

PEACE SUPPORT OPERATIONS AND PERPETUAL HUMAN FAILINGS

‘Are we all human, or are some more human than others?’¹

DR. NAISON NGOMA

Introduction

In 1994, in the tiny African country of Rwanda, eight hundred thousand Rwandans were brutally murdered in a period of a hundred days. In the words of Lt. General Romeo Dallaire, the force commander of the United Nations (UN) Assistance Mission for Rwanda from July 1993 to September 1994 (UNAMIR), it was a case of ‘betrayal, failure, naïveté, indifference, hatred, genocide, war, inhumanity and evil’². The UN stood by and the world’s great powers chose to do nothing. On the other hand, the slaughter of the innocent in the former Yugoslavia received such an overwhelming response from the same powers that even apolitical people were left wondering why. As of today, over three million people have died in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) in a conflict spanning decades, but where the peacekeeping force (in a country larger than the entire Western Europe) is tiny compared to the size of forces deployed in the former Yugoslavia. It may therefore be asked whether race is the major factor in the nature of responding to conflicts³.

Since the inception of UN peace missions, there have been 15 such missions sent to the African continent, while (currently) the mission number has dropped to eight. It is interesting to compare this with other missions elsewhere. In the past, the Americas have had eight UN missions, Asia and Europe had seven, and the Middle East has had six. Presently there is only one UN

mission in the Americas, Asia has two while Europe and the Middle East have three each⁴. Given 43 peacekeeping missions in the past and 17 at present, it may be correctly deduced [Wrong: it can only be noted that the UN’s response level has dropped. It may imply that...] that conflict levels have indeed dropped. However this does not necessarily imply that there has necessarily been a reduction in fatalities.

This commentary aims to make the point that peace support and peacekeeping operations have thus far not brought about the peace and security the world has been searching for. After looking at some related concepts, it focuses on a conceptual assessment of the concepts designed to seek an explanation for the dysfunctional nature of peace support and peacekeeping operations. This commentary also elaborates on a variety of dimensions that contribute to the inability of humanity to make these operations work.

Peace support and peacekeeping operations: A discourse

Peacekeeping and peace support operations are concepts and practices that are famous and infamous – they are ‘catch-all’ terms associated with every conflict and post-conflict zone of major proportions. However, nowhere in the world have they been so intensely scrutinised as on the African continent. In some instances they have been scornfully regarded as anything

but synonymous with the attainment of stability and looked at as the answer to a brighter future for both the people and the states embroiled in conflict.

Of the two concepts, peace support operations and peacekeeping, it is the latter that has often tended to catch more attention despite the fact that it is derived from the former. The Department of Peace Keeping Operations (DPKO), on the one hand, defined peace support operations as 'preventive deployments, peacekeeping and peace-enforcing operations, diplomatic activities such as preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peace building, as well as humanitarian assistance, good offices, fact-finding, electoral assistance'⁵. Peacekeeping, on the other hand, is defined as 'non-combatant military operations undertaken by outside forces with the consent of all major belligerent parties and designed to monitor and facilitate the implementation of an existing truce agreement in support of diplomatic efforts to reach a political settlement'⁶. A more comprehensive definition is as follows:

'As a general expression peacekeeping is a third party role played by an actor in a violent conflict situation. The putative peacekeeper, by using a repertoire of behaviour, attempts to stabilize the conflict at least to the extent of eliminating violence from the relationship. Thus typically a peacekeeper will assist in the establishment of a truce or cease-fire. Peacekeeping then, is an activity engaged in by military and/or civilian actors operating in a neutral and impartial way, with the consent of the parties and using force strictly in self-defense: the object being the cessation of violence, through such measures as supervising the withdrawal of forces, the repatriation of prisoners and perhaps the imposition of its own contingents into a 'cordon sanitaire.' In this way peacekeeping can be viewed as a function of diplomacy.'

Critical to the definitions is that the activity is essentially a political action, which implies being open to unpredictable dimensions. Central to the argument of this commentary is that the nature of political activity makes the phenomena of peace support and peacekeeping operations

unpredictable. Arising from this, the commentary argues that these operations, though well meaning, are a consequence of constant human failings, as events in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) would appear to suggest⁷. Sceptics may, therefore, argue that peace support and peacekeeping operations do little to ensure sustainable peace and stability.

Doomed to failure?

'Does peacekeeping work? Do international interventions to help maintain peace in the aftermath of civil war actually contribute to more stable peace?'⁸

The nature of peace support operations shows an array of variables that, even on their own, exhibit more complex dimensions. Winning the peace and reaching the stage of facilitating the evolution of democracy (for example) is, on its own, a complex process with a long gestation period. The many variables that form peace support operations, i.e., fact finding, humanitarian assistance, and the usage of 'good offices' are complex factors that are not only difficult to set up but even more complicated to implement successfully. The inclusion of both peacekeeping and peace-enforcement, among others, (if nothing else) makes peace support operations a mammoth task.

