

Steven Aiello

The Principles of UN Peacekeeping: A Lesson in Misguided Priorities

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Abstract: United Nations Peacekeeping forces are limited under international law by a variety of constraints, including their specific UN mandate. This article examines how the UN's principles of peacekeeping undermine the ability of peacekeeping missions to protect civilians, presumably a key objective for peacekeeping missions. A number of case studies highlight this phenomenon and show the need for a modification of the principles guiding peacekeeping missions in order to allow them to achieve the intended goals.

“The heroes of the world community are not those who withdraw when difficulties ensue, not those who can envision neither the prospect of success nor the consequence of failure -- but those who stand the heat of battle, the fight for world peace through the United Nations.”¹

-- **Hubert H. Humphrey, 38th American Vice President**

Introduction

The UN as an organization represents an attempt to unify the world’s states, with their myriad often competing economic, political and social interests, under the general rubric of ensuring global peace and stability. It is difficult to make the case that the UN has been very successful in this regard. Criticism of the UN has focused on the conflicting ideologies that it attempts to unify, its domination by non-democratic states in the General Assembly or by veto-carrying member states in the Security Council, and its lack of an effective enforcement mechanism.

This paper focuses on UN peacekeeping missions. The argument is made that the three basic principles by which UN peacekeeping missions must abide—namely consent of the parties, impartiality, and the general non-use of force except in self-defense and defense of the mandate—are fundamentally crippling to an overall objective of ensuring human rights and addressing humanitarian need. This is not just a theoretical argument but one that is supported by more than a half-century of failed UN

¹ Douglas, Hon. Dr. Denzil L. *Statement at the 64th Session of the UN General Assembly*. Rep. 2009. *UN.org*. Web. 2 Jan. 2011. <http://www.un.org/en/ga/64/generaldebate/pdf/KN_en.pdf>.

missions and corroborated by the testimony of former UN peacekeepers and official UN reports.

It is to be expected that it may be easier to identify the problem than to solve it. Nonetheless, suggestions are made in the concluding section for changes that can be taken in the future.

Doctrines and Mandates

Every UN peacekeeping mission is limited by four factors. The first three are the basic three principles of UN peacekeeping: consent, impartiality, and the absence of force. The fourth factor limiting a UN peacekeeping mission is the specific mandate of the mission. Each one of these factors will be explained individually.

Regarding consent, the UN website declares that:

UN peacekeeping operations are deployed with the consent of the main parties to the conflict. This requires a commitment by the parties to a political process. Their acceptance of a peacekeeping operation provides the UN with the necessary freedom of action, both political and physical, to carry out its mandated tasks.²

That is, according to the UN guidelines, the main parties involved in a conflict must consent in order for a UN mission to be allowed to intervene.

Secondly, UN peacekeeping missions are bound by a policy of impartiality.

Here, we are instructed that:

² United Nations Department of Peacekeeping Operations, United Nations Peacekeeping Operations : Principles and Guidelines, available at <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/principles.shtml>

...a peacekeeping operation must scrupulously avoid activities that might compromise its image of impartiality. A mission should not shy away from a rigorous application of the principle of impartiality for fear of misinterpretation or retaliation.

Failure to do so may undermine the peacekeeping operation's credibility and legitimacy, and may lead to a withdrawal of consent for its presence by one or more of the parties.³

The UN maintains that a policy of impartiality is distinct and "should not be confused with neutrality".⁴ However, this difference seems largely semantic. In any case, in practice this principle has been much abused, as will be discussed *infra*.

The third principle is that of the non-use of force. The UN guidelines state that "UN peacekeeping operations are not an enforcement tool. However, they may use force at the tactical level, with the authorization of the Security Council, if acting in self-defense and defense of the mandate."⁵ Thus by default UN peacekeeping forces are prohibited from using force, and when permitted, the use of force is limited to self-defense and must be consistent with the mandate.

