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Peace Support Operations and Parameters for the Use of Force In the Context of UN Reform

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Introduction

“Neither Srebrenica nor Mogadiscio”.¹ This expression has been used repeatedly for the last few months by Jean-Marie Guéhenno, the United Nations (UN) Under-Secretary General for Peacekeeping, to set the new template for the use of force by UN peacekeepers. The reference to these two cases is particularly appropriate as they appear as two extreme – but not unique – traumatic experiences in the recent history of peace operations. In Somalia, the peace mission was gradually turned into a war operation against the Somalian people as a whole where everybody was perceived as an enemy, causing, in four months of clashes, between 6,000 and 10,000 deaths on the Somali side, and the number of wounded being estimated at twice that.² The UN forces, on their side, lost 83 soldiers killed and 302 wounded.³ The UN previously had a similar traumatic experience in Congo in 1960-63, one that, unfortunately, everybody has tried to forget instead of learn about. Nevertheless, in the

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¹. See for instance his interview in *Le Monde*, September 14, 2005.

². These are the estimates of Mohamed Sahnoun, former Special Representative of the Secretary General in the country; the UN did not provide official figures on this subject and maintained the division between ‘militiamen’ and ‘civilians’, which, in most of the clashes under consideration, was practically impossible to make.

³. Total losses for the whole operation were 136 men.

history of the UN, these experiences remain exceptions: the Blue Helmets are better known to be reluctant to use any force up to the point of appearing overly passive, regardless of the event in question. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, in the enclave of Srebrenica in July 1995, the security of 300 Dutch soldiers had priority over the security of the 27,000 Bosnian Muslims whom they were supposed to protect. In Rwanda, after the start of the massacres in April 1994, the Security Council made the extraordinary decision to reduce the strength of United Nations forces on the ground, which were already very limited. In many other less publicized cases, UN soldiers did not act, and thus allowed people they were supposed to protect be massacred. This was the case, in particular, in Ituri (Eastern Congo) in May 2003. At Bunia in Ituri, MONUC⁴ was unable to protect even civilians who had taken refuge within the perimeter of its base to escape the massacres. Yet Security Council Resolution 1417 gave it a mandate to protect civilians immediately threatened with physical violence. In too many cases, the Blue Helmets have committed the double sin of non-participation and non-assistance to people who were in danger. In the minds of the killers, as of the victims, the local people were literally abandoned by those who were supposed to represent the 'world community' at the local level.

By comparison, in the last year and a half, in particular in East Congo (MONUC) and Haiti (MINUSTHA),⁵ Blue Helmets have been increasingly engaged in so-called 'robust' operations using relatively heavy force (tanks, armed helicopters) in targeted actions against armed groups. Whereas such an evolution is facing some criticism, it has been clearly advocated by different groups of experts. In 2000, in particular, the Brahimi report clearly recommended it. In an attempt to offer an alternative to the "neither Srebrenica nor Mogadiscio" dilemma, the panelists proposed to distinguish between the use of force against an aggressor (which would be clearly identified as fighting a war) and in defense of a population or a mandate. *De facto*, for the last decade, the classic distinction between chapter VI ½ and VII of the UN Charter, between peacekeeping and enforcement operations, has increasingly appeared untenable. Even if the dichotomy is still regularly called upon by some State members for different political reasons, peacekeeping operations are now routinely given the more robust chapter VII authorization denied to the most traditional missions.

This is a positive evolution from a moral, political and practical point of view. First, if you don't use force to protect the people and abandon possible victims to their fate, you violate international law by not protecting civilians, whether this is explicit or not in your mandate. Instructions to remain passive or even leave the scene, as was routinely the case in the past, effectively lead Blue Helmets into covering crimes against humanity and contravening international law. The 'responsibility to protect' has now become both a basic moral as well as judicial principle. Second, situations which are dealt with very superficially have a great chance to come back on the international agenda and require a new UN intervention in much deteriorated circumstances. As in Haiti for the last fifteen years, too often the UN has intervened in situations without actually doing anything "serious" – as local people say – in order to tackle the real security issues and restore order. Today, the UN has to act in this country in conditions which had never been so bad in the past.⁶ Third, even if

⁴. United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (acronym not translated in English).