Being a sub-set of peace support operations does not make peacekeeping operations any less complex. Over time, the concept and practice of peacekeeping has become multifaceted and, in the process, has become even more difficult to comprehend. Today there are three categories: first, second and third generation peacekeeping.⁹

When unarmed or lightly armed troops intercede between two warring parties (albeit on the understanding that a truce exists), as was required by the *first-generation peacekeeping* (Chapter VI), risks for the UN forces become unreasonably high. The requirement that the military forces must abide by the neutrality principle is not easy to apply in practice, particularly when faced with one side that is guilty of brutal human rights abuses. The *second-generation* operations are an attempt to improve upon the initial model by taking into account an in-depth study of the conflict. In this model, the peacekeeping forces undertake more complex functions, some of

which are organically police and civilian responsibilities. Unlike the more traditional peacekeeping model, the second generation operates in an environment in which all the belligerents will have provided the peacekeepers with comprehensive consent. Former Secretary-General Boutros-Ghali's contribution in this regard is that peacekeeping operations should have a comprehensive focus with such elements as 'support structures, which will tend to consolidate peace...disarming the previously warring parties...destruction of weapons, repatriating refugees...monitoring elections...and promoting formal and informal processes of political participation'.¹⁰ While the 'menu' set out by the former Secretary-General offers all the pertinent issues required for an attainment of a peaceful environment, it also shows the magnitude of the task at hand.

The evolution of *third generation peacekeeping* is designed to resolve some of the major difficulties experienced during the United Nation's experiences in undertaking peacekeeping missions. David Carment and Dane Rowlands identify some of these as 'guaranteeing the safe passage of humanitarian assistance, assisting displaced persons, (and) stopping the killing of ordinary citizens' by 'resort(ing) to more forceful measures'.¹¹ The 'birth' of the *third generation peacekeeping* characterised by 'peace enforcing' missions under the UN's Chapter VII, are designed to achieve the menu items above, as well as forcibly ensure that whatever agreements arising from prior negotiations are respected. This is, of course, not straightforward, nor is it very 'mission-fulfilling'. Experience has shown that the old adage 'violence begets violence' has often been the case, as shown in every mission where Chapter VII has been applied. A case in point is the Somalia mission. Is there any way out of this dilemma? Robert Tomasovic stipulates that peacekeeping also 'suffers from a great deal of conceptual and operational confusion'¹². A brief outline of some conceptual issues highlights this issue.

Seeking a conceptual framework

Some issues, which have been raised before, but which nevertheless remain pertinent include Dane Rowlands' and David Carment's thesis

that the increase in the use of force could raise tensions, and their desire to understand the reason behind the success or failure of peaceful or forceful third party intervention¹³. Rowlands and Carment nonetheless hold the view that forceful intervention is more likely to succeed. On the issue of impartiality – so much credited by both the first and second general peacekeeping models – there is 'little consensus' on its ability to handle contemporary conflicts.

