

UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

Description of the Committee

The 15-member Security Council has been the centerpiece of the United Nations' efforts to resolve conflict and promote peace throughout the world since its inception in 1946. This came on the heels of the failed League of Nations. Part of the reason for the League's failure was its inability to bind its members to adopted resolutions. Consequently, in addition to serving as a forum for security-related matters, the United Nations Security Council may create binding resolutions, levy sanctions, mandate collective security forces and dispatch United Nations **peacekeepers**.

Although the Security Council strives to prevent conflicts before they arise, it is often faced with already developed conflict situations. Continuously in session, the Security Council is usually the first UN body to meet and address emergency situations. For this reason, member states must have a representative on call at all times. The body also has a wealth of expertise at its beck and call from the broader UN system.

Of the 15 members, five are permanent: The People's Republic of China, France, The Russian Federation, The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, and the United States of America. The Permanent 5, or P-5, have veto power over any resolution before the Security Council. The body also includes 10 non-permanent members chosen to represent the different regions, each of which serve two-year terms. At present, this includes: Azerbaijan, Colombia, Germany, Guatemala, India, Morocco, Pakistan, Portugal, South Africa and Togo. Nations on the Security Council, particularly the permanent members, have great influence over the UN during their tenure and assume a leadership role in the international community on any issue that comes before them.



The United Nations Security Council

Source: UN Photo

Topic: Comprehensive Review of Peacekeeping Operations

Introduction

Since its creation in 1948 as a result of the establishment of the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, the United Nations Peacekeeping Operations (UNPKO) have been tasked with providing “security and the political and peace building support to help countries make the difficult, early transition from conflict to peace.”¹ Currently, the UNPKO maintains 16 missions across four continents, including missions in Haiti, South Sudan, Kosovo and Afghanistan.² Most commonly Peacekeepers, or **Blue**



UN Blue Berets in the Cote d’Ivoire.

Source: www.unmultimedia.org

Berets, are called upon to assist with protecting civilians, facilitating the electoral process, promoting human rights and supporting the strengthening of the rule of law.

While the UNPKO persists as an institution, even winning the Nobel Peace Prize in 1988, the organization has been criticized and there are constant calls for reform. In particular, three major areas have fallen under attack: the well-being of peacekeeping troops and the potential harm they could experience, the rise of human trafficking and prostitution in peacekeeping areas, and the efficacy of the organization as a whole. As the United Nations Security Council, you are given the power to determine how the UNPKO should operate to promote peace in the international community. You should take these criticisms into account as you make a comprehensive review of UN Peacekeeping Operations, in an effort to promote peace and stability across the globe.

Background

The United Nations Peacekeeping Operations emerged out of the establishment of the first peacekeeping mission, the United Nations Truce Supervision Organization, in 1948. This organization was created to mediate conflict in the newly formed state of Israel, and it still exists. A year later, in 1949, a second mission was formed, the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP). These organizations are united under the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). The United Nations Security Council maintains authority over this body, but the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) exists to administer day-to-day activities of the organization. An Undersecretary-General serves as the head of DPKO. Currently, this position is held by Hervé Ladsous.



Peacekeepers taking part in an observance of the UN's 60th Anniversary.

Source: www.unmultimedia.org

At its most basic level, the United Nations Charter calls upon all member states to provide capable armed forces to the Security Council to pursue peace. Since its inception, more than 130 states have provided personnel to the UNPKO.³ In October 2011, about 80 percent of UN peacekeeping personnel were troops, while another 15 percent were police and the remaining 5 percent were military observers whose role is to oversee the peace process. The top five leading contributors of personnel are Bangladesh, Pakistan, India, Nigeria and Ethiopia. Upon reviewing these statistics, it is surprising to see that the highest-ranking state from the Western Europe and Others bloc is 17th (Italy). This is partly because WEOG forces typically go to NATO or the European Union rather than the Security Council.⁴

