

Professionalization of Peace Operations

Causes, Dynamics and Effects

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Abstract

Peace operations have not only become “multi-dimensional”, but also highly professionalized. The report goes through what professionalization entails, identifies some of its effects, and discusses some of its implications for on-going debates about ways to make peace operations more effective. One central claim is that professionalization entails increased differentiation and specialization of tasks: the different dimensions of peace operations – protection of civilians, rule of law, democratization etc – are becoming ever more refined and specific and defined through best practices and guidelines. Professionalization may thus result in an increase in coordination challenges. Another claim is that the different tasks that make up post-conflict reconstruction are endogenous rather than exogenous to professional groups’ search for and nurturing of authority: professional actors have interests, and they advance these in part by seeking to define what is to be governed and for what purpose, which helps secure their authority over specific tasks. Thus, professionally shared conceptions of what is to be governed, how and why may be more important than organizational affiliation. The implication of this is that current debates about the need for more coordination and better integration of security, humanitarian and developmental concerns – as in the concept of Integrated Missions – may be off target. Integrating or coordinating between the tasks controlled and performed by professional actors will not be achieved by organizational reform but requires changes in and alliances between professional groups’ conceptions of governance.

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Introduction

As the UN has taken on ever more complex and ambitious tasks since the early 1990s, there have been a steady growth and institutionalization of professional standards. The professionalization of the UN peace, development and humanitarian machinery has, however, gone largely unnoticed in the academic and policy literature. There has certainly been a lot of research and policy discussion about the need for better training, the development of best practices, and – more recently – for the establishment of a fully-fledged strategic framework for peace operations and auxiliary activities (i.e. DPKO's Capstone Doctrine and New Horizons). There has also been considerable discussion of the need for better coordination and integration between the different units that partake in post-conflict reconstruction – notably through the Delivering as One initiative and Integrated Missions. But there has not been much attention to what the process of professionalization implies and how it may affect the nature of the work done by the actors involved. This report seeks to fill that gap. It looks at the professionalization process within the UN as it relates to the response to violent conflicts. The purpose of the study is to assess some central insights about the process and effects of professionalization from sociology and organizational studies, and to show how these insights can contribute to better understandings of the dynamics of peace operations.

The report is organized as follows: I first elaborate on why it is important to understand and discuss post-conflict reconstruction without making heroic assumptions about the actors' core interests and normative commitments. I then consider in some detail insights from organizational theory and the sociology of professions about the process of professionalization and its effects on governance practices. One central insight is that shared conceptions of what is to be governed, how and why is more important than organizational affiliation. Another is that how peace, relief and protection are defined is not at all exogenous to professional groups' search for and nurturing of authority: Professional actors have interests, and they advance these in part by seeking to define what is to be governed for what purpose, which helps secure their authority over specific tasks. I then illustrate how military professionals, humanitarian actors and civilian peace builders have markedly different conceptions of what is to be governed, how, and why. I conclude by reflecting on the implications of these findings for the currently popular idea that better coordination between distinct UN entities can increase effectiveness.

Do-gooders as professional actors

In his introduction to the DPKO's doctrine for peacekeeping – the Capstone Doctrine – then Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guehenno emphasized that it formed part of a more long-term effort to professionalize peacekeeping. He noted that “In order to meet the challenges posed by the unprecedented scale and scope of today's missions, the United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) and the Department of Field Support (DFS) have embarked on a major reform effort, *Peace Operations 2010*, aimed at strengthening and *professionalizing* the planning, management and conduct of United Nations peacekeeping operations” (2008: 3. Emphasis added). The ICRC similarly notes that the central motivation behind the development of “Professional Standards for Protection Work” is that “the absence of common *professional standards* can ... lead to situations in which protection work could actually cause harm to the very people and communities it seeks to protect. It is now generally agreed that an effective protection response demands adequate *professional competence*...” (ICRC 2009: 7. Emphasis added).

That these two documents both stress the importance of professionalism in dealing, respectively, with peacekeeping, peace building and the protecting civilians is no coincidence. Nor is it a coincidence that they are produced at about the same time – in 2008 and 2009. Both documents stress not only *that* the development of professional standards and principles is important. They also both point out that given the variety of skills needed to perform these tasks and the professional background of those involved, a most central challenge is to manage and resolve conflicts and tensions that emanate from different professional backgrounds and competencies. The Capstone Doctrine says, for example, “Peacekeeping personnel will come from diverse national and professional backgrounds (including from significantly different civilian, military and police working cultures) which may cause friction...” (DPKO 2008: 65). And the ICRC makes a point of stressing that whereas in the past, humanitarian and human rights actors were often at loggerheads in terms of their professional priorities and professed values, the single most important goal of the document is to establish a set of shared “baseline” professional standards that can align and bring humanitarian and human rights actors and organizations to work better together.

