

UN looking for peace or pushing it away: Assessing the effectiveness of peacekeeping missions

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Abstract

This article is product of a topic review related to the UN Peacekeeping Missions established since 1945. This paper aims to address the role of these missions based on the UN official reports of each one of them in the attempt to reestablish and preserve peace in regions where conflict has arisen. The type of methodology used was phenomenological, focusing on a descriptive study. The paper is divided in two main sections, the first section is general overview of the current literature related with the effectiveness of those missions and the second section analyzes each intervention and their respective outcomes in order to come with a conclusion about the importance and effectiveness of peace keeping operations. The main conclusion reached has to do with the nature of the conflict. Missions that have taken place in a conflict related more with political aspects than those related with social issues have a better performance fulfilling their mandates and with this, having a good evaluation of their effectiveness. But, in those conflicts where there is a social aspect at stake, with manifestations of violence it is harder to achieve its mandates, thus, the effectiveness it's less clear and in some occasions, it can be seen as a failure of the mission involved.

When the UN was born in 1945 the main objective was to preserve peace, but there have been a lot of scenarios that have threatened this goal, and here is when the UN has to intervene in order to defend something that concern them deeply: peace.

But those interventions have worth it? Through a quick look into many conflicts where the UN has intervened with their peace keeping op-

erations, this article is intended to assess the effectiveness of those missions preventing and restoring peace.

This article is going to be divided in two sections: the first section is going to be a general overview of the current literature related with the effectiveness of those missions and the second section is going to analyze each intervention and their respective outcomes in order to come with a conclusion about the importance and effectiveness of peace keeping operations.

UN Peacekeeping Missions

In the first place, this article aims to make a general summary of the UN missions since its creation in 1945 until now. According to the website of the UN, in the section of peacekeeping operations, it states that “there have been a total of 63 UN peacekeeping operations around the world. The first UN peacekeeping mission was established in 1948, when the Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to the Middle East to monitor the Armistice Agreement between Israel and its Arab neighbors.”¹

The operations of peacekeeping are in charge of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) attached to the Security Council which determine when is appropriate to create a mission. Those missions are constituted by military arms to protect the population but also by administrators and economists, police officers and legal experts, de-miners and electoral observers, human rights monitors and specialists in civil affairs and governance, humanitarian workers and experts in communications and public information.²

Peace keeping operations initially were intended to monitor and control of the conflict, but recently the missions are getting a multidimensional field of action “through social and economic cooperation, rebuilding infrastructure, and reforming institutions so as to reduce incentives for future violence.”³ According to this there are two main types of mission: the traditional and the multidimensional missions.

After this general overview, the article is going to move forward to a more specific but still general look of those UN missions highlighting the number of those in each continent and the main form the missions have taken to deal with the conflict and protect the civil population affected.



1. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, United Nations web page, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/> retrieved March 30, 2010.

2. *Ibid.*,

3. Macartan Humphreys, & Jeremy M Weinstein, “Demobilization and Reintegration”, *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.51, num 4, 2007, p. 531.

As it is mentioned earlier the DPKO has participated in around 63 conflicts through missions such as UNMOGIP (United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan), UNAMIC (United Nations Advance Mission in Cambodia), UNOMUR (United Nations Observer Mission Uganda-Rwanda)⁴ and so on.

Those missions have taken place in almost all the continents: In Africa there is the place where more missions have settled down; there have been in the following countries: Angola, Congo, New West Guinea, Burundi, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, Ethiopia, Eritrea, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Sudan and Uganda. In Asia there have been a lot of missions as well: in Afghanistan, Cambodia, Cyprus, Georgia, India, Pakistan, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Lebanon, Tajikistan, Yemen. In Europe there have been missions in Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia, and Georgia. In America the missions have been focused in Central America: Haiti, El Salvador, Guatemala and Dominican Republic.

The UN's greatest involvement has been in the conflicts of the "Third World" through numerous peacekeeping missions in Asia and Africa, which have intensified in scope and in number since the end of the Cold War."⁵

The missions in America "involved an ambitious multinational operation, with thousands of blue helmets who ultimately assisted in verifying and enforcing ceasefire agreements. The United Nations took an active position in disarming factions in civil wars."⁶

In the literature review there are contradictory findings. According to a study called The UN's Effectiveness in Post Civil War Peace Durability of Jung In Jo, he found that UN interventions (specially the multi-dimensional missions) facilitate the duration of peace stability in the aftermath of civil war. In other words, UN interventions diminish the hazard of recurrent crisis.⁷

In the other hand, according to an Economic Review of the World Bank, "UN peace keeping operations have succeeded in maintaining peace in the two to five years after the ends of civil wars."⁸ Thus, the UN missions have not achieved the goal of peace sustainability, that the organization desires it.

Here, it concludes the first section of the article giving a partial report of the UN missions and the main two perspectives by the third parties regarding conflicts and the role of the United Nations within them.

4. United Nations Webpage, "United Nations Peacekeeping", *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/list.shtml> retrieved March 30, 2010.

5. Sunil Amrith and Glenda Sluga, "New Histories of the United Nations", *Journal of World History: Special Issue: New Histories of the United Nations*, vol. num. 3, september 2008, p. 251.

