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The Principles of Peacekeeping: A Concept Still Up-to-Date for Effective Peace Operations?

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**The Principles of Peacekeeping:
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Lieutenant-Colonel Anja Greven

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INTRODUCTION

Since its foundation in 1945, the United Nations (UN) has sought to secure world peace, uphold international law, protect human rights and promote international cooperation. Peace operations and peacekeeping missions in particular, have become one of the UN's main tools in preventing and ending international conflicts. Although peace operations are not explicitly mentioned, the first article of the UN Charter already seems to emphasize their high significance:

“...To maintain international peace and security, and to that end: to take effective collective measures for the prevention and removal of threats to the peace, and for the suppression of acts of aggression or other breaches of the peace, and to bring about by peaceful means, and in conformity with the principles of justice and international law, adjustment or settlement of international disputes or situations which might lead to a breach of the peace...”¹

UN peacekeeping began in 1948 when the Security Council authorized the deployment of UN military observers to the Middle East. Since then, peace operations have evolved from primarily observing cease-fires and the separation of conflicting parties to multidimensional operations and even transitional administrations.² Cold War rivalries frequently paralyzed the Security Council and decolonization significantly affected the power structure within the UN. After the end of the Cold War, the focus shifted from inter-state to intra-state conflicts and civil wars. The number and intensity of these conflicts increased considerably, thereby elevating the quantity and complexity of peacekeeping missions.³ Unfortunately, UN peacekeeping could not always meet the rather ambitious expectations, which grew beyond its capacity to deliver. A series of disastrous experiences during the 1990s led to a severe loss of reputation and many

¹ United Nations Charter, retrieved Mar 14, 2022. United Nations Charter (full text) | United Nations

² Dorn, A. W., “Keeping Watch. Monitoring, Technology & Innovation in UN Peace Operations”, United Nations University Press, 2011, ISBN 978-92-808-1198-8. *KeepingWatch_Dorn_CompleteBook-WithCovers_UNUP_2011.pdf

³ Skidelsky, R., “Dag Hammarskjold and the future of the UN”, 17 Oct 2005, published in “The Adventures of Peace”, edited by Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). [Dag Hammarskjold's Assumptions and the Future of the UN – Robert Skidelsky](#)

member states significantly reduced their troop contributions⁴. Self-reflection and reorientation were inevitable⁵. The spread of Islamist terrorism further fueled many domestic conflicts and thereby increased the risks of UN peacekeeping operations.

In spite of all these political transformations and challenges, the three basic principles of UN peacekeeping, also called the “Peacekeeping Trinity”, have been preserved since the first UN observer mission UNTSO (UN Truce Supervision Organization) in the Middle East in 1948.⁶ The **consent of the parties**, **impartiality** and the **non-use of force** (later extended by the exception of self-defense and defense of the mandate) are still applied today and should serve as guidance for UN peacekeepers both on the ground and at UN headquarters.⁷ Nonetheless, just as the entire organization must continually explain and defend its *raison d’être*, these traditional principles are also subject to constant debate in an inexorably changing environment.

The less frequently used term “Hammar skjöld Principles” encompasses far more than only principles of peacekeeping. The second UN Secretary-General, Dag Hammar skjöld, strongly believed in protecting the weak against the interests of greater powers and considered the UN as a neutral international tool. From his point of view, the organization had to follow the core principles of equal rights and opportunities, justice and the prohibition of armed force in order to achieve its goals. However, during his term in office, the first armed UN soldiers were deployed with permission to defend themselves if attacked.⁸

⁴ Williams, P.D., Bellamy, A.J., “*Understanding Peacekeeping*”, 2021, 3rd edition, Polity Press, ISBN-13: 978-0-7-456-8671-4

⁵ United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect, retrieved Apr 15, 2022. United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect

⁶ United Nations, Resolution 50 (1948), retrieved Apr 13, 2022. [United Nations Official Document](#)

⁷ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. [capstone_eng_0.pdf](#)

⁸ Stahn, C., Melber, H., “Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency. Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammar skjöld”, Part 1-Reflections on Dag Hammar skjöld. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 5 May 2014. Reflections on Dag Hammar skjöld (Part I) - Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency ([oclc.org](#))

This paper addresses the question whether the basic principles of peacekeeping are still up-to-date in order to ensure effective peacekeeping operations. Additionally, the broader principles set up by Dag Hammarskjöld will be assessed from today's viewpoint. The paper further discusses the various arguments and counter-arguments of the peacekeeping trinity with respect to the evolution of peace operations and political developments. It will justify the thesis that the UN should maintain the principles, but that they need to be amended individually to meet specific operational requirements. However, adapting these principles is not sufficient on its own to improve the efficiency of UN peacekeeping. This process has to be flanked by clearly formulated mandates and a range of tasks that can be met by UN peacekeepers in terms of resources and education available in the field. The commitment of the UN member states, especially of the five veto-powers, is crucial in managing complex crises that pose a threat to international peace and security. Russia's current war of aggression against its sovereign neighbor state Ukraine impressively demonstrates the UN's limited ability to act within its given structures and the disregard of international rules by a permanent member of the Security Council.

