

How Did the Brahimi Report Improve the Effectiveness of UN Peacekeeping Operations?

Written by Lauren Durand

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LAUREN DURAND, SEP 5 2012

Peacekeeping has been one of the main challenges the United Nations (UN) has faced since the end of the Cold War due to the rise of civil wars in the 1990s. The Brahimi report was written in the year 2000 by a panel of ten experts in response to the dramatic failures of UN peacekeeping in the 1990s, especially in Rwanda and Srebrenica. In alignment with Boutros Boutros Ghali's 1992 Agenda for Peace, the Brahimi report aimed at renewing the commitment of UN member states to the "maintenance of international peace and security" (Gray 2001). The report made a number of recommendations designed to improve operational and doctrinal aspects of peacekeeping. It questioned the appropriateness of pre-Cold War traditional peacekeeping when dealing with "new wars". This essay will argue that the progress made by peacekeeping since 2000 has been influenced by the publication of the report. First, post-Brahimi report missions have been characterised by the increasing participation of non-UN third parties and regional organisations. Furthermore, as recommended by Brahimi, peacekeeping operations (PKOs) have moved away from neutrality to become instead impartial and robust. Finally, immediate relief is no longer the first priority of the UN. Instead, reconstruction, development and sustainable peace have become one of the main concerns of the organisation, which is striving to facilitate peacebuilding. While ameliorations have been noted, the UN must "continue to strengthen the peacekeeping machinery" and renew the commitment of states for future successes (Ban 2010).

The Brahimi report recognises the importance of regional and sub-regional organisations in the establishment and maintenance of peace and security (UN 2000). Deficiencies in staff, funds and equipment have been found responsible for many of the failures of the UN. The fiasco of UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone can be attributed to the allocation of only five staff in the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) to manage 12,000 troops in the field. UNAMSIL is not the only operation with this problem. In 2001, the DPKO was composed of only 400 staff for 58,000 troops deployed around the world (Gray 2001). UN peacekeeping missions have also been unsuccessful due to the lack of involvement of troop contributing countries (TCCs) and the resulting gap between the physical means provided and the aims of the mission. This has been worsened by the war on terror that began in 2001. The stationing of large contingents of Western troops in Afghanistan and Iraq limits the availability of forces for other operations (Williams and Bellamy 2010). States are also more wary of deploying their own personnel in risky areas because of the number of casualties the war on terror has caused. Nonetheless, the number of troops has steadily increased to reach almost 100,000 in 2010, namely five times more than in 2000 (William and Bellamy 2010). Despite this sharp increase motivated by the Brahimi report's recommendations, UN and non-UN troops are still plagued by overstretch. The mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) constitutes 18,000 troops deployed on a territory as large as Western Europe (Gowan 2006).

Division of labour through the participation of regional and international organisations is a possible solution to the lack of personnel that restrains complex missions. The 2005 World Summit reiterated the wish of Brahimi and called for the implementation of a ten-year plan to build the capacity of the African Union (AU) (UNGA 2005). The UNAMID mission in Darfur established in 2007 was the first hybrid mission between the UN and the AU. Its mandate included the deployment of 26,000 personnel making it the biggest mission in the world (UNAMID 2001). However, the Brahimi report warns against the demands of modern peacekeeping and the potential unpreparedness of troops in the most crisis prone areas (UN 2000). Indeed, UNAMID has not been a clear success. This can partly be explained

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by the involvement in the mission of untrained AU troops (Murithi 2009). Strengthening collaboration with regional organisations can be beneficial because it increases the amount of resources available but just like UN PKOs, regional campaigns should not be authorised until the mandated mission receives adequate funds and troops are appropriately prepared. UNAMID reveals the operational flaws of hybrid peacekeeping resulting from logistical and strategical constraints.

Apart from the capacity to promote human rights, setting up elections and assisting with provisions of humanitarian aid, regional organisations have the possibility to prevent conflict, which is one of the central tenets of the Brahimi report. Regional organisations are more aware of the situation and may help to establish “clear, credible and achievable” mandates. The presence of regional forces can overcome the reluctance of states to accept the intervention of external parties. The UN/AU hybrid mission in Darfur has appeased the fears of neo-colonialism expressed by a number of African heads of states (Paterson 2007). The European Union (EU) has been particularly involved in operations because of its ability to quickly deploy troops. The relationship between the EU and the UN has been strengthened since 2004, however while organisations can help render mandates credible and achievable, they do not have any obligations to commit to a mission. In 2008, the EU refused to send more troops into the DRC due to the dangers of the situation (Gowan 2009). Regional organisations therefore remain independent and their ability to deny assistance to the UN Security Council (UNSC) has caused mandates to become less predictable. Furthermore, it should be pointed out that the UN peacekeeping force is almost entirely provided by developing countries. The five biggest contributors are Pakistan, Bangladesh, India, Nigeria and Ghana (Williams and Bellamy 2010). The lack of contributions from developed states and, more importantly, the permanent members of the UNSC (P5), questions the credibility of UN missions. In contrast, the operation “Iraqi Freedom” launched by the US obtained large support from a “coalition of the willing”, mainly Australia and the United Kingdom. Three major powers were deeply involved in a non-UN approved mission while they refused to increase their donations to the DPKO. Despite the alarming humanitarian situations in certain conflict zones and the call of the Brahimi report for better commitment, it seems Western nations always put their geopolitical interests first.

