

# Un peacekeeping operations



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**“ Why are the UN peacekeeping operations rarely successful? Explain using appropriate examples”.**

### **A. Introduction**

With the end of the Cold War, a new generation of peacekeeping operation was born. On the one hand, the deadlock situation lived before in the Security Council was overcome for a more coordinated one. On the other hand, “ almost all new armed conflicts have occurred within the territories of a sovereign state” (Doyle and Sambanis, 2006, p. 3). This new frame claimed for a more robust peacekeeping operations able to deal with intrastate conflicts. As the 1990s passed, UN experienced difficulties to reach its objectives, changing the initial optimism for a more pessimistic position. The complexity of intrastate conflicts -waged within the population, with weak governments and serious humanitarian problems- required multidimensional peacekeeping missions. During this decade, interventions into states in conflict were justified as humanitarian intervention.

Peace operations carried on during this time left a negative trace -Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda. The rarely successful of UN peace operations drove the organization to consider a serious change on the peace operation structure. The lack of consistency and determination of the mandates could not be sustained any longer. In words of the Secretary-General Kofi Annan peace operations are meant “(...) to intervene: to prevent conflict where we can, to put a stop to it when it has broken out, or -when neither of those things is possible- at least to contain it and prevent it from spreading” (Kofi Annan, 1999, p. 4). The results of this change of lenses are the UN mandates in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL 1999-2005) and Haiti MINUSTAH (2004-Present).

However, further consequences of this shift will come with the consolidation of the Brahimi Report (2000) in future missions.

The aim of the present essay is to offer a critical analysis of the effectiveness of UN peace operations launched in the post-Cold War period, supporting the arguments with examples of the most controversial peace operations of 1990s -UNOSOM and UNAMIR. To get this approach, the structure of this essay is composed by three sections. This first one introduces the main characteristic of peace operations, articulating an understanding of the modus operandis of UN and the key problems. The second section comments the main difficulties that the coordination between the political sphere (UN) and the operational sphere (battlefield) has been facing in concrete situations -Somalia and Rwanda- showing the deterministic connection of events. Finally, a brief conclusion with the main findings and future expectations.

### **B. Burying the seed of failure.**

‘Peacekeeping’ is a complicated concept with complicated uses. Being the result of a difficult coordination between the political sphere – UN, Secretary-General, Security Council and Member States – and the operational sphere – type of conflict, geographical area, and parties confronted-, peacekeeping operations lacked the consistency that should had to be effective.

The problems begin with the absence of a definition of peacekeeping in the Charter of United Nations. There is no specific Article of Chapter that refers precisely to what peacekeeping operation entails, the criteria to establish it, or guidelines for its deployment.[1] According to the Secretary-General

Boutros-Ghali (1992) peace operations concern ‘ the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field, hitherto with the consent of all the parties concerned’, with the aim to terminate the conflict and recover security in the region. Peacekeeping forces are meant to protect civilians, provide aid, supervised ceasefires, military demobilization and elections in order to bring back the state in conflict into peace and stability. As a result, peace operations during the 1990s were characterized for more complex affairs and much longer duration represented by multidimensional missions.

Peace operations are, according to Fridley (2002), all UN missions involving military personnel, mandated by the Security Council and operating under the UN command. Four types of peacekeeping operations can be distinguished: (i) observation missions, (ii) traditional peacekeeping missions, (iii) multidimensional missions, and (iv) enforcement missions. The first three are resolutions taking under the Chapter VI, while the last one is under the Chapter VII (Fortna, 2006, p. 6-7). Growing in complexity from one to four, the last two are applied more often since the end of the Cold War to end the conflict and improve the prospects for peace (Doyle and Sambanis, 2006).

However, the optimism for a wider peacekeeping with more resources defined by Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali in his Agenda for peace (1992), ended with the opposite results than those expected. I argue in this essay that UN peacekeeping operations rarely succeed due to problems of coordination and determination. Let me go into the main handicaps.