TERMINOLOGY OF PEACE OPERATIONS

Peacekeeping is one of various measures undertaken by the UN and other international actors to preserve or restore international peace and security. It is important to understand how it relates to terms like conflict prevention, peacemaking, peace enforcement, peacebuilding, humanitarian assistance and stabilization when discussing the principles of peacekeeping.⁹ Definitions and concepts to label international peace support operations are not coherent within

⁹ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

UN, NATO and the different national militaries.¹⁰ This paper refers to the version adopted by the UN. The broadest term to cover the whole spectrum is “**peace operations**”.

Conflict prevention includes diplomatic and structural measures to prevent intra-state or inter-state tensions from escalating into violent conflicts. It is located below the threshold of international operations.¹¹

Peacebuilding is the comprehensive approach to develop the political, socio-economic and physical infrastructure. It encompasses “measures aimed at reducing the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict, by strengthening national capacities for conflict management and laying the foundations for sustainable peace.”¹²

Humanitarian assistance means keeping people alive by the provision of vital goods and services such as water and food supply, sanitation and hygienic measures, shelter and health care. This acute emergency aid measure is to be distinguished from long-term development aid. The aim here is the return to a normal, self-reliant life.¹³

Peacekeeping implies that ceasefire is already established and that there is peace, “however fragile”, to preserve. Peacekeepers assist in implementing agreements between the conflicted parties, which may include the use of armed force in self-defense and in defense of the mandate. It can be divided into traditional types of peacekeeping (observer missions and the

¹⁰ Dorn, A. W., “Peace Operations: Terms and Definitions”, A brief prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defense, 11 May 2018. Microsoft Word - Definitions-Peace-Operations-Doctrine_with-Annex1_11May2018.docx (walterdorn.net)

¹¹ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

¹² Dorn, A. W., “Peace Operations: Terms and Definitions”, A brief prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defense, 11 May 2018. Microsoft Word - Definitions-Peace-Operations-Doctrine_with-Annex1_11May2018.docx (walterdorn.net)

¹³ Sphere Handbook 2018, The Sphere Handbook | Standards for quality humanitarian response (spherestandards.org)

interposition of forces) and modern or second-generation forms of peacekeeping (multidimensional missions and transitional administrations).¹⁴

Peace enforcement can be described as a last resort of peace operations, when all other means have failed.¹⁵ It should not be confused with “robust peacekeeping”,

“which includes the use of force at the tactical level with the authorization of the Security Council and consent of the host nation and/or the main parties to the conflict. By contrast, peace enforcement does not require the consent of the main parties and may involve the use of military force at the strategic or international level, which is normally prohibited for Member States under Article 2(4) of the Charter, unless authorized by the Security Council.”¹⁶

At this point, many discussions arise about whether the three principles of peacekeeping are still valid in the context of peace enforcement.

The term **stabilization** or **stability operation** is broadly used and part of many UN peace operations’ names. They are compatible with peace operations but follow a less ambitious aim by not necessarily addressing the underlying root causes of a conflict (“negative peace”).¹⁷



Figure 1. Types of activity and operations designed to support peace (Dorn, 2018)

¹⁴ Dorn, A. W., “Peace Operations: Terms and Definitions”, A brief prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defense, 11 May 2018. Microsoft Word - Definitions-Peace-Operations-Doctrine_with-Annex1_11May2018.docx (walterdorn.net)

¹⁵ Idem

¹⁶ United Nations Peacekeeping, retrieved Mar 14, 2022. Principles of peacekeeping | United Nations Peacekeeping

¹⁷ Dorn, A. W., “Peace Operations: Terms and Definitions”, A brief prepared for the House of Commons Standing Committee on National Defense, 11 May 2018. Microsoft Word - Definitions-Peace-Operations-Doctrine_with-Annex1_11May2018.docx (walterdorn.net)

HISTORICAL AND POLITICAL CONTEXT

The founding period of the UN was strongly influenced by the horror and devastation of the Second World War and the ensuing desire for peace and prosperity. Thus, the UN Charter was established to put an end to wars of aggression, such as those waged by Germany, Italy and Japan in the 1930s and early 1940s. It was entered into force in October 1945. Mandating peace operations, especially according to Chapter VII of the Charter, is reserved to date for the Security Council including the five permanent veto-members Britain, China, France, the USA and Russia. The Security Council cannot adopt any resolution that has been vetoed by a permanent member. At that time, it was taken for granted that most of the other members of the General Assembly would agree with the Security Council's proposals. It was assumed that the Great Powers shared the same conception about how a post-war world should be organized and remain in control of the structure of international relations in the long term. The opposite proved to be true. The Cold War destroyed this collective security concept and thereby the Security Council's ability to act due to numerous blockades initiated by the Great Powers, who executed their right to veto.¹⁸

Decolonization was the second significant alteration. Dwindling European Colonial Powers were pitted against both the United States and the Soviet Union, culminating in the Suez crisis of 1956. The impacts of decolonization were lasting and still have consequences today. It increased the number of member states whose independence and sovereignty needed to be defended against foreign and domestic aggression. Moreover, it enlarged the constituency of “non-aligned” states who strived to protect their interests against those of the Great Powers. Both the Cold War and decolonization pivoted the UN's center of gravity from the Security Council to

¹⁸ Skidelsky, R., “*Dag Hammarskjold and the future of the UN*”, 17 Oct 2005, published in “The Adventures of Peace”, edited by Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Dag Hammarskjold's Assumptions and the Future of the UN – Robert Skidelsky

the General Assembly.¹⁹ The adoption of UN General Assembly Resolution 377 (“Uniting for Peace”) in 1950 during the Korean War to overcome the Soviet veto might serve as an example.

