

DON'T GO IT ALONE: America's Interest in International Cooperation

Peace and Stability Operations: Challenges and Opportunities for the Next U.S. Administration



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*Executive Summary***Peace and Stability Operations:
Challenges and Opportunities for the Next U.S. Administration**

The next U.S. Administration will face serious questions of resource allocation regarding peace and stability operations, whose responsibilities range from cease-fire observation to temporary governance, where political authorities have collapsed or departed. They are often complex mixes of civilian and military action. The United States, despite its status as the world's greatest economic and military power, has found it not only useful but necessary to undertake these operations in the company of others—coalitions, alliances, regional groupings, and global institutions—in support of a stable peace.

But peace has a problem. When it breaks out in places like Bosnia or the Congo, press and public turn their attention away, seeking more exciting news. Peace is rarely self-enforcing; it often needs outside help. NATO, for example, poured 60,000 troops into Bosnia in 1995 to cement the Dayton Accords. Twelve years later, 2,200 troops remain, now under European Union command. This makes Bosnia typical in one sense—peace takes years to rebuild—but unusual in another, as the continuous recipient of major security and economic aid for so long a time.

Most peace missions struggle to attract the manpower and the funds needed to make a real change. The United Nations tries to keep the peace in Congo-Kinshasa with one-third as many troops as NATO started with in Bosnia, spread over an area six times as large and teeming with well-armed and vicious militias. Overall, the UN has more than 100,000 troops and police in the field, so it has trouble finding more troops for new operations like the one in Darfur, Sudan.

Few of the troops in its toughest, African operations come from developed states. Delayed payments from these same states also help keep UN peacekeeping perennially underfunded. At the end of its last peacekeeping budget year, in June 2007, the UN was still owed \$2.1 billion—nearly 40 percent—for its peacekeeping work. In one of life's greater ironies, it may not borrow funds to cover that shortfall, a rule enforced by the most indebted government on the planet: our own.

The UN's problems are not unique. In Afghanistan, maintaining adequate force-strength and building adequate fighting capacity has become a real issue for NATO, as too few NATO members bear these burdens amid flagging commitments and reluctance to risk troops on the part of most NATO countries.

Once it substantially disengages from Iraq, the U.S. will find it both cost-effective and politically expedient to lean on other states and organizations to help it advance shared strategic interests in international peace, security, justice, and prosperity. People around the globe understand, accept, and applaud UN actions. Compared to regional organizations and ad hoc alliances of nations, the UN has greater political reach and a deeper logistics network supporting humanitarian relief and development projects, as well as peace operations. U.S. support is critical to the success of UN peacekeeping operations, and well worth strengthening.

Early in the next Administration, the President should begin that process by:

- Declaring that the United States and the United Nations share common goals in expanding the writ of human rights and realizing human dignity, which in turn requires international peace and individual human security.
- Offering strong support—in cash and in kind—to every UN peace operation for which it casts its vote in the Security Council, setting an example for others by promptly contributing the U.S. share of UN peacekeeping costs.
- Supporting the continued restructuring and strengthening of UN headquarters offices that plan and support peace operations.
- Pledging strong and sustained U.S. diplomatic and political support to UN peacekeeping operations, especially in volatile states and regions.
- Promising temporary U.S. military support, in collaboration with its NATO allies, for UN operations that experience trouble from local spoilers or terrorist action.
- Continuing to train foreign peacekeepers, contingent on their governments' willingness to discipline troops who violate international humanitarian law.
- Acknowledging that effective “transition and reconstruction” programs are peacekeepers' best exit strategy.
- Announcing that the United States will rethink, restructure, and expand its own capacity to contribute not only military advisors and police personnel, but also political advisors and civilian substantive experts to UN peace operations.
- Putting in place a new interagency process and new centers of excellence to implement these objectives.

“The U.S. government should make it clear that it supports an effective UN that, in turn, supports international peace and security in irreplaceable ways.”



In deciding how best to defend itself and its interests, every state faces tough policy choices. Small, poor states have few options and often find their choices dictated by others. Big, rich states have more choices—but each choice comes with consequences. America can act on its own in many matters of peace and security but there are times when acting in concert—through coalitions, alliances, regional groupings, or global institutions—is not only useful, but also necessary. Even a superpower has finite resources, as Iraq and Afghanistan continue to demonstrate. Especially where the resources needed to shore up the peace can be found among many implementing partners and organizations, smart engagement argues for leveraging those resources to accomplish common goals and to better manage hard problems multilaterally.