Political Sphere – United Nations peace operations, as mentioned above, are the result of a mandate emanated from the Security Council (SC). Composed by fifteen members, five of them permanent and with veto power – China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States (P5) -, the SC is responsible to make resolution after a recommendation for peace mission made by the Secretary-General. To approve the mandate, it's required a majority of nine members. Besides the coordination needed to get the minimum votes, the resolution can be block by one of the P5. The decision of one of the members to use the veto power depends on her interest and aspirations – the veto problem. This is the first setback on the way to peace. For example, in January of 1997 China used its veto power to block a peace mission to Guatemala designed to verify Guatemala's signed peace accords. The reason why China took this decision was because she did not like Guatemala's close ties to Taiwan.[2]

During the process to approve a Resolution, other problems can emerge. The 'posturing problem' is the drafting of an elaborated and abstract resolution that most of the time does not contain what is needed to solve the conflict - too weak, or too pretentious – This was the case of Somalia; one of the objectives of UNOSOM II was the disarmament of the militias, however, the implementation of the mandate was not feasible, specially after the withdraw of USA troops. The 'coordination problem' arrives when the great powers should define the nature of the conflict and take the most effective way to solve it; this is the crux for a appropriate design of a successful operation. However, this coordination problem is the responsible of

deliberately vague mandates – and a mode to get consensus between the members of the SC.

Once a mandate is approved by the SC as a Resolution, the deployment of the peace forces depend on the contribution from Member States, as it is specified in the Fact Sheet of United Nations Peacekeeping. However, the authorization of the deployment does not guarantee its effectiveness.[3] As I discuss next, these inconveniences at the political level affect the operational one; a delayed resolution and an inadequate strategy have terrible consequences on the final result of the peace operation – Rwanda (1993), MINURCA (1998).[4]

Operational Sphere – Intrastate conflicts are difficult to solve. The fundamental distinction between types of civil wars -ethnic, separatism, religion- and the parties involved make each conflict different not only the operational level, but also in the political articulation of it (Byman and Seybolt, 2003). This information should be taken into consideration for the SC to articulate a mandate that responds to the situation.

But, the SC responses are not as straight forward. Crisis and its answers are shaped by the decision of those that compose the SC, who are determined by their interest and the internal situation of their country – as it was mentioned before with China in 1997. However, when the conflict is considered ‘ a threat to peace’ and the SC is able to articulate a Resolution, the intervention should be legitimized. Intervention can only take place when the state is (i) engaging in a systematic human right violations, (ii) is incapable of protecting human right violations due to the breakdown of the

state authority, or (iii) when the government in power is unlawfully constituted (Semb, 2000). Justified in terms of humanitarian claims under Chapter VII (Articles 41 and 42)[5], the intervention must have the voluntary consent of the parties to the presence and activity involved in the mission[6]. (Fridley, 2002). The mandate is to relieve humanitarian crisis, as it was the case of Somalia (UNOSOM 1993) when the state breakdown. The success of the operational sphere depends, then, on the adequacy between the mandate and the conflict situation.

### **Coordination –**

The two spheres must be well coordinated to terminate the conflict. Different situation can be originated from this.

It could be the case that the lack of interest from the member states to intervene generates the absence of intervention or a more complicated bargaining process to involve state members on the mission . As Wilson (2003) stress, “ in the post-Cold War era the absence of a UN military capacity has meant that when the SC has at least been able to use its Character VII powers at an unprecedented rate, it has been forced to rely on a decentralized approach to enforcement the action and entrust operations to those actors willing to conduct them on its behalf”. Most of the time, this calculation is made in terms of cost-benefit analysis; when the conflict provides more loses than gains, the state will be reluctant to provide troops – at the beginning of Rwanda crisis in 1993, most Member States where not interested to intervene. But, this is a double-sided sword. States can also see the opportunity to defend her interest – as it was the case of UK in Sierra Leone in 1999 and France in Rwanda.

It could also be the case that the SC approves a Resolution and Member States agree to provide the troops – as it was the case of USA with Bosnia (1992) and Somalia (1992) respectively. However, when the purpose of the mission is not clear, the precision on the solving-conflict situation is inexistent and incoherent, creating a disarticulates mission. This difficulty can be solved. Resolutions already deployed are reinforced by the events on the conflict area; a new Resolution can then answer the needs of the conflict. This was the case, for example, of UNOSOM I and a later UNOSOM II. However, when the Secretariat is not supportive enough, there is not real response to the conflict situation, and then, the mission failed – Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali with UNAMIR.