⁵. United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (acronym not translated in English).

⁶. Of course, in the case of Haiti, one cannot forget that, in the meantime, the condition of the forced departure of former President Aristide, and namely the distribution of additional arms and the support to former military

security issues should not overshadow other key dimensions of peace-building processes (in particular, the political and socio-economic ones), many situations have proven to what point basic security (the right not to have one's life at risk at any time) was a basic first step for any serious action. If basic security is not there, everything is paralyzed; socio-economic projects are stopped (because the staff is not mobile, among other reasons), and economic aid is not spent. For all these reasons, I now tend to consider the recourse to 'robust' operations as a positive evolution in order to curve basic insecurity in countries when UN missions are deployed.

I also see this evolution as inescapable. I am referring here to what is generally referred as a 'security vacuum' in the immediate aftermaths of a conflict. Of course, the expression 'security vacuum' is itself problematic in many ways; it would be better to speak of situations of 'neither war nor peace', that are highly volatile, changing from one day to the next, and where the security problems faced by local people are, at best, 'reframed', in the sense that the issue may be transferred or displaced without being solved at the core. Violence may no longer refer to what is considered as characterizing a war period, but it continues and sometimes increases in multiple other forms. In these circumstances, lack of civilian police capacity – both local police which generally has to be entirely (re) constituted and UN civpols which are structurally understaffed – leads to reliance on the military to undertake responsibility for the immediate basic law and order, while the first weeks and months greatly affect the local legitimacy of the operation and the possibility to bring back any security. It is therefore inescapable that peacekeepers be more and more called upon to restore and maintain law and order and use some force to do so. But urgent measures need to be taken in order to actually improve their capacity to do so correctly and have an actual sustainable impact on local security contexts. This includes a need for clearer doctrines and rules of engagement so that peacekeepers' actions appear more consistent and less amateur.

In order to address this, this contribution will first propose a diagnosis of the main difficulties encountered today when dealing with the issue of the use of force by UN peacekeepers. Second, it will make some concrete recommendations on how to improve the practice and select some aspects on which intense exchanges, brainstorming, development of procedures and guidelines, as well as joint training programs could be organized between Europe and Latin America.

Of course, this subject is closely related to two aspects of peace processes which, until now, have not been satisfactorily managed: the conditions in which disarmament and the reintegration of former combatants are carried out, on the one hand;⁷ and the difficulties in creating or reforming police structures on the other hand. The limits of this contribution explain that these two dimensions will not be considered here as such but it is very clear that huge improvements are needed both in the doctrines and actions undertaken on these two fronts.

and para-military groups, have played an important role in the huge degradation of the local security conditions.

⁷. See *The Politics and Anti-Politics of Contemporary Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs / Les anciens combattants d'aujourd'hui: désarmement, démobilisation et réinsertion*, Paris / New York / Genève : CERJ / SGDN / PSIS, September 2004, 56 pages (bilingual).

Diagnosis: Current Conditions and Limits of the Use of Force in Peace Operations

The circumstances of the use of force

The tasks assigned *de facto* to peacekeepers which may require the use of force include:

- *Protecting secure or safe areas, including humanitarian corridors or refugee camps*, such as in Sudan today (these tasks being assumed by African troops in this specific case). Peacekeepers may also be asked to escort and protect individuals and convoys.
- *Assisting delivery of humanitarian aid and assistance*. In Haiti, after the floods that badly affected the city of Gonaives, fighting occurred during humanitarian aid distribution and the UN peacekeepers were asked to intervene. Such incidents occur rather routinely in popular neighborhoods of Port-au-Prince.
- *Providing crowd and riot control*. Demonstrations are clearly very risky situations for the Blue Helmets. In Port-au-Prince, in October 27, 2005 a sit-in was organized in front of the office of the Haitian Prime Minister by the association of the women victims of a scandal over cooperatives. The Blue Helmets along with the national police intervened and dispersed the demonstrators, using 'robust' means – 'violence' in the words of local people. In Liberia, in early November 2005, UN peacekeepers had to disperse hundreds of Weah supporters during a protest in the streets of Monrovia. A 20-years old woman was bleeding from the head after being hit by a UN policeman, witnesses said. This produced a furious reaction from members of the crowd who chanted "Wicked UN". *De facto*, the risk of being perceived as a force of oppression is relatively high in such circumstances. It is clearly worsened when demonstrations are against the presence of foreign troops, as was the case for anti-French demonstrations in Ivory Coast, in November 2004.
- *Using force to protect civilians or react when massacres have occurred*. In East Congo (Ituri and Kivu), people are regularly slaughtered. Peacekeepers always arrive too late for different reasons: they are informed very late, or they are too far away from the scene. This handicap is particularly key in such a huge country as the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where communications are very poor and roads in very bad shape. On 1 October 2004, the Security Council, by resolution 1565, gave MONUC a series of new responsibilities, including ensuring the protection of civilians "under imminent threat of violence". There are many instances in which insecurity prevails in popular neighborhoods. In Haiti, in the first half of 2005, killings and kidnappings were occurring very routinely, sometimes at a very short distance from the peacekeepers, if not "under their eyes", and they did not interfere or leave the place because they could not confront the situation immediately, or again, they "arrived too late". For the average citizen in the countries concerned, the lesson is clear: the Blue Helmets "are not there to protect [them]" as they regularly claim in field investigations. On the part of the Blue Helmets, the challenge is not only to obtain the capacity to face these kinds of situations but also to be prepared to risk their lives to protect local people.

- *Protecting UN personnel, facilities and equipments from hostile threats and acts.* This task is a more classic one but has clearly taken on increasing importance in consideration with the fact that international staff is now currently deployed in volatile situations where their own security is problematic and international staff is more often targeted. In the past, there has often been a kind of trade-off between the security of the international staff and the security of local populations. On the ground, the relative importance of security for international civilian personnel and soldiers, compared with that of the people they are supposed to have come to help, remains a major stumbling block. This discrepancy was shown in a particularly glaring way in Somalia, but also in Rwanda, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, and more recently in eastern Congo, considering the violence suffered at the same time by the local people. In Somalia, notably, Operation 'Unified Shield' launched on February 28, 1995, to protect the evacuation of the remaining 2,500 Blue Helmets in the country and the reloading of heavy equipment loaned to UNOSOM by the United States for shipment, mobilised 18 ships and nearly 10,000 men. In Bosnia-Herzegovina, one of the declared objectives of UNPROFOR was its own protection; those who had to exercise responsibility at its head have spoken of the time and energy devoted to that purpose and the elaboration of hypothetical evacuation plans, which were constantly updated. In Kosovo, the NATO 'extraction force' was stationed on the borders of the country to protect the OSCE observers in the province of Serbia, in case the security of those observers was threatened. They were evacuated immediately after the failure of the Rambouillet agreements, although it was known that the ethnic cleansing operation had already started on the ground. Today, in Eastern Congo and Haiti, in order to ensure the protection of UN personnel from hostile threats and acts, the Blue Helmets engage in retaliatory operations.

- *Confiscating weapons, enforcing disarmament, intervening to stop serious crimes or arrest 'spoilers'.* In Haiti, for the last year and a half, almost 60 operations were conducted by the Blue Helmets, mainly in poor neighborhoods of the capital, Port au Prince. Last October 11, 280 Blue Helmets, twelve tanks and helicopters participated in an operation in Bel-Air. Eight suspects were arrested and two grenades were seized. These operations are generally very consuming in personnel and materials, for a frequent poor result. In Haiti, today, most of the leaders of militias continue to operate. The killings and sequestrations of civilians have been reduced but they continue nonetheless, and the population does not understand why the Blue Helmets do not do a better job. Identically, some robust operations have been undertaken to seize arms in Eastern Congo. More recently, MONUC has participated in joint operations with the national army of DRC to fight Rwandan Hutu rebels.

In all these instances, the Blue Helmets may be obliged to use force, and they have to be prepared to do so. Seven key issues may be identified in the current practice.