A Brief History of Peace and Stability Operations

Contemporary peace operations got their start after World War II, when some 200 unarmed military observers wearing United Nations armbands patrolled cease-fire lines between India and Pakistan and the armistice lines around the new state of Israel.¹ Six decades later, 104,000 troops, police, and civilian personnel in 20 UN missions on four continents use presence, persuasion, and modern weapons to support the rebuilding of peace under tough conditions. The newly authorized mission for Darfur will drive that total to 130,000. The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) manages a further 50,000 peacekeepers in Kosovo and Afghanistan, the European Union (EU) manages 2,400 troops and police in Bosnia, and the African Union (AU) managed about 7,000 in Darfur through the end of 2007, when that force merged into a new UN-AU “hybrid” force. Washington has authorized, endorsed, or supported all of these operations through its votes in the Security Council or on NATO’s North Atlantic Council.

In recent years, in fact, the United States itself has been front and center in propounding a substantial increase in the size, use, and deployment of UN peacekeeping around the globe. Within the last year or so, the United States and its colleagues on the Security Council have called for:

“UN operations, as currently conducted, are a relative bargain for their funders.”

- A new peacekeeping mission in Somalia;
- A seven-fold expansion of the UN’s peacekeeping mission in Lebanon;
- The four-fold expansion of the peacekeeping mission in Darfur;
- Reauthorization of the UN’s peacekeeping missions in Haiti and Liberia;
- A renewed peacekeeping mission for East Timor; and
- New missions in Chad, the Central African Republic, and Nepal.

“Preserving liberty and fostering democracy among such countries is critical to America’s interests. It is too big a job for any one country to shoulder alone.”



Cheaper than War, but not Cheap

Peacekeeping today costs \$10–12 billion annually, not including the counterinsurgency wars in Iraq or Afghanistan. The UN’s peacekeeping budget accounts for about half of that total amount, and Washington covers roughly a quarter of the UN budget.

The costs of UN peacekeeping operations are pro-rated among member states according to a “peacekeeping scale of assessment,” which is based on contributions to the regular UN budget. The five permanent members of the Security Council each pay a 20% larger share of peacekeeping costs than they do of the regular budget, given their special responsibility under the UN Charter for international peace and security, and because they can veto any operation they dislike. UN operations, as currently conducted, are a relative bargain for their funders, costing less than one-fifth of what the same missions would cost if conducted exclusively by developed-state military forces.

The costs of other peacekeeping missions are borne primarily by the troop contributors. NATO and the EU collectively fund mostly minor “common costs” for their missions. Occasional subsidies from wealthy states allow less-wealthy states to send troops to non-UN operations. Substantial outside cash and in-kind support (airlift and civilian contractors) have enabled the AU, for example, to deploy and support its observer force in Darfur.

“What it lacks in combat power, the UN more than makes up for in legitimacy and staying power.”

The Case for International Cooperation

As all-consuming as the conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan are at the moment, there is a world of hurt beyond their borders—a world being hurt. How much can or should America try to help, either on its own, or in the company of other states? The question will probably never be answered precisely because politicians want and need the flexibility to adapt as problems change and challenges evolve. But it can be answered in broad terms.

Once it substantially disengages from Iraq, the United States will find it both cost-effective and politically expedient to lean on other states and organizations to help it advance shared strategic interests in international peace, security, justice, and prosperity. The available forms of collaboration have complementary strengths: Coalitions of the willing are better at suppressing violence but typically lack staying power and means of joint finance. Regional organizations have greater legitimacy and cohesion when working within their regions but risk losing both when they venture farther afield. The UN cannot handle full-scale combat since it lacks both full control over the forces it receives and the sort of cohesion that an alliance or coalition can generate, but what it lacks in combat power, the UN more than makes up for in legitimacy and staying power.

People around the globe understand, accept, and applaud UN actions, from children's health, to famine relief, to post-conflict security operations. Compared to regional organizations and ad hoc groupings of states, the UN has greater political reach and a deeper logistics network supporting humanitarian relief and development projects, as well as peace operations. Those who think of the UN system as desk-bound should witness its fieldwork firsthand: more UN staff members work in field postings than in headquarters. The UN's global system of financial assessments for peacekeeping enables the UN to tap the strengths of the private sector, with more than 100 "systems contracts" in place for essential mission support.

