**General Assembly Fourth Committee**


“The UN's impartiality allows it to negotiate and operate in some of the toughest places in the world. And time and again, studies have shown that U.N. peacekeeping is far more effective and done with far less money than what any government can do on its own.”

- Ban Ki-moon, Former United Nations Secretary-General

United Nations peacekeeping operations are tasked with maintaining peace and security, protecting civilians, facilitating political processes, and the protection and promotion of human rights and the rule of law. There are currently 16 peacekeeping operations on four continents made up of over 112,000 personnel. These operations, including the deployment of United Nations Police (UNPOL), are widely recognized as critical to the maintenance of international peace and security and often take place in fragile States. Ensuring that these missions have adequate resources, including financially, logistically, and in terms of information and communication technologies, human resources, and general and administrative backing has long been a priority for the UN. The General Assembly Fourth Committee regularly addresses how to improve field support and ensure not only that there is adequate staffing for each mission, but that those staff are receiving the financial, logistical, and material support they need.

**Background:**

*Foundations of Peacekeeping Operations*

The United Nations, not having its own military force, has always relied on Member States to supply personnel, equipment, and expertise. The Security Council is the only body that can define or modify the mandate of a peacekeeping operation, and there are principles that missions must always adhere to, including: consent of the parties, impartiality, and the non-use of legal force except in self-defense or defense of the mandate. UN peacekeeping began within a few years of the formation of the UN when the Security Council passed a resolution allowing for the deployment of military observers in the Middle East. This early mission had a narrow focus, but

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the purpose of UN peacekeeping has evolved over time, and has grown to be supported by an ensemble of administrators, political specialists, human rights experts, electoral observers, humanitarian workers, police officers and legal experts. This early mission, like most early UN peacekeeping operations, had a strict mandate limited to monitoring, observing and reporting. As the nature of conflict shifted and the international community recognized a need for missions to serve more functions, a change started to occur. Starting in the 1990s, largely in response to the Agenda for Peace, a report by then Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali that advocated for the concept of “peacebuilding,” advisory, mentoring, and training functions were further integrated into peacekeeping functions. It was at this critical juncture in the reformation of United Nations peacekeeping operations that UNPOL began to engage in advisory, mentoring, and training capacities, and in many cases, are utilized in order to allow peace operations the opportunity to act as a corrective mechanism with domestic police and other law enforcement agencies. Over the past decade, the Security Council has recognized that, in certain situations, even more robust mandates are needed, in some cases authorizing peacekeepers to use “all necessary means” in defense of civilians or in defense of their mandate. The evolution of these mandates has been accompanied by a similar evolution in the support mechanisms that are required to assist them.

Changes in Peacekeeping Operations

In the early days of peacekeeping, those Member States that contributed troops also contributed a bulk of the logistical and field support, with oversight and minimal support offered by the UN Office of Special Political Affairs. In 1992, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) was formed, which continues to provide strategy and operational support. The establishment of the DPKO marked a significant shift in the management of peacekeeping operations, with the UN taking a higher degree of control. In the late 1990s, particularly within the UN administered Kosovo, the former Yugoslavia, and East Timor, the number of UN police skyrocketed as these operations required a significantly more involved presence than past efforts. In these missions, the UNPOL were given an executive mandate to safeguard law and order while facilitating the launch of new domestic police service. In the years to follow, over a dozen missions were established, requiring a huge ramp up in funding and other support.

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9 Ibid.
12 Ibid.
15 Fréchette, "UN Peacekeeping: 20 Years of Reform."
The rapid expansion of peacekeeping operations, paired with a recognition by many in the international community that the UN had failed to intervene to prevent hundreds of thousands of deaths in Rwanda and Bosnia and Herzegovina in the mid-1990s, led to the creation of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, which met in 1999. Their major report, the Brahimi Report, noted many weaknesses in peace operations and noted that operations “must be properly resourced and equipped, and operate under clear, credible and achievable mandates” in order to be successful. Throughout the 2000s, there were calls for a major overhaul of peacekeeping operations. Many experts and diplomats were increasingly recognizing that the mechanisms in place to manage the operations was insufficient and inefficient. In 2007, the Secretary-General split the DPKO and formed the Department for Field Support (DFS), creating necessary leadership positions in the process.

Structure of the DPKO and DFS

Today, the DFS and DPKO now form the bulk of back-end support for peace operations and have expanded functions and provide high levels of support for peace operations. The DPKO has four offices, including: the Office of Operations, which provides strategic and operational guidance for missions; the Office of the Rule of Law and Security Institutions, which supports Member States with security sector reform and coordinates the work of the UN Police; the Office of Military Affairs, which handles the military deployment and capabilities, including working to improve efficiency and effectiveness; and the Policy Evaluation and Training Division, which develops and delivers training and coordinates actions both within the UN and with external partners.