After the end of the Cold War, the conditions for peace operations changed. The number and the intensity of intra-state conflicts increased considerably, as did the number of vacated potential peacekeepers. Permanent member states of the Security Council, who until then had been excluded from participating in UN missions, became troop contributors as well. There was a growing recognition that those intra-state conflicts in particular could not be solved permanently by observation and separation of the various conflict parties alone.

Multidimensional UN peace operations with a broad comprehensive approach originated with the intent to address the root causes of the conflicts and thereby enable sustainable peace. In this context, the socio-economic empowerment of the affected states and a security sector reform turned out to be key to the process.²⁰ However, the UN peacekeeping missions of the 1990s were often neither sufficiently trained nor equipped for this ambitious approach. Vaguely formulated mandates, inadequate command and control (C2) structures and the lack of lines of communication further hampered mission success. Especially after the disastrous experiences in Angola, Somalia, Rwanda and Bosnia with a total of approximately 1,5 million civilians killed, many troop contributors reduced their commitment, and the reputation of the UN as a protector of world peace underwent considerable damage. The principles of impartiality and the non-use of force except for self-defense were severely debated facing the genocide in Rwanda and Srebrenica. Neither of them could be prevented by the UN troops on the ground who were hardly

¹⁹ Skidelsky, R., “*Dag Hammarskjold and the future of the UN*”, 17 Oct 2005, published in “The Adventures of Peace”, edited by Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Dag Hammarskjold’s Assumptions and the Future of the UN – Robert Skidelsky

²⁰ Dorn, A. W., “Keeping Watch. Monitoring, Technology & Innovation in UN Peace Operations”, United Nations University Press, 2011, ISBN 978-92-808-1198-8. *KeepingWatch_Dorn_CompleteBook-WithCovers_UNUP_2011.pdf

able to defend themselves. Years of investigation, introspection and the evaluation of "lessons learned" followed before the UN was able to announce successful interventions again, and the number of deployments finally resurged. Many publications were released in the following years. Their findings, unfortunately, have only been partially implemented to date. The most important among them were the "Brahimi Report" in 2000²¹, the "The Responsibility to Protect" report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty (ICISS) in 2001²², the development of "UN Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines" (Capstone Doctrine) in 2008²³, the "New Horizon Initiative" (2009), launched by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS)²⁴ as well as the work of the "High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations" (HIPPO) in 2015.²⁵ In the so-called Capstone Doctrine, the first official UN doctrine on peacekeeping, the DPKO confirmed the ongoing relevance and appropriateness of the three cardinal principles of consent, impartiality and non-use of force except for self-defense and defense of the mandate while slightly adapting them to current challenges.²⁶

With the Islamist attacks on September 11, 2001, a worldwide fight against terrorism began that continues to this day, fueling many domestic conflicts. The ongoing conflicts in the Sahel region might serve as an example.

²¹ United Nations Peacekeeping, "*Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations (Brahimi Report)*", retrieved Mar 24, 2022. a_55_305_e_brahimi_report.pdf (un.org)

²² International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, "*The Responsibility to protect*", 2001. 0889369607.pdf (dspacedirect.org)

²³ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

²⁴ Gowan, A., "*The New Horizon Initiative*", United Nations Peacekeeping for the 21st Century, Signal, p.45-51, winter 2011. gowan_horizon.pdf (nyu.edu)

²⁵ Novosseloff, A., "*Can we make peacekeeping great again?*", Global Peace Operations Review, May 9, 2017. Can we make UN peacekeeping great again? | Global Peace Operations Review

²⁶ Tull, D. M., "*Die Peacekeeping-Krise der vereinten Nationen. Ein Überblick über die Debatte.*" SWP-Studie, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut fuer Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Jan 2010. SWP-Studie 2010/S 01, Januar 2010, 30 Seiten (swp-berlin.org)

The latest twist of international security policy occurred on February 24, 2022, when the permanent member of the Security Council Russia attacked its sovereign neighbor state of Ukraine. The post-Cold War era was abruptly ended with this act of aggression. The global impact on international relations, economies and organizations such as the UN and NATO cannot be conclusively assessed at this time.

THE PEACEKEEPING PRINCIPLES – IDEALS AND CHALLENGES

While some resources credit the origin of some or all of the principles of peacekeeping to Dag Hammarskjöld in the context of the Suez crisis in 1956,^{27 28 29} they were actually postulated as early as the first UN observer mission in 1948. The term “Hammarskjöld Principles” is therefore rather misleading in this context. When UNTSO was deployed in the Middle East, Acting Mediator Ralph Bunche already stressed the importance of impartiality and the non-arming of UN observers and thereby the non-use of force. He was the head of the UN Trusteeship Department and later promoted to Under-Secretary-General for special political affairs.