Peacekeeping is also member-funded. The UN Charter, Article 17, requires all member states to pay a specific proportion to the peacekeeping budget. From this, the General Assembly agrees upon a budget for each mission based on a specific formula. The largest financial contributors to UN peacekeeping are much different than the largest troop contributors. The top five are the United States, Japan, United Kingdom, Germany and France. In fact, the United States provided more than 27 percent of the budget in the last fiscal year.⁵

Criticisms

Criticism of the UNPKO has existed for nearly as long as the institution itself. As with any armed combatants, there is the risk of serious injury or death to peacekeepers when they are involved in violent conflict. UN peacekeepers are put in a particularly precarious position because they are not to use force in mediating conflict. As a result, they are not always able, or even armed, to defend themselves in a violent situation. While it is an international norm that peacekeepers are not to be harmed, certain groups do not necessarily respect this, or peacekeepers may be caught in crossfire. This strains the number of available peacekeepers because the pool of personnel is not as large as it could be, and states are not willing to provide large portions of their armed forces if they are at risk of losing them.

A contrasting criticism is the rise of sex trafficking, prostitution and sexual violence in conjunction with peacekeeping operations. There is a proven link between the rise of child prostitution and human trafficking during violent conflict and the arrival of peacekeeping troops.⁶ It is not necessarily true that these acts were committed by UN peacekeepers, although it has been alleged that some have been; rather, it is noted that UN peacekeepers do not effectively assist in monitoring the situation and do not have the capacity to protect civilians from **sexual exploitation**. This has in many ways tarnished the reputation of the organization.

Human Trafficking in the Balkans

During the Bosnian War in the mid-1990s, prostitution erupted throughout the Balkans as a means of making money in the war torn economy. This ring was fueled by a heavy human trafficking industry in which young girls were removed from their homes and forced into sexual slavery. When UN Peacekeepers came on location, a handful of high-level scandals occurred in which peacekeepers were ousted after being discovered in brothels or with child prostitutes. These scandals did not go away after the war ended. In fact, many argued it only got worse during the post-conflict effort.

Source: "The Blue Helmets: Sexual Exploitation, Sex Trafficking and Organizational Culture in UN Peacekeeping Operations," <http://www.ideajournal.com/articles.php?id=50>

The question of efficiency began to arise, particularly during the 1990s, but it has existed much longer. During the 1990s, UNPKO faced two startling failures: Rwanda in 1994 and Bosnia in 1995. These conflicts were both marred by mass killings, and arguably both are considered genocides. The United Nations took significant criticism in both of these situations in that it did nothing to prevent the conflicts from arising, and UN peacekeepers were not successful in thwarting massive human rights abuses. Furthermore, during these two conflicts, nearly one-third of all peacekeeping fatalities since the creation of the institution occurred.⁷ After these incidents, many questions began to arise about the purpose of UN peacekeeping.

Current Situation

Currently, the United Nations has "over 100,000 peacekeeping personnel in the field—mostly soldiers, but also police and civilian advisors, working in more than a dozen operations."⁸ With 16 missions around the world, the organization is much larger than it was in the 1940s when it only had two missions. As such, the organization has had to grow quickly to maintain the support it offers, and criticism of the organization has increased accordingly.

CRITICAL THINKING

Should the Security Council deploy peacekeepers for military purposes, like preventing genocide, or should they maintain their role as post-conflict assistance and humanitarian support?

Concerns over peacekeeper fatalities has remained consistent since the 1990s. While death tolls are down, the number of active missions has increased the odds of troop fatalities. In fact, 2010 was the second bloodiest year in the history of UN Peacekeeping with 173 deaths. Only 1993 was more deadly, with a staggering total of 231 deaths. The number of deaths in 2010 is particularly important because it is higher than those of 1994 and 1995, considered two of the hardest years in UN peacekeeping history. More than 100 troops have died in seven out of the last eight years, cumulatively more deaths than the first 38 years of the organization put together. With these numbers, criticism over the protection of UN peacekeepers is on the rise, and new ways to ensure their safety must be explored.⁹



Gambian Peacekeepers provide an escort service through a conflict-ridden region of Sudan.

