Inovační politické činnosti a institucionalizace
UN Peacekeeping in the 21st Century:
A Capabilities-Expectations Gap Analysis

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Abstract: This article presents a capabilities-expectations analysis of United Nations (UN) peacekeeping. I use the capabilities-expectations gap analytical concept to examine and compare the actual UN peacekeeping capabilities and expectations in the post-Cold War era, and to assess the feasibility of two basic options for closing the large gap that has developed between the two since the early 1990s – a UN capabilities increase and/or a UN expectations decrease. I argue that as long as UN Member States continue to be unwilling and/or unable to provide political leadership, instruments and resources commensurate with the daunting tasks of peacekeeping and peacebuilding, a UN expectations decrease will remain the only feasible option for closing the gap between UN capabilities and expectations. As in the past, this means that the UN will constantly be forced to make Faustian choices between the quantity and quality of its peacekeeping operations. In the 21st century, however, the repercussions of both of these choices are likely to be more formidable than ever before. If UN peacekeeping suffers another high-profile failure because of a Rwanda-like inaction or a Srebrenica-like inadequate action, the UN’s collective security role is bound to be significantly eroded not only through a combination of limited resources and its Member State conflicts, but also by a substantially increased involvement of various non-UN actors, and by a growing sense of the limits of what can be expected of the UN.

Keywords: Peacekeeping, United Nations, capabilities-expectations gap

1. Introduction

There is a general consensus among practitioners and scholars in the conflict resolution field that being the only universal collective security organization, the United Nations (UN) is uniquely positioned to save the succeeding generations from the scourge of war. Most would also agree that the UN cannot meet this challenge without the wholehearted support of its Member States. The problem is, as General Francois Briquemont, UNPROFOR’s Chief Commander aptly observed, that: “Time and again, [there has been a] fantastic gap between
resolutions of the Security Council, the will to execute those resolutions and the means available to commanders in the field." (cited in Doyle 2001: 537) While the majority of UN Member States have repeatedly called on the organization to do more peacekeeping in highly complex intrastate conflicts of the post-cold war world, only few have been willing and/or able to increase the limited cold war era UN peacekeeping capabilities. Consequentially, since the end of the cold war, the UN has been suffering from a severe capabilities-expectations gap which continuously forces it to make difficult, and often immoral, choices between the quality and quantity of its peacekeeping operations (PKOs).

This article presents an innovative framework for analysis of the past and future of UN peacekeeping – the capabilities-expectations gap analytical concept (CEGAC). First introduced by Christopher Hill in 1992 as a unique tool for analyzing the evolving European Union’s (EU) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), CEGAC’s underlying assumptions is genially simple: “If we accept the premise that expectations and resources can get out of line – a familiar enough proposition in most walks of life – then it should be possible to see whether a chasm has narrowed to fissure, or whether something that was at one time bridgeable has now widened to the proportions of a Grand Canyon.” (Hill 1998: 18–19) Building on Hill’s conclusion that in addition to other regional organizations like the EU or the OSCE, a capabilities-expectations gap can not only be found in every American presidential election, but also in the UN (Hill 1998: 18), I argue that a CEGAC analysis of UN peacekeeping allows us to sketch a more realistic picture of what is the UN peacekeeping capable of doing in the world than that presented either by its more enthusiastic supporters or by its fierce critics. Perhaps most importantly, CEGAC provides a yardstick by which the process of change in UN peacekeeping policy might be measured, which enables us to continuously monitor, measure and evaluate its achievements over time. As such, CEGAC holds the promise of pushing a step further the currently dominant “lessons learned” problem-solving debates, which may be useful as a guide for future peacekeeping action but “provide only partial explanations and limit the scope of creative thinking and practice.” (Bellamy 2004: 17)

The structure of the article is as follows. In the first section, I summarize the basic ideas behind the CEGAC concept. In the following sections, this analytical concept is then used to: 1) identify and examine the actual UN peacekeeping capabilities in the post-cold war era, 2) identify and analyze existing expectations about the quality and quantity of UN peacekeeping operation, as expressed by relevant actors in the conflict resolution field since the end of the cold war. The subsequent comparison of UN peacekeeping capabilities and expectations reveals that a large gap has developed between the two since the early 1990s and is likely to become even greater in the immediate and medium-term future. In the remainder of this chapter, I therefore proceed to assess the feasibility of three basic options for closing this gap – 1.) a UN capabilities increase; 2.) a UN expectations decrease; 3.) a combination of 1 and 2. I argue that as long as the UN Member States continue to be unwilling and/or unable to provide political leadership, instruments and resources commensurate with the daunting tasks of conflict prevention peacekeeping and peacebuilding in contemporary war-torn societies, a UN expectations decrease will remain the only feasible option for closing the gap between UN capabilities and expectations.

The implications of the continuing existence of a capabilities-expectations gap for the conduct of UN peacekeeping in the 21st century are assessed in the concluding section.
I contend that the repercussions of the persistent need to make Faustian choices between the quantity and quality of UN peacekeeping are likely to be more formidable than ever before. If UN peacekeeping suffers another high-profile failure because of a Rwanda-like inaction or a Srebrenica-like inadequate action, the UN’s collective security role is bound to be significantly eroded not only through a combination of limited resources and its Member State conflicts, but also by a substantially increased involvement of various regional and non-governmental actors, and by a growing sense of the limits of what can be expected of the UN.

