

# Taking Leadership to the Next Level: Leading Peace Operations in a Complex World

The last few years has seen an increased commitment to United Nations (UN) peace operations from the international community. A window of opportunity for reform has been identified as the new Secretary-General (SG) António Guterres takes office. However, the increased attention has come with growing expectations for more effective peace operations that use less resources to achieve more. Whilst peace operations are growing into increasingly complex missions—in environments with more asymmetrical threats, unpredictable or no peace agreements, and blurred parameters—the level of tolerance for under-performance is decreasing.

The current international peace and security environment puts a premium on leadership, and the necessity for getting it right. Missions demand more skilled and multifaceted leaders to manage some of the most fragile and potentially most devastating situations in the world. It has been said that if the UNSG has the most difficult job in the world, then the work of the Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSG) only just falls short of that challenge. The same is true for all senior mission leadership. It is possibly one of the loneliest jobs around. Many will want to share your success, but few will want to share your failures. Reminding ourselves of the question that Lakhdar Brahimi asked already in 2010 of whether too much is asked of the UN's senior leaders, we might consider what expectations we can realistically put upon senior mission leadership.<sup>1</sup>

Against this background, the Challenges Forum organized a workshop on *Taking Leadership to the Next Level: United Nations Peace Operations 2020*,

## Background details

A Challenges Forum Workshop on *Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020* was co-hosted by Challenges Forum Partners the Peacekeeping and Stability Operations Institute, in partnership with the Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Center for Creative Leadership in Carlisle 28 February – 1 March 2017. The policy brief takes into account deliberations and results of the meeting.

The views expressed are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Challenges Forum Partnership, Secretariat or hosts of the meeting.

## About the author

**DR JIBECKE JOENSSON** is the Acting Head of Policy and Best Practices at the Challenges Forum International Secretariat. Previous positions include political adviser in the European Union Delegation to the Kyrgyz Republic, and Programme Manager at the United Nations University Office to United Nations headquarters in New York. Dr Joensson has also worked in the private sector and with international NGOs. She holds a PhD with a focus on multilateralism, collective security and UN peacekeeping.

<sup>1</sup> For more about the challenge of, and requirements for, leading UN peace operations, as well as what good mission leadership entails, see Robert Gordon, *Leading United Nations Peace Operations*, Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2017:1.



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28 February-1 March 2017, to initiate and feed into a two-year Work Strand on the topic. This Policy Brief is a summary of some of the main points made during the Carlisle workshop presentations and discussions with regards to: first, how peace operations provide the perfect storm for leadership; second, how this therefore requires more coherent peace operations; and third, how better to support those leading peace operations. The Policy Brief concludes with a set of recommendations that outline some of the recurring themes in the challenges and ideas for action presented and discussed by the Challenges Forum Workshop participants—including Challenges Forum Partners; UN representatives from the Executive Office of the Secretary-General and the Departments of Peacekeeping Operations, Field Support and Political Affairs; and leadership experts from academia and the private sector.<sup>2</sup>

### Peace Operations are Leadership's Perfect Storm

UN peace operations have over the last two decades transformed into larger more complex and robust missions that operate in increasingly non-permissive environments. At the heart of the large majority of these missions' mandates is the protection of civilians, which necessarily comes with questions about the appropriate use of force. Nothing about these missions is predictable. They function in constantly changing environments, but always as guests in other people's countries; host countries which may not always cooperate. Indeed, host nation consent is too often arbitrary and fades with time, undermining cooperation and engagement with the host government and thereby its ownership of the solution.<sup>3</sup>

#### Managing Expectations

As mandates keep expanding in both scope and strength, so do the expectations for the missions and the UN. Expectations are not only high but also numerous and different, and at times even conflicting. It is quite common for peace operations to be expected to conduct programmatic peace support activities in an environment of terrorism and violent extremism, as well as carry out executive policing tasks rather than policing support tasks, for which they are not properly equipped or mandated so to do. There are examples from the field whereby UN police, on the second day of employment are asked why crime levels have not gone down, or why spoilers including terrorist groups have not been effectively dealt with. They are expected to restore and maintain public order whilst also building the capacity of national institutions to enable them to do so themselves.