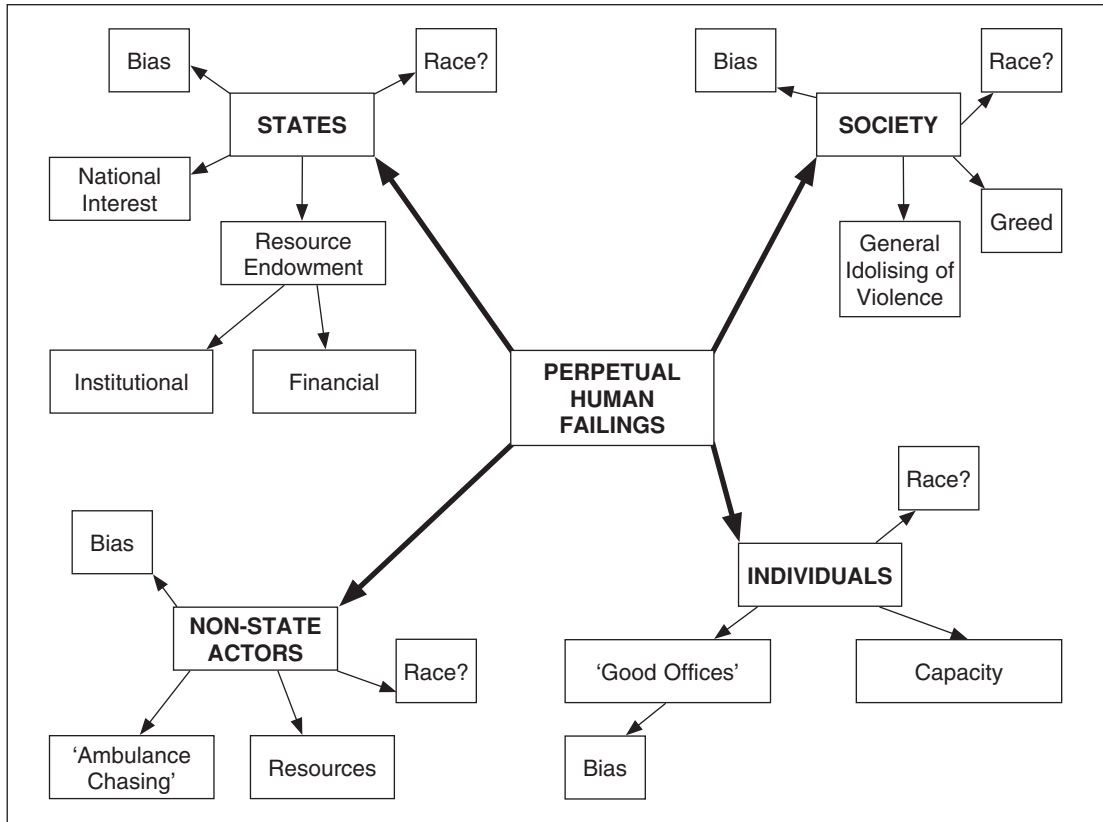
Contrary to Rowlands and Carment's inquiries is James and Roberts' belief that readiness to exercise force leaves lightly-armed UN peacekeepers susceptible to attack and shows up the UN criticism of using force that may have an unfavourable impact on the civilian population¹⁴. Richard Betts postulates that stability is a function of an outside power in complete command of the environment, and one that imposes a peace settlement.¹⁵ However, a most fascinating question is why and how peace support and peacekeeping operations are related to the never-ending scenarios of human failings.

Dimensions of perpetual human failings

The seemingly non-ending failures by peace support operations are a function of four factors, namely states, non-state actors, society and individuals. It may be argued that the failure of peace support and peacekeeping operations is largely due to the manner in which these factors relate to the operations in a direct or indirect manner. The table below provides a graphic layout of a proposed 'human failing matrix'. It illustrates the factors as well as the way they contribute to the overall never-ending failure to uphold peace and security in the world.

As expected, states feature significantly in the provision of peace and security. Although peace support and peacekeeping operations are harmonised at the UN level, regional and sub-regional bodies also play an important role. This is particularly the case in Africa where the African Union and its five regional bodies are currently trying to develop stand-by force arrangements. Needless to say, because of the nature of the states' different abilities to mobilise resources, their impact on peace support operations will be different. It is not rocket science to

A Human Failings Matrix



deduce that the United States, the only surviving super power, and some of the great states such as Britain, France and Germany, ultimately determine how UN resources are employed. I, therefore, argue that the overriding consideration they use to determine whether or not the resources are employed, and in what measure, is their 'national' interest, even if it may be such a factor as the state resource endowment. Events surrounding UNAMIR (Rwanda) and to a significant extent MONUC (DRC) and UNOCI (Côte d'Ivoire) would appear to suggest that general bias¹⁶ and race factors are amongst those that affected peace support decisions. The differences in the treatment of the conflict in Yugoslavia (involving Europeans) and that in Rwanda (concerning Africans) may be cited as a good case.¹⁷ Non-state actors are not far from the position of significant influence on matters of determining the success or failure of peace support operations. They are regarded by this commentary as consisting of international organisations like the various departments of the UN and non-govern-

mental organisations (NGOs) in the humanitarian aid field.

The amount of resources non-state actors can bring to bear in any part of the world is phenomenal. With financial resources that equal or supersede some states, non-state actors have the capacity to use their resources effectively and, consequently, make a fundamental difference to peace support operations. However, like state actors, non-state actors also have negative traits like bias which, at times, could be seen as having a racial component. For instance, how else would one explain the continually under-funded peace missions while some of these organisations operate in what may be regarded as 'luxury', and show little interest in the seriousness of the challenges of peace support operations¹⁸.

A concept closely connected to non-state actors, especially those working in the humanitarian aid field, is 'ambulance chasing'. In some cases, some humanitarian organisations literally seek out conflicts where they can use (or abuse) the suffering people to further their own work. In

some cases, conflicts have become big business at the expense of a people.

Another group in the matrix is the 'individuals'. These are men and women who are renowned and internationally respected for their ability to negotiate in crisis situations. Invariably, the majority of these individuals will be former heads of state. Presidents Nelson Mandela of South Africa, Kenneth Kaunda of Zambia and Jimmy Carter of the United States are among former heads of state who have participated in the resolution of intra and inter-state conflicts, using what may be referred to as their 'good offices'. Indeed, the positive role such individuals play can significantly reduce human failings and, consequently, bring more success to peace support operations. As expected, the success of the individual does not only rely on their individual skill, but also on resources available to them. Like states and non-state actors, individuals have their own biases – usually due to their ideological orientations and life experiences. Race too is never too far away. For instance, despite the fact that the African continent has its fair number of ideal interlocutors, their participation in world affairs is seemingly marginalised. Can it be deduced that the effectiveness of such individuals appears to be neutralised because of the race factor? This is unclear, but this is not as crucial as the contribution that society makes toward the perpetuation of human failings.

