

THE CHALLENGE OF CHANGE: AN APPROACH TO TRAINING FOR UN PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

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Introduction

The sense of euphoria towards UN peacekeeping operations (PKOs) suffered a grave setback in the wake of Somalia, former Yugoslavia, Rwanda and to some extent Angola in the 1990s. The recommendations of the Brahimi Panel¹, to a great extent, have provided an able way to tide over structural and conceptual deficiencies noticed during the conduct of complex PKOs in this period. The world body recognized the requirement for change through restructuring and strengthening the UN capabilities to conduct PKOs in the 21st century.

While the recommendations were being debated in the UN and elsewhere, the events of 11 September 2001 changed the concept of the 'threat to international peace and security'. Notwithstanding the raging debates on the ethical questions of the Iraq war and so-called pre-emptive vs. preventive actions in the absence of any international support, it is the post-Iraq peace-building that needs a sharper focus. How should the world conduct peace-building and maintain law and order in a country after a conflict, regime change or the successful conduct of a PKO? The former High Commissioner of Human Rights and Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General in Iraq, the late Sergio Vieira De Mello had rightly commented, that "**soldiers are not the right choice for post-conflict nation-building tasks**"². We are a daily witness to the results of combat soldiers attempting to maintain peace, security, law and order in Iraq and at times in Afghanistan.

A preliminary analysis of Iraq and Afghanistan shows that it is extremely difficult for a combat unit to transform itself from a war-fighting outfit to a peacekeeping team on the stroke of a clock. Iraq continues to experience combat casualties, because there was no transition of a 'combat soldier' to a 'soldier peacekeeper', besides partial failure to manage perceptual aberrations on both sides. Coordination with other components engaged in the same peace-building activity is an extremely important area, generally ignored while conducting such operations. Therefore, a full spectrum peacekeeping training of all components much before their deployment on PKO is the key for this transition.

International peace operations can only be conducted by a cohesive, well-trained and fully integrated team of the civilian components (both UN and non-UN staff), the military, civilian police and other agencies including the Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Understanding and appreciating each other's role, respect of local sentiments, local community building even amongst the reining chaos, and focus on the mission mandate are some of the key attributes for all the three phases of peace operations.

Existing Arrangements of Training

While the Brahimi Panel made far-reaching recommendations towards strengthening of UN capacity for peace operations including most of the strategic and operational aspects,

references to training remained indistinct and oblique. “ *The Secretariat should as a standard practice, send a team to confirm the preparedness of each troop contributor to meet the provisions of the memoranda of understanding on the requisite training and equipment requirements, prior to deployment; those that do not meet the requirements must not deploy...*”³, recommended the learned Panel. Understandably, the training of all components to be deployed in a PKO is left to the host organization or country. While this cannot be questioned, the need to standardize training methodologies to suit the UN requirements and enhance interoperability amongst all components should be focused.

At present the UN Secretariat follows a briefing routine based on past experiences to prepare its staff, while some of the contributing countries conduct pre-deployment training and mission specific briefings for a period varying from a few days to a few weeks. Most of these activities are facilitated through classroom instructions and have specific trainer focus. The UN staff relies on ‘on the job’ training, training through seminars, cross-postings, interactive learning and the ‘oral culture’ of organizational experience. The UN and non-UN civilian staff have an important role in modern complex PKOs as most operations are organized and operated around this component. Military and civilian police components assist the civilian efforts, humanitarian or administrative, and therefore mutual cooperation and understanding become all the more important.

The military component is the only one with due emphasis on regular and structured training at all times. It trains for combat through a process of mission analysis, task assignment, generation of various courses of action and evaluation of training needs through annual training cycles. The development of intuitive and risk-taking initiative and practice to use all means including deadly force to achieve a given objective are the primary tools during normal combat training. For the military in PKOs, last minute mission assignment, pre-occupation with national duty or deployment till the last moment, constraints of training time and lack of finances remain major impediments towards a well-structured training for the PKOs. Unfortunately, there is a general tendency to play down the need to train military components for UN assignments as soldiers are supposed to be always combat ready, a fallacy with obvious pitfalls.

NGOs on the other hand are always reluctant to work in a bureaucratic set up and prefer functioning ‘outside the box’. Other components need to understand their emphasis on flexibility, creativity and ‘empathy for locals’. As far as the civilian police are concerned, very few countries conduct structured training courses. These too remain confined to the SMART concept (supporting, monitoring, advising, reporting and training tasks)⁴. The Civilian Police Division (CPD) of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) conducts language and driving skill tests for most new police personnel before their deployment in a mission area, which are perhaps only a few of many attributes that are required in a police monitor.

