

Testimony before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
Hearing on
United Nations Peacekeeping and Opportunities for Reform
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by
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Chairman Corker, Ranking Member Cardin, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to address this body on the timely and consequential subject of peacekeeping and the U.S. national interest.

I'd like to start with four main points, and then suggest some key areas for reform.

First, when we address the subject of international peacekeeping, we have to start with an essential question: does the United States want to have at its disposal a tool for burden-sharing for far-flung crises, or does it want to do the job itself? That's the fundamental issue.

The right way to think about international peacekeeping is as a tool for sharing the burden of 'manning the outer perimeter.' We're never going to rely on international peacekeeping for core security tasks, but when we move beyond those matters of primary national security, we have three choices: do nothing, and live with the consequences – in the form of refugees, in the form of spreading instability, in the form of safe havens for terror networks; tackle these problems ourselves—even when they arise in places like the Central African Republic or northern Uganda or Yemen or northern Mali; or build and manage multilateral tools for maintaining stability and security in non-vital regions that distribute the commitment among many nations. It seems evident that the third of these is the only credible option—building tools for burden-sharing in the mission to uphold stability. The existence of such tools doesn't preclude U.S. engagement, but it gives us options.

Second, then, we have to look at the tools at our disposal, including *but not limited* to the UN. It's rarely the case that the UN is the sole tool we are going to use to tackle a problem of civil war or humanitarian crisis. There are regional organizations, NATO, the African Union, and coalitions of the willing; as well as tools for the development of economic and governance institutions, such as the World Bank. In the vast majority of cases today, two or more of these entities are involved in producing solutions or tamping down problems. One of the weaknesses of current U.S. policy is that we treat these institutions or tools as if they are stand-alone entities; in actuality, they almost always work in concert, albeit in imperfect ways. This is all the more important given that we now confront a UN Security Council in which Russia is inclined to block unified action, at least in cases where it is directly involved.

Third, that being said, we should take the signal from the reality that in the vast majority of those cases, the UN does play an important role—in the humanitarian response; in the political response; and in the security response – all of which are supported through the peacekeeping tool. The reason the UN shows up in so many cases arises from a very basic but very important fact: The United Nations is a global institution, rather than a regional one, making its tools global in scope. UN peacekeeping is the only mechanism we have at our disposal that allows us to combine forces from every region in the world to tackle crises or conflicts wherever they occur. Regional organizations can't produce Indian troops

working with us in central Africa; or Brazilian troops working with us in East Timor, as they did; or European forces working with us in Haiti. Thus, for all its flaws and weaknesses, the UN is the only tool available to us for genuinely global burden-sharing. And that's all the more important at a point in time when rising democracies like Korea, Indonesia, and Brazil want to do more, not less, on the international stage, and don't have any alternatives to the UN.

Fourth, and critically, when we hear about peacekeeping, we hear most about failures and setbacks. Even the most optimistic literature about UN and international peacekeeping suggests that it fails approximately 40% of the time. But that should not obscure the 60% of the time when it succeeds, or succeeds in part—either helping to end a war, securing a part of territory, or protecting a portion of a population.¹ Success is not categorized by the building, or rebuilding, of secure democracies overnight—we have to have maintain reasonable expectations of peacekeeping.

So how do we improve the ratio between success and failure? We have to work on four fronts.

- This is about effectiveness – and first and foremost that means getting better quality troops into the UN.
- It's about efficiency, especially cost efficiency.
- It's about putting an end to sexual exploitation and abuse—actions that erode the local and international legitimacy of peacekeeping.
- And it's about leadership.

The most important issue is effectiveness—if the UN isn't helping to create a solution, then the question of whether its operations are efficient or legitimate is moot. The most important determinant of effectiveness is the quality of troops that participate in operations—that is to say, their capacity to undertake complex stabilization operations. When conflicts are relatively easy, i.e. when the state or the rebels in question are of low capacity, then the UN can draw troops from whichever nation is willing, gathering a coalition for action that can keep the lid on things. But, as we confront more resilient actors in tougher settings—especially as the geography of intra-state and proxy conflict shifts from sub-Saharan Africa to the Middle East and North Africa— we need the participation of both the European allies and the rising powers if we're going to have the capable troops needed to produce security outcomes required on the ground. This is all the more true as we deal with the reality that in a growing portion of wars, at least one actor is engaged in terrorist activities, often with a transnational link.

I am therefore very supportive of the Obama Administration's efforts – colloquially, the Biden initiative – to bring European actors back into the fold and engage rising states in UN peacekeeping efforts for the provision of both troops and enabling capacities.²

Effectiveness also means being flexible about how we structure these forces. We tend to focus on the traditional "blue helmet" operations, that is, operations controlled centrally by the UN Secretariat. There's a powerful alternative in the UN's toolkit, namely UN-mandated multi-national forces. These are operations that fly under a UN banner but are led and commanded by an individual state, rather than

¹ For the comprehensive study behind these figures, see Virginia Page Fortna's 2008 book: *Does Peacekeeping Work?*, specifically chapter five. See: Fortna, V. P. (2008). *Does Peacekeeping Work?* Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

² For an overview of the Biden initiative, see: Office of the Press Secretary, The White House. (2014, September 26). *Summit on UN Peacekeeping* [Fact sheet]. Retrieved December 6, 2015, from Whitehouse.gov website: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/2014/09/26/fact-sheet-summit-un-peacekeeping>.

the UN Secretariat. Australia has led such multinational forces (in East Timor), as has Canada (in the Congo). The United States commands such a force in the Sinai (MFO Sinai). We should put more emphasis on using this option, and some of its variants.