The reality is that UN peace operations are most often sent out to solve intractable problems for which there are no quick or easy solutions. Expectations



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<sup>2</sup> For more information about the Challenges Forum Workshop including the programme, some of the presentations and photos, see <http://www.challengesforum.org/en/Events/> (accessed 19 April 2017).

<sup>3</sup> United Nations, *The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations*, Report of the Secretary-General, A/70/357-S/2015/682, 2 September 2015.

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from the host nation in particular, but also from the international community, are commonly unrealistically high and the lack of quick-wins or even success undermines trust and confidence. The international community has to be realistic about the goals and visions that are set out for UN peace operations, and what is communicated to host countries and peoples on the ground. In addition to unrealistic expectations on the military and police, there is a certain lack of honesty about the impact, and more specifically the immediate stabilising effects that civil and political efforts such as institution-building and election support are likely to have in a post-conflict society.<sup>4</sup>

Although the civil, military and police components are closely interconnected and hopefully support mutually reinforcing processes, the different components can only be expected to deliver on their specific goals within the wider framework of the common vision. Military staff can be expected to support police and civil goals, but not to fulfil them and vice versa. Mixing them up can have detrimental effects for UN peace operations. Ultimately peace operations come in many shapes and sizes and it is unwise to generalise or template them. Special Political Missions alone can span from small groups of three people or even one special adviser, to slightly larger sanction monitoring teams, to missions with up to 1600 personnel on the ground in for example United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA). The same cannot be expected from all of them.

### Complex machineries and complicated structures

Peace operations are complex machineries made up of numerous pieces, often not designed for purpose, but which must be fitted within large and complicated structures that are heavily dependent on leadership to run effectively. The UN does not have its own army or police. It is reliant on its Member States to provide such capacities. Consequently, the UN does not manage the training or career development of those deployed. Nevertheless, peace operations are subject to UN rules and standards, as well as realities which its implementers do not necessarily perceive as their own. There are currently 123 countries contributing with troops to UN peace operations. In any particular mission with a military component, more than 40 countries contribute with troops and officers. One Force Commander can at times have more than 10 000 troops under their command. When it comes to UN Police, 89 countries are contributing with all together 13 000 police (to 18 peace operations).

The police and military staff and components do not come with the same equipment and they will most likely have no experience of working together under one command. They will have been trained in different environments and in different things, all in their own language according to national needs and national rules and procedures. This means that they will most likely not have a shared understanding of the mission mandate; how it should be imple-

<sup>4</sup>For more about the relationship between conflict and elections, see for example Edward D. Mansfield and Jack Snyder, *Electing to Fight: Why Emerging Democracies Go to War* (MIT Press, Cambridge MA, 2001).

mented, what it should achieve, and what the overarching purpose is. They all have different concepts of risk and different preparedness to take risk and indeed accept casualties. Robustness therefore, will mean very different things to different contingents and staff. It is not unusual that national practices and judicial systems and legislation collide with international standards.

There is often a lack of a common understanding of the different roles and tasks within the mission. The siloed work structures and mentalities that constitute challenges at headquarters, are commonly replicated in the field, ranging from overlaps and duplications in the report writing, to the implementation of potentially counter-productive activities on the ground. Such instances of incoherence can develop into a competition for resources that results in non-collaboration. With instructions coming from the top, where there is often no understanding of the unique conditions on the ground, combined with the uncertain, volatile, ambiguous and unpredictable nature of peace operations, there is a risk of mission staff suffering from alienation. The situation is further complicated by the fact that there are several dimensions to the regulation of peace operations. In addition to the parameters set out in the mandates, peace operations are guided and instructed by international principles, and a web of numerous doctrines and standard operating procedures with regards to specific components of the peace operations.<sup>5</sup> Without coherent leadership, navigation through all of this is hard.

## Coherence in the Leading of UN Peace Operations

Peace operations operate in a foggy environment. Clarity in direction is uncertain. Leading peace operations is about navigating in this fog, while depending on people on deck to help steer ahead. Sense of hugely complicated mandates must be made in order to steer, manage and project coherence. Gathering the many contributions and components of today's peace operations into one set of goals, according to one vision, requires refined and multifaceted leadership. Progress is dependent on cooperation between the different parts of the mission. No matter how competent and well trained mission staff are, without unity of purpose and action, underpinned by a genuine team spirit, success will be limited. To guide the process, a circular model for effective leadership can be drawn upon, based on three essential components, namely: i) alignment; ii) commitment; and iii) direction, which depend on a team effort to achieve success.