Post-Cold War peacekeeping missions often have to operate in hostile environments (Jones 2009) and far from the consensual context required by traditional peacekeeping. Today’s peacekeeping is a choice between “a more robust approach and going home” (Johnstone, Tortolani and Gowan 2005) and states, if they fear for their troops, will hesitate to intervene like in the DRC. The Brahimi report recommends the use of peacekeeping forces robust enough to represent a threat to belligerents and deter them from dropping out of previously signed peace agreements (Khan 2002). While it is not the objective to turn peacekeeping forces into “war fighting machines” (Annan 2000), they must be “prepared to confront the lingering forces of war and violence” (UN 2000). This preposition was first tested in the year 2000 by UNSC resolution 1313, which expanded the mandate of UNAMSIL in Sierra Leone (Johnstone 2006). In May, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF) withdrew its support to the Lomé Peace Agreement and restarted hostilities endangering both peacekeepers and civilians. The peacekeepers were unable to protect themselves or the population from the attacks of the militia despite the robust mandate previously authorised in February by resolution 1289. As a result, the UNSC authorised the new mandate to “deter and where necessary, decisively counter, the threat of RUF attack by responding robustly to any hostile actions or threat of imminent and direct use of force” (UNSC 2000). This decision was controversial as it essentially blurred the line between peacekeeping and peace enforcement. Brahimi reminded that the concepts of consent, impartiality and minimum use of force should remain essential in peacekeeping. In Darfur, the partial failure of UNAMID was attributed to the inexistent consent of one of the faction which forced troops to keep peace where there was no peace to keep. Building on the Brahimi report, the UN published the Capstone Doctrine in 2008, a document that detailed the duties and responsibilities of peacekeeping. It aimed to prevent failures similar to UNAMID. The parties of the conflict had to consent to both the presence of peacekeepers on their territory and the implementation of a political process (Johnstone 2010). In addition, consent had to be maintained by peacekeepers, through deterrence if necessary. This type of consent was not an ideal situation as it hindered the rapid and smooth development of the local political process that would lead to sustainable peace. The UN was accused of forgetting two of its guiding principles, namely consent and impartiality and thus the robust mandate questioned the credibility, efficiency and legitimacy of the UN.

The intention of the report was not to declare the UN the imperialistic judge of good and evil but rather to distinguish between neutrality, the equal treatment of both parties, and impartiality, reactivity unburdened by prejudice. To favour

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of neutrality over impartiality has in the past caused some missions to fail. In 2004, the MONUC mission in the DRC failed to protect the town of Bukavu when the militias attacked it, killing more than one hundred people (Johnstone Ian 2006). The peacekeepers were criticised for having mistaken impartiality for neutrality. Rather than withdrawing from the DRC and repeating the mistake of Rwanda, the UNSC revised the mandate to establish a more robust force and “ensure the protection of civilians, including humanitarian personnel, under imminent threat of physical violence” (MONUC 2011). Yamashita (2008) argues that impartiality is loyalty to the mandate of the mission and that in the face of genocide, there can be no neutrality. Post-Brahimi report missions require peacekeepers to identify potential spoilers of the mandate and take action against them, using force if necessary. This can be a danger to the mandate as governments, if they support militias, will feel threatened by peacekeepers and withdraw their consent (Johnstone 2010). The UN has to both maintain a friendly relationship with governments by making concessions to its mandates and remain impartial enough that it does not appear as a supporter of a non-democratic government that violates human rights. MONUC was victim of a decrease in its credibility when it cooperated with the DRC armed forces (FARDC), a necessary step for the conduct of the mission but an apparent dismissal of the human rights violations they had committed. Abandonment of neutrality was prominent in subsequent UN operations. This was a groundbreaking measure as it set precedent to the doctrine of Responsibility to Protect (R2P) embraced in 2005 during the General Assembly World Summit.