2. Original Application of the Capabilities-Expectations Gap Analytical Concept

The capabilities-expectations gap analytical concept utilized in this article is relatively new, although its intellectual roots may be traced back to the theories of relative deprivation that were elaborated by Ted R. Gurr and James C. Davies in the early 1970s (Davies 1971, Gurr 1970). In its current form, the capabilities-expectations gap concept was first introduced by Christopher Hill in 1992 as a unique tool for analyzing the evolving European Union’s (EU) Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). One year later, Hill outlined his new concept in a journal article entitled The Capability-Expectations Gap, or Conceptualizing Europe’s International Role and stipulated the following core objective of CEGAC: “The aim here, in working to a brief of conceptualizing Europe’s international role, is to look at the functions which the Community (EC) might be fulfilling in the international system, but also at the perceptions which are held of its role by third parties.” (Hill 1993: 306)

Conceptualizing Europe’s international role, according to Hill, involves “using concepts to understand Europe’s various activities in the world; it does not mean outlining a single ‘role’ which Europe does or might follow.” (Hill 1993: 307) Two “indispensable” concepts identified by Hill are actorness and presence. Actorness provides us with “a theoretical perspective which can incorporate both internal dynamics of institutional development” and “the changing nature of the international environment in which it has to operate.” (Hill 1993: 309) Presence is “a consequentialist notion which emphasizes outside perceptions of the Community and the significant effects it has on both the psychological and the operational environments of third parties.” (Hill 1993: 309) Hill proposed that a conceptualization that utilizes both of these concepts would allow for a more nuanced assessment and understanding of EU’s role in international politics than the old debate between proponents of intergovernmentalism and supranationalism has produced thus far. In particular, he suggested that a CEGAC analysis of CFSP should allow us “to sketch a more realistic picture of what the Community does in the world than that presented either by its more enthusiastic supporters or by the demandeurs beyond its borders.” (Hill 1993: 306)

In his subsequent books and articles, Hill also suggested that the capabilities-expectations gap “is not a uniquely European phenomenon” because “the divergence of expectations from capabilities is a human tendency” that only “occurs more easily in a massive regional organization which struggles to act as an effective unit.” (Hill 1998: 38) For the purposes of this analysis,
perhaps the most significant conclusion made by Hill is that in addition to other regional
organizations like OSCE, the capabilities-expectations gap can not only be found in every
American presidential election, but also in the UN. (Hill 1998: 38) Thus, in the remainder
of this article, I am going to use CEGAC to determine whether or not UN peacekeeping suffers
from a capabilities-expectations gap.

Before proceeding to the actual analysis of UN peacekeeping with CEGAC, however, it is
important to stress that methodologically speaking the idea of conceptualizing the role of UN
peacekeeping in contemporary international politics does not mean that the more ambitious
undertaking of providing a theory which might explain and predict UN’s behavior is being
undertaken. While attentive readers may uncover more theoretical assumptions in the CEGAC
analysis of UN peacekeeping than those which are explicitly spelled out below, I concur
with Hill that the whole enterprise is essentially pre-theoretical in the sense that it fashions
certain general ideas and arguments which might be useful in the construction of a wider
theory, without attempting the systematic linking together characteristic of theory proper.
(Hill 1993: 306)

3. UN Capabilities and Expectations

In order to conceptualize UN peacekeeping by utilizing CEGAC, it is necessary to determine
what capabilities does the UN actually posses. According to Hill, capabilities can be broken
down into: 1. resources; 2. instruments; 3. cohesiveness. (Hill 1998: 24) Following this logic,
the UN peacekeeping capabilities can essentially be broken down into:

1. Resources (both tangibles such as money, troops and equipment, and intangibles such
   as reputation, neutrality and legitimacy);
2. Instruments (i.e. various types of peacekeeping operations and other conflict resolution
   mechanisms available to the UN);
3. Cohesiveness (i.e. the ability of the UN Member States to agree on a decision and hold
   on to it).

It is important to keep in mind that UN has not always possessed all of these capabilities
to the same degree.

As regards the UN expectations, the EU/UN analogy is somewhat less useful. Hill de-
scribed the EU expectations as “ambitions or demands of the EU’s international behavior
which derive from both inside and outside the Union.” (Hill 1998: 26) Similarly, it can be
argued that UN expectations may be basically described as demands for UN action to pro-
vide solutions to contemporary conflicts (although there is little consensus about how exactly
should these solutions look like and how should the UN best pursue them). In contrast to the
EU, however, there is no clear dividing line between internal and external UN expectations.
This represents a formidable limitation in terms of the applicability of the capabilities-ex-
pectations gap analytical concept for UN PKOs. Fortunately, as Weiss pointed out, it is both
possible and useful to make a distinction between: “IGOs as arenas in which member states
make decisions, and which thus are essentially tools to pursue national interests, and their role
as operational actors or secretariats, whose member-states have endowed military and relief
operations with a semi-independent identity and staffed them with a semi-independent civil service.” (Weiss 2001: 424)

More specifically, Weiss argued that we should not confuse the “two UNs.” The “first UN” is represented by the sovereign UN Member States, while the “second UN” is represented by the semi-independent UN Secretariat. Following this logic, it is also possible to make a distinction between external and internal UN expectations – the demands coming from the second UN can be described as internal and the demands faced by the first UN as external expectations. As demonstrated below, the distinction between the “two UNs” is also useful when it comes to evaluating the process of change of UN capabilities since the end of the cold war.

4. UN Capabilities in the 21st Century

In mid-1990s, after a series of high-profile UN PKOs failures all around the world, both the UN Secretariat and the UN Member States were forced to acknowledge that the concept of classical peacekeeping is at best ineffective when it comes to addressing intrastate conflicts, whose protracted and complex nature requires a comprehensive conflict resolution treatment that is markedly different from the original concept of classical UN peacekeeping. (Doyle 2001) The subsequent attempts to move from classical to second-generation peacekeeping undoubtedly represent a step forward in the right direction. Whether they should be considered an increase in UN capabilities is, nevertheless, disputable.