Against this backdrop, there are good reasons to analyze peacekeeping and protection as performed by professional actors in the sense that they form a “group with common work”. (Abbott 1988: 20). In suggesting that these actors are fruitfully understood as professionals, I am not arguing that they form well-bounded professions, such as the legal profession or the medical profession. But I do want to suggest

that the different actors involved in post-conflict work of different types form loosely bounded or proto-professions. They do so because they perform ‘common work’ on the basis of a set of either practical or academically generated conceptions of what is to be governed, how, and why. A key distinction between these professional groups and typical professions should be noted, however: with the exception of military professionals, those engaged in peace operations and humanitarian relief form a professional group not necessarily by virtue of a shared educational background. In stead, it stems in no small part from practical work and experience, on the one hand, and from codified and abstract knowledge emanating from this experience and from associated research, on the other.

A key implication of this perspective is that the contents of these conceptions of governance are not given, but evolve over time through discussions, negotiations and trial and error where professional actors play a crucially important role. These conceptions are often defined in and through discussions at the field level and through processes aimed at distilling guidelines and best practices, and depending on how these are defined, some groups gain and others lose control over central tasks. Hence, a largely overlooked aspect of the process through which dominant conceptions of peacekeeping and protection work change is that of the discussion, competition and also conflicts between distinct professional groups themselves. Put more starkly, the contents of a given task – such as peacekeeping, protection, or development – can be seen as temporary settlements of inter- or intra-professional debate and competition.

What is peacebuilding? What is protection?

It is exceedingly hard to define “peace”, “security”, “protection” and “needs” according to external standards. In imposing a given definition of what constitutes peacebuilding, for example, we run the risk of imputing it with a meaning that it may not have in practice. Similarly, in studying humanitarian relief, we may start out by observing that these actors adhere to and defend the principles of neutrality and impartiality, but that does not tell us much about how these principles are interpreted and acted upon in practice. Nor does it tell us much about whether or not the meaning and operationalization of these principles are changing, both as a result of external factors – such as the targeting of humanitarian workers – and as a result of changing ideas about the meaning of humanitarianism by humanitarian workers themselves (cf. Barnett and Weiss 2008).

How peacebuilding is constituted and delimited is thus not given by a set of abstract attributes against which peace builders’ norms, frames,

or organizational behaviour can be assessed. Similarly, while we can certainly get a sense of what “protection” is by looking at relevant international legal documents, Security Council resolutions and mission-specific strategies for protection, we risk overstating the importance of such documents for what practitioners actually do when they do protection work. Assuming in advance that the meaning and nature of protection and peacebuilding is given exogenously to the practices of governing in different settings often means projecting or reading into them a set of pre-conceived, often normatively laden, conceptions about what they should be. If one wants to assess the efficacy or appropriateness of protection and of peacebuilding, it makes sense to establish an external yardstick. But it is not very helpful if we want to capture peacebuilding or protection as a set of interrelated social practices, the meaning of which inheres in how professional actors think of and actually do their work (Adler and Pouliot, n.d.).

Despite the sophistication of some of the research on peacebuilding, there is an implicit assumption that there *is* some externally given standard for what peacebuilding really is or should be. This is what is implied in Barnett and Finnemore’s (2004) reference to the “pathological” behaviour that they find in the UN’s Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO), in Paris’ (2003) argument that peacebuilding is “constrained“ by specific world society norms, and in Autesserre’s (2009) account of the misleading “cognitive frames” that peace builders use in the Democratic Republic of Congo. For these authors, the central explanation of the functioning of peacebuilding is primarily located in factors that are external and contingent, not internal and constitutive. By shifting focus to the practices that the actors involved partake in, it is possible to identify the *performative* aspect of peacebuilding in terms, for example, of how peacebuilding emerges with its distinct meaning and significance in and through how peace builders categorize and understand the countries where they intervene in particular ways, how they judge different types of knowledge, and how they perceive of their own role.

