

# PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT. AN ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES, CHANGES IN COMMAND ACTION AND TRAINING NEEDS

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*The aim of this paper is to uncover emerging challenges of peacekeeping operations, determine the changes in command actions and its effects on the professional preparation of commanders by analyzing experiences of military officers. To that end the research data were collected by means of structured face-to-face interviews with voluntary participation of fourteen officers, who took charge in various peacekeeping operations. The collected data were analyzed based on the content analysis method. Findings indicate that peacekeeping operations pose specific challenges for peacekeepers, necessitate changes in command action in terms of flexibility and new precautions in terms of preparation of commanders.*

**Key words:** *management, Peacekeeping operations, peacekeeper, command action.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The context of peacekeeping operations comprises impartial civilians, non governmental organizations, military organizations and warring factions, all of which together form a multi dimensional environment for military commanders as distinct from conventional warfare [1]. In a typical peacekeeping operation, missions are executed by diverse staff, usually who belong to different nationalities. Each mission comprises several tasks to be done in sometimes dangerous, usually challenging and generally unstable environments. Resources of the operations are usually scarce. Organizational procedures and regulations of different nations are frequently cumbersome. Usually it is difficult to synchronize the staff for a common goal, and that sometimes impedes the success. Therefore, any kind of emerging difficulties pertaining to peacekeeping operations force commanders to make changes in command actions and keep up with new challenges [2].

In this context the aim of this paper is to uncover emerging challenges of peacekeeping operations, determine the changes in command actions and its effects on the professional preparation of commanders by analyzing experiences of military officers, who took charge in various peacekeeping operations throughout the world. The importance of this research derives from its research topic, which was not studied before as far as we detected. While forming the theoretical framework, first of all the concept of peacekeeping operations was defined and its evolution process was explained. Following that, characteristics of peacekeeping operations management were described. Later on, collected data were analyzed based on the content analysis technique. Finally, findings are discussed and implications are emphasized.

## 2. PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS

Peacekeeping operations are performed as a sort of peace support

operations. Peace support operations are to be executed in order to strengthen countries' diplomatic efforts toward providing peace in conflicting states. Therefore peace operations' objectives involve peace enforcement, peace making and peacekeeping. In this respect the spectrum of peace operations ranges from observation missions to peace building and peacekeeping operations [3]. To date, peacekeeping operations have evolved into three generations. The first generation of peacekeeping operations were performed just before the beginning of the Cold War. The first generation was dubbed as traditional peacekeeping. Peacekeepers were impartial, equipped with light arms and formed of international troops. Peacekeepers' objectives consisted of separation of belligerents and observation or monitoring of peace agreements or ceasefires. Consent of the warring parties, impartiality and use of force in case of a threat to self-security are prominent principles of traditional peacekeeping [4]. The United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF) in Sinai, the United Nations Peacekeeping Force (UNFCYP) in Cyprus, the United Nations Disengagement Observer Force (UNDOF) in Golan Heights are examples of traditional peacekeeping. In the course of time, following the end of the Cold War, upon the inability of traditional peacekeeping forces to hamper the conflicts and improve the deteriorating conditions such as in Srebrenica, along with the arguments and dissents on the effectiveness of traditional peacekeeping operations in provision of peace, the second generation of peacekeeping operations was put into practice [5]. The United Nations Assistance Group (UNTAG), the United Nations Operations in Mozambique (UNOMOZ) and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) are some examples of second generation of peacekeeping operations. In the second generation peacekeeping operations peacekeepers strove to resolve the conflicts between belligerents until removing all of the reasons for their presence, in addition to their observation and monitoring missions as distinct from

