



November 2007

The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping (2): Reforming DPKO

TIMO PELZ & VOLKER LEHMANN

Summary

The current increase in UN peacekeeping operations has strained the institutional capacities of the UN Secretariat. Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's reform, which adds to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations a new Department of Field Support, is only the last in a series of changes of the UN peacekeeping architecture aiming to balance unity of command and division of labor.

Origins of UN Peacekeeping Structure

Initially the concept of peacekeeping operations was not part of the UN Charter. The institutional capacity within the UN Secretariat grew only in reaction to the necessity for UN involvement in maintaining peace. This was in part an evolutionary process and in part a consequence of a number of individuals who held key positions in crucial times.

The institutional starting point of the UN's structure for undertaking peacekeeping operations (PKOs) is the Military Staff Committee (MSC). Article 47 of the Charter stipulates that the MSC advises the Security Council (SC) on all questions related to the military requirements for maintaining international peace and security. Yet by 1948, when the UN established its first PKOs¹, the Cold War confrontation among the permanent five members of the SC rendered the MSC defunct. Its responsibilities were displaced onto other organs of the UN, which were forced to undertake peacekeeping with insufficient structural or budgetary resources on an ad hoc basis.

As for the secretariat, in 1953 the incoming Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld appointed two "Under-Secretaries-General (USGs) without portfolio", who were relabeled "USG for Special Political Affairs" in

1961. One post was first held by Ralph Bunche, and after his death in 1971 by Brian Urquhart. Urquhart oversaw the UN's operations in the Middle East, which comprised almost all of the UN's PKOs, and the office's tasks included both field operations and mediation. When Urquhart was succeeded by Marrack Goulding in 1985, the office soon began to lose control over the increasingly disparate components of the peacekeeping business.

At the end of the Cold War the nature of peacekeeping changed that required a break with the traditional way of peacekeeping. Whereas between 1948 and 1988 about half of all PKOs were deployed to internal armed conflicts, since 1998 this figure has risen to 90 percent. At the same time the UN also had to adjust to the ever-increasing demand for peacekeeping.²

When Boutros Boutros-Ghali took office as Secretary-General in 1992, one of his first decisions therefore was to rationalize peacekeeping by separating the political from the operational business. As a result, all political offices were bundled in a new branch, the Department of Political Affairs (DPA), whereas the old Office for Special Political Affairs was turned into a new Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO). Headed by Marrack Goulding as the first USG for Peacekeeping (with Kofi Annan as his deputy), DPKO was further subdivided into two organizational areas: An Office of Operations, which dealt with the conduct of missions all over the world, and included regional divisions as well as a situation center in New York; and an Office of Mission Support, to help divisions with administration and logistics. Aside from these two main offices, DPKO featured a military and a police division as well as an integrated training service.

¹ These two missions, both of which still exist today, were the United Nations Truce Supervision Agency (UNTSO) in Israel/Palestine, established in 1948 and the United Nations Military Observer Group in India and Pakistan (UNMOGIP), established in 1949.

² See Pelz and Lehmann: "The Evolution of UN Peacekeeping (1): Hybrid Missions". FESNY Fact Sheet, November 2007.

Reform After the Brahimi Report

In 1999, UN reports on the organization's failures during the 1994 genocide in Rwanda and the 1995 massacre in Srebrenica urged Kofi Annan (by now Secretary-General himself) to commission the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, chaired by USG Lakhdar Brahimi. Its final document,³ referred to as the "Brahimi Report", recommended a funding minimum and personnel requirements for UN peacekeeping missions. The Brahimi Report also initiated the creation of a Lessons Learned Unit, later to be succeeded by the Peacekeeping Best Practices Section (PBPS).

A New Peacekeeping Architecture

When PKOs grew by almost 50 percent throughout the summer of 2006,⁴ DPKO's resources were stretched thin in particular within the Office of Operations. To accommodate the increase in the number and complexity of PKOs, incoming Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon made DPKO reform a priority. However, his first call for the re-structuring of the department and the establishment of a separate Department of Field Support (DFS), was rejected by the General Assembly (GA) in February 2007. Members from the Group of 77 contended that such reform had to proceed according to the established legislative procedures of the Organization.⁵

A compromise resolution was adopted in March 2007⁶ and after the GA's 5th Committee adopted the budget⁷, a new peacekeeping structure has become effective since July 1st, 2007. In the future, DPKO will be focusing on operations, whereas the newly created DFS will handle management and logistics.⁸ Yet the GA rejected the SG's proposal to give DFS the authority over procurement for peacekeeping operations, which will remain within another entity, the Department of Management.⁹ Human resources will increase due to 284 newly created positions, though the SG had initially called for 400 new posts.

³ United Nations, Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations, A/55/305-S/2000/809, August 21, 2000.

⁴ See Security Council Report Special Report No. 5, 8 September 2006:
http://www.securitycouncilreport.org/site/c.glKWLeMTIsG/b.2056585/k.A1E/Special_Research_Report_No_5_8_September_2006.htm

⁵ Resistance also arose because DPKO reform was linked to the SG's proposal to downgrade the Department of Disarmament into an Office for Disarmament Affairs. See <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/peacekpg/reform/2007/0206rejected.htm>

⁶ These were the framework resolution A/61/L.54.

⁷ See A/C.5/61/L.71

⁸ For an organizational chart see <http://www.un.org/Depts/dpko/DFSchart.pdf>

⁹ See <http://www.globalpolicy.org/security/peacekpg/reform/2007/0629splitintwo.htm>

To maintain unity of command and proper integration of services, the new entity DSF and the USG for Field Support will remain subordinated to the USG for Peacekeeping. The latter position will continue to be held by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, DPKO's head for the last seven years. Until a USG for Field Support will be nominated, Assistant Secretary-General Jane Holl Lute acts as officer in charge. The new position of USG for Field Support will be subject of a review after one year, as will the budget of US\$ 230.5 million for the entire UN Secretariat peacekeeping structure.

Challenges Ahead

As the United Nations Integrated Mission in Timor (UNMIT) and the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) are reaching full capacity and the hybrid UN-African Union peacekeeping force in Darfur (UNAMID) is gearing up to become operational early 2008, a reformed DPKO/DSF will have to hit the ground running to meet unprecedented challenges for the UN peacekeeping architecture.

- **Cumbersome Coordination:** The SG claims that the current reform does not split DPKO in two, but creates a new department with the necessary resources to accommodate better the increasing demand from the deployment of more troops. While the old DPKO has certainly been overstretched, its history also shows that tight coordination between the field and UN peacekeeping headquarters are pivotal in any singly UN PKO. The verdict as to whether the establishment of a new department will encourage or stifle coordination is still out.
- **Envious Equality:** Having two department heads that are equal in terms of UN hierarchy while one having to report to the other may turn out as a recipe for bureaucratic infight at the expense of operational efficiency in peacekeeping. Moreover, because USGs are the third highest rank in the UN nomenclature, their nomination is generally politically charged and subject to 'national' and UN regional groupings' claims. France insisted on the continuation of Jean-Marie Guéhenno at the helm of DPKO. Other countries that are not yet adequately represented in the UN hierarchy may lay claim to the position USG for DFS and bargains may not necessarily lead to the strongest candidate for such a challenging job.
- **Bad Behavior:** DPKO continues to face quality management issues caused by misconduct of mission members in the field. DPKO needs to safeguard that the increase in quantity of troops deployed does not compromise their quality. It continuously has to implement the lessons learned. A promising, more proactive approach already started to show when the UN recently made public cases of child molestation by mission members in Cote d' Ivoire before the press broke the news.