<sup>5</sup> For example with regards to police in peace operations, the UN Police Division has recently developed and approved several standard operating procedures for the assessment of language and ensuring and improving competencies, including shooting and weapon handling. In addition the Department of Peacekeeping has developed a broad encompassing doctrine on police and on policing such as the Strategic Guidance Framework (SGF). Moreover, DPKO-DFS have since 2013 developed 11 UN military manuals (UNMAM), in collaboration with 40 Member States and field missions, to standardize military contributions for various units routinely deployed in peacekeeping operations such as Special Forces, Signals, Maritime, Aviation, Logistics, Engineers, Military Police, and Reconnaissance.



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### Balanced and unified leadership teams

More often than not, a substantial part of peace operations' mandates evolves around somehow changing or at least influencing the behaviour of largely non-cooperative host countries, as well as other partners and donors over whom the mission leadership has no authority. This makes for an interdependent relationship that requires a delicate balancing act between an affirmative yet cooperative stance. The same way in which any peace negotiations or implementation of a peace agreement need force as a deterrent for spoilers of peace, force alone cannot bring lasting peace.

Thus, although it is the SRSG and Head of Mission who holds the ultimate responsibility for formulating the strategy to implement the mandate, force commanders, police commissioners and chiefs of mission support play a key role in this process as their advisers. There has to be complete harmony and understanding between the SRSG, the Force Commander and Police Commissioner. It is essential that they act as a team with absolute transparency. Equally, there has to be good inter-departmental cooperation between DPKO and DPA as they pursue their respective peace mandates, always under one SG, but with different roles (and different reporting lines). The leadership itself of UN peace operations consists of several pieces that need to work as a unified team in order to ensure the effective integration of the respective mission as a whole. It has to oversee a large bureaucracy and budget, working through a complex system that is not necessarily conducive to the needs of the field in terms of flexibility, adaptability and quick decision-making.

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Mission leadership has to ensure the safety and security of all its mission staff, and manage substantial human, financial, logistic and operational resources. It also has to ensure the upholding of certain rules and codes of conduct, and hold those who go against these accountable. An example is the need to address, as well as to prevent, harassment of women in the workplace in order to ensure a consistent application of zero tolerance on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The UN has to set an example for national counterparts on this and other equally important commitments including gender mainstreaming and human rights. Failing to do so will necessarily undermine the credibility of both the mission and the UN as a whole. Last but not least, mission leadership has to manage what are often difficult external relations with the host government, and with other Partners and stakeholders—both international and national.

### Integrated analysis and planning

Recognizing the importance and complexity of achieving coherence, the SG in 2015 established a small integrated analysis and planning capacity in the Executive Office (SG) in support of UN peace operations (in line with the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) Report recommendation).<sup>6</sup> A team of three persons support ongoing planning exercises and coordinate improvements on analysis and planning across the UN system. A considerable task, for which many challenges remain with direct bearing on leading UN peace operations. True multi-disciplinary conflict analysis is still largely absent. Weak analysis undermines the extent to which peace operations are designed to solve the causal or underlying problems, achieve sustainable results and identify conflict prevention opportunities. There has also been insufficient or early enough strategic direction, leadership and resources for integrated planning.

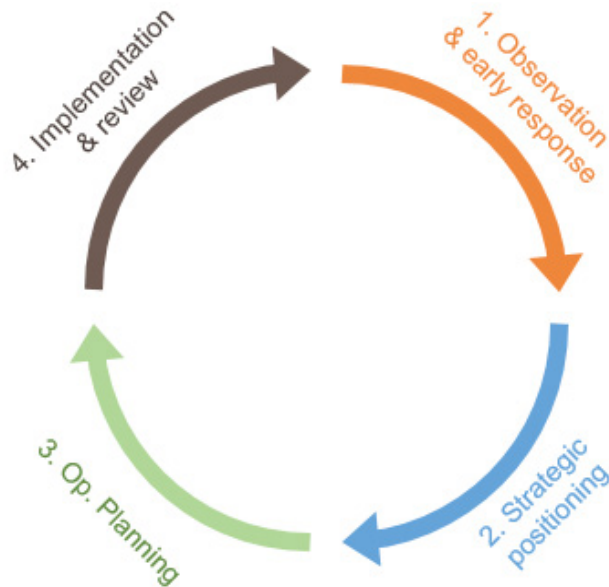
Peace operations to a large extent rely on templated or supply-driven plans, which can result in either duplication of effort or gaps, and cause delays or increased cost of deployment. An integrated analysis and planning approach that a peace operation requires (and was suggested by HIPPO), is highly complex and further complicated by the different departmental cultures. The starting point is for people to engage in genuine dialogue and share information better, to understand each other's perspectives and value added. This should result in unifying synergies and eventually evolve into fully integrated plans, programmes and multidisciplinary teams across the system.