traditional peacekeeping operations [6]. The peacekeepers were equipped with heavy arms in order to deter belligerents and use force if necessary. Besides, force formations of troops were larger in size than previous generation. Peacekeepers began their missions while conflicts between warring parties were not ceased yet [7]. International organizations were involved into the conflicts directly as an actual actor upon the United Nations Security Council's decision and without the need of belligerents' approval. However, since 1994, the second generation has not been able to meet the expectations. Therefore a new generation of peacekeeping operations was defined, namely the third generation. The aim and scope of the third generation of peacekeeping operations were larger than previous ones. The aims of the third generation peacekeeping operations comprised stabilization of war prone conditions and rebuilding a fallen state. The composition of the troops and contingents changed significantly in comparison to previous generations. Police units, members of non-governmental organizations and humanitarian workers took part in missions along with military peacekeepers. Peacekeepers strove to end the conflicts, enforce ceasefires, sustain peace agreements and rebuild the war torn states by combining military and civilian capabilities synchronously. In addition to UN peacekeepers, international and regional organizations also conducted peace operations under the UN mandate as distinct from previous generations. Throughout this evolution process the objective of international peace operations transformed from peacekeeping to peace enforcement and peace building among belligerents [8]. The way of peacekeeping operations' management also evolved in correspondence with these developments. However as far as we realized there is a considerable lack of research on features of peacekeeping operations' management. Therefore we believe that the management of peacekeeping operations should be evaluated in order to accommodate permanent changes and overcome challenges.

### **3. PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS MANAGEMENT**

In general, the concept of management refers to a process in which resources of an organization are used effectively in order to achieve organization's objectives. Management comprises planning, organizing, executing, directing, monitoring and evaluating functions [9]. In peacekeeping operations military leaders direct the resources of a multinational coalition in order to achieve objectives given by UN or another superior international formation. Leaders execute every function of the managerial process in extreme conditions. Peacekeepers operate in multidimensional environments. Multidimensionality derives from operations' multinational and multi tasked character. New generation peacekeeping operations were performed by diverse personnel who are from different nationalities, professional background and cultures. Military peacekeepers always cooperate with the personnel of non-governmental organizations or governmental organizations, technical experts or even politicians. However, this diversity creates challenges for both military leaders and their followers since, in general, military personnel are not accustomed to a multidimensional peacekeeping environment, if they are not trained for peace operations specially. Thereby, military peacekeepers encounter adversities, which cause severe stress. Some of those adversities are physically remote locations, unclear missions, confusion on command structure due to the multinational character of missions, role and identity ambiguity, lack of knowledge in foreign cultures and languages, repetitive work, mines, snipers and exposure to death [10]. In addition to those adversities lack of harmony and cooperation in civil-military relationships also constitute another challenge for military leaders although both sides strive for provision of better conditions. Military personnel from diverse branches are trained for combat in pursuit of eliminating the

reasons of their presence and providing peace. That is why military actions help political objectives directly. In contrast, civilian humanitarian organizations strive for relieving the suffering by accessing every population in the theatre. Therefore, civilian humanitarian organizations are mostly perceived as neutral by all parties. In this circumstance military leaders have to find a way to direct the efforts of civilian humanitarian organizations in cooperation with military actions [11]. Therefore, the management of peacekeeping operations requires flexible, fast and responsive processes, which can accommodate changing circumstances effectively. Because many times the peacekeeping environment involves a good many of risks, which affect decision-making processes at all levels. Thus, effective management of peacekeeping operations may help peacekeepers overcome those challenges and set the stage for success [12]. From this point of view, in this study the management of peacekeeping operations is evaluated in terms of challenges, changes in command action and training needs by making use of experienced peacekeepers' earlier practices.

### **4. METHOD**

#### **4.1. Participants**

A total of 14 officers participated in our survey voluntarily. All of the participants have experience in the following missions: UNOMIG, ISAF, EUFOR Althea, KFOR, UNMIS, SFOR, TIPH, and UNIFIL. Participants' years of service in military vary from 8 years to 23 years with an average of 16 years ( $SD = 4.55$ ), their ranks change from lieutenant to colonel, all of them are males, 2 of which are married and the rest are bachelors. The sample of the study is believed to fulfill the "maximum diversification" principle of qualitative research with viewpoints from various missions and regions.

#### **4.2. Materials**

In this study data were collected by means of structured interviews,

which comprise questions about participants' occupational information and demographic characteristics, such as years of service in military and marital status, mission specific training on the field and command experience, as well as personal experience. The interview form is presented in Appendix A.