I should stress that policy documents and mandates from the UNSC evidently are important in grasping what protection, and peacebuilding, is all about. Moreover, I do not mean to imply that turf battles and organizational rivalry are unimportant. Rather, I want to suggest that organizational rivalry and debates about the boundaries of humanitarian space can be better understood when we see *where* these differences in view come from, and *how* they are advanced. And here, distinctly professional actors’ shared conceptions of what is to be governed, how and why are central. One important implication of this is that organizational integration or coordination will *not* lead to more effective approaches, as the fundamental differences that are played

out *as* organizational turf battles have to do with divergent conceptions of governance rooted in conceptions of governance. Hence, it is necessary to consider more seriously how shared conceptions of governance can be established and institutionalized.

To make headway in terms of integrating disparate elements of a peacebuilding strategy, therefore, it might be as important to consider how conceptions of governance emerge, change and can be institutionalized across a wider set of professional actors, than to focus on the establishment of new organizational units or their integration into a new structure. A case in point is the new intelligence-gathering unit in UN integrated missions – the so-called Joint Missions Analysis Cell (JMAC). Shetler-Jones (2008) reports, for example, that these have not resulted in any significant integration between disparate elements of any integrated missions, in no small part because there are conflicting interpretations and priorities by the actors involved – what I here call conceptions of governance. Shetler-Jones notes, for example, that development-oriented staff does not want to be subordinated to information from the JMAC because it is perceived to privilege security concerns over developmental ones. The implication of this is that conceptions of governance – the substance contents with which and from which actors define problems and seek to address them – appear more important than organizational positions.¹ But what characterizes professional actors’ work, and what do their operations imply for our understanding of peace operations and other post-conflict efforts?

Authority, Expertise, Professionalization

In an eloquent summary of the character of the professional, Thomas Brante recalls how he and a friend had to fix their car in Italy back in the late 1970s. The car all of a sudden did not go faster than 32 miles per hour. Having searched for and eventually found a garage, a man whom the other workers referred to as “Il Professore” entered the room:

“an elderly gentleman dressed in a white doctor’s coat arrived. .. He ordered the young men to open the hood and start the engine. He began to walk slowly around the vehicle, hands behind his back, bowing his head and listening. After a few minutes he spoke a few quick words to one of the mechanics and left. *Il Professore* had given his diagnosis and a prescription. *Il Professore* listened to various symptoms. He focused on some of them. From the symptoms, he could draw on his knowledge of more general principles, in this case, the structure and operation of car engines, deducing (retroduction) what caused the unwanted symptoms. Judging from his attitude to his me-

¹ I owe this take on organizational affiliations and professional background – where the latter is seen as potentially more important than the former – to Leonard Seabrooke.

chanics, *Il Professore* regarded himself primarily as an 'organizational' professional" (Brante 2010: 2).

At its core, the issue is how some actors rather than others are constituted as "experts", thus being "an authority" and with a socially recognized claim to superior skills and knowledge to diagnose and treat specific tasks or problems. For Baumann, "The essence of expertise is that doing things properly requires certain knowledge, that such knowledge is distributed unevenly, that some persons possess more of it than others, that those that possess it ought to be in charge of doing things, ..." (Baumann 2000: 196. Quoted in Barnett and Finnemore 2004: 165). As I have argued elsewhere (Sending 2009), those that are engaged in peacebuilding typically account and justify their position as being "experts" on how to build peace in distant countries by reference precisely to "knowledge of more general principles". There is, however, more at stake here than simply the reliance on general knowledge claims. It is also that *Il Professore* approached the task in a disinterested fashion and that he selected some rather than other symptoms ("he focused on some of them") as central to diagnosing the problem. What is of interest here is that professionalization generally involves standardization (development of rules, operational procedures), which implies that some symptoms and causes are highlighted and others marginalized. One implication of this is that professionalization also involves the emergence of "blind spots" (Seabrooke, n.d.).

Another implication is that efforts to produce and nurture a position of authority to govern with reference to superior knowledge and governance tools affect the organization and the content of governance efforts. Stephen Hopgood's (2006) analysis of Amnesty International is here exemplary. For Hopgood, Amnesty International is torn between two different and competing claims to authority – one moral, the other political – and this tension runs through the organization, shaping its identity and mode of operations where one camp is intent on shoring up moral authority by not interfering with and advocating explicit political reforms, while the other wants to use that shored up moral authority to advocate for political change. Thus, a central concern here is how *claims* to authority put forth by professional actors shape the practice and meaning of peacebuilding and protection work.

