



INTELLIGENCE AT THE UNITED NATIONS FOR PEACE OPERATIONS

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Abstract:

Since the end of the Cold War, peacekeeping has assumed a renewed saliency and importance. Intelligence in general and peacekeeping intelligence in particular, has long been highly sensitive subject at the UN. In this sense this piece wishes to contribute to a better understanding of the necessity of timely and adequate intelligence support for political and military decision makers during any international peacekeeping operation. Good intelligence is always important to both soldiers and policy-makers can be crucial in any kind of conflict. The UN intelligence efforts in peacekeeping operations have thus been limited. Some improvements have been made, but the further development of intelligence capabilities raises a number of important issues that point to mayor constraints and possible inherent limits on what the UN can achieve.

Keywords: Intelligence, peacekeeping, United Nations.

Resumen:

Desde el final de la Guerra Fría, el mantenimiento de la paz ha adquirido una renovada importancia. La Inteligencia en general y la dedicada al mantenimiento de la paz en concreto, ha sido largo tiempo un tema muy sensible en las Naciones Unidas. En este sentido, este trabajo desea contribuir a una mejor comprensión de la necesidad del apoyo de una Inteligencia actual y adecuada para los decisores políticos y militares durante las operaciones internacionales del mantenimiento de la paz. Poseer una buena Inteligencia es siempre importante tanto para soldados y como para decisores políticos, pudiendo ser crucial en cualquier clase de conflicto. Las Naciones Unidas han realizado diferentes esfuerzos en lo que inteligencia para operaciones de paz se refiere. Sin embargo estos esfuerzos han sido muy limitados. El desarrollo de unas capacidades creíbles de inteligencia merece un completo análisis de estudio, ya que en última instancia estas capacidades condicionaran lo que las Naciones Unidas puedan conseguir en el futuro.

Palabras clave: *Inteligencia, operaciones de paz, Naciones Unidas.*

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Introduction

The so-called classic peacekeeping by UN forces was a success for many decades. It was the only possible way for the UN during the bi-polar system to act in a military way. But in the early nineties, when the bipolar system of power did not function any longer, the UN made the mistake of approving peacekeeping missions with the same set of rules and principles which did not fit to the changed security situation. The mission in Bosnia in the mid nineties was an example in which the UN failed as a result of using the old concept which did not fit to the changed security environment. It showed that UN missions could not always be impartial and non-threatening. As a result of the failed UN missions on the Balkans but also in Rwanda and Somalia the UN started with a revision of its concept.

The report of Mr Brahimi in 2001 stated very clearly that UN peacekeeping missions should be more robust and more backed by a wider mandate to act in accordance to the situation on the ground.² Indeed since the end of the Cold War, Peace Operations have assumed a renewed saliency and importance. The end of the cold war gave rise to an expansion in the mandates, scope, and capabilities of UN peace operations. The UN moved to centre stage in world affairs, with missions of greater scope and authority, and its need for accurate and timely intelligence increased proportionately. In peace operations, in particular, the threat is often much more diffuse and harder to identify than in conventional military operations. The enemy is less clear defined and regular military forces can be largely absent. They present a wide range of difficult problems particularly internal conflicts or the breakdown of law and order, characterised by civil war with strong national and ethnic overtones, and involve intentions, overt and covert motives and a sheer number of actors that are extremely hard to survey.³ Furthermore, as is often the case in civil wars, the civilian population is a prime target. The war is hence fought over wide areas, without any clear front lines, featuring large-scale massacres, rapes, and destruction of cultural heritage. The most important features, however, are probably the volatility and dynamics of the conflict. As far as Brahimi is concerned, “in some cases local parties consist not of moral equals but of obvious aggressors and victims, and peacekeepers may not only be operationally justified in using force but morally compelled to do so.”⁴

Now more than ever intelligence is always important to both soldiers and policy-makers and is crucial in these kinds of conflicts. However, Intelligence in general and “peace operation intelligence” in particular, have long been a highly sensitive subject at the United Nations (UN). However, there is a need for a different interpretation of the impartiality of an international peace operation. In principle, precisely because international forces under U.N mandate can not necessarily rely on as good an information flow as would be forthcoming in a national command structure and because they likely to be up against irregular forces with a vastly superior knowledge of the local terrain, they need to compensate for shortcomings in intelligence collection, assessment and distribution, by being active themselves in the generation of their own local, tactical information base.

Many failures in the history of U.N field operations might have been avoided if the U.N had taken a more forthright approach to intelligence and possessed a stronger mandate to

² United Nations: *Report of the Panel on UN Peace operations (Brahimi report)*, A/55/305-S/2000/809, 21 August 2000.

³ Erikson, Par: “Intelligence in Peacekeeping Operations”, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence* Vol. 10, No. 1 (Spring 1997), p. 1.

⁴ *Brahimi Report, op cit.*, p. ix.



gather information and improve its information-gathering systems. In this sense, this paper wishes to contribute to a better understanding of the necessity on timely and adequate intelligence support for political and military decision makers during any international peace operation under UN mandate.

1. The problem of the concept “Intelligence” within the UN terminology

As Frank Van Kappen, pointed out “The subject of matter is not only complex, but also controversial”.⁵ In addition, terminology problems blur the discussion. What is considered collecting information by some is considered intelligence gathering by others, what is labelled “strategic intelligence” by some is labelled “espionage” by others.