To begin with, the acknowledgement of a mistake does not necessarily imply its remedy; it is merely a pre-condition for it: “While many lessons have been noted and articulated, the notion of lessons learned implies that these must be taken into the collective wisdom of the people, states or organizations in order to affect future behavior. Often this has not happened and operations have continued to be based on false (and overly optimistic) conclusions about what had worked before. Too often, doctrine has been used to convert practice into theory (legitimization of past failures or successes) rather than to develop a body of knowledge that will enhance future operations.” (The Challenges Project 2002: 94)

Secondly, although the creation of the Lessons Learned Unit within DPKO in 1995 finally gave the UN an institutional memory in relation to peacekeeping and an institutional capacity to begin addressing broader conceptual issues, a number of scholars have ironically pointed out that in too many cases it would be more appropriate to speak of “lessons forgotten.” (Weiss 2001: 420) In case of the UN Lessons Learned Unit, the lack of actual learning has been recognized in mid-2000, when the Report of the Panel on Peace Operations once again advocated the creation of a unit “that could serve as the peace operations ‘learning manager’.” (United Nations 2000a) In response to the Report’s critique, the Lessons Learned Unit was merged with the Policy and Analysis Unit and the newly created Best Practices Unit became a part of the overhauled Office of Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations. The unit effectively became operational only in 2003 and it remains to be seen whether it will perform any better than its much criticized predecessor.
5. Internal Capabilities

Notwithstanding the numerous deficiencies of the original Lessons Learned Unit, it has to be acknowledged that the “second” UN has quite frankly admitted the shortcomings of its peacekeeping operations in a number of high-profile reports and drafted specific proposals aimed at improving the quality of UN peacekeeping operations. The *Brahimi Report* (2000), for example, provides suggestions for possible improvements in virtually all areas of UN conflict resolution activities, including, but not limited to, peacekeeping operations. (United Nations 2000a) The UN DPKO and the Secretary General, however, have only a limited influence on the fate of their reform proposals and recommendations. As Kofi Annan noted, the point of departure in the search for reforms must be the recognition that the United Nations is only as effective as its Member States allow it to be. (United Nations 2000b)

The problem is that although UN Member States have repeatedly pledged their support to UN peacekeeping operations in various UN Security Council and UN General Assembly resolutions, in practice this support has all too often been lacking. The failure of UNAMIR to stop genocide in Rwanda, despite the promise of 19 UN Member States to keep some 31,000 troops on stand-by basis for new UN PKOs under the *United Nations Standby Arrangements System* (UNSAS) is perhaps the most prominent (but not the only) example in this regard.

On a more positive note, there is little doubt that the UN internal capacity has increased since 1994. Even though the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Jean-Marie Guéhenno has repeatedly warned that process of change has been “too slow and not always smooth,” (UN Undersecretary General 2002) recently there has been further heartening progress towards implementation of the Brahimi Report recommendations. The positive developments include the following:

- The capacity of the DPKO has been significantly supplemented, exceeding the Brahimi recommendations: in addition to the 92 posts in the DPKO created in 2000, another 91 were approved in 2001, with an additional 30 posts in other departments at UN headquarters.
- A generic mission headquarters structure has been created in the DPKO.
- A “surge roster” of key administrative staff essential for the rapid and effective start-up of new mission has been established.
- The restructuring of UN DPKO was completed ahead of the 2004.
- UNSAS has been refined for more active use in generating assistance for rapid deployment and participating Member States have developed a better understanding of the various requirements.
- The Multinational Standby High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations (SHIRBRIG) is operational and was utilized in recent PKOs.
- Strategic deployment stocks have proved to be beneficial both in increasing the speed of deployment and in helping to overcome the equipment shortfalls of troop-contributing countries.
- Efforts to increase procurement from developing countries, least developed countries and economies in transition have led to 48 per cent of procurements in 2002 emanating from those countries. That percentage has been steadily rising since 1999.
Successful establishment of Joint Mission Analysis Cells in four missions.

The level of cooperation and consultation by the Secretariat with troop and police-contributing countries has continued to grow. There have been significant improvements in the conclusion of memorandums of understanding between the United Nations and troop-contributing countries.

The assignment of civilian police advisers to some permanent missions has resulted in more effective cooperation between the Secretariat and police-contributing countries on issues of mutual interest.

With the recruitment of a disarmament, demobilization and reintegration adviser, the DPKO is now in a position to develop operational modalities (policy guidelines, standard operating procedures and mutually agreed divisions of labor) for early preparation and planning, consistent implementation and effective management of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programs in peacekeeping missions.

The creation of the Criminal Law and Judicial Advisory Unit within the Civilian Police Division in March 2003 has significantly enhanced the capacity of the DPKO in that regard.

Recent improvements in the area of public information include the first-time deployment of public information assets to Liberia from the strategic deployment stock to allow early start-up of radio broadcasting and other public information activities.

The establishment of 10 mission training cells in the field missions and training focal points in others extends the coordination mechanism on training issues to the field.

DPKO has enhanced the management and conduct of civilian training in field missions.

With extensive consultation and support from Member States and national and regional peacekeeping centers, the Standardized Generic Training Modules, Level 1, were developed. DPKO has commenced with the development work for Levels 2 and 3.

Other training manuals and materials developed by the DPKO include generic training modules on the standards of conduct, particularly the Code of Personal Conduct for Blue Helmets; a comprehensive Handbook on Peacekeeping Operations; and a Gender Resource Package.

These reforms are no small achievements, particularly because they were attained in the absence of powerful statesmen committed to championing the cause of UN peacekeeping reform. Moreover, as most UN experts recognize, the larger UN system is not altogether amenable to rapid modernization.