*“This was the first U.N. military-observer group-indeed, the first U.N. peacekeeping operation-and there were no precedents for it. The first and most basic principle was **strict impartiality and objectivity**. Bunche also insisted that the observers should be **unarmed**, something alien to the traditional military mind. He believed that this was vital for the observers' own safety and would put them above the conflict they were monitoring, whereas carrying individual weapons would only endanger them. Bunche's rule became the accepted practice in all U.N. observer missions”³⁰*

Moreover, impartiality and consent are also implied in Resolution 50 of 29 May 1948³¹:

²⁷ Novosseloff, A., “Can we make peacekeeping great again?”, Global Peace Operations Review, May 9, 2017. Can we make UN peacekeeping great again? | Global Peace Operations Review

²⁸ Levine, D., “Peacekeeper Impartiality: Standards, Processes and Operations”, Center for International and security Studies , University of Maryland, April 2010. *peacekeeper_impartiality__cissm_working_paper_.pdf

²⁹ Tsagourias, N., „Consent, neutrality and self-defence in peacekeeping: their constitutional dimension“, University of Glasgow, Mar 27, 2014. *SSRN-id1856570.pdf

³⁰ Urquhart, B., “Ralph Bunche. An American Life”, 1993. W.W. Norton&Company, ISBN 0-393-03527-1, p. 185.

³¹ United Nations, Resolution 50 (1948), retrieved Apr 13, 2022. United Nations Official Document

“The Security Council, Desiring to bring about a cessation of hostilities in Palestine without prejudice to the rights, claims and position of either Arabs or Jews, ...”.

*“Invites the States members of the Arab League and the Jewish and Arab authorities in Palestine to communicate their **acceptance** of this resolution to the Security Council...”.*

As a novelty, armed UN units were deployed to the Sinai in 1956, not only to observe but also to separate the Egyptian army from the invading Israeli, French and British forces by creating a buffer zone to help facilitate the end of the Suez crisis. In his report to the General Assembly, then UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld set out the principles and conditions under which the deployment of the first United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) was to be carried out. This UN force was to be:

- under the command of the UN Secretary-General,
- recruited from UN member states other than the five permanent members of the Security Council due to their involvement in most conflicts during the Cold War,
- paid by the UN,
- present with Egypt’s **consent**³²,
- **impartial** and
- **non-offensive**, using armed force only in **self-defense**.³³

Over the past seven decades, these three basic principles have traditionally served as a compass for peacekeeping missions. The exceptions to the use of force, self-defense and defense of the mandate, have been added successively due to ever-increasing threats and fatalities. The

³² Urquhart, B., *“Ralph Bunche. An American Life”*, 1993. W.W. Norton&Company, ISBN 0-393-03527-1, p. 438,441.

³³ Dorn, A. W., *“Keeping Watch. Monitoring, Technology & Innovation in UN Peace Operations”*, United Nations University Press, 2011, ISBN 978-92-808-1198-8. *KeepingWatch_Dorn_CompleteBook-WithCovers_UNUP_2011.pdf

principles underline the special characteristics of UN interventions for the maintenance of international peace and security and are “inter-related and mutually reinforcing”.³⁴

Consent of the parties. UN peacekeeping missions are based on the consent of the main parties to the conflict. It demands their commitment to a political process and their approval of a peacekeeping operation to support this process. This consent is crucial in order to provide the peacekeepers with the necessary freedom of action both politically and physically to fulfill their mandate. A constant task of peacekeepers on the ground is to observe and obtain this sometimes vulnerable consent, especially when it has been obtained reluctantly through international pressure and in the absence of trust between the parties. However, having the main parties’ consent to deploy a UN peacekeeping operation does not necessarily include the consent at the local level or of all relevant subgroups who are able and willing to spoil the peace process.³⁵ The Capstone doctrine states, “Peacekeeping operations must have the political and analytical skills, the operational resources, and the will to manage situations where there is an absence or breakdown of local consent. In some cases this may require, as a last resort, the use of force.”³⁶ This raises the question whether the principle of consent can be preserved at this point. The experience of recent years has shown that the condition of consent is often not met. Some parties to the conflict refuse to consent to the mission or only hesitantly grant it, which amounts to the same effect (e.g. UNAMID in Darfur and MINURCAT in Chad). In other cases, consent is withdrawn implicitly or explicitly during the peacekeeping operation. This is particularly problematic when the host government withholds or withdraws its consent (e.g. ONUB in Burundi and MONUC in the Democratic Republic of the Congo). Almost all contemporary

³⁴ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

³⁵ Ibid

³⁶ Ibid

peacekeeping operations could be classified in a third category. Due to the high number of parties to the conflict, an agreement between all the relevant parties to the conflict is almost impossible. With the multitude of violent actors, this is a ubiquitous problem in Africa's conflict regions (e.g. MINUSMA in Mali).³⁷

Impartiality. This principle means conducting the task of peacekeeping without favor or prejudice to any of the conflict parties, which is crucial to achieve and maintain consent and cooperation. It should not be confused with neutrality or serve as an excuse for inactivity. The Capstone doctrine uses the very suitable comparison of a good referee who is impartial, but will penalize the violation of rules regardless. The UN peacekeepers can only demonstrate their impartiality by adopting fairness, transparency and communication.³⁸ Nevertheless, they are not immune to being perceived as one-sided, especially in regions with numerous conflicting parties. Often, public opinion in the areas of operation is deliberately manipulated. Particularly in countries where a peace process is still non-existent, there is a significant risk of becoming part of the conflict and of being used by the conflicting parties. This indirectly contributes to exacerbating or prolonging conflicts. UN missions, like any other external interference, always change the constellation of forces within a conflict, strengthening one side and weakening the other. If, for example, an operation is used to freeze a conflict by means of a cease-fire, the militarily stronger party to the conflict will achieve less than by waging war. The further the conflict is located from a political solution, the more likely it is that individual parties to the conflict (usually the militarily weaker ones) will see the peacekeeping mission as an opportunity to improve their situation politically, diplomatically and militarily (e.g. UNOSOM in Somalia