Both protection and peacebuilding are increasingly professionalized sets of practices where professionals – civilian, military, humanitarian – operate on the basis of a distinct knowledge base found in policy documents, operational guidelines and institutionalized "best practices". This process of professionalization has, inter alia, resulted in the establishment of DPKO's Best Practices Unit, and professional standards and codes of conduct for humanitarian agencies such as UNHCR and OCHA through the work of the Inter-Agency Standing

Committee (IASC) (Harvey et al. 2010).² Similarly, the UNDP – also central to peacebuilding efforts through its role in more long-term reconstruction – has a virtual “Community of Practice” where staff discuss and learn from peers how to address particular challenges. This development is not surprising. The “rationalization” of large organizations is a ubiquitous feature of modern society, and international organizations are no exception (Barnett and Finnemore 2004).

The concept of ligation (Abbott 2005) helps account for the social constitution of expertise by drawing attention to how the claims made by certain actors about the definition of a certain task (building peace, protection) are bound up with efforts to either establish or maintain a position of authority. This means, in turn, that the identity or meaning of the task over which professional actors claim control is endogenous to social interaction: peacebuilding, protection, humanitarian relief etc are defined by how professional actors define them, using a variety of strategies to claim authority and control over the definition of what is to be governed, who is to govern it, and how. The authority and functioning of a professional group can in this light not be determined independently of the “task” it is defined in relation to (health for doctors, law for lawyers, peace for peace builders). Rather, the “task” over which professionals claim authority and some level of jurisdictional control, emerges with distinct properties, boundaries, and meaning through the work of the professionals to construct it in a particular way (Abbott 2005: 249-250). The meaning and definition of “peace” and of “protection”, then, is produced in and through the way professional actors define and act on it as a specific task, and in so doing, their professional identity becomes linked to that task.

Adopting the concept of ligation helps in spelling out how it is that the object to be governed – “post-conflict society” and the identity and practices of peace builders – is not at all an external and contingent relationship but an internal and constitutive one. Peace builders do, for example, define “the rule of law” as a set of principles derived from an a priori transcendental space rather than from a socio-political and historical one, the specifics of which it is for peace builders to identify and operationalize rather than for local actors to negotiate and agree upon through a political process (Sending 2009). Thus defined, the rule of law is a “*techne*”, something that peacebuilders can fix by virtue of their expertise in translating from the universal to the local: Their authority on how to build peace is secured through reference to universal standards, placing them in a position “above” politics.

² Examples include the Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action (ALNAP), and the Sphere Project.

By contrast, humanitarian organizations advance claims about a separate “humanitarian space” within which individuals’ security and rights as civilians are to be protected against both military and political considerations. Their authority as humanitarian professionals does not derive from a claim to expertise on how to engineer socio-political change. Rather, it derives from their definition of a space for action – “humanitarian space” – that is “outside” of politics. This is achieved by invoking the Geneva Convention and by insisting on the professionalism and effectiveness of humanitarian actors in relief delivery under difficult circumstances. Indeed, the two feed on each other, as claims about the need to preserve a space beyond politics are intimately tied to the argument about the importance of upholding humanitarian principles as a means to secure access. The reference point for humanitarian actors also differs significantly from that of personnel involved in peacebuilding: whereas the latter are focused on society and its transformation, the former are primarily oriented towards individuals and collectives thereof who are in need of help (Barnett and Weiss 2008).

Liisa Malkki (1996) has described how the continual construction of humanitarianism as outside of politics affects how humanitarian actors categorize, understand and interact with refugees. Humanitarian practices of organizing and producing knowledge of refugees work to silence the refugees’ own histories, privileging instead “physical, non-narrative evidence”, since the latter operate at the level of the moral and humanitarian, not historical and political. Reflecting on how humanitarian actors administrating refugee camps interacted with refugees, Malkki argues that

“...history tended to get leached out of the figure of the refugee, as imagined by their administrators. This active process of dehistoricization was inevitably also a project of depoliticization. For to speak about the past, about the historical trajectory that had led the Hutu as refugees into the western Tanzanian countryside, was to speak about politics. This could not be encouraged by the camp administrators; political activism and refugee status were mutually exclusive here, as in international refugee law more generally” (1996: 385).

Adopting the concept of ligation helps in spelling out how it is that the object to be governed, here “refugees”, is bound up with humanitarian workers’ claim to a position of authority by virtue of standing outside of politics. The contrast with peace builders is striking: For humanitarian workers, the individual is the object of reference, whereas for peace builders, it is society. For humanitarian workers, the key task is to alleviate suffering, whereas for peace builders, it is transforming society. Moreover, for humanitarian organizations, there is a set of legal rules and principles in place that they actively use to nurture their position as authorities on individual “needs” outside of the politi-

cal sphere. For peace builders, no legal document of the same sort exists, and thus the claim to authority is grounded in a claim to expertise on the ends and means of peace. These differences in conceptions of governance are intimately tied up with and are constitutive of these actors' professional identity: humanitarian actors' professional identity differs from that of peace builders' *because* they define and approach their object of governance in different ways (cf. Abbott 2005).