### 4.3. Procedure

All of the participants, whose contact information was found in authors' directories, were reached through e-mails. In this way invitations covering information about aim and scope of this survey were sent to a total of 43 officers initially. However, only 14 officers agreed to participate in this survey. Each volunteer participant was interviewed face to face on a scheduled day by the first author of this paper. Responses of interviewees were recorded over a voice recorder upon consent of the interviewee and some notes were taken below each question by interviewer during the interview. After controlling all interview sheets, the data were analyzed based on the content analysis technique.

## 5. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The data were analyzed according to content analysis method [13] in three phases. These phases are: collating data, developing themes and deriving meaning from themes. While collating data and developing themes the participants' answers were evaluated under the following question groups: training, field experiences, unit commanded and personal experiences. The purpose of collating data is to arrange messy data and compare the answers of each participant for each question. Therefore each answer of the participants was read carefully and collated according to question groups, by designating numbers for each answer initially. In this way participants' answers were listed below each question group whereby answer sets were created. Following that each answer set was examined in terms of relatedness,

repetition of same expressions and logical ties among them. As a result of this process threads of answer sets were generated, from which themes for each group of questions were developed. While deriving themes, answers to the following question were looked for: What are the main challenges in peacekeeping operations? How do these data explain changes in command action and how and how much these changes affect the professional preparation of commanders? The derived themes are presented in **Table 1**.

The findings indicate that the unusual nature of peacekeeping operations necessitate new precautions in terms of preparation of commanders because commanders are the head of the system, which operate for the accomplishment of the overall mission. Unless commanders are prepared sufficiently, it will not be a surprise to taste the failure in the theatre of peacekeeping operations. The major challenges that officers can experience in a typical peacekeeping operation can be summed up as deficiencies in language capabilities, communication and coordination skills, lack of cultural awareness, knowledge about history, religions and military equipment used by other militaries. Participant 5's statement addresses communication challenges clearly "*During my mission in Bosnia & Herzegovina sometimes I could not communicate with my colleagues who were from other nations due to my incompetency in military terminology and abbreviations.*" Likewise, participant 13 addresses cultural issues along with language drawbacks with his statement "*Our personnel generally hesitate to speak in public. The reason behind it may be officers' lack of English competency or cultural awareness.*" On the other hand, there are good examples among participants' answers, which indicate effectiveness of pre-mission trainings and being knowledgeable when misunderstandings happen in the theatre. Participant 11's statement summarizes an incident which took place between a presenter and an officer in Kosovo (KFOR) mission: "*During the Key Leaders' Training in*

Kosovo, presenter was giving historical information regarding the remnants of an old monastery, which was located almost 5km outside of Prizren town center. He told that monastery was destroyed by Ottomans, and with its stones a mosque was built in Prizren town center. Upon this disinformation I raised my hand and asked permission to speak about that remark. I told them there was a church, which was still sound and in use right 50 meters away of aforementioned mosque. Considering the logistics ability of that time it was not logical to destroy a far away church and use its stones for building a new mosque in city center while there was another church in city center. Moreover it was a known fact that the Ottomans were respectful to religious beliefs of people and never stooped for destruction of a church. Right after the visit, I filled a complaint about the presenter and sent it to the commander of the sector. A couple of days later, I received an e-mail regarding my complaint, in which commander wrote that they omitted the controversial part from presentation." This is a good example for advantages of history knowledge. If this officer had not commented in time, everyone in the briefing room at that time and listeners of forthcoming meetings would have been misinformed, which later on might have caused severe disputes among officers of multinational force and thereby mission efficiency would have lessened.

