



CHALLENGES IN PEACEKEEPING

Past, Present and Future

**Millennium Hotel, New York
October 29, 2002**

Seminar Report

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The International Peace Academy (IPA) and the Best Practices Unit of the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (UNDPKO) organized a half-day seminar on October 29, 2002, with the generous support of the Government of Norway, to celebrate the 10th anniversary of UNDPKO. Entitled “Past, Present and Future Challenges in Peacekeeping,” the seminar reunited current and previous Under-Secretaries-General and several highly reputed Special Representatives of the Secretary-General (SRSGs) in a review of the last ten years in UN peacekeeping history.

This event brought together more than 170 participants from the UN Secretariat and Permanent Missions to the UN, as well as representatives of the academic world, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and the media, to examine the lessons learned during a decade of ‘second generation’ peacekeeping and UN management of complex crises.

David M. Malone, President of IPA, and H.E. Mr. Vidar Helgesen, State Secretary for UN Issues, Norway, delivered opening remarks, followed by an address by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan. The Secretary-General noted that “his experience heading the world body’s peacekeeping department taught him that UN troops need a realistic mandate in order to succeed,” and forcefully made the point that, given the right conditions, UN peacekeeping can and does make a tremendous contribution to alleviating people’s suffering.

The first panel, “The Challenge of Running Peacekeeping Operations: Personal Reflections,” was chaired by David M. Malone. The panelists were Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guéhenno, former Under-Secretaries-General Bernard Miyet and Sir Marrack Goulding, and UN Chef de Cabinet S. Iqbal Riza, a former Assistant-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations. Sir Brian Urquhart, former Under-Secretary-General for Special Political Affairs, who attended the meeting, was recognized for his seminal contributions in the history of UN peacekeeping.

Deputy-Secretary-General Louise Fréchette chaired the second panel, “What Does It Take to Make UN Peacekeeping Operations Succeed? Reflections from the Field.” The panelists were UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and former Transitional Administrator in East Timor, Sergio Vieira de Mello, and Special Representatives of the Secretary-General Lakhdar Brahimi, Oluyemi Adeniji, and Jacques Paul Klein.

The opening speakers provided an overview of DPKO’s recent history, highlighting the dramatic changes in the structure and role of UN peacekeeping operations over the last ten years, during the course of which DPKO grew from 46 people to nearly 600. As Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno stated, a consensus now exists on what no longer should be done; identifying a single standard for the way things *should* be done, however, remains a significant challenge.

Success in peacekeeping operations can only be achieved through a collective effort on the part of a broad range of actors, including regional organizations, NGOs, and UN agencies. As a political process, peacekeeping takes time and requires the constant support of the corps of Member States. And though the UN has the legitimacy and, arguably, the duty to take care of failed states and crises, especially in Africa, a military capacity equal to the task must back this legitimacy. If the Member States truly wish to support an effective peacekeeping capability, they must be prepared to supply adequately equipped soldiers.

Today, maintaining international peace and security cannot be separated from protecting the individual security of civilians. The UN must put the protection of civilians at the center of its peacekeeping and peace-building activities; the fact that civilians have become primary targets of hostilities needs to be fully reflected in current peacekeeping doctrine. Protection of civilians is a matter of upholding respect for human rights and humanitarian law. Failure to do this could seriously undermine the credibility of UN peacekeeping efforts. The Blue Helmets must be in a position to protect all civilians located in their immediate environment, and must avoid making the mistake of attempting to create safe areas for civilians without adequate means for doing so.

The two panels, during which the panelists' presentations called attention to several major challenges, were followed by open discussion periods. The key points discussed were:

Lessons Learned

The panelists and the audience stressed the importance of establishing an effective 'lessons learned' mechanism and noted that the experience gained by UN staff serving in field missions is an invaluable resource. Not utilizing this resource to improve the planning, implementation, and conduct of future UN operations does a disservice both to the UN and to the nations for which it seeks to provide assistance. It was also mentioned that the UN Secretariat very seldom receives feedback and lessons learned reports from the Member States. Lessons Learned must be a collaborative process with input not only from the offices of the UN, but also from the Member States, NGOs and other organizations with field experience.

Command and Control

Several panelists highlighted the need for a unity of objectives and a unity of command overseeing UN intervention. The organization of each operation must be integrated exclusively under the orders of the SRSG, to whom the Security Council will have furnished precise movement and operational orders. Separating lines of command through different pillars within an operation or across military and civilian lines causes confusion, is often counter-productive, and puts the overall goals of any UN operation at risk.

In a similar vein, both the panelists and members of the audience raised the question of the conduct of UN personnel. The SRSGs felt that along with establishing a clear code of conduct, the SRSG must have the authority to expel from the mission anyone who demonstrates inappropriate conduct. It was noted that without such clear authority, disciplinary actions are often long delayed or quietly hidden. This not only frustrates the mission's efforts to ensure that its members are accountable for their actions, but also leaves the local population in the mission area under the impression that UN staff are somehow above the law.

Clear and Achievable Mandates

Most of the SRSGs stressed the importance of establishing a clear, credible, and achievable mandate. A confusing mandate only leads to confusion on the ground. The mandate must ensure unity of effort, of vision, and of political control. In order for an operation to achieve its goals, it must be able to count on the availability of adequately equipped troops. It was noted that some Member States, especially the most powerful ones, do not seem willing to accept the same risks for their troops that they do for their civilian personnel.