By design and definition the UN has to be a highly transparent organization and in 1960 it was suggested that the word “intelligence” should be banned from the lexicon of the UN.⁶ Indeed, the UN continues to shy away from official use of the term because of its association with illegal or undercover activities, such as spying, theft, and distortion, with which the UN would not (and should not) be involved. The traditional attitude within the UN system is that intelligence gathering is contrary to the open nature of the UN system and is therefore absolutely forbidden.⁷ In this sense the UN is reluctant even to use the word “intelligence”. Due to political sensitivities, for many years intelligence within the UN was not considered an acceptable term, activity or process of “Intelligence” preferring the term “information” in order to avoid the usual connotations of subterfuge and secrecy.⁸ “Intelligence” also implies the existence of enemies or at least rivals, a suggestion that the UN is naturally anxious to avoid.

The quasi-official Peacekeeper’s Handbook goes so far as to state “The UN has resolutely refused to countenance intelligence systems as part of its peacekeeping operations, intelligence having covert connections, is a dirty word”⁹ The UN’s reasoning for this is that: “...Any covert intelligence is liable to create prejudice and suspicion... Trust, confidence and respect from the essential fabric on which a successful peacekeeping operation needs to be based. “Spying does not help towards this end”.¹⁰ Hence, the Canadian military doctrine actually states: “The term “intelligence” carried negative and covert connotations. To ensure the operations of the peacekeeper appear to be impartial, trustworthy and overt, the term “information” will be used in place of “Intelligence”.¹¹ Although as Paul Johnston magnificently describes:

⁵ Van Kappen, Frank: “Strategic intelligence and the UN”, in Platje, Wies, Neville-Jones, Pauline, De Jong, Ben and Steele, Robert D. (eds.) (2003): *Peacekeeping Intelligence: Emerging Concepts for the Future*, Oakton, OSS International Press, p. 3.

⁶ Dorn, Walter A.: “The Cloak and the Blue Beret: Limitations on Intelligence in UN Peacekeeping”, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (Winter 1999), p. 414.

⁷ Erikson, *op cit.*, p. 1.

⁸ Smith, Hugh: “Intelligence and UN Peacekeeping”, *Survival*, Vol. 26, No. 3 (1994), in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

⁹ *International Peace Academy, Peacekeeper’s Handbook* (1984), New York, Pergamon, p. 39.

¹⁰ Johnston, Paul: “No Cloak and Dagger Required: Intelligence Support to UN Peacekeeping”, *Intelligence and National Security*, Vol. 12, No. 4 (October 1997), p. 103.

¹¹ Canadian Forces Publication 301(3) Peacekeeping Operations, (1992), Section 618, para.1, sub-Para-e.



In fact, an examination of the UN's own definition and vocabulary reveals that not only does the UN conduct "Intelligence" by any other name, but most of what UN actually do is "collecting intelligence" whether they want to admit it or not. In that sense classic Western military intelligence doctrine defines information as a raw data, whereas intelligence is the end result of processing this raw data and drawing pertinent conclusions.¹²

2. The concept of secret in the UN

One of the first stumbling blocks that the UN encounters in the use of intelligence is the issue of secrecy. Because, despite of the UN recognised that secret information-gathering and handling is often required to achieve its noble ends, and that under certain circumstances, secrecy of information is unarguably essential, the UN cannot afford to lose credibility or tarnish its image as an honest broker and impartial mediator by having competing parties accuse it of using covert methods to gather information.

Today secret intelligence is even more important in modern multidimensional operations with their expanded responsibilities, election monitoring, arms control verification, law enforcement agency supervision... Although the UN still had many challenges and limitations in dealing with secret intelligence. One of the main reasons is that the UN does not have guidelines to govern the methods of intelligence, to determine which material is to be kept secret, at what classification level, and with what means, to uphold rules of secrecy or workable procedures for declassification.¹³

The ability to carefully and wisely distinguish between what should be open and what should be secret (and for how long) is the key to creating confidence within both the UN and the international community. An effective confidentiality system is necessary to maintain the proper balance, whether in the Security Council, at UN headquarters, or in the terrain. In this regard, the UN is weak in comparison with that of most governments, and devotes few resources to it. The mayor nations have been reluctant to give the UN a greater intelligence mandate because to many of them, intelligence is power, and they believe their own power would be threatened by a UN that possessed real intelligence, especially intelligence they may themselves not have. Ultimately, more resources must have be devoted to strengthening the UN's intelligence capacity if it is to engage in proactive peacekeeping and conflict resolution to prevent future wars, genocide's and other crimes against humanity.

The UN now realized that the basic "overt intelligence" must be provided in order to ensure force protection and enhance the capability of the force to achieve its mandate. In a UN or multinational mission it is necessary that there is a free flow of information relevant to the mission for all participants. The only restriction should be measures taken to protect the sources. The main problem is that one UN principle is that *information* and its storages has to be public open and transparent. In this ideal world the UN have access to open sources which they get from the warring factions, third parties and their own forces. It must be reasoned that by information provided to the UN will sooner or later become public knowledge. There are inevitable political reasons for this release of information. The fundamental reason for the openness of UN "intelligence" is the fact that the organization is international and its personnel is multinational.¹⁴ Firstly, on the political level, states tend to have diverse interests

¹² Johnston, *op cit*, p. 105.

¹³ Dorn, *op cit.*, p. 417.

¹⁴ Smith, *op cit.*, p. 233.



in any peace operation. Secondly, the loyalty of personnel working directly and indirectly for the UN will tend to lie, in the last analysis, with their own country. Another factor contributing to the openness of U.N intelligence is the transparency of peacekeeping operations, which are normally accessible to the world's media in a way that national military operations are not¹⁵. The U.N finds it very difficult to prevent reporters from moving around an operational area, the result of a lack of authority as well as a lack of resources, so that the media is often only limited in their access by the unavailability of transport.

