



Norwegian Institute
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Researching the Effectiveness of Peace Operations

Seminar Report, 31 May – 1 June, Oslo

Cedric de Coning & Bård Drange



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Summary

The African Union (AU), European Union (EU), and United Nations (UN) are under increasing pressure to justify the effectiveness of the peace operations they deploy. Justifying this effectiveness requires precise assessments based on systematized and evidence-based data. Per now, however, this data is lacking, a gap the global research community could help address.

On 31 May and 1 June 2017, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) hosted a seminar that brought together thirty participants from the AU, UN, the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as well as research institutes and think tanks from across the globe. The aim of the seminar was to share insights on how best to research the effectiveness of peace operations and to explore the establishment of a network that could seek to address this gap.

The seminar discussed how to research and measure the effectiveness of peace operations. It looked at current definitions and conceptualizations of effectiveness, and it discussed the varying perceptions stakeholders have of the effectiveness of peace operations.

The group also explored the options for establishing a network dedicated to research on the effectiveness of peace operations. The seminar agreed on the value of establishing such a network, with an aim to produce knowledge that is both academically valuable and relevant for policymakers. Hence, it considered different organizational modalities for a potential research network, with regards to governing principles, funding, and how researchers could undertake joint research projects.

This report summarizes the key conclusions and recommendations from the seminar, and lists what the next steps may be for the establishment of a research network on the effectiveness of peace operations.

Introduction

The Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) hosted a seminar on researching the effectiveness of peace operations on 31 May and 1 June 2017 in Oslo. The seminar brought together thirty participants from the United Nations (UN), the African Union (AU), the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and research institutes and think tanks from across the globe.

The UN and other multilateral institutions like the AU and the European Union (EU), are under increasing pressure—including most recently from the new Trump administration—to justify the effectiveness and cost efficiency of their peace operations. As part of its support to the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, NUPI was asked to organize and facilitate two workshops on success factors in Dhaka and Addis Ababa. It became clear during these workshops, and during the course of this support to the Panel, that there is a gap when it comes to generating the kind of evidence that can be useful for assessing the effectiveness of specific mission, or peace operations in general.

To address this gap, and following extensive consultations, NUPI decided to bring together research institutes and think tanks with special emphasis on the Global South, which could form a network to undertake research into the effectiveness of peace operations. The aim of the seminar was first, to engender a critical discussion around researching and measuring effectiveness, by discussing contested concepts and divergent methodologies. Second, the seminar discussed the organizational modalities for the potential network, with regards to governing principles, funding and how researchers could undertake joint research projects. With multilateral stakeholders present, the seminar discussed how the research could be valuable for the UN, AU, EU and others.

Why Focus on Effectiveness?

The effectiveness of peace operations is at the very core of the discussion of their continued value and relevance. In 2014, then Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon commissioned the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations to consider what needs to be done to ensure that UN peace operations become more effective.¹ The Panel found that the UN has “not invested sufficiently in the monitoring and evaluation of its peace operations or in building results or impact measurement frameworks for missions to draw upon”. Hence, it argued that the Secretariat should “introduce regular independent evaluations, using external expertise to assist missions through objective assessments of progress.”²

The newly elected Secretary-General António Guterres followed up on the peace operations and related reviews,³ and went on to appoint an internal review team that will take these reforms forward. This team will review the UN Secretariat’s peace and security strategy, functioning and architecture, and advise him on which aspects to prioritize. This report is due in June 2017.

In the mean-time, Gueterres established, along the Panel’s recommendations, a Strategic Planning and Monitoring Unit within the Executive Office of the Secretary-General (EOSG). Furthermore, Guterres, in his revision of the terms of reference for the EOSG, stressed that it will be “forward-looking, open to new ideas and welcoming of dissenting views, drawing on and commissioning research and inputs from a variety of internal and external sources to support senior decision-making and strategic thinking”.⁴ This explicit openness to and interest in input from external sources is encouraging.