³⁷ Tull, D. M., *“Die Peacekeeping-Krise der vereinten Nationen. Ein Überblick über die Debatte.”* SWP-Studie, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut fuer Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Jan 2010. SWP-Studie 2010/S 01, Januar 2010, 30 Seiten (swp-berlin.org)

³⁸ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

and ECOMOG in Liberia). In rare cases, the militarily weaker party to the conflict tries to bring about or even provoke an intervention in order to gain a more favorable position. Examples of this are the strategies of the rebels in Darfur and Kosovo. From the point of view of at least one party to the conflict (in the case of Darfur, the Sudanese government), it is clear even before the arrival of the Blue Helmets that they are biased.³⁹ The DPKO has recognized the pitfalls of impartiality long ago. For several years, the official stance has been that UN missions can remain impartial towards parties of a conflict, but cannot remain neutral when it comes to defending the mandate⁴⁰. However, this semantic formulation does not solve any problems in ongoing conflicts, where the UN mandate is not clearly articulated or peace agreements are defended that are not sustainable. The Treaty of Algiers for Peace and Reconciliation in Mali, adopted in 2015, could serve as an example.⁴¹

Non-use of force except for self-defense and defense of the mandate. This is the most debated principle in the context of "robust peacekeeping." Many UN members reject a policy of intervention led by military means. From an operational point of view, the use of force is undesirable because it automatically compromises the impartiality of peacekeepers.⁴² Changes began after the Brahimi report. Although Brahimi also confirmed that the principle must continue to apply, he also advocated robust mandates. He stated that the fundamental renunciation of coercive means weakens the credibility of a mission and, in the worst case, even

³⁹ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

⁴⁰ Tull, D. M., *“Die Peacekeeping-Krise der vereinten Nationen. Ein Überblick über die Debatte.”* SWP-Studie, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut fuer Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Jan 2010. SWP-Studie 2010/S 01, Januar 2010, 30 Seiten (swp-berlin.org)

⁴¹ Tull, D.M., *“Mali: Friedensprozess ohne Stabilisierung”*, SWP aktuell (Stiftung fuer Wissenschaft und Politik), November 2016. Mali: Friedensprozess ohne Stabilisierung. Die internationalen Partner sollten die malische Regierung in die Pflicht nehmen (swp-berlin.org)

⁴² Tull, D. M., *“Die Peacekeeping-Krise der vereinten Nationen. Ein Überblick über die Debatte.”* SWP-Studie, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut fuer Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Jan 2010. SWP-Studie 2010/S 01, Januar 2010, 30 Seiten (swp-berlin.org)

eliminates its significance.⁴³ Force may have to be used against so-called spoilers undermining the peace process, and in order to protect civilians from violent assault. Between robust peacekeeping on the one hand and the principle of using force only in self-defense on the other, tensions inevitably arose that even Brahimi could not resolve. Consequently, tensions also increase between the Security Council and those countries that are supposed to contribute soldiers for high-risk operations. Moreover, the reputation of UN peacekeeping missions suffers when robust mandates raise misleading hopes that UN missions could and should enforce their mandates by force of arms. Experience shows that this is only partially successful and the UN is therefore confronted with constant criticism and the stigma of failure.⁴⁴

In addition to these three basic principles, peacekeeping operations must be perceived as **legitimate** and **credible**, particularly in the eyes of the local population. Equally important is the **promotion of national and local ownership** in order to contribute to the achievement of a sustainable peace. In the 2008 Capstone Doctrine, they were included as additional key factors for mission success.⁴⁵

THE PRINCIPLES AND CONVICTIONS OF DAG HAMMARSKJÖLD

Dag Hammarskjöld was the second Secretary-General of the UN from April 1953 until his sudden death in a plane-crash in the former Belgian colony of Congo in September 1961. Speculations never stopped whether the tragedy was more than an accident⁴⁶. During his terms in office, he did not only deploy the UN peacekeeping missions to solve the Suez Crisis, but also

⁴³ United Nations Peacekeeping, “*Report of the Panel on UN Peace Operations (Brahimi Report)*”, retrieved Mar 24, 2022. a_55_305_e_brahimi_report.pdf (un.org)

⁴⁴ Tull, D. M., “*Die Peacekeeping-Krise der vereinten Nationen. Ein Überblick über die Debatte.*“ SWP-Studie, Stiftung Wissenschaft und Politik, Deutsches Institut fuer Internationale Politik und Sicherheit, Jan 2010. SWP-Studie 2010/S 01, Januar 2010, 30 Seiten (swp-berlin.org)

⁴⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

⁴⁶ Williams, S., “Who killed Hammarskjöld? The UN, the Cold War, and White Supremacy in Africa”, New York: Columbia University Press, 2011.

implemented the special representatives. They were assigned to deal with sensitive matters on the ground on his behalf, in order to find solutions for peace and stability. His concept of humanitarian intervention channeled the later standard of the Responsibility to Protect. During the Cold War the UN tried to preserve a neutral role and Hammarskjöld strived not to serve national interests, but to be loyal to the UN Charter. His independent attitude was criticized by all veto-powers at different occasions.⁴⁷

Hammarskjöld's general principles applied to the entire organization and formed the basis for the conditions he set for UN peacekeeping missions. He recognized early on that sustainable peace had to be supported by various factors anticipating the comprehensive approach of today's multidimensional operations. From his point of view these were:

1. **“Equal political rights”** – comprising both the “respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms” in Article 1 of the UN Charter and “the sovereign equality” of all member states in Article 2.
2. **“Equal economic opportunities”** – promoting “higher standards of living, full employment, conditions of economic and social progress and development” as well as “solutions of international economic, social, health and related problems (Article 55).
3. **“Justice”** – the international community must be “based on law... with a judicial procedure through which law and justice could be made to apply”.
4. The **“prohibition of the use of armed force”**, to be “safe in the common interest”.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ Melber, H., *“In the Footsteps of Hammarskjöld: The United Nations and Interventions for Security and Development”*, (Nov 2012). Strategic Review for Southern Africa, Pretoria. Vol. 34., edit. 2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HAMMARSKJÖLD: THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT - ProQuest

⁴⁸ Stahn, C., Melber, H., *“Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency. Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld”*, Part 1-Reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 5 May 2014. Reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld (Part I) - Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency (oclc.org)

These convictions have to be assessed with respect to their historical context and the constraints with which Hammarskjöld had to act. They strongly influenced his assumptions and beliefs. When he was appointed in 1953, a full-fledged war took place on the Korean peninsula and the UN was deeply divided between East and West. Due to the UN's refusal to accept the now communist Chinese regime as a veto-power on the Security Council, the Soviet Union boycotted the Council.⁴⁹ Hammarskjöld assumed the permanence of the Cold War, which meant to him that the Security Council would remain blocked and thereby no Chapter VII actions would be adopted in the foreseeable future. This assumption substantiated his conviction that the UN should attempt to protect as many nations as possible from superpower competition. He vigorously promoted and defended his idea of the "International Civil Servant" including the political independence and neutrality of the Secretariat and the Secretary-General.⁵⁰

Moreover, he believed in the absolute sovereignty of states according to the Westphalian order. The UN existed to protect states from external attack and to keep peace between "sovereigns".⁵¹ Hammarskjöld was further convinced that, in contrast to the Charter's prospect, there was no "existing or conceivable alliance of nations" in order to enforce peace or concede political conflicts. Because of the ongoing blockades of efficient Chapter VII actions, he believed that the main instruments of peacekeeping had to consist of diplomacy and conciliation. They were to be based on respect for the equal sovereignty of states. Consequently, he rejected any form of imperialism or colonialism. The new states should have the same rights as the old

⁴⁹ Bildt, C., "*Dag Hammarskjöld and United Nations Peacekeeping*", UN Chronicle, retrieved Apr 10, 2022. *Dag Hammarskjöld and United Nations Peacekeeping _ United Nations.pdf

⁵⁰ Hammarskjöld, D., "*The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact*", Lecture Delivered in Congregation at Oxford University, Oxford, England, 30 May 1961, Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation. The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact (daghammarskjold.se)

⁵¹ Skidelsky, R., "*Dag Hammarskjöld and the future of the UN*", 17 Oct 2005, published in "The Adventures of Peace", edited by Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Dag Hammarskjöld's Assumptions and the Future of the UN – Robert Skidelsky

ones. He also understood that more members would endorse the office's position towards the permanent members of the Security Council.⁵² As an economist, he knew that sustainable peace and independence are inextricably linked to economic and social development.⁵³

These assumptions and convictions explain the conditions Hammarskjöld established for UN peacekeeping operations and underpin his principles of peacekeeping. UN forces could only be deployed with the consent of the host nation and must not intervene in internal affairs. They would be subordinated to a UN command responsible to the Secretary-General. Security Council veto-powers were not allowed to provide troops. The costs of the peacekeeping missions would be distributed between the member states on a voluntary basis in addition to the ordinary UN budget. The UN forces would be armed only to defend themselves when attacked, because "The moment a peacekeeping force starts killing people, it becomes part of the conflict it is supposed to be controlling and therefore part of the problem".⁵⁴

EFFECTIVE PEACEKEEPING – MORE THAN PRINCIPLES

The question of whether the principles of peacekeeping should be employed for all peace operations or amended based on mission requirements in an increasingly complex and hostile world cannot be considered in doctrinal isolation. They are not an end in themselves, but are ultimately intended to enable successful peacekeeping. Since its foundation in 1945, the UN has not been idle but is constantly adapting to an evolving security environment, resulting in

⁵² Skidelsky, R., "*Dag Hammarskjöld and the future of the UN*", 17 Oct 2005, published in "The Adventures of Peace", edited by Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Dag Hammarskjöld's Assumptions and the Future of the UN – Robert Skidelsky

⁵³ Melber, H., "*In the Footsteps of Hammarskjöld: The United Nations and Interventions for Security and Development*", (Nov 2012). Strategic Review for Southern Africa, Pretoria. Vol. 34., edit. 2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HAMMARSKJÖLD: THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT - ProQuest

⁵⁴ Skidelsky, R., "*Dag Hammarskjöld and the future of the UN*", 17 Oct 2005, published in "The Adventures of Peace", edited by Sten Ask and Anna Mark-Jungkvist (Palgrave Macmillan, 2005). Dag Hammarskjöld's Assumptions and the Future of the UN – Robert Skidelsky

numerous reforms and rationalizations. The same has applied to the evolution of peacekeeping for decades, starting with unarmed observer missions and interposed forces to a comprehensive multidimensional approach under robust mandates. Even the peacekeeping principles, enshrined in the 2008 Capstone Doctrine, have been adapted to a certain degree, recognizing the need to address the complex challenges of intra-state conflicts and civil war.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, the principles have limits to their applicability that cannot be solved by a doctrine; they should not be considered as a given in any situation. However, they can serve as a starting-point to empower the Secretariat in assessing the realistic feasibility of a peacekeeping operation, as some missions would benefit from being led by other sub-regional, regional or international groupings.⁵⁶