Peacebuilding and Protection

In the contemporary era, "emergency" and "disaster" are not apolitical labels on events or situations. Calling something an emergency, and succeeding in getting acceptance for that term, has huge political and economic implications. As Craig Calhoun has noted, the term emergency calls for immediate action, not for analysis. And those that are affected by these emergencies – whether caused by natural disaster, man-made drought, or war – assume status as suffering individuals rather than citizens with rights whose political identities, histories and aspirations matter (Calhoun 2010). How an "emergency" is defined and responded to, is not something that we can readily understand without analyzing in some detail the interests, resources and behaviour of the professional groups involved.

Humanitarian work was historically more circumscribed than it is today. Being actors with considerable resources operating in situations where ordinary structures typically don't work, they were always political in one sense. But following the humanitarian debates from the early 1990s and also somewhat before that, a new set of tasks and objectives was included in what was considered typical and appropriate humanitarian work. While writing specifically about famine, de Waal's description of how the justification for the expansion of tasks into new areas testifies to the importance of understanding how changes in conceptions of governance are part and parcel of professional groups' search for authority and control, and how they affect how governance is practised. De Waal notes that one effect of the extension of humanitarian work into more explicitly political areas (cf. Barnett and Weiss 2008), was that the

"language of basic rights and humanitarian principles obscured the total lack of any engagement with the local political process that can actually resolve the problems of famine. It was becoming harder, not easier, for the humanitarian international to recognize and support anti-famine political contrasts" (de Waal 1997: 157).

After the bombings of the UN compound in Iraq in August 2003, representatives of the UN grieved the loss of their colleagues, indirectly criticized the US for intervening in the first place, and pointed out that

the UN was there to help Iraqis, not support the US-led coalition. Then Under-Secretary-General Mark Malloch-Brown told reporters that "We do this out of vocation. We are apolitical. We were there to help the people of Iraq and help them return to self-government". He added, "This is another blow at the neutrality and the impartiality of the UN flag." At the same time, there is no shortage of analyses that paint a picture of an increasingly professionalized *and* politicized field of humanitarian relief, including work on protection. One report states, for example, that

"humanitarian programming is becoming increasingly intertwined with human rights activities. Rule of law and access to justice programmes are common features in humanitarian response, and human rights and humanitarian agencies increasingly share information and coordinate responses. As one interviewee stated: 'protection was seized upon in order to be able to talk about human rights'. Child protection, sexual and gender-based violence and returnee monitoring activities are programmatic and pragmatic responses by humanitarian agencies to violations of the *rights* of civilians. Agencies increasingly construe their role as advocates on behalf of the victims of crises, and even agents for change, particularly in the context of complex political emergencies" (Callaghan and Pantuliano 2007: 8).

If "protection was seized upon in order to be able to talk about human rights" from within humanitarian circles, it is interesting to note that the reverse was the case when the international human rights movement started in earnest after WWII. As Garth and Dezalay (2002) have noted, proponents of human rights inserted themselves into discussions about humanitarian law, thus linking an internationally sensitive political issue to a more heavily institutionalized and less politically sensitive one. At the time, there was a convention on humanitarian issues (Geneva Convention) and (merely) a political declaration on human rights (Declaration of Human Rights). The more general point to be made here does not so much concern the degree to which peacebuilding is considered political while humanitarianism less so. Clearly, both concern politics, but in slightly different ways, owing to how the task in question is conceptualized and how these tasks are justified. Rather, the point is that how professionals in peacebuilding and in humanitarian relief define and approach their respective tasks affects their view of what is and what is not political, and consequently what they do and how they do it.

I recognize that the categories used here do not correspond neatly to the current evolution of protection strategies in the field, and there is certainly overlap in professional competence and areas of work. Nonetheless, we can identify distinct ways of defining the core problems of how to operate and what to aim for in conflict and post-conflict environments: differences in professional ways of doing things do matter

both for debates about strategies and organizational structures for post-conflict reconstruction, and for considerations of how to train and equip future civilian and military personnel of UN peace operations.