It was also highlighted that political objectives must be held distinct from operations in the field as a necessary pre-condition for creating a viable mission mandate. Mission mandates

should be developed in close consultation with experts from the field and must make use of lessons learned to ensure the establishment of realistic operational goals. The prioritization of the peacekeeping process must closely reflect the needs of the affected population.

Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration

The panelists pointed out that peacekeeping operations are not, in themselves, a solution to conflict. More effort must therefore be made to develop exit strategies that promote the peace-building process. The key to this objective is the Demobilization, Disarmament, and Reintegration (DD&R) process. Future peacekeeping operations must incorporate DD&R into the long-term mission plan or risk former areas of conflict falling back into chaos. It is essential to involve the international community and the various components of the UN system at the earliest possible moment in all peacekeeping and peace-building processes.

Public Awareness/ Local Ownership

Many members of the panel highlighted the importance of developing a comprehensive public information strategy. The local population cannot be expected to support a process that they do not understand. The variety of cultural conditions and traditions encountered in peacekeeping operations requires innovative and professional approaches to information policies. Even the most well intentioned and well designed mandates are doomed to failure if the local population does not support them.

Information sharing within the UN remains an area of great concern. The lines of communication between the field and HQ are not adequate and are frustrating to both sides.

Security Sector Reform

The SRSGs and the audience stressed the need for increased focus on security sector reform, rule of law strategies, and improved civil-military cooperation in peacekeeping. Better coordination, both at headquarters and in the field, is necessary, and the Secretariat's strategic guidance and support in this area is crucial.

Rule of Law

Rule of law was highlighted as a key to the future development of successful peacekeeping operations. One panelist felt that rule of law must be placed as the centerpiece of practically every peacekeeping mission. Without it, a credible exit strategy is inconceivable—international military forces cannot leave, the economy cannot recover, democracy remains a façade, and corruption and criminalization become entrenched.

Transitional Authority

The panelists pointed out that it is the UN's responsibility to concern itself with what becomes of failing states, but DPKO does not have the means to administer entire countries. Given the current resources and personnel of DPKO, the concept of the UN acting as a transitional authority in peacekeeping operations must be reconsidered.

Some of the panelists felt that trusteeship over certain territories was not an appropriate role for the UN to play, but also noted that if the Member States believe that the UN must be able to exercise that kind of authority, then they must come together to decide what resources should be made available for the task.

Increased Coordination between HQ and Missions

Panelists expressed frustration with the continuing lack of communication between field missions and UN headquarters. Some pointed out that there is now a trend to recruit SRSGs outside of the UN system. When SRSGs are externally recruited they must have ‘inside’ deputies. Some pointed out that SRSGs without UNHQ experience struggle to keep the lines of communication open. It was noted that Headquarters does not seem to be equipped to effectively coordinate information coming from the field.

A greater effort needs to be made on both sides to ensure that the SRSGs are given the support they need from Headquarters and that the Headquarters remains aware of the current activities within a mission.

The United Nations and Regional Organizations

The question was asked whether the UN should go back to basics—concentrating on norm-setting, standards, and political support—and simply accept that regional organizations will do more of the actual peacekeeping in the future. It was argued that the role of regional organizations should be emphasized more, particularly in the African context; there has been some improvement lately, but increasingly there is a need to formalize coordination between the UN Secretariat and the main regional organizations.

Conclusions

The seminar concluded with Under-Secretary-General Guéhenno’s speech, identifying how peacekeeping has evolved in the last ten years and how it may continue to change. Understandable and achievable mandates, good leadership, clear organizational structures, modern strategic planning, and the political will of all Member States are necessary for success in UN peace operations. Complex crises cannot be the affair of the UN alone, but must involve, in a methodical way and under its leadership, the set of actors in the international system. With the Security Council serving as the orchestra conductor, peacekeeping, now more than ever, must be a collective effort.

Seminar Program

10:00 -	Opening	H.E. Mr. Vidar Helgesen , State Secretary for United Nations Affairs,
10:30	Remarks	Norway
	Address	Mr. Kofi Annan , Secretary-General, United Nations
10:30 -	Panel 1	"The Challenge of Running Peacekeeping Operations: Personal
11:30		Reflections"
	Chair	David M. Malone , President, International Peace Academy
	Panelists	Sir Marrack Goulding , former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations
		Mr. Bernard Miyet , former Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations
		Mr. S. Iqbal Riza , Under-Secretary-General and Chef de Cabinet of the Secretary-General; former Assistant Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for El Salvador and for Bosnia and Herzegovina
		Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno , Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations
	Discussion	
11:50-	Remarks	H.E. Mr. Arthur C.I. Mbanefo , Ambassador, Permanent
12:00		Representative of Nigeria to the United Nations and Chairman of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations
12:00-	Panel 2	"What Does It Take to Make UN Peacekeeping Operations Succeed?
13:00		Reflections from the Field"
	Chair	Ms. Louise Fréchette , Deputy Secretary-General, United Nations
	Panelists	Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello , United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for East Timor and for Kosovo
		Mr. Lakhdar Brahimi , Special Representative of the Secretary General for Afghanistan, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Haiti and for South Africa
		Mr. Oluyemi Adeniji , Special Representative of the Secretary General for Sierra Leone, former Special Representative of the Secretary-General for the Central African Republic
		Mr. Jacques Paul Klein , Special Representative of the Secretary- General for Bosnia and Herzegovina
	Discussion	
13:00-	Closing	Mr. Jean-Marie Guéhenno , Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping
13:15	Remarks	Operations, United Nations