6 Arturo Sotomayor, . (2002). "Peacemaking and Democratization in the Western Hemisphere", *Journal of International Affairs*, vol. 55, num. 2 , 2002, p. 531.

7. Jung In Jo. (2006). "The UN's Effectiveness in Post Civil War Peace Durability", *Journal of International and Area Studies*, vol1. 3, num. 1, 2006, p. 23.

8. Ibrahim Ahmed Elbadawi, "Postconflict Transitions: An Overview", *The World Bank Economic Review*, vol. 2, 2008, p. 1.

Assessment of UN Peacekeeping Missions

The second section first analyzes some of the most remarkable past missions' reports made by the UN which are supposed to be impartial and objective leading to factual conclusions if the missions succeeded or failed. Then, the article looks to highlight some important terms related with the importance of peace keeping Missions before to make a conclusion of their role in conflicts.

UNAMIR and UNOMUR were two missions sent to Rwanda, but according to the report of the UN "the United Nations and the whole international community remained accused of not having prevented the genocide and that the overriding failure in international community's response was the lack of resources and political will, as well as errors of judgment as to the nature of the events in Rwanda".⁹

In Angola there were four missions: UNAVEM I, UNAVEM II, UNAVEM III and MONUA, they were created in this order, being UNAVEM III the predecessor or MONUA. The secretary General stated that the situation in Angola remained grave, with heavy fighting continuing to rage in several parts of the country. Deep animosity and distrust persisted between the Government of Angola and the National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA).¹⁰

The United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC), which took place in the Republic of the Congo from July 1960 until June 1964, marked a milestone in the history of United Nations peacekeeping in terms of the responsibilities it had to assume, the size of its area of operation and the manpower involved. It included, in addition to a peacekeeping force which comprised at its peak strength nearly 20,000 officers and men, an important Civilian Operations component.¹¹

In Sierra Leone there have been two missions: UNOMSIL and UNAMSIL that replaced the first. With help of UNOMSIL "Negotiations between the Government and the rebels began in May 1999 and on 7 July all parties to the conflict signed an agreement in Lome to end hostilities and form a government of national unity."¹² But the following creation of the UNAMSIL shows that the conflict has not ended and there are still some actions to do.

In Somalia there were 2 missions: UNOSOM I and UNOSOM II that was the extension of the first. "The Security Council underlined that the timely intervention of UNOSOM II and the humanitarian assistance given to Somalia had helped to save many lives and much property,

9. United Nations Webpage, "United Nations Peacekeeping", *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unamirFT.htm> retrieved March 30, 2010.

10. United Nations Webpage, "United Nations Peacekeeping", *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/monua/monuab.htm> retrieved March 30, 2010.

11. United Nations Webpage, "United Nations Peacekeeping", *United Nations web page*, [online] available <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onucB.htm> at retrieved March 30, 2010.

12. United Nations Webpage, "United Nations Peacekeeping", *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomsil/UnomsilB.htm> retrieved March 30, 2010.

mitigate general suffering and contributed to the search for peace in Somalia. However, “the continuing lack of progress in the peace process and in national reconciliation, in particular the lack of sufficient cooperation from the Somali parties over security issues, undermined the United Nations objectives in Somalia and prevented the continuation of UNOSOM II.”¹³

Regarding to Africa, there are other current missions that cannot be assessed yet because they have not finish it therefore they have not fulfill their mandates.

In America there have been several missions: with ONUCA mission the United Nations became directly involved in peacekeeping and peacemaking efforts in Central America in 1989, when the Governments of Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras and Nicaragua requested its assistance in the implementation of their collective agreement. “The Secretary-General paid tribute to the military and civilian personnel who served in ONUCA for their great success in establishing the first large-scale peacekeeping operation of the United Nations in the Americas and for the contribution which they made to the restoration of peace and stability in Central America.”¹⁴


In Dominican Republic there was a mission denominated DOMREP that according to the Secretary-General “the effect of his role had been significant, since he had played a major part in bringing about a cessation of hostilities on 21 May 1965.”¹⁵

The mission that took place in El Salvador was ONUSAL. “the Security Council paid tribute to the accomplishments of ONUSAL, under the authority of the Secretary-General and his Special Representatives, and recognized with satisfaction that El Salvador had evolved from a country riven by conflict into a democratic and peaceful nation.”¹⁶

In Guatemala there was one mission: The Secretary-General recognized “the successful completion of their tasks and the significant contribution they have made to the Guatemalan peace process”.¹⁷

In Haiti there were four missions in the past and currently there is a mission sent by the UN. According with the respective report of each mission, there were able to accomplish the majority of their goals but the fact there still exist a mission reflect that their goals are not totally reached.