Numerous factors influence the use of the principles and the success of peace operations. When a peace process is either nonexistent or unstable, the UN presence might be instrumentalized by the different conflicting parties, putting enormous stress on the guiding principles of peacekeeping and the capabilities of those missions. These unsatisfactory and often dangerous conditions on site additionally fuel the controversy among the multiple Troop Contributing Countries (TCCs). European and Western countries support robust missions but only represent five percent of all contributors, while the larger TCCs like Bangladesh and Pakistan are increasingly reluctant to expose their soldiers to these situations. Blue helmets are often deployed to remote areas and vast countries that are far from their home countries' strategic interests. Relatively small contingents limit their ability to act effectively and to protect the population. Mandates are elaborated without most of the troop contributors, which does not foster any risk-taking, but enhances the division between the large TCCs and the mandating

⁵⁵ United Nations Peacekeeping Operations, Principles and Guidelines, 2008. capstone_eng_0.pdf

⁵⁶ Novosseloff, A., "*Can we make peacekeeping great again?*", Global Peace Operations Review, May 9, 2017. Can we make UN peacekeeping great again? | Global Peace Operations Review

Security Council.⁵⁷ In particular, the principle of non-use of force except for self-defense and defense of the mandate is difficult to maintain under such difficult circumstances on the ground and the gap between troop contributors and decision makers disturbs the cohesion of peacekeeping missions.

Additionally, the absence of political goals or strategy leads to a disproportionate importance of military tasks on a tactical and operational level and exposes the missions to unnecessary risks. This only deepens the trenches between the different stakeholders of peacekeeping and inevitably results in mission failure.⁵⁸ A purely military initiative is never successful. The value of a comprehensive approach to achieve sustainable peace has long been recognized. In addition to building a functioning security sector and fighting corruption, socio-economic development is of crucial importance and was already one of Hammarskjöld's basic convictions.⁵⁹

Another impeding factor to successful peacekeeping is the chronic underfunding of the UN. The international organization was never funded with adequate financial and military means by its member states to have a significant impact in challenging environments. In 2017, the total budget of peacekeeping operations was equivalent to 0,4 per cent of the world's military expenditures, which was about eight billion dollars. As of 8 April 2022, 84 of 193 member states have paid their regular budget assessments in full. Such financial limitations require hard choices and prioritizing with respect to operations to launch as well as protective equipment and

⁵⁷ Novosseloff, A., "Can we make peacekeeping great again?", *Global Peace Operations Review*, May 9, 2017. Can we make UN peacekeeping great again? | *Global Peace Operations Review*

⁵⁸ *Idem*

⁵⁹ Williams, P.D., Bellamy, A.J., "Understanding Peacekeeping", 2021, 3rd edition, Polity Press, ISBN-13: 978-0-7-456-8671-4

technological assets to procure. Consequently, the ability of self-defense and defense of the mandate as well as fulfilling the responsibility to protect may be at stake.⁶⁰

Moreover, deployed units suffer from a lack of interoperability. Basic English as a common language, frequent personnel rotations and inhomogeneous training standards on the specific methods of peacekeeping hamper collaboration and professional performance according to the guiding principles. Those units also often miss political support, in particular from the powerful members of the Security Council who could influence the conflicting parties. Thus, peacekeepers sometime “fight” their last stand, often denigrated by host governments and operating at constant risk.⁶¹

This point touches on the crucial problem of drafting clear mandates and important resolutions. In addition to the above-mentioned aspects, the configuration of the Security Council with its five permanent veto-members significantly affect effective peacekeeping, since they ultimately decide on the mandate. In order to protect their own interests, decisions are blocked without restraint, which would serve the actual purpose of the UN, namely to secure world peace, uphold international law, protect human rights and promote international cooperation. Since the veto-powers can also overrule any change in the structure of the Security Council, voluntary relinquishment of power in favor of a more equitable distribution of seats is realistically not to be expected. The only option would probably be to dissolve and reestablish the organization. This bold idea, however, would run the high risk that no agreement on a new statute would be reached, many powerful contributing states would no longer join and the only

⁶⁰ United Nations, General Assembly of the United Nations, Committee on Contributions, retrieved Apr 17, 2022. Contributions received for 2021 for the UN Regular Budget - Committee on Contributions - UN General Assembly

⁶¹ Novosseloff, A., “*Can we make peacekeeping great again?*”, Global Peace Operations Review, May 9, 2017. Can we make UN peacekeeping great again? | Global Peace Operations Review

formal and informal international discussion forum of this kind would be lost⁶². The current war in Ukraine tragically illustrates the dilemma. Russia, a permanent member of the Security Council has launched a war of aggression on its sovereign neighbor accompanied by serious violations of international law. In doing so, Russia demonstrates the utmost disregard for the UN Charter and indifference to common goals and values. A condemnation of Russia as the undeniable aggressor by the Security Council is impossible, because Russia can prevent it by its own veto. No measures, which might be adopted by the General Assembly applying the “Uniting for peace” resolution 377 to bypass the Security Council, are binding⁶³. This brazen demonstration of “might is right” makes impartiality, consent and the non-use of force a distant prospect, even if a ceasefire and a UN-led peacekeeping operation, however designed, were eventually to take place.