Although somewhat simplified, an analysis and planning cycle can help guide the leading of the process in a peace operation. The cycle can be divided into the following four stages: i) observation and early response; ii) strategic positioning; iii) operational planning; and iv) implementation and review. Bridging support may be necessary between the different stages at key moments in time for the respective peace operation. But ultimately, the leadership has to provide direction underpinned by UN system-wide directives and supported by evidence based analysis and planning assessments and exercises. This however, requires focused and skilled additional resources.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Uniting Our Strengths for Peace, Politics, Partnerships and People*, Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, A/70/95-S/2015/446, 17 June 2015, para. 180.



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### Strategic and 'dialogue driven' communications

Strategic communications is critical to promoting effective analysis and planning, as well as to achieving internal and external coherence of messaging. From the outset, mission leadership must clearly communicate the mandate to mission staff, the host country and the wider public. This will help missions build trust and better manage expectations and avert reputation crises. Failure to engage effectively with local actors puts the entire mission at risk, and can undermine information-driven decision-making. Yet, there is a lack of specific guidance and policy oversight on strategic communications, or instructions and training for senior mission leadership to communicate strategically.<sup>7</sup> Some mission leaders communicate robustly while others do not. They often struggle with the use of social media, and underestimate its importance. Most mission leadership has never received communications training.

The UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and of Political Affairs both have very small communication units at headquarters and while within the missions their size vary greatly, these units are mission critical assets and key players in ensuring overall mission success. There is a need for a shift in the approach to strategic communications within the leadership of UN peace operations. Regular and effective strategic communications must be viewed as a requirement according to a set policy framework supported by clear guidance and adequate resources. Adherence to this principle should be reflected in all operationalization documents including in the mission directive, the SRSG's compact and the mission concept of operations.

A dialogue driven 'circular' style of communications that creates and encourages discussions rather than monologues is crucial. Communication is not just about transmission but also about reception and toleration of opposing view-

<sup>7</sup>The UN Department of Public Information has developed draft social media guidance but it remains general and in the shape of guidance rather than an instruction or an obligation/requirement.

points to promote engagement. Strategic communications has to become part and parcel of information gathering, and the integrated analysis and planning process. Success has to be measured not in terms of the messaging, but in terms of the response to that messaging. Any communicator today is faced with expectations to engage in dialogue and advocacy driven messaging, two areas in which UN peace operations continue to have difficulties.<sup>8</sup>

## Strengthening UN Peace Operations Leadership

In the coming year, UN peace operations are due a large influx of new leaders as more than half of the current some 50 leaders in peace operations are scheduled to change. As we consider the future of leadership within UN peace operations, the analysis and recommendations presented by the HIPPO Report and developed in subsequent reports remain relevant. The emphasis that is put on the primacy of politics and prevention has to be reflected in the appointment of UN peace operations' leadership, with particular attention to ownership inclusion and gender mainstreaming. A leader coming into this context must see and understand the mission's operating environment, the rising expectations on the ground and from the international community, and their role—both managerial and political—in achieving its mandate.

### Finding leadership teams fit for purpose

The processes through which leaders of UN peace operations are appointed have been accused of being somewhat archaic, with political considerations playing too large a role. Member States have been accused of holding the process hostage, often with regrettable consequences. Very rarely are the appointment processes coordinated in a way that allows for the different leaders—military, civilian and police—to be recruited in parallel, or even in consultation, to ensure optimal complementarity. This comes back to the problem of integrated planning and analysis combined with the unpredictable nature of UN peace operations. The UN primarily acts on emergencies. It is reactive rather than proactive, which makes the ambition of preventive action all the more difficult to achieve.

