinking defence budgets, increased demand, and armed forces structured inappropriately for new operational requirements. For the world's most capable armies (eg. US, UK) commitments are rising. NATO's commitments are rising, and many regional organisations are now engaged in peacekeeping operations for the first time. It is becoming harder and harder for the UN to find the troops (and police, etc) that it needs to meet increasing commitments.

3) The Brittleness of the International Security system. The system as it is was created for the cold war. It has not yet evolved to meet the new challenges. The divisions exposed over the war in Iraq have weakened the system further. It can no longer be assumed that the world's major powers will support the UN in crisis, because they many no longer consider that it can provide a solution. The whole international security system is at risk of disintegration in the face of a new major crisis.

What needs to be done, and who can do it?

1) Faster deployment capability. Limited numbers of competent forces deployed very quickly can usually achieve much more – ie save more lives – than very large numbers deployed belatedly. But high quality troops, police, civilian specialists need to be maintained at high readiness by member states to provide this capacity – otherwise it does not exist. The idea of a UN Strategic Reserve of Peacekeeping forces (which UK supports) would be a very good contribution to achieving this.

2) Engagement with a broader range of partner organisations. UN needs to work with and support regional peacekeeping initiatives, eg in Africa. Also, UN needs to partner with institutions that can rebuild capacity in damaged areas so that successful peacekeeping missions do not lapse back into conflict when the peacekeepers leave.

3) Improving existing capabilities. Better doctrine, command and control, training, and discipline of existing operations is essential. Basic standards and guidelines are needed, coupled with higher professionalism, better selection of operational leaders, and a more transparent system of selection and appointment of political officers. UN cannot survive many damaging scandals such as the allegations of sexual abuse by peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of Congo. The UN Civil Service needs to become more professionally competent to be able to manage the growing responsibilities.

Implementing Peace Operations Effectively

All situations, countries and interventions are unique, but all must respond to 3 basic questions:-

- What are the features of the situation?

- What effect do we want to have on that situation?

- What will the situation be like when we have finished?

Successfully addressing a root cause of crisis and breaking the 'cycle of conflict' demands a comprehensive, coherent strategic plan and the coordination of effort on the ground from a range of agencies. The military is only one of what needs to be a mix of different instruments operating as part of a coherent, coordinated strategy. The desired outcome must be analysed and agreed upon by all the major actors in a Peace Operation. If a final end state cannot be agreed, then at least interim criteria must be established. Unless there is a shared interest to address the underlying causes of the conflict, then the use of force cannot be considered a 'Peace Operation' – instead it is only being used to tackle the symptoms and, once the force is removed, the cycle of conflict will return.

But as the agencies concerned are many and diverse, this task will not be easy. There must be:

- a thorough analysis of the problem

- comprehensive planning

- a coordinated and adequate response by agencies on the ground

- measures of effectiveness to assess success or failure.

The key to a solution of the crisis lies with local people, ie:

- they must be major partners in any comprehensive plan

- we must understand and respect local cultures and local desires, rather than imposing external solutions

- we should use local mechanisms, tribal and religious institutions etc wherever possible.

Modern Peace Operations do not evolve in a linear manner and it is unrealistic to expect to be able to deploy a force with a limited mandate (eg for keeping an existing peace). In practice, forces may have to employ a range of military stances, from humanitarian assistance to peace enforcement on the same day and within a short distance of each other (described by USMC Gen Krulak as '3 block war'). Consequently, it is too risky to deploy a force of limited capability with only partial training into a modern Peace Operation – this is asking for trouble. A force must have the military capability, backed up by the necessary political will,

to enforce its writ. Equally, it needs the flexibility to soften its stance and behaviour should a safe environment evolve.

Enabling a force for Peace Operations with this degree of flexibility is difficult. It requires:

- robust, coherent mandate and strong political will over an extended time

- serious investment in training and equipping forces and support for long term deployment

Although the need for rapid deployment on the one hand, and comprehensive analysis and careful planning on the other seem contradictory, this contradiction must be reconciled for modern Peace Operations to work.

<u>Specific Challenges of modern Peace Operations</u>

Peace Challenges are always contentious, but operating in this stressful and disputed territory poses two particular challenges.

1) <u>Campaign Authority</u>

- Legal authority derives from the mandate. But a successful long term outcome requires the locals to comply with agreements brokered as part of the Peace Operation

- Actual 'Campaign Authority' on the ground is dependent on: -

    - The perceived legitimacy by all actors of the international mandate

    - The perceived legitimacy of the freedoms and constraints placed on those executing the Peace Operation

    - The degree to which local and other actors accept the authority of those conducting the Peace Operation, from unwilling compliance to free comment

    - The degree to which the activities of those carrying out the Peace Operation meet the expectations of the actors and external agencies

- a key role in Campaign Authority is played by the media, which can easily project false or distorted perceptions. Winning the media campaign to prevent false perceptions being seen as reality is essential.

2) <u>Transition</u>

Handovers of responsibility as the situation improves will be necessary along all the lines of activity. These are high risk, critical points.

- The commanders and staff of the Peace Operation forces must recognise from the start that their aim is to create a good environment for a subsequent handover of responsibility or authority

- Everything a Peace Operation does must avoid creating a local culture of dependency

- Injections of money, material, or manpower destabilize a local society. Locals must be encouraged to do as much as possible for themselves as soon as possible.

- For seamless transition in a Peace Operation from effective military operations to stabilization and post-conflict reconstruction, it is highly desirable that all players (ie military, NGOs, civilians) should be trained together. Yet in the vast majority of cases this does not happen. Players are trained separately, coordination is poor, and the gains so painfully made in the military phase are squandered by a poor transition.