Considering all these challenges to modern peacekeeping and to the UN in general, some of Dag Hammarskjöld’s principles and beliefs are surprisingly up-to-date and still far from being addressed. The interests of the great powers and the permanent members of the Security Council still outweigh those of all other members, while there is little appetite for “equal political rights”. He was convinced that, in contrast to the Charter’s prospect, there was no “existing or conceivable alliance of nations” in order to enforce peace or concede political conflicts. Industrialized countries remain reluctant to support the promotion of “equal economic opportunities” despite its recognized stabilizing effects. The “sovereignty of states” and the

⁶²Bosco, D. “*Assessing the UN Security Council: A Concert Perspective*”, *Global Governance* Vol. 20, Oct-Dec 2014, 545-561. DOI:10.1163/19426720-02004005. Assessing the UN Security Council: A Concert Perspective - ProQuest

⁶³ Tagesschau, “UN Sicherheitsrat, Resolution gegen Russland scheitert“, Feb 26, 2022, 00:12 hrs, [UN-Sicherheitsrat: Resolution gegen Russland scheitert | tagesschau.de](https://www.tagesschau.de/ausland/2022-02-26-un-sicherheitsrat-russland-scheitert)

“rules and laws” of international coexistence are frequently violated as the current Ukraine war cruelly demonstrates.⁶⁴

Nevertheless, UN peacekeeping remains one of the most important, beneficial and inexpensive tools in managing international crisis and its basic principles should generally be maintained. The UN as a whole may not be perfect, but it is invaluable as a common platform for dialogue⁶⁵. Dag Hammarskjöld’s famous quote at the end of his speech to the University of California’s Convocation on 13 May 1954 reflects this very insight:

“It has been said that the United Nations was not created in order to bring us to heaven, but in order to save us from hell. ...that sums up as well as anything I have heard both the essential role of the United Nations and the attitude of mind that we should bring to its support.”⁶⁶

CONCLUSION

The UN should maintain the basic principles of peacekeeping - consent, impartiality and the non-use of force except for self-defense or defense of the mandate - as a guidance and starting-point for peacekeepers, both on the ground and at headquarters. Supplementing factors for success are legitimacy, credibility and the promotion of national and local ownership. At the same time, however, the ability to adapt these principles individually to the realities of a peacekeeping mission must be present. It is not the frequent publication of new doctrines and reports that lead to success, but the implementation of the findings in practical action. This can

⁶⁴ Stahn, C., Melber, H., *“Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency. Rethinking Human Security and Ethics in the Spirit of Dag Hammarskjöld”*, Part 1-Reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld. Published online by Cambridge University Press: 5 May 2014. Reflections on Dag Hammarskjöld (Part I) - Peace Diplomacy, Global Justice and International Agency (oclc.org)

⁶⁵ Bosco, D. *“Assessing the UN Security Council: A Concert Perspective”*, Global Governance Vol. 20, Oct-Dec 2014, 545-561. DOI:10.1163/19426720-02004005. Assessing the UN Security Council: A Concert Perspective - ProQuest

⁶⁶ Melber, H., *“In the Footsteps of Hammarskjöld: The United Nations and Interventions for Security and Development”*, (Nov 2012). Strategic Review for Southern Africa, Pretoria. Vol. 34., edit. 2. IN THE FOOTSTEPS OF HAMMARSKJÖLD: THE UNITED NATIONS AND INTERVENTIONS FOR SECURITY AND DEVELOPMENT - ProQuest

only be accomplished by unambiguously worded mandates and rules of engagement (ROE) that clearly address the principles within the given constraints and restraints. Blue helmets should not have to interpret vaguely worded mandates and ROE on the ground. Defined tasks and a desired end state presuppose political goals and a strategy. It is crucial to mission success and reputation that they match the available resources on the ground in terms of force strength, equipment and training in order to avoid inflated expectations and the withdrawal of troop contributors. Rapid deployment and robust posture will come by setting the limits to peacekeeping that all troop contributors agree with. The Security Council's operational capability is of decisive importance in this respect because a divided council weakens UN peacekeeping operations.⁶⁷ Unfortunately, a fundamental reform of the Security Council's structure is not to be expected in the near future, which will continue to result in a limited ability to act and vague compromises. The recent resolution to justify a veto within ten days before the General Assembly as a consequence of the Ukraine war, could be seen as a small step in the right direction.⁶⁸

Nevertheless, the aspects described have the potential to increase the likelihood of feasible, successful missions and thereby ultimately support peacekeepers to comply with the principles of peacekeeping.

⁶⁷ Novosseloff, A., “*Can we make peacekeeping great again?*”, Global Peace Operations Review, May 9, 2017. Can we make UN peacekeeping great again? | Global Peace Operations Review

⁶⁸ NTV, “*Blockade im UN-Sicherheitsrat. Reform zwingt Veto-Mächte zu Rechtfertigung*“. Apr 26, 2022, 20:53. <https://www.n-tv.de/politik/Reform-zwingt-Veto-Maechte-zu-Rechtfertigung-article23291512.html>

FIGURES

Figure 1: “Types of activity and operations designed to support peace”

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