The complexity of levels and coordination between the spheres and within them are not following any patter. Although, the interdependence between decision-making -systematic setbacks that decrease the possibilities to obtain a coherent mandate- and conflict events -the necessity of a strong mandate to operate consistently- determines the character and effectiveness of the mission. Gilligan and Stedman (2003) address the vagueness of this UN internal process, “ standards of the UN provide little guidance as to the actual decisions of the Security Council regarding when and where peacekeepers will be deployed”. This links the criteria problem; UN decision between Chapter VI or Chapter VII to generate the mandate that will determine the core of the peace operation. Mandates under Chapter VI lack the strength needed – UNMOP (1996-2002) -, and mandates of enforcement under Chapter VII are costly for state members – UNOSOM (1992-1995).[7]



The inadequacy of institutional structure to respond effectively, the intermittent communication between spheres, and the vacuity of the mandates ended with the dominant tendency to fail. By the end of 1990s, UN was aware of this setback.

The result to this declined support for peacekeeping operations was the Brahimi Report (2000). Composed by fifty-seven explicit recommendations and over one hundred implicit ones, it was prepared for the Millennium Summit. It claims for a relation between the magnitude of the conflict and the resourced and supported operation deployed to solve it. It also stresses (i) the need of criteria to avoid the intervention in conflicts that cannot be solved, and well-supported plans when it is required an intervention; (ii) a better understanding of the conflict, and coherence between the mandate and the real situation. (iii) This implies more flexible administrations rules capable to show in the Resolution a “ greater delegation of authority to the field”; (iv) Clear and concrete mandates; (v) and, last but not least, a rapid deployment of the peace operation to be ready to operate within week six and twelve. Since then, a slightly modified typology has been applied. Mission as UNMIL (2003-Present), MINUSTAH (2004-Present), and UNAMID (2007-Present) were designed under this focus.[8]

From my point of view, this report stresses the most controversial points that generate inappropriate mandates. However, this only recommends certain actions on the operational sphere that can help to increase the effectiveness of the peace missions. It does not mention that the problem of coordination also involves part of the structure of UN. Even though it is possible to improve the articulation between the two spheres, states

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members can provide or move back troops from the operation if they consider it appropriate, interest will remain in the atmosphere of the SC, and the criteria for intervention will depend on the SC decision. Hence, the Brahimi Report is a valid document to improve the immediate problems, but does not mention the roots of them.

### **C. Harvesting failures.**

The problematic coordination between the political level and the operational one, and also problems within the structure of peacekeeping operations, carry with it another obstacle: time. Since the beginning of the conflict till the deployment of the peace forces, the conflict has different picks of intensity. During this time, more elements are involved in the conflict (children soldiers, natural resources) and more destruction is generated (infrastructure, deaths, famine, etc). The longer it takes to deploy the peace operation, the more complex it will be to solve the magnitude of the problem. And this was the case of most UN peace operations during the 1990s.

Nonetheless, the complexity and wide range of areas that the mission should cover, made the peace operations complicated to assess. A problem arrives then, the criteria to determine how much forces and commitments should be taken to solve each conflict. It is generally argued that UN “ should have been done less in Somalia, and could have done much more in Rwanda” (Farrel, 2007). The case of MONUC (1999-Present), UN mission in the Democratic Republic of Congo, is a good example. The recommended force of 6, 000 troops is too small to present a credible military deterrence, but is too large for a symbolic presence considering the extension of the territory;

the lack of infrastructure represented and extra complication to an already difficult operation.

In same line of a criteria problem, we also have the lack of consistency in the decision-making of UN -discussed in the former section. Generally, in peace operations, the objectives are not well defined. Mandates produced by the UNSC can be indecisive, written with abstract concepts that make its application inconsistent with the real conflict -too pretentious for the force deployed or too scarce for the actual need. Military commanders will applied the mandate as precisely as possible to solve the actual situation where they find, but this does not solve the problem.