An absence or inconsistency of strategy

The practice too often reveals a lack of apparent strategy. Contradictory signals are sent to the public; the operations are not always consistent and followed by adequate measures to ensure that, if a 'new', safer situation is supposed to be created by a 'robust' operation, it will be sustainable; there is too much variation in the criteria applied to act or not and against whom. For instance, on disarmament operations and when offensive actions are undertaken against spoilers, the UN is often alternating between inaction and strong actions, in which local people may feel there is a disproportion in the deployment of material and forces. The risk of presenting a contradictory face and of being perceived as just another fighter (and no longer a peacekeeper) are even greater when you participate in joint operations with an army which is more a fluid alliance between armed groups (as in DRC) or when there is a confusion between the security mandate and the fight against terrorism (as in Afghanistan).

The 'collateral damages': the existence of civilian victims of UN 'robust' actions

In various instances, in East Congo as in Haiti, an undefined number of local civilians were killed during the course of 'robust' operations; no real serious investigation was undertaken, at least officially, which generated all kinds of rumors, as well as much anger on the part of local people. In the situation's present state, it is almost unavoidable that the use of force in overpopulated neighborhoods or refugee camps where the spoilers hide will create civilian victims. Three main factors may explain why. The use of the means of war are what UN soldiers know and mostly have at their disposal, even if they are not necessarily the most suitable for the situations (use of helicopters and tanks, for instance). Most of the means deployed are to secure the operation and peacekeepers themselves, so the objective of protecting local civilians is secondary. Finally, the amount of 'collateral damages' may largely be considered in direct proportion to the lack of familiarity peacekeepers have with the areas where they intervene. Two dimensions may be distinguished here: very poor intelligence and understanding capacity on the part of the peacekeepers; the fact that if the UN members are not known of the local inhabitants, if they have not previously built up a minimum level of trust, it will be more difficult to act in difficult circumstances. At best, people will ignore them, will not help them if they need information, or will give them information that is incorrect; but they may even turn against the peacekeepers if the situation becomes very tense and people do not feel that they can trust the UN. Of course, this is reinforced by the absence of real and public investigation when civilians are killed in such operations, fueling resentment and rumors.

The risk of operations perceived as acts out of 'revenge'

Too many robust actions are also perceived by local people as strict 'vengeance' (when the UN might talk of a form of "self-defense"). Indeed, in many instances, in particular in Haiti and East Congo, UN robust actions have immediately followed in time attacks against Blue Helmets. UN officials may argue that they were already planned and were designed also as retaliation or prevention of violence against local people. However, if these people think that the Blue Helmets act only when their men have been targeted, this perception is what counts.

In the same vein, there is a need to go further in the reflection about the willingness of member states to put their men at risk for the protection of local people. In most national historical traditions (albeit with important differences and variations over time), soldiers are supposed to be prepared to die for their nation. But the conduct of operations outside home territory raises additional difficulties. Should one risk losing his life in defense of universal values or to save other's life (especially if they are 'foreigners' and 'far' from home)? In Eastern Congo and Haiti, some peacekeepers were injured and killed during 'robust' operations. The number of fatalities is still relatively low, particularly in comparison with war operations such as in Iraq. Most fatalities in UN operations result from road accidents, suicides, and homicides in connection with private affairs. But the possibility of more often resorting to force reinforces the need of greater reflection in that respect. The absence of strong cultural identity among UN peacekeepers and the increasingly wide gulf between those who decide on interventions and those who are in fact ready to deploy military personnel on the ground, highly complicate the matter. Developing countries continue to make up over three-quarters of the contributing troops for peace operations under the UN command, notably in Africa. On their side, industrialized countries provide troops that operate under national or NATO command (such as in Afghanistan or in advance operations like in Haiti before the deployment of MINUSTHA), under the assumption that they would participate in more dangerous and robust missions. But the reality on the ground faced by UN peacekeepers clearly indicates how short the argument is. The current division of labor between the West and the rest of the world is clearly an issue which has to be tackled seriously.