The Brahimi report established the humanitarian nature of PKOs by suggesting that peacebuilding, transitional administrations, reconstruction and development were equally as important as peacekeeping (UN 2000). Peacekeeping is no longer immediate relief but the establishment of long-term peace. The complex long-term commitment has put a strain on the UN by being more financially demanding and time consuming. This is nonetheless necessary since a 2004 High-level panel report identified violence within states as one of the six main threats to peace and security in the world (UN 2004). The clarity of mandates wanted by the Brahimi report was brought by the creation of an international pool of civilian police officers (CivPol) coming from 80 participating states (Williams and Bellamy 2007). Deployed on the ground along with national police, they increased the coordination of the different parties to facilitate peacebuilding, reconstruction and development and assist with the delivery of humanitarian aid. The first CivPol was present in Cambodia for the 1992 UNTAC mission but since then, the use of police force has become common and their mandate has expanded to give them the rights to arrest, detain and prosecute criminals (Williams and Bellamy 2007: 19). However, the presence of police does not diminish the need for peacekeepers since their number is usually limited and their power is only efficient if there is a foundation of peace and public order.

With the use of civilian police, the UN has been increasingly preoccupied with the development of a rule of law as part of the reconstruction process. Revived by the success of the Australian-led transitional administration in East Timor in 2006, a model rule of law that could be applied in case of state collapse was created. Moreover, the Brahimi report inspired the creation of the Peacebuilding Commission (PbC) during the 2005 World Summit as a result of its recommendation to establish a body capable of dealing with transitional administrations and failing states (Stahn 2005). The PbC includes a set of preventive measure designed to keep states from relapsing into conflict. It requires dialogue between the UN, donors, TCCs, NGOs, regional organisations, financial institutions and any other body capable of facilitating the post conflict recovery of states (McAskie 2007). Far from being a neo-colonialist scheme, the PbC has an advisory role and works in close cooperation with national elites and remaining political apparatus with their consent (Stahn 2005). In addition, the creation of the Peacebuilding Fund should ensure the functioning of the PbC if TCCs and financial institutions can maintain the required budget of \$250,000 (McAskie 2007). This seems unlikely considering the reluctance of states to assist peacekeeping operations. Since peacebuilding is a step ahead of peacekeeping, it would be surprising if TCCs were able to fund reconstruction but not missions. In 2011, the PbC is reviewing the cases of Burundi, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau, Central African Republic, Liberia and Guinea. The UNSC can also benefit from the recommendations of the PbC to ensure adequate resource and fund allocations. The main challenge of peacebuilding is the same as peacekeeping: the coordination between a number of agencies with different strategies, budgets, ideologies, resources, geographic locations and ambitions.

Post-Brahimi peacekeeping mission include the doctrine of R2P, which encompasses the responsibility to prevent, react and rebuild. The first official use of the doctrine of R2P was UNSC resolution 1973 implemented in Libya in 2011 but since 2000, eight new missions have been mandated, under Chapter 7 of the UN Charter, to use “all means

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necessary" to protect civilians (Yamashita 2006). However, the doctrine of R2P, like the Brahimi report, considers intervention to be a last resort and therefore the international community must focus on prevention (Breau 2006). The Brahimi report participated in early warning by suggesting reports in partnership with regional organisations. The desire of the UN to act preventively was capable to prevent escalation in 2004 in Cote d'Ivoire during the ONUCI mission, which authorised the use of force along with disarmament, demobilisation, reintegration, repatriation and resettlement. In 2006, the situation was still unstable but the robust mandate prevented the massacres of thousands of civilians (Breau 2006). Most recently, the Secretary General's "New Horizon" report renewed the recommendations of the Brahimi report for cohesiveness, robustness, speed or capability. Moreover, this non-paper reiterates the need to create exit strategies first suggested in a 2001 report (UN 2009). They aim to define "an overall objective, not an arbitrary, self imposed, artificial deadlines which encourages belligerents to outwait the outside intervention" (Gray 2001). The Presidential elections held in 2010 in Cote d'Ivoire are a tribute to the efficacy of exit strategies, peacekeeping and peacebuilding.

The Brahimi report is not an achievement in itself since very few of the recommendations made were implemented or implemented properly. However, the report greatly contributed to the progress of peacekeeping by highlighting its operational and doctrinal flaws. The UN and its partners realise the urgency of the situation and produced a number of reports designed to reform peacekeeping, including the 2008 capstone doctrine that set out the principles and guidelines of PKOs. Post-2000 peacekeeping is characterised by the increasing involvement of transnational and regional organisations that contribute to the credibility and achievability of the mandates. Moreover, more robust operations have stirred peacekeepers away from neutrality and forced them to engage in impartiality so as not to be complicit in crimes against humanity. Finally, the Brahimi report was the first step towards the "humanitarianisation" of peacekeeping that charged itself with peacebuilding and development goals. However, despite all the good intentions that emerged since 2000 and the few successes registered by the UN, PKOs still face major operational issues due to the lack of funds and resources and the disengagement of TCCs.

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