



Enabling Military Contributions Challenges Background Paper

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1. Introduction

Over the past decade, the mandates of United Nations peacekeeping missions have become increasingly ambitious; most are multidimensional missions authorised under Chapter Seven of the UN Charter. They frequently take place in logistically challenging environments, like the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan, where even “large” UN missions – in terms of troops and police – are thin on the ground.² The emphasis on protection of civilians, among other mandated tasks, has also placed a premium on rapid responsiveness, forward deployment, and proactive presence patrolling that challenge traditional static deployments of infantry troops that make up the bulk of UN peacekeepers. Moreover, peacekeepers are frequently called up on to use force in self-defence or in defence of a mandate, whether against well-armed rebel groups, or organised security forces.

These trends have necessitated increasing reliance on force enabling and force multiplying capabilities like helicopters for troop deployment, rotation, resupply, and patrols; on armoured personnel carriers and field hospitals to mitigate and respond to casualties; and surveillance and information-collection technologies like communications monitoring, infrared radar, and night vision capabilities.

Such capabilities are often in short supply in UN-led missions, however.³ In part, this shortage is due to another shift in peacekeeping over the past decade: the growth in troop contributions from the global South and the withdrawal of large-scale Western contributions to UN-commanded operations. In 2010, for example, the top ten troop contributors to UN peacekeeping were all middle- or low- income countries, nine from Asia and Africa.⁴ Of course, many current troop-contributing countries (TCCs) are extremely capable. Some, however, struggle to deploy with minimum standards of equipment or arrive in mission with limited access to realistic pre-deployment training, let alone to more sophisticated force multipliers and enablers.

¹ The authors wish to thank Hazel Haddon for her contribution to the paper.

² See Richard Gowan and Benjamin Tortolani, ‘Robust Peacekeeping and its Limitations’, in Center on International Cooperation, *Robust Peacekeeping: The Politics of Force*, December 2008.

³ For a more comprehensive list of factors affecting military effectiveness, see Donald C.F. Daniel, ‘Partnering for Troop Supply’, *International Peacekeeping*, Vol. 18 (5), (November 2011), 534-560, at pg. 546.

⁴ Uruguay, ranked ninth, is the exception. ARGPO 2011.

Meanwhile, amid the current financial crisis, heated debates in New York over troop reimbursement rates (and, indeed, mission mandates and force requirements) this past year have worsened tensions between Western countries that pay the bulk of the UN's assessed budget and those countries that provide most of the troops, further fraying the "grand bargain" under which peacekeeping has surged over the past decade.

In short, the mismatch between mandates and resources – a problem identified in the Brahimi Report over a decade ago – remains current. Many good political solutions have been tabled to improve the contribution of TCCs to Security Council mandates, as well as to communicate the impact on missions of insufficient capabilities. This paper looks at options to enhance military contributions for UN peacekeeping. It offers two sets of suggestions – the first set is how to deepen and/or strengthen the capabilities of TCCs that are currently willing to deploy troops to UN-led peace operations⁵; the second is how to incentivise those countries that largely deploy peacekeepers through platforms other than the UN.

2. Options for Enabling Military Contributions

Strengthening Existing TCCs

There are numerous existing bilateral and multilateral initiatives aimed at enabling military contributions to peacekeeping, from providing training⁶ and planning assistance⁷ to logistics⁸ and intelligence support.

At UN Headquarters, much emphasis has been placed on **increasing consultations between the Security Council and TCCs on mission mandates**. This is a particular concern for troop contributors, who wish to see mandates drafted in a clear and implementable way. After initial progress in early 2009, the initiative faltered, but may have new momentum after the Security Council's thematic debate on peacekeeping during India's presidency in August 2011. The session recommended that Reports of the Secretary-General provide "realistic assessment[s] of current capabilities and logistical planning, and how they affected implementation of various mandate elements," as well as that the practice of annual briefings by force commanders to the Security Council be extended to heads of police components.⁹

Troop contributors are concerned that they should be involved in the planning stages of the peacekeeping operations to which their forces are deployed. Mandate drafting is a vital area for this kind of consultation, but broader cooperation throughout the planning process between TCCs, the Security Council and the UN Secretariat would be received positively by troop contributors. Troop contributors cite the pre-deployment stage, the drafting of rules of engagement, and the planning of a peacebuilding strategy as critical points at which their involvement should be sought.