An insufficient understanding of local contexts and lack of confidence-building with local populations

One particular aspect of these difficulties is the under-estimation of the numerous linkages to 'spoilers' usually entertained by local populations. One has to take due account of variable interaction networks to which they belong, and *a fortiori* of their capacity to mobilize; otherwise, a robust action may prove not only ineffective but risky because it will be felt as a declaration of hostility towards a whole social group. Most militias and even the worst 'warlords' engage in relations with local populations which appear as a mixture of forced allegiance, manipulation and exchange of services. In practice, it may also be rather difficult to distinguish between civilians and militia members. The construction of the 'combatant / civilian dichotomy' may differ from the viewpoint of different groups within local societies, but also as compared with the perception of outsiders. The question of who is a civilian is also blurred by the fact that many combatants may actually be part-timers, and by the large diversity of militias and para-military groups co-existing in the meantime. For instance, the creation of village or district militias, of true self-defense movements, can initially be a response to violence from 'below' or from the state, in circumstances when the state fails to provide security to the people. Even if these groups later evolve differently, they may keep some social bases which will count at the time when an outsider decides to fight them. In the face of such volatile contexts, gaining the respect and confidence of the local population is also a way to reduce the power of the local insurgents and ensure better conditions in which you will probably need to use less force, and therefore employ the force used in a better, more targeted way. A confidence-building approach is equally important in view of potential demonstrations so that the Blue Helmets are not *de facto* considered as potential oppressors.

In that perspective, the fact that peacekeepers are generally seen by the local population as 'very distant', 'outsiders', or as 'not interested in the people' is a heavy handicap on their operations for the day when they have to intervene in a village or district and count on some minimal cooperation and local trust. As people repeatedly told me in different countries, in very similar terms, despite differences in language, the UN is 'like the state', 'it does not give a damn about us', 'it does not protect us', 'we can't have any confidence in it'... It is no surprise then that people resort to dodging UN personnel as the last resort of the weak against the strong. They refuse to answer questions from United Nations police officers, supply false information, exercise passive resistance, even sabotage and steal light weapons, etc. Too often, the relationship between the Blue Helmets and local people is characterized by mistrust and mutual ignorance; this has to be reversed.

The under-estimation of the highly subjective nature of security issues

On all these aspects, the highly subjective nature of security issues is largely underestimated. There are always some discrepancies between what your intentions are, why you decide to attack, and the way people will understand it: this reality seems difficult to understand for UN officials. However, here lies a basic notion central to anyone who deals with public security issues: the necessity to deal both with 'objective' and 'subjective' dimensions of (in)security.

A lack of human and material resources

The lack of human and material resources (availability of a certain kind of helicopters, in sufficient numbers, for instance) for operations which are very consuming constitutes a serious obstacle to a larger and more consistent recourse to 'robust' actions. The last few years have shown some evolution from that point of view. The crises experienced by the peace mission in Sierra Leone in the spring of 2000 showed the limits of the Blue Helmets' capacity in such situations. They were literally taken hostage by rebel troops, and only owed their salvation to the targeted intervention of the British army to support the local government (Operation Pallister). The alarm signal dispatched at the time by the UN Secretary General underlined, once more, the contrast between decisions by the Security Council to reinforce certain peace operations and the refusal of the same member states to provide the resources, both human and material. In the cases of Eastern Congo and Haiti, the engagement of some member states has allowed for the partial prevention of such a situation to repeat itself, but the balance is always very fragile. In many instances, it is also very clear that a smaller number of highly trained riot police would have done a better job than militaries which were unprepared for the kind of situations they had to face.

The respect of international law into question

All the previous points lead to a more general challenge: the necessity to continue to respect international law, in particular with regards to international human rights standards and the appropriate use of force. To a large extent, peacekeepers have to set an example; if they do not comply with basic rules, what does that mean? Are they above the law?