A clearly stated dimension of the stakes involved here are found in Hugo Slim's (2003) observation that humanitarian actors define humanitarianism in ways that seem to imply that only some actors – proper, professional humanitarian actors – can operate and define what is “humanitarian”. Slim observes that the humanitarian tradition has a “strong conviction that an ethic of restraint, kindness and repair in war is universal, a trans-cultural phenomenon that is found in all peoples”, and proceeds to ask (rhetorically), “Doesn't this mean that everyone *should* be a humanitarian?” Judged against humanitarian actors' positions on *who* is allowed to perform humanitarian work, the answer is no. Slim concludes that

“The main issue seems to be a feeling that humanitarian NGOs want to put *moral boundaries around what can rightfully be considered humanitarian action*. In doing so, they seem to be suggesting that such boundaries to humanitarian action are not about activities (*what* is being done: food, water, shelter etc) but agents and motives (*who* is doing these activities and for what reason)” (Slim 2003).

Against this backdrop, it is instructive to look at the current debate about the balancing of two objectives that are set up as being distinct and potentially at loggerheads, namely peacebuilding and protection of civilians. In a discussion of the protection mandate of MONUC in the Democratic Republic of Congo, one report stresses that “MONUC has been mandated to support the weak and often criminal Congolese military, the FARDC, while simultaneously protecting civilians from ongoing violence. MONUC mission leadership and the UN Security Council must reinforce the mission's protection strategies, and ensure ...that support given to the FARDC does not undermine overarching protection objectives”. (Refugees International 2009). Similarly, DPKO has concluded that “In UNMIS, ... reallocating the mission's finite resources from efforts to support the CPA (Comprehensive Peace Agreement) to activities that prioritize PoC has been extremely challenging given the critical importance of both areas” (DPKO 2010: 3). Note that in both circumstances, a tension is identified between peacebuilding objectives – supporting the Congolese state and the implementation of the CPA – and protection objectives.

How humanitarian organizations' authority is constituted and nurtured, and how it differs from that of peace builders, is quite clearly brought out in the current debate within the UN on the issue of Protection of Civilians (PoC). For humanitarian organizations, PoC is a task that is grounded in key provisions of the Geneva Conventions and

subsequent protocols. It also has to do with the broader concept of “vulnerability” and covers a range of activities or tasks that can help protect groups against risks of different sorts, be it famine, earthquakes, or war. For DPKO, by contrast, PoC is at its core about “physical protection” that can be provided by the tools at the disposal of the DPKO, and is primarily defined in terms of “imminent threat” of attacks from rebel groups. For peace builders, and for DPKO, PoC is a strategic challenge inasmuch as being mandated to do protection may conflict with other key tasks, such as peace - or state building. Allan Doss, SRSG for MONUC, recently reflected on the tensions involved in doing both PoC and peacebuilding:

“How do you protect people, but at the same time, disarm and dismantle foreign and local armed groups? How do you do it in a place such as the Kivus, help end a crisis, but at the same time, do it in a way that protects people? You know, ending the crisis is essentially a political task, protecting civilians in some ways a humanitarian task. ... So these are complex issues, and sometimes, as I say, there are contradictory elements in our mandate, which puts a huge pressure on a mission, and frankly is leading us sometimes into rather uncharted waters” (Doss 2009).

The “tension” that MONUC faces in both doing protection of civilians (“a humanitarian task”) and at the same time doing peacebuilding (“a political task”) stems, I submit, from the continual reproduction, by the actors themselves, of a particular relationship with their object of reference as either being outside the political (humanitarian) or as above the political (peacebuilding). For humanitarian actors, this means reading out the historical and socio-political causes of humanitarian crises. For peace builders it often means subordinating knowledge of local context to universal standards, and privileging international over local sources of legitimacy.

In the new model for protection of civilians published by the DPKO and also the standards identified by the ICRC, there is explicit reference to the importance of both physical protection and the building of a political framework that can prevent attacks against civilians and also the more general threat of violation of core rights. Thus, even on account of the main actors’ own policies and standards, building peace is a means to protect civilians, and protection is conversely seen as a means to strengthen peacebuilding efforts. What, then, is all the fuzz about? I argue that the debate over these issues between humanitarians and peace builders (both military and civilian) has to do, as Slim alludes to in the quote above, with *who* is doing it and who is in a position to decide which objective is to take precedence over the other: it displays the different professional actors’ views on what to do, how, and by whom.