Given the expansion of UN peacekeeping in this decade, the next Administration will certainly face serious questions of resource allocation regarding the UN and global peace and stability operations.

Coping with Growth in Peacekeeping Operations

As the UN's peacekeeping operations have expanded, the first question is whether the world and the United States have devoted resources to support this growth industry. The answer to this question would have to be "no." The surge in UN peacekeeping has not been met by commensurate increases in the number of staff in the UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) or in the number of troops or police volunteered to the UN by its richest members for the UN's toughest missions. The result has been forces of highly variable professionalism. In the past two years, for example, the UN has asked states to take back hundreds of troops and police when investigations have implicated them in sexual abuse and exploitation of the local population.

The United States chronically under-budgets its share of UN peacekeeping costs, even as it votes for more and expanded peacekeeping missions on the Security Council. As of February 2008, the U.S. had built up \$1.2 billion in essentially permanent prior-year debt for UN peacekeeping and was likely to fall at least another \$500 million short in its peacekeeping dues for 2007–08.²

“Even UN missions launched with urgent U.S. backing may not receive U.S. funds for months unless they can hitch a ride on a timely supplemental in the Congress.”

Beyond this, ever since Somalia (1992–93), the United States has declined to provide troops for the riskier UN peacekeeping forces. The Force Commander and majority of UN forces in Haiti (1995–96) were American but the last American military unit to serve in a UN-led mission came home in 1999. Subsequent U.S. non-participation means that our government has no military commanders in any current UN field missions and dwindling institutional memory of how UN operations work.

The second big question is whether the world and the United States are lining up the right kinds of capabilities to meet the world's needs in the peace and stability arena. In peace operations, the military's real exit strategy is successful peacebuilding, or "transition and reconstruction." This involves many tasks—from arranging and supervising elections, training novice lawmakers, and jumpstarting economic activity

to rebuilding police forces and promoting independent judiciaries—all tasks for which armed forces are poorly suited or totally inappropriate. Successful peacebuilding, and therefore a successful exit strategy, require complementary civilian capacity working alongside the military.

What Washington Should Do: Recommendations for Action

As UN peacekeeping's largest and most influential donor, the U.S. government, under a new Administration, should make it clear, very early on, that it supports an effective UN that, in turn, supports international peace and security in irreplaceable ways—not as a tool of U.S. policy but as a venue for leveraging scarce funds and people toward a just public order that improves people's lives.

Early in the new term, while the UN Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations is in session, the President should set out the following principles and policy goals:

- **Declare that the United States and the UN share common goals in expanding the writ of human rights and realizing human dignity, which in turn requires international peace and individual human security.** The majority of UN member states are poor, less than free, and often difficult to deal with. As a global institution, the UN includes the world's worst human rights offenders but also its strongest human rights proponents. Moreover, the UN Charter and the Covenant on Civil and Political Rights reflect Western values on a global stage. The General Assembly regularly votes budgets for peace operations that Washington sees fit to support in the Security Council, and those budgets are cleared first by a committee of 16 states on which the United States has nearly always had a strong voice. The UN system also provides a wide range of services through its operational agencies that work beyond the realm of high politics and security, in food aid, refugee support, human rights support, global public health, vaccinations against childhood diseases, and nuclear non-proliferation.
- **Offer strong support—in cash and in kind—to every UN peace operation for which it casts its vote in the Security Council and set an example for others by promptly contributing the U.S. share of UN peacekeeping costs.** The UN is precluded from borrowing to finance its operations, so when the Security Council votes to support a mission, the UN must rely on Member States' payments toward the mission's "assessed" budget to get things underway. The State Department frequently under-budgets for UN peacekeeping operations, and the Office of Management and Budget in recent years has cut those requests further, making it up later with "supplemental" requests. This sleight-of-hand approach means that money shortages drive day-to-day U.S. dealings with the UN on matters of peace and security that should be driven by U.S. interests. Even UN missions launched with urgent U.S. backing may not receive U.S. funds for months unless they can hitch a ride on a timely supplemental in Congress. U.S. delays encourage other member nations to hold back funds, and UN peacekeeping operations, as a result, are chronically in arrears (on the order of \$2 billion in a \$5 billion annual budget; when the Darfur operation is in full swing, that deficit will grow by at least 50 percent). The bottom line? Mission deployments slow down to match the flow of funds, jeopardizing the people, places, and peace they are intended to protect.