The specific mandate of a mission is itself the fourth constraining component of UN peacekeeping. A mission receives a specific mandate, essentially its larger objective, and this serves to focus the mission's leaders while restricting their choices in decision-making. Depending on a mission's mandate, the head of a peacekeeping mission may have more or less discretion. For example, a mission may be limited to a

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ *Ibid.*

certain conflict, region, minority group, and its members may be so restricted as to be there just to submit reports to superiors at the UN headquarters in New York or elsewhere.

Flaws of the UN Peacekeeping Doctrine

These four limitations have several obvious flaws that have contributed to the failure of UN peacekeeping missions. Firstly, by requiring consent of the parties prior to intervention, the UN risks allowing great atrocities and humanitarian disasters to unfold without the appropriate intervention. Moreover, parties involved can use this knowledge to their advantage by forcing the mission to accept a limited mandate in order to receive consent to act as a peacekeeping force.

Some of the situations that seem to most urgently require the intervention of an international peacekeeping force are those where the incumbent power refuses to allow foreign forces on its soil. In such a situation there is not much that the UN can do. A Security Council resolution can be used to create a legal justification for outside forces to enter. However such resolutions are invariably a matter of great political debate and consequently they are few and far between.

The requirement of consent by the parties gives the upper hand to the dominant power, which generally will not have much to gain by allowing UN peacekeeping forces to enter the conflict. Where it will consent, it is only because its leaders expect to gain some other benefit in return. This may, and often does, mean that corrupt leaders can parlay the requirement of their consent into international relations influence in a wide variety of areas. This requirement is perhaps best understood in the context of

state-state relations that the United Nations was formed; when dealing with corrupt regimes engaged in wars of attrition with sub-state actors this requirement seems misplaced.

Secondly, the requirement of impartiality is one that has led to UN policies that essentially fail to distinguish between aggressor and victim. It is true that such distinctions may not always be made clearly, and neither side in a conflict is free of culpability. However in most of the conflicts discussed *infra*, there was a clear aggressor and a clear victim. By failing to call evil for what it is, the UN was able to continue to "shake hands with the devil," to use peacekeeper Romeo Dallaire's terminology.⁶

This entire condition seems nebulous and poorly formed. Consider the paragraph quoted *supra*. In consecutive sentences the guidelines advises that peacekeeping forces should not worry about misinterpretation in pursuing the interests of impartiality—or more precisely in avoiding activities which might be misconstrued as being impartial. Practically this seems to mean that the concern over being viewed as impartial should trump other considerations, with the reference to misinterpretation as a tacit acknowledgement that this policy may lead to difficult decisions, particularly where involvement might seem justified or warranted.

There is little reason to read between the lines as to why such limiting guidelines would be preferred. The second paragraph quoted makes this quite clear. Indeed, it advises that any failure to maintain an image of impartiality risks undermining credibility, which in turn could lead to the withdrawal of consent. Practically, in many

⁶ <http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/dallaire/>"In Depth: Romeo Dallaire." *In Depth: Romeo Dallaire*. CBC News, 24 Oct. 2003. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.cbc.ca/news/background/dallaire/>>.

conflicts where the only party whose consent matters is the incumbent government, this means that the UN peacekeepers must ensure not to step on the feet of the government, which means that their mission is anything but impartial.

It must be asked whether this is the proper list of priorities for a United Nations peacekeeping mission. Should the chance of the perception of peacekeeping forces as partial prevent its members from taking actions essential for the very reason they are there? The reasoning that impartiality is essential for the mission to continue seems appropriate for actions that are clearly biased, and especially a pattern or trend of partial behavior, but should such fears over its image dictate which actions mission forces can take and which it cannot?

In this regard the guiding principles seem both harsh and excessive. On the one hand it is true that unfair actions jeopardize an individual mission just as a clearly partial peacekeeping mission would threaten the integrity of future missions. On the other hand what are considered here are not biased actions, but the very perception of such; the original purpose of the missions seems lost in a sea of politics with this guideline.