The shortage of military utility and attack helicopters has operational consequences, as noted above, in terms of logistics, medical evacuation, reconnaissance, air and ground support, and deterrence. Providing a **guaranteed minimum reimbursement to helicopter providers**

⁵ This distinction, of course, is an oversimplification. Indeed, several European countries, including Italy, France, and Spain are significant providers of troops, albeit to specific missions like UNIFIL.

⁶ E.g., the United States' Global Peace Operations Initiative and the G8 "Action Plan".

⁷ E.g. the Strategic Military Cell established for UNIFIL.

⁸ US support to Nigerian peacekeepers in Liberia during the ECOWAS intervention.

⁹ Security Council (SC/10368), 26 August 2011.

would help ensure the sustainability of their deployments and potential encourage additional deployments. Increasing bilateral support to **pilot training** and **refurbishment** could also increase the pool of helicopter providers to UN peacekeeping.¹⁰

Another option is the use of “**support packages**” of material and equipment like those provided to the African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS) and the African Union Mission in Somalia (AMISOM). The light support package to AMIS, for example, included 36 armored personnel carriers. Support packages could be provided either directly by the UN (for example, through modification of the Strategic Deployment Stocks) regional organizations, or bilaterally. UN support packages, however, would have consequences for the assessed budget.

The electoral crisis in Cote d’Ivoire in early 2011 points to another recent innovation – **intermission asset sharing**. The transfer, in November 2010, of Ukrainian utility helicopters and, in April, of Ukrainian attack helicopters from the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) to the UN Operation in Cote d’Ivoire (UNOCI) provided the latter with surge air assets at a turning point in country’s security situation, enabling UN and French peacekeepers to defeat forces loyal to former president Gbagbo. Similar sharing of other units across regionally proximate missions could be envisioned – for example, sharing of military field hospitals.

Relationships with existing troop contributors must also be strengthened, and their concerns addressed. TCCs stress the importance of continued bilateral and multilateral cooperation, particularly in providing logistical resources and training for countries which contribute large contingents. They also raise technical points that should be addressed if relationships are to be sustained, including reviewing the compensation procedures for loss of military equipment, whereby some agreements limit compensation to cases where equipment has received damage worth more than 10 per cent of its total value. In the case of high value equipment, damage that is lower than this percentage may represent a significant loss, and may deter troop contributors from deploying expensive force multipliers. These agreements should therefore be reviewed.

Other technical issues could be resolved in order to support and encourage existing troop contributors, such as speeding up the payment system of financial entitlements in case of the death or injury of troops, in order to allow the quick dispersal of compensation, and maintaining ongoing cooperation between DPKO, the TCCs and the host country when peacekeeping missions draw to a close, in order that the troops and equipment deployed on mission may be quickly discharged.

The first set of options outlined above should help remove caveats that some troop contributors have at times imposed on their units, and strengthen their effectiveness against spoilers. These options, however, do not address questions of individual leadership – which often prove decisive, whether in protecting civilians or standing up to armed aggressors.