Recommendations: A Mental Revolution & an Ethical Renewal

A deeper reflection and commitment at the top political level

The Member States clearly carry a great deal of responsibility in dealing with the challenges raised by the security dilemma faced by UN peace operations on the ground, in particular in regard to the question of the use of force. Clear commitments are needed in at least three directions:

- *Regarding the conditions in which the UNSC resolutions are negotiated and approved.* It is more likely that a high level of ambiguities, if not contradictions, and even hypocrisy will continue to prevail in the diplomatic practice; one cannot be too idealistic in that respect. But we need to increase the level of consistency in the decisions made, as well as their suitability with the resources given to the UN in addition to the reality on the ground. Exchanges of views between decision-makers and officials from Europe and Latin America should partly aim towards a realistic assessment of the current practices in that respect and an effort to improve them in the diplomatic management of crises.
- *Regarding the reflection about the security of military and civilian staff.* More discussions are needed if we want to be consistent with the principle of 'the responsibility to protect'. We cannot maintain the hierarchy between the security of the local population and outsiders, whoever they are. This is a long term ethical issue and we need to support what seems to be an unavoidable evolution.
- *Regarding the definition of clear and consistent standard rules of engagement, as well as strategies for the use of force.* This is a 'work in progress' at the level of the UN but clearly has to be boosted, developed and implemented in a more precise and decisive way. What exists is clearly insufficient and, in most cases, not appropriate for concrete situations in the field. There is a need for much more concrete and operational tools for the peacekeepers to work on a daily basis. There is also a need to develop strategies in relation to the use of force, to develop tools to take them into account in the planning and management of operations, as well as to bolster the training and briefing of the staff.

On each of these issues, a working paper with concrete recommendations could be prepared by a group of experts from Europe and Latin America, and then presented and discussed during inter-regional meetings.

A fundamental change in peacekeepers' understanding of local contexts

Fundamental changes are needed in outsiders' understanding (which goes beyond traditional military intelligence) of local contexts: who is who on the ground, how local actors' strategies evolve on a daily basis, what are the rumors circulating about peacekeepers and the security situation, etc. Peacekeepers also need a comprehensive monitoring system of the dynamics they engender in order to be able to graduate their responses and the kind of

force that might be needed in a particular set of circumstances. Everyone—not only members of the mission's analysis unit or the military intelligence cells—must have at their disposal, at all stages of their work, relevant tools of analysis and monitoring. This information must be at the continuous disposal of field teams. It does not require years of study and expertise, but suggests simply taking into account what various social science disciplines have to say about the situations under consideration, and using that knowledge in an operational and analytical approach, with regular updates. The elements to develop these tools are there, as well as the technology (only computers and basic data bases and programs are needed to put in place such a monitoring system) but, up to now, their necessity does not seem to have been understood. Identically, there is a need to develop concrete guidelines for field staff, so that they understand the relevance of such understanding in the management of their interaction with local people.

A greater proximity with local people

A series of measures needs to be taken to ensure more proximity with the population in order to build and keep their confidence. Indeed, a large component of the mandate of UN missions has to do with policing; now, any police work requires proximity to local communities. Several dimensions deserve urgent attention:

- *Greater attention needs to be paid to the modalities of deployment and work of the peacekeepers* (importance of the foot patrols, of a continuous presence and frequent visits). A series of 'best practices' needs to be developed in order to develop new ways of working on the model of proximity police. Key elements such as the basic knowledge of local languages should be strengthened; which means that a reflection is needed to develop linguistic basic training in any field mission. Concrete tools can be easily put in place such as interactive maps which allow for a better understanding of how entire neighborhoods or regions are organized, a follow-up on how insecurity is progressing there, and the way the UN troops are deployed as a consequence. Up to now, the tools used are too much basic, inconsistent, and clearly insufficient for a real monitoring of local situations.
- *A strict application of the code of ethics, greater accountability and stronger sanctions.* Progress has been made recently in that direction (see, for instance, the recent report of the Office for Internal Oversight Services to the UN General Assembly and the appointment by Secretary-General Kofi Annan of five experts to explore expanding accountability of UN peacekeepers) but much more is needed. There is an urgent need for strict guidelines and the development of a consistent and transparent system of sanctions. For now, UN peacekeepers' accountability remains close to zero, and this is clearly unacceptable in the eyes of the local populations they deal with. This does not help building their confidence in the UN missions, a key component in the legitimization process, both of which are crucial elements when the issue of using force comes to the forefront in the course of an operation.