Despite the many problems in the security of intelligence at the UN, there are two compensating factors. First, is the short lifespan of much intelligence, once it becomes widely known, most intelligence ceases to be sensitive because the event has already occurred or relevant action has been taken. Provided that sources and methods are not compromised, which is generally less of a problem in the case of the UN, subsequent disclosure is not necessarily undesirable.

A balance between secrecy and openness obviously needs to be achieved. While information secrecy should be situation-dependent, guidelines for the classification of information are valuable. The emphasis should be on openness, but, in cases where secrecy is warranted, it should be strictly maintained. As A. Walter Dorn pointed out "The information should be open unless by divulging it the UN would: Result in death or injury to individuals, bring about failure of a UN mission or mandate, violate the right to privacy of one or more individuals; or compromise confidential sources or methods"¹⁶.

3. The necessity of intelligence

To gain strategic advantage in order to avoid war and bloodshed, nations require accurate information and insight. The same applies to crisis management and international peace support operations¹⁷.

The traditional view on UN peacekeeping operations is that they do not need an intelligence service that provides long-term predictions. Their "information service" mainly compiled and presented reports on whatever events that had occurred. But this kind of information is hardly insufficient today.¹⁸ Firstly, since the great powers do not control the clashing parties as much as they used to, and since peace operations forces now often deploy in the middle of an on-going volatile conflict, the risk of attacks on the peacekeepers has increased and, for the sake of their own safety, they therefore need to know more about the situation in the area. Secondly, the more complex tasks, involving ethnic, social, and nationalist factors, as well as difficulties in trying to identify the combatants, demand a profound insight in the parties' nature, interest and activities. Thirdly, the UN and other international organizations cannot afford to have less knowledge of the parties' intentions and activities than the parties themselves if the organisations desire to achieve any political tasks at the negotiating table. Fourthly, considering the great powers' vast intelligence capacity, the parties may actually believe that the world community knows more than it really does. And finally, an intelligence service is needed to predict conflict in advance in some kind of UN

¹⁵ *Ibid*, p. 240.

¹⁶ Walter, *op cit.*, p. 436.

¹⁷ Valimaki, Pasi: *Bridging the Gap: Intelligence and Peace Support Operations*. in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 47.

¹⁸ Erikson, p. 3.



early warning system. But the main problem is that the majority of UN members do not want to be put under “observation” by UN.

Early warning signals appear most clearly to those immediately around the disputants. Early warnings need to be integrated into locally based early response mechanisms in a compelling manner. Having reliable information on what is going right and where, is thus of immense value to today’s peacekeepers, whose responsibilities continue to expand. In addition, monitoring cooperation, and conflict, and both situations and events, and then actively supporting response mechanisms in the face of an early warning signal is very important in today’s peace operations. Collaboration on peace-generating factors builds trust between peacekeepers and the local population. In return, affected groups are more likely to confide sensitive information to peacekeeping forces: “hence forces need good relationship with the local population. If the local populace is not on the side with the peacekeepers, they will not get the intelligence that they need”.¹⁹ Paid informants and participatory observers face different incentives and constraints, even as they both carry a bias in their observations. While the informer may be driven by pecuniary rewards, participatory observers have a stake in the information they collect and in the way this information is used. Almost everyone now recognizes that preventing violence before it breaks out is much easier than resolving a conflict once blood has been shed.

On the other hand the peace force must protect both its integrity vis-à-vis the fighting parties and the organisation’s (OSCE, UN...) ability to achieve political success in negotiations²⁰. At the same time it is not morally acceptable to send soldiers to a war zone without proper knowledge of the situation. The peace force must make clear to the parties that collected intelligence does not reach their adversaries that the main purpose of this intelligence is to facilitate peace negotiations and the successful execution of the peacekeeping operation.

Proposals have been made for the establishment of a permanent intelligence unit within the UN. The Australian Foreign Minister, Senator Gareth Evans, for example has suggested for example that “a group of professionals from various countries with expertise in intelligence... be recruited and approved by the Security Council”²¹ The group, it was suggested, would have access to classified information in order to provide independent advice to the council but several concerns exist about this and similar proposals.

In 1987, the Office for Research and the Collection of Information (ORCI) was established as an effort to streamline the Secretariat and cut repetition in functions relating to political assessments and analysis. The US were reluctant to the new office, Senators Bob Dole and William Roth in a letter to the UN Secretary-general they charged that the new office could “provide a cover” for Soviet espionage in the US and that it would “gather information on the internal political situation of member states, a definite UN intrusion into domestic affairs.”²² With an initial staff of 20 members, understaffed, under-equipped, and unable to hire new staff from outside the UN system, it could not devote the time and effort needed for deeper analysis of pressing international issues. Though it had an “Early Warning System” it did not issue significant early warnings. When Boutros-Ghali arrived as Secretariat

¹⁹ Ankersen, Christopher: “Peacekeeping Intelligence and Civil Society”, in Carment, David and Rudner, Martin (eds.) (2006): *Peacekeeping Intelligence: New Players, Extended Boundaries*, Oxford, Routledge, p. 137.

²⁰ Erikson, *op cit.*, p. 4.

²¹ Evans, Gareth (1993): *Cooperating for Peace: The Global Agenda for the 1990s and Beyond.*, St. Leonards, Allen and Unwin, p. 163.

²² Dorn, *op cit.*, p. 67.



General in 1992, he created the DPKO to manage the burgeoning practice of UN peacekeeping that was quickly becoming a centrepiece of the organizations response to many post cold war conflicts.²³

A situation centre was created within the DPKO in 1993. This was to be more than the “cable room” that had existed in the office for Special Political Affairs, but not the nerve centre for command and control commonly found in national defence establishments. Boutros-Ghali had advocated in 1992 in his land-mark report *Agenda for Peace* the necessity of early warning and the necessity of preventive diplomacy. To uncover the deeper forces underlying conflicts, the DPKO needed a way to tap into the vast information networks of national governments, with their numerous embassies and sophisticated intelligence agencies. The major powers did not want to send information to the Secretariat without having someone linked to them (their man) inside the UN to handle and more carefully disseminate sensitive information. The result was the creation in September 1993 of the Information and Research Unit, composed of officers on secondment from the governments of four of the five permanent members of the Security Council: France, the UK, Russia, and the US. But its staff maintained substantial links to the intelligence services of their home countries, most having come from these agencies. There were many fears that the US could manipulate UN decision-making by providing selective and biased information.

In 1998, about ten countries decided to create a permanent headquarter that could be called up for PKO the United Nations Standby Arrangements System.²⁴ The headquarter was established in Copenhagen (Denmark) and acted perfectly for the first time in a classic PKO (UNMEE) in Eritrea. It is apparent that any development of UN intelligence will be heavily shaped by a small group of Western nations. They, almost exclusively, have the knowledge, experience and global research that is required. Such developments will serve to emphasise the hegemony of the mayor Western powers, in terms not of military power, but of information. Substantial reliance on Western intelligence by the UN could well produce an adverse reaction from the majority of its members outside the club. Unless the five permanent members of the Security Council (the United States, Great Britain, France, China, and Russia) commit themselves to participation in these missions then without doubt the same old problems will again be left to deploy troops into ill-defined situations, with unrealistic expectations, leading in turn to further problems of the kind that Brahimi and his colleagues have identified for elimination.²⁵ If troop contributing nations continue to regard their forces as their ‘own’ and feel at liberty to backslide on decisions taken centrally when they feel so inclined, we have a situation of parallel national operations rather than international or multilateral operations. In such a situation, one can hardly hope for anything other than parallel national intelligence support²⁶.

4. Basic Principles in Peacekeeping Operations

It is hard to envisage the possibility of capable and effective peace operations without the availability of good quality timely, intelligence. At the same time, since most peace

²³ *Ibid*, p. 69.

²⁴ *United Nations Standby Arrangements System (UNSAS)* is a list of military assets of the UN member states, which are in principle available for peacekeeping operations.

²⁵ O’Shea, Brendan: “The Future of UN Peacekeeping”, *Studies in Conflict & Terrorism*, 25 (2002), p. 145.

²⁶ Aldrich, Richard J.: “From Ireland to Bosnia: Intelligence Support for UK low Intensity Operations”, in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 96.



operations forces of any size, involving a mission of any complexity, are almost certainly going to involve troops of more than one nationality, the requirement for providing and using intelligence poses a challenge not encountered in one nation forces²⁷. In peace operations there does not exist as such a baseline for which operational and tactical level intelligence officers are trained. There is no clear structure, no clearly defined tasks and operational plans, no basic rules, and no clearly defined weapons capabilities to assess capabilities and intentions. However, decision-makers will continue to assess whether strategic coercion can be used. This requires the assessment of different variables and factors that are politically, demographically, and economically related, as well as context dependent. Military capabilities and intentions exist, but are not the only key factors. Detailed and precise information is imperative to decision-making²⁸. In this sense, there have to be some generally accepted basic principles which all forces involved in an operation sign up.

In any peace operations the starting point has to be minimizing the risk to the forces involved while maximizing their effectiveness. The acceptable level of risk is a crucial issue, and is not just a matter for the military²⁹. Civilian public opinion tends to have strong views. A level of risk perceived as acceptable in cases where defense of the homeland is involved will not necessarily be acceptable in the context of providing security to societies other than one's own. As a general proposition, it is fair to say that peace operations will only be politically sustainable at national level, if the levels of risk evolved for the peacekeepers are not disproportionately high in relations to the goals of their mission. Suffice it to say that it is not only the increased risk for the peace forces but also the fact that the root causes of civil wars and failure states are complex and require a multidisciplinary approach. The military operation alone will not create a sustainable peace, it only provides the security umbrella underneath which the real peace process has to take place. I am personally convinced that the lack of strategic intelligence has been an important factor in the failure of a number of UN operations. The fact is that the UN has no intelligence capability of its own and is totally dependent on the member states for intelligence support. For strategic intelligence the UN is mainly dependent on the permanent members of the Security Council³⁰.

In any multinational peace operation, there is likely to be more than one way of "peacekeeping" in evidence. An emphasis in the field on heavy armed and force protection, resulting in less flexible patrolling and less contact with the local population, will be likely both to generate less useful tactical intelligence and to rely on it less. A more extended concept of "peacekeeping", in which troops get out and about, patrolling with the aim of making local contact, will generate more and need more. Strategic intelligence, and top down information generally which extends the range of the individual unit's information base, increasing its ability to predict correctly the movement of hostile forces and to interpret accurately the longer range significance of activity in the immediate locality, will all be vital assets in threatening environments.

Intelligence in peace operations has to be able to support three primary goals: firstly, winning public confidence through a 'winning the hearts and minds' or at least 'winning passive acceptance campaign; second, misinformation spread by the paramilitaries and by spontaneously generated damaging rumours, and third, spreading misinformation to damage or unbalance the paramilitaries. In peace, responses to direct and indirect threats must be as

²⁷ Neville-Jones, Pauline, in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. iv.

²⁸ Valimaki, Pasi: "Bridging the Gap: Intelligence and Peace Support Operations", in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

²⁹ Van Kappen, Frank: "Strategic intelligence and the UN", in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 3.

³⁰ *Ibid.*



much political/ psychological as military. Intelligence is a vital component of ‘soft’ political, economic, psychological, and moral power, supported by information operations, careful intelligence work, and surgical precision at the more direct military or police level³¹. Intelligence has a strong role to play in supporting policy-makers attempting to negotiate solutions to bitterly divided communities.

5. The problem of Intelligence sharing

One obvious problem in the organization of intelligence in peace operations is the issue of unilateralism versus multilateralism. In Peace Operations the countries are working in the context of the UN or NATO, which created unique problems that arose out of international liaison and intelligence sharing amongst troop contributing nations³². In this sense there are also differences in attitude between the various nationalities. Some countries will reject the development of an intelligence capacity because they do not appreciate the significance or because they consider it inappropriate for the UN³³.

The UN system has therefore potentially an inherent and considerable capability to produce intelligence. The problem is that the Humanitarian side of the “house” has understandably no intention whatsoever to co-operate. Hence the ability of national contingents to collect and process intelligence within their area of operations will vary enormously. The troop contributing countries also have to reach agreements about how and to whom the information should be disseminated³⁴. It is therefore important to have both human and technical sensors all over the conflict area. Although a UN operation does not have its own recognisance units. The tasking of intelligence collection in these international peace support operations remains mainly a matter for individual nations and the intelligence alliances to which they belong.

The genuine difficulties that exist for member-states in providing information to an international organisation cannot be ignored, especially by an organization that does not have effective security classification procedures or security practiques. National agencies are, therefore, likely to retain their natural concern with compromising sources, national-security classification requirements, sensitivity towards neighbours and allies, third party restrictions, on formation that has been illegally obtained and domestic political factors.

Another problem is that sometimes the intelligence was only provided face to face, verbally and with the caveat that the information could only be shared with a limited number of officials mentioned by name and with nobody else. It was sometimes extremely difficult to work effectively under these circumstances and to maintain the necessary team spirit. Often intelligence is not shared with the UN Secretariat because the nation that owns that information is afraid its intelligence sources may be compromised, or else certain technical capabilities may be revealed.

³¹ Aldrich, *op. cit.*, p. 73.

³² *Ibid*, p. 75.

³³ Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

³⁴ Some troops contributing nations appointed officers without intelligence training and some of them had insufficient knowledge of the conflict.



6. Possible sources of information within the UN

Apart from the different international Organizations related to the UN, such as the *International Monetary Fund (IMF)*, or the *Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)*, among others, the UN can call upon any of its over 180 members to provide information and since the end of the cold war there are signs that member-states are increasingly willing to respond.³⁵ Even if the mayor powers do not have personnel in a particular mission, they may well be willing to assist the operation by providing intelligence. In encouraging member-states to contribute intelligence for peacekeeping, the UN can take various approaches. One useful strategy is to play off one state against another. Another strategy is to establish permanent channels of communication with member-states³⁶. Although, the force always remain in the control of the countries involved and furthermore the troop quality varies greatly from contingent to contingent in matters of discipline, training and economic conditions³⁷. But national control is not always an evil; the UN 's own control system does not always function in a wholly rational manner, so outside influence is sometimes necessary.

The UN's intelligence efforts in peace operations have thus been limited both in terms of planning and of conducting peacekeeping operations. Some improvements have been made, but the further development of intelligence capabilities raises a number of important issues that point to major constraints and possible inherent limits on what the UN can achieve. An important step in this direction was the creation in 1993 of a Situation Centre at UN headquarters to monitor peacekeeping operations. The centre, however, does more than simply pass on information received from various transmissions to the UN Secretariat. Within the situation centre at the United Nation Head quarters (UNHQ) in New York a separate section was formed, *A research and information cell* that interprets information received from the field and combines it with data obtained from a wide variety of other sources. Intelligence experts from the five permanent members of the Security Council command this section. These experts have access through their national channels to the intelligence agencies of their respective nations. Request for intelligence information from the various departments within the Secretariat can be put forward through this section to the intelligence agencies of the permanent members. It is for example not clear who is in charge of this section how it is managed and how is responsible for what³⁸.

6.1. Collection

Because of the political sensitivity on many UN missions, limitations are often placed upon the collection of information³⁹. Collection in peacekeeping intelligence has been always difficult because meting that requirements has always been difficult to reconcile with NATO derived assumption that intelligence collection is national, and unsuitable for international command. Nevertheless it would be realistic to expect that most of "in-theatre intelligence collection" will remain under national control. The same applies equally at the top level.

³⁵ Smith, *op cit.*, p. 241.

³⁶ *Ibid*, p. 243.

³⁷ Herman, Michael: "Intelligence Doctrine for International Peace Support", in Platje *et al.*, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

³⁸ Van Kappen, *op cit.*, p. 5.

³⁹ Johnston, *op cit.*, p. 106.



A) Human Intelligence

Liaison officers are in privileged position to collect information from the local authorities⁴⁰. Liaison officers attached to the peace operation units to handle relations with local groups and units, military as well as civilians, generally have somewhat sensitive relations with the intelligence component⁴¹. UN Military Observers (UNMO's) are unarmed officers who are supposed to monitor the developments, establish contacts with and between the parties, and act as the UN's feelers in what are often the world's most troubled areas.

The UN would make use of spies or agents or resort to bribery and blackmail in its quest for information. Such covert information gathering would be seen as contrary to the ethic of peacekeeping and a breach of the sovereignty of the targeted nations. It also leaves all parties to a conflict suspicious of what the UN might know or what the UN might mistakenly believe about them. The subsequent revelation of covert activities would also prove highly embarrassing and counter-productive. Indeed, there are many sources of information that can be turned into intelligence for peacekeeping purposes and access to them is perhaps the least of the difficulties surrounding UN intelligence.

When it comes to local contacts and sources, one should always consider why they want to help the peace support operation. It is quite obviously that their motives are often less noble than we expect them to be. The military peace support force does not operate alone. Most often, civilian organizations, with different corporate cultures, and their own approach to intelligence and security are present in the region too. All these organizations collect information. This means that procedures need to be agreed upon to permit a smooth sharing of relevant intelligence, before the start of the operation. The most ideal solution is the creation of a fusion center⁴², where representatives of the various organizations come together and share and exchange intelligence in an organized way.

B) Technical intelligence

The technical means of gathering information may suffer not only a lack of relevant sources, but also from inherent problems. Aerial photography is often an attractive option, having the advantages that it is cheap, simple and compared to satellite photography, requires little interpretation. It is also a capability possessed by over 50 states. It seems unlikely that the UN would acquire its own satellites or sophisticated radar systems within the foreseeable future. It is, first of all, a political problem; many states are reluctant to give the UN large independent surveillance resources⁴³. SIGINT continues to prove itself very useful today, both at the strategic and operational level, to find out whether atrocities such as ethnic cleansing were carried out under orders from superior commanders or what kind of contacts there are between the two conflicting parties at the operational level, to predict the parties' actions, to find out whether a weapons firing was intentional or not, to locate combat units, and so on. Technical intelligence plays a vital role even in low level conflicts. That is one of the main

⁴⁰ Theunens, Renaud: "Intelligence and Peace Support Operations: Some practical Concepts", in Platje et al., *op. cit.*, pp. 61-72.

⁴¹ Erikson, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

⁴² Theunens, *op. cit.*, pp. 61-72.

⁴³ Erikson, *op. cit.*, p. 10.



lessons learned by the UK in Bosnia regarding communications, Richard J. Aldrich has pointed out that “rigorous communications security is essential, even against non state enemies”⁴⁴.

C) Open Sources

To reduce reliance on member-states, the UN can make use of open sources that are becoming increasingly varied and accessible. There are traditional public sources used by journalists, scholars and other investigators, books, journals, magazines, industry publications, government publications... In that sense for current information, the most accessible open sources are television and radio networks. In recent years, the world information market has grown even wider as certain governments have sought to make money through the sale of information. Russia has opened its archives to arise hard currency, while the central intelligence agency (CIA) in the US is also declassifying material for sale. In fact, between open sources and the information being generated by the sources currently available to the UN, there is probably enough information out there to provide whatever intelligence the UN needs. In that sense Hugh Smith makes the point that the UN needs good intelligence at all levels.⁴⁵

6.2. Analysis

Certainly there is no international staff, at the UN and elsewhere, specifically charged with putting different national assessments together and producing their own, non-national judgements, and no formal mechanism through which national leaders can discuss assessments collectively before arguing about decisions and policy.⁴⁶

6.3. Distribution and dissemination

The dissemination phase is quite affected in peace operations too. Such dissemination normally requires the approval of national headquarters and may require the sanitising of information. A further distinction may be drawn between intelligence that can be retained by other states and intelligence that can be shown to, both not retained by, other states. In practice, too, contingents may use their own distinction in passing on information and informal networks will develop among contingents.

Conclusion

In the post-Cold War era priority must be given to the "classic" requirement of foreign policy, that of ensuring the safety and welfare of the state and its citizens. This is especially so when it comes to the military instrument of foreign policy, which is best suited for protecting national interests and curbing the external behavior of others. Today's political environment is significantly different and, in important ways, more complex. All this creates opportunities for, and places special pressures and constraints on diplomacy and armed force. Liberated

⁴⁴ Aldrich, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

⁴⁵ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 108.

⁴⁶ Herman, *op. cit.*, p. 159.



from the danger that military action will lead to confrontation between superpowers, Western alliances are now freer to intervene. Moreover, only the United States possesses the means to intervene “*decisively*” in many situations, in particular those that are more demanding militarily. Yet U.S. means are limited; there will always be more interests to protect than resources to protect them. The United States can do anything, but not everything. There remains a need to choose whether to intervene. In this sense in the 21st Century the role of the international institutions in general and of the UN in particular will be fundamental if we can not forget its credibility have been damage after the US “*invasion*” on Iraq in 2003.

If there are new reasons as well as new opportunities for the UN to use force, there are no longer any clear guidelines for when and how to do it.⁴⁷ In the foreseeable future, no single overarching foreign policy doctrine or touchstone is likely to command widespread popular and elite support. This is an inevitable reflection of a more complicated world characterized by a diffusion of economic, political, and military power and relationships that resist easy or permanent categorization.