Encouraging More Western Military Involvement

The drawdown of Western militaries in Afghanistan has prompted speculation, if not hope, that Western militaries may **return to UN peacekeeping**. Yet, debates in capitals are likely to hinge on three factors. First, despite improvements in UN command and control and

¹⁰ Jake Sherman, Alischa Kugel, and Andrew Sinclair, ‘Overcoming Helicopter Force Generation Challenges for UN Peacekeeping Operations’, *International Peacekeeping*, forthcoming 2012.

operational support over the past decade, these systems are still significantly lighter than Western militaries in NATO and the EU have come to expect. Second, Western countries will insist on faster casualty evacuation and better medical support than typically available within UN peacekeeping operations. Third, governments replacing military equipment damaged in Afghanistan, Libya, and elsewhere will have to justify the expenditure for peacekeeping domestically – and in a much constrained financial environment. If the UN is able to overcome these issues, it will lower obstacles to reentry. In principle, strengthened mechanisms for UN command and control, and better medical response, and better communication by the UN of its successes in the field would benefit all troop contributors.¹¹

Nonetheless, even without a return to UN peacekeeping, there are partnership models whereby countries or other regional organizations, like the European Union, could support UN peace operations outside of UN command and control through **“green-blue” or inter-institutional partnerships**. From a UN perspective, such a model is not ideal, as it can lead to fragmentation and reinforce perceptions of a two-tier system. Nonetheless, countries that currently prefer deploying through NATO or the European Union could deploy units – including specialised assets like attack helicopters and maritime units – as an “add-on” mission to the UN’s peacekeepers. The advantage of this model was amply demonstrated during the Cote d’Ivoire election crisis, when the relatively small French Operation Licorne significantly multiplied the UN’s own military capabilities.

This model may be particularly valuable in two contexts: First, in transition environments, like Timor-Leste and Haiti, where peacekeeping missions are in the process of drawdown. Second, in environments where a civilian or unarmed military mission may be more appropriate than a heavy peacekeeping presence, like Libya. In both cases, **smaller, rapidly deployable, highly mobile forces** – located either in-country or “over the horizon” – could provide protection, extraction, and crisis management to civilian or unarmed military/police missions. Examples include the vanguard of US Marines deployed to Monrovia in 1999 ahead of ECOWAS forces, and the UK’s joint rapid reaction force in Sierra Leone in 2000. The *World Development Report 2011* has called for a joint UN-World Bank study on the feasibility and practical arrangements for long-term security guarantees, including rapid reaction forces.¹²

Finally, it is worth noting that while some of the most notable examples of rapid reaction capabilities exist outside of the UN, there are examples within the UN – for example, the Standby High Readiness Brigade (SHIRBRIG) (ultimately terminated), and the surge military capacity deployed to Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake. A recent article in *International Peacekeeping* also calls for the establishment of two “Standing High Readiness Battalions” (SHIRBATs), with wide regional composition, to provide rapidly deployable mission-planning and “lead deployment elements” for UN missions.¹³

3. Conclusion

As United Nations peacekeeping operations become more complex and face new challenges, the demands placed on military contributors become greater. Existing troop contributors, mainly from the global South, need support from other countries, for example by providing

¹¹ Jean-Marie Guehenno and Jake Sherman, ‘Command and Control Arrangements in UN Peacekeeping’, Background Paper for the International Forum on the Challenges of Peacekeeping, November 2009.

¹² World Bank, *World Development Report 2011: Conflict, Security, and Development*, (Washington, DC: World Bank Group, 2011).

¹³ Daniel, op cit.

equipment or assets via multilateral or bilateral partnerships, or by providing logistical assistance and training. Strong relationships between troop contributors and key UN actors such as DPKO and the Security Council, must be maintained, and planning stages of peacekeeping operations must necessarily involve consultation and cooperation with troop contributors, particularly at the critical stages of drafting and renewing mandates, establishing rules of engagement, and pre-deployment. Troop contributors' concerns about technical issues such as compensation for lost equipment and repatriation of troops at the end of operations must be addressed in order to maintain good relationships and encourage confidence.

Encouraging Western countries to return to peacekeeping operations as troop contributors would also strengthen the military capacities of UN operations. Improving mechanisms for command and control and providing better medical responses, as requested by these countries, would in fact benefit all contributors.

In addition, there may be possibilities for inter-institutional cooperation, whereby troops deployed to regional organisations such as the European Union or NATO could be used to support UN missions. This kind of mechanism offers new possibilities for rapidly deployed, mobile forces, which may be particularly appropriate for certain conflict situations.