



# Taking Leadership to the Next Level: UN Peace Operations 2020

Challenges Forum Workshop

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Impact of Leadership on UN Peace Operations – The Why

**Check Against Delivery**

## Impact of Leadership on UN Peace Operations

- What is a good leadership?
- What is required to *select, prepare, support and evaluate leaders*?

Let me first thank the Challenges Forum for providing me this opportunity to share my thoughts on the military leadership in United Nations Missions and what we should be looking for to select the best leadership. During my time in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) for three years this was one area that we laid a lot of emphasis on, and under the leadership of Under-Secretary-General (USG) Herve Ladsous we tried to pick the most suitable leaders for the UN Missions.

In the morning session you heard why we need the best leadership. Peacekeeping missions has transformed from the old chapter six missions to the somewhat dangerous missions under chapter seven, operating in almost non-permissive environments. An extra ordinary leader is required to deliver under these environments.

### Why is the Command more Challenging in UN Missions?

In UN Missions we get troops from 123 countries and in any Mission there is more than 40 countries contributing with troops and officers. The ground realities are:

- These troops have never worked together under one command.
- They are trained in varying environments according to their national needs.
- In some countries Forces are employed to suppress the opponents or exert influence with impunity. The troops from these troop contributing countries (TCCs) come with a mindset of absolute authority.
- The equipment and training standard varies a lot and there is no mechanism of vetting before deployment, especially when we rotate these troops.
- The political mind set in capitals is quite different from the mindset in the UN Security Council, as well as in countries where UN Missions are deployed.
- Robustness carry different meanings for the parties involved, namely, the Member States, the UN Security Council and the Governments in countries where the Missions are deployed.
- To command these troops and to get the desired results you need extra ordinary leaders to accomplish the mandate.

### What Are We Looking For? Strategic Vision and Understanding

- Understanding of the operating environment.
- Understanding of the expectations from him/her and the Force.
- Understanding of his/her role in the accomplishment of mandate.
- Liberty of action and challenges.
- Military Force Commanders should have the qualification, experience and understanding of the strategic objective of the peacekeeping mission. He/she should be able to identify his/her role and responsibility in the Strategic Framework as laid out by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG). He/she acts as an adviser to the SRSG and guides him or her in formulating the strategy to achieve the mandate.

That is why in the interviews we usually ask him/her about his/hers understanding of the geopolitical environment of the Mission.

## Team Work

His/hers personality, attitude and experience in working in such an environment is absolutely crucial. The SRSG, Force Commander (FC) and Chief Mission Support are the key pillars of any Mission. Not that the others are of less significance but friction amongst these three will have serious consequences for any Mission. While selecting FC we try to strike a balance between his/hers steadfastness and cooperative behavior. A cooperative but weak FC can also be a disaster for the Mission. He/she has to be polite, cooperative but firm in his/hers dealings. Remember, a weak FC can let down the complete Mission.

## Operational Control and Guidance

- Strategic guidance and mandate from the UN Security Council.
- Strategic framework given by the DPKO in line with the mandate received.
- Mission concept of operation (CONOP) worked out by the Mission Leadership.
- Military, Police and Logistic CONOP by the leadership of their leaders and approved by the SRSG.
- Implementation of these concepts is the responsibility of the FC, Police Commissioner and the Director Mission Support.

*Micromanagement by anyone: the UN Security Council, Secretariat, SRSG or the Capitals will erode the confidence, undermine the chain of command, create friction and make accountability more difficult.*

Military concept of operation is derived from the Mission CONOP and has to be in sync with the overall strategic objective of the mission. While the Force is a backbone and the most visible element of any Mission it cannot be an end in itself. Under Chapter seven, Force creates a secure environment for the other components of the mission to work. It serves as a deterrent for the spoilers of peace and should act robustly under a given mandate. But Force alone cannot bring lasting peace. There should be complete harmony and understanding between the FC and SRSG, but ultimate control and employment of Force rests with the FC. He/she is responsible for issuing operational orders, directives and standard operating procedures (SOPs). Implementation of the concept of operation is the prime responsibility of FC.

*I always say that the FC should be told what is to be done. Should the question of how it is to be done be left to him/her? The answer to how will come from the Force Concept and it should be sorted out in discussions with the other pillars of the Mission.*

## Robustness, Rules of Engagement (ROE) and Performance

With protection of civilians (POC) at the heart of almost every mandate, the appropriate use of force when needed is the challenge for peacekeeping missions. Blue helmets have been criticized for the lack of will to use force when innocent lives are threatened. Mali, CAR, DR Congo and Darfur are quoted as vivid examples of the lack of will. Performance is the buzz word in the current missions. How to improve the performance is a real challenge.

- Capability to Perform
- Will to perform

- Leadership

The command of contingents from almost 123 countries who never train together, come from various backgrounds with varied training standards, is never considered easy. It needs an extraordinary leadership to get these troops together and to motivate them enough to meet expectations. Caveats imposed by the Member States, some hidden some declared, is another impediment. In the past couple of years, substantial effort has been put in by the UN and Member States to bring the political and the leadership onboard to improve performance. Training guidelines have been published, seminars held and training courses introduced to make the soldiers and the leadership aware of their responsibilities under new mandates. All these efforts become meaningless if the leadership on the ground is either incapable or unwilling to command. Hence, the importance of appropriate leaders.

### Evaluation and Accountability

To improve the performance, the UN system is being reoriented from the evaluation of equipment to the evaluation of performance. It is not tangible and it is not easy but the UN with the support of Member States have travelled quite a bit of distance in this direction. Evaluation regime has been introduced at contingent and at Headquarters' level. FC and the SRSG are now required to report on the performance of each and every contingent. The Office of Strategic Partnership is also helping in pointing out systemic problems to the leadership.