Naturally, the above-mentioned challenges cause changes in command actions of commanders. Otherwise, officers experience difficulties when commanding multi national units in a multi dimensional environment. For instance, according to findings, commanders need native consultants and interpreters in order to build healthy relationships and command accurately. Participant 6 clearly calls attention to the matter: "During ISAF mission we seriously needed native interpreters in order to make contact with locals and Afghan soldiers, who were trained and commanded by us". Besides, commanders have to comprehend fast changing conditions and go beyond usual

ways of coordinating and organizing, be creative and bold to implement new techniques and be open to new ideas. Participant14's statement emphasizes the importance of creativity: "When you experience ambiguity during mission and when SOPs don't work, you have to find a way to solve the problems and continue the mission. This is more than taking initiative. This is creativity." Moreover, acting in order to create an organization culture among officers and subordinates may help formation of solidarity among colleagues, as well. Therefore, officers and commanders have to be ready for unexpected circumstances of peacekeeping operations.

Some of the effects on preparation of commanders deriving from participants' ideas on peacekeeping operations indicate that in order to succeed, officer specific training programs should be developed, by which officers should be given training about different languages, cultures, religions and values along with military habits of allies in addition to organization theories and coordination methods. Likewise participant 3's statement about training needs indicate the necessity of specific training programs for officers. "I believe that it will be helpful, if officers have cultural awareness training, covering knowledge about military traditions, religions, national customs, daily habits, abbreviations or military jargons of each participating nation along with the host nation prior to putting boots on the ground." Besides, in order to deal with and lead units equipped with various kinds of armament, officers should possess certain hard and soft skills. Participant10 points out the matter smoothly: "The equipment and armament of local Afghan military personnel were old and ragged, about most of which we had not much detailed knowledge. Many times we felt that they didn't understand what we thought. However they were expecting us to train them." To that end, officers' both soft and hard skills have to be improved through trainings and they have to be ready mentally for future operations. Soft skills simply refer to communication, interpersonal and

social skills, which comprise listening, presenting, teaching, speaking, being courteous, presenting in a polite manner, being nice, having sense of humor, being empathetic and having self-control [14]. Officers need soft skills while they manage throughout their career. On the other hand, hard skills refer to technical skills, which comprise working with equipment such as guns, vehicles and any training assisting materials, data, hardware and software [15]. In addition to soft skills officers have to possess necessary hard skills, as well. Otherwise, missions can fail. To that end, effective training methods must be applied while training officers for peacekeeping operations, whereby training transfer can be enhanced. Namely, the better officers are trained before missions, the less they will fail there. Participant 4 smoothly points out the necessity of using effective training techniques: *“Before deployment, in my opinion it would be better to have scenario based exercises along with visual demonstrations of mission area and mission specific operations, which can prepare us mentally for the forthcoming missions.”* Actually, this participant pays attention to the efficiency of transfer of training unintentionally. The transfer of training indicates the extent to which given training was applied in the theatre by trainees and the impact of training in terms of an increase in mission efficiency [16]. Therefore, it may not be unreasonable to think that mission success, to some extent, may depend on the level of training transfer, which will prepare officers and commanders for future peacekeeping operations. In this sense, effective success measurement tools, which can be used at the end of training programs, may also help increase the level of training effectiveness.

## 6. CONCLUSION

The aim of this paper is to analyze challenges that officers and commanders experience in peacekeeping operations, hence determine the changes in their command actions as distinct from conventional implementations and

finally evaluate how these changes affect the preparation of officers and commanders for future asymmetric warfare operations. To that end, interviews were conducted with the voluntary participation of 14 officers, who had participated in peacekeeping operations previously. Findings indicate considerable challenges that officers and commanders come up against and changes in command actions meant to overcome those challenges. Starting from the belief that what does not change is change itself and as a result of this research, we uncovered that in order to succeed in peacekeeping operations that characterized by multi dimensionality, as it is the case of working among and together with civilians, officers have to change their conventional command actions and adapt to emerging conditions rapidly. Interactions between challenges, changes and effects on the preparation of officers occur in a continual process, which indicate the need for the projection of flexible and modular training programs for commanders. Despite limitations of our research such as the small number of participants, the application of structured interviews instead of unstructured ones and the absence of prior research on the same or related topics, we believe that our study fills an important gap in the field of management of peacekeeping operations by uncovering the challenges, commander reactions and training needs of officers. Thereby, our study may give inspiration to researchers for conducting new studies on the issue. For example, researches can develop new tools in order to measure changes in the command actions of commanders and in this way they can determine training needs and effects on officers' preparations for the future peacekeeping operations specifically. Moreover, depending on the findings of this research, the armed forces of countries involved in this type of operations, can develop new specific training programs for their officers in order to prepare their commanders for the ambiguous and multidimensional environment of peacekeeping operations.