6. External Capabilities

Although the recent reforms provided solutions to some of the most blatant shortcomings identified in the plentiful “lessons learned” reports, numerous problematic gaps remain. At the political level, despite the widespread rhetoric about rapid deployment, the list of tangible commitments to UN capabilities in this area is very short. On average, it still takes the UN 4–5 months to put peacekeeping troops on the ground and many national contingents continue to
come without the equipment they promised. This is largely due to the fact that “with rising frequency, the UN has discovered that those with the capabilities tend to be unwilling and those who are willing tend to lack the capacities.” (Langille 2002: 63) Naturally, those who are willing are not pleased by the reluctance of the most capable. As Langille put it, “[a] confidence gap has emerged between the directors and those deploying. This also reflects a leadership gap in the UN Security Council and a responsibility gap in its reluctance to maintain the peace and security in Africa.” (Langille 2002: 63, original emphasis)

This leadership and responsibility gaps have been especially noticeable in the UN Security Council’s response to the Darfur crisis. Despite the countless verbal proclamations and calls for immediate action, those with the rapid deployment capacity have again failed to stop the atrocities that they condemn so vehemently on daily basis. Similar to the situation in Rwanda ten years ago, it seems that even a massive genocidal slaughter of unarmed civilians will not provide a compelling reason for national, regional and global powers to commit their blood and treasure to save human lives in a far away, strategically unimportant region of Sudan. (International Crisis Group 2004)

At the operational level, the recent case of UNMIL has shown that full deployment within the envisaged 90 days still remains a difficult goal for to attain, even when conditions are favorable. (United Nations 2004: par. 20) Even more troubling is the fact that few outside the UN system consider a response within 90 days as constituting rapid deployment. Most modern defense establishments that retain rapid deployment forces aim for sending initial reconnaissance and air-born battalions within 24–48 hours, mechanized brigades within two weeks and heavy, large division within a month. (Langille 2002: 64–65) Such deployment times are much more in line with the conclusion of several recent studies that UN PKOs are likely to be most effective if deployed within a few weeks after the negotiation of a cease fire. (Findlay 2002: 335)

Results have been similarly mixed with regard to military and police on-call lists. On a positive note, 39 Member States nominated a total of 668 personnel to fill the 147 positions on the military on-call list that was recommended by the Brahimi Report. On a negative note, however, a recent report of the Secretary General states that “while system has been of some use in establishing the United Nations missions in Liberia and Côte d’Ivoire, we have seen an inability to meet response times, as well as a lack of familiarity with United Nations processes and procedures.” (United Nations 2004: par. 25) The situation is even worse in the case of the civilian police roster, which has received very few submissions thus far. The shortage of qualified international police personnel available for deployment in UN peacekeeping missions is particularly worrisome, because several recent analyses of contemporary post-conflict environments singled out civilian security, police reform, and rule of law as key determinants of success of UN PKOs. (Stedman 2002)

At the tactical level, there are still concerns about the capacity and competence of some national peacekeeping contingents. Although the original planning assumptions for the strategic deployment stocks concept were based on mission profiles of a traditional as well as a complex mission, UN Member States decided to stock requirements for only one complex mission of up to 10,000 troops. As a consequence of this decision, the strategic deployment stocks are already severely depleted in many asset areas. (United Nations 2002) Moreover, the UN Secretary General recently warned that the lack of expertise at both Headquarters and the
United Nations Logistics Base at Brindisi to plan and support the technical aspects of public information components in new peacekeeping operations will, unless addressed, weaken the organization’s ability to use public information effectively in the critical start-up phase of anticipated peacekeeping missions. (United Nations 2004: par. 55)

7. UN Expectations in the 21st Century

After the unprecedented increase in the demand for UN peacekeeping operations after the end of the cold war, from 1993–1999, primarily due to the shortcomings of the second UN PKO in Somalia (United Nations 1997) and the tragic failures of UN PKOs in Rwanda (United Nations 2000c, Suhrke a Jones 2000) and Srebrenica (United Nations 1996), there has been a manifest reduction of UN expectations. Since 1999, however UN expectations have once again reached extraordinarily high levels. The jury is still out when it comes to identifying the specific factors that prompted the most recent UN peacekeeping revitalization and there are some scholars that question both its magnitude and durability. (Bellamy et al. 2004: 87–88)

What we know for sure, however, is that contrary to a number of mid-1990s predictions that UN peacekeeping operations will forever be scaled down both in their quantity and in the scope of their mandates, (Jett 1999: 33–34) the number of UN peacekeepers has been steadily rising and may soon surpass the early 1990s record levels (see Table I).

Another good illustration of both the quantity and quality of the current expectations placed upon UN PKOs all around the world can be obtained from Table II, which outlines the many functions that UN peacekeepers are nowadays expected to perform. While a few UN PKOs have still been tasked with more traditional “cooking and looking” mandates (UNMEE), the mandates of the vast majority of the most recent UN PKOs (MINUSTAH, ONUB, ONUCI, UNMINIL, MONUC, UNMIS) have been rather complex, and in some cases (MONUC, UNAMSIL), they were further expanded over time. Similarly, should the UN eventually send its forces to Darfur and/or Iraq, one can expect that the mandate of this operation will be anything but one-dimensional. While it remains to be seen whether the UN will eventually establish any substantial presence in either of these countries, the very demands for a substantial UN role in such complex conflict environments are yet another proof that UN expectations are, once again, reaching extraordinary levels.