Source: www.unmultimedia.org

Of the three criticisms of UN peacekeeping, the rise of human trafficking, prostitution and sexual violence when peacekeepers are present is perhaps the most gripping. Although the institution is now over 60 years old, little has been done to curb the incidence of sexual exploitation. In fact, recent reports highlight that numbers are still quite staggering. In 2009, at least 8,300 rapes were reported in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, although this number could be more than double when considering those that were not reported.¹⁰ Issues in the Balkans and Haiti that also involved UN peacekeepers have sparked much debate on how UN peacekeeping fuels sexual exploitation. The

DPKO has been criticized heavily for its inability to police its own forces, and many high-level officials disagree about how to mitigate this problem. As a result, no real action has been taken to prevent sexual exploitation in relationship to UN peacekeeping.¹¹

From the perspective of efficacy and institutional design, UN peacekeeping has become expensive. With 16 active missions worldwide, the DPKO operates off with a nearly US\$8 billion budget, much like an international corporation.¹² This money is used to pay salaries, buy supplies and provide logistical support for peacekeeping troops and the office of the DPKO. As with troops, the DPKO relies on UN member states to provide funding. While the provision of aid has been relatively steady because it is mandated by the UN Charter, it does not necessarily provide all of the resources the organization needs. As a result, missions are often underfunded, and appropriate support cannot be provided. This in turn fuels criticisms of both the organization's peacekeeper protection and the rise of sexual exploitation when peacekeepers are present.



Alain Le Roy from the DPKO briefs the Security Council on peacekeeping activities.

Source: www.unmultimedia.org

The scope of UN peacekeeping also raises questions about the efficacy of the institution. Typically, missions are given a relatively narrow mandate, often relating to post-conflict reconstruction. While this has accomplished many important things in conflict torn regions, the narrow mandate does not allow peacekeepers to explore the root causes of conflict. When these causes are not found and addressed, conflict may re-emerge, effectively negating the impact the peacekeepers had in the first place.

CRITICAL THINKING

How does the United Nations Security Council determine the mandate for peacekeeping operations? Is it always for post-conflict peacebuilding reasons, or are there instances of peacekeeping missions that have a scope of practice during conflict? How could these missions be different? Which is more effective?

International Action

The United Nations has done several things to counter the criticism it faced in the 1990s. As a direct result of the conflicts in Rwanda and Bosnia, the United Nations Peacebuilding Commission was created in 2005. This commission is an advisory body made up of UN member states that works with the DPKO and Security Council. It is tasked with “bringing together all of the relevant actors, including international donors, the international financial institutions, national governments, troop contributing countries; marshalling resources and advising on and proposing integrated strategies for post-conflict peacebuilding and recovery and where appropriate, highlighting any gaps that threaten to undermine peace.”¹³ While this commission has taken much of the organizational strain off the DPKO, it has only passed the work to another organization, not made it more efficient.

The United Nations also published the **Brahimi Report** in 2000, and has reviewed and updated the report each year since. The initial goal of the report was to analyze former peacekeeping missions to pinpoint inefficiencies that could be improved upon. Currently, the report is used to review the progress made by the United Nations and DPKO in reforming the peacekeeping institutions and to explore new trends of inefficiency that can be dealt with in the future. Because it is a published UN document, the report has helped publicize the need for UNPKO reform.

Finally, there has been a rise in non-UN peacekeeping operations internationally. Both the European Union and NATO take part in human rights and peacekeeping missions. Often these organizations work in conjunction with the United Nations, and usually they are authorized by the Security Council itself to take part in peacekeeping missions. However, the funding, provision of troops and general organizational matters of the mission are considered completely independent of the United Nations. What is curious about this is that many of these non-UN missions are considered to be much more successful. Indeed, the European Union had much more success in the Balkans than the United Nations did in the 1990s, and they were able to mediate a ceasefire between Russia and Georgia.¹⁴ Why is it that these missions have concluded more successfully than UN ones?