Table 1. Research Findings

Question Groups	Challenges in Peacekeeping Operations	Changes in Command Action	Effects on Professional Preparation of Commanders
Training	Lack of competency in foreign languages and military terminology. Lack of cultural awareness.	Hiring native consultants to command multicultural units. Commanding locals and allies by means of native interpreters.	Three to four weeks for preparation on the culture of forces involved in operation, geography and military habits of allies. Learning local languages at least six months prior to setting foot in the theatre.
Field Experiences	Coordination deficiencies in supply chain management, operations management and planning. Controversies on historical facts between allies of asymmetric warfare operations.	Developing new ways of coordination apart from traditional hierarchical patterns, in which coordination happens at and between all levels of command structure in a more flexible manner. Understanding sensibilities of each participating allies on historical issues. Commanding by considering and respecting religious varieties among allies.	Preparation about different ways of organizing techniques and decision-making processes in unusual times. Understanding social network structures in organizations. Learning history of the region objectively. Having general knowledge about religious belief systems and values.
Unit Commanded	Existence of different training and commanding patterns as distinct from national or NATO SOPs. Variety in military equipment and armament.	Fast adaptation to various training techniques and military equipment, developing new common training patterns. Commanding various military means synchronously as it had never happened before.	Learning training patterns of allies prior to mission. Having knowledge about technical and tactical characteristics of military equipment used by both allied countries and the country where operation is being held.
Personal Experiences	Officers' lack of experience in asymmetric warfare operations. Lack of adaptation skill to distinct multidimensional environments. Lack of communication skill. Lack of stress management skill.	Motivating personnel to participate in asymmetric warfare environment by informing them about local and multicultural character of the mission. Direct command of small unit commanders and personnel. Comprehending rapidly changing theatre conditions and making decisions wisely even under stressful circumstances.	Preparing officers mentally for forthcoming asymmetric warfare operations with any means such as, videos, news, demonstrations, experiences of veterans, natives and publications. Training officers for stress management and communication skills. Providing opportunity for officers to contact with natives of operation area prior to mission.

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## Appendix A. Interview Sheet

### 1. Demographic Data

Gender:  
male female  
Rank:  
Service and specialty:  
Years of service:  
Marital Status:  
single married  
Operational experiences:  
Theatre:  
Year:  
Duration:  
Role:

### 2. Training and specific training

- a. Which languages can you speak?
- b. During your mission have you ever encountered with any problems about language competency?
- c. Did you join any training program about peace operations?
- d. Do you have any proposals on specific training for Peace Operations?
- e. What was the suitability of preparation that you received in order to acquire intercultural communication competency in the theater of the mission?

### 3. Field experiences

- a. Have you ever encountered with any logistical problems in Peace Operations? If yes, describe them.

- b. Have you ever applied the Rules of Engagements (ROEs-lawful commands to use force) in some occasions? If yes, what was their impression on you? Have you ever faced any problems in applying them?

- c. How was the hierarchical relationships in Peace Operations that you took part?(degree of autonomy in the field)?

- d. How were your relationships with other actors in the area? (other units of the coalition, the local armed forces, local communities, local civil authorities, international organizations, NGOs, mass media etc.)

- e. Have you experienced any interoperability problems with the other military units?

- f. Have you experienced of particular problematic situations in the field? If yes, what were the solutions and results?

### 4. Unit Commanded

- a. What was the training level of the unit you served?

- b. How was your unit's compliance with the materials, proposals?

- c. How was your unit's morale: trends during mission, influencing factors, cases of defection, possible cases of PTSD (posttraumatic stress disorder).

### 5. Personal experience

- a. Are you satisfied with (the) Mission/s;

- b. What is your personal assessment of the results in peace operations?

- c. Do you desire to be sent in asymmetric warfare missions again in future?

- d. Do you have anything more to say?