8. External Expectations

There are several indicators suggesting that much of the demand for UN action since the end of the cold war has come from various UN Member States, i.e. from the “first UN.” First, more than ever before, an increasing number of UN Member States seem to be willing to address, rather than ignore, complex intrastate conflicts and dreadful humanitarian emergencies. While they are certainly still not always willing and/or able to act through the UN, more often than not they nowadays at least entertain the idea of deploying a UN peacekeeping force when it comes to determining the most appropriate responses to various contemporary threats to (inter-)national peace and security. A number of UN Member States have also embraced
and actively promoted the concept of human security, which, at least according to the recent *Report of the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty*, includes a responsibility of the international community to “deliver practical protection for ordinary people, at risk of their lives, [whenever] their states are unwilling or unable to protect them.” (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001: VII) Combined with the insistence of the Commission that there “is no better or more appropriate body” than the UN Security Council to authorize military intervention for humanitarian purposes, the Report’s strong emphasis on re-framing, re-focusing and re-characterizing the longstanding “humanitarian intervention” debate by talking not of a “right to intervene” but of a “responsibility to protect” (International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty 2001: 11) clearly indicates a robust external UN expectations increase.

Secondly, although there is evidence indicates that some developing countries are vehemently opposed to the enhancement of UN peacekeeping capabilities on political grounds, (Findlay 2002: 4) numerous leaders from developing countries ravaged by conflicts – both ongoing and resolved – have repeatedly urged broad support for enhancing UN peacekeeping capabilities. Most recently, in their addresses to the UN General Assembly’s high-level debate on September 23, 2004, they stressed that while much had been already achieved, more UN support and nurturing of the habitually fragile peace processes is needed in the years to come. To mention but two examples, Joseph Kabila, President of the DRC, advocated expanding both the quality and quantity of troops serving with the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC). According to the Interim President of Haiti, Boniface Alexandre, “it is only natural” that his country turned to the UN following the turmoil which erupted in February 2004. (UN News Service 2004a) The fact the representatives of conflict-ridden countries in unison called for more, expanded, and longer-term UN peacekeeping operations suggests that they hold rather high expectations of UN capabilities in this area. It also confirms Jennifer M. Welsh’s contention that a division of international society into Western vs. developing countries on questions of humanitarian intervention, human security, and (I add) UN peacekeeping is “too simplistic.”(Welsh 2004: 187)

9. Internal Expectations

Regarding internal UN expectations, virtually all official reports published by the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and/or written on behalf of the UN Secretary General contain at least some requests for enhancing the UN capabilities as well as urgent calls for new and/or expanded UN peacekeeping operations. The current debate about the UN’s role in Darfur and Lebanon the most prominent examples of the latter, while the UN Secretary General’s reports on UN PKOs reforms provide plenty of examples regarding the former. In his recent report, for example, the UN Secretary General warned that the increased threat to peacekeeping personnel in the field, combined with a need to conduct regular security assessments both at Headquarters and in the field, conduct security planning for new or expanding missions, implement a standard approach to security in the DPKO and missions and ensure compliance with security management policy and guidance, all require enhanced internal and external coordination and strengthening of the Department’s security management ca-
pacities. (United Nations 2004: para. 10) For his part, Deputy Secretary General Louise Fréchette suggested in October 2004 that the world body desperately needs another 30,000 military and many more civilian peacekeepers to satisfy current demand for PKOs. (UN News Service 2004b)

The available scholarly literature also offers numerous hints and indications that a number of UN officials, including the Secretary General, have occasionally been quite keen to take advantage of the rising demand for UN action to increase the relative power and importance of “their own” organization. (Suhrke 2000, Barnett 1997) Downs & Stedman, for example, contend that “eager to ensure that the UN will have a role in conflicts around the world, the UN Secretariat has incentives to downplay the difficulties of some missions, and to withhold worrisome threat assessments.” They suggest that this is largely because the Secretariat seems to have learned that there are some cases where the UN Security Council “will only authorize a mission if it perceives that the case will be safe and easy.” The problem is that this “ask for what the traffic will bear” policy of UN bureaucrats has led to organizational pathologies within the organization and precluded objective contingency planning for UN PKOs. As consequence, UN PKOs were deployed in extremely difficult conflict environments where, if anything went wrong, the UN was bound to fail. (Downs a Stedman 2001: 65) Notwithstanding the highly unfortunate consequences of the “ask for what the traffic will bear” policy, the eagerness of UN bureaucrats to ensure that the UN have a role in conflicts around the world provides yet another proof that the internal UN expectations have been, and are likely to remain, rather high.

10. Bridging the Capabilities-Expectations Gap

The capabilities and expectations analyses of UN peacekeeping presented above suggest that the post-1999 increase of both the internal and the external UN expectations has not been accompanied by a corresponding increase of UN capabilities. While the pragmatic lowest common denominator approach of the Brahimi Report has facilitated a modest increase of internal UN capabilities, the external UN capabilities have by and large remained unchanged because too many UN Member States have either been unable or unwilling to provide the resources, instruments and political support necessary for adequate treatment of complex post-cold war conflicts. Moreover, while many of the recent developments are laudable and the employment of a “minimum threshold of change principle” may give the impression of progress, they entail the twin risk of inadvertently confining current efforts and overlooking critical future needs. As the Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Jean-Marie Guéhenno warned, “if we continue to define our required capacities strictly based on the bare minimum needed today and only today, then we will be no better off two to three years down the road.” (UN News Service 2001)

Overall, the CEGAC analysis of UN PKOs reveals the existence of a wide, and arguably growing, gap between UN capabilities and UN expectations. This gap is presenting the UN with difficult choices and experiences that are the more painful for not being fully comprehended. Perhaps most importantly, as in late April 1994, when (after a month of procrastination, inactivity and perhaps even moral indifference) the UN Secretariat finally unveiled its
long overdue plan for ending the Rwandan genocide only to find out that it is too idealistic and impracticable,
there is a real danger that the gap between UN peacekeeping capabilities and expectations may again lead to situations where the UN diverts its energy away from projects which might be realistically pursued and thus actually help those on the ground. The crucial question is, therefore, how do we close this gap?