It would be worth the effort for the United States to do a detailed examination of the range of alternatives available to the UN—from blue helmet operations to multi-national forces to so-called hybrid operations (where the UN and a regional organization fuse their forces into a single structure); such a study would enable the United States to better support and more firmly encourage the UN to explore a variety of options when confronted with an emerging conflict.

Then let's turn to efficiency. Nobody would accuse the UN of being an efficient organization. However, to be fair, during Ban Ki-Moon's term, two dynamic women, Susanna Malcorra and Ameerah Haq, effectively built the UN's Department of Field Support into a more robust tool for undertaking complex field operations.

Unfortunately, the UN's rules still mean that decisions made in the Department of Field Support are subject to the arcane and cumbersome tools of the Department of Management, which oversees headquarters operations. This dual key system introduces major inefficiencies and unnecessary redundancy. The United States could lead, or at a minimum offer support for, a political coalition to build on the new proposals from Ban Ki-Moon's high-level panel to increase the flexibility and efficiency of the UN's field support tools.³ This set of ideas is similar in spirit to a proposal made by former U.S. permanent representative to the United Nations Ambassador John Bolton for stand-alone management arrangements for UN peacekeeping.

Over time, of course, the United States will also have to secure a better arrangement for UN peacekeeping dues: a situation where the U.S. share of the global economy has shrunk from approximately 25% to 21%, and its share of UN peacekeeping dues has grown to 28%, is obviously unsustainable.⁴ China has shown that it is willing to do more in voluntary funding of the UN's operations, and its own rates continue to rise; but eventually this scale of assessment will have to be reworked. But the United States also has to recognize that, contra the 'American decline' narrative, it is still the only global power, the only power with the capability to act in every theater, and thus the actor that most profits in real terms from burden-sharing.

The UN also has to address a problem that eats away at its legitimacy— sexual exploitation and abuse. No other issue so profoundly erodes the trust of local populations, or the confidence of the international community, in UN operations than incidences of sexual misconduct or abuse by UN peacekeepers. Let's be clear: this is a problem of a very small number of troops in a minority of operations. But the UN leadership makes a grave mistake when it doesn't recognize that it's a fundamental challenge to the legitimacy of UN operations. Kofi Annan eventually recognized this, and adopted a zero tolerance strategy; and, rather belatedly, Ban Ki-moon has recognized this, and has adopted a new, tougher

³ The High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations was convened on 31 October 2014 "to undertake a thorough review of United Nations peace operations today and the emerging needs of the future." See: *Report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on Uniting Our Strengths for Peace: Politics, Partnership and People* [PDF]. (2015, June). Retrieved from http://www.un.org/sg/pdf/HIPPO_Report_1_June_2015.pdf.

⁴ The UN's figures for fiscal year 2016 have the United States contributing 28.38% of total peacekeeping dues. See: *Financing Peacekeeping*. (n.d.). Retrieved December 6, 2015, from UN.org website: <http://www.un.org/en/peacekeeping/operations/financing.shtml>.

policy.⁵ The United States should be vigilant in maintaining the necessary oversight to ensure that the Secretary General fulfills the promise of this new policy.

Finally, this is about leadership—at headquarters, and in the field. There’s no percentage in commenting here on personalities. And we’re coming to the end of Ban Ki-moon’s term, so soon there will be a new leadership team at the UN. In preparation for this new window of opportunity, the United States should elevate the prioritization of the identification and the selection of a secretary-general committed to effective and efficient UN contributions to international security; and we should work closely with the incoming Secretary-General and the other members of the P5 to make sure that she has available to her a deep roster of political and organizational talent from which to draw in selecting top officials for the management of political, peacekeeping, and humanitarian operations.

It has become fashionable to describe the United States as a power in decline. I disagree. The United States is the only power with political, economic, and military clout both at a global level and in every region of the world. America is the only power capable of convening states (and actors beyond states) of every stripe, of every income level, and from every region. It has an extraordinary suite of allies. The dynamism of the American private sector has been on vivid display in the energy renaissance and the economic recovery from the 2009 global financial crisis.⁶ China, India, and other actors have rising capacity to be sure, and with it, spreading interests. But for now, only the United States has a global responsibility, and only the United States can build the coalitions and the multilateral instruments for global security. A peacekeeping tool that is adequately manned, resourced, and supported is an important tool in upholding that security.

Thus, only with sustained U.S. attention will it be possible to ensure that we have available to us a sufficient suite of tools for stabilization and peacekeeping, at the UN and beyond, to meet the American interests of supporting stability without over taxing U.S. treasure and overextending U.S. forces.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address this Committee.

⁵ For a 2004 statement from Secretary General Kofi Annan, see: Annan, K. (2004, November 19). Statement by the Secretary-General on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in the UN Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) [Press release]. Retrieved from <http://www.un.org/sg/statements/?nid=1189>.

For Secretary General Ban’s recent statements on sexual assault in the Central African Republic, Ban, K.-M. (2015, August 12). Opening remarks to press on the Central African Republic [Press release]. Retrieved from http://www.un.org/apps/news/infocus/sgspeeches/statments_full.asp?statID=2714#.VmTuilv45UQ.

⁶ For a comprehensive account of these factors, see: Jones, B. (2014). *Still Ours to Lead: America, Rising Powers, and the Tension between Rivalry and Restraint*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press.