Challenges Forum

Background Paper
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Performance of Peace Operations

Abstract

How should we assess and improve the performance of peace operations? This is the topic of the third dialogue strand of VCAF20. UN peace operations are under growing pressure to increase performance and enhance mandate delivery. This background paper assesses recent research into the effectiveness and performance of peace operations and new UN initiatives for internal monitoring, evaluation and related data management systems.

Introduction

One of the recurring challenges that international peace operations face is how to measure their performance and effectiveness. Policy makers, practitioners and scholars have used different definitions and metrics to assess and measure the performance of peace operations, ranging from strategic reviews, case studies looking at mandate implementation, the monitoring of short-term results and macro analyses of the possibilities for sustainable peace and long-term effects.[1] This background paper highlights some of the challenges related to assessing the performance of international peace operations and gives a presentation of recent United Nations (UN) initiatives and academic studies aimed at measuring and increasing peace operations' performance.

Over the past decade, the performance of UN peacekeeping operations has come increasingly under the spotlight. One driver is financial pressure to reduce the overall cost of UN peacekeeping operations, especially but not exclusively by the United States Government. Another is frustration with the slow pace of progress. For example, there has now been a UN peacekeeping presence in the Democratic Republic of the Congo for 20 years; in Mali, the situation seems to be deteriorating despite the presence of the UN over the past 7 years, and in South Sudan, where the UN

1. Peter, Mateja, "Measuring the Success of Peace Operations: Directions in Academic Literature". NUPI Working Paper 862. (Oslo: NUPI, 2014).

ABOUT THE EVENT

The Virtual Challenges Annual Forum 2020 (VCAF20) will take place virtually from 7–11 December 2020. Hosts for this year's Forum are the Challenges Forum Partners: the Institute for Security Studies (ISS) in South Africa, the Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI) and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Indonesia. With the overarching theme "Framing Peace Operations in a Changing Global Landscape", VCAF20 proposes to reflect on how to sustain effective peace operations in a changing global context.

Challenges Forum is a global partnership that uses its convening power to generate innovative ideas and promote results for more effective peace operations.

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had a peacekeeping presence for 15 years, the operation seems trapped with little role beyond protection civilians. There is also growing impatience with what is seen as the underperformance of some units that fail to protect civilians and the inability of the UN, despite some progress, to stop its peacekeepers from committing sexual exploitation and abuse. As a result of these frustrations a tension is building up between, on the one hand, the pressure to reduce budgets and on the other, expectations around increasing the performance of peacekeeping missions.

The UN has responded with a number of initiatives, including the UN Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping campaign, a series of strategic reviews of ongoing missions as well as of key cross-cutting challenges such as the security of peacekeepers, the adoption of a new Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) for UN Peacekeeping operations, and a Security Council resolution dedicated to performance.

The UN Security Council landmark resolution 2436 on improving the performance of UN peacekeeping operations was unanimously adopted on 21 September 2018. The resolution highlighted existing challenges both in mandate implementation and for the missions in general. The Council stressed three main issues: 1) The importance of identifying gaps that have an impact on mandate delivery and creating a transparent process for reporting performance failures; 2) creating accountability measures and incentives for better performance; and 3) the importance of using relevant data in order to improve performance. In order to follow-up on these issues, the Council requested the Secretary-General to report to the Security Council on instances of outstanding performance, and reaffirmed its support for the Secretary-General's development of a comprehensive integrated performance policy framework measuring performance based on data collection and analysis.

Does peacekeeping work?

In her recent book *Power in Peacekeeping*, Lise Morjé Howard points out that we have at least 14 peer-reviewed, quantitative studies that demonstrate that, all else equal, peacekeeping save lives.[2] Howard argues that these quantitative studies have found that peacekeeping has a positive and statistically significant

2. Howard, Lise Morjé, Power in Peacekeeping (Washington D.C.: Cambridge University Press, 2019). See also: Hegre, Håvard, Lisa Hultman & Håvard Mokleiv Nygård, Peacekeeping Works: Evaluating the effectiveness of UN peacekeeping operations, Conflict Trends, 6, (Oslo: PRIO, 2017).

effect on containing the spread of civil war, increasing the success of negotiated settlements to civil wars, and increasing the duration of peace once a civil war has ended.