Regional complications

In addition to the general problems and essential characteristics of Peace Operations listed above, each region produces specific conditions which require special attention or pose extra difficulties for the UN.

For example, there is a strong rationale for giving regional bodies more responsibility for local peacekeeping. However, in Africa, not only are the locally available bodies only partially developed, but the various national armed forces are mostly inadequately trained and equipped and have virtually no logistics capability for force projection, even over short distances.

Furthermore, African regional organisations do not have the capability to transform from Peacekeeping to Peace building. Partnership and distribution of tasks can certainly help bridge the gap, and perhaps this is the best way that the UN can support regional efforts. Nevertheless, this fact, coupled with the lack of military capability referred to above, means that, for the foreseeable future, Africa itself will not be capable of making a major contribution to Peace Operations on its own territory. Africa will remain a net consumer of international security. This fact alone makes a solution to the UN's problems essential.

The work of the UN Secretary General's High Level Panel on Threats, Challenges & Change

The Panel was set up in 2003 in the light of the UN's problems, to address how to mobilize collective action to identify new threats, meet the new challenges and carry through essential changes. The panel plays an important role as an interface between the peacekeeping professionals on the one hand and the UN

policy community on the other. It also plays the role of 'honest broker" between big powerful states and weaker and vulnerable states. It has to reconcile what can be done with what should be done.

The Panel concluded that today's threats were not envisaged when the UN was founded. No state today can ensure its security without international cooperation. Member states must be prepared to exercise their responsibilities, but need to develop the capacity to do this. Preventing threats arising by tackling root causes should be the way forward. Military force is a justifiable tool of prevention after other methods have been tried and failed. But there should not be undue reliance on force as a mechanism to resolve problems.

The Responsibility to Protect

The Panel considered that State Sovereignty is important, but it cannot be absolute. When a state fails to protect its citizens, the international community has a responsibility to intervene. Use of force also implies a commitment to rebuild shattered societies.

The criteria set by the Panel for intervention with the use of force were:

- seriousness of the threat

- proper purpose

- last resort

- proportionate means

- balance of consequences

The Panel noted the disquiet in developing societies which perceive this as powerful developed countries yet again imposing their value systems on weaker states.

Existential Threats

The Panel recognised the importance to international security of preventing the spread of nuclear, biological and chemical weapons and suggested measures to prevent further proliferation of weapons of Mass Destruction.

The danger of global terrorism was likewise recognised as a threat to all states and to the UN itself. A particular and growing threat was seen in transnational organised crime, both in its own right and as a factor increasing the risk of all other threats, viz

- terrorists use criminal groups to move money, men and materials

- governments and rebels sell national resources through criminal groups to finance wars

- state competence in governance is weakened by corruption

- combating organised crime is a state's sovereign responsibility

- human trafficking (including donor organs) is a particularly horrific situation.

The Panel also noted the importance of encouraging moderate Islamic governments and progressive elements in Islamic Societies to counter the influence of extremist fundamental sects that foster violence.

UN Organisational reform

The Panel recognised the need for urgent organisational reform and had offered two alternative models for improving the effectiveness of the Security Council. Recommendations were made for enhancing the Economic and Social Council, and for improving the working mechanisms of the General Assembly.

Peacekeeping and Peace Enforcement

The Panel noted the evolution of the UN's peacekeeping function and the increasing importance, as well as sensitivity, of this role. It also noted with disquiet the challenges facing Peace Operations in the current environment and the various means by which these challenges could be met, including the concept of a standing UN rapid deployment force. This issue was developed in detail and forms a major recommendation of the report. The Report also noted lessons to be drawn from the development of the role of other international organisations (NATO being the most effective and positive example) and of regional organisations.

NATO's role in the Balkans widely admired. But developing nations were concerned that the loss of competence seen in UN Peacekeeping in that region would lead to NATO evolving as an alternative, rather than contributing to the repair of the UN mechanism.

Whilst much hope had been invested in the development of the European Union's capacity for Peace Operations, it should be recognised that this will take a long time to develop and that this is not a solution to the current crisis facing the UN. Indeed the EU faces the very same problems in deploying forces that beset the UN.

The EU does have very important contributions to make in crisis management, the deployment of economic assistance, the coordination of anti-terrorist operations, and the deployment of police and judiciary personnel etc. But it is recognised that these do not address the main current deficiencies of the UN's capacity for Peace Operations.

<u>Conclusions</u>

The tone of the workshop was frank and uncompromising throughout. It laid out starkly the problems facing both the UN itself and its Peace Operations mechanisms, and did not stay away from the most sensitive and difficult issues. The high level of expertise and experience gathered in its participants made its sober conclusions all the more convincing. These were as follows

- The world is likely to see a greater need for highly complex Peace Operations in increasingly difficult circumstances

- Some regions of the world are incapable of meeting this need by themselves, and most regions would benefit from external assistance providing, that this is offered or sanctioned by international institutions in which they have confidence. (Small or weak countries can feel threatened by Peace Operations conducted by major powers if these are not so sanctioned)

- There is a serious shortage of troops and other security forces (eg Police) and essential back up available to the UN to meet the demand for Peace Operations

- The UN's own internal political and administrative mechanisms are now inadequate to meet current demand. They do not provide the necessary framework to repay the security investment of major donor states, and cannot promise to meet the security needs of vulnerable states.

- Unless the UN is reformed and rejuvenated to enable it to meet the needs of the full range of its membership, donor members will cease to support it, delinquent states will cease to respect it, and it will decline into insignificance

- However, in the absence of any alternative mechanism, and given that no one nation or small group of nations – however powerful – can yet provide an alternative service, it would be unwise to let the UN atrophy. Rather, a greater effort should be made to find ways of giving it new life.