Ultimately it is the responsibility of the Member States to provide and support leaders fit for purpose, just as it is their responsibility to provide the resources necessary to implement mission mandates. Nevertheless the UN also must play a role in terms of identifying and managing staff within the UN system who demonstrate leadership potential and here, there is considerable room for improvement. Despite the UN's recent efforts to apply a leadership cycle approach and strengthen its merit-based appointment process, too often, Member States are accused of nominating candidates on the basis of whether they are likely to convey the political preferences of their country.<sup>9</sup> Manage-



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<sup>8</sup> For more on this see Robert Gordon and Peter Loge, *Strategic Communication: A Political and Operational Prerequisite for Successful Peace Operations*, Challenges Forum Occasional Paper No. 7, November 2015.

<sup>9</sup> For more on the appointment of UN senior mission leaders, see Jibecke Joensson, *Strengthening the Selection, Preparation, Support and Appraisal of Senior Leadership in UN Peace Operations*, Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2017:2.



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rial capabilities are often under-prioritised as something that can be delegated. Moreover, certain Member States systematically overlook women despite their competencies to deliver, and also undermine geographical representation with their insistence on certain key appointments.<sup>10</sup>

Current statistics reveal a trend whereby the majority of SRSG positions are held by candidates external to the UN system, whereas it is the reverse for the Deputy SRSGs. Is this the result of a political process that places a premium on national appointees for the more senior roles and UN staff for their deputies? Is it a way to balance political weight with managerial and administrative competency? If so, where should the priority lie? In any event, the underlying key issue is that the UNSG has to be provided with the resources and space to make appropriate appointments based on proven competence and experience.

### Evaluating and holding leadership accountable

With the appointment of the new SG, the UN is taking the opportunity to review its managerial structures and make them fit for purpose. But further progress will require clear and solid political support from UN Member States, especially from the large troop and police contributing countries, as well as from some of the most important donor countries, to ensure the implementation of the evaluation regime that has recently been introduced at contingent and headquarters levels. The accountability culture in the UN is not strong, nor is it traditionally coupled with dialogue and constructive feedback. Momentum needs to be gathered around the shift that has already begun with the current reform processes, from an evaluation of the equipment to an assessment of the performance of those in charge of using that equipment, notably the leadership.

Indeed performance has become a mantra in peace operations, with improvement as the key challenge, especially within leadership. The UN continues to be weak when it comes to appraisals. Criticism has been voiced that when performance is actually assessed, this is done according to UN standards and a prescriptive rather than supportive practice. Whether and how the UN has implemented its mandate or projects is assessed, rather than what the effects or impact of that implementation are for the beneficiaries. Universalist understandings of mission success is seen to take precedence over recognizing specific mission and host country environments, overlooking in particular the African perspective. The key question then is what constitutes success?

To answer this question, first consider whether success is when the peace operation closes or when the country reaches the end state as outlined in the initial mandate? If the former, success becomes more tangible and short-term. If the latter, success necessarily has to extend beyond the withdrawal of the UN troops and police, and involve multiple actors. But what does this mean for the leadership of UN peace operations? Here it might be more suitable to consider an ongoing process of working towards the end state, and how that affects three clusters of actors, as well as their interrelationships, namely: i) The people of the host nation and their perceptions and expectations; ii) the people within

<sup>10</sup> See for example Louise Olsson, *Leading the Way to a More Equal Peace: Senior Management and Gender Mainstreaming*, Challenges Forum Policy Brief 2016:4.

the mission including military, civilian and police staff and the UN peace and security community; and iii) the wider international community. But the challenge is to agree and define a purpose and an end state that resonates and is communicated to all of these actors, as well as to provide them with strategic direction and guide them throughout that process.

Second, leadership more specifically can be considered as a measurement of success. Current leadership theory often lists four fundamental leadership skills including:

- i) self-awareness and a sense of humility, always looking for ways to improve;
- ii) learning agility to be comfortable even in the uncomfortable and unknown;
- iii) communication with all partners and parties; and
- iv) influence to act and achieve change.