The UN has been striving to standardize peacekeeping training for in recent years. The UN Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) packages have been used by many PKO training centres as basic guidelines and UNITAR has also provided distance learning platforms. The Training Evaluation Services (TES) and CPD of the DPKO are attempting to engage as many Member States as possible to develop a coherent training syllabus and conduct structured programmes. The TES decided to address the standardisation of peacekeeping training and the shift of focus to the peacekeeping training centres through a project entitled “Standardised Generic Training Modules (SGTM)”. The development of the modules and the sharing of their contents took place during 2002. However, the basic implementation remains with the Member

States and training modules remain issue or theme specific. There appears to be a conflict of interests and duplication of efforts in UNITAR and TES. Some serious issues like human rights training are yet to be finalised while many less important subjects find a place in the finalised modules.

Many international institutes have carried out extensive studies in evaluating the effectiveness of peacekeeping training around the world. The United States Institute of Peace published 'Peaceworks – 43', based on an annual symposium held in June 2001, on best training practices for various aspects of conflict management. The papers brought out clearly the contrast in the capabilities of military and civilian communities at the commencement of PKOs. The papers have given an apt insight into the institutional obstacles for training and steps needed to address the training challenges facing humanitarian relief and development personnel, and military and police personnel for the peace operations⁵.

Another informative report was issued by The Henry L Stimson Center, Washington, in July 1994, in which 'Training for Peacekeeping: The UN Role'⁶ was the main focus. While conducting research into this field, the interviews and analysis of casualties during various PKOs, strongly suggested that countries that conducted systematic peacekeeping training were more effective peacekeepers, more useful to the UN commander, inflicted fewer casualties on civilians and suffered fewer casualties themselves. However, practice on the ground sometimes belies this well-researched view, as some of the contingents, observers, police and staff personnel without adequate peacekeeping training are sometimes found hesitant to take any risks and therefore spend their time in missions protecting themselves and waiting for the peace to break out! The Stimson Center Report had analyzed four alternative roles for the UN – as an information service provider to encourage national training, as a coordinator of international training events utilizing national assets, as an actual trainer through the UN peacekeeping training centre and as a contractor for specialized training to be provided to designated units and individuals through existing national training centres. The Report concludes that the 'coordinator' model is the best role for the UN, being the most 'politically acceptable' option to most of the Member States, but this concept does not ensure optimally trained peacekeepers for PKOs.

Structured peace operations training has witnessed growing acceptance in many traditional troop-contributing countries. Many prestigious institutes have sprung up to address this critical training and educational vacuum which contributed to an upsurge of failed missions and casualties amongst the peacekeepers. NORDIC countries have been at the forefront of military and police peacekeeping training for many years. Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden have long traditions in PKOs and have contributed immensely towards formalization of peacekeeping training structures and syllabi. Each country provides pre-deployment training for units and individuals, whereas the Joint Nordic Committee for UN matters provides advanced training. Canada too has some fine courses on offer and so have many others in the world. Analysis of the syllabi reveals that the focus is either on expected roles (UN Military Observers, UN Civilian Police or Staff Personnel etc) or on the core competencies that exist (military, police, administration, human rights etc).

The time has come to reassess the efficacy of the existing training methodologies and shift emphasis to integrated training on inter-agency coordination with less focus on the core competencies. Countries employing volunteers or reservists only for PKOs need to separate military training in basic combat skills from actual PKO training. There is no point in spending

weeks on training a soldier how to carry out patrolling or training a civilian police officer how to investigate a crime scene. Training efforts need to focus on the PKO environment and what to look for and how to achieve co-operation from other components while on patrol. Trainees should be taught to ask what other components can provide to assist them while carrying out their assigned task of investigating human rights violations or reaching out to the needy with humanitarian aid.

Recommended Changes

Modern day complex peace operations cannot be managed by any single agency. Inter-agency cooperation requires enhancement of interoperability, understanding of each other's role and knowledge of other's operational techniques. The foursome of the PKO, i.e. the civilian component (both UN and non UN staff and leadership), military, civilian police and the NGOs operate in the same geographical areas and yet find themselves at cross-purposes with each other. This invariably leads to confusion, suspicion of intent and eventual diminishing of each other's capabilities. The situation is almost the same in various current missions as obtained in the early nineties in Cambodia, Bosnia or Somalia. Instead, there is a need to share these capabilities in order to reduce the other's limitations. Understanding and respecting each other's strengths would reduce overlapping efforts, thereby sparing a large amount of resources. This can only happen if the training regime is enlarged to include most of the agencies, through a whole package, both at home and in mission.