Looking trough the Asian Continent there were several missions as well: In Cambodia there were two: the UNAMIC and its replacement

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13. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unosom2backgr2.html> retrieved March 30, 2010. United Nations Webpage.
14. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onucabackgr.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.
15. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/domrepbackgr.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.
16. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/onusalbackgr2.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.
17. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/minuguabackgr.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.

the UNTAC that were established to monitor and guarantee a fair elections during its duration. According to the report of the UNTAC they were able to accomplish its central task of holding a free and fair election in Cambodia and laying a sound foundation for the people of Cambodia to build a stable and peaceful future.¹⁸

East Timor had 2 missions: UNTAET and UNMISSET that continued with the mandate of the former. Those missions saw the process of this territory from been classified as Non-Self-Governing Territory to its independence from Portugal “ensuring the security and stability of the nascent State”.¹⁹ Those missions seemed to be a success.

In Kashmir the UNMOGIP was established to supervise the ceasefire in that territory. “The Secretary-General reported that the withdrawal of the troops by India and Pakistan had been completed”²⁰ but with Following renewed hostilities of 1971, UNMOGIP has been reopen.

In the case of Tajikistan there was a mission (UNMOT) established in 1994 to monitor the ceasefire agreement between the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition. According to the report of UNMOT they succeeded fulfilling their mandate.²¹

Related to Iraq there have been established two missions: UNIIMOG regarding the conflict with Iran and UNIKOM related with the Kuwait issue. The former fulfilled its mandate after “Iran and Iraq had withdrawn fully their forces to the internationally recognized boundaries”.²² In the later the mandate was also accomplished. The Secretary-General Kofi Annan said “The United Nations can be proud of the achievements of UNIKOM.”²³

In Yemen the mission established (UNYOM) did not accomplished the total goals of its mandate.²⁴

Nowadays there are some missions established around Asia, in countries such as Lebanon, Afghanistan, Timor, India and Pakistan.

To close this section the last country where this article aims to analyze the missions that have been implemented is Europe.

The United Nation mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina was called UNMIBH. In words of Kofi Annan: “UNMIBH has completed the most extensive police reform and restructuring project ever undertaken by the United Nations.”²⁵ In Georgia the UNOMIG did not fulfill its mandate, “due to a lack of consensus among Security Council members on

18. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/untacbackgr2.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.

19. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmisset/retrieved> March 30, 2010.

20. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unipombackgr.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.

21. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmot/Unmot.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.

22. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/uniimog.htm> retrieved March 30, 2010.

23. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unikom/retrieved> March 30, 2010.

24. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unyombackgr.html> retrieved March 30, 2010.

25. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unmibh/retrieved> March 30, 2010.

mandate extension”.²⁶ In Croatia the mission implemented was UN-CRO that “United Nations-sponsored talks concluded with the signing of the Basic Agreement on the Region of Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium on 12 November. The Agreement provided for the peaceful integration into Croatia of that region and requested the Security Council to establish a transitional administration to govern the region during the transitional period.”²⁷ Actually there are two missions in Europe, one in Kosovo and the other in Cyprus.

After examining all the UN reports, it is important to take into account an important aspect of the Law of the War where Missions are directly involved in the conflict but they can not be a military target because of their status. “When a peace operation is deployed in the area of an armed conflict, but not engaged in that conflict, the personnel of the peace operation are entitled to the protection of civilians under IHL. Directing an attack against such personnel, when they are entitled to the protection extended to civilians, is prohibited as a rule of customary international law in international and non-international armed conflicts.”²⁸ This is very important to highlight due to the fact that in many cases the missions are forced to withdraw specially because of their status is not respected and the life of the personnel is put in danger.

After the previous analyses of each peacekeeping mission established by the Security Council in order to prevent, control, or improve a situation where there is some kind of conflict, it is hard to make a single conclusion about the effectiveness of those missions regarding their mandates. Even though there are several missions that are succeeded, especially in America, Europe some of the missions in Africa and Asia, there are also several mission that have failed achieving their objectives or in some cases there are failed in the part of sustainable peace because the conflict has reemerged in those countries. Therefore it is very important to study each mission by separate in order to have a more objective and real analysis of the effectiveness of each mission.

To evaluate if the mission have succeeded or not it is important to take into account several aspects: in the first place, the nature of the conflict. Determining this, it can lead to show that missions that have taken place in conflict related more with political aspects than those related with social issues have a better performance fulfilling their mandates and with this, having a good evaluation of their effectiveness. But, in those conflicts where there is a social aspect at stake, with manifestations of violence it is harder to achieve their mandates,

26. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unomig/retrieved> March 30, 2010.

27. United Nations Webpage, “United Nations Peacekeeping”, *United Nations web page*, [online] available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/uncro.htm> retrieved March 30, 2010.

28. Ola Engdahl, “The Status of Peace Operation Personnel under International Humanitarian Law”, *Yearbook of International Humanitarian Law*, vol. 11, 2008, p. 109.

thus, the effectiveness it's less clear and in some occasions, it can be seen as a failure of the mission involved.

Another aspect to take into account that it's deeply related with the nature of the conflict is the type of missions that is assessed. By evaluating this, the multidimensional missions have better ranking of effectiveness in comparison with the traditional missions which only were observers and limited to monitor and in some cases to control parts of the conflict, with blue helmets.

And finally, it is important to highlight that with the UN missions, conflicts take importance in the International Community, because they stop being internal matters only to become an important scope of the International community, thus, the International law, which is where it find a lot of its roots and sources of its development.



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