Everything else equal, there are three basic options for bridging the current gap between UN capabilities and expectations:

1. Increase UN capabilities enough to meet current UN expectations;
2. Decrease UN expectations to meet the currently available UN capabilities;
3. A combination of 1 and 2.

The realization of the first option, i.e. increasing UN capabilities, would require the provision of precisely those resources, instruments and cohesiveness that the UN Member States have been either unwilling or unable to provide thus far.

To be more specific, a significant increase of UN capabilities would require the following: defining the concept, principles and doctrine(s) of UN peacekeeping that would allow the organization to effectively address both inter- and intrastate armed conflicts; making efforts to increase the credibility of UN peacekeeping; solving the command structure problems; provision of sufficient human, material and financial resources; reform of the UN policy- and decision-making structures and mechanisms; securing timely deployment of Blue Helmets in sufficient numbers, with adequate equipment and under unified command; improving the coordination among the civilian and military components of UN PKOs; improving the cooperation with other local, regional and international organizations; more sensitive approach and treatment of the local culture; paying equal attention to all armed conflicts around the world; clear public information policy toward the public both in the intervened and intervening states; adequate adaptability to local and current incentives; involving and functionally integrating the capable and representative components of local population; acknowledging the inherently risky nature of UN peacekeeping; improving prior planning and preparation; devising clear exit strategies; timing and procedural consistency between the military and civil reconstruction; adopting broader perspective that would include neighboring countries and regions as well as the developing tendencies of the subsystem units; drafting adequate and unified rules of engagement; and getting over personal, political and ideological antipathies. In short, we need an agreement on what is desired, as well as on a global strategy for eliminating all that is not desired.

The majority of the above mentioned requirements are aimed at increasing the external UN capabilities, which means that they are under the exclusive control of the UN Member States. This is not to claim that the internal UN capabilities are so good that there is no need for further improvements – quite to the contrary, there definitely is plenty of room for increasing the internal UN capabilities. It would be, however, imprudent to expect that mere changes in the size and/or efficiency of the UN DPKO could boost the overall UN capabilities enough to bridge the existing capabilities-expectations gap in the area of UN peacekeeping. The message is, therefore, quite lucid – the only way to significantly increase the overall UN capabilities is to increase the external UN capabilities.
Option 1: Increasing UN capabilities enough to meet current UN expectations

The probability of a major increase of external, and therefore also overall, UN capabilities in the foreseeable future is quite low. The UN Member States have a solid record of resistance towards granting additional instrument and resources to the United Nations. As Johansen noted, “Many governments have complained that UN peace-keeping needs reform, which is true, yet these complaints have come from the same member governments that have repeatedly hampered the United Nation’s optimal functioning within its existing institutional structure and that continue refusing to pay the costs of reform.” (Johansen 1998: 89–90) Furthermore, as discussed above, several developing countries oppose any kind of enhancement of UN capabilities on political grounds. Thus, short of a major of a major unexpected upheaval in international politics akin to the end of the cold war, the current Brahimi report type, lowest common denominator approach will remain prevalent.

The provision of the third, and in the long-run perhaps the most crucial, element of UN capabilities – the cohesiveness of UN member states – is also anything but sufficient. Long before the Darfur crisis unfolded, it was questionable whether issues such as proper authorization, the magnitude of the crisis and its impact on international peace and security themselves have ever really been the key issues in debates about whether or not to intervene for humanitarian and/or international peace and security maintenance purposes. As Byers and Chesterman put it: “States are not champing at the bit to intervene in support of human rights around the globe, prevented only by an intransigent Security Council and the absence of clear criteria to intervene without its authority. The problem, instead, is the absence of the will to act at all.” (cited in Welsh 2004: 189)

Given the cultural, political, religious, and economic development heterogeneity of the UN membership base, it would be rather idealistic to expect a major increase of cohesiveness among the UN Member States in the years to come. Notwithstanding the embracement and support of the human security concept by a number of so-called middle-powers, a genuine international political leadership that would champion the cause of major UN capabilities enhancement is yet to emerge. Moreover, as Johansen pointed out, no consensus has been formed thus far “to construct a global strategy of peace capable of drawing together the separate interests of diverse UN members.” As result, “governments chose not to provide the material, political, and moral resources required to enable the United Nations to succeed in peace-keeping and enforcement.” (Johansen 1998: 90)

Considering that the current attempts to raise the overall UN capabilities are unlikely to be sufficient to bridge the existing UN PKO capabilities-expectations gap, and taking into account that most UN Member States are, for a number of different reasons, averse to pursuing more radical reforms to enhance external UN capabilities, we can safely reject option one as a viable alternative in the foreseeable future. This also implies the de facto elimination of option three. Consequently, option two, i.e. lowering the high UN expectations to meet the currently available UN capabilities, seems to be the only alternative left for bridging the UN PKO capabilities-expectations gap in the foreseeable future. The question to be asked, then, is how can we lower the currently excessive expectations enough to close the existing capabilities-expectations gap?
Option 2: Lowering the high UN expectations to meet the currently available UN capabilities

The experience of the 1990s suggests that when the available UN capabilities are more or less fixed (and are likely to remain fixed in the short- to medium-run), some conflicts are either not going to be “treated” by UN peacekeeping or, alternatively, the quality and durability of the “treatment” provided by UN peacekeeping operations will be relatively low. From 1988 till 1993, the UN by and large opted for bigger quantity but the low quality and short durability of its PKOs proved to be a recipe for disaster in a number of complex conflicts all around the globe. The norms, doctrines, and rules of engagement developed for traditional peacekeeping missions proved to be woefully inadequate in second-generation PKOs, a reality that UN Member States accepted incrementally and unevenly. As consequence, from 1993 till 1999, UN fell out of favor as an instrument for large-scale intervention in intrastate conflicts altogether. This resulted in a decline in the size and scale of UN missions and the increased use of coalitions of the willing and regional organizations for missions that had UN authorization but were conducted outside the mechanism of the UN. (Sens 2004: 144)