The DFS has a narrower focus, principally providing the ICTs and logistical and administrative support necessary for peacekeeping operations to function. The DFS is split up into several functional divisions, including: the Field Personnel Division, which provides human resources support and recruiting, in addition to collecting and managing internal information; the Field Budget and Finance Division, which prepares and organizes budgets and handles the financial management of peace operations; the Logistics Support Division, which handles UN logistics and coordinated with external partners, including for air and ground transport; and the Information & Communications Technology Division, which handles all field communications and deployment and management of technology.

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**Current Issues:**

*Personnel Issues*

Although past efforts to reform peace operations have resulted in more modern and efficient systems for field support, many challenges remain. These include challenges in managing personnel, which are likely the most apparent and numerous, but also challenges in ensuring that peacekeeping operations have the necessary initial and continuing support to be efficient and effective.

There are numerous personnel issues related to peacekeeping staff and peacekeepers themselves. Among the most widely publicized are issues related to sexual abuse. Cases and allegations of sexual abuse have been routinely leveled against UN Peacekeeping, especially in Africa. The most recent allegations arose from an Associated Press report that not only outlined documented child sex abuse by peacekeepers in Haiti, but also noted over 2,000 allegations over the past 12 years.\(^{20}\) While the General Assembly Sixth Committee has sought methods to ensure that these peacekeepers can be held legally responsible, the DFS has attempted to scale up services to victims and Secretary-General Antonio Guterres has made it a priority to improve UN response to allegations of sexual abuse.\(^{21}\) Some Member States have found progress to be too slow; however, and several demands have been made for the UN to do much more to stop sexual abuse or lose the voluntary funding that is needed for peacekeeping to continue.\(^{22}\)

Many argue that a lack of training and support for the personnel themselves is a key reason for continued misconduct. Studies over the past decade have identified that untreated mental illness is common for peacekeepers both during and after service, with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) being common, especially amongst troops provided by developing States.\(^{23}\) Additionally, due to a lack of sufficient staffing on peacekeeping missions, there has been an increase in fatigue among deployed personnel. Some deployed troop formations and police contingents are also stretched to cover geographical areas that exceed their capacities, which threaten both the safety and security of the personnel, and adversely affect their capacity to implement their mandate.\(^{24}\) Troops from industrialized States often have higher levels of training before serving as peacekeepers and retain the support of the contributing country in service, but they constitute a small percentage of overall peacekeeping personnel. While there are UN institutions meant to help train peacekeepers, including a network of Peacekeeping Training Centers, they are ill-equipped

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\(^{21}\) Ibid.

\(^{22}\) Ibid.


to handle the current levels of personnel.\textsuperscript{25} There have been repeated calls for increased vetting of peacekeepers, increased support for their mental and physical health, and better support and monitoring in the field, but implementation of these goals remains a challenge.\textsuperscript{26}

\textit{Logistics, Deployment, and Finance}

The internal personnel issues faced by UN peace operations are compounded by the nature of peace operations themselves. There are no standing troops or funds for peacekeeping; when the Security Council recognizes the need for a new mission and passes a resolution as such, it can take weeks or months to encourage Member States to increase their troop and financial contributions to make a mission possible.\textsuperscript{27} Further, the UN’s methods for procurement of necessary food and equipment have been identified as inefficient and subject to favoritism, corruption, and other abuse.\textsuperscript{28} Internally, some experts have stated that, while much progress has been made, the need for reform of peace operations is ongoing, and there are still major efficiencies that could be addressed.\textsuperscript{29} Some have also identified that there is an ongoing need for more resources to be provided to the UN such that they can handle their own logistics and deployment rather than rely on the cooperation of Member States in every instance.\textsuperscript{30} These suggestions have been met with resistance, however, due in part to their cost, and in part to political objections by some Member States.

\textbf{Future Outlook:}

The UN and its peacekeeping operations are viewed globally as a force for democracy, unity and peace, but there is widespread recognition that the support required for them to uphold their mandate is lacking. Peacekeeping operations suffer from insufficient levels of oversight and accountability. As instability grows in many regions of the world and the global refugee crisis reaches unprecedented levels, the importance of the UN peacekeeping operations remains crucial in the overall maintenance of international peace and security. Recent controversy has tarnished the credibility of UN peacekeeping operations, and the UN must actively seek to address the logistical pitfalls which allowed such detrimental incidents to occur. While massive improvements have been made in the last few decades, the DPKO and DFS still have numerous opportunities for improvement, and the Secretary-General is actively seeking methods to improve the state of peacekeeping operations. The General Assembly Fourth Committee regularly examines how to improve peacekeeping operations, but coming up with concrete solutions to persistent challenges has proven difficult.

\textsuperscript{26} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.
Focus Questions:

1. Is your Member State a troop-contributing or police-contributing country?
2. Has your Member State hosted a peacekeeping operation? Your region?
3. What are the most pressing issues in the management of peace operations?
4. How can the DFS and DPKO be strengthened?
5. What steps can be taken to maximize the effectiveness of peacekeeping operations?
Bibliography