- *Substantial efforts on the missions' communication capacity.* With regards to the subject of this contribution, UN missions need to communicate more locally in two directions:
 - to explain what they are doing and why; each 'robust' action needs to be backed by a consistent and skilful communication strategy (even if you decide not to communicate afterwards, previous communication being generally excluded by definition for this kind of operations);
 - to recognize when problems occur (in particular, when there are civilian victims) and apologize; the same should go for peacekeepers' alleged misconducts; it is important to react quickly on such issues and not to wait so long that anything you will say will not be accepted as a sign of good will or may even produce a counter-productive result; you can always say that an investigation is under way so as to clarify what has really happened and to show that you take the matter seriously.

- *More reliance on community resources to face the security issues.* Peace cannot be built only with outside resources; this is true for security issues as for any other dimension of peace building. For instance, some experiences have shown that community consultation and engagement is critical to successful and sustainable disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR) programs. Among the few DDR success stories are experiences which have aimed at introducing normative compliance through local informal 'peace agreements' with voluntary disarmament and reintegration clauses (as the Mendi Peace Agreement in Papua New Guinea and, to a certain extent, the Community Arms Collection and Destruction program in Sierra Leone) or the declaration of weapons free areas where civilian as well as combatant weapons are collected (as in South Africa and the Solomon Islands).⁸ Here again, best practices and guidelines need to be developed so that the field staff knows that this is supposed to be a key direction of the work.

In other words, the challenge for peacekeepers to be able to deal with 'neither war nor peace' situations, and specifically manage their ability to use force to restore and maintain order in such circumstances, calls for the best lessons from our good domestic policing practices to be extracted and implemented, when they exist – as well as the lessons from the bad ones, which should be avoided. Indeed, the issues at stake are very similar, with three main differences which reinforce the importance of the recommendations here formulated: first, you understand very little of what is going on; second, you are in a different political culture, dealing with different systems of reference (including on the side of the peacekeepers); third, you are prone to less legitimacy from the outset and the basis to maintain it is much more fragile, which means that you should do more to build it, maintain it, and consolidate it, day after day. Local legitimacy is never a given, and it can be lost very quickly, and yet it is absolutely key for any force claiming to maintain order.

⁸. See *The Politics and Anti-Politics of Contemporary Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Programs*, op.cit.

Better training, briefing and de-briefing of the staff

The existing mechanisms are clearly insufficient. Identically, *a greater continuity during the course of a mission* is needed. While staff turn-over is quite high, there is very little transfer of knowledge about the local situation; there is very poor organizational and personal memory of UN action; too often, each group arrives as if its arrival was the starting point of the entire operation. Here again, concrete tools need to be put at the disposal of the teams and clear instructions given to ensure this continuity. Relying on the good will of everybody is clearly insufficient.

All these recommendations require very pragmatic and concrete measures to be taken. But they are urgent. Peacekeepers are currently without a doubt under-equipped to face the challenges they have to deal with in the field. A small group of experts originated from the two continents and organized on a network basis, could be put in place. This working group would be responsible for developing concrete tools to be discussed in the different countries, amended and then tested in the field. Complementary tools for the assessment of practices and the formulation of new training curriculum should also be developed.

Conclusion

The nature and scope of UN peace operations have evolved drastically in the last fifteen years. Yet, the tools at the disposal of the members of the missions do not reflect that evolution. What is clearly needed today is a mental revolution in the way local situations and contexts of intervention are thought out, as well as an ethical renewal to expand our collective accountability towards local people. Former UN Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjöld, the centenary of whose birth was celebrated this year, used to define the public servant's political ethic as an ethic of personal commitment which could be summed up in the imperative for everyone to do one's best, at any time.⁹ He also referred at some point to Albert Schweitzer's summary of his ethical outlook in the words 'respect for life'.¹⁰ In intense and violent situations, pretending to contribute to peace building is a difficult task and there are very few clear-cut answers. But it is possible to at least improve our practices which, to date, too often give credence to that expression heard so often in the field about peacekeepers: "Those people are not serious!"

Rio de Janeiro & Paris, November 2005

⁹. See Hammarskjöld's famous lecture entitled « The International Civil Servant in Law and in Fact » at Oxford University, 30 May 1961.

¹⁰. Article in Tiden magazine on « The Public Servant and Society » 1951.