The policy of non-use of force has also served to handicap UN peacekeeping forces in the past. Even when peacekeepers have been in a position to intervene and have had warning of attacks, because they are limited to the use of force only for self-defense they have simply stood back and allowed attackers to have their way.⁷

It must be understood that peacekeeping missions face a double-pronged challenge, of limited resources and political opposition. UN missions must balance a

⁷ For examples see the UN idleness in Rwanda, or in Srebrenica, discussed *infra*.

delicate political equilibrium to enjoy the support needed to be present; this is part of the previous challenges discussed. In addition to that however, many UN peacekeeping missions are under-staffed. A lack of manpower and firepower often prevents UN missions from undertaking a broader mandate to intervene and protect, or where such mandate exists, the mission may be forced to abandon its mandate in humbling recognition of its inadequacies to deal with the threat.⁸ But these are practical issues, while the limitation on the use of force is a theoretical, *a priori* restriction. In any case, all of these issues beg to be considered in questioning whether UN missions fulfill their *raison d'etre*, and if not, how they might be reformed.⁹

Finally, because they are limited to a specific mandate, often a very narrow one, UN peacekeepers and even commanders have their hands tied. They may be in a position to help or they may know of an urgent situation in which their forces are needed, but because taking action would fall outside the purview of their mandate, intervention will not be permissible.

This situation becomes absurdly complicated when one considers that the field commanders are relaying their appraisals and requests to UN headquarters in New York where they must then receive an answer from a UN bureaucrat who himself may be

⁸ One notable suggestion for reform of UN peacekeeping efforts that this article does not endeavor to discuss is the suggestion that the UN create a standing army bearing loyalty to the United Nations itself, from which peacekeeping missions could draw on support. Nita, Bhalla. "UN Official Says Criticism of Peacekeepers in I.Coast "unfounded"" AlertNet, 7 Apr. 2011. Web. 1 Jan. 2012. <http://www.trust.org/alertnet/news/un-official-says-criticism-of-peacekeepers-in-icoast-unfounded/>

⁹ For a contrast with the UN's most recent attempts at a comprehensive overview of Peacekeeping flaws and limitations see Brahimi, Lakhdar. *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peacekeeping Operations*. Rep. United Nations, 2000. Web. 01 Sept. 2011. <http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/>.

more concerned with balancing international politics than with the situation on the ground. Once again, the question begging to be answered is what the purpose of UN peacekeeping truly is—are forces there to ensure the protection of the innocent, or to serve more complicated political interests? The answer is often not as straightforward as one might hope.

For all of these reasons, UN peacekeeping missions are fundamentally and severely flawed. It is no surprise then that peacekeeping forces have failed to perform to what might be their expectations. What is shocking, however, is the extent to which they have failed and the magnitude of the impact of some of these failed missions.

UN Peacekeeping: Limited from the Start

UN peacekeeping failures are unfortunately nothing new. In fact the opposite is true; it is peacekeeping successes that are few and far between. Oftentimes multiple peacekeeping missions must be sent to the same place, in the hopes that modifying the mandate slightly and changing the mission name will bring about a more positive outcome.

An early UN peacekeeping failure was that of the Organisation des Nations Unies au Congo (ONUC) in the Congo in the early 1960s.¹⁰ On July 11th, 1960, less than two weeks into the life of the new state of Congo, Belgium-supported Tshombe and his forces declared an independent state of Katanga. UN forces under Dag Hammarskjöld responded following resolution 143, but for more than a year the UN mission was

¹⁰ "Republic of the Congo-ONUC Background." United Nations. Web. 1 Sept. 2011.

<http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onuc.htm>

prevented from using force.¹¹ In the interim, a Congolese government-led attempt at reunifying Katanga failed, and the situation worsened from one of two competing parties to one with four leaders vying for control.