- **Support the continued restructuring and strengthening of the UN headquarters offices that plan and support peace operations.** Secretary-General Ban-Ki Moon proposed, and the General Assembly approved, splitting the Department of Peacekeeping Operations into two parts, one (which keeps the old name) that is focused on policy, strategy, and planning, and another (the Department of Field Support) that is focused on finance, personnel, logistics, and communications. The General Assembly also agreed to add 287 staff to UN Headquarters support of peacekeeping, bringing the total New York staff to about 1,200, to manage up to 130,000 personnel in the field. Its cost, together with that of the UN's main peacekeeping logistics base at Brindisi, Italy, is five percent of the UN's peacekeeping budget. Try to find another agency (or company) in defense and security that runs on five percent overhead.

- **Pledge strong and sustained U.S. diplomatic and political support to UN peacekeeping operations, especially in volatile states and regions.** Every successful peace operation has had the strong support of at least one great power. Such support does not guarantee success, but its absence is a near-guarantee of failure.

- **Promise temporary U.S. military support, in collaboration with its NATO allies, for UN operations that experience trouble from local spoilers or terrorist activities.** In spring 2000, in Sierra Leone, Britain turned a non-combatant evacuation operation into a mini-counterinsurgency campaign against the armed gangs who had threatened both the country's fragile peace and a wobbly UN peacekeeping operation. Most of the British troops withdrew within four months, leaving behind a training mission to rebuild Sierra Leone's army. The UN operation restructured itself and ended up doing a creditable job, withdrawing in 2005.

“Every successful peace operation has had the strong support of at least one great power.”

In 2004, in Haiti, U.S. armed forces led a coalition of the willing that preceded a UN operation, instead of serving in parallel. There is no good reason why such U.S. deployments could not be made in parallel, however, as Britain and the EU have done, should a UN operation run into trouble.

- **Continue training foreign peacekeepers, contingent on their governments' willingness to discipline troops who violate international humanitarian law.** The U.S. supports the G8's Global Peace Operations Initiative, which aims to train 75,000 peacekeepers, primarily in Africa, by 2010. This is a valuable program worth sustaining and extending, but it could also be used to give the UN better leverage over troop-contributing states whose troops commit crimes while on UN duty. The U.S. government should tie continued assistance under this initiative to recipients' demonstrated willingness to discipline troops who violate their own military codes of justice or UN standards of conduct while serving in UN operations.

- **Acknowledge that effective “transition and reconstruction” programs are a peacekeeper’s best exit strategy.**
- **Announce that the United States will rethink, restructure, and expand its own capacity to contribute to UN peace operations.** This includes supplying not only military advisors and police personnel but also political advisors and civilian substantive experts who specialize, for example, in infrastructure repair, human rights, or de-mining.
- **Announce that the United States will put in place a new interagency process and new centers of excellence to implement these objectives.**

Lives and Leadership: Both on the Line

For nearly half a century, Washington was the recognized leader of the free world, earning that distinction by investing in and protecting the freedom of others. In the new century, as in the last, alternatives to western-style liberty and self rule are being offered to—or forced upon—peoples in Asia, Africa, Latin America, and the borderlands of Europe, especially in countries recently torn apart by war. Preserving liberty and fostering democracy among such countries is critical to America’s interests. It is too big a job for any one country to shoulder alone, but by working with allies and institutions like the UN, we can share that burden and earn back the respect of the world.

References

¹ Some peacekeeping missions still deploy along international borders: between Israel, Egypt, Lebanon, and Syria, for example, or between Ethiopia and Eritrea. Some keep the peace within split but relatively stable states like Bosnia and Herzegovina, with its largely separate Serb and non-Serb populations, and Cyprus, where the “Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus” is recognized only by Turkey but backed by 36,000 Turkish troops. Most peace operations, however, deploy within states that are rather less stable, with recently ended wars that no local party was strong enough to win. Note that the counterinsurgency wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are not included in this tally, as they far exceed reasonable definitional limits of peace/stability operations. For discussion, see William J. Durch and Tobias C. Berkman, *Who Should Keep the Peace?* (Washington, D.C.: Stimson Center, September 2006), pp. 1–5.

² Better World Campaign, “FY 2009 Budget Request: Growing Debt to the United Nations and Peacekeeping,” fact sheet, February 2008. <http://www.betterworldcampaign.org/issues/funding/growing-us-debt-to-the-un.html>

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