All components need to train in managing relationships, self-evaluation, behavioural adaptation and in making a conscious effort to move away from creating their own exclusive identities. Since UN staff components are the axis around which a PKO is structured, it requires training with other agencies, sharing their strengths and creating common operating procedures to work in the complex environment. While speaking at the US Institute of Peace in June 2001, Major-General William Nash (US Army, retired) had the following to say: -

“Until the civilian components attain the same level of competence and resources as the military, the political objective will not be achieved. Too much time is spent talking about military effort and not enough about political, social and economic aspects of civilian training. If the civilian and military communities fail to train effectively, they will continue to experience pain in reaching their joint objectives....”⁷.

Even the military needs orientation towards 'fighting for peace', with scaled down emphasis on 'use of force'. Patience, persuasion, negotiation, mediation, role explanation and listening skills are the new combat tools, which can only be developed and sharpened through structured training and practice through genuine role players. The training emphasis needs to change the mindset of 'pre-dominance' in a PKO, if harmonized working with other agencies is to be achieved. The military needs greater education on other components and their competencies to ensure it respects their sensibilities and reaches out to them in order to achieve mission mandate.

The restoration of law and order in a post-conflict situation is fast emerging as the greatest challenge to the civilian police in a PKO. Apart from the concept of SMART, the civilian police role has even extended up to police administration and most policing functions in a host country during the transitional phases. Institution-building, reforms in existing structure,

organizing change, capacity-building, a role in the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration process, and working in a multi-cultural/multi-religious environment are some other demands on the civilian police. Most of these were identified in the Concluding Report of the Challenges Project 1997-2002 and the requirement is to define ways and means to impart this education and training to the potential peacekeepers. While commenting on the existing regime of training, Lieutenant-General Satish Nambiar (Indian Army, retired) had commented, “*At present, coordination between armed forces and police is almost non-existent. It is imperative that this be set right and a common approach be formulated. Use of national institutes like the Centre for Peacekeeping should be made to foster commonality of training*”⁸.

The Concluding Report of the Challenges Project, Phase I, dedicated an exclusive chapter to training and education⁹, thereby acknowledging the criticality of training in emerging peace operations. Chapter 13 highlights the need for a greater coherence in the peace operations training and education system, the establishment of a peacekeeper’s profile, evolving the training curriculum to match the desired basic profile, identifying the most effective and efficient methodologies and developing a comprehensive evaluation system. The Report may have to be re-evaluated either in future Challenges Seminars or through the International Association of Peacekeeping Training Centres (IAPTC), as current systems of training and education continue to train peacekeepers in their own fields of expertise in an isolated manner – an unacceptable situation for future peace operations. The Concluding Report needs to be followed up with some practical suggestions to inter-mesh training audience with the desired profile of peacekeepers.

The focus needs to shift from theoretical policy formulations to the methodologies of conduct of training and education. In the case of UN civilian police monitors and military observers, in many situations their roles overlap and therefore both require better understanding of each other’s capabilities. There is thus a need to develop more comprehensive training syllabi, which look at the commonalities rather at the distinctiveness of each component. The application of these training packages needs a changed philosophy, where active involvement of all players must be attempted during all stages of training both when training before actual deployment and during in-mission briefings. The challenge is to convince all troop and police contributors to establish joint training facilities and **actually train their components**. During earlier Challenges Project deliberations, the partners from India recommended the following sub-themes for further deliberation specific to education and training:-

In view of reluctance on the part of many Member States, there is a need to set our priorities for peace operations training and education right. Training for complex operations under the UN cannot be allowed to be ignored by any Member State. Can there be a MOU on the training before the components are allowed to deploy?

Increasing complexity and need for specialization demands constant review of training methodologies. There is a need to create a pool of expert trainers, both retired and serving in different walks of life, who should be exchanged amongst the training institutes. DPKO may sponsor such exchanges to share the financial burden.

Training in Member States should continue to be focused at the tactical level, which is crucial to the success for peace operations, but at the same time the UN needs to identify and train strategic and operational leadership.

The Way Ahead

The training of potential peacekeepers outside their core competencies is the real challenge for the UN, contributing organizations and troop/police contributing countries. Some of the common subjects like inter-personal communication skills, code of conduct and behavioural guidelines, developing the right attitude to work in a multi-religious/multi-cultural environment and understanding the importance of human rights for the host country require added emphasis. The military must know the basic domain knowledge of civilian police or humanitarian agencies, not to take over those jobs, but to be able to better appreciate and offer advice or security support for their functioning. In Somalia, during UNOSOM II, some of the troops deployed in Mogadishu were clearly not adequately trained in restraint, use of minimum force and the techniques of crowd control – primarily a police function, yet these are essential for peacekeeping missions. Consequently, when provoked, that force over-reacted to a hostile demonstration and shot approximately 20 civilians. Similarly, the civilian component must understand the strengths and limitations of the military or civilian police in order to place reasonable demands on them.