These findings are also echoed by Jessica Di Salvatore and Andrea Ruggeri, who have systematically evaluated most of the recent quantitative literature on the effectiveness of peace operations.[3] They found that effectiveness, measured as 'negative peace' (absence of violent conflict) is robustly associated with presence of UN operations. Another recent book, *Peacekeeping in the Midst of War*, also finds that peacekeeping operations mitigate violence and shows that the capacity of a peace operation (including deployment size and constitution - type of personnel) is a crucial factor that shapes conflict dynamics and saves civilian lives.[4]

Howard points out that since the end of the Cold War, two-thirds or 11 out of 16 UN peacekeeping operations successfully ended and withdrew. These were the missions in Namibia, El Salvador, Cambodia, Mozambique, Eastern Slavonia/Croatia, Guatemala, Timor Leste, Burundi, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, and Liberia. There are also studies on the endurance of self-sustainable peace after these UN mission withdrew.[5] Howard judges the following missions to have been unsuccessful: Somalia in 1993; Angola in 1993; Rwanda in 1994; Bosnia (Srebrenica) in 1995; and Haiti in 2017. A further 13 UN peacekeeping missions are currently ongoing. In addition, the UN also deploys 25 special political missions (SPMs).

Overall, it has thus been established that peacekeeping works, but the current focus on performance is driven, in part, by frustration with some of the ongoing missions where progress and exit is unclear. What do we know about the performance of these missions?

The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON)

Despite the positive conclusions of these statistical studies, not enough is known about how peace operations contribute to reducing violence and sustaining peace in specific cases.[6] The Effectiveness of Peace Operations Network (EPON) is an attempt to address this gap by undertaking a number of principally qualitative studies into the effectiveness of specific ongoing

3. Ruggeri, Andrea & Jessica de Salvatore, "The Withdrawal of UN Peace Operations and State Capacity: Descriptive Trends and Research Challenges". International Peacekeeping, 27 no. 3 (2020). https://doi.org/10.1080/13533312.2019.1710368
4. Hultman, Lise, Jacob D. Kathman, & Megan Shannon, Peacekeeping in the midst of War (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019).
5. Ruggeri, Andrea & Jessica de Salvatore, 2020, Op.cit.
6. Call, Charles T., Why Peace Fail: The Causes and Recurrence of Civil War. (Washington D.C.: Georgetown University Press, 2012); Richmond, Oliver, Failed Statebuilding: Intervention, the State, and the Dynamics of Peace Formation (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012).

peace operations, where each operation is assessed in its own context. This network employs a shared methodology across these studies to enable comparative and longitudinal analysis.

EPON is a global research consortium of more than 40 institutions that are collaboratively undertaking research into the effectiveness of specific peace operations.[7] Since 2018 EPON has undertaken studies into the African Union (AU) Mission in Somalia (AMISOM), the UN Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (MINUSMA), the UN Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS), the UN Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA) and the UN-AU Hybrid Operation in Darfur (UNAMID). Studies into the UN Verification Mission in Colombia, the EU and OSCE missions in Ukraine and the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) are underway and more studies will follow.

EPON defines effectiveness as the overall strategic impact of a peace operation, understood as reducing conflict dynamics in the area of operation over a particular period of time, in the context of its mandate and resources. The network's studies employ three analytical tools: a context analysis, an identification of effects, and a review of explanatory factors. The EPON methodology employs a set of six explanatory factors: political primacy; mandates and resources; people-centred approaches; legitimacy and credibility; coordination and coherence; and women, peace and security.[8] However, research teams are also encouraged to look beyond these factors and to identify any others that may be of relevance to their specific case.

> "The emerging findings of the studies undertaken by EPON to date are that most of the peace operations have made significant contributions to preventing major civil war and large-scale violence."