The choice between quantity and quality is inherently a difficult one. In mid-1990s, some authors suggested that military, political, and humanitarian objectives should not necessarily be inextricably combined and that peacekeeping should go “back to basics” of traditional peacekeeping. (Ramsbotham and Woodhouse 1999: XIX) The problem with this idea is that most post-cold war conflicts are simply not amenable to traditional peacekeeping. Consequently, pointing out that “we will not be able to face twenty-first century by remaining firmly rooted in the twentieth,” the vast majority of experts in the field predictably dismissed the go “back to basics” rationale. Instead, they suggested that in order to survive and to be relevant in the future, UN peacekeeping has to be strengthened and redefined so that it could operate beyond the constraints of classical peacekeeping. (Tharoor 1996: 53)

Similarly, since 1999, both the first and, albeit belatedly and reluctantly, also the second UN acknowledged that in order for any peacekeeping operation in the 21st century to be successful, heavy emphasis has to be put on its quality. In January 2005, for example, the UN Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping Operations Guéhenno noted that while it is impressive that there were more than 75,000 Blue Helmets deployed in 16 UN PKOs all around the world in 2004, these numbers came at a cost: “[L]imitless growth is not a smart business model in any field, and especially not in ours where humility should be the rule. There comes a point when the demands exceed your ability to get the job done properly, while concurrently putting in place the reforms necessary to make sure that we do it even better down the road. As we experienced in 2004, as in the early 1990s, it is difficult to run and tie your shoe-laces at the same time. But, if you do not tie those laces, there is a danger that you will trip and fall. I want to avoid that. I want us to take care of the loose ends, before we push our luck by taking on additional new complex operations in 2005, beyond Sudan.” (Guéhenno 2005)

Guéhenno’s concerns about the UN taking on too much peacekeeping and spreading itself too thin should indeed be taken seriously because the current practice of sending senior UN officials in places like Congo to review “how peacekeepers can do more with less” (UN News Service 2004c) is clearly unsustainable in the long-run. This was also acknow-
ledged in the December 2004 Report of the UN High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, which noted that the demand for personnel “for both full-scale peace-enforcement missions and peacekeeping missions remains higher than the ready supply” and warned that “[i]n the absence of a commensurate increase in available personnel, United Nations peacekeeping risks repeating some of its worst failures of the 1990s.” (UN High-level Panel 2004)

In my opinion, the quality of UN peacekeeping operations should never be compromised in order to increase their quantity. Quality should be given priority over quantity no matter how difficult and painful the choice may be because long-lasting peace can be only built with well planned, high quality, and adequate mission-durability peacekeeping operations. Past attempts to use short-term, best-case-scenario and/or common-lowest denominator mandated peacekeeping operations to provide solutions to complex, protracted, and often on-going intrastate conflicts have repeatedly proven to be dismal disasters that have further widened the existing gap between UN expectation and capabilities by further eroding the UN credibility. Last but not least, I would contend that a heavy emphasis on the quality, rather than quantity, of all categories of UN peacekeeping personnel is the only viable remedy to the proliferation of sexual exploitation and other types of grave misconduct cases in UN PKOs.


As of early 2005, the gap between UN peacekeeping expectations and capabilities seems to be growing rather than narrowing. The renewed confidence of Member States in UN peacekeeping operations has led to a surge in their demand, with the result that the UN now has more multi-faceted missions on the ground than ever before. The problem is that the UN’s peacekeeping capacity is not commensurate with the demands that are currently placed upon it. Perhaps most alarmingly, top level UN officials are still being sent to conflict zones all around the world to figure out how UN peacekeepers could do more with less, although one of the cardinal lessons of the 1990s is that the UN should not be asked “to take on too many peacekeeping operations, with too few resources, in too many places where they do not necessarily belong.” (Guéhenno 2005)

The central message of the capabilities-expectation gap analysis for the conduct of UN peacekeeping in the 21st century is lucid – just as the UN went through the contraction period after the high-profile failures of second-generation peacekeeping in Somalia, Bosnia and Rwanda, the continuing lack of willingness and/or ability of UN Member States to provide political leadership, instruments and resources commensurate with the daunting tasks of conflict prevention, peacekeeping and peacebuilding in contemporary war-torn societies may already have set the stage for yet another retrenchment period in the history of UN peacekeeping. There is nowadays a real possibility that in the absence of tangible efforts to significantly enhance the meager UN peacekeeping capabilities, limiting either the quantity or quality of UN PKOs is likely to again become the preferred option for bridging the growing capabilities-expectations gap of UN peacekeeping.
In the 21st century, however, the repercussions of both variants of this option are likely to be more formidable than ever before. If UN peacekeeping suffers another high-profile failure because of a Rwanda-like inaction or a Srebrenica-like inadequate action, the UN’s collective security role is bound to be significantly eroded not only through a combination of limited resources and its Member State conflicts, but also by a substantially increased involvement of various regional and non-governmental actors, and by a growing sense of the limits of what can be expected of the UN. As Sens explained, “Aspersions would once again be cast on the UN system, provoking a shift toward other organizational or coalition mechanisms in the pursuit of peacekeeping objectives. In the process another blow will have been dealt to the reputation of the UN as an instrument of international peace and security.” (Sens 2004: 152) In short, perhaps the biggest danger is that with limited capabilities, the UN system will once again prove incapable of adequately meeting the demands and expectations placed upon it as a preferred mechanism for maintaining international peace and security.