There are 18 active UN peacekeeping missions stood at over 69.000 people, added to which there were some 15.000 international and national civilian staff and UN volunteers in the field, bringing the deployed total to 84.000 personnel. These numbers together with those operations with personnel not under UN command (such as in Kosovo, Afgnistan, Iraq, and the Solomon Islands) underline the extent to which such operations place high demands on the international community.⁴⁸ A particularly challenging aspect of recent complex peace operations has been a broadening of mandates, and including with regard to the use of force. This evolution has necessitated progressive shifts form “classical peacekeeping” (traditionally associated with Chapter VI mandates and under the “Blue Helmet” command) through various phases to regional actions (for example, by ECOMOG and ECOWAS in West Africa in the 1990s), to the trend toward UN operations themselves being assigned Chapter VII mandates.

Increasingly, operations have taken on a hybrid character, with two or more organizations responsible for different elements of the international response. Complex, multinational, multicultural and multi-dimensional peace operations normally take place in difficult political, security, economic and humanitarian environments and therefore require effective co-operation and coordination. Coordination implies cooperation. However, the question of who should carry out such activities has resulted in overlapping of interest and responsibilities and at times institutional clashes between the different actors, raising questions with regard to policy aspirations versus operational capacity.⁴⁹

On the other hand, the consequences of weak, fragile or failed states, and the threat of terrorism, differ in significance form country to country and from region to region. However, both sets of challenges constitute a serious threats to life, property, social stability, public order and established governmental authority, and have impelled the international community to devise actions to address them, including robust multifunctional peace operations under Chapter VII mandates and specific countermeasures against terrorism.

⁴⁷ Eland, Putting I. (2001): “*Defence*” Back into U.S. Defence Policy: Rethinking U.S. Security in the Post-Cold War World, Westport, Praeger, p. 142.

⁴⁸ Elanders, Gotab (ed.) (2006): *Meeting the challenges of peace Operations: Cooperation and Coordination*, Sandöverken, Folke Bernadotte Academy.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.



The peace operations deployed in this kind of states have needed mandates covering a wide spectrum of tasks, often far beyond the traditional training and duties of soldiers and police. Now UN peacekeepers have to be regarded as being at much higher risk, and according much greater caution has to be exercised in their deployment. Moreover, great security arrangements involve greater cost, adjusted operational concepts and techniques, and the new situations argue for much better field intelligence, to anticipate and to thwart such attacks.

During recent years, a great emphasis has been placed on the idea of human security, focusing on human life and dignity, rather than narrower and more “traditional” security concerns. Evolving concepts outlined in a number of reports have recognized that the traditional concept of sovereignty is changing, and that there is a wider acceptance of the need for the international community and regional entities to act early, not only to address problems in states of concern and to prevent humanitarian disasters, but also to assist failed or weak states to recover.⁵⁰ The concepts of “partnership” and “ownership” become critical to a sustainable peace process. National and local authorities and the public must be treated as partners and become owners of the process, supported by the international community. There is no place for international military rhetoric that talks about “enemy forces”, or civilian organizations, including NGOs, who go ahead with their own operational concepts and priorities without consultation with local authorities.

We can conclude that constraints on the use of intelligence structures and personnel for direct missions, either by the UN or by other coalitions involved in peace operations, seem to be diminishing. The key difference between the “complex emergencies” and traditional peacekeeping operations has been the attempt to coordinate the political, diplomatic, economic, and military approaches to resolve *a crisis* in much more complicated environments.⁵¹ However as we have seen the correct use of intelligence by the United Nations presents some problems. The difficulties that the United Nations encountered with the use of intelligence in peace operations can be summarized as:

First, The UN has resolutely refused to countenance intelligence systems as part of peacekeeping operations; intelligence, having covert connections. “The parties to a conflict in a PSO environment may be suspicious of all intelligence-related activities. They are likely to regard the gathering of intelligence itself as a hostile act.”⁵² Mention of intelligence and its importance to the success of peacekeeping missions is still largely absent from the UNDPKO website there is no intelligence division in its organizational chart and it is not a topic listed in its best practices section. Further, the word intelligence is entirely absent from the most recent handbook on peacekeeping.

The growing requirement for intelligence can be evident on the ground in relation to basic force-operation issues. The tragic loss of the Special Representative and the other UN personnel killed in the bomb attack on the UNHQ in Baghdad brought home the lesson of the lack of intelligence structures in the UN and the resultant poor situational and threat awareness as well as a failure to plan for the worst-case scenario on both tactical force protection and operational levels.⁵³ A conceptual issue that the UN faces is the need for a

⁵⁰ *Ibid.* 40

⁵¹ Lawrence, Cline: “Operational Intelligence in Peace Enforcement and Stability Operations”, *International Journal of Intelligence and Counterintelligence*, 15 (2002), p. 179.

⁵² *The Military Contribution to Peace Operations*, Joint Services Publication 3–50, Peace Support Operations, at http://coe-dmha.org/PKO/USA04/images/references/jwp3_50.pdf.

⁵³ Carment and Rudner, *op. cit.*, p.xxi



transition in thinking. Specifically, the need for member states to accept that peacekeeping and peace enforcement operations need to be planned on sound military assessment and not around present political sensitivities, with the mindset that the military contribution can be upgraded later.