For successful leadership, these skills have to be complemented by what has been referred to as boundary spanning, involving three specific areas. First, mission leadership has to manage boundaries in the sense of building teams based on their specific skills, and specifying respective roles and contributions as well as their relations. Second, common ground has to be forged, tapping into already shared passions to then build on diversities to motivate everybody's presence and create a shared vision for moving forward. Third, new frontiers can be discovered, building on agility and trust to share ideas and rewarding innovative problem-solving to achieve the shared vision.<sup>11</sup> This stems from and reinforces the idea of leadership teams and the need for coherence in leading today's peace operations.<sup>12</sup>

### Self-development and experience-driven learning

Just as important as considering what constitutes success, is to identify what success is not, in terms of warning signs of leadership failure. Early detection of any of such signs can be a way to prevent complete derailment and provides an opportunity to re-coach those leaders to prevent them going off course. These warning signs include:

- i) weak interpersonal skills;
- ii) problems forming and leading teams;
- iii) difficulty adapting to new circumstances;
- iv) failure to meet mission objectives; and
- v) narrow functional orientations.

However, the UN is often accused of not engaging enough or even at all in leadership development and mentoring. Although there has been considerable progress when it comes to doctrines and guidelines available for all components of peace operations including leadership, weaknesses in their consistent



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<sup>11</sup> See John R. Ryan & the Center for Creative Leadership, 'The Next Level: 4 Principles for Elevating Mission Leadership in UN Peacekeeping Operations', Challenges Forum Workshop *Taking Leadership to the Next Level*, Carlisle, USA, 28 February-1 March 2017, available at: <http://www.challengesforum.org/en/Events/> (accessed 11 April 2017).

<sup>12</sup> For more about what specific leadership skills and qualities is sought for in UN peace operations, see Robert Gordon, 'Leading United Nations Peace Operations', Background Paper, Challenges Forum Workshop *Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020*, 28 February-1 March 2017.

application continue to undermine coherence. Moreover, the UN Department of Field Support, in 2014, launched a pilot Leadership Partnering Initiative that has been widely appreciated but limited to a selected few newly appointed senior mission leaders at the outset of their term.

Weaknesses in leadership support is partly a question of available (or unavailable) resources, and partly a question of a leadership culture within the UN that seems reluctant to engage in self-development and team-building.<sup>13</sup> Because in practice, leadership learning is a process and an attitude that is primarily achieved by participation. Leadership theory speaks of experience-driven learning based on a 70/20/10 proportion model where we learn respectively from challenging assignments/other people/and specific training.<sup>14</sup>

## Conclusion

While there is ample room for improvement, the complexity, scope, depth and width of the current 16 peace operations and 26 special political missions, must be taken into account. Recognizing the extremely complex contexts within which UN peace operations operate and the limited resources which the UN is given to address these multifaceted challenges (that all other actors have thus far failed to solve), the fact that missions continue to make a difference and save lives must mean that there are layers of leadership that are performing well. Recent and ongoing reform efforts have provided useful tools, mechanisms and structures to select, appoint and support UN mission leadership. The main challenges lie within their application by the UN itself, as well as by the Member States.

Taking leadership of UN peace operations to the next level will require a number of shifts in cultures and approaches. A shift from a focus on purely political qualities and considerations to managerial competences in the appointment of mission leadership; from an evaluation of equipment to assessment of performance of mission leadership; and from parallel to integrated analysis and planning processes in the leading of peace operations. This in turn requires a shift in the way in which UN peace operations, in particular their leadership, communicates, namely a shift from monologues to a dialogue driven 'circular' style of communication and discussions. Drawing upon leadership theory, we might also call for a shift away from more assertive matter of fact leadership towards more humble and self-aware leadership that sets the example of ending each day with asking themselves and their team: what did we do today? What can we learn from that and how can we apply those lessons learnt in order to improve tomorrow? This requires an open and transparent environment, underpinned by accountability and dialogue, wherein staff communicate and share information.

There is consensus that leadership is essential for success in UN peace opera-


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<sup>13</sup> For more information about UN training for senior mission leaders, see *Existing Training Programmes for Senior Field Leaders in United Nations Peace Operations*, Geneva Centre for Security Policy and the Challenges Forum, 22 February 2017; available at <http://www.challengesforum.org/en/Events/> (accessed 19 April 2017).