The potentially grave implications of the continuing existence of a significant capabilities-expectations gap of UN peacekeeping are, unfortunately, still not fully comprehended by either of the two UNs. Perhaps most alarmingly, neither the UN Secretariat nor the UN Member States seem to be too concerned about the potential repercussions of opting for lesser quantity of UN PKOs at the moment. In fact, both the first and the second UN currently seem to favor the idea of greater involvement of other organizational or coalition mechanisms in the pursuit of peacekeeping. The December 2004 Report of the High-level Panel on Threats, Challenges and Change, for example, stated the following: “[I]t is unlikely that the demand for rapid action will be met through United Nations mechanisms alone. We welcome the European Union decision to establish standby high readiness, self-sufficient battalions that can reinforce United Nations missions. Others with advanced military capacities should be encouraged to develop similar capacities at up to brigade level and to place them at the disposal of the United Nations.” (UN High-level Panel 2004: 69)

Question remains, however, whether the non-UN mechanisms will really enhance UN peacekeeping capacities. If the answer to this question turns out to be an affirmative one, then the non-UN mechanisms should indeed be utilized as alternative options for bridging the current UN peacekeeping capabilities-expectations gap. If, however, the answer turns out to be a negative one, then there is a substantial risk that instead of helping to bridge the existing UN peacekeeping capabilities-expectations gap, non-UN peacekeeping mechanisms may merely siphon off scarce resources and divert political support away from their UN counterparts.

The findings of this analysis clearly indicate that if the UN is to maintain international peace and security in the 21st century and beyond, the current need to make Faustian choices between the quality and quantity of UN PKOs must be progressively eliminated. Outsourcing peacekeeping to regional arrangements, coalitions of the willing and/or private military companies may help in the short run, provided that a set of clear mechanisms of accountability, control and transparency are put in place. In the long run, however, it is impossible for the United Nations to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war without the provision of adequate resources, instruments and political support. As the Brahimi Report noted, whenever the UN Member States decide to send UN forces to uphold peace, they must
make sure that “they are capable of confronting the lingering forces of war and violence.” (United Nations 2000a) In practical terms, this means that rather than devoting more precious time and further scarce resources to a search for alternative options for bridging the current capabilities-expectations gap of UN peacekeeping, UN Member States should focus on those basic options that would ultimately guarantee both sufficient quantity and top quality of UN peacekeeping operations.

Table I: UN Peacekeeping 1993–2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>December 1993</th>
<th>June 1999</th>
<th>March 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of active missions</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Military personnel and civilian police</td>
<td>76,393</td>
<td>9,124</td>
<td>88,652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual UN peacekeeping budget</td>
<td>US$ 3.6 billion</td>
<td>US$ 1.0 billion</td>
<td>US$ 5.03 billion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: UN DPKO Publications and Archives, 2004 & UN DPKO Background Note, 2006.

Table II: Functions Performed by UN Peacekeepers since the End of Cold War

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Military</th>
<th>Political/Economic</th>
<th>Humanitarian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cease-fires observation and monitoring</td>
<td>Upholding law and order</td>
<td>Protecting aid convoys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maintaining buffer zones/boundary demarcation assistance</td>
<td>Helping to establish viable government</td>
<td>Protecting relief/delivery workers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disarming warring factions</td>
<td>Helping to maintain independent status</td>
<td>Providing humanitarian aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulating the dispositions of forces</td>
<td>Coping/negotiating with government entities/Election administration</td>
<td>Establishing, supporting, and protecting regional safe havens and other protected areas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing infiltration</td>
<td>Natural resources administration monitoring</td>
<td>Assisting in refugee repatriation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preventing civil war</td>
<td>Exercising temporary administrative authority</td>
<td>Monitoring refugee ow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Verifying security agreements and withdrawal of foreign troops</td>
<td>Providing security and helping to reestablish economic life for the local populace</td>
<td>Logistical support for humanitarian projects including transport, medical, and engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supervising disengagement and cantonement</td>
<td>Management and arbitration of local disputes</td>
<td>Verifying human rights agreements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clearing mines</td>
<td>Confidence-building measures/reconciliation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training/re-forming military units</td>
<td>Training and restructuring of police forces</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Monitoring economic sanctions</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes:

1. Hill has first introduced the “capabilities-expectations gap” concept in 1992 at a conference held in Edinburgh to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Journal of Market Studies.

2. Strictly speaking, the term European Union (EU) should be used only when referring to the organization in the post-Maastricht period. Before the Maastricht Treaty on the European Union (TEU) entered into force in November 1993, the proper term to use is the European Communities (EC). However, not to complicate things more than they already are, for the purposes of this article, the name European Union will be used to describe the organization both in the pre- and in the post-Maastricht era, unless specifically noted otherwise.

3. The UN Member States that have pledged to provide troops under UNSAS are obliged to provide them ready for effective deployment within 30 days of the adoption of a Security Council resolution establishing a traditional peacekeeping operation and within 90 days for complex peacekeeping operations.

4. Few UN PKOs have operated with the maximum authorized force over the entire period of their mandate, most often because the UN Member States have repeatedly failed to provide the required amounts of Blue Helmets in a timely fashion. Moreover, the maximum strength of troops authorized by the UN Security Council for UN PKOs has often fallen short of the target numbers recommended by the Secretary General.


6. Only nine countries have committed personnel to the list thus far.

7. The plan created an image of a UN that was poised for action but, according to Barnett, it was unlikely to contribute to ending the genocide: “Simply put, this proposal was merely symbolic and highly impractical: it proposed to dispatch 5,000 troops to Kigali, acknowledged that these troops might not be located for months (if ever), and confessed that it had no real idea what they would do once they arrived. The United States rightly criticized the plan as little more than smoke and demanded that the Secretariat and other on the Security Council design a realistic proposal rather than constructing a Potemkin village.” (Barnett 1997: 560–61)

Bibliography:


