



Why Peace Operations are Challenging for Military Forces

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While G5 Military Planning is challenged by Peace Operations, G5 Policy needs to look beyond Military Operations

To stop conflict, peace forces must be prepared to engage in combat or in the least to deal with peace spoilers. As it is well known, military forces have been designed, equipped, and trained according to fundamental principles of war, which are the tenets originally proposed by Carl von Clausewitz in his essay *Principles of War*, and later enlarged in his book, *On War*. However, these principles rarely apply in practice when it comes to peace operations. In addition, there are a number of specific operational pathologies created by imperatives to manage public support for peace operations that complicate operations on the ground.

If we look at what are acknowledged as the four main principles of war (objective, unity, mass, and surprise), we can see that all are problematic when it comes to peace operations. First and foremost is the principle that military operations should be conducted towards clearly defined, decisive and attainable objectives. This is possible in war, with objectives including seizure of territory and/or destruction of enemy forces. In peace operations, however, objectives are often vague to reduce the coordinating problem,



and may emerge also as a consequence of the posturing issue because at an early stage of a peace operation, it may be convenient to talk tough without actually committing precious resources to tough action. In addition, peace operations are, in themselves, decisive only in the sense of short-term effects; for examples, securing aid routes or stopping a massacre. Actually, truly decisive objectives are the long-term provision of societal security, political surety, and economic stability, for which non-military instruments are essential. This issue enlarges upon the Comprehensive Approach, which represents one of the major challenges facing the Alliance today and is no longer a question of whether NATO needs such an approach but rather defining the content.

In our HQ, G5 and in particular the Policy section already

joint operational experience, may inhibit the creation and operation of an effective command structure in peace operations. To make matters worse, commanders must coordinate their actions with civilian agencies (UN, non-government, and local agencies) to achieve unity of effort in peace operations. Here differences in military and civilian organizational cultures are more profound and can place a barrier to effective and timely coordination.

The third principle is for commanders to mass force. This may be achieved through concentration of force at points in space and time that will have greatest impact on the enemy. It also may be achieved through massing the effects of combat power, that is, synchronized use of all the elements of combat power to create decisive effect.



When it comes to peace operations, however, forces are more commonly dispersed rather than concentrated in order to maintain high visibility and provide security on the ground. Force dispersal at this level also limits possibilities for massing effects. The smaller the unit, the fewer elements of combat power will be available to the commander.

The principle of surprise, namely, to strike the enemy when and where they least expect it, is difficult to incorporate into peace operations. The critical ingredients for surprise are speed, secrecy, and deception. Speed, as we have seen before, may be hampered by the lack of a timely coordination; while secrecy, and then deception, is often compromised by the imperative for unity of effort, which requires peace forces to share operational information with civilian agencies, many of which hire local staff.

Moreover, in place of traditional principle of war, peace operations are shaped by the imperative to deal with public opinion. This imperative is generated by the sensitivity to casualties, particularly in what are essentially wars of choice, which are fought for reasons of principle, ideology, geopolitics or sometimes pure humanitarianism.

In any case, military intervention as wars of choice, in contrast with passivity that might cost in the long run, is due to the



connection between threats and domestic institutions. On this, it would be better to place more weight on “transformative” strategies that do not interfere in the domestic affairs of the target, such as counterinsurgency operations, nation-building and reconstruction, and policing. At the level of national and external policy, this also results in a focus on winning the media battle.



Furthermore, concerns with public opinion produce pathologies in peace operations. First is the strategic compression of the battlefield. In conventional

war, strategic outcomes are shaped by military action at the campaign level. By contrast, tactical military actions can have strategic consequences in peace operations (the already famous “strategic soldier”). As a consequence, not only must the military commanders become effective media managers, they must also anticipate and avoid those military actions likely to result in negative fallout.

Second is an operational focus on full force protection, which is that peace forces are not vulnerable to attack. Full force protection, as an operational imperative, can hinder effective peace operations in a number of ways. It can result in a concentration of force when security for aid operations would be best promoted through the dispersal of peace forces to provide military presence over a larger area. It can require military commanders to order their forces to wear body armour, visibly demonstrating distrust and insecurity, when a more relaxed force posture would make it easier to build relations with the local community. Similarly, an over-reliance on air power, given by the aversion to casualties in wars of choice, can impede mission success as well.

In front of the challenges posed by peace operations, peace forces must avoid over-use of force so



peace operations, it is mandatory to avoid mission failures exploring the military character of peace operations by first considering the applicability of

and helping to reconstruct governments, police forces, and armies. Being all these activities essential to achieve the aforementioned provision of societal security, political surety, and economic stability, meaning the accomplishment of what are identified as truly decisive long-term objectives. In conclusion, doctrine is evolving in the NATO environment in order to keep the military instrument “up to date” and ready to face those new challenges.

The “new” Comprehensive Operational Planning Directive (COPD) and related documents and Functional Area Services like TOPFAS are clear examples on how the military instrument is capable and willing to change the way the military “do their business” in order to face this evolution In our HQ, G5 Plans & Policy is monitoring the NATO, and not only, doctrinal evolution and in our library you can find useful information on these topics.

as to maintain consent for their operations while at the same time being prepared to take robust action against peace spoilers. Such careful pondering may dramatically fail, triggering a return to intervention pessimism and traditional peacekeeping, where these served only to monitor ceasefire and supervise truces after being deployed when a conflict had ceased and with the full consent of the belligerents. On the balance between maintaining consent for peace operations while also being prepared to use force to neutralize those seeking to wreck peace agreement and oppose

the principles of war, and then by looking at how, in practice, peace operations are shaped by imperatives to deal with.

Prospects for peace operations look hopeful despite they are more complex affairs than the predecessor peacekeeping missions. In fact, peace operations are a kind of interventions that involve a wider range of tasks, including protecting territory, people, and aid operations, disarming belligerents, policing demilitarised sites and monitoring demobilization, monitoring and running elections,