The political situation only worsened, until former Prime Minister Lumumba, having been captured by Tshombe's forces, was murdered at Tshombe's command. Only at that point was there enough political impetus to support the use of force by UN peacekeepers under Security Council Resolution 161.¹² Even then, a number of mostly unsuccessful operations followed until the Tshombe regime was defeated and the country finally reunited in 1963. In all, some 100,000 lives were lost, including the assassination of Prime Minister Lumumba as well as the death under mysterious circumstances of then UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld.¹³ This was certainly not a success to brag about.

The events that transpired between July 1960 and June 1964 were certainly not caused by the UN. However to say that the organization bears no responsibility for the direction taken would not be wholly accurate either. The situation itself gradually worsened as time progressed; in turn UN peacekeeping involvement increased with the passage of time. The evolution of the UN mandates reflects this.¹⁴ It is clear in

¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹² "Republic of the Congo-ONUC Mandate." United Nations. Web. 1 Sept. 2011
<http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onucM.htm>

¹³ "Mid-Range Wars and Atrocities of the Twentieth Century." *Twentieth Century Atlas*. Oct. 2010. Web. 31 Aug. 2011. <<http://users.erols.com/mwhite28/warstat4.htm#Crisis>>.

¹⁴ Consider resolutions ranging from UNSC Resolution 143 to UNSC Resolution 169. See "Republic of the Congo-ONUC Mandate." United Nations. Web. 1 Sept. 2011 <http://www.un.org/Depts/DPKO/Missions/onucM.htm>. In particular, it was only after Prime Minister Lumumba and several other key Congolese political figures had been killed that the UN finally approved the use of force by the peacekeeping forces stationed in the Congo. See UNSC

retrospect that the lack of a strong, concerted effort by UN peacekeepers in the beginning of the mission—and the conflict, contributed to the protracted internal fighting. An initial mandate that allowed ONUC to move on the ground would likely have prevented the escalation that instead occurred; rather than a gradual increasing of UN boots on the ground in synchronization with a broadening mandate an initial surge, and a mission mandate that allowed ONUC to act more freely would likely have been beneficial to the UN itself and certainly would have saved many Congolese lives. Instead, the specific politics that prevented such approval at the top of the UN decision-making, and the specific requirements of non-use of force and limitation to a mandate that did not make protection of civilians the top priority, doomed this mission, if not to utter failure certainly to a less than auspicious start, one that would only reach a more positive resolution once the mandate itself had been altered.

The UN has had numerous chances to even the record since 1960, but more often than not they have fallen short. In the last two decades in fact, despite the ending of the Cold War, some of the worst, most barbaric fighting in human history has occurred. The next two case studies highlight the failures of the UN to learn from its previous failures and adapt its peacekeeping methodology accordingly, and grave consequences of this failure.

The Bosnian-Serb Conflict

From 1992 until 1995, the Bosnian-Serbian war claimed more than 100,000 lives, and over two million people were displaced from their homes in the most devastating

Resolution 161, Web. February 1961. <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/RESOLUTION/GEN/NR0/171/68/IMG/NR017168.pdf?OpenElement>

conflict on the continent in half a century.¹⁵ Throughout the conflict United Nations forces were on the ground, but they were outmanned and limited by the constraints to display impartiality and to avoid the use of force. Although this was standard operating procedure for UN peacekeeping forces, it called on the UN mission to treat the sides as equal participants in the conflict. In fact the Serbians were responsible for most of the immense damage caused in this war, including the most gruesome incidents and human rights violations.¹⁶

The Srebrenica Massacre in particular is one of the more ignominious moments in UN history.¹⁷ In Srebrenica, the ironically-named UN Protection Force (UN ProFor) allowed Serbian forces into a UN-declared safe house and then left the Bosnian Muslims there without protection.¹⁸ The subsequent murder of more than 8,000 Bosnians was recognized as genocide by the International War Crimes Tribunal in The Hague.¹⁹ UN peacekeeping forces managed to evade legal culpability by claiming immunity, but morally it is nearly impossible to deny the failures and the role that the UN peacekeeping principles played in contributing to the casualties of this conflict.²⁰

¹⁵ "Review of European Security Issues." *Review of European Security Issues*. U.S. Government, 3 Mar. 2006. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.america.gov/st/washfile-english/2006/March/20060302182114MVyelwarC0.6359674.html>>.