This market-like competition for turf or jurisdiction is clearly brought out in Barnett and Ramalingam's discussion of the "humanitarian's dilemma". While recognizing the volume of the humanitarian system's efforts to improve over the last decade or so, they point out that

"Agencies want to help others while advancing their organisational interests, and are likely to pursue actions that they believe will resonate with those interests. This is not surprising, as one of the basic lessons from business strategy is to identify and exploit niches. From this perspective, the objectives of aid agencies can be paraphrased as: to assist targeted beneficiaries in such a way that our good works are seen and valued by donor communities and the profile of our agency is enhanced, so we can do more good works in the future, working in a collaborative fashion where possible" (2010: 4).

The sum-total of this competitive logic is that those reforms that have been supported and implemented by aid agencies are those that "enhance their autonomy and size – more humanitarian space, more resources, and more flexibility and control over how they spend their money" (ibid: 5). The authors hasten to add that aid agencies are of course concerned with the beneficiaries of aid. The issue is how the rules and incentives of the humanitarian system are structured in a way that each agency's primary interest may come into conflict with the effectiveness of the system as a whole (i.e. coordination issues). This is not, I submit, a peculiarity of humanitarian organizations. It also holds for development agencies and those involved in peace operations.

Consider, moreover, the on-going debates between humanitarians and military professionals about the nature and limits of humanitarian space, the division of tasks between them in complex emergencies, and also the debate between them regarding what is to be prioritized when and decided by whom on what grounds. Military professionals define their professional identity in relation to objectives traditionally concerned with control and defence of a territory, and to "clear, hold, build". Certainly, the development of so-called counter-insurgency doctrines aims to render military techniques more effective in also rebuilding and de facto acting on individuals to address the causes of conflict as a tool to marginalize insurgents and to shore up support from civilians. Nonetheless, traditional military practice is still distinct from that of humanitarian actors operating in the same physical location. When these two groups are to cooperate to formulate strategies and best practices, and to make decisions on what to prioritize, conflicts and tensions are bound to emerge. What type of conception of governance emerges as dominant through such a process will affect the scope, nature and status of each of the professional actors involved.

These dynamics will always be more pronounced and significant during periods where the nature of the task to be performed is uncertain and where there is no settled or dominant conception of how to govern. For example, military and political strategies for security and post-conflict reconstruction have come to include humanitarian relief as a means to enhance effectiveness to attain non-humanitarian objectives, most infamously captured in then-Secretary of State Colin Powell's reference to humanitarian organizations in Afghanistan as "force multipliers". Whether true or not, this is how humanitarian professionals see it. A case in point is how the humanitarian bulletin *Humanitarian Aid on the Move* recently described the state of affairs:

"NATO and the European Union are increasingly trying to integrate humanitarian aid into their strategic agendas. UN integrated missions are going in the same direction. Humanitarian aid is being "bunkerised", militarised and politicised and is becoming a crisis management tool. As such, it runs the risk of losing the characteristics which allow victims to gain access to aid and protection" (URD 2010).

At the same time, the scope of humanitarian action has expanded considerably since at least the 1990s, now including human rights as a core concern, and also moving in the direction of addressing the causes of conflicts (Barnett 2005). This is acknowledged by humanitarian organizations themselves as they describe the expansion of tasks and also the broader range of situations where they perform their work (ICRC 2009). Running parallel to these developments, however, has been an increase in "expertise and specialization" and an attendant investment in governance efforts in new areas such as "child protection, sexual and gender-based violence and access to justice" (ibid). Against this background, it seems important to treat those involved in peace operations and protection work as professional actors that have interests, the advancement of which affects the contents of how peacebuilding and protection are defined and implemented.

The upshot of all this is that the debates about improved coordination and so-called Integrated Missions may be off target (cf. Paris 2009). While integrated missions may increase effectiveness in advancing given objectives, it does presume that one already knows what works best. Much research on peace operations suggests that this is not the case (Englebert and Tüll 2008). More importantly, the premise for the debate about and efforts to reform the UN's operational effectiveness in peace operations is that organizational structures matter more than the professional identity and outlook of the actors involved. In short, the debate about coordination and integration assumes that where you stand depend on where you sit in organizational terms, whereas the perspective advanced here suggests that who you are as a professional

actor determines what you think from, which often overrides organizational positions and boundaries.

In this light, the future effectiveness and success of peace operations and protection work do not ride on organizational reforms alone, nor on the development of best practices and the training of professionals that are to do the tasks involved, but also – and crucially so – on whether convergence on conceptions of governance can be facilitated between different types of professional actors.