While bias and race, as well as sheer greed, also play a role in society's contribution to the never-ending conflicts in the world, it is society's daily idolising of violence that, in the final analysis, contributes to the sad state of affairs. Entertainment, an activity that occupies a significant amount of society's time, is usually made up of life's 'exciting' activities. These are transplanted (as action and suspense movies) into society via that little box called a television, one of which is owned by many families. Hollywood, Bollywood (India) or Nollywood (Nigeria) stars and other action actors often occupy a spot in the family 'hall of fame'. Even children are not safe from the 'avalanche' of modernity. Little boys are given toy guns and camouflage clothes as well as violent TV games – all in the name of modern living. It is, therefore, not a surprise that, despite the numerous sermons and homilies during weekend mass (during which the term

'peace' is often mentioned), peace continues to be elusive. The long and the short of this is that societal behaviour – or rather change of behaviour – is crucial to the 'changing of the tide' of the failures of human beings. There is a dire need for increased sensitivity towards the challenges peace support operations face if any substantial progress is to be made.

Conclusion

The relationship between peace support operations and the attainment of peace is generally accepted. This commentary began with the premise the relationship (deducing that one follows the other) is problematic, and went on to show this during the discussion of the concepts of peace support and peacekeeping operations. The subsequent discussion of the various types of peacekeeping models over time, i.e., first, second and third generation, provided some explanations and showed the complexity of peacekeeping and the challenges of controlling violence. When analysing conceptual issues, the commentary looked at some presuppositions regarding the attainment of peace through a lightly armed force, concern for the civilian population, and role of the external forces.

The failure of peace support operations is not purely because of the nature of the concept alone, but also due to the nature of states, non-state actors, individuals and society – what the commentary calls 'a human failings matrix'. At this juncture, each of these factors plays a part in contributing towards an unsafe world. The society is particularly critical in this development. Therefore, for peace support operations to be successful, there is an urgent need for the dysfunctional factors presented in the matrix and then discussed, to be mitigated.

Notes

- 1 Romeo Dallaire, *Shake hands with the Devil: The failure of Humanity in Rwanda*, Arrows Books, London, 2003.
- 2 *Ibid*, p. xvii.
- 3 See also Romeo Dallaire, 2003.
- 4 For details of these peace keeping missions see <<http://www.un.org/depts/dpko>>
- 5 <<http://www.un.org/depts/dpko/glossary/p.htm>>
- 6 *Ibid*
- 7 See Down Jones & Company, Inc., 'Peacekeepers

- 8 Knowingly Killed Congo Civilians', 12 April 2005. Virginia Page Fortna, 'Does Peacekeeping Keep Peace? International Intervention and the Duration of Peace After Civil War', *International Studies Quarterly* (2004) 48, p. 269.
- 9 Michael W. Doyle, 'War Making, Peace Making, and the United Nations' in Chester A. Crocker et al. 2001. *Turbulent Peace: The Challenges of Managing International Conflict*, United States Institute for Peace Press, Washington, D.C.
- 10 Boutros Boutros-Ghali, *An Agenda for Peace*, New York: United Nations, 1992, p.32.
- 11 David Carment and Dane Rowlands, 'The Role of Bias in Third Party Intervention: Theory and Evidence', *International Security Program, Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs*, 2001-08 October 2001, p. 4.
- 12 <http://www.nps.navy.mil/sigs/idesp_un/03_un_overview.htm>
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 David Carment and Dane Rowlands (1998) 'Three's Company: Evaluating Third-Party Intervention in Intrastate Conflict', *Journal of Conflict Resolution*, vol.42, pp. 572-599.
- 15 Richard, K. Betts (1996) 'The Delusion of Impartial Intervention'. In Chester Crocker and Fen Osler Hapson, eds. *Managing Global Chaos: Sources of and Responses to International Conflict*, Washington, D.C.: United States Institute of Peace Press, pp. 333-343.
- 16 Bias may be regarded as 'an unfair preference for or dislike of something' and in the context of this paper may be wide ranging. While 'race' is one such bias, the paper nevertheless views it separately because of its exceptional effect on peace support operations.
- 17 See also Romeo Dallaire, op cit.
- 18 See Adam Hochschild, 'Heart of Sadness: Congo', *Amnesty Magazine*, 2005; <<http://www.amnestyusa.org/amnestynow/congo.html>>