All components operating in the field need to understand the application of human rights standards in the host country. Local military, police or the lower administrative functionaries cannot be expected to know the legal nuances of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Therefore, there is a need to develop linkages of important clauses of the covenants (the international Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights) and the existing or erstwhile constitutional provisions of the host nation. The local administrative functionaries would appreciate these linkages, including linkages to any regional human rights treaties, rather than references to the UN documents of 1948 or 1966 origin which they had no role in drafting or may never understand. New approaches would need to be devised in sustaining these training objectives with the potential peacekeepers.

The requirement of interoperability of all four principal components in a PKO has generally been accepted by all inside and outside a peacekeeping mission area. **The challenge lies in devising training methodologies to bring them together and train under controlled conditions in a one or two-sided role-playing environment.** The TES and CPD of the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations have recently made conscious efforts to experiment with combined training capsules, wherein most of the components are involved in an interactive learning process. While the focus of training methodologies in most training institutes around the world has remained on classroom instructions, the Indian experience of an interactive field exercise for the UN Military Observer and Civilian Police Officers Course in October 2003 received an excellent report for its practical application and usefulness.

The Course was run under the guidance of DPKO (TES and CPD) and planned with the assistance of the Indian Centre for UN Peacekeeping. The incorporation of most of the agencies, including media (over 50 media persons and 10 TV channels for a day) and the use of local population centres to develop communication barriers, provided an excellent opportunity to the training audience (both foreign and Indian military and police officers) in the practical handling of different situations. The focal point of training remained management of human relations, behavioural patterns, interpersonal communication skills, negotiation on a daily basis, and management of group conflicts, integrity in purpose and action and handling of live situations. Mission goals and inter-agency coordination during various phases of execution of a complex PKO were built into a compressed time schedule and executed on the ground in a regime of

nearly 16 hours a day. The required landscape for the training audience was provided by role players from an infantry battalion moving on a new deployment to a UN mission and civilian police members already experienced in a PKO. Military observers and police officers attending the course carried out 'on the spot' mediation, negotiation, casualty evacuation, interviews with media and often experienced the near real-life stress of being detained or working in a combat simulated situation.

Joint training efforts need to steer clear of the core competency of each agency, as the same is inherent in their jobs. The training programme may be developed with a focus on a curriculum of common subjects, in which most of the components need to work together. The programme can be executed in up to three weeks, with a structured mix of classroom instruction, exercise model discussions on a master scenario event list and a full-fledged field exercise of up to a week's duration. **The challenge in preparation and execution of the training module is to cover the core-training curriculum with relevance to the majority of the components of a PKO.** The training could revolve around UN military observers, civilian police personnel and UN civilian staff operating in the field. Thus the members of the UN Field Security Service, UN High Commission on Human Rights, humanitarian aid agencies, UNHCR and even ICRC could be incorporated in the training module as either role players or training advisors. The execution would need extensive fine-tuning of role players and a daily routine through a contiguous story line giving a narration of mission progress.

The UN has been acting as a coordinator in order to develop and utilize national peacekeeping training centres and expertise around the world since the late 1990s. Through the TES, it has been carrying out coordination of training, generation of standard training material and evaluation of the formed troops. It is time that the UN reevaluates its own efficacy in this regard and works towards wider peacekeeping training by encouraging a full-fledged training schedule for all participating members. The emphasis needs to shift to '**training together for peace**', for which all components may have to be brought together on a national or regional basis. The field exercise experiment in the Indian Centre for UN Peacekeeping in New Delhi could be one of the start points and could be further refined over time through other peacekeeping training institutes into an acceptable field exercise of at least seven days' duration.

¹ Recommendations of the Brahimi Panel, UN document A/55/305-S/2000/809 of 21 August 2000.

² Sergio Vieira De Mello, in an interview to the BBC, 48 hours before the ghastly terror strike on the UN office complex in Baghdad in August 2003.

³ Recommendations of the Brahimi Panel, August 2000.

⁴ Tonya Cook, International Civilian Police, paper for Peaceworks-43 by the US Institute of Peace, June 2001.

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Barry M Blechman & J Matthew Vaccaro, Training for Peacekeeping: The United Nations Role, The Henry L Stimson Center, Washington, July 1994.

⁷ Introduction, Peaceworks-43, June 2001.

⁸ Satish Nambiar, Lt Gen (ret'd), Director USI, speaking to UN Military Observers' Course at the Centre for UN Peacekeeping, New Delhi, November 2002.

⁹ Chapter 13, Training and Education; Concluding Report, 1997-2002 Challenges of Peace Operations: Into the 21st Century – the Challenges Project, the Swedish National Defence College and Challenges Project Partner Organizations.