<sup>14</sup> Center for Creative Leadership, 'The Next Level: 4 Principles for Elevating Mission Leadership in UN Peacekeeping Operations', Challenges Forum Workshop *Taking Leadership to the Next Level*, Carlisle, USA, 28 February-1 March 2017.

tions. The expectations however, that are put upon that leadership, have to be realistic. An understanding for what the task actually entails in the field has to be first framed, and second, widely shared in order for the challenges that it involves to be addressed through a fit for purpose leadership team. Those in positions of leadership have to do their uttermost to solve their respective tasks in as much harmony as possible to ensure coherence throughout the mission lifecycle. The UN plays an important role here in terms of guiding that process and ensuring that missions are underpinned by the necessary structures to do so. This includes integrated analysis and planning tools, as well as the appropriate doctrines, standards and guidelines.

The international community is currently going through somewhat ambivalent times. On the one hand, challenges for multilateralism and collective peace and security have never been greater. On the other, ongoing reform efforts combined with the hope for change that the new SG is bringing to the UN and multilateralism generally, suggest that the mission of collective peace and security is as relevant today as it was in 1945. The current international climate is one of change, with a demonstrated commitment to reforming the UN, to ensure its continued relevance. Peace operations and their leadership are a central piece in this puzzle.



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# Recommendations

1. Ideally, **UN senior mission leadership should be selected, appointed, supported and trained as a team from the outset**, in order to have a shared interpretation of the mission mandate, and shared articulation of the strategic direction and implementation plan (including resources management and distribution). **When circumstances prevent** such team development from the outset, every effort should be made to consider the leadership team composition throughout recruitment and once appointed, inculcate new senior leaders into the leadership team by **mentored leadership team development**.
2. The UN should with the support of Member States set up mechanisms for development of a **pool of trained 'ready-to-go-leaders'** for peace operations integrated into the selection process that captures **current and/or potential leadership candidates** from a wide range of backgrounds, geography and with gender parity—from both within the UN system and from Member States—and **invest in their leadership development** through team-building mechanisms such as mentor programmes, senior mission and scenario-based training, and table-top exercises.
3. Member States should support the UN in its effort to **institutionalise a mission leadership life cycle** that provides support and leadership development opportunities (including strengthening existing mentorship and coaching schemes), to **current as well as potential future mission leaders**. This mission leadership life cycle should be able to detect gaps and **prevent leadership failures, and enable learning from experience** and the development of best practices, across the UN system and Member States, and throughout deployment, including pre- and post-appointments.
4. Member States should support an **institutionalisation of an integrated analysis and planning cycle** (including gender mainstreaming) in support of UN peace operations leadership that spans across the different Departments involved, and across time from pre- to post-deployment processes. It is essential that the cycle **facilitates** (rather than complicates) **adaptability** to the conditions on the ground, as well as to the resources and commitments available on the international level at any particular place in time, and that it includes **improved information sharing structures and tools**, together with clear instructions and guidance for how to use them.
5. Member States should support the UN DPKO/DFS to develop a **policy framework and guidance for strategic communications** of peace operations that clearly outline the **leadership responsibilities** (and possibly obligations) and benefits in this regard, as well as support and hold leaders accountable in fulfilling those responsibilities (and possibly obligations), including through providing the necessary resources in terms of both training and tools.
6. **The mission leadership team**, throughout the mission life cycle, **must agree and ensure a shared realistic and coherent vision** of, and for, the mission mandate and its implementation. This vision must be **communicated to all** staff, partners and stakeholders, including the host country, to ensure a common coherent understanding of the mandate and the mission, and **to manage expectations and avert reputation crises**.
7. The UN SG should in close cooperation with Member States work to **instil a culture of accountability and constructive feedback**, providing room for errors and creating incentives for taking initiatives to improve mandate implementation, by establishing a system wherein **rewards for action** to recognize and address perceived gaps, outweigh penalties for genuine mistakes.





## **INTERNATIONAL FORUM FOR THE CHALLENGES OF PEACE OPERATIONS**

The Challenges Forum is a strategic and dynamic platform for constructive dialogue among leading policymakers, practitioners and academics on key issues and developments in peace operations. The Forum contributes to shaping the debate by identifying critical challenges facing military, police and civilian peace operations, by promoting awareness of emerging issues and by generating recommendations for solutions for the consideration of the broader international peace operations community. It is a global network of Partners representing 49 peace operations departments and organizations from 22 countries. [www.challengesforum.org](http://www.challengesforum.org)