¹⁶ See "About the ICTY". Web. Accessed Dec. 1, 2011 <http://www.icty.org/sections/AbouttheICTY>

¹⁷ "History of the War in Bosnia." *Center for Balkan Development*. The Center for Balkan Development, May 1996. Web. 01 Sept. 2011. <http://www.balkandevlopment.org/edu_bos.html>.

¹⁸ UNProFor was originally assigned to help peace and stability efforts in Croatia, but was expanded to include Bosnia-Herzegovina when the need became apparent. "United Nations Protection Force Background." Web. Accessed Dec. 1, 2011. http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprof_b.htm

¹⁹ "UN Srebrenica Immunity Questioned." *UN Srebrenica Immunity Questioned*. BBC News, 18 June 2008. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/europe/7461310.stm>>.

²⁰ As with many other conflicts, the core issues of the conflict were far from resolved by the formal ending of conflict. Instead, Serbia was once again involved in ethnic warfare in Kosovo, where NATO intervention finally

By being asked to treat each side ‘impartially,’ UN peacekeepers stationed in the former Yugoslavia were made to conduct dealings with military commanders known to be perpetrating gross human rights violations, the extent of which would later warrant the creation of a separate ad hoc criminal tribunal.²¹

Compounding this and due in part to limited resources and political discord, UN peacekeepers stationed in the region under the UNPROFOR mission were largely ineffective, extremely limited, and ultimately failed in the effort to protect civilians during the conflict. Many peacekeepers were captured or killed, but perhaps more disturbingly, when inevitably facing larger numbers of Serbian forces, the UN troops would surrender, or given the opportunity, retreat, leaving local civilian populations to become casualties.²² In short, UNPROFOR’s shortcomings during the Bosnian-Serbian had disastrous consequences for the local civilian populations; these shortcomings in turn can be traced back to inherent flaws of the UN peacekeeping doctrine, issues which three decades after ONUC’s limitations in the Congo still had not been addressed.

Dealing with the Devil: Rwandan Experience

While Bosnia was a debacle for the UN, it pales in comparison to what happened in Rwanda in 1994. In Rwanda, more than half a million lives²³ were taken and the entire

ended the fighting. There too, international intervention was late in coming, but at least with NATO, the use of force necessary to end the conflict was eventually authorized.

²¹ See “About the ICTY”. Web. Accessed Dec. 1, 2011 <http://www.icty.org/sections/AbouttheICTY>

²² http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/missions/past/unprof_b.htm

²³ The estimated figures range from 500,000 to a million.

country was thrown into turmoil in the span of one hundred days.²⁴ The ethnic and historical roots of the conflict trace back directly to colonialist policies of Belgium. But the real onus of responsibility for the genocide in Rwanda lies with the UN leadership at the time, and the failure to expand the powers of the UN mission at the time.

A UN peacekeeping mission was in place in Rwanda prior to the escalation of violence and the resultant civil war. Moreover, the forces on the ground were aware of rising tensions and feared for the worst. Force Commander Roméo Dallaire's testimony about repeated overtures to UN headquarters in New York warning them of the threat of an escalation in violence and pleading for a broader mission mandate and the manpower necessary to protect civilians is most well-known, but in fact intelligence analysts and leaders of several Western states were aware of the risk assessment²⁵. Yet none of this changed the constraint to Commander Dallaire and his troops. They were essentially asked to standby and avoid direct confrontation with what he calls 'The Devil'. The UN team lacked the resources to stop the marauding Hutus, but even protecting whom they could would have violated the second and third principles, as well as the mission's mandate.