With common definitions of national interest more elusive than ever, building political consensus around specific foreign policies is more difficult. Foreign policymaking is also often complicated further by the participation of individuals and groups holding very different views of national priorities.⁵⁴ All this is taking place in a context of heightened media scrutiny and coverage where intelligence in peace operations will remain mainly a national activity and no ready-made solution is available to the problems of harnessing it properly to international peace support.⁵⁵ Nations should aim to make their national product available for international assessment, and assessment of this kind should be a standard ingredient of international decision-making. Intelligence agencies remain conservatively shy organisations which are loyal to their national governments, but their allegiance to a single state raises an important consideration. With the gradual erosion of the state, loyalties are becoming confusing and problematic. In this sense, we must understand that many of the peace operations under a United Nations mandate could be of high interest to some states. For this reason, “Effective military intelligence can be conducted on UN missions without compromising political sensitivities, so long as proper intelligence fundamentals are respected. The UN need not fear any of this intelligence work, *no cloak and dagger* are required, just the efficient management of the information which UN missions are already collecting in any event”⁵⁶.

Sadly, despite the increasing paradigm shift that UN member states are making toward recognizing the need for intelligence, the Brahimi report recommendations relating to peacekeeping intelligence have not yet been fully implemented. This is due to reluctance on the part of the member states to take action.

Establishing fundamental communications is the essential first step in the cooperation process. There is no place in today’s complex missions for “stovepipestyle” operations, isolationism and the promotion of narrow goals. Experience has demonstrated that within operations there are a number of formal ways to facilitate such communication: agreed exchanges of information and reports, regular meetings, establishment of liaison officers, memoranda of understanding, joint reconnaissance, common boundaries, task forces/groups, and joint civil-military facilities. In a less formal sense, irregular or issue-specific meetings can assist in the process of exchanging information, as can use of the web with a greater promotion of (OSINT) and, even, taking every opportunity for casual interaction. Even with formal relationships established in formal ways of communicating, it is crucial to establish informal ways of exchanging information.

Credibility and reliability from participants act as catalysts for effective coordination. While much time and energy are spent on attempting coordination between international actors, regrettably little time is devoted to ways to improve this partnership with the local population. From the outset it is important to include the media and academia in early contacts, and to progressively engage groups in a process of reconciliation; groups such as veterans, youth people and religious leaders to name a few. It is important that the

⁵⁴ O’Hanlon, Michael (1992): *The Art of War in the Age of Peace: U.S. Military Posture for the Post-Cold War World*, Westport, Praeger, p. 39.

⁵⁵ Herman, *op cit.*, p. 163.

⁵⁶ Johnston, *op cit.*, p. 102.



international community acknowledge the opposition leaders in a fledgling democracy, lest the impression be given that the international community is supporting only existing leadership. Improving liaison is an important aspect to achieve information haring. To do that is would be necessary to set basic guidelines, an approach to common activities, laying out the fundamental principles, practices and procedures normally to be followed in meeting the mandates of such operations. The UN, in full cooperation with individual member states, needs to further refine the guidelines, doctrine and policy for multifunctional peace operations, and then seek to distribute the products widely in the UN official languages.

Finally, the intelligence education manuals and courses developed for peacekeepers may also include the training of mission-unique skills. This could include, among other things, training in the languages and cultures of the region of operations. Since *peacekeeping Intelligence* almost always involve questioning of refugees and members of different factions of warring groups, training might also involved working with local translators of the region. The skills necessary to compare the doctrines, write the cases and identified the missions-specific knowledge necessary of mission success all currently lie within academia. Under my own point of view, it is here where academics, specialists in peacekeeping or intelligence, perhaps can help the commander more quickly develop the intelligence management plan in whatever form it takes. Academics also bring increasingly powerful and analytic techniques to the table.⁵⁷

Another conceptual issue is the critical need for the member states to recognize that intelligence in the twenty-first century must focus on OSINT, on many smart analysts working together, and on analytic tools. Member states need to empower the technical and analytic capability of the UN by creating the structures, post, and process for information liaison and analysis.⁵⁸ Analysis, or the intellectual task of understanding complex and often incomplete or contradictory information, is the key to the intelligence process. Another possible outcome from this situation may be the recognition that PKI requires the more nuanced linguistic and cultural skills that are unviable in Washington or London. Thus membership in the Organization of Africa Unity or the Arab League may provide greater credentials for future PKI staff.

Dissemination of the information used in U.N. report formats is another important issue to improve, as numerous leaks exist in the U.N. system. It is important to disseminate sensitive information on a need-to-know basis, avoiding large distribution channels. protecting methods andns ources. However, as Paul Johnston says “Intelligence is not about secrecy; it is about learning what is going on by the rigorous analysis of all available information, and, most importantly, by the active tasking of information collectors to confirm or deny what one thinks one knows”.⁵⁹ All this is still an open field of study, so there should be no reason why the UN cannot provide effective intelligence support to its own peacekeeping missions. In this sense, the efficient gathering and processing of information, and the dissemination of information, is critical to the success of peacekeeping missions and the safety of mission personnel. Most of the times the crucial information of personalities, motives, and intents, can only be obtained through traditional (Humint) means. Poor intelligence means you often do not have the right forces with the right equipment at the right place and time. In that sense while the sources and associated products attract considerable attention, largely due to the

⁵⁷ Heibel, Robert, Bhattacharya, and Wheaton, Kristan: “Enabling Intelligence in Peacekeeping”, in Carment and Rudner, *op. cit.*, Oxon, p. 182.

⁵⁸ Carment and Rudner, *op. cit.*, p.xxi.

⁵⁹ Johnston, *op cit.*, p. 111.



technologies involved, they cannot provide complete knowledge of the environment, local attitudes, emotions, opinions, identities and importance of key players and their role in the situation.