¹ United Nations, *Uniting our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnerships and People*, Report of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations, New York, 16 June 2015.

² United Nations, *Uniting our Strengths for Peace*, 2015, p. 46-47.

³ Three major reviews were published in 2015: the peace operations report, the 10 year review of the UN Peacebuilding Architecture, and the review of the implementation of Security Council Resolution 1325. See Stamnes, Eli & Kari Osland, *Synthesis Report: Reviewing UN Peace Operations, the UN Peacebuilding Architecture and the Implementation of UNSCR 1325*, NUPI Report 2/2016

⁴ United Nations, *Terms of Reference for the New/Revised EOSG Posts and Units 2017*.

However, these reforms take shape amidst a more UN-skeptic atmosphere in Washington D.C. The Trump administration has stressed that United States (US) contributions to the UN, including peace operations, will be cut significantly (the US contributes approximately 28% of the UN peacekeeping budget). Thus far in 2017, the US has used performance based arguments to successfully argue for reductions in the size of the UN missions in the Darfur and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and this trend is likely to continue.

The UN is thus under increasing pressure to justify the effectiveness and cost efficiency of its peace operations. At the same time, however, there is a lack of systematized and evidence-based data that can be used for assessing the effectiveness of specific missions, or peace operations in general. Research that generate the kind of evidence that can be used to make such assessments, as well as generate more generic findings about the characteristics that influence the effectiveness of peace operations, will thus be very useful to the UN, AU and EU policy and practitioner communities.

Measuring the Effectiveness of Peace Operations

Researchers and practitioners seem to have different perspectives when it comes to assessing the effectiveness of peace operations. Researchers tend to seek generalizable criteria, whilst practitioners tend to focus on specific missions.⁵ Further, scholars tend to focus on longer-term developments and trends, whilst practitioners are more concerned with short-term revisions of operations. This is most likely due to the different objectives that drive the assessments carried out by researchers and practitioners. Researchers typically aim to identify challenges at the more systemic level, and offer findings that aim to improve the practice of peace operations in general, whilst practitioners tend to be more concerned with overcoming the immediate challenges, at field or policy level, that could lead to real-time improvements in the effectiveness of peace operations. There is more cross-fertilization than these distinctions suggest, but certainly not enough.

In a literature review that informed the seminar, Mateja Peter argues four choices must be made when researching the effectiveness of peace operations. First, one must recognize that actors differ on their definition of success or effectiveness. Hence, one must ask, “success for whom”? Second, one must decide when to conduct an assessment, and what time period to consider, i.e. short-term versus long-term. Third, a baseline for assessment is necessary; what the operation is compared to becomes crucial. Fourth, finding cases that are comparable in one or several aspects is both crucial in order to conduct comparisons, but also increasingly difficult due to high heterogeneity.⁶

The seminar recognized that researchers and practitioners have yet to agree on a definition of “effectiveness” or “success” of peace operations. Indeed, a key question is; which and whose objectives should one consider? Some argue that judging a mission against its own objectives (its mandate) is too narrow and that one needs to look at its broader impact. Such a more general approach to the effectiveness question can perhaps be framed as the contribution that a peace operation makes to

⁵ Peter, Mateja, *Measuring the Success of Peace Operations: Directions in Academic Literature*, NUPI Working Paper 862, 2016, p. 4.

⁶ Peter, *Measuring the Success of Peace Operations*, 2016, p. 11.

achieving the changes that the international community (as articulated in UN Security Council resolutions) want to see in a specific conflict situation. For example, one could undertake surveys that track community-level perceptions of security and well-being over time, to assess whether there has been an improvement over time. Others argue that such an approach is too broad and would not generate specific enough or actionable evidence. Disagreement on definitions produces studies that are difficult to compare and thus prevents a more systematic generation of knowledge.