Female peacekeepers in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

Source: www.unmultimedia.org

Recommendations for Creating a Resolution

There are many areas that the United Nations Security Council can look at in its Comprehensive Review of Peacekeeping Operations. Of course, the three main issue areas must all be addressed: harm to troops, sexual exploitation and organizational efficiency. The Security Council must think critically to determine whether are ways in which the possibility of harm to troops can be solved, or look for other alternatives to ensure the vitality of the program. In regard to sexual exploitation, the Security Council must identify the root causes of these occurrences and develop methods to eradicate them from the start.

Of course, the Security Council can look at other areas to better UN peacekeeping. One way this could occur is by taking a critical look at the role of gender in UN peacekeeping. This comes from two perspectives: engaging more women as peacekeepers and examining the role of gender in conflict. Today, less than one-tenth of all personnel in the DPKO are women. Furthermore, it is argued that in peacebuilding scenarios, it is beneficial to have women on hand to provide insight into gender equality and peace.¹⁵

Another way in which UN peacekeeping can be reviewed is by comparing it to both NATO and European Union peacekeeping programs. As noted, both organizations have seen much success in their own peacekeeping and humanitarian endeavors, and the UNPKO could benefit by adopting some of their measures. A good resolution will keep these points in mind.

Questions to Consider

1. What are your country's relationships with the UNPKO? Does your country provide peacekeeping troops? How much funding does your country provide to the UNPKO?
2. What are ways in which UN peacekeeping has succeeded? What are some of its failures?
3. How does the impact of sexual exploitation scandals affect the legitimacy of the UNPKO? Are there ways in which this legitimacy can be regained?
4. Other than the inclusion of more women in UNPKO activities, what other methods can be used to improve peacekeeping missions?
5. How is the relationship between the Security Council and the UNPKO? Should the Security Council have more or less control over peacekeeping missions? What about the UNPKO's relationship with the Peacebuilding Commission?

Research Aid

The United Nations' website has an entire section devoted to peacekeeping. Within these pages you can find information on troop involvement, funding missions and the different deployments that currently take place around the world.

- **United Nations Peacekeeping:** <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/>

The Global Policy Forum has published a fair amount of research on UN peacekeeping, including both present and historical.

- **Global Policy Forum, UN Peacekeeping website:**
<http://www.globalpolicy.org/security-council/index-of-countries-on-the-security-council-agenda/peacekeeping.html>

A fictionalized account of the UN peacekeeping sex scandal in Bosnia, the feature film *The Whistleblower* casts light on how the scandal developed. Ask a parent or teacher before getting the film because it has an R rating for mature scenes and violence.

- **The Whistleblower on IMDB:** <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0896872/>

The United Nations maintains a YouTube playlist of videos relating to UN peacekeeping. These videos include first-hand accounts, policy analyses and promotional pieces on the organization.

- **UN Peacekeeping YouTube Playlist:**
<http://www.youtube.com/user/unitednations#grid/user/49CE20981558F582>

For up-to-date news from the DPKO, the organization maintains a Twitter account.

- **DPKO Twitter:** www.twitter.com/UNPeacekeeping

Terms and Concepts

Peacekeepers: forces provided by the UN as a third party to a conflict to monitor cease-fires, etc. Peacekeeping personnel can only be established by the UNSC and can be armed. However, the peacekeepers, or Blue Helmets, are not to be considered peace “makers.”

Blue Beret: nickname for UN peacekeepers because they wear blue berets or helmets so as to be distinguishable from other armed forces.

Sexual exploitation: the act of exploiting another person in a sexual manner. This could include forced prostitution, rape or human trafficking.

Brahimi Report: An annual report reviewing UN peacekeeping missions and exploring trends in inefficiency with the goal of identifying areas of the institution to reform.

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