The UN decision-making and behavior in Rwanda was nothing short of egregious. By failing to heed the warnings and take the necessary steps to save human lives, the UN peacekeeping office showed its true colors and exposed its moral turpitude for the world to see. Its inability to prioritize the urgent humanitarian situation

²⁴ "Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened." *Rwanda: How the Genocide Happened*. BBC News, 17 May 2011. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-africa-13431486>>.

²⁵ Human Rights Watch. *Leave None to Tell the Story: Genocide in Rwanda*. Rep. Human Rights Watch. Web. <http://www.hrw.org/legacy/reports/1999/rwanda/Geno1-3-05.htm#P114_47129>

over its protocols and principles undoubtedly kept it from playing a key role in preventing the massive loss of life that occurred. The UN did not just refuse to identify 'evil' for what it was; it failed to react to the evil occurring until the situation was too far-gone.

With the magnitude of the UN's failures in Rwanda, faced with undeniable proof of the role that the limiting mandate and impartiality and nonuse of force obligations played in the UN's therein, one would hope that the organization, and the world, could learn from history. But once again, this did not happen.²⁶ UN Head of Peacekeeping Missions Kofi Annan was subsequently promoted to the position of Secretary General, and it was only after six years that the UN finally produced a report acknowledging its own responsibilities in the genocide.²⁷

If there were any doubt as to the UN's failures to learn from history, Darfur provides the unwanted confirmation. Here too, conflict was far from unexpected, and in fact it is difficult to point to an exact moment as to the 'start' of conflict. Instead the conflict was clear, as was the lack of an appropriate response by the international community. From 2003 until 2010, as many as three million people were displaced from their homes. The

²⁶ The effects of the conflict in Rwanda are even more devastating when evaluated from a regional perspective. The spillover violence from Rwanda led to years of subsequent conflict in the Congo, and an estimated death toll in excess of five million. French, Howard W. "U.N. Congo Report Offers New View on Genocide - NYTimes.com." *The New York Times - Breaking News, World News & Multimedia*. 27 Aug. 2010. Web. 01 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/28/world/africa/28congo.html>>

²⁷ "UN Admits Rwanda Genocide Failure." *UN Admits Rwanda Genocide Failure*. BBC News, 15 Apr. 2000. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/714025.stm>

casualty figures are controversial, but including death by disease and malnutrition associated with the conflict this may exceed 300,000.²⁸

In any case, the conflict engulfed the entire Darfur region for the greater part of a decade, with minimal and blatantly insufficient international response. Here the limitations of the UN peacekeeping principles may once again be criticized. There were repeated efforts to get Sudanese approval to allow a UN peacekeeping force to enter the region; time after time this permission was refused and momentum to intervene stagnated. Even the world's most powerful countries refused to intervene in a state that lacked the resources to maintain order in its own borders, a state that nonetheless engaged opposition rebel forces in battle after bloody battle. Clearly the UN had more regard for the sovereignty of Omar Al-Bashir, a tyrant who was indicted by the ICC during this time period, than for those living under his murderous rule.²⁹

Only in late 2007, more than four years from the start of the conflict, did the UN Security Council finally approve a peacekeeping force to be deployed in Darfur, and it did so under conditions amenable to the Sudanese regime.³⁰ Once again, it was a matter of too little, too late. The conflict from that point on did deescalate for the most part, but an incredible loss in human life had already occurred while the UN Security Council played political games trying to get permission to send a peacekeeping force. Once

²⁸ Lacey, Marc. "Tallying Darfur Terror: Guesswork with a Cause." *NY Times*. 11 May 2005. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/05/10/world/africa/10iht-journal.html>>.