The seminar identified two approaches—not necessarily mutually exclusive—to this definitional question. One is to use the OECD’s more comprehensive approach to performance assessment, that encompass effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, sustainability, and coherence. Although the OECD’s approach is designed for development and peacebuilding program evaluation contexts, the OECD’s conceptual approach may nevertheless serve as a baseline common position, from which further nuance can be added.⁷

The other is to accept that it is unlikely that all stakeholders engaged in a given peace operation can agree on a common yardstick for effectiveness. The seminar therefore decided that research on the effectiveness of peace operations should aim reflect the variety of vantage points from which key stakeholders interpret the effectiveness of peace operations. The perspectives of local communities, national governments, neighboring countries, regional organizations, bilateral donors and partners, Troop and Police Contributing Countries and members of the Security Council may differ substantially. Therefore, depending on their own objectives and perspectives, it is likely that they end up with opposing, or at least conflicting, assessments of a given mission’s effectiveness. Hence, to thoroughly comprehend effectiveness, it is central to recognize the different viewpoints that stakeholders may hold, and to analyze the implications of this range of interpretations of effectiveness for how peace operations are implemented and assessed.

The seminar also recognized that there is a lack of data and systematized evidence that can be used to assess the effectiveness of peace operations. Based on lessons learned from previous research, assessments of peace operations will be well served by seeking to triangulate both long-term

⁷ OECD, *Guidance on Evaluating Conflict Prevention and Peacebuilding Activities*, 2008.

and short-term perspectives, as well as the production of both generalizable and specific knowledge.

The Network

The seminar decided that members of the network will be research centers and think tanks. All members will co-govern the network. Membership will require agreement to a charter document. Members will be expected to adhere to the principles and rules of the network as set out in the network charter.

The network will have an international advisory board that will provide strategic guidance and contribute to overall quality assurance. The membership of the international advisory board should reflect geographical, gender, professional and academic disciplinary diversity, as well as seek to have key partners (AU, EU & UN, etc.) and core donors represented, directly or via proxies.

The network will not be a legal persona in its own right. The legal responsibility for managing the research, including its funding, and for the conduct, safety, and wellbeing of individual researchers, remains with the members of the network. The members also retain ownership of academic material, including copyright, unless otherwise specified in specific collaborative contracts. As stated earlier, the network aims to make its core data and research products freely available to the public (open source), but this does not prevent members from additionally publishing some of their research findings in academic journal articles or with academic book publishers that may have copyright restrictions.

The network needs to have its own results framework and a monitoring and evaluation mechanism so that the network can regularly review its own progress, and can adjust its own approach, structures and working methods to ensure its relevance and effectiveness.

Resource mobilization for the network's activities will be coordinated by the members of the network according to an agreed work plan. Research studies will be undertaken by research teams made up of three or more members. Each research team will seek funding for its own research, either within existing resources available to the network or directly from research or other funding sources. Members will not seek resources from funding agencies that have conditions that will impact negatively on their independence or ability to otherwise adhere to the principles and ethics that guide the network.

The Research

The seminar agreed on a working formulation of the aim of the envisaged research network, namely: to generate evidence that can be used to assess the effectiveness of peace operations.

The seminar agreed to use the report of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations and its recommendations, as well as subsequent decisions by the Secretary-General and UN bodies such as the C-34, as one set of benchmarks against which effectiveness can be assessed. Other benchmarks could include perceptions that local, national, regional, and international stakeholders hold on the perceived effectiveness of a given peace operation.

The seminar agreed that an important added value of the network would be to reach a level of scale, scope, and credibility that one can only obtain together. The network would aspire to undertake several case studies (research into the effectiveness of a specific peace operation) a year, and in that way generate a considerable body of data in the first three to five years. With time, the aim would be to generate a sizeable data-set that may be of considerable value to the international peace operations community. The data-set will allow members and others to do longitudinal studies (i.e. compare specific missions over time), as well as thematic studies across missions, comparing for instance aspects such as Protection of Civilians, gender, or local perceptions of missions across different missions.

It is crucial that the data reflect the range of professional disciplines involved in peace operations as well as the range of geo-political perspectives and approaches. The network would therefore aim to be both multi-disciplinary and to have a broad global membership. In addition, every study would need a specific strategy for engaging with national and local stakeholders, and make use of local researchers.

The seminar agreed that the network should produce knowledge that is both academically valuable and relevant for policymakers. The network thus needs to find the appropriate balance between critical and independent research approaches and policy relevant approaches that will have an impact on the effectiveness of peace operations in the near to medium term.

Modalities, Principles, and Organization

The constitutive document will contain a code of ethics and other principles that will guide the network's research, include elements such as independence, do no harm, cost-efficiency, and transparency.

It was agreed that the network should conduct independent, innovative, and field-based research. Towards this aim, the network should develop a shared approach and methodology. This can enhance the usefulness of any single contribution, in that all research generated can more easily be compared, shared, and refined – both by members of the network and others. Such a shared approach and methodology should not impose a one-size-fits-all research design for every research study, but should represent the common standard and baseline requirement for each study.

The network will regularly assess its shared approach and methodology, and adapt it based on its own field research experience, as well as best practices or innovations developed elsewhere in the research community.

The data generated by the network's research should be shared via an open source data set that make it possible for anyone in the international research community to use the same data to verify the findings of the network, or to conduct their own research. The data-set should be administered by a member or members that have been selected for this role by the general assembly.

The network's research, and especially its field research, should closely follow the highest international research standards and ethical codes, and should take active steps to prevent and mitigate any harm, especially to local communities and individuals in conflict settings, that could come about – intended or unintended – as a result of its research and findings.

Researching Specific Missions

- Research will be undertaken by geographically diverse and gender balanced teams of at least three members.
- The research teams should be professionally diverse (e.g. including persons with military, police, and civilian backgrounds), and multi-disciplinary (e.g. political science, international relations, security studies, military studies, peace studies, sociology, economics, anthropology, criminology, logistical science, management sciences, etc.).

- Researchers and experts not affiliated with a member institution could take part by being invited by a research team and contracted by a member.
- Research teams need to take specific steps to include local researchers. Local researchers can be guides, interpreters and data gatherers, but should also be represented in the overall management, design, and quality control of the research.
- The network will seek to invest in the development of future researchers, both among its members and within countries that host peace operations. Research teams need to have a capacity building element to their research design, for which members should be encouraged to seek funding.
- To ensure efficiency and avoid duplication, research teams should map existing data and assess their relevance and limitations.
- In addition to the internal quality assurance steps taken by members and research teams, each research study requires a specific quality assurance strategy. This could be a review process by a panel of country experts, local/national experts, review by another research team in the network, and/or review by an international advisory board or a sub-group of the international advisory board.

Dissemination

The seminar identified three types of audiences that require different dissemination strategies for sharing the networks' research findings:

- The research community: Reach via academic publishing, presentations at research conferences and social media.
- The general public: Reach via news and social media, and in countries hosting peace operations via workshops with selected national stakeholders or local communities.
- The policy community, including the diplomats and staff of multilateral organizations such as the AU, EU and UN: Reach via contact persons within the organizations and through seminars and workshops. Beforehand, establish what kind of questions the policy community needs evidence for and at what point in the policy process such evidence would be most useful. In this

work, a combination of oral presentations, policy briefs and more comprehensive reports may be useful.

Next Steps

The next steps in the process of establishing the network will be as follows:

- Share the report of the seminar with prospective members, the peace operations research community at large, key stakeholders such as the AU, EU and UN and their member states, and potential funding agencies (by end-June 2017);
- Undertake further consultations, especially with potential members unable to attend the seminar (June – September 2017);
- Draft a network charter document based on the guidance generated at the seminar and gained from further consultations, and refine it based on feedback from prospective members (July-October 2017);
- Organize a constitutive meeting where members sign the charter and establish the network (October/November 2017);
- Develop a work plan for 2018 (October/November 2017);
- Seek funding for the network according to the work plan (November 2017 – February 2018);
- Undertake first (pilot) series of studies (2018); and
- Hold a second meeting of network members to assess progress, adapt research approach and methodology, and develop work plan for 2019 (October/November 2018).

Seminar Program

Wednesday 31 May

- 10:00 Welcome & introduction – Kari Osland
- 10:10 Aim of the seminar – Cedric de Coning
- 10:30 Overview of the High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations' recommendations and subsequent developments in the context of assessing the effectiveness of peace operations – Ian Martin
- 11:00 Measuring mission performance from a UN perspective – Oliver Ulich
- 11:30 Assessing the effectiveness of operations from an AU perspective – Jide M. Okeke
- 12:00 Q&A
- 12:30 Lunch
- 13:15 How do we understand effectiveness? What are the various dimensions of effectiveness that need to be taken into consideration?
- 14:30 How do we measure/judge effectiveness? Quantitative aspects, qualitative aspects?
- 15:30 Wrap-up Day One discussions
- 17:30 Fjord-cruise & dinner

Thursday 1 June

- 09:30 Organisation, coordination, & funding of the research consortium
- 10:30 Principles that should guide the research

11:30 Research approach & shared methodology

12:30 Lunch

13:15 Dissemination of research

14:30 Discussion of any outstanding issues, taking stock of what there is agreement on & way forward

15:30 Closing

List of Participants

1. Ian Martin, Security Council Report, New York
2. Oliver Ulich, Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations
3. Jide M. Okeke, Peace Support Operations Division (PSOD), African Union Commission (AUC)
4. Brig.Gen. Robert Kabage, PSOD, AUC
5. Annette Leijenaar, Institute for Security Studies, South Africa
6. Linda Darkwa, Training for Peace Secretariat, Addis Ababa
7. Adriana Erthal Abdenur, Igarapé Institute, Brazil
8. Ashraf Swelam, Director, Cairo International Center for Conflict Resolution, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding in Africa, Egypt
9. Onur Sazak, Support to Life, Turkey
10. Annika Hansen, Centre for Peace Operations, Germany
11. Akira W. Jingushi, National Institute for Defense Studies, Japan
12. Adam Day, UN University, Tokyo, Japan
13. Emery Brusset, Social Terrain, United Kingdom
14. Charlie Hunt, Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Australia
15. Richard Caplan, University of Oxford, United Kingdom
16. Jyrki Ruohomäki, Crisis Management Centre Finland
17. Maria Mekri, SaferGlobe, Finland
18. Elisa Norvanto, Finnish Defence Forces International Centre

19. Tore Hattrem, Ambassador designate, Norwegian Permanent Mission to the UN
20. Anne Kjersti Frøholm, Specialist Director Peace Operations, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
21. Martine Aamdal Bottheim, Senior Advisor, Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
22. Col. Petter Lindqvist, Norwegian Defence International Centre & NUPI
23. Lotte Vermeij, Norwegian Defence University College
24. Kari Osland, NUPI
25. Eli Stamnes, NUPI
26. Mateja Peter, NUPI & University of St Andrews
27. Natasja Rupesinghe, NUPI & PSOD, AUC
28. Bård Drange, NUPI
29. Cedric de Coning, NUPI & ACCORD



Norwegian Institute of International Affairs

Established in 1959, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs [NUPI] is a leading independent research institute on international politics and areas of relevance to Norwegian foreign policy. Formally under the Ministry of Education and Research, NUPI nevertheless operates as an independent, non-political instance in all its professional activities. Research undertaken at NUPI ranges from short-term applied research to more long-term basic research.

About the authors:

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