The unity of command is another setback. On the one hand, troops are provided by a number of Member States, with different training and equipment. The motley composition of troops needs to operate with determination, a good coordination and synchronization. However, such adequation in time and space is nearly idealistic. On the other hand, the states members that provided troops can end their cooperation to the mission if they consider that their troops are in serious threat – cost-benefit analysis. This was the case of USA in Somalia during UNOSOM II, who showed to be really sensitive to casualties withdrawing its forces after the death of eighteen soldiers.

Here I describe two of the most sounded UN peace missions that gather together all the difficulties mentioned before: UNOSOM, and UNAMIR.[9] The reason why I chose these two cases is the relation that connects the two: the passive reaction to the later one was a consequence of the negative results

of the former. The first conflict represents the new challenges that peace operations faced at the beginning of the 1990s. The second one a passive attitude toward the conflict, consequence of the Bosnia (1992-1995) and Somalia (1992-1995) failures.

Somalia (1992-1995) – United Nations Operations in Somalia (UNOSOM I) was deployed in mid-1992 when the country reached the lower situation of her civil war and a terrible famine hit her population. The civil conflict took the country into a complete anarchic situation, where the distribution of aid failed – landlords manipulated it as power. By the end of the summer of 1992, 300, 000 Somalis were dead. The UNSC approved the Resolution 794 to let UNITAF, a US 37, 000-strong force, to resolve the situation and establish the adequate situation for a proper distribution of aid. However, by December 1992, 95% of the population was malnourished and 70% in imminent danger of death by starvation (Western, 2002, p. 115). The mandate was created to demilitarized zones to get a better distribution of the aid. In mid-1993 UNOSOM II was deployed with 28, 000-strong UN force to fulfil a more ambitious mandate: the disarmament of the parties and the reconstruction of the Somalia government. However, all the efforts were truncated; the ceasefire with the warlords was broken when the paramilitary group attacked a UN patrol killing twenty-four Pakistani soldiers. UNSC Resolution 837 determined the end of the conflict; but the result was the opposite when the 3rd of October of 1994 a US helicopter was shot down; eighteen US soldier were killed. The Clinton administration withdraws her troops within months and UNOSOM II kept active till 1995 without a strong leadership and too ambitious objectives to be accomplished. [10] Even

though the money invested and the strong military presence in Somalia, UNOSOM II failed in its mandate: to restore a long-term order.

The difficulties faced in Somalia made the Security Council members reluctant to engage in similar conflicts, the passive reaction to the genocide in Rwanda can be explained under this focus (Semb 2000).

Rwanda (1993-1994) – The ethnic conflict in Rwanda ended in a terrible massacre of 800, 000 Tutsi and moderate Hutu. The precedent of such irrational situation was an instable political situation when the Hutu-moderate government introduced a multi-party democracy that ended with the exclusion of the Hutu extremists.[11] This radical faction started a terror camping, after the accidental death of the President, to exterminate the Tutsi population of the country. By April of 1993, when the genocide started, there was a UN peacekeeping force with a limited mandated deployed in Rwanda. Composed by 2, 500-strong United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) was designed to monitor the ceasefire between the government and the Rwandese Patriotic Front.[12] The peace operation was “ understaffed, under-resourced, and unauthorized to use force to prevent crimes”. [13] The UN response the 27th of April was inadequate: to re-establish the ceasefire. The awaited Resolution 918 to expand UNAMIR to 5, 500 troops to protect the population arrived the 17th of May, too late. By July the genocide was already committed. The disintegrated situation in Rwanda was denounced by the UNAMIR Force Commander, Major General Roméo Dallaire, in February 1993. The UN could have been able to do much more; if not to stop the genocide, at least it could have reduced the terrible

consequences of it. Boutros-Ghali was unable to push an adequate resolution and the SC was blocked by USA and UK.

It can be appreciate from the examples examined the difference of commitment to bring into an end the conflict. However, both situation ended in failure. Both cases have in common the weak coordination between the political and operational spheres that generated late and inconsistent mandates. Somalia demonstrates the compromise of USA to finish it, but in the end the situation was reversed and such commitment was shown not to be that strong. Rwanda is in the opposite side of the spectrum, there was no interest – part as the failure of Somalia – for intervention. After a decade of rarely successful operation, the ‘credibility’ of UN was damaged, as it was assumed by the UNSC in November 2000, Resolution 1327.