In the context of the increase in the number of peace operations with a specific mandate to protect civilians, DPKO and OHCA recently commissioned a study to take stock of what is being done in peace operations to protect civilians and to identify ways to improve current practice. The report “Protecting Civilians in the Context of UN Peacekeeping Operations”, Holt and Taylor (2009), provides a comprehensive account of the state of affairs of protection work in UN peace operations. In their foreword, the USGs of DPKO and OCHA, Alain le Roi and John Holmes, note that despite the “positive developments” that can be identified in terms of making protection of civilians more central to the UN’s work in conflict zones, these have “not translated into systematic and consistent protection of civilians on the ground” (2009: iv).

The report concludes that the “presumed ‘chain’ of events to support protection of civilians –from the earliest planning, to Security Council mandates to the implementation of mandates by peacekeeping missions in the field – is broken” (Holt and Taylor 2009: 5). It lists a number of factors that helps explain why. Key among these are that planning that informs UNSC discussions, and thus also mandates, does not adequately assess the threats to civilians; that the Secretariat (i.e. DPKO) does not have a good grasp of the UNSC’s intent as regards protection; that the confusion of the UNSC’s intent results in inadequate guidance and planning by the Secretariat; and that the sum-total of all of this are gaps in planning, guidance and preparation for protection work (ibid: pp. 6-8). It specifies that there is considerable confusion about what protection work entails, with the UNSC some times referring to a very broad concept of protection consistent with human rights and humanitarian law, some times defining it as an end-result of what peace operations already do, and others still as physical protection against imminent threats. This differentiation process, with peace operations being specified into ever more specific tasks and objectives, is also reflected in the increased scope and level of detail in UNSC mandates: these have come to include increasingly detailed language about tasks and specific objectives to be carried out. While this growth in the specificity of mandates can be traced to a number of

factors, this development feeds into the logic of professionalization since it entails the differentiation and specification of tasks for which best practices are being developed.

Confusion on the part of different actors about what protection is or should be, and about how it is to be achieved, stems, I submit, not from inadequate knowledge, lack of clarity, or from the inherent complexity of the task of protection. Holt and Taylor identify through their interviews three different interpretations of the protection of civilians. One set of actors define protection in terms of international humanitarian law and human rights and thus as an overarching objective for all post-conflict work. That is: protection is the ultimate objective and peace operations and development work more generally are or should all be geared towards this ultimate end. Another set of actors treat protection as a new task that is to be carried out alongside the overarching objective of building peace. A third set of actors see protection in terms not dissimilar to the first group, but conceive of it not in terms of human rights and international humanitarian law, but as synonymous with the goal of producing peace. Hence, protection of civilians is here seen to be redundant as a separate task.

Crucially, Holt and Taylor do *not* link these different interpretations to specific organizational units, as they are to be found across a wider spectrum of actors operating within different parts of the UN. Certainly, there tends to be a dominant conception of governance within an organization, but as Hopgood (2006) has shown in the case of Amnesty International, there are often competing conceptions of governance within the same organization. Thus, focusing on coordination and integration between organizational units may often be off target, and fleshing out the contents, scope and implications of professional conceptions of governance seems important for debates about the effectiveness of peace operations.

Conclusion

Experts and professional groups mark global governance at every turn. Or as one observer has argued: “professions have never been more important to the well-being of society. ...How [such] professional expertise is developed, how it is deployed, by whom it is deployed and for what ends are among the most pressing issues facing all modern nations” (2000: 673). This includes, as I have tried to show above, humanitarian relief, peace operations, protection work, and broader peacebuilding efforts. While extant literature on peace operations is clearly cognizant of the efforts to professionalize peace operations through the institutionalization of best practices and the development of training and operational guidelines for ever more specific tasks,

there is little discussion about what this entails for the dynamics of peace operations as a form of governing. Focusing here on peace operations, on protection, and on the broader question of the relationship between humanitarian, civilian, and military professional actors, I have tried to show that conceptions of governance matter more than organizational structures, and that efforts to integrate and coordinate different aspects of the UN's work in conflict zones may be off target. The tendency to try to "mainstream" new tasks and objectives across different UN entities is a clear example of the limitations of thinking in organizational, rather than professional, terms. That is: moving from a system where one office in charge of a particular set of tasks and a particular objective – be it gender, or protection of civilians – to one where all organizational units are supposed to take it on board has yet to result in increased effectiveness. The reason why this is so is that the actors involved – being professional actors – will take on board and prioritize new tasks and objectives as part of a push for mainstreaming if and only if the new task can be made integral to and supportive of their already established core conceptions of governance. Thus, identifying what these conceptions of governance are, whether they converge or conflict with that of other professional actors, and specifying how they can be changed and institutionalized seems an important route to explore.

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