



## Concluding Remarks for the Challenges Forum 2009

Mr Jean-Marie Guéhenno  
Challenges Forum Patron / Fmr Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping  
Operations, United Nations

Is MONUC Peacekeeping? Is Afghanistan peacekeeping? The distinction between peacekeeping and peace enforcement is being blurred, and there is no clarity on where it should be. Who is a spoiler, who is a strategic threat? The use and role of force is not agreed.

Should security sector reform be part of peacekeeping? DDR? And what about rule of law? What are the critical elements that need to be addressed to prevent resumption of conflict? How do we define success? There also, there is no consensus, and different member states have very different views on what the scope of peacekeeping should be.

Protection of civilian: what does it mean? To me it is a symptom of a conceptual confusion. When the UNSC tasks the UN to “protect civilians in imminent physical danger”, at once it states the obvious and sets a very ambitious goal without giving guidance on how to reach it. It states the obvious because soldiers witnessing threats against civilians, and having the capability to do something about it, who would do nothing would be guilty of criminal negligence. It states the obvious because the minimum one can expect from an organization whose charter starts with “we the people” is to have as its ultimate goal the welfare of the people. But at the same time it sets a very ambitious goal because no UN force is sized to properly protect civilians. As we know from counter-insurgency manuals that make protection of civilians the central goal, that requires a force of a different order of magnitude. The only sensible strategy to protect civilians is therefore an indirect strategy aiming at consolidating a legitimate state. But the Security Council does not tell the UN how to get there, thus transferring an enormous burden of responsibility to the Secretariat, which has to prioritize and make the strategic choices.

These new questions raise major issues for the definition and scope of peacekeeping.

What is the meaning of consent? On the one hand, consent, by definition, cannot be coerced, but on the other hand, the possibility of use of force as well as the prospect of sanctions do influence the calculations of the parties and affect the equation on the ground. When a multidimensional mission effectively leverages all the tools it has, is it forcing consent or intelligently consolidating peace? Where does peacekeeping end, and where does coercion begin? There is no consensus on that.

Does use of force only in self-defense make sense to consolidate peace? Or does it risk putting the mission in an excessively reactive posture in which it loses the initiative? Wouldn't it be wiser, and actually save more lives and put the mission in a safer position to sometimes pre-empt? There is no consensus on that.

What does impartiality mean in an internal conflict? The United Nations is an organization of States, and it seems only natural to support the consolidation of the authority of states. But what if the legitimacy of the state is still uncertain, and if peace would be better served by mediating between the state and groups that threaten it? What if the State abuses its power? Can the UN keep a distance with the host country? And should it? There is no consensus on that.

What should fall under the responsibility of the Security Council and what is the domain of the General Assembly? As the definition of peace and security becomes more extensive, the distribution of competencies shifts, but there is no consensus on how big that shift should be.

The key principles and understandings on which peacekeeping has so far being based are challenged. And the operational arrangements are also challenged: as the definition of peacekeeping becomes more ambitious, the risks increase, and success requires more capabilities as well as broader and deeper support. The present situation, in which one group of countries makes the decisions while another takes the risks, is not sustainable. As for the UNSC, it runs the risk of either micro-managing or losing control.