²⁹ "US Rice Hopes Sudan Will Okay Darfur Force." *Sudan Tribune*. 18 Nov. 2006. Web. 01 Sept. 2011. <<http://www.sudantribune.com/US-Rice-hopes-Sudan-will-okay,18750>>

³⁰ "Sudan 'will Support Darfur Force'" *Sudan 'will Support Darfur Force'* BBC News, 1 Aug. 2007. Web. 1 Sept. 2011. <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/6925538.stm>>

again the UN's principles of peacekeeping had failed the goal of preventing a situation of humanitarian crisis, while the greater political objectives were prioritized.

Conclusion: Necessary Reforms

UN peacekeeping missions have four primary constraints. The first three factors—consent, impartiality, and non-use of force—are the general limitations of every UN peacekeeping force, while the fourth—the specific mandate of a mission—is distinct for each mission. But what all of these factors have in common is that they highlight the weight that politics invariably plays in UN decisions, counterbalancing any humanitarian needs for intervention.

Because UN missions require a mandate and Security Council approval and because there are conflicting political agendas represented on the UNSC and especially among the five veto-carrying states, some of the world's worst atrocities have gone without a real response from the UN or have occurred in the presence of UN peacekeeping missions too handicapped by constraints to serve the true humanitarian need. This represents a failure of the UN model that warrants immediate rectification.

While strong arguments can be made for the need for reform of the Security Council or even the overall UN organization, or for recognition of the fact that collective world peace and human rights may not coincide as organizational objectives, those are all beyond the focus of this discussion. Instead, a number of possibilities regarding peacekeeping missions would seem to offer improvements to the current situation.

Firstly, the need for consent as a pre-condition to intervention should be abolished. This requirement has been used to allow some of the worst atrocities in

human history to occur. The constraints of limited UN resources and the need to gain UNSC approval should suffice to ensure that the missions embarked upon are in fact cases of urgently-needed intervention.

For this purpose, a more streamlined procedure for approval of UN peacekeeping forces might be developed, one which would have a process by which the relevant UN agencies and international actors could petition to have peacekeeping missions sent to the places where they are most needed. The criteria for dispatching of peacekeeping forces should be whether forces are needed to keep the peace, not whether the party in control, often an illegitimate power, is particularly desirous of a UN peacekeeping presence.

Secondly, instead of neutrality and the non-use of force, protection of civilians should become a priority. In far too many instances UN peacekeepers have allowed civilians to be injured, raped, killed and mutilated. If forces are being sent to a country, this should be for the purpose of ensuring the protection of civilians. The obligation to protect civilians should be incorporated into every UN peacekeeping mission mandate as a top priority. The other issues mentioned in the current guidelines are important as well, but they should not be placed above the protection of civilians.

It is submitted that the fear expressed explicitly and implicitly in the peacekeeping guidelines, namely that UN missions might come to be seen as partial, is a mistaken one, and represents a miscalculation. If UN peacekeeping forces show an unwavering commitment to the protection of the innocent, if they will not step aside when greater forces threaten civilians, then and only then can they enjoy the respect of the parties to a conflict. It is precisely when UN forces show their resolve to stand up for their values,

and face down evil even when outnumbered, that they will warrant greater support from individual countries and garner international prestige.

Certainly this would mean that a certain number of countries would cease to allow UN peacekeeping forces to be present if these forces began to act with moral fortitude. However coupled with the first suggestion, this effect would be reduced. Moreover, of what value is it to have an abundance of peacekeeping missions that are too limited to protect the victims of violence, and ultimately to prevent the worst conflicts from continuing, or even increasing in magnitude? It would seem that even if peacekeeping missions became less prevalent but more substantial, this would be advantageous to the purported values of a peacekeeping mission.

If these changes to the UN peacekeeping model are made, the system is depoliticized, and the necessary resources are provided, then peacekeepers can cease to be de facto observers and can begin to protect the people who need protecting.

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