#### **D. Conclusion: awaiting for a better harvest.**

The main reasons why UN peacekeeping operations during 1990s rarely succeeded were problems with coordination to approve a resolution and the inconsistency of delayed responses. I argued that the intensity of the conflict aggravated through this ‘decision’ time determined the structure, durability, complexity, and the final balance of these peacekeeping operation. In a simple line, we can say that the objective of the UN forces were not clear by the time they went into the conflict area. This triggered a whole succession of complications such as a deficient coordination, an irregular institutional behaviour, and the lack of criteria to establish the adequate measure of forces. Missions were then not strong enough to be able to take robust actions against peace spoilers. Overall, missions tended to fail.

As I argued before, the complexity of intrastate conflicts and the corresponding peace operation can get worse rather than better if (i) the expected peace operations has not a clear objectives already designed by the time of it implementation, (ii) there is no coordination between the area of the conflict and the SC to empower the strategy to wage the conflict, and (iii) if there is no suitable ‘ time-reaction’ from the authorities to operate on the conflictive area to stop the violence. Conflicts experience different waves of violence, and the grade of destruction increases when the peace forces are not effective. So, the longer the conflict, the more elements are involved, and the more complex the peace operation should be to re-establish peace (e. g. Children soldiers, infrastructure, mechanism of corruption, etc). In other words, the longer to make a resolution and deploy the peacekeeping troops with a specific and consistent mandate, the less effective the operation will be.

The structural and functional problems considered here made clear a claim for robust mandates, that is, the implementation of the appropriate force to achieve the mission mandate, to protect civilian in danger, and provide the suitable condition to deploy the mission (Yamashita, 2008). A strong justification must support this type of robust mandates. As it was the case of Sierra Leone in 1999 (UNAMSIL); the Resolution 1313 of the 4th of August of 2000 was the result of the breakdown of the Agreement. This Resolution authorized peacekeepers to deter and counter the threat of RUF responding robustly to any imminent direct use of force (Yamashita, 2008 p. 620).

This new direction of peacekeeping has also its institutional consequences. Recently published, the 2008 Principles and Guidelines Material for <https://assignbuster.com/un-peacekeeping-operations/>

Peacekeeping[14] outlines the interconnection between the two spheres mentioned before. In order to get that, the SC decisions are influenced by the agreement reached and the parties that compose the conflict. The result of a good coordination will produce a suitable mandate for the conflict – see also the Brahimi Report already mentioned.

To sum up, peacekeeping is not risk free, this is the main reason why if UN is going to intervene in a conflict must do it with the strength and consistency required for an effective action. Once the operation is in the conflict, it must be able to complete the mission successfully – fruit of the satisfactory coordination between the political sphere and the operational one – being able to bring peace where it is needed.[15]

The actual deployed missions generated under this new wave of peace keeping – MINUSTAH (2004-Present), UNIT (2006-Present), UNAMID (2007-Present) – will show if the coordination and consistency problems, that were the pulse under which peacekeeping was shaped during the 1990s, has been solved.

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[2] Francisco Villagran de Leon, Ambassador of Guatemala to Canada (January 1997) for the New York Time, available at < <http://www.nytimes.com/1997/01/18/opinion/l-stop-abuse-of-un-security-council-veto-power-220205.html?pagewanted=1> >

[3] The P5 has had the tendency to pas the resolutions, but has not been able to provide the means.

[4] Edelstein (2004)

[5] Semb (2000)

[6] This can take place once a ceasefire agreement for the deployment of peace forces was reached.

[7] Doyle and Sambanis, 2006.

[8] For more detailed information, < <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/> >

[9] Due to the complexity of the intra-state conflicts, I do not discuss the historical facts that composed the each of these operations. I will only

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concentrate in those events that were significant for the failure of the mission and that allow me to establish a critical analysis of the cases.

[10] The United Nations and Somalia (1996), Boulden (2003)

[11] Wilson (2003)

[12] Boulden (2003).

[13] Farrel, T. (2007) p. 320

[14] Available at

[15] “ Military intervention is a nasty business. It should never be the first option considered, but sometimes it is the only choice” (Beyman and Seybolt, 2003 p. 77).