7. The studies are available on the network's website: https://effectivepeaceops.net
8. The six explanatory factors were developed and discussed in the EPON methodology working group and validated through multiple consultations. They are based on factors widely held to contribute to effectiveness in policy documents such as the UN Capstone Doctrine (2008) and the report of the UN High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (2015).

The emerging findings of the studies undertaken by EPON to date are that most of the peace operations have made significant contributions to preventing major civil war and large-scale violence. However, these peace operations are not able to bring an end to these violent conflicts on their own. They simply do not have the political leverage and support, requisite mandates, resources and thus capacity to end violent conflict at the scale required. Sustainably ending violent conflict can only be achieved politically.

The peace operations EPON has studied to date have not met local and international expectations when it comes to protecting civilians. The operations in the DRC, Mali, Somalia and South Sudan have protected many civilians directly and indirectly, but they simply do not have the political backing, resources and capacity to protect all civilians at all times. Expectations that these operations can protect civilians at scale, with the levels of political leverage and level of resources currently mobilised are unrealistic.

All of the peace operations EPON has studied have been more successful during periods when they enjoyed coherent political support among most of the key stakeholders, especially between the Council, host government and key neighbouring and regional stakeholders. One implication of this observation is that operations only have weak leverage on one of the most important factors that can influence their effectiveness, as a large portion of the work necessary to bring about and sustain such coherent political support needs to happen at the level of the political bodies and strategic headquarters that have deployed the operation.

All of the operations EPON studied lacked a clear political project aimed at resolving their respective conflicts. Instead, all these operations have a conflict management mandate, with a focus on stability and the protection of civilians. The bulk of their efforts is devoted to essentially keeping the situation from deteriorating further. This also means that they lack a clear end-state and a strategy they can pursue to achieve it within a reasonably timeframe.

The peace operations EPON has studied are all still predominantly state centric; focussed on supporting the host government and state institutions, or threats to them. Much more needs to be done to operationalise and implement the HIPPO call for peace operations to become more people-centred.[9] Other areas where

9. de Coning, Cedric & Linnéa Gelot, "Placing People at the Center of UN Peace Operations", Global Observatory, IPI (2020).

the effectiveness of these operations can be further improved included especially Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and the Women, Peace and Security agenda.[10]

From the EPON studies to date it is also clear that the performance of peace operations should not be judged only on the ability of the missions to achieve their own civilian, police, and military objectives. Nor is it enough, for instance for a UN peacekeeping operation to be integrated with the rest of the UN system. Effectiveness also depends on the degree to which peace operations, and their strategic headquarters, contribute to shaping and maintaining the strategic political coherence of the larger national and international effort to sustain the peace in a given country or region. The performance of a peace operation is only effective if its contribution to the larger effort helps to enable overall progress with the conflict to self-sustainable peace transition.

Another overall observation in this context is that the systematic collection, management and analysis of data on the actions and performance of peace operations, and its effects on the people and institutions they are meant to protect and support, would significantly improve the ability of these operations, their mandating organisations, their host institutions and external observers and researchers, to assess and analyse the performance and effectiveness of these operations. Unfortunately, through our studies to date we have found that whilst some data is being collected, this data has not been systematically organised, analysed and shared within the organisations responsible for deploying international peace operations. In this regard, two recent UN initiatives to improve performance are especially promising, namely the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) for UN peacekeeping operations and the Force Commander's Unit Evaluation system.

Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS)

The Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) for UN peacekeeping operations was launched in 2018, in order to give UN peace operations a tool with which to measure their impact.[11] CPAS is a context- and mission-specific planning, monitoring and evaluation system. It enables the mission leadership team to make decisions aimed at improving performance by maintaining or scaling up those activities that have a meaningful impact and adapting or ending those that do not.

10. See Westendorf, Jasmine-Kim "WPS and SEA in Peacekeeping Operations" In Sarah Davies, & Jaqcui True (Eds) Oxford Handbook of WPS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018); and Sharland, Lisa, "Women, Gender and the A4P Agenda: An Opportunity for Action?" Policy Brief 2019:7, Challenges Forum, (2019).
11. de Coning, Cedric & Emery Brusset, "Towards a Comprehensive Performance Assessment and Reporting Framework for UN Peace Operations", NUPI Report 4 (Oslo: NUPI, 2018).

CPAS assess mission performance by analysing its effect on the knowledge, attitudes and behaviour of the people and institutions the mission needs to influence in order to prevent violent conflict and sustain peace. It does so by analysing the relevance, extent and duration of the mission's actions on selected outcomes, identified during the planning process. CPAS provides the leadership team with evidence of the impact the mission is having, and analysis of where adjustments may be necessary to improve performance. This enables the leadership team to optimise the allocation of resources and to direct the mission's focus in ways that can maximise performance and continuously improve mandate implementation.

The concept, methodology and design approach of CPAS represents a significant shift in peace operation planning and performance assessment. CPAS is aimed at assessing the impact of the overall effect of the peace operation, as opposed to evaluating the delivery of outputs, and puts in place the methodology and tools to regularly measure progress and adapt to changes in context.

CPAS has now been introduced to almost all UN peacekeeping operations. It will take a number of iterations before the people involved and the mission leadership becomes fully conversed in the process and with interpreting and analysing the data that it generates for mission leadership. However, early indications are that the people and teams involved report heightened awareness of why the peace operation is undertaking certain actions and what it intends to achieve; greater awareness across teams of how synergies and collective effort contribute (or not) towards shared goals, and much more nuanced planning as the people engaged become more aware of the causal assumption that earlier planning relied on, and the gaps created between actual outputs and the ambitious goals these limited outputs were meant to achieve.[12]

Force Commander's Unit Evaluations

In order to address the need to assess the performance of the various units that make up the military component of a peacekeeping mission, Force Commanders are expected to submit a report of their evaluations of each unit under their command to the Office of Military Affairs at UN Headquarters. These reports are discussed with the relevant troop contributing countries (TCCs) to identify and remedy specific shortfalls

12. de Coning, Cedric, "Adaptive Peace Operations: Navigating the Complexity of Influencing Societal Change Without Causing Harm", International Peacekeeping, 27 no.5, (2020): 836-858. DOI: 10.1080/13533312.2020.1797500

identified in their contingents. The assessment carried out by Force Commanders focusing on the ability of the unit to perform the specific capabilities and tasks required of them, as specified in the Statement of Unit Requirement and the relevant UN Military Unit Manual for that particular type of unit. The Force Commanders are also encouraged to offer recommendations for the evaluated unit's improvement, including additional resources that may be required from Sector, Force, Mission Headquarters, TCCs or UN Headquarters. Recommendations for improvement may include actions to address personnel skills and capabilities, training, manpower strength, equipment capabilities, readiness and logistical requirements. The evaluation process involves a Force or Sector Headquarters team visiting each unit and reporting their findings to the Force or Sector Commander and the evaluated unit commander. Formed police units (FPUs) are evaluated following a similar process.

Conclusion

This background paper has highlighted several challenges facing international peace operations' performance today, including the lack of political backing, adequate resources and capacity in order to achieve their mandated tasks. The first step in the right direction is to improve the internal monitoring, evaluation and related data management systems for ongoing assessment of mission performance. This information needs to be fed into and integrated with mission management, reporting and budgeting cycles so that mission leadership can regularly adapt mission plans, budgets and activities to improve performance. Here we see important progress in recent years in the UN system with the development of the Comprehensive Performance Assessment System (CPAS) and the Force Commander's Unit Evaluations. The regularity with which the UN has commissioned strategic reviews and the renewed interest in the research community to study the performance of peace operations is also promising. However, the regular and systematic assessment of peace operations, both internally and by external reviewers, is only a recent development, and we hope the 2020 Challenges Forum will feed into the discussion on how we can further improve the ways in which the performance of international peace